

The Admonishing Muse: Ancient Interpretations of Personal Abuse in Old Comedy

by

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List of Abbreviations

- A.P.* *Anthologia Palatina*
- G.-P.* Gow, A. S. and D. L Page. 1965. *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*. Cambridge.
- G.-P. (Garland)* ———. 1968. *The Garland of Philip and Some Contemporary Epigrams*. Cambridge.
- K.-A.* Kassel, R. and C. Austin. 1983-. *Poetae Comici Graeci*. Berlin.
- Koster* Koster, W. J. W. 1975. *Prolegomena de comoedia. Fasc. Ia, Prolegomena de comoedia*. Groningen.
- LIMC* 1981-. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Zurich.
- TrGF* Snell, B., R. Kannicht, and S. Radt. 1977-. *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Göttingen.

Chapter 1

Introduction

§1.1. Introduction

In the earliest surviving comedy in the Western tradition, the poet Aristophanes, speaking through a character, says, "Comedy knows justice, too."¹ Although Old Comedy was remarkable for its exuberance, vulgarity, and vicious abuse against politicians and other members of society, Aristophanes asserts that such humor serves the common good. With this claim, we see the beginnings of a tradition in the West that comedy can, and perhaps should, improve its audience. While, as we shall see, comedy's usefulness was a matter of polemic throughout antiquity, by the fourth century AD Donatus could assert that, through the materials of comedy, one would learn what in life is useful and what is adverse.² When humanists in the Renaissance and later turned to the discussion—indeed, the justification—of comedy, they drew on precisely such arguments from antiquity about comedy's usefulness.

Philip Sidney in the sixteenth century defended comedy on the English stage by claiming that it induced viewers to avoid vice;³ on the continent a few decades earlier, Gian Giorgio Trissino in his *Poetics* could amplify Aristotle's discussion of comedy by saying that comedy teaches men virtue by deriding men who are base.⁴ This view of comedy was persistent, and the idea that comedy is corrective because it induces laughter at, and by extension the avoidance of,

¹ Aristophanes *Acharnians* 500.

² Donatus *Commentum Terenti* I p. 22 Wessner.

³ p. 117 of Shepherd's 1965 edition of Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* (first published in 1595).

⁴ p. 224 (=6.120a) in Gilbert 1962.

vice influenced even Bergson's theory of laughter and the comic in his seminal work *Le Rire. Essai sur la signification du comique*, which proposes that that by laughing at the inflexibility of comic characters we generate increased flexibility in ourselves.

Such theories can apply just as well to invented characters and situations as to real ones, and the dramatists of the Renaissance dealt in character types or ciphers. Plautus, Terence, and their predecessors in Greek New Comedy similarly used fictional plots and characters in their dramas, and therefore these dramas operate at a level of abstraction from reality. Old Comedy and Aristophanes, however, are often not so abstract and casually blur fiction and reality.

Whereas Plautus may portray a generic braggart soldier, Pyrgopolynices ("Mr. Manycitysacker"), and expose him to derision, Aristophanes can put on stage a character with the name and likeness of a real, contemporary Athenian general, Lamachus, who was perhaps himself in the audience, and subject this *ersatz* Lamachus to abuse for his purported faults. Indeed, the membrane between fiction and reality is often permeated even further: not only are manifest analogs to contemporaries portrayed on stage and subjected to mockery over the course of the play's action, but characters in the plays frequently joke about or abuse real contemporaries in the audience. Aristophanes himself can, speaking through a character, address the audience in his own voice to criticize contemporaries for their faults. He, through such characters, is always quick to assert (naturally) that his mission is to improve his spectators and that he criticizes the deserving. Aristophanes and Old Comedy interact with reality in a rather more direct way than these other types of comedy: rather than abstract away their targets of mockery, they can confront them head-on. Rather than cloak in generalized terms their advice for the city, they can say precisely what they mean.⁵

⁵ I do not mean, however, to underplay how very engaged a comedy dealing only in ciphers can be. Consider, for example, the case of Molière's *Tartuffe*, which so offended the Church that it threatened with excommunication

Indeed, only in the last few decades has popular comedy approached Old Comedy's vulgarity, abuse, and engagement with reality.⁶ I have in mind not only comedies that satirically treat current events, such as the *Onion*, *Daily Show*, and *Colbert Report*, but also comedy like *South Park*, which, as Old Comedy did, depicts real characters and events in a fictional story and subjects them to derision. This mode of comedy has become increasingly permissible and popular, and the intents and effect of such comedies are controversial: they are accused of mocking celebrities and politicians only to provoke laughter, diminishing the public's confidence in government, misusing a public forum, and promoting cynicism in audiences.⁷ Some of these same complaints were leveled against Old Comedy, which, as we have said, stands at the origins of comedy in the West and was as or more vulgar and abusive than many of these modern forms.

Plutarch complained that Old Comedy made for unpleasant reading at parties because one would need a grammarian at hand to explain all of the topical references.⁸ But, precisely because of its engagement with reality, Old Comedy, long after it ceased to be performed, continued to offer a paradigm for thinking about broader problems, including the ramifications of free speech, the effects of popular media on the public, and the nature of the audience's complicity in promoting or tolerating such humor. In particular, the discussion and criticism of Old Comedy offered a means for thinking about the democratic values of fifth century Athens that enabled Old Comedy's freedoms. Our comparably abusive forms of comedy, which have, in the scheme

whoever went to see it. Molière defended this play by arguing in a series of petitions to the king that, of course, the function of the comic is to correct vice in its spectators.

⁶ Euben 2003, 64-84, likens Aristophanes to the *Honeymooners* and the *Simpsons* and proposes that such comedy teaches viewers to be skeptical of those who are in power and social norms on the whole. This may be true, but such sitcoms are far less challenging than Aristophanes. However transgressive they may sometimes be, they consistently value the integrity of the family unit: episodes often feature conflict within the family and resolve with its integrity restored. But Aristophanes can give us endings like those to the *Clouds* and *Wasps*. The more thorough-going skepticism (a critic would say cynicism) of the *Onion* or *South Park* may better approximate Aristophanic comedy.

⁷ See, e.g., Baumgartner and Morris 2006, a study that argues that the *Daily Show*, while it may be educational, makes viewers more cynical of and less confident in American political institutions.

⁸ *Mor.* 712a.

of things, so recently appeared, already provide such a means for thinking about ourselves and will, like Old Comedy, provide a means for future critics to think about us and our freedoms. In this regard, there perhaps has been no more apropos time for thinking about the ancient interpretation of personal abuse in Old Comedy.

§1.2. Abusive Humor in Old Comedy

In what follows, I use the term "personal abuse" broadly to mean jokes at the expense of historical individuals contemporary with the plays' production. Chief among these is when a character in a play abuses such an individual by name (ὄνομαστὶ κωμωδεῖν), but I also include in the category of personal abuse incorporating analogs to such individuals as characters in plays and treating them shamefully. Most analysis of such abuse in Old Comedy has been folded into the questions of what Aristophanes' political affiliations were, whether his comedies are purely laughable or both laughable and serious,⁹ and what the social and political effects of his comedies might have been when they were performed in fifth century Athens. This has been perhaps the most incendiary question in the study of Old Comedy, and already in 1938 Gomme could begin his important study on Aristophanes and politics by stating, "This is a threadbare subject."¹⁰ But arguments continue to run the gamut. For his part, Gomme argued that, on

⁹ I use the word "serious" here as short-hand to mean that the comedies were intended to produce effects in the spectators that lasted beyond the performance of the play, especially by influencing the politics and society of Athens. Seriousness does not necessarily contrast with laughter or the comic: defenders of comedy regularly assert that laughter produces a lasting effect that benefits the individual and society, and that the comic could be deathly serious was well-appreciated in antiquity. To take one anecdote about the comic stage, the Old Comic playwright Eupolis supposedly was drowned by the general Alcibiades because the former mocked the latter in a comedy. The historical information in this anecdote is untrue (see Nesselrath 2000); but it was early and popular enough that Alexandrian scholarship was aware of it and refuted it. The dichotomy, rather, is between humor that achieves a serious effect; and humor that only purports to achieve a serious effect to further the humor. For discussion of the dichotomy between seriousness and humor, see Silk 2000, 301-49.

¹⁰ For the critical tradition of this question in British scholarship on Old Comedy, see Walsh 2009, who emphasizes the role of the social and political climate of eighteenth and nineteenth century England in shaping Aristophanic scholarship.

balance, Aristophanes' political advocacy was "only in jest, or at best incidental."¹¹ This skepticism towards the comedies having real political purposes and effects has found modern adherents in Halliwell and Heath, who approach the question from rather different perspectives from Gomme and from each other. Halliwell emphasizes the festive nature of Old Comedy and in fact argues that it was exempt from Athenian laws about abuse precisely because it was more festive and carnivalesque than politically and socially efficacious.¹² Heath has argued that comedy, its didacticism, and its abuse seem to have had no real effect on Athenian politics and that the playwrights' real aim was to please the audience and win first prize.¹³

A host of other scholars accept that there were real political intents and effects to the performance of Old Comedy. De Ste Croix claims to locate a consistently conservative strain in Aristophanes' plays and regards him as a Cimonian conservative;¹⁴ Sommerstein's formulation is similar.¹⁵ Henderson emphasizes the relationship between the *demos* and Old Comedy and has argued that the latter is an institution of the former: "Comedy itself was an arm of that rule [of the *demos*]."¹⁶ Goldhill and Carey, however, argue for the diversity and multiplicity of purposes and voices in Aristophanic comedy.¹⁷ Old Comedy and Aristophanes prove to mean different things to different people.

So it was in antiquity, too. Even in fifth century Athens, Aristophanes consistently claims that his abusive humor served the greater mission of teaching his fellow citizens and improving the city; but he hints that other poets may use personal abuse for personal purposes,¹⁸ or that they

¹¹ Gomme 1938, 109.

¹² Halliwell 1984*a*; 1991; 1993; 2008, 243-63.

¹³ Heath 1987; 1997.

¹⁴ de Ste Croix 1972; Cartledge 1990, 43-53, takes the same position as his teacher (to whom the book is dedicated).

¹⁵ See Sommerstein 1996.

¹⁶ Henderson 1990, 313. See also Henderson 1998.

¹⁷ Goldhill 1991, 167-222; Carey 1994.

¹⁸ *Wasps* 1025-8.

may have no real agenda but seize on trite abuses of politicians to raise a laugh.¹⁹ However, the Old Oligarch says that comedy and its abusive humor are means of flattering the *demos* and marginalizing the elite,²⁰ while Cleon claims that Aristophanes defamed both the city and the *demos*.²¹ This controversy about the intent and effect of Old Comedy's humor has a very ancient pedigree.

§1.3. The Ancient Reception of Old Comedy

In antiquity, as now, the questions of the intent and effect of Old Comedy's personal abuse were controversial, and many modern contentions have ancient analogs. As we will see, the view that comedy is fundamentally carnivalesque is similar to the proposal of some ancient theorists that comedy originated from festival and has (or should have) no real engagement with civic life. The conception that comedy represents the *demos* also echoes ancient notions, as does the idea that the comic poet pursues only victory and is unconcerned about whether his abuse is justified or not.

Connected to these problems, indeed, underlying them, is the question of how personal abuse relates to Old Comedy, and comedy on the whole, as a genre. Most scholarship on the reception of Old Comedy in antiquity treats this question indirectly by focusing on the ancient periodization of Greek comedy. Ancient periodizations of comedy frequently propose that each phase was characterized by a different kind of abuse, and studies have addressed when, how,

¹⁹ *Clouds* 549-62.

²⁰ [Xenophon] *Ath. Pol.* 2.18.

²¹ On Cleon's charges against Aristophanes, see Sommerstein 2004. The case of Cleon demonstrates best of all that, even when Old Comedy was being performed, the intent and effects of its abuse were controversial and difficult to interpret. Cleon felt strongly enough about Aristophanes' comic abuse to take him to court, and the *Knights* won first prize for skewering Cleon. However, despite the play's accolades, and despite the Old Oligarch's opinion that comedy only attacks those who are unpopular with the *demos*, Cleon was elected general soon after the *Knights* was performed.

and by whom Greek comedy was divided into its different phases (Old, Middle, and New).²² But this analysis prioritizes the labels and the theorists involved rather than theories about the process of comedy's development (and, for our purposes, what role personal abuse plays in that development). Comedy's evolution begins, of course, long before the period called "Old Comedy," which, regardless of the nature of its personal abuse and whatever its other qualities were, can only refer to the earliest phase of Greek comedy at Athens.

Theories about the process of this evolution can be much more revealing. As we will see in chapter 3, certain theories that arose in Athens in third century about the origins, development, and personal abuse of comedy are quite compatible with each other, even if they have slightly different ideas about how the phases of comedy should be categorized. Contrawise, while two interpretations of comedy and its abuse may agree on the labeling, they may have very different understandings of comedy and its abuse. In chapter 5, we will see two bodies of criticism that share the premise that Old Comedy was characterized by personal abuse and New by an absence of abuse. But according to one body of criticism, Old Comedy's abuse was, like the radical democracy that enabled it, dangerous and unwarranted, and it was rightfully superseded by New Comedy, which was a superior form for abandoning Old's irresponsible abuse. According to the other, Old Comedy used its abuse to fulfill comedy's mission of attacking wrongdoers, and New, with its absence of abuse, is an attenuation. The labels alone can be misleading; to understand the ancient reception of Old Comedy's abuse, we must look to the arguments and theories that underlie the labels.

²² On the history of these questions, see Nesselrath 1990, 1-28.

§1.4. The Present Study

This study focuses on accounts of the genre's nature and development, what roles personal abuse plays in them, and how that abuse was interpreted. Is personal abuse an original feature of comedy, and is it an essential feature? What are the intent and effect of such abuse? Is the story of how personal abuse diminishes and vanishes from comedy a story of comedy's evolution into a superior form or a narrative of decline? This inquiry will prove to be not only an assessment of the types of evaluation made of Old Comedy's personal abuse. Rather, it is also the study of how Old Comedy as a genre came to be constructed in antiquity.

Our analysis is, then, similar in some respects to Nesselrath's 1990 study *Die attische mittlere Komödie*, in which he determines when and how the generic category of Middle Comedy came to be and what its essential features were. But the problems in tracing the development of Old Comedy as a genre are fundamentally different from the problems in tracing Middle Comedy: the latter suffers from being a elusive, amorphous category, and Nesselrath devotes much energy to proving that it existed as a distinctive type of comedy. However, the problem in the study of Old Comedy is that, as we have seen, already in the fifth century, when it was still a living form, it could mean contradictory things to different parties. The analysis of the genre is not, as for Middle Comedy, a process of unearthing what features could have been unique to it. On the contrary, the excavation of the ancient construction of Old Comedy entails tracing centuries of arguments about what Old Comedy's unique features meant for the genre and what effects they had; chief among these is personal abuse.

For Aristophanes' freedom of speech and vicious abuse were affecting for his later readers, few of whom could enjoy that same lack of restraint. Even when the targets of his abuse were long dead and in many cases forgotten—both now and in antiquity, some individuals were

only known through the abuse Aristophanes heaps upon them—the fact that this abuse was directed publicly and by name in the theater against real individuals must have seemed quite significant. For a reader in late antiquity, the Cleonymus whom Aristophanes abuses in several plays for cowardice, and about whom only a little is known beyond the abuse in the comedies, would have been about as familiar and real as a character in Plautus or Terence. But the fact that such targets of abuse were once living exerted a kind of fascination, just as fifth century Athens generally did on subsequent generations.

It has always seemed both surprising and telling to me that, if the numbers of fragments of the plays on papyrus are any guide, the *Knights* was a particularly popular play among later readers. It is famous for being a sustained attack on Cleon, who is represented in the play as a deceitful slave. But the *Knights* was not one of the three plays, the so-called Byzantine triad, on which Byzantine scholarship concentrated. These were the *Clouds*, attractive because Socrates appears in it, the *Frogs*, of interest because Aeschylus and Euripides feature as characters, and the *Wealth*, to which the Byzantine scholars may have been drawn because it prefigured New Comedy.²³ But there are more fragments of the *Knights* on papyri than of these three plays; indeed, there are more fragments of the *Knights* on papyri than any of Aristophanes' other comedies.²⁴ And while Cleon's analog in the play is called Cleon only once,²⁵ it was well known that the entirety of the play was a vehicle for abusing him: one late tradition, which must be using the play itself to construct history, claims that no actor was courageous enough to play the part for fear of retribution from Cleon, and therefore Aristophanes played it himself.²⁶ This, in

²³ On Aristophanes as a transitional figure in comedy's history see §3.6.

²⁴ Trojahn 2002, 148, tabulates the Aristophanic papyri in a convenient fashion.

²⁵ *Knights* 976.

²⁶ This tradition must be based on an inference from *Knights* 230-3, in which another slave (usually identified with Demosthenes) says that the prop makers were too frightened to create a mask in Cleon's likeness for the actor playing him. The *Life of Aristophanes* amplifies this, saying that not only would nobody create a mask but no actor would even play the part: διεχθρεύσας δὲ μάλιστα Κλέωνι τῷ δημαγωγῷ καὶ γράψας κατ' αὐτοῦ τοὺς Ἰππέας, ἐν οἷς

some respects his most viciously abusive play, became a part of a history—or, rather, a mythology—that developed around Old Comedy, Aristophanes, and the abuse of wrongdoers.

In examining these histories and mythologies about personal abuse and Old Comedy, we begin from the earliest and best preserved theory about comedy's development and the role of its personal abuse, Aristotle's. In the second chapter, I examine his model for the evolution of drama in the *Poetics*. While Aristotle traces the origins of comedy to personal abuse, it is personal abuse of a very specific kind: the abuse is only among the poets themselves and does not target third parties. I suggest that his theory of poetry admits only limited types of personal abuse (but, notably, it does not exclude abuse on the whole). For Aristotle, Old Comedy's purported civic engagement and mockery of wrongdoers were not original or central features of comedy.

In the third chapter, I turn to theories of comedy current in the third century. None of these survives in full, but I reconstruct them from fragments and from their use by later authors. The most important of these is Eratosthenes', the third chief librarian at Alexandria and one of antiquity's most important scholars. These theories deviate importantly from Aristotle's, particularly in how they describe the relationship between comedy and tragedy. However, I argue that they also derive comedy from unserious abuse at religious festivals. Here, too, comedy and its personal abuse were not originally corrective and did not attack third parties.

While Aristotle's theory is the best preserved and the most familiar to modern readers, Eratosthenes' and the related theories from the third century may have been more influential in antiquity. In the next chapter, I explore theories about the origin of comedy and the nature of its abuse at Rome. These, too, survive only in secondary sources—the poets and grammarians who used or reported parts of the theories—but they probably derived from the Roman scholar Varro,

διελέγχει αὐτοῦ τὰς κλοπὰς καὶ τὸ τυραννικόν, οὐδενὸς δὲ τῶν σκευοποιῶν τολμήσαντος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ σκευάσαι δι' ὑπερβολὴν φόβου, ἅτε δὴ τυραννικοῦ ὄντος, μηδὲ μὴν ὑποκρίνασθαι τινος τολμῶντος, δι' ἑαυτοῦ ὁ Ἀριστοφάνης ὑπεκρίνατο αὐτοῦ τὸ πρόσωπον μίλτω χρίσας (Koster XXVIII, 11-6).

who, in turn, was probably relying on Eratosthenes and the theories from the third century. But more of Varro's theory can be reconstructed, and the plot thickens as we learn more of the story. Varro seems to have acknowledged that the originally mirthful abuse was at some point directed against members of the community and that it did have serious effects beyond the festival. But, according to Varro, this abuse became irresponsible, dangerous, and destabilizing and had to be curtailed by law. This, we surmise, is why Old Comedy ended.

According to this theory, personal abuse was originally festive and only among performers; when it did attack third parties, it came to have a deleterious effect; and, finally, it was outlawed for the common good. In the fifth chapter, I look more closely at the role of politics in histories of comedy. I argue that according to one body of theory, to which Varro belongs, the emergence of personal abuse against spectators and politicians in comedy is to be connected with the ascendance of a dangerous, irresponsible *demos* that gave the poets license to commit abuse. The attacks on Old Comedy's civic engagement and personal abuse are, therefore, also attacks on democracy and its values, especially free speech. I contrast this with another theory that has a more positive view of democracy and Old Comedy. According to it, comedy emerged from abuse against wrongdoers, was institutionalized in the democracy to defend the *demos*, and came to an end because anti-democratic oligarchs wanted to do wrong with impunity.

Having established that the nature of its personal abuse is a chief question in antiquity about development of comedy, I next look to another genre, satyr play. Only one satyr play from antiquity survives, but, using fragments of others, I demonstrate that, towards the end of the fourth century, satyr play began to feature personal abuse comparable to Old Comedy's. As a result, I suggest, later theorists supposed satyr play to *be* a subcategory of Old Comedy and

incorporated it into their histories of and theories about comedy. Abuse of third parties was a central feature of comedy and could be used to define and track the genre.

In the final chapter, I analyze more comprehensively ancient interpretations of personal abuse in Old Comedy proper. Some theorists, especially during the Second Sophistic when problems of the Greek canon, education, and free speech may have been felt particularly acutely, are critical of Old Comedy's unrestrained abuse, and I show how Dio Chrysostom, Aelius Aristides, and Plutarch attack the idea that comic abuse could be salutary. However, this competed with an interpretation that compared Old Comedy's abuse to the Cynic mode of discourse and excused its vulgarity and viciousness by accepting that it served the good of the audience and the state. This line of reasoning is, I suggest, an important reason why Old Comedy survived.

As is clear from this outline, our sources will be eclectic: much of the material has been lost, and the theories and trends must be reconstructed. One collection of sources, used throughout, deserves particular mention. These are the treatises on comedy, which Koster has assembled in the first fascicle of the first edition of the scholia to Aristophanes. I refer to these treatises by their number in Koster throughout, and I have included an appendix with short summaries of the salient points of the treatises that I use. These texts are quite varied in content and quality. Most are anonymous and probably late, but their authors sometimes preserved very ancient information. As we will see in chapter 3, one of these, Koster III, is singular and quite learned, and it probably draws on Alexandrian scholarship.²⁷ Others are replete with stories like the aforementioned anecdote that Aristophanes himself acted in the *Knights*.²⁸ But the treatises are still invaluable, even if they do not record the facts of the matter. Because they are informed

²⁷ §3.6; cf. §7.2.

²⁸ See especially §5.6 for narratives of this kind.

by inference and their own biases rather than historical facts that have been transmitted, they reveal all the more about the analytical strategies of their authors, their views about personal abuse in comedy, and what Old Comedy was to its ancient readers.

Indeed, it was a history of comedy that recurs in a few of these that originally attracted me to this study. This history, which is really more of a folktale, describes the development of comedy thus: in the old days, if a farmer was wronged, he and his fellows used to gather, paint their faces with lees as a disguise, and assemble outside the house of the wrongdoer. They would lampoon the malefactor before his family and neighbors. Shamed in this fashion, he would avoid doing wrong in the future; for fear of such shame, others would avoid wrong, too. Because this practice was so useful, it was eventually institutionalized by the democracy in the form of comedy.

This story, which will be discussed throughout this study (but especially in chapter 5, where we will also see an inversion of it), supposes that corrective personal abuse is the seed from which comedy grew. It is charming for its naivety and its conviction that comedy was fundamentally a force for social good. But it has a mean edge to it, since it imagines a single kind of laughter at the heart of comedy, laughter as social control. If there is joy to comedy, it is entirely contingent on past wrongdoing and the shame inflicted on wrongdoers. Everything else in comedy—the festivity, the liveliness, the singing and dancing, even the plot and fictional frame—are accretions. It reduces comedy to something purely useful.

This story, at least in the form described above, is late and, I will argue, developed as part of a long-running debate about the nature of comedy and comic abuse. If it proposes an extreme position, a position that may seem not only alien but a little repugnant to any modern admirer of Old Comedy, stripping the genre, as it does, of so many of its other extraordinary attributes, there

are good reasons why this position formed. It developed as a response to constructions of the genre that deny that Old Comedy served the social and political good—constructions that reject Old Comedy's concrete grappling with reality in favor of New and Roman Comedy's more abstract engagement. It responds to arguments that Old Comedy and its abuse had a detrimental effect on society, that they were dangerous, disruptive influences, and that they were instrumental in the decline of the state. As we have said, Old Comedy and its abuse meant different things to different people, and these interpretations built upon and reacted to each other.

However imperfect this folktale is as a history of comedy, and however much it minimizes the artfulness and joy of comedy, I suggest in the final chapters that it is partly because of arguments like those implicit in it that Aristophanes survives. Such thorough-going defenses of his abuse, a feature that proved so controversial and unique to Old Comedy, perhaps offered some license for its viciousness and vulgarity and are reasons why Aristophanes could be used in schools—and, consequently, continued to be read, copied, and preserved unto today. This study, therefore, concerns not only what comedy was in antiquity but also how Old Comedy survived and came to be what it is for us. Even if such interpretations seem to discount the beauty, liveliness, and joy of Aristophanic poetry, we owe them a debt.

Chapter 2

The Low Road: Mimesis, Personal Abuse, and Comedy in Aristotle's History of Drama

§2.1. Introduction

In the beginning of his 1974 article on the subject, Carnes Lord could already say that treating Aristotle's history of poetry in the *Poetics* had become practically indefensible.¹ By treating this topic, we may seem to be driving our chariot down the same broad road as so many others; but, by restricting our discussion to our narrow interests, we may introduce some novelty. Our treatment will not really be interested in the historicity of Aristotle's history of drama, as so many studies are,² but in the role and nature of personal abuse in its history of comedy.

A curiosity of Aristotle's account in the *Poetics* is that he professes ignorance about the evolutionary stages of comedy: unlike tragedy, he says, those were not recorded.³ And yet he is able to give not one but two antecedents to comedy—(a) lampoons and (b) phallic songs—over the course of two different, but connected, histories.⁴ By locating the origins of comedy in the lampoon, Aristotle accepts that comedy's antecedents had personal abuse as their main business. But Aristotle has a very specific and very peculiar idea about the nature of that personal abuse, and that has received little attention. As we will see, Aristotle's system in the first account is rather self-contained: poetry evolves not due to external factors, but due to the ingenuity of the

¹ Lord 1974, 195.

² E.g., Pickard-Cambridge 1962, 94-7, 133-4; Else 1965; Lord 1974; Seaford 1976; Winkler 1990; Rusten 2006; Depew 2007.

³ *Poetics* 5.1449a37-1449b1: αἱ μὲν οὖν τῆς τραγωδίας μεταβάσεις καὶ δι' ὧν ἐγένοντο οὐ λελήθασιν, ἡ δὲ κωμῳδία διὰ τὸ μὴ σπουδάζεσθαι ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔλαθεν.

⁴ For an elegant illustration of these, see Rusten 2006, 40.

poets, and he describes the personal abuse at the origins of comedy as being reciprocal only among the poets themselves. For Aristotle, personal abuse may be an original and central feature of comedy's antecedent forms, but it is not the unrestrained abuse of politicians and other spectators that would feature so prominently in descriptions of Old Comedy. Aristotle strongly delimits the abuse at comedy's origins, and, as we shall see, he also restricts the kinds of abuse that are appropriate for comedy itself.

In what follows, I will firstly describe the stages of Aristotle's history of drama and identify the attributes whose evolution he is tracking. The evolution of poetry that he describes is an evolution toward a more perfect kind of mimesis that achieves the appropriate effect of comedy,⁵ and I will next describe the features of that more perfect kind of mimesis. I will go on to show that Aristotle puts reciprocal abuse at the beginnings of comedy and has it evolving into the kinds of comic abuse that fit his system: the abuse among poets prefigures the abuse among actors in comedy. But I will also suggest that, despite what has sometimes been claimed on the basis of passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics*⁶ and the *Politics*,⁷ some forms of personal abuse involving spectators are compatible with his theories of poetry.⁸ While Aristotle excludes personal abuse from being a central feature of comedy for Aristotle, nothing precludes certain kinds of personal abuse from being ancillary features.

⁵ On interpretations of Aristotle's comic catharsis, see Golden 1984; Janko 1984, 143-51; Watson 2012, 152-7, 179-82.

⁶ *EN* 6.8.1128a20-31. This passage is used to argue that Aristotle disapproved of Old Comedy's personal abuse by, e.g., Lucas 1968, 68; Ussher 1977, 71; Halliwell 1987, 87 (cf. Halliwell 1986, 273-4). In this passage, Aristotle distinguishes between the abusiveness of the older comedy (*αισχρολογία*) and the innuendo (*ὕπνοια*) of the new with regard to their decency (*εὐσχημοσύνη*); but he is discussing here the appropriate humor for social discourse, not what is appropriate for the stage.

⁷ *Pol.* 7.17.1336b3-23, which is used by Else 1957, 187-8, to argue that Aristotle generally rejected abuse in Old Comedy. Here, Aristotle recommends legislation against abusive and shameful language (*αισχρολογία*)—but he specifically gives allowance for raillery (*τῶθασμός*) at certain religious festivals, and the only prohibition that the proposed law places on comedy is that it ought not be viewed by children. On the reality of such legislation, see Halliwell 1991 (with pp. 68-70 on these passages in particular).

⁸ See Heath 1989*a*, 344-5, who argues against using these passages as evidence for Aristotle's views on personal abuse; cf. Heath 1987, 26-7.

§2.2. Aristotle's History of Drama in the Poetics Book 1

In what follows, I lay out Aristotle's history of drama in the *Poetics*, which begins from the causes of poetry and concludes with the culmination of poetry's evolution, comedy and tragedy. What follows is not a translation of the history, but an attempt to divide it into a sequence of discrete points; my division here is similar to Rotstein 2010.⁹

1. The Philosophical Account: Praise and Blame, Epic and Iambus

A. 4.1448b20-24: Mimesis, like harmony and rhythm, is natural to humans; therefore, from the beginning those who were especially naturally gifted at these things gradually advanced poetry and produced it from improvisations.

B. 4.1448b24-27: Poetry was separated into two categories according to the poets' characters.¹⁰ The loftier poets (σεμνότεροι) represented fine actions of fine men (καλὰς πράξεις); the baser poets (εὐτελέστεροι) represented the actions of base men (φάυλων). The loftier poets composed hymns (ὕμνους) and encomia (ἐγκώμια); the baser poets first composed lampoons (ψόγους).

C. 4.1448b28-1448b33: Of the poems of the baser category, there were probably many before Homer, but none are known. They can only be named starting from Homer, such as his *Margites* and poems of such a kind. In these poems, the iambic meter emerged because it fit them, and for this reason it is now called iambic: in this meter they used to lampoon one another (ιάμβιζον ἀλλήλους). Some of the poets of old became iambic poets, and some became epic poets.

D. 4.1448b34-1449a2: But Homer produced serious material (τὰ σπουδαῖα) as well as indicated the form (σχῆμα) of comedy: he composed not lampoon (ψόγον), but dramatically rendered (δραματοποίησας) the laughable (τὸ γελοῖον). The *Margites* is the analog to comedy, as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are to tragedy.

E. 4.1449a2-6: After comedy and tragedy had been glimpsed, poets took up each type according to their own characters: some became comic poets instead of iambic, and some became tragic poets instead of epic. This was because the forms (σχήματα) of comedy and tragedy were greater and conferred more honor than the previous genres.

⁹ Rotstein 2010, 76-7.

¹⁰ *Poetics* 4.1448b24 reads διεσπᾶσθη δὲ κατὰ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἥθη ἢ ποιήσις. Else 1957, 136-7, is of the view that the division is according to *poetry's* character, rather than its poets, though Lucas 1968 *ad loc.* takes it in the latter sense. The latter makes rather more sense given that in what immediately precedes and follows the focus is on the abilities and characters of the poets themselves and how those attributes affect the development and classification of poetry (thus Lord 1974, 197 n. 5). That being said, the difference is unimportant: the whole point is that the character of the poetry directly corresponds to the character of the poet.

2. The Historical Account: The Dithyramb and Phallic Songs

A. 4.1449a9-14: Tragedy emerged from the leaders of the dithyramb, comedy from the leaders of the phallic songs. They were both originally improvisatory and grew gradually as the poets advanced them.

B. 4.1449a14-28: Tragedy went through many changes before attaining its nature. Aeschylus changed the number of actors from one to two, lessened the role of the chorus, and had the dialog be chief in importance. Sophocles added a third actor and scene painting. Its greatness (μέγεθος) also changed. It originally had small plots and laughable speech, but, at a late point, it became lofty (σεμνά) after changing from the satyric (διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν). The meter changed to the iambic from the tetrameter, which had been in use when the poetry was satyric and had more dancing, but tragedy's nature found its meter when its language emerged: for the iambic is a meter especially fit for speech. Its number of episodes changed too.

C. 5.1449a32-1449b5: Comedy is a representation of those who are baser (μίμησις φαυλοτέρων), though not in every badness (κακία). The laughable is part of the shameful (for the laughable is an error and a cause of shame that is not painful or ruinous, as the comic mask is shameful and twisted without pain). While the advancements in tragedy and through whom they occurred have been recorded, the development of comedy was forgotten because it was not serious. The archon only gave comedy a chorus at a late date; until then, its performers were volunteers. Its poets are recorded only after it already had some of its forms (σχήματά τινα). Who gave it masks, prologues, its number of actors, and such things is unknown.

D. 5.1449b5-1449b9: Composing plots (τὸ δὲ μύθους ποιεῖν) first came from Sicily. Of the comic poets in Athens, Crates first abandoned the iambic form (ἀφέμενος τῆς iamβικῆς ιδέας) and began to compose stories and plots (λόγοι καὶ μῦθοι) in a generalizing fashion (καθόλου).

§2.3. The Modes of Analysis

The first account gives a history that tracks the development of the poetic genres, proceeding from the first cause of poetry through the intermediate forms to the genres' ultimate forms in tragedy and comedy. The second account begins with a restatement of an important point in the first: 1A gives improvisation as the initial means by which talented individuals produced and advanced poetry. Yet, in 2A, Aristotle not only gives a second, hitherto unmentioned, antecedent for tragedy and comedy—this time the dithyramb and the phallic

songs¹¹—but he also says once again that these relied on improvisation, returning to the first engine of poetic development mentioned at the beginning of the first account.¹² The second version seems to begin a new narrative by returning to impromptu performance and adducing new precursors for drama. As Rotstein has argued, these two accounts seem to rely on two different modes of analysis.¹³ The first, which is called here the philosophical account, has a particularly theoretical bent; it draws stark dichotomies that are complicated by observations made elsewhere in the *Poetics*, makes no mention of externals such as, for example, politics or geography on the development of poetry, and does not name the poets who originated the genres it discusses.¹⁴ The second, which is called here the historical account, seems to turn more fully to the *realia* to which Aristotle has more direct access and mentions, for example, poets who added to, but did not invent, their genres. As we will see, this historical mode does not obviously parallel the philosophical one.

In 1A, Aristotle begins his history of poetry from an argument about probability and human nature: mimesis is a natural feature of humanity, and this causes gifted humans to produce poetry. This claim that mimesis is intrinsic to humans goes back to the very beginning of ch. 4, before the history of the poetic genres properly begins, where Aristotle justifies the centrality of mimesis to the discussion of poetry:

¹¹ The thesis of Leonhardt 1991 is that the traditional interpretation is mistaken and these antecedents are related chiastically, i.e., that tragedy derives from phallic songs and comedy from the dithyramb. This claim is to my knowledge nowhere accepted; for refutations see Seaford 1993 and Patzer 1995.

¹² On the importance of improvisation in this account, see Winkler 1990.

¹³ Rotstein 2010, 74-88. Rotstein regards the first account as using a "Theoretical or Deductive Approach" and the second as using an "Empirical or Inductive Approach."

¹⁴ On this point, see below. That Aristotle would use such a methodology ought not surprise us: as his differentiation between history and poetry (cited below) makes clear, the poet—like the philosopher—is interested in the truth of things, not how contingent events play out. Cf. Halliwell 1986, 93-4.

εοίκασι δὲ γεννηῆσαι μὲν ὅλως τὴν ποιητικὴν αἰτίαι δύο τινὲς καὶ αὗται φυσικαί. τό τε γὰρ μιμεῖσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παιδῶν ἐστί, καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρουσι τῶν ἄλλων ζώων, ὅτι μιμητικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ τὰς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας, καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντα.

It is probable that about two causes generate poetry on the whole, and these are natural. For mimesis is inborn to humans from childhood, and they differ from other creatures in this: that humans are the most mimetic creature and learn in the first place through mimesis, and all humans delight in representations.¹⁵

The whole initial discussion is contingent, then, on an argument from probability.¹⁶

Aristotle's argument proceeds by asserting that, given the premise that humans are naturally imitative and enjoy representation, certain gifted humans would produce and advance poetry gradually through improvisation.¹⁷ This is the point at which Aristotle's theory about the characters of poets is significant. It is the apparatus by which he differentiates the lines of poetic progress at 1B, where he describes two types of poets who write two kinds of poetry.

The worse types (εὐτελέστεροι) write about the base actions of base men (τῶν φαύλων); their productions are lampoons (ψόγοι). The loftier types (σεμνότεροι) write about the fine actions of fine men (τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων); these he calls hymns or encomia. This distinction is one point at which the highly schematized nature of Aristotle's analysis becomes clear: he is shaving off the fringe cases, which he apparently regards as

¹⁵ *Poetics* 4.1448b4-9. This, too, is a problematic passage: what exactly the two αἰτίαι are is unclear. If they are both contained in the second sentence, they are (a) the natural imitativeness of humans and (b) the enjoyment humans take from representation (thus Halliwell 1986, 70-1). However, these two points seem to be practically the same (that humans are imitative and enjoy representation), and some commentators look later in ch. 4 for a second cause, the main contender being in 4.1448b22, the human propensity for harmony and rhythm (see, e.g., Else 1957, 127-134; Lucas 1968 *ad* 1448b22). Winkler 1990, however, offers a third candidate for the second cause, "the specific giftedness of certain individuals who are naturally talented in singing, dancing, and verbal performance" (308). As Winkler admits, however, his own two αἰτίαι are not wholly distinct either, for they amount to (a) the natural imitativeness of all humans and (b) the particular talent of some humans at representation. Of course, Aristotle blurs the two causes from the start: they are, after all, called δύο τινές. All translations are mine unless stated.

¹⁶ Cf. Else 1957, 126: "Ἐοίκασι has a deceptively empirical look; what it really represents is theory, not observation."

¹⁷ On the theoretical importance of gradualism in Aristotle's discussion, see Winkler 1990.

unproductive in the history. For earlier in the *Poetics*, when discussing the objects of mimesis at 2.1448a1-18, Aristotle has briefly alluded to a third category:

ἐπεὶ δὲ μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας, ἀνάγκη δὲ τούτους ἢ σπουδαίους ἢ φαύλους εἶναι (τὰ γὰρ ἦθη σχεδὸν ἀεὶ τούτοις ἀκολουθεῖ μόνοις, κακία γὰρ καὶ ἀρετῇ τὰ ἦθη διαφέρουσι πάντες), ἥτοι βελτίονας ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἢ χείρονας ἢ καὶ τοιούτους, ὥσπερ οἱ γραφεῖς.

But since those who represent represent men in action, and since it is necessary that these be either lofty or low (for usually people's characters accord only with these, because all people differ with regard to character in badness and excellence), they must represent men better than us, worse than us, or of such a kind as us, as the painters do.¹⁸

As Lucas notes in his commentary, the category of characters who are like us does not appear elsewhere in the *Poetics*,¹⁹ and Else would have that category deleted.²⁰ But Aristotle provides not only Dionysius as an example from among the painters who produce representations that correspond to those like us, but, more importantly, he gives an example from the epic poets: Cleophon,²¹ he says, produces representations of neither the high nor the low, but those like us (ὁμοίους).²² A final indication that Aristotle's system is not as schematic as the use of it in ch. 4 suggests is his concluding observation in this section on the objects of mimesis, where he describes how comedy and tragedy differ on this point. Here, as in ch. 4, comedy is associated with the representation of worse objects (χείρους) and tragedy with that of the better ones (βελτίους), but he describes this as an inclination or tendency to represent such objects (μιμεῖσθαι βούλεται) rather than as a prescriptive fact determined by the history of the genres.

¹⁸ *Poetics* 2.1448a1-5.

¹⁹ Lucas 1968, *ad* 1448a5.

²⁰ Else 1957, 68-86. See Táran and Gutas 2012, *ad loc.*; as Táran argues, the attempts to emend or excise parts of this passage have no basis.

²¹ Cleophon is usually regarded as a tragic poet, but see Janko 2011, 333-5.

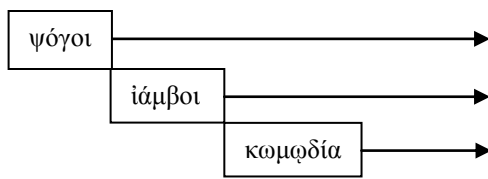
²² See Zanker 2000, 229-230, with n. 11.

Indeed, having just mentioned Cleophon, he could not but allude to exceptions to a two-fold system.²³

And yet Aristotle's history of drama in ch. 4 relies on a two-fold division and excludes that medial case. This bipartite system is how he tracks the development of the different genres of poetry in his philosophical account. The characters of the poets, and consequently the characters of their subjects, remain constant, with the genres of poetry evolving along two parallel lines, with newer forms supplanting, but not eliminating, older forms.²⁴

Figure 2.1. Poets and Objects of Mimesis

Baser poets imitating the base actions of base people



Loftier poets imitating the fine actions of fine people



At the beginning of the *Poetics*, Aristotle proposed three *differentiae* for mimesis by which poetry can be distinguished, and the character of the objects of mimesis (and, correspondingly, the character of the poets) is the second that he describes.²⁵ The first *differentia* is the media of representation, which in ch. 1 he gives as rhythm, language, and harmony

²³ Exceptions to the dichotomy are admitted elsewhere, too. In Aristotle's dialog *On Poets*, these deviations must have been addressed more fully. A speaker in fr. 10 Janko refers to an artist who, according to his inclination, painted handsome and ugly people; fr. 12 Janko refers to poets who attempted to humanize (ἐξάνθρωπιζειν) tragedy. On these passages, see Janko 2011, 336-8, who gives Pauson as a possible identity for the artist. Pauson is described at *Poetics* 2.1448a6 as imitating the χείρους; *On Poets* fr. 14 Janko says that Pauson represented all of his characters in a laughable manner. If Pauson indeed tried to paint both types, he must have portrayed both as laughable (on Pauson, see Janko 2011, 340-2, who describes Pauson as a caricaturist). Cleophon is mentioned again with the tragedian Sthenelus at *Poetics* 22.1458a18-21, where both are said to use common diction that is, as a result, low (ταπεινή). Aristotle does not deny the poets agency: they can produce representations of objects that do not correspond to their character, but these representations are of bad quality inasmuch as they do not achieve their genre's appropriate effect and do not advance poetry (the subject of this account).

²⁴ Iambus continues to co-exist, of course, with comedy (and epic with tragedy), with at least one poet, Hermippus, practicing both forms in the fifth century.

²⁵ *Poetics* 2.1448a1-18.

(ῥυθμός, λόγος, ἄρμονία).²⁶ In that discussion, he mentions that different genres of poetry use different attributes or use all the attributes but emphasize them differently. To illustrate the latter case, he gives the examples of *nomos* and, more importantly for our purposes, dithyramb, tragedy, and comedy. The *nomos* and dithyramb are choral performances that employ rhythm, language, and harmony throughout; tragedy and comedy, in contrast, sometimes use only rhythm and language (in dialog) and sometimes use all three (when the chorus performs).²⁷

We might expect, then, an account of the evolution of the poetic genres and the emergence of comedy and tragedy to allude to such a development. And, in 1A in the scheme above, harmony and rhythm, like mimesis, are said to be natural to humanity. But the media only reappear at 1C, which describes the institution of the meters appropriate for iambic and epic poetry; none of the refinements and additions to the poetic media that are necessary for the emergence of comedy or tragedy is described. For, while it may even be that some iambic poetry was sung and accompanied by music,²⁸ ancient scholarship did not necessarily regard this as characteristic of the genre,²⁹ and such melic iambic poetry would at any rate be far from the use of the media in comedy, where iambic dialog is mixed with melic performance by the chorus in a variety of meters (epic, of course, differs in a similar fashion from tragedy). But such an evolution of the media is not Aristotle's concern here, and the media are left largely

²⁶ *Poetics* 1.1447a13-1447b29.

²⁷ *Poetics* 1.1447b24-1447b29. The media described in this section are ῥυθμός, μέλος, and μέτρος, which are roughly comparable to the media described earlier, ῥυθμός, ἄρμονία, λόγος. Cf. Lucas 1968 *ad* 1447a22 and 1447b27.

²⁸ Rotstein 2010, 229-252, argues that in the Archaic and Classical periods some iambic poetry was sung to musical accompaniment; cf. Bartol 1992, 70-1.

²⁹ Pfeiffer 1968, 182. Certainly Aristotle associates the iambic poetry that he discusses with ordinary speech and not song: this is the reason that it was adopted by the actors (*Poetics* 4.1449a22-9). The more musical elements derive from another source, but this other source is not his concern here.

unexplored.³⁰ The really important *differentia* is the third, the mode of mimesis. This is the feature that Aristotle regards as important here, since it is the one that evolves over the course of the history he presents.

§2.3.1. Mimesis and Modes of Mimesis in the Poetics

As has been said, the first chapter of the *Poetics* establishes these *differentiae*, according to which different genres of poetry are distinguished according to their mimetic media, object, and mode. The mode refers to the manner in which the mimesis is communicated. The passage describing the distinctions within this category is, like so many passages in the *Poetics*, utterly ambiguous, and Aristotle describes either two or three divisions of mode, depending on how directly he is echoing Plato's division of poetry in the *Republic*.³¹ There, Plato divides poetry into three categories: (a) poetry that is narrated; (b) poetry in which the poet sometimes narrates and sometimes speaks in the voice of characters, as in Homer; (c) poetry entirely in the voice of the characters, such as tragedy. For Plato, only the third of these is purely mimetic, and the second is a mixed form.

The three-part division in the *Poetics*, which is supposed to respond to Plato's, would be thus: (a) poetry in which the poet narrates the action by speaking in his own person; (b) poetry in which the poet sometimes narrates the action by speaking in his own person and sometimes by speaking in the voice of characters, i.e., a mix of narration by the poet and dramatic enactment, as in Homer; (c) poetry in which the poet's voice never intrudes, but which is fully dramatic.³²

This three-part division, however, based as it is on shaping the passage in Aristotle to fit Plato, is

³⁰ Nor is the combination of meters (iambic and dactylic) in the *Margites* mentioned; while Aristotle says that κατὰ τὸ ἀρμότιον καὶ τὸ ἰαμβεῖον ἦλθε μέτρον (*Poetics* 4.1448b31-2), he does not explain the peculiarity of a poem having two meters appropriate to it. On the *Margites* and its meters, see below.

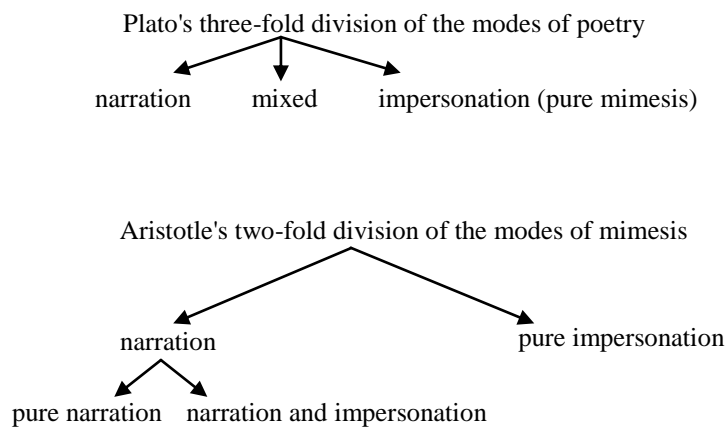
³¹ *Poetics* 3.1448a19-28; cf. the division of poetry in Plato *Rep.* 3.392d.

³² The three-part division is held by, e.g., Halliwell 1987, 77; but see Halliwell 1986, 128 n. 34.

deeply problematic: Plato, as we have said, regards impersonation as the essential feature of mimesis, but Aristotle's system is contingent on the idea that poetry, by its very nature, is mimetic, even if it is in narrative. This is not an imitation of Plato's scheme; it is a new system based on new premises.³³

The two-part division does not echo Plato and seems to conform more fully to Aristotle's system. It describes two modes of mimesis, with what is (b) above, the mixed mode, being a subcategory of (a), the narrative mode. The following figure describes these schemes.

Figure 2.2. Plato's Modes of Poetry and Aristotle's Modes of Mimesis



As Halliwell notes, despite this early groundwork in describing the types of mimesis that differentiate the genres of poetry, there is still a certain instability in how Aristotle treats mimesis.³⁴ Despite dividing mimesis into the narrative and dramatic modes, he clearly regards the latter as the more effective form. This preference is apparent in the first clarification of the term mimesis in the *Poetics*, at the beginning of ch. 2: "those who represent represent men in

³³ On the differences between their schemes, see Woodruff 1992, 78-80; Woodruff 2009, 621. See also the discussions in Else 1957, 90-101 and Lucas 1968 *ad* 1448a20-4 for the different divisions.

³⁴ Halliwell 1986, 109-137.

action."³⁵ This hints that the dramatic mode is the purest form of mimesis, inasmuch as the purest representation of men in action is, of course, men in action, and it excludes out of hand, e.g., descriptive poetry, though such poetry is mimetic in the broad sense that it is representational and could comfortably otherwise fit into the categories Aristotle describes.

More telling, and more important for our purposes, is the variable treatment of epic poetry. Aristotle, of course, regards Homer as the best of the epic poets, and, as we have seen in 1D, Aristotle says that Homer prefigured both comedy (through the *Margites*) and tragedy (through the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*). Homer is given as an example of the mixed mode of narrative mimesis in the passage above, and the point is that Homer's superiority is in part because he is an epic poet who incorporated impersonation into the narrative mode.³⁶ Aristotle compares Homer to the other epic poets in the following fashion:

Ὅμηρος δὲ ἄλλα τε πολλὰ ἄξιος ἐπαινεῖσθαι καὶ δὴ καὶ ὅτι μόνος τῶν ποιητῶν οὐκ ἄγνοεῖ ὁ δεῖ ποιεῖν αὐτόν. αὐτόν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν ἐλάχιστα λέγειν· οὐ γὰρ ἔστι κατὰ ταῦτα μιμητής. οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι αὐτοὶ μὲν δι' ὅλου ἀγωνίζονται, μιμοῦνται δὲ ὀλίγα καὶ ὀλιγάκις·

Homer is worthy of praise for a great number of reasons, and especially because he alone of the [sc. epic] poets knew what he ought to do. For the poet himself ought to speak least: for when he does these things, he is **not engaging in mimesis**. The other poets themselves take part through the most of their composition, and they **engage in mimesis in a few places and rarely**.³⁷

This seems to hark back to the Platonic system, rather than to his own, and Lucas notes here that Aristotle has switched to a "restricted sense" of mimesis.³⁸ Given Aristotle's system, whereby poetry is necessarily mimetic, it seems to be oxymoronic to speak of poets and poetry as being unmimetic. Aristotle may have had a "faint recollection of Plato's teaching" and

³⁵ *Poetics* 2.1448a1: μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας.

³⁶ For a useful digest of the treatment of mimesis in epic and Homer in the *Poetics*, see Halliwell 1986, 128-9.

³⁷ *Poetics* 24.1460a5-9.

³⁸ Lucas 1968 *ad* 1460a8.

"unconsciously echoed" it;³⁹ that the other epic poets are not mimetic must be an overstatement. But the point is clear: the dramatic mode is superior to the narrative mode, as tragedy is superior to epic. Homer's excellence in part is due to the very fact that his poetry approaches drama, and this is what differentiates him from his fellow epic poets.

A second idea emerges over the course of Aristotle's discussion that leads to a narrower, more restricted sense of mimesis, and this one is not an attribute of poetry's form but of its content. As we have said, in ch. 2, Aristotle clarifies mimesis as a representation of people in action. In explaining the *differentia* of the objects of mimesis, he describes those people as being better, worse, or similar, but the nature of the action associated with these objects of mimesis—i.e., the plot ordering their activities—only becomes clear over the course of the *Poetics*.

Aristotle's conception of poetic mimesis proves not to be generally representational of any human action; rather, the action should be governed by probability. In a well-known passage, Aristotle describes the difference between poetry and history thus:

φανερὸν δὲ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων καὶ ὅτι οὐ τὸ τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τοῦτο ποιητοῦ ἔργον ἐστίν, ἀλλ' οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον. ὁ γὰρ ἱστορικὸς καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς οὐ τῶ ἢ ἔμμετρα λέγειν ἢ ἄμμετρα διαφέρουσιν (εἶη γὰρ ἂν τὰ Ἡροδότου εἰς μέτρα τεθῆναι καὶ οὐδὲν ἦττον ἂν εἶη ἱστορία τις μετὰ μέτρου ἢ ἄνευ μέτρων)· ἀλλὰ τούτῳ διαφέρει, τῶ τὸν μὲν τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο.

From what has been said, it is clear as well that the job of the poet is not saying what happened, but what sort of things could happen and are possible according to what is likely to happen or must happen. For the historian and the poet differ not in speaking in verse or prose (for the works of Herodotus could be put into verse, and it would no less be a history with meter than without meter). But they differ in this regard: the historian says what happened, but the poet says what sort of things could happen.⁴⁰

³⁹ Woodruff 2009, 621.

⁴⁰ *Poetics* 9.1451a36-1451b5. Cf. Halliwell 1986, 132-6, who notes also the especial relevance of the passage at *Poetics* 25.1460b8-11, that the poet must represent either (a) the sort of things that existed or exist, (b) the sort of things that are reported to exist or seem to exist, or (c) the sort of things that ought to be, the third category of which vindicates poetry from merely being a representation of the reality that is readily accessible and claims for it a place in representing less easily accessible truths.

Aristotle's sense of mimesis can be rather more technical and narrow than the *differentiae* of the genres of poetry in the first few chapters of the *Poetics* suggest. We can adduce, then, the following senses of mimesis in mimetic poetry:

- (a) A broad sense of mimesis as the representation of men in action, including poetry that is wholly narrated by its poet and poetry that represents particulars.
- (b) A more effective kind of mimesis that ought to have two attributes: (i) a fully dramatic mode; and (ii) action whose causes are determined by probability or necessity rather than actuality or contingency.

We must be quick to add a caveat to this, however: the requirement for plausibility is established by way of Aristotle's discussion of epic and tragedy. We must suppose that there will be rather more leeway in the case of comedy, where the unexpected or nonsensical can be a means of producing laughter.⁴¹ Even in the case of tragedy, he acknowledges that there may be characters whose behavior is consistently inconsistent,⁴² and to this type may belong the majority of comic characters. But while there is some allowance for inconsistency and violations of probability or necessity in comedy, some degree of plausibility must still be desirable for this second category of mimesis. There must be a baseline, after all, to violate. This second category, with its two attributes fulfilled, is preferred by Aristotle and is the acme of poetry. It is precisely poetry's movement from the first sense of mimesis towards the second sense that the account of the history of comedy and drama in ch. 4 charts.

§2.4. ψόγος and its Successors

We have seen that the philosophical account in *Poetics* ch. 4 begins with talented people producing two types of poetry. The baser people produce compositions called ψόγοι in which

⁴¹ See §7.2.

⁴² *Poetics* 15.1454a27.

they represent baser persons, and the loftier people produce poetry called ὕμνοι and ἐγκώμια in which they represent fine persons (i.e., praise of the gods and men, respectively). Praise (ἔπαινος) and blame (ψόγος) are also rhetorical categories that, in the case of oratory, Aristotle regards as subdivisions of epideictic speech;⁴³ he gives the aim (τέλος) of such speech as conferring honor or shame on the subject.⁴⁴ Poetic ψόγοι, ὕμνοι, and ἐγκώμια presumably have such aims too, and a passage from the *Laws*, in which Plato constructs a festival at which such poetry is recited, helps us conceive of them more fully:

νικητήρια δὲ καὶ ἀριστεῖα ἐκάστοισι τούτων δεῖ διανέμειν, ἐγκώμια τε καὶ ψόγους ποιεῖν ἀλλήλοις, ὁποῖός τις ἂν ἕκαστος γίγνηται κατὰ τε τοὺς ἀγῶνας ἐν παντί τε αὖ τῷ βίῳ, τὸν τε ἄριστον δοκοῦντα εἶναι κοσμοῦντας καὶ τὸν μὴ ψέγοντας.

They must distribute trophies and prizes for each of these [sc. mock battles], and they must compose ἐγκώμια and ψόγοι for each other about how each of them is at the contests and moreover in his life as a whole, honoring him who seems to be best and directing ψόγοι against him who is not.⁴⁵

In the first stage of the *Poetics*, too, the poetic ψόγοι and ὕμνοι/ἐγκώμια under consideration refer to compositions designed to confer blame and praise on their subjects. They are rather vague and amorphous types.⁴⁶ Indeed, for their part, Plato's versions are not necessarily even harmonious, though he dictates that they are to be sung all the same (τὰ τῶν τοιούτων ἀδέσθω ποιήματα, ἐὰν καὶ μὴ μουσικὰ πεφύκη).⁴⁷

Likewise, in Aristotle, these forms have not yet hit upon their appropriate meters; iambic and epic poetry have not emerged. That Aristotle is vague about them is unsurprising. While he

⁴³ *Rhet.* 1.3.1358b12-3: ἐπιδεικτικῶ δὲ τὸ μὲν ἔπαινος τὸ δὲ ψόγος.

⁴⁴ *Rhet.* 1.3.1358b27-9: τοῖς δ' ἔπαινοῦσιν καὶ ψέγουσιν [sc. τέλος] τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν.

⁴⁵ *Laws* 829c2-5. It is clear from what follows that Plato has poetic compositions in mind, as he refers to the composers as ποιηταί and their products as ποιήματα.

⁴⁶ For a fuller study of the nature of and variations on these categories, see Rotstein 2010, 88-97.

⁴⁷ *Laws* 829d3-4.

supposes that they existed and presumes that there were many, he admits his ignorance about them in their earliest and least defined state:

τῶν μὲν οὖν πρὸ Ὁμήρου οὐδενὸς ἔχομεν εἰπεῖν τοιοῦτον ποίημα, εἰκὸς δὲ εἶναι πολλούς.

We cannot name such a poem [i.e., a ψόγος] of any poet who preceded Homer, but there were probably many poets.⁴⁸

The poems of this earliest type may be unavailable to Aristotle because of their improvised nature. But the ψόγος must be more than first person raillery, since it is mimetic in the broad sense; they are, after all, produced after the genesis of poetry by poets⁴⁹ and must themselves be poems, but they are neither dramatic nor do they use the causal structure associated with the more effective kind of mimesis. Indeed, in this latter regard, they are closer to history than poetry. Their subject is the character and actions of particular individuals, and, by virtue of being publicly performed, they confer blame on their particular subjects.⁵⁰

The developments that follow are described in an especially problematic passage:

⁴⁸ *Poetics* 4.1448b28-29.

⁴⁹ More precisely, after talented individuals have produced poetry and advanced it and after poetry has split into two categories based on the character of the individual. Else is a bit too dismissive of these original poets when he writes: "It would follow that the original 'lowlifes,' the makers of ψόγοι, were not poets but plain people, mocking and flouting each other" (Else 1957, 139). His point is that these original poets performed improvisations and had not yet become iambic poets; but Aristotle does tell us that these were particularly talented individuals, and it would be precisely these (along with their counterparts among the lofty poets) who would advance poetry.

⁵⁰ However, the representation of particulars is still mimetic, and can still be mimetic poetry, even if it is not mimetic in narrow sense, *pace* Else 1957, 46, who says that they would "barely be mimetic." Cf. Halliwell 1986, 276 n. 36; Heath 1989a, 349; Janko 2011, 235-6, (revising Janko 1984, 61, 69, 250); Rotstein 2010, 70-1. As Heath 1989a, 350, notes restricting mimetic poetry to only non-historical characters and subjects precludes, e.g., poetry about the gods and heroes from being mimetic. Generalized plots are indeed the important thing, though clearly much mimetic poetry falls short of this.

ἀπὸ δὲ Ὅμηρου ἀρξαμένοις ἔστιν, οἷον ἐκείνου ὁ Μαργίτης καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. ἐν οἷς κατὰ τὸ ἀρμόττον καὶ τὸ ἰαμβεῖον ἦλθε μέτρον—διὸ καὶ ἰαμβεῖον καλεῖται νῦν, ὅτι ἐν τῷ μέτρῳ τούτῳ ἰάμβιζον ἀλλήλους. καὶ ἐγένοντο τῶν παλαιῶν οἱ μὲν ἥρωικῶν οἱ δὲ ἰάμβων ποιηταί. ὥσπερ δὲ καὶ τὰ σπουδαῖα μάλιστα ποιητῆς Ὅμηρος ἦν (μόνος γὰρ οὐχ ὅτι εὖ ἀλλὰ καὶ μιμήσεις δραματικὰς ἐποίησεν), οὕτως καὶ τὸ τῆς κωμωδίας σχῆμα πρῶτος ὑπέδειξεν, οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δραματοποιήσας· ὁ γὰρ Μαργίτης ἀνάλογον ἔχει, ὥσπερ <ή>⁵¹ Ἰλιάς καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια πρὸς τὰς τραγωδίας, οὕτω καὶ οὗτος πρὸς τὰς κωμωδίας.

But we can [sc. name ψόγοι] if we begin from Homer, for example his *Margites* and poems of that sort. In these, the iambic meter also emerged according to what was suitable—for this reason, it is also called iambic now, because in this meter they used to lampoon [i.e., compose iambic poetry about] each other. And, of the poets of old, some became poets of epic poetry and some became poets of iambic poetry. But, just as Homer especially was a poet of serious matters (for he alone composed not only other things well but also composed dramatic representations), thus, too, he first outlined the form of comedy, since he composed⁵² not a ψόγος but a dramatic rendition of the laughable: for as the *Margites* is analogous to comedy, so the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are to tragedy.⁵³

A central difficulty is the relation among the ψόγοι, the *Margites*, and other iambic poetry. The connection between the ψόγοι and iambic poetry is the least problematic. Iambic poetry is a development of the earliest type of ψόγος: rather than using an incidental meter or even being unmusical but still sung, as Plato's ψόγοι were, such poetry has hit upon its appropriate meter, the iambic, and, accordingly, iambic poets have emerged. As Rotstein suggests, the ψόγος here is best conceived as a broad category of types of poems that are united in their aim of conferring blame.⁵⁴ In this regard, iambic poetry is a type of ψόγος and a refinement on the earliest type of ψόγος.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Added by Bywater.

⁵² Vahlen 1885, 104 (followed by Heath 1989a, 346) notes that ποιήσας must be understood here.

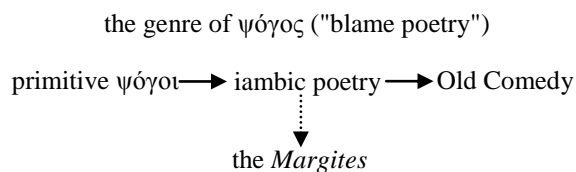
⁵³ *Poetics* 4.1448b30-1449a2.

⁵⁴ Rotstein 2010, 96-7.

⁵⁵ My treatment of the relationship between iambic poetry and ψόγος admittedly simplifies the problem of to what extent ψόγος and iambus are co-extensive. In the view of West 1974, 22-39, poems belonging to the category of iambus were regularly ψόγοι, and, when iambic meters, e.g., the iambic trimeter, are used for poetry that was not invective, such poetry is not a type of iambus. In Bowie's view (Bowie 2001; Bowie 2002) iambus was a looser category that embraced a variety of subjects, but iambus of the ψόγος variety was prominent enough to characterize the genre (for a concise summary of these views, see Bowie 2001, 6; for a survey of attempts to define the genre and its attributes, see Rotstein 2010, 16-24). However, these problems with iambus are unimportant for our purposes: the salient thing is that Aristotle's account clearly regards iambus as a direct relation to ψόγος and as a genre that is originally characterized by mockery.

Where the *Margites* fits is the primary difficulty. Aristotle seems to regard it as (a) the earliest specimen related to ψόγος poetry that he can name and (b) either comparable to or an instance of iambic poetry. Yet later in the passage he says that Homer produced not a ψόγος but a dramatic rendition of the laughable (οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δραματοποιήσας). Attempts have been made to liberate the *Margites* from the strange position of being connected to the ψόγοι while not really a ψόγος and of being classed among iambic poetry but not really being a lampoon.⁵⁶ But if we take the text as it stands and interpret it naturally, the *Margites* occupies just such a liminal position. For while Lucas tries to distance it from ψόγος and iambus by referencing other genres and instances of comic poetry, e.g., burlesque poetry and the *Batrachomyomachia*,⁵⁷ such variations do not enter into this account: rather, it charts only two types, the low writing poetry in the category of ψόγος and the lofty writing in the category of praise poetry, with only the singular Homer writing in both. The *Margites* must be in some capacity both descended from ψόγος and a form of iambus.

Figure 2.3. ψόγος as a genre and the development of its forms



⁵⁶ Vahlen 1914, 12, essentially regards the sentence τῶν μὲν οὖν πρὸ Ὁμήρου οὐδενὸς ἔχομεν εἰπεῖν τοιοῦτον ποίημα, εἰκὸς δὲ εἶναι πολλοῦς, ἀπὸ δὲ Ὁμήρου ἀρξάμενοις ἔστιν, οἷον ἐκείνου ὁ Μαργίτης καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα as a parenthesis, with the subsequent ἐν οἷς ... picking up from the preceding discussion of ψόγοι. The problem with this is, as Else 1957, 138, and Lucas 1968 *ad* 1448b28 note, that τοιοῦτον ποίημα must refer to that form of poetry. Else 1957, 137-42, transposes these lines to later in the text.

⁵⁷ Lucas 1986 *ad* 1448b30.

§2.4.1. Iambus and Its Modes of Mimesis

As we have said, iambus appears here as a more sophisticated form of that earlier type of ψόγος. It is more sophisticated in that it has a set meter, the iambic trimeter, and has poets who specialize in it, the iambic poets, but the object of the lampoons remains the same, base characters, corresponding to the baseness of the poets' own character. This was hinted at by the point that the poets' targets are people like themselves, but, with the advent of iambic poetry, a central feature of Aristotle's account becomes clear: the lampooning of the poets is directed against each other (ιάμβιζον ἀλλήλους).⁵⁸ The mockery is mutual; they are their own material. Indeed, for the earliest type of improvised ψόγος, we are to imagine, as Else does,⁵⁹ a situation akin to Horace's description of Fescennine verses: rustic, impromptu, reciprocal abuse.⁶⁰ These abusive verses were probably attached to a festal occasion, as Fescennine verses were according to Horace, as probably the ὕμνοι and ἐγκώμια were, and as Plato's construction has them.

But the delimitation of iambic abuse to only the reciprocal is rather surprising; while, as we will see in later chapters, reciprocal abuse is a recurrent feature of the earliest stage of abuse in histories of comedy, the histories also sometimes describe a subsequent stage in which the performers abuse not only each other but also third parties. Aristotle, however, leaves out such an intermediate stage and draws a direct line of continuity from this form of iambic abuse to Old Comedy. That Aristotle would restrict it to reciprocal abuse here is especially startling because the abuse of the iambic poet *par excellence*, Archilochus, whose name is conspicuously absent from the account,⁶¹ is not directed against other poets, nor, for that matter, was Hipponax's

⁵⁸ On the complex of meanings in the term ιαμβίζειν, see Rotstein 2010, 100: "[W]e can infer that for Aristotle ιαμβίζειν covers the cluster σκώπτειν (mock), γλευάζειν (joke), λοιδορεῖν (abuse), αἰσχρολογεῖν (use shameful, i.e. obscene language), κακολογεῖν (speak ill of), ψέγειν (abuse, slander)."

⁵⁹ Else 1957, 139-40.

⁶⁰ On which see §4.2.3.

⁶¹ On this silence about Archilochus, see n. 64.

abuse. There is no indication that their most famous targets—Lycambes and his daughters for Archilochus and Bupalus for Hipponax—were themselves iambic poets.

One important reason for delimiting the abuse in this fashion is that, as we have noted, this first account is more philosophical than historical: it excludes the contingent events that may have influenced poetry's development in favor of how, given the natural course of things, poetry had to develop.⁶² As Else says, the account considers the development of poetry from the inside;⁶³ the historical account, with its explanation of which poets added what elements and when, is a more external version.⁶⁴ In this philosophical version, poetry develops within itself, and abuse of third parties has no place. Even so, ψόγος and iambus have a parallel in the antecedent to comedy given in the historical account, improvised performances by the leaders of the phallic songs (2A). Aristotle has nothing to say there about the nature of the humor and abuse in these phallic songs, but evidence from another source points to their kinship with ψόγος and iambus. Semus of Delos, an antiquarian from perhaps the third century BC preserved in

⁶² Indeed, *Poetics* ch. 4 begins by asserting that the causes of poetry are natural (φυσικαί), and the first account begins by reiterating that representation, harmony, and rhythm exist by nature for us. On the importance of human nature in the account see Winkler 1990.

⁶³ Else 1957, 147.

⁶⁴ On Aristotle's silence about Archilochus even here, see Else 1957, 148-9; Lord 1974, 203-4; Rotstein 2010, 102-4. The consensus is that Archilochus is excluded in favor of (a) a history of poetry that is centered on Homer and (b) a history of iambus that distances it from the personal abuse associated with Archilochus (and, for that matter, the pre-iambic ψόγος). Thespis and Susarion, the supposed inventors of tragedy and comedy respectively, are also very surprising omissions, especially because Aristotle surely knew of them. Susarion appears in Aristotle *On Poets* fr. 32 Janko, as well as in the Parian Chronicle, which dates to 264 and probably used Peripatetic sources (on this and related accounts see §3.4). Cf. Else 1957, 112-3. As for Thespis, D.L. 5.92 says that Heraclides of Pontus (a contemporary of Aristotle) is reported to have written tragedies and ascribed them to Thespis. Thespis also appears in the Parian Marble, and Aristotle's student Chamaeleon is said to have written a work *On Thespis* (cited at *Suda* s.v. οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον). Aristotle leaves out of ch. 4, therefore, three poets elsewhere credited with originating three of the four types of poetry he focuses on: Archilochus (for Archilochus as the inventor of abusive iambic poetry, see Horace *Ars Poetica* 79), Thespis, and Susarion. Homer is mentioned instead of Archilochus, it is true, but, *pace* Lord 1974, 203-4, Aristotle does not assert that Homer invented iambic poetry, but only that the *Margites* is the first poem of that type that Aristotle knows (thus Else 1957, 143). By leaving out these inventors and emphasizing such poetry's origins in human nature, their contingent nature is effaced: rather than owing their origins to the genius of singular individuals (to whom Else 1965 argues that tragedy, at least, does owe its origins), they are the product of a natural process. Other than Homer, poets are named only for their accretion to the forms, e.g., Aeschylus adding a second actor for tragedy or Crates finally abandoning the iambic spirit. These inventors of genres would have been discussed in Aristotle's *On Poets*, probably in the first book; see Janko 2011, 363-71.

Athenaeus, describes three apparently related performances.⁶⁵ He first discusses the αὐτοκάβδαλοι, extemporaneous performers who were crowned in ivy; later, he says, they and their poems were called iambi. Secondly, he describes performers called the ἰθύφαλλοι, who wore garlands and masks representing drunkards and invoked Dionysus in song. Finally, he describes the φαλλοφόροι, who, after singing an invocation of Dionysus, run up to audience members and abuse whomever they liked (προστρέχοντες ἐτώθαζον οὐς ἂν προέλοιντο).⁶⁶ But despite the prominence of abuse of third parties in iambus and its attestation in at least one type of phallic song, reciprocal abuse is the only kind mentioned in Aristotle's account.

The key to understanding Aristotle's conception of iambus, personal abuse, and the development of comedy is the *Margites*, the only instance of iambus Aristotle mentions and the apex of the genre. How the *Margites* is differentiated from other iambus will tell us more about how we are to conceive of such poetry, its connection to comedy, and the nature of personal abuse.

The claim that with the *Margites* Homer prefigured comedy by producing not a typical ψόγος but a dramatic rendition of the laughable (οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δραματοποιήσας) is not exactly a straightforward dismissal of personal abuse in comedy. Rather, it consists of two claims about Homer's innovations on iambic poetry, one in form and one in content. Formally, one of the primary directions of evolution is, as we have seen, from the narrative mode to the dramatic, and a main point of the contrast is between composing a typical ψόγος and composing a dramatic rendition. Homer is excellent because he is a proto-dramatist both in epic and iambus; this is to say that the mimetic mode of the *Margites* is implicitly compared to the poems of other

⁶⁵ *FGrH* 396 F 24 (=Ath. 14, 622a-d). On the relevance of this passage for the development of comedy, see Pickard-Cambridge 1962, 132-62; Rusten 2006, 39-40. On the relation of these to iambus, see West 1974, 23; Gerber 1997 31-51; Rotstein 2010, 269-72.

⁶⁶ On the implications of the word τωθασμός, see Rusten 1977.

iambicists in just the same way that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were explicitly compared the poems of other epic poets in the passage cited above.⁶⁷ As we saw, Aristotle criticized the other epic poets for speaking in their own voice too often, and thereby generally failing to attain one attribute of his preferred mode of mimesis, the dramatic. This is not to claim that the other iambic poets (like the other epic poets) only used the narrative mode. We can imagine or adduce iambic poetry of both types, and Old Comedy's mode and its style of abuse, as we shall see, seem to have more in common with these than with the *Margites*. The types are:

(a) Invective that is narrated in the poet's voice. No example of purely narrated iambic poetry survives; however, on the importance of narrative in iambus see Bowie 2001. The most primitive type of ψογός may have taken this form, if, as the passage of Plato cited above says, these ψογοί were merely descriptions of "how each of them are at the contests and moreover in his life as a whole."⁶⁸

(ii) Invective mixing narrative in the poet's voice with speeches in the voices of characters (i.e., the mixed mode). Aristotle gives the *Margites* as the paradigmatic case, but it is not singular for doing so. Archilochus fr. 23W mixes direct speech in Archilochus' person, direct speech in a woman's person, and narrative, as does, e.g., fr. 196aW (the Cologne Epode); the invective achieves its force from having its target speak and do shameful things (as in the case of, e.g., Lamachus in the *Acharnians*).

⁶⁷ *Poetics* 24.1460a5-9. On this comparison, see Else 1957, 148, 150.

⁶⁸ *Laws* 829c2-5, cited above.

(b) Invective that is dramatic. Archilochus fr. 19W and 122W appear to be speeches that are entirely or mostly not in the voice of the poet. Indeed, Aristotle is well aware of this mode of invective, for he describes it elsewhere:

εἰς δὲ τὸ ἦθος, ἐπειδὴ ἔνια περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγειν ἢ ἐπίφθονον ἢ μακρολογίαν ἢ ἀντιλογίαν ἔχει, καὶ περὶ ἄλλου ἢ λοιδορίαν ἢ ἀγροικίαν, ἕτερον χρὴ λέγοντα ποιεῖν ... ὡς Ἀρχίλοχος ψέγει· ποιεῖ γὰρ τὸν πατέρα λέγοντα περὶ τῆς θυγατρὸς ἐν τῷ ἰάμβῳ "χρημάτων δ' ἄελπτον οὐθέν ἐστιν οὐδ' ἀπώμοτον" (122W), καὶ τὸν Χάρωνα τὸν τέκτονα ἐν τῷ ἰάμβῳ οὐ ἀρχὴ "οὐ μοι τὰ Γύγεω" (19W).

When it comes to character, since saying some things about one's self entails causing jealousy, long-windedness, or contradiction, and saying something about another entails abuse or boorishness, it is necessary to make another say them ... as Archilochus does when he lampoons: for he makes the father speak about his daughter in the iambic poem, "Of events nothing is unexpected or sworn impossible ...," and he has the carpenter Charon speak in his iambic poem that begins, "For me the possessions of Gyges do not [sc. matter] ..."⁶⁹

In such cases, part of the force of the invective may derive from how the poem is structured: as in Horace's *Epode 2*, which is probably inspired by Archilochus 19W, the speaker may only have been revealed at the end of the poem.⁷⁰ In the case of 19W, for example, the barb may have been that the speaker refusing such power and wealth is none other than the poor blowhard Charon, who makes a show of pontificating at length and rejecting riches that he could never actually attain (but might accept if he could).

However, despite the variety of mimetic modes in archaic iambus, in Aristotle's view Homer excelled the iambic poets with his *Margites*. Indeed, his silence about Archilochus' role in the development of iambus is quite startling and shows just how important he thought Homer and the *Margites* were: Archilochus is put in the same position as the anonymous non-Homeric epic poets.

⁶⁹ *Rhet.* 1418b23-33.

⁷⁰ Fraenkel 1957, 59-61; Rotstein 2010, 64-5. On Horace's use of Archilochus in *Ep.* 2 and elsewhere, see Harrison 2001.

The second innovation which Aristotle ascribes to the *Margites* is that it was not like the other specimens of ψόγος in content. The other ψόγοι, as we have seen, aim at conferring shame on real individuals by incorporating them into their poetry. Their point is to cause historical individuals pain. While the *Margites* may be a type of ψόγος, its methods and object are different: it is a rendition of τὸ γελοῖον. This does not mean that it does not portray what is shameful, and, indeed, in the broad category of blame poetry ψόγος and the laughable are not mutually exclusive.⁷¹ Rather, for Aristotle, the laughable encompasses a specific kind of object: it is a certain error and shame that is not painful and ruinous (τὸ γὰρ γελοῖόν ἐστιν ἀμάρτημά τι καὶ αἴσχος ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν).⁷² The *Margites* is a very particular kind of ψόγος, then: it has elements of the dramatic; and it treats a kind of shame that is not truly painful or destructive. This sets it up in direct contrast to the unmentioned Archilochus or Hipponax, both of whom are credited with being so abusive to the characters in their poetry that the historical individuals on whom the characters were based killed themselves. The *Margites*, in contrast, like the optimal form of comedy, is not constructed around historical events and harming historical individuals; it is constructed around achieving a certain effect on its audience.

§2.4.2. The *Margites* and Personal Abuse

Despite the importance that Aristotle ascribes to the *Margites* here as a forerunner to comedy, and despite its attribution to Homer in antiquity,⁷³ only a few fragments of the poem

⁷¹ See Heath 1989a.

⁷² *Poet.* 5.1449a35.

⁷³ Beyond the attribution in Aristotle, the *Margites* is also attributed to Homer by [Plato] *Alcibiades* 2.147b. A 12th century commentary on *Nic. Eth.* 6.7.1141a12 by Eustratius says that Aristotle, Archilochus, Cratinus, and Callimachus attribute the poem to Homer. That Archilochus would or could have done so is generally disbelieved (Davison 1968, 80-1; Bossi 1986, 40; West 1999, 376-7; Graziosi 2002, 68-9), though Gostoli 2007 accepts it and, on the basis of Archilochus' supposed attribution to Homer, is willing to put the poem in the 8th century. However, Meineke 1839, 188, suggested that Cratinus ascribed the poem to Homer in his play the *Archilochoi*, and Eustratius or his source has garbled the citation; West 1999, 376-7, supposes that some confusion may have arisen because the

survive and its nature remains enigmatic.⁷⁴ The poem's main character is the titular Margites, whose name means "mad man,"⁷⁵ and testimonia about the poem suggest that it is about the misadventures that result from his lack of common sense: he is the stupidest man of all—ὁ πάντων ἀβελτερώτατος.⁷⁶ The adjective also reflects, of course, his social and ethical qualities, and these are quite in keeping with the kind of poetry to which the *Margites* belongs, representations of low characters and their actions.⁷⁷ He was said to be unable to count past five⁷⁸ and, when he was a young adult, to have had to inquire about whether his mother or father had borne him.⁷⁹ On one occasion, he got his penis stuck in a chamber pot,⁸⁰ and, in the most detailed episode known from the epic, Margites, after getting married, refuses to lie with his wife because he is afraid she will slander him to her mother.⁸¹ His wife and her mother therefore hatch a plan to induce him to consummate the marriage: she claims to have been wounded in her

same fragment is assigned to both Archilochus and the *Margites* (Archilochus fr. 201W and *Margites* fr. 5W; Zenobius, from whom the latter comes, notes that the same line is ascribed to both Archilochus and Homer).

⁷⁴ The fragments are collected by West in *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*; Gostoli 2007 is the most recent text, commentary, and translation. Since these collections, West 2008 has adduced a new potential fragment from Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.8.41-5.

⁷⁵ E.g., Suetonius *Περὶ βλασφημιῶν* 7.31: Μαργίτης: ὁ ἄφρων, ἀπὸ τοῦ μαργαίνειν ὃ ἐστὶ μωραίνειν. His lack of sense may be the primary quality his name highlights, but the adjective μάργος surely reflects on other qualities as well with its extended meanings, i.e., "gluttonous" and "lustful." There may be a joke in that, while his name may imply the latter quality, he is if anything far too reluctant to mate with his wife (see below).

⁷⁶ Hyperides *Pro Lyc.* 6.21.

⁷⁷ Watson 2012, 74-5, supposes that, because Homer wrote poetry in both the lofty and low kinds of poetry, Aristotle is also charting a movement according to which poetry is produced initially from reality (i.e., the poets' own characters) but ultimately from art, and Homer's composition of both types of poetry heralds this change. However, if that were so we would presume that in the final stage, after comedy and tragedy have emerged, iambic poets could take up tragedy or epic poets could take up comedy. On the contrary, at the conclusion of this first account (1E), the poets who had written ψόγος and then iambus transfer their skills to writing comedy, the poets who had written praise poetry and epic transfer their skills to writing tragedy, and no poet participates in both kinds. Homer in this account is singular for writing both types.

⁷⁸ *Suda* s.v. *Μαργίτης*; cf. Polyb. 12.4a.

⁷⁹ Schol. in Aesch. 3.160.14-6; *Suda* s.v. *Μαργίτης*; Tzetzes *Chiliad.* 4.866-70 and 6.595-7; Nicephorus Blemmides ὅποῖον δεῖ εἶναι τὸν βασιλέα 100.11.

⁸⁰ *P. Oxy.* 2309.

⁸¹ This reason is given in Schol. in Aesch. 3.160.16; *Suda* s.v. *Μαργίτης*; Nicephorus Blemmides ὅποῖον δεῖ εἶναι τὸν βασιλέα 100.11. The other sources do not describe his motivation.

nether regions and that the only cure is his penis; thus he has sex with her under the pretext of curing her.⁸²

As we have already said, Aristotle's clearest claim about the *Margites* is that it dramatized the laughable (τὸ γελοῖον) and in this regard it outlined the form of comedy (τὸ τῆς κωμωδίας σχῆμα πρῶτος ὑπέδειξεν). And, as we have also said, the *Margites* was somehow attached to the line of poetry that includes ψόγος and iambus. Indeed, it was composed in an irregular mixture of dactylic hexameters and iambic trimeters.⁸³ This use of the iambic meter, of course, draws the poem into the sphere of iambus, and its treatment of low characters and vulgar actions is fully continuous with this genre of poetry.

Despite our lack of information, we can say for certain that, while other instances of archaic iambus, like the examples above show, more or less used the dramatic mode of mimesis, the *Margites* was superior. It is true that iambus did not conform to Aristotle's aesthetics for other reasons,⁸⁴ but the fact that the *Margites* was of the mixed mode is the feature that he singles out. He is explaining how Homer outlined the form (σχῆμα) of comedy; the internal quality of the plot of comedy and iambus, which he later refers to as the sense or spirit (ιδέα), are treated later when he comes to Crates (2D).⁸⁵ It is true that the *Margites* may have approached Aristotle's ideal plot structure, but that is not where the emphasis falls.

⁸² The episode is recounted thus in Eustathius *in Od.* 1669.48. West 2008 adduces a possible new fragment to the *Margites* which describes in hexameters the vagina in rather periphrastic terms. He proposes (p. 374) that, if indeed the fragment is from the *Margites*, the hero may have consulted an oracle about how to have sex and these hexameters were the response (and Margites would, of course, have misunderstood it). However, while Margites clearly did not understand the mechanics of sexual intercourse, the factor impeding the consummation is not his ignorance but his fear of the bride's mother. If the description is from the *Margites*, it must belong to a context different from that which West suggests.

⁸³ Hephaestion 60.2 and 65.10 Consbruch.

⁸⁴ In particular, iambus does not meet Aristotle's standards of having a plot that has a structure which governed by probability and necessity and is of appropriate scale (Halliwell 1986, 282-5; Heath 1989a; Rotstein 2010, 104-8).

⁸⁵ Else 1957, 144, in fact reads σχήματα instead of σχῆμα (i.e., οὕτως καὶ τὰ τῆς κωμωδίας σχήματα πρῶτος ὑπέδειξεν, οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δραματοποιήσας) precisely on the ground that Homer must have prefigured comedy in two ways, that is, by exhibiting the dramatic mode and by "the substitution of humor for invective or malicious satire." But the latter is described in different terms; it is an ιδέα, not a σχῆμα. On this difference between

We have already seen that the dramatic mode is one of Aristotle's desiderata when he compared the other epic poets to Homer—αὐτὸν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν ἐλάχιστα λέγειν ("For the poet himself ought to speak very little")⁸⁶—and in that context the emphasis is on using speeches in the voice of the characters rather than narrative in the voice of the poet. But this principle has greater ramifications in the case of iambus, where, as in the examples above, the poet is frequently identified with a character in the poem. When such a character gives a speech, it is still mimetic poetry, to be sure, and it is even in the dramatic mode. We might even regard a fully narrated iambic poem, provided the narration is put in the mouth of a character (even if that character claims the identity "Archilochus"), to be technically in the dramatic mode.⁸⁷ But in these cases, the categories are getting confused and are clearly not optimal: the intrusion of the voice of the poet, or of a character who is identified with the poet, is problematic. Indeed, it is unclear whether or to what extent Aristotle would have acknowledged a fictional first-person speaker who is identified with the poet as mimetic.⁸⁸ What Aristotle has in mind is clear from his exemplars, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and from the final stage in his evolution of poetry, comedy and tragedy. It is poetry that is dominated by the voices of characters and their actions; in the case of poetry in the mixed mode, narrative is minimized and is related in a way that foregrounds the actions of the characters without the poet's own *persona* seeming to intrude and influence the course of events and their portrayal.

Given this, we can begin to envision how the *Margites* relates to the other cases of iambus, how its abuse worked, and why Aristotle claims that it prefigured comedy. Lord is very

σχῆμα and ἰδέα, see Lord 1974, 200, who aptly quotes *Metaph.* 1029a4-5: τὴν δὲ μορφοῦν τὸ σχῆμα τῆς ἰδέας ("the shape is the form of the idea").

⁸⁶ *Poetics* 1460a7.

⁸⁷ See Rosen 2007, whose thesis is that "virtually all poets using first-person narratives would at some level construe their methods as mimetic and fictional, and that they worked on the assumption that their ideal audience would understand this" (p. 39 n. 62).

⁸⁸ See Halliwell 1986, 126; Halliwell 1987, 172-4; Clay 1998, 24-8.

much on the right track when he suggests that it is a dramatization of invective, though his emphasis on the transformation from blame poetry to harmlessly amusing poetry is a little misleading.⁸⁹ The historical existence of the characters matters less than the poem's conformity with Aristotle's aesthetic ideals (which are constructed around the aims of the genres of poetry). In this context, the problem is not precisely that the iambic poets were shaming historical targets. As we have said before, the important relationship for Aristotle is between the poetry and the individual processing it, and the pain or pleasure experienced by third parties is incidental: the same requirements govern the treatment of historical characters as govern completely fictional ones.⁹⁰ The other iambic poets were inferior, firstly, because using contemporaries as characters, particularly contemporaries with whom the poet is supposedly involved, is neither conducive to maintaining the dramatic mode appropriately nor to achieving that second desideratum of mimesis, plots—including the actions of characters—structured by probability or necessity; and, secondly, because they inflicted *too much* pain on their characters to produce the experience that Aristotle recommends for comedy. For, while Margites, like Lycambes or Chaeron, may be treated shamefully over the course of the epic, the shame inflicted on him seems to mostly be caused by his own foolishness and, in the end, the poem appears to have had a happy ending, provided it does end with him assuming his duties as husband and head of the household. He does not accidentally mangle his penis, and he does consummate his marriage.

The historicity of individuals matters only inasmuch as using historical individuals—that is to say, identifying characters in poetry with historical individuals—leads to writing about

⁸⁹ Lord 1974, 201-3. On the *Margites* exhibiting a painless form of humor, see Else 1957, 145; Rotstein 2010, 102-4.

⁹⁰ As Heath 1989a, 352-3, argues (*pace* Halliwell 1986, 85), some forms of pain are permissible, e.g., Aristotle says that a double ending like the *Odyssey*, in which the good come to good and the bad to bad, produces a pleasure more appropriate to comedy than tragedy (13.1453a30-36). The reading of this passage in Else 1957, 189, is instructive, for he must struggle to make it apply to both the character *and* the spectator, suggesting that ἀνώδυνον applies to both the spectator and the character but acknowledging that οὐ φθαρτικόν can only apply to the character.

historical events and aiming to affect historical individuals. Historical events are contingent, unlike the plausible events that ought to be poetry's concern, and the poetry's real aim ought to be to bring about a cathartic effect on the spectator.⁹¹ Constructing poetry around historical events and individuals prevents the production of the verisimilitudinous fiction that Aristotle wants poetry to be. In fact, Aristotle recommends the use of historical names when writing some tragedies, for this can lend events plausibility.⁹² His concern has nothing to do with the historicity of characters and the pain that their real analogs may feel, but rather how a play should be optimally constructed to give a spectator the appropriate experience.

The innovations of the *Margites*, then, arise from its more perfect conformity to the more effective mimesis, in particular its more perfect use of the dramatic mode, and because it treats its characters in such a way that it better achieves the desired effect on the spectators. Indeed, Aristotle seems to be describing the *Margites* as a dramatic form of the iambic complex. As we have seen, in Aristotle's account, the iambic complex is not envisioned as an open ended system, with poets abusing unresponsive spectators or even absent parties. On the contrary, it consists of the poets composing iambic poems against each other (ἰάμβιζον ἀλλήλους). The *Margites* seems to have embedded this system into a semi-dramatic frame; the parties involved in the exchange have been limited.

Rather than being, like the other iambus Aristotle describes, a triangular relationship, with two poets abusing each other and a third party spectating, by situating this iambic complex

⁹¹ We might usefully term poetry that is mimetic in the general sense and even partly or wholly dramatic, but that does not attain the second desideratum of mimesis and employ generalized plots, "historical poetry" inasmuch as it, like history, treats more than a single action and is structured by contingent events rather than probability or necessity. Such a category of mimetic poetry is not described in Aristotle's taxonomy in the first book of the *Poetics*, but it is precisely where iambus would fit, and, as we have seen, there are more varieties of mimesis and mimetic poetry implicit in the *Poetics* than Aristotle's taxonomy describes. Indeed, such a category is perhaps hinted at in 23.1459a17-30, where Aristotle criticizes the epic poets who compose poetry that is more like history because it does not treat a single coherent action. In fact, the *Tractatus Coislinianus* delineates just such a type of mimetic poetry; on the *Tractatus* and such poetry, see Watson 2012, 110-24.

⁹² *Poetics* 9.1451b11-21.

into a dramatic frame the relationship is limited to poem and spectator. The poem has become self-contained. This is why Aristotle claims that the earliest abuse was reciprocal and the *Margites* pointed towards comedy. The poets who abuse each other in ψόγος poetry prefigure the characters who abuse each other in the *Margites*. The characters who abuse each other in the *Margites* prefigure the actors who abuse each other in comedy.

It may even be that the *Margites* preserved some of the reciprocal nature of the original mockery: perhaps the iambic sections sometimes included characters exchanging abuse.⁹³ In any case, we may suppose that some form of abuse directed against the characters was still a feature of the poem. It is very much a ψόγος in that it portrays the low actions of a low character, *Margites*, and, by doing so, makes him the object of mockery and shame.⁹⁴ This may seem to make the poem too literally reflect Aristotle's observations about it, but there is a small amount of evidence that point in this direction.

(a) The *Suda* considers the character *Margites* as an object of comic mockery, describing him thus: Μαργίτης· ἀνὴρ ἐπὶ μωρία κωμωδούμενος ("Margites: A man mocked for his stupidity").⁹⁵

(b) John Tzetzes, who admits that he has not read the *Margites*,⁹⁶ describes it as being written *against* the character *Margites*. After explaining that *Margites* was supposedly so foolish that he

⁹³ However, this is mere speculation; the iambic lines that survive reveal little about their general use aside from that they presumably signal a shift into a more farcical mode.

⁹⁴ Thus Lord 1974, 201-3; Rotstein 2010, 102-4.

⁹⁵ *Suda* s.v. Μαργίτης. Cf. *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. μάργος: ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ μάργος γίνεται Μαργίτης ὁ ἀνόητος καὶ ἐπὶ μωρία κωμωδούμενος. It might be objected that these entries are describing what the insult "Margites" means, since his name came to be proverbial for a foolish or knavish person; see especially Aeschines in *Ctesiphon* 160, where Demosthenes is alleged to have called Alexander a *Margites*. But these entries go on to explain why *Margites* in the poem was so foolish and give no indication that they are an explanation for the epithet rather than a short history of the character. The *Suda* in fact has a separate entry for the epithet (Μαργίτης· Αἰσχίνης ἐν τῷ κατὰ Κτησιφῶντος· ἐπωνυμίαν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ Μαργίτην ἔθετο. ἐκάλουν δὲ τοὺς ἀνόητους οὕτως).

⁹⁶ Tzetzes *Exeges. in Iliad* p. 37.

had to inquire whether his father or mother bore him in the womb, Tzetzes says: Ὅμηρος βίβλον ἔγραψεν εἰς τοῦτον τὸν Μαργίτην.⁹⁷

Both of these testimonia express the idea that the poem itself treated Margites as an object of mockery by having him do and say foolish things, and in this regard it is a form of invective. A third and final testimonium suggests that there was some sort of abuse among the characters in the poem as well.

(c) In the best reported episode from the *Margites*, described above, Margites refuses to consummate his marriage; in fact, three sources report that he refuses because he is worried about some form of abuse. A scholiast and the *Suda* say that he is worried that his wife will speak ill of him to her mother if he should have intercourse with her:

δεδιέναι γὰρ ἔλεγε μὴ διαβάλλοι αὐτὸν πρὸς τὴν μητέρα.

For he kept saying that he was afraid that she would slander him to her mother.⁹⁸

The third testimonium reports that he was worried about chastisement (κόλασις) from his mother in law.⁹⁹ Whether the abuser he feared was his wife or his mother in law—and perhaps both sources are accurate, and he fears that his wife will slander him to her mother, and then the latter will criticize him to his face—Margites' fear of abuse is the main motivation for the only action in the poem that is known in much detail.

I have suggested, then, that in the history of poetry in *Poetics* ch. 4, the *Margites* outlines the form of comedy not simply by using the dramatic mode more frequently than other instances

⁹⁷ Tzetzes *Chiliad*. 6.598.

⁹⁸ Schol. in Aeschinem 3.160.16. This episode is described with nearly the same wording in *Suda* s.v. Μαργίτης.

⁹⁹ Nicephorus Blemmides ὁποῖον δεῖ εἶναι τὸν βασιλέα 100.11.

of archaic iambus but by using it more purely, i.e., by maintaining a great distance between the poet and his characters and narrative. We have noted that the *Margites*, rather than being constructed around the aim of causing shame to historical individuals, treated fictional characters, and, as such, it approaches that second desideratum of mimesis, generalized plots.¹⁰⁰ I have also suggested that the *Margites* may have exhibited a form of dramatized personal abuse and that, in Aristotle's accounts of drama's evolution, personal abuse and the infliction of pain in poetry is not absent. Rather, it changes towards what he regards as more appropriate to comedy and is carefully delimited.

§2.5. Aristotle's History of Poetry and Personal Abuse in Old Comedy

We can now list variations on direct personal abuse in Old Comedy and consider where they might fall in Aristotle's evolution of drama.

(a) A character mocks a real person within the frame of the play, i.e., either while talking to himself or another character.

¹⁰⁰ The structure of the plot of the *Margites* is, however, very ambiguous, and it is unclear whether its plot was generalized or just its characters. Significantly, Aristotle says that generalized plots only entered comedy at the hands of Crates under Sicilian influence, but it is not right, as Lord 1974, 202, says, that "Aristotle suggests it had no plot at all." It just does not have a plot structured in such a way that it prefigured the generalized plots of Crates' comedies. Though it is an *argumentum e silentio*, in *Poetics* 8.1451a16-35, when Aristotle praises Homer for composing plots that treat a single action rather than a single character, he mentions the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but not the *Margites*. Perhaps the plot of the *Margites* was like the plots of the *Heracleid* and *Theseid* to which Aristotle objects, that is, plots that follow the life of a single character rather than a single action. For the testimonia and fragments to the *Margites* all seem to relate to his ineptitude at successfully navigating the major stages of life: Eustathius 1669.41 reports that he was born to prosperous parents, and, as we have seen, in his youth he inquires which bore him; a fragment preserved in Aristotle *Nic. Eth.* 6.7.114a15 describes his lack of a trade, for he failed at every skill (πάσης δ' ἡμάρτανε τέχνης), and, as another fragment from [Plato] *Alcibiades* 2.147b indicates, he knew many things, but knew them badly; and, in the best known episode, he must be deceived into consummating his marriage. Of course, this is very indecisive: *Poetics* 9.1451a16-35 treats primarily epic and tragedy, and therefore its silence on the *Margites* is in keeping with this discussion, and the *Odyssey* manages to relate information about the same or similar stages in Odysseus' life without digressing far enough from its single action that it disrupts the poem's unity.

Provided that this character is of the type that would mock such a target, this kind of abuse fully conforms to Aristotle's criteria.¹⁰¹ It is fully dramatic, it is the sort of thing that sort of character would do, and it could even be so incorporated into the plot that it is necessary or probable.¹⁰² That a particular person is meant rather than a general type of character does not matter; it is not a particular that intrudes on the generality of the character or plot. Dicaeopolis' criticisms of the tragedian Theognis, whose plays, he complains, were performed instead of Aeschylus' as he comments on how Athens is lately going to seed,¹⁰³ is well in keeping with his character. Likewise, Strepsiades' complaints to his son about Euripides towards the end of the *Clouds* are consonant with his character, and his distaste for Euripides is in fact a plot point. His preference for the more traditional tragedians and his son's preference for the more new-fangled ones, like Euripides, is both an instance of the discord that the play explores and leads directly to the confrontation between father and son near the end of the play.¹⁰⁴

(b) A character within the frame of the play is identified with, and even given the name of, an historical character and is made to speak and do shameful things.

For example, Lamachus appears as a character in the *Acharnians*, the Paphlagonian (identified with Cleon) in the *Knights*,¹⁰⁵ Socrates in the *Clouds*, and Euripides in the *Acharnians*, *Ecclesiazusae*, and the *Frogs*. This form of mockery is only problematic in Aristotle's scheme if (a) the identification leads to the character speaking and doing things that are too determined by historical actions rather than by the tendencies of that character type, and

¹⁰¹ Thus Heath 1989a, 348-9.

¹⁰² However, as we noted above, Aristotle is fully aware that subverting expectation and even veering into the nonsensical is a means of causing laughter; see §7.2. Therefore, abuse that is not causally motivated or that is even contrary to probability and necessity in terms of both the larger plot and the propensities of the character may not be objectionable under some circumstances.

¹⁰³ *Ach.* 9-12.

¹⁰⁴ *Clouds* 1371-1379.

¹⁰⁵ However, he is identified by name only at *Knights* 973-6.

especially by the demands of a generalized plot; and (b) the character incurs too much pain and ruin.

As we mentioned above, in the case of tragedy, the use of historical names (e.g., of kings and gods) is recommended if it lends credibility to events:¹⁰⁶ according to this view, the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, for example, would not be a recounting of the historical (we might say legendary) events of that drama, but rather its plot was (or ought to have been) first composed according to the rules of generalization. Because the historical Oedipus was involved in events of that sort, naming the protagonist Oedipus lends the events (and characters) a kind of credibility: since such events happened before, it is plausible that they would happen thus in the play.

While Aristotle says in the same passage that comedy uses chance names, and while perhaps chance names are preferable, we might describe some uses of the historical names in comedy in the same way. Naming Dicaeopolis' hawkish opponent in the *Acharnians* after the general Lamachus grants a certain plausibility through familiarity to that character type and his actions, even if the events themselves are complete fictions. That such names would primarily lend credibility to the character type because of the audience's familiarity with the character of Lamachus, rather than with the actions that the character undertakes and that structure the plot (for these have no historical prototype), is perhaps why he does not recommend this.

But this issue becomes much less problematic if, along with Butcher, we accept οὐ (instead of οὐτω) τὰ τυχόντα (as the Arabic indicates) instead at 1451b13,¹⁰⁷ i.e., the comic poets do *not* choose chance names.¹⁰⁸ Lucas is quite right that this gives a weaker antithesis between the chance names of comedy (τὰ τυχόντα ὀνόματα) and the actual names the tragic poets

¹⁰⁶ *Poetics* 9.1451b11-32.

¹⁰⁷ See Táran and Gutas 2012 *ad loc.* for this reading.

¹⁰⁸ Butcher 1911, 376-9.

sometimes takes up (τῶν γενομένων ὀνομάτων).¹⁰⁹ But is there really such an antithesis?

Aristotle is suggesting that both comedy and tragedy ought to use generalized plots and *not* deal in chance and contingencies.

If οὐ is correct, Butcher and Lucas suppose that Aristotle is suggesting the use of names that point to the personality of the character, with the latter giving such examples as Euelpides from the *Birds* ("Mr. Goodhopeson") or Pyrgopolynices from the *Miles Gloriosus* ("Mr. Manykeepconqueror"). Historical names in some cases perform precisely the same function, and the name of Lamachus ("Mr. Reallywarlike") in fact is an instance of both an historical name and a pointed name.¹¹⁰ Such pointed names are quite common in Aristophanes, as a brief survey of a few of the proper names of protagonists of his plays will show, and it would be surprising for Aristotle to ignore these.¹¹¹ That Aristotle gave consideration at least to the comic potential of wordplay with names is clear from the *Rhetoric*, giving as an example the phrase Ἀνάσχετος οὐκ ἀνασχετός ("Mr. Borne can't be borne").¹¹² We might add, too, that the titular character Margites ("mad man") is also a pointed name.

It is hard to imagine that he would wholly reject calculated names that would aid in constructing the comic characters and plots by recommending the use only of chance names. If such pointed, but wholly invented, names are admitted, historical names that perform the same function as they do in tragedy should perhaps be accepted as well. In Aristotle's system, the aim

¹⁰⁹ Lucas 1968, *ad* 1451b13.

¹¹⁰ This is surely the foremost meaning; jokes, especially puns, about Lamachus' bellicosity run throughout the play. Cf. 269-70 (Dikaiopolis speaks of being freed from μαχῶν / καὶ Λαμάχων); 1071 (the messenger cries out ἰὼ πόνοι τε καὶ μάχαι καὶ Λάμαχοι). In *Peace*, there are similar jokes on his name: he is called ἀνὴρ βουλόμενος (1293), and the child who prefers to sing warlike songs instead of peaceful ones proves to be Lamachus' son. However, the name may actually be derived from λαός and mean "Mr. Fighterforthepeople," and both meanings may have coexisted. See Larsen 1946, 93-4.

¹¹¹ Dicaeopolis ("Mr. Justcity") of the *Acharnians*; Strepsiades ("Mr. Justicetwister") of the *Clouds*; Bdelycleon and Philecleon ("Mr. Hatecleon" and "Mr. Lovecleon") of the *Wasps*; Trygaeus ("Mr. Vintner") of the *Peace*; Peisetairos ("Mr. Friendpersuader") of the *Birds*; Lysistrata ("Ms. Armylooser") of the *Lyistrata*; and Praxagora ("Ms. Publication"). On the use of names in Aristophanes, see Russo 1997, 34-7; Ercolani 2006, 17-26.

¹¹² *Rhet.* 3.11.1412b13.

of using such names would not be in having characters with those names do and say shameful things that the historical individuals purportedly did for the purpose of shaming them. As Aristotle says, this is what the iambic poets do, for they compose their poetry about particular individuals and therefore let history determine plot.¹¹³ But if a comedy were composed around a generalized plot, and the name of an historical individual were affixed to add credibility or even humor, it ought not be problematic. Such a use may confer shame on the historical individual, either as an incidental effect or an ancillary aim, but this does not seem to be an issue. The problem is not history or historical individuals *per se*; as we have noted, the gods, heroes, and the myths about them that provide the materials for most tragedies ought to be regarded in this context as historical.¹¹⁴ History and its particulars are only a problem if they interfere with the generation of a generalized plot.

The treatment of the character is the second concern. As we have seen above, Aristotle says that the laughable comprises a shame that is not painful or ruinous. As I have suggested, however, this requirement is true for all characters, and not merely those based on historical individuals. Aristotle's system may be critical of Lamachus' death in the *Acharnians*; but it would be equally critical if Lamachus were a completely fictional character with a fictional name. Nor does Aristotle exclude all forms of pain, for he notes at 1453a30-36 that the ending of the *Odyssey*, in which good come to good and bad to bad, is more appropriate to comedy than tragedy.¹¹⁵ It seems probable that a great deal depends on what engenders that pain and how it is presented rather than just its magnitude.

¹¹³ *Poetics* 9.1451b14-5.

¹¹⁴ See also n. 50 above.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Heath 1989a, 352-3.

(c) A character directly engages with and abuses an audience member, or rather makes a pretense of engaging with and abusing an audience member.

An example of this is appears early in the *Wasps*, in which the slave Xanthias invites the audience to guess what ails his master, Philocleon. He and his fellow slave feign that audience members assume that Philocleon is suffering whatever vice they themselves suffer. For example, they pretend that an audience member named Arynias has responded:

Ξανθίας·
Ἀμυνίας μὲν ὁ Προνάπους φήσ' οὕτοσι
εἶναι φιλόκυβον αὐτόν. ἀλλ' οὐδὲν λέγει.

Σωσίας·
μὰ Δί', ἀλλ' ἀφ' αὐτοῦ τὴν νόσον τεκμαίρεται.

Xanthias: Arynias the son of Pronapes over here says that he [sc. Philocleon] is a gambling addict. But he's wrong.

Sosias: No by Zeus, but he's guessing the sickness based on his own!¹¹⁶

These characters are the type that is predisposed to such mockery, and the incorporation of such historical particulars as these supposed audience members does not interfere with the plot. Rather more unhappy is the form of this engagement with the audience: the characters are acting as if they are not a representation of characters in action, but are really people in action who are standing on the stage and engaging with an audience. This form of abuse enters into precisely that muddled territory that we saw associated with iambus' mimetic mode above, where the distance between representation and reality are collapsed.

(d) The voice of the poet emerges to criticize, either in the first person or through his characters.

¹¹⁶ *Wasps* 74-6.

This most commonly occurs in the *parabasis* when the chorus leader speaks in the voice of the poet, though it certainly can occur elsewhere.¹¹⁷ While Heath may be right to suggest that certain types of digression in drama are unproblematic for Aristotle and that the *parabasis* poses no problem with regard to unity of action,¹¹⁸ this form of criticism does pose a problem with regard to mimesis. The faults associated with it correspond closely those we noted above with iambic poetry, in that it treats particulars rather than generalities and especially that it uses the dramatic mode unsuccessfully. With regard to the latter, at least, in iambus only the *Margites* really excelled, and in Old Comedy only Crates and his followers¹¹⁹ would attain the ideal.

In this context, one feature of the philosophical account seems rather more pointed. We noted above the peculiarity that Aristotle conceived of iambic abuse as happening among the poets themselves, but that this conception accords badly with what their actual practice seems to have been. Nor does it accord with Semus of Delos' descriptions of phallic songs. The abuse of other poets—and the defense of the author from other poets' criticisms—is, however, quite characteristic of the *parabasis*,¹²⁰ the section that suffers from faults that are so similar to iambus, and it may be that Aristotle had this practice in mind when he described that mutual abuse.¹²¹ It is true that the *parabasis* can attack targets who are not poets, but even in the process of doing so other poets are often points of comparison and objects of derision. A section from the *parabasis* in the *Peace* offers an instructive example:

¹¹⁷ Most notably in *Acharnians* 366-84, where the main character speaks as if he were Aristophanes to defend himself and criticize Cleon.

¹¹⁸ Heath 1987, 29-37; Heath 1989b, 46.

¹¹⁹ Chief among these must have been Pherecrates; see Koster III, 12-3 (a treatise discussed in §3.6). On Pherecrates and personal abuse, see Urios-Aparisi 2001.

¹²⁰ On the *parabaseis* of the early plays especially being a kind of self-defense and autobiography, see Hubbard 1991. On the continuity between Old Comedy and iambus, see Degani 1988; Rosen 1988; Degani 1993; Kugelmeier 1996, 163-94; Zanetto 2001; Kantzios 2005, 151-61.

¹²¹ Cornford 1914, 41-8, conceives of the kind of phallic songs discussed above at §2.4.1 as precursors to the *parabasis*. The song of the φαλλοφόροι, in which the performers invoke Dionysus and then speak abuse directly to the audience, is the closest. An interesting similarity in this context is that, in the invocation that Semus of Delos gives as an example, the performers assert its originality; this is of course a recurrent claim that the comic poets make in their *parabaseis* (Cornford 1914, 123 n. 3); see the example from the *Peace* below.

ἄξιος εἶναι φησ' εὐλογίας μεγάλης ὁ διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν.
 πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ τοὺς ἀντιπάλους μόνος ἀνθρώπων κατέπαυσεν
 ἐς τὰ ῥάκια σκώπτοντας ἀεὶ καὶ τοῖς φθειρσὶν πολεμοῦντας,
 τοὺς θ' Ἡρακλέας τοὺς μάπτοντας καὶ τοὺς πεινῶντας ἐκείνους
 ἐξήλασ' ἀτιμώσας πρῶτος, καὶ τοὺς δούλους παρέλυσεν
 τοὺς φεύγοντας κάξαπατῶντας καὶ τυπτομένους ἐπίτηδες,
 οὓς ἐξῆγον κλάοντας ἀεὶ, καὶ τούτους οὐνεκα τουδί,
 ἴν' ὁ σύνδουλος σκώψας αὐτοῦ τὰς πληγὰς εἶτ' ἀνέροιτο,
 'ὦ κακόδαιμον τί τὸ δέριμ' ἔπαθες; μῶν ὕστριχίς εἰσέβαλέν σοι
 ἐς τὰς πλευρὰς πολλῇ στρατιᾷ κάδενδροτόμησε τὸ νῶτον;
 τοιαῦτ' ἀφελὼν κακὰ καὶ φόρτον καὶ βωμολοχεύματ' ἀγεννῆ
 ἐποίησε τέχνην μεγάλην ἡμῖν κάπύργωσ' οἰκοδομήσας
 ἔπεσιν μεγάλοις καὶ διανοίαις καὶ σκώμμασιν οὐκ ἀγοραίοις,
 οὐκ ἰδιώτας ἀνθρωπίσκους κωμῳδῶν οὐδὲ γυναῖκας,
 ἀλλ' Ἡρακλέους ὀργὴν τιν' ἔχων τοῖσι μεγίστοις ἐπεχείρει.
 διαβὰς βυρσῶν ὀσμὰς δεινὰς κάπειλὰς βορβοροθύμους,
 καὶ πρῶτον μὲν μάχομαι πάντων αὐτῶ τῷ καρχαρόδοντι.

Our poet says that that he is worthy of great praise. For, firstly, he alone of men stopped his rival poets from always directing their mockery against rags and making war on lice, and he first disdained and drove off stage those Heracleses who are kneading bread and starving. He also released the slaves who run away, cheat, and are beaten by design, whom they always used to bring out weeping so that a fellow slave could mock his beatings and inquire, "Oh poor fellow, what did you suffer on your skin? Did a whip attack your sides with a huge host and lay waste to your back?" Removing such ills, vulgarity, and ignoble bufoonery, he created a great art for you. He built it up and fortified it with great words, thoughts, and novel mockery by making fun not of private people nor even women, but he, taking on the wrath of Heracles, attacks the mightiest men. Having traversed the terrible smell of leather and his muddy-hearted threats, I first of all men fought the saw-toothed one himself.¹²²

The chorus leader initially claims to speak on behalf of the poet, though, in the last line of the section cited, the speech switches into the first person as if the poet himself were speaking, and the first person persists for the remainder of the speech. The chorus leader/poet mocks rival poets for using hackneyed characters and situations, such as a starving Heracles who bakes bread or runaway slaves who are beaten and mocked by their fellows. But he also criticizes them for mocking petty targets—that is, making war on lice—and he asserts his own superiority not only

¹²² Aristophanes *Peace* 738-54.

on the ground that his poetry is original but also that he attacks really deserving and powerful targets.

The demagogue Cleon is whom he means in particular, and the last two lines of the passage cited, as well as the much of the remainder of the speech, is devoted to heaping abuse on Cleon. Such a speech, even if it mocks third parties, folds such criticism into mockery of other poets, and in this regard it corresponds more closely to Aristotle's description of iambic abuse than the archaic iambic poets themselves do. In any event, this kind of address to the audience is problematic in the same way as both the previous category and iambic poetry, aside from the *Margites*: it not only collapses the dramatic mode but also makes a pretense of being unmimetic.¹²³

§2.6. Conclusion

Aristotle's account, then, does not track a departure in comedy from every form of personal abuse. His history of poetry charts a movement towards what is for him a more effective form of mimesis, and, in consequence, some forms of personal abuse are ultimately excluded. However, I have suggested that some forms of personal abuse that could potentially be painful to third parties—such as the use of the character Lamachus—are not necessarily problematic for the more developed form of comedy. The central issue is not pain to third parties, but achieving the appropriate effect, comic catharsis, in the spectator. As such, Aristotle emphasizes the kind of personal abuse that best fits his system: reciprocal abuse among poets, which, as I have argued, he supposes evolved into dramatic abuse among characters.

¹²³ From Aristotle's point of view, it may *be* unmimetic. The point, however, is moot: whether Aristotle recognized the first person narrator as a character or as the poet himself, his view is that such a form does not achieve the aims of mimesis.

Aristotle's claim, therefore, is not that personal abuse was not an original feature of comedy, or even that comedy ought not to have personal abuse. It is that the kind of personal abuse at the origins of comedy *did not have social or political pretensions* and that personal abuse in the more evolved form of comedy ought to be purely in the service of comedy's aim of catharsis, which may in fact serve the common good, but which does not revolve around shaming targets through personal rebuke. Quite significantly, as we have seen, the personal abuse that actually evolved into comedy was for Aristotle not even directed against third parties, but against the poets themselves. By this line of reasoning, the civically engaged personal abuse that characterizes Old Comedy was not an original or essential feature of comedy; it is a deviation from the abuse of other poets that characterized the predecessors of comedy. Furthermore, much of the abuse in Aristophanes and the other poets of Old Comedy is atavistic, since their plays fail to incorporate the innovations of their predecessor Crates in composing generalized plots and abandoning the iambic form.

Given these points, we are in a position to offer some concluding remarks about the historical account, to which we have referred only rarely, and its bearing on the history of comedy and the role of personal abuse. Its primary contributions to our discussion above are (a) that comedy derived from phallic processions and (b) that Crates abandoned the iambic spirit. Otherwise, we have only alluded to the differences between the philosophical and historical accounts; sometimes, I fear, this may have appeared to be to Aristotle's detriment.

However, in light of the discussion above I suggest that the apparent inconsistencies are less significant than they seem and some of the points can be more or less reconciled. For, as Lord says, we are obligated to presume that Aristotle composed the *Poetics* with at least ordinary

care.¹²⁴ To this we ought to add that we must presume that Aristotle was himself of at least ordinary integrity: if he has omitted Archilochus from his account, it is not *only* to advance Homer at Archilochus' expense, but *also* because he had sound reasons for doing so.¹²⁵ I restrict myself to only two points in the historical account, both of which have some bearing on the origins and development of comedy.

We said at the beginning of this chapter that Aristotle seems to start his history of drama anew and begin a second, more historical account by giving dithyramb and the phallic songs as the antecedents for tragedy and comedy. But the two accounts are not wholly divorced. With regard to comedy, we noted that the phallic songs can be connected, if not really identified with, the ψόγος and iambus of the philosophical account; as for tragedy, as Else saw, the dithyramb is analogous to, or an instance of, the hymns and encomia in the philosophical account.¹²⁶

Winkler, who argues that Aristotle's account is primarily based on theories about natural processes and gradualism driven by improvisation, supposes that Aristotle adduces the dithyramb as the origin because he needs a type of performance that could have been improvised at one point; however, Winkler suggests that this, too, is merely hypothetical because by the fifth century the dithyramb was not extemporaneous.¹²⁷ But there is good evidence that the dithyramb was indeed at one point improvisational, and Aristotle would probably have been aware of this. A famous fragment of Archilochus hints at an improvisatory circumstance when he asserts that,

¹²⁴ Lord 1974, 195-6.

¹²⁵ The real question on this particular point is whether the *Margites* truly was an example of abusive iambus. If the argument above is accepted, then it was—but it was an anachronistically advanced instance. If that conclusion is acceptable, then of course it overshadowed Archilochus' iambus, which followed Homer and succumbed to faults that the *Margites* did not have. The *Margites* would bear the relation to Archilochus' iambic poetry that unrestrainedly abusive Old Comedy would bear to Crates'. These considerations make the omission no less polemical, but do mean that the polemic is not just rhetorical, but rather is also based on theory and fact.

¹²⁶ Else 1957, 154-5; Else 1965, 13-4, 22.

¹²⁷ Winkler 1990, 313-4.

when his wits are blasted with wine, he knows how to lead off the dithyramb,¹²⁸ and the wording here is unmistakably similar to Aristotle's: Archilochus says that he knows how to ἐξάρξαι ... διθύραμβον; Aristotle says that tragedy emerged from τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον.¹²⁹ Some idea of development within the dithyramb, and even perhaps a connection with tragedy, are also not original to Aristotle. Both Arion and Lasos are credited with making significant changes to the form, so much so that each is said to have invented the dithyramb—a proposition that could not literally be true, since Archilochus, who predates both, can lead one.¹³⁰ The changes must include transforming the dithyramb from a procession into a circular chorus and performing pieces practiced and composed beforehand. As for the dithyramb's connection with tragedy, a passage from John the Deacon quotes Solon as crediting Arion with not only inventing the dithyramb but with having some role in the invention of tragedy.¹³¹ This, too, is a tradition of which Aristotle would have been well aware.¹³²

Aristotle did not invent the improvised dithyramb or the connection between the dithyramb and tragedy, then. The real theoretical point structuring this discussion is, as I have suggested, the division of poetry and its directions of evolution based on the characters of the poets and their objects, with lower poets writing lower poetry in one line and higher poets writing higher poetry in the other. This appears as a stronger claim in ch. 4 of the *Poetics* than it does elsewhere; as we have noted, when discussing the mimetic *differentia* of object, he alludes

¹²⁸ Archilochus fr. 120W. Cf. the Mnesiepes inscription (*SEG* 15.517) col. 3, 20, which is badly damaged but says something about Archilochus composing verses extemporaneously ([αὐτο]σχεδιάσ[αι]) and having a chorus perform them; see West 1974, 24-5).

¹²⁹ On this fragment see Else 1965, 11; Csapo and Miller 2007, 13; Hedreen 2007, 186-7. Cf. Aristotle *On Poets* fr. 37d Janko (a fragment J. rates as dubious), with Janko 2011, 500-1.

¹³⁰ On this issue, and on the innovations of Lasos in particular, see D'Angour 1997. For a survey of the problems involved, see Csapo and Miller 2007, 10-12.

¹³¹ Solon fr. 30aW. The traditional reading is that Arion invented the δρᾶμα of tragedy, but this is an impossible claim; Janko 2011, 367, 496, suggests the emendation σχῆμα.

¹³² Indeed, Janko 2011, 367, 496, argues that, given that John the Deacon cites Aristotle concerning comedy and tragedy immediately before citing Solon, Aristotle himself may be the ultimate source the information about Solon's views and gives the passage as *On Poets* fr. 36c.

to a third category, people like ourselves.¹³³ Likewise, while the dithyramb appears here as an instance of the higher type that develops into another instance of the high type, tragedy, the dithyramb is not so restricted in ch. 2. After explaining that objects of mimesis differ in being better, worse, or the same, he seems to suggest that the dithyramb can accommodate all of these categories, giving the dithyramps of Timotheus and Philoxenus as examples, with the former seeming to represent the loftier type and the latter the lower type.¹³⁴

While these are representatives of the new kind of dithyramb, and Lucas is skeptical that there were many instances of the lower type, in its earlier form the dithyramb seems to have had just such a double character. Archilochus' claim that in his drunkenness he can lead the dithyramb certainly hints at a dithyramb of a lower character; a fragmented part of the Mnesiepes inscription seems to describe him instructing a song to a chorus (διδάξαντα)—i.e., he is composing and producing poetry that is not iambus—but its spectators found it "too iambic" (ιαμβικώτερο[ν]), meaning, we must suppose, too obscene and abusive.¹³⁵ The latter account may describe precisely the kind of dithyramb that Archilochus boasted he could lead.¹³⁶ To this point we may add that a scholiast to Pindar reports that the most serious element (τὸ σπουδαιότατον) of the dithyramb appeared originally in Corinth, hinting at an unserious element and an unserious dithyramb that perhaps resembled in some important ways the phallic processions.¹³⁷ The movement to a more serious dithyramb may be associated with the dithyramb's transformation from more or less improvised performances in a procession—indeed,

¹³³ See §2.3.

¹³⁴ Lucas *ad* 1448a14.

¹³⁵ *SEG* 15.517 col. 3.

¹³⁶ As was argued by Privitera 1988; cf. Hedreen 2007, 185-7.

¹³⁷ Schol. in Olymp. 13.26b: αἱ τοῦ Διονύσου διθυράμβων ἐν Κορίνθῳ ἐφάνησαν χάριτες, τουτέστι τὸ σπουδαιότατον τῶν Διονύσου διθυράμβων ἐν Κορίνθῳ πρῶτον ἐφάνη. On these innovations within the dithyramb, and especially on these unserious elements, see Hedreen 2007, 185-7; Steinhart 2007, 209-12.

a κῶμος, as the dithyramb could still occasionally be called in classical Athens¹³⁸—into more stationary performances with pre-composed and practiced scripts.

But despite the reality of the unserious dithyramb and its connection with the κῶμος, and despite Aristotle's one-time acknowledgment of it, he does not let it enter into his calculations in the development of poetry in ch. 4. The claim is not that low poets do not ever try to write high poetry, that high poets do not ever write low poetry, or that there is no such thing as poetry that is neither high nor low. Aristotle does not, in the face of the reality, claim that such scenarios do not exist, nor does he really deny the agency to the poets of deciding what to write.¹³⁹ Rather, there is an implicit idea that such forms exist, but, for the history of poetry, and for poetry's evolution into its optimal forms, they simply do not, or rather should not, matter. As we will see in the next chapters, however, this claim simply could not persist in the face of such evidence. Given the dithyramb's origin in improvisational, unserious performances, and given its origins as a κῶμος, some theorists subsequent to Aristotle would ascribe a common origin to comedy and tragedy. And in their view, as I will argue, the form antecedent to *both* comedy and tragedy may be characterized by reciprocal personal abuse.

Yet, despite Aristotle's view that the development of poetry can be tracked along two distinct lines, the higher and lower, he does acknowledge deviant forms. This is of particular significance with regard to the satyric performances that he says preceded tragedy, which had small plots and laughable language.¹⁴⁰ The claim that a higher form (tragedy) emerged from

¹³⁸ This is in all probability an archaism based on the dithyramb's origins as a procession. See Csapo and Slater 1995, 41; Csapo and Miller 2007, 12; Steinhart 2007, 211-12. On the connection that this implies between dithyramb and comedy, see §3.5.

¹³⁹ See n. 23 above.

¹⁴⁰ *Poetics* 4.1449a19-21: ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν ὄψε ἀπεσεμνύθη. While this seems to contradict his argument about the characters of the poets corresponding to their poetry, it does not contradict the aforementioned claim that tragedy emerged from the dithyramb. See Seaford 1976; Seaford 1984, 10-6; and Seaford 1994, 267-8, which argue that the processional and surely unserious early dithyramb from which tragedy derived included the performance of satyrs.

what appears to be a lower form (the satyric) is such a stark inconsistency in Aristotle's account that Else argued that it was an interpolation into the text by a pro-Dorian member of the Lyceum, perhaps Chamaeleon.¹⁴¹ But Aristotle had to address this inconsistency: no contemporary reader would have been unaware of the third form of drama, satyr play, a semi-comic form written by tragedians as part of the tetralogy.¹⁴² In describing the connection between satyr play and tragedy, he did not even necessarily have to make the former the predecessor of the latter; on the contrary, some accounts seem to make satyr play an addition to tragedy rather than an antecedent.¹⁴³ But he *does* include it; the inclusion of this inconsistency speaks to his credibility and indicates that—whether or not the claim is true—that he believed it. But perhaps we are to suppose that this earlier, unserious form is an accidental or contingent development within the otherwise lofty line of poetry. Certainly Aristotle has nothing to say of satyr play proper, which, if the views of his student Chamaeleon are any indication, he might have regarded as a concession to the vulgar tastes of the public rather than a natural and productive stage of poetic development.¹⁴⁴

In light of our discussion above, however, we may note two points that closely connect satyr play to tragedy in Aristotle's system and distance it from comedy. We have seen that the lower line seems to have lagged behind the loftier line in attaining the desiderata of the preferred sense of mimesis. Even after the *Margites* and Crates, Old Comedy would not consistently exhibit the more purely dramatic mode, generalized plots, and limited personal abuse. It is hazardous to say much about satyr play because so little evidence is available, but in these

¹⁴¹Philodemus this inconsistency and used it as an objection against Aristotle (Philodemus *On Poems* 4 col. 111 Janko). See, too, Else 1957, 166-79; Else 1965, 13-4, 22-5.

¹⁴² On the comic elements in this form and in particular personal abuse, see chapter 6.

¹⁴³ As the account in Horace *Ars Poetica* 200-4 appears to have it, as well as Zenobius 5.40. Seaford 1976 and Seaford 1984, 10-6, argue, however, that the tradition that satyr play proceeded tragedy can be reconciled with the view that the satyric preceded it.

¹⁴⁴ *Suda* s.v. οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον. We must wonder, too, what emotions were appropriate for satyr play to arouse and whether, like its relations tragedy and epic (cf. Janko 1984, 136-7), it pursued some form of catharsis.

regards it seems to have been much closer to tragedy than comedy. It would only admit clear references to historical contemporaries in the last third of the fourth century; from around this period, too, is the only likely instance of a character addressing the audience in a satyr play.¹⁴⁵

The plots may not have been generalized in Aristotle's strictest sense, with the actions firstly determined by probability and necessity and then specifics such as character names added. But, as Else notes, we can presume that no tragedy was ever constructed from the ground up in this fashion either.¹⁴⁶ However, the plot of the Classical satyr play perhaps rather lent itself to being constructed around probability and necessity. As one much quoted passage describes the premise of satyr play, "The recipe is as follows: take one myth, add satyrs, observe the result."¹⁴⁷ The plot is based on inserting satyrs into an existing story and exploring the humorous ramifications.¹⁴⁸ It is, therefore, perhaps less amenable to the capriciousness and contingency that the Old Comic plot could admit: the whole point is to let the natural consequences of the addition of satyrs play out, though post-classical satyr play abandons this premise.

To speak of post-classical satyr play in the context of Aristotle's system, it travels against the current by incorporating historical characters and events as plot points. It evolves (or degenerates) in the direction of *ψόγος* and iambus towards contingent plots—and concomitantly towards more direct personal abuse. And, precisely because of this, it enters more into the orbit of Old Comedy than of tragedy, as we will see in chapter 6.

¹⁴⁵ Astydamas II fr. 4. On audience address in satyr play, see Bain 1975, 23-5.

¹⁴⁶ Else 1957, 309.

¹⁴⁷ Lissarrague 1990, 236.

¹⁴⁸ On the plot of satyr play, see Sutton 1980*a*, 137; Lissarrague 1990, 228-36.

Chapter 3

Punishing the Goat: Eratosthenes and Related Accounts of the History of Comedy and Personal Abuse

§3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I showed that Aristotle traced the origins of comedy to personal mockery, but it was mockery of a very particular sort: according to his system, the poets mocked only each other, and politicians and other spectators were spared. It was this limited form of mockery that was important for comedy's evolution, and, while his system does allow some forms of personal abuse, it precludes abuse from being central to comedy. I concluded by discussing the ideological concerns that structured Aristotle's history of drama and argued that, despite his compartmentalization of comedy and tragedy into two segregated lines, he proposes that they both emerged from mirthful, unserious celebrations for Dionysus that had no engagement with civic life.

In this chapter, I will discuss a series of closely related theories about the origins of comedy and the original nature of comic abuse that emerged in the third century, probably in Athens. These theories, unfortunately, are more elusive than Aristotle's. They, and the theories discussed in the next chapter, are systematically articulated in no extant source. But they were quite influential, and, as we will see, fragments and hints about them survive in the Greek and Roman poets, historians, philosophers, and grammarians who used them. Particularly important from this point onwards will be the collection of mostly anonymous treatises on comedy compiled by Koster. The treatises sometimes preserve information that is ancient and very

erudite (see especially Koster III, discussed below at §3.6), but some of them can be rather tendentious or fanciful (see some of the treatises discussed at §5.6). An appendix at the end of this study summarizes the salient points of these treatises.

The most influential of the lost theories about the origins of comedy was proposed by the third century poet, scholar, and scientist Eratosthenes. Eratosthenes' most extensive work on comedy was probably his twelve-book treatise on Old Comedy, Περὶ τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμωδίας,¹ though the fragments preserve no information about his views on the origin of comedy and its nature in its early stages.² They discuss etymologies, accentuations, the meanings of words,³ allusions,⁴ the correct authorship of plays⁵ and the dates and circumstances of their production,⁶ and problems in the chronology of the careers of certain playwrights.⁷ However, the scanty fragments of his lost epic the *Erigone* are more suggestive of Eratosthenes' views on the origins of comedy and the role of personal abuse.

After reconstructing Eratosthenes' view on the origin of comedy and the nature of early comedy's humor, I will set it alongside other accounts of the same, especially the version represented by the roughly contemporary Parian Chronicle, a document inscribed on a marble on the island of Paros that described important events in the history of Greece, including the development of drama. As we will see, these histories differ fundamentally from Aristotle's because they postulate a unified origin for comedy and tragedy. But, like the Aristotelian model,

¹ For the title, see fr. 1-8 Bagordo.

² For Eratosthenes' work on comedy, see Bagordo 1998, 37-40; Nesselrath 1990, 176-8; and Geus 2002, 291-301.

³ Fr. 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11 Bagordo. Fr. 23 Bagordo, said to be from a work called the Σκευογραφικός, may be a subsection of the Περὶ τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμωδίας. It perhaps identified and described σκευή in particular; see Nesselrath 1990, 87-8, and Bagordo 1998, 40, on this work.

⁴ Fr. 6, 15 Bagordo. It seems questionable to me whether fr. 13 Bagordo ought to be assigned to this work. See Bagordo, 38-9, with n. 40.

⁵ Fr. 5, 17 Bagordo.

⁶ Fr. 10, 14 Bagordo.

⁷ Fr. 12, 18 Bagordo.

they seem to have held that comedy emerged from mirthful, unserious celebration and that personal abuse was originally reciprocal in nature.

§3.2. The *Erigone* and its *Aition* of Comedy

Eratosthenes probably mentioned the myth of Erigone and the aitiologies connected to it on three occasions: in his *Hermes*, which dealt with various astronomical matters; his *Katasterismoi*, which examined the origins of constellations; and his *Erigone*, his most extensive treatment of the subject.⁸ Eratosthenes' version of the myth took the following form:⁹ Icarius gave hospitality to Dionysus when the god visited Attica, and the god in return gave him wine and taught him viticulture. While cultivating the vine, a goat entered the vineyard and ate some of the vines; Icarius captured the goat, killed it, turned it into a wineskin and filled it with wine,¹⁰ and invited his friends to dance on it (this dance is called the *askoliasmos*). Later, Icarius left his daughter, Erigone, at home and traveled through Attica to present wine to the shepherds. Some of these drank themselves into unconsciousness; the others supposed that Icarius had poisoned their fellows and killed him. Once those who had fallen asleep awoke, Icarius' killers fled to Ceos. Maera, Icarius' dog, had accompanied him; it returned to Erigone and led her to Icarius' corpse, whereupon Erigone hanged herself. Erigone was set among the stars as the constellation Virgo, Icarius as Bootes, and Maera as Sirius. Afterwards, the maidens of Attica began to hang themselves without cause, and to propitiate Erigone the Athenians instituted a yearly festival, the

⁸ The most recent and most thorough work on the *Erigone* is Rosokoki 1995, who collects the testimonia and fragments and provides a commentary. For additional discussions of Eratosthenes' *Erigone* and its contents, see Maass 1921, 59-138; Solmsen 1947; Merkelbach 1963 (translated as Merkbach and West 1964); Geus 2002, 100-110.

⁹ The following is based primarily on the account in Hyg. *De astr.* 2.4.149-223, which cites Eratosthenes as a source. On this and the other sources, see Rosokoki 1995, 60-4. As Maass saw, Hyginus' account actually includes a second, non-Eratosthenic version that Hyginus distinguishes from the Eratosthenic one; see Maass 1921, 60-2.

¹⁰ Hyginus 2.35.156 says that the skin was filled with air (*vento plenum*), but this cannot be right. Rosokoki 1995, 85, suggests emending *vento* to *vino*.

Aiora, at which maidens would play on swings to commemorate and harmlessly imitate her hanging.¹¹

The poem gives several *aitia*, one of the most important for our purposes being the origins of the *askoliasmos*. The description of its institution is probably one of the few lines from the *Erigone* that survive, though the text in the manuscripts is confused and has undergone a few different emendations. The line probably reads:

Ἰκαριοῖ, τόθι πρῶτα περὶ τράγον¹² ὠρχήσαντο ...

In Icaria, where they for the first time danced about the goat ...¹³

Though this fragment may appear too short and problematic to tell us much about the *Erigone*, it confirms that the *Erigone* described the *askoliasmos* and alluded to the invention of drama—and, perhaps, to tragedy and comedy specifically.

This description is similar to some of the material that we will see in the next chapter, and in particular to Vergil *Georgics* 2, which certainly describes the origins of drama. Vergil explains that the goat damages the vines and is for this reason sacrificed to Dionysus. As part of the sacrifice, the Athenians established the *askoliasmos*¹⁴ and eventually invented drama.¹⁵ Despite

¹¹ Merkelbach and West 1964, 177-184, retell the story in a rather more lively fashion. The summary in Rosokoki 1995, 13, is too brief and omits both the episode with the goat and the *askoliasmos*.

¹² περὶ τράγον is given in the manuscripts as περιστραγον (Montepessulanus H334 [9th c.]), περιστρατον (Reginensis Lat. 1260 [9th century] and Monacensis Clm. 13084, f. 73 [9th or 10th c.]), and πεστρατον (Parisinus Lat. 8663 [11th c.]). I give here Viré's emendation, which most recent editors follow. Bursian's emendation, *ap.* Hiller 1872, 107, of περιστραγον to πέριξ τράγον is perhaps preferable to πέρι τράγον because it explains the σ in the transmitted περιστραγον as an error for ξ and because this ξ would make clear that the second syllable must be long. Rosokoki emends to περ εἰς τράγον instead, giving the line Ἰκαριοῖ, τόθι πρῶτά περ εἰς τράγον ὠρχήσαντο, but Geus 2002, 104, points out that this is metrically impossible. Geus 2002, 104-5, 108, wants to banish from the *Erigone* the entire episode where Icarus cultivates the vine and sacrifices the goat and proposes the rather unusual line Ἰκαριοῖ, τόθι πρῶτα **περὶ στρατὸν** ὠρχήσαντο. But another fragment from the *Erigone*, fr. 3 Rosokoki, seems to describe one of the vines that Icarus has tended, which is perhaps also the very vine that the goat eats. On this fragment, see Hollis 1991; Rosokoki 1995, 81-3.

¹³ Hyg. *De astr.* 2.4.160 (=fr. 4 Rosokoki). Whether τόθι is relative, as translated here, or demonstrative depends on the line's context.

¹⁴ Vergil *Georgics* 2.384: after sacrificing the goat, [*sc.* Thesidae] *mollibus in pratis unctos saluere per utres*.

its sorry state, we can suppose that the *Erigone* also gave *aitia* connected to drama. The *askoliasmos* was practiced and associated with the theater in the fourth century,¹⁶ and, like Vergil, ancient scholarship connected it with the emergence of theater.¹⁷ That the *Erigone* treated the invention of drama is also suggested by the very fact that it is an aitiological poem set in Icaria, where drama at Athens is traditionally said to have originated.¹⁸ Thespis, the inventor of tragedy, is usually said to have been born there, and Susarion, the inventor of comedy, is said to have lived there.¹⁹ Furthermore, the *Erigone* describes the origins of the first coordinated dance for a goat, the prize for tragedy and an ancient etymology for the word tragedy, and the origins of drunkenness, which is associated with the invention of both forms of drama.²⁰

The following aitiologies are readily identifiable in the *Erigone*, then: the cultivation of the vine and the production of wine; the sacrifice of the goat to Dionysus; the dance around and for the goat (the *askoliasmos*) and tragedy; the festival of the swings (the Aiora); the constellations Sirius, Virgo, and Bootes; and the enmity between Sirius and the Ceans. How the story foreshadowed the origins of comedy is rather less apparent. Merkelbach and West suggest that the etymology of comedy would have been given or alluded to by Icarus' journey as he distributes wine through Attica: his passage would have entailed leading the first κῶμος through the κῶμαι.²¹ These are early etymologies (they appear already in the *Poetics*),²² and it is quite probable that the poem would have implied as much. I suggest, however, that Eratosthenes

¹⁵ On this passage, See §4.2.1.

¹⁶ See Eubulus fr. 7 K.-A. (=fr. 8 Hunter); cf. Jones 2004, 143-4.

¹⁷ Pausanias α 161 Erbse s.v. Ἀσκόλια.

¹⁸ E.g., Athenaeus 2.11.40a: ἀπὸ μέθης καὶ ἡ τῆς κωμῳδίας καὶ ἡ τῆς τραγωδίας εὐρεσις. ἐν Ἰκαρίῳ τῆς Ἀττικῆς εὐρέθη, καὶ κατ' αὐτὸν τὸν τῆς τρύγης καιρὸν. Icaria is already the birthplace of comedy on the Parian Marble (ca. 264 BC); see below.

¹⁹ On Thespis and Susarion, see below.

²⁰ See Athenaeus 2.11.40a, quoted at n. 18.

²¹ Merkelbach and West 1964, 178-9.

²² Aristotle *Poetics* 3.1448a35-8.

provided a further *aition* related to drama, comedy, and personal abuse, one concerned with "the abuse from the wagons," τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀμαξῶν.

§3.3. Abuse from the Wagons

As we will see below, pronouncing abuse from wagons is an activity associated with several festivals, and not just those connected to the *Erigone*. But there are good reasons for supposing that an *aition* for the abuse from the wagons featured in the *Erigone*. Eratosthenes says that Icarius was transported to the stars and became the constellation Bootes, the ox-driver. One reason must be that Icarius went in a procession through the κῶμαι to distribute wine on ἄμαξαι. A scholium to the *Odyssey* explains it thus:

ὁ Βοώτης καὶ Ἄρκτοφύλαξ καλεῖται. καὶ δοκεῖ εἶναι ὁ Ἰκάριος. Βοώτης δὲ λέγεται ὅτι κατὰ τὴν ἐπιτολὴν αὐτοῦ βοηλατοῦσι καὶ ἀροτριῶσιν, ἢ ἐπεὶ ὁ Ἰκάριος ἐπὶ ἀμαξῶν παρεκόμιζε τὸν οἶνον.

Bootes is also called Arctophylax, and he seems to be Icarius. And he is called Bootes because when he rises they drive their oxen and plough the fields. Alternatively, it is because Icarius conveyed wine on the wagons.²³

Hyginus conceives of it as the latter, since he says that Icarius used a *plaustrum*²⁴ to transport the wine.²⁵ The iconography also supports the proposition that wagons are central to the story.

Though it dates to around the second century AD, one of the mosaics in the House of Dionysus at Paphos depicts the scenario thus:

²³ Schol. in *Od.* 5.272 (=Rosokoki T25). For other references of Icarius as the cart driver, see Maass 1883, 116-7.

²⁴ Among Roman authors, Bootes is said to drive a *plaustrum*. See, e.g., *Ov. Met.* 10.447.

²⁵ *De astr.* 2.4.162.

Figure 3.1. Mosaic from the "House of Dionysus" in Nea Paphos (after Dunbabin 1999, fig. 240)



On the left, Dionysus, holding a cluster of grapes, sits beside a nymph drinking wine; in the center, Icarius holds the reins of oxen that pull a wagon holding wineskins. On the right, two drunkards labeled οἱ πρῶτοι οἶνον πίνοντες enjoy the wine that Icarius has given them (and, in their drunkenness, perhaps quarrel).²⁶

However, neither Rosokoki nor other scholars have considered the significance of the association between Icarius and the wagon for the other *aitia* in the *Erigone*. Icarius' journey with the wine would have been the first κῶμος, and the *Erigone* would have featured revelry associated with it during his progression on the wagons—which are in fact carrying the prize for comedy, the new wine. Indeed, Hyginus mentions inappropriate language as one effect of the shepherds' drunkenness: *alia ac decebat loquebantur*.²⁷ This revelry from the wagons would also fit well with the *aition* for the *askoliasmos*, which the poem gave as the precursor to tragedy. The "things from the wagons" would have functioned as a precursor to comedy—though in some sources it is also more generally connected with the origins of scenic drama, and not just comedy. Horace describes Thespis as originally performing from the wagons in *Ars Poetica* 275-7, and at least some parts of Horace's account about the origins of drama correspond with or

²⁶ LIMC V, Ikarios I, A 4; see Dunbabin 1999, fig. 240.

²⁷ *De astr.* 2.4.167.

draw on the Eratosthenic account. Furthermore, the "things from the wagons" is part of the ritual complex that is associated with the Aiora and the festival honoring Icarus and Erigone: the Anthesteria.

The following are the relevant testimonia describing the circumstances of the abuse from wagons; I have them organized by occasion. I regard the ascriptions to festivals of the testimonia with an asterisk as probable but not certain:²⁸

Choes and Anthesteria:

T1. Photius s.v. τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀμαξῶν· ἐπὶ τῶν ἀπαρακαλύπτως σκωπτόντων· Ἀθήνησι γὰρ ἐν τῇ τῶν Χοῶν ἑορτῇ οἱ κωμάζοντες ἐπὶ τῶν ἀμαξῶν τοὺς ἀπαντῶντας ἔσκωπόν τε καὶ ἐλοιδοροῦν. τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ τοῖς Ληναίοις ὕστερον ἐποίουν.

The mockery from the wagons: regarding those who mock without concealment. For at Athens at the festival of the Choes the revelers on wagons used to mock and abuse those whom they encountered. And they used to do the same thing later at the Lenaea as well.²⁹

*T2. Harpocration *Lex.* p. 253 Dindorf: πομπείας καὶ πομπεύειν· ἀντὶ τοῦ λοιδορίας καὶ λοιδορεῖν. Δημοσθένης ἐν τῷ ὑπὲρ Κτησιφῶντος (Dem. 18.11 and 18.124). μεταφέρει δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν ταῖς Διονυσιακαῖς πομπαῖς ἐπὶ τῶν ἀμαξῶν λοιδορουμένων ἀλλήλοις· Μένανδρος Περινθία ... (=Suda s.v. πομπείας καὶ πομπεύειν)

Procession and to process: instead of "abuse" and "to abuse." Demosthenes in *On Behalf of Ctesiphon*. He transfers it metaphorically from those who abuse each other on the wagons in the Dionysiac procession: Menander in the *Perinthia* ...³⁰

*T3. Suda τ 19 (s.v. τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀμαξῶν σκώμματα): ὅτι οἱ Ἀλεξανδρεῖς τὸ παλαιὸν καθαρμὸν ἐποιοῦντο ψυχῶν· ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ὀρισμέναις ἡμέραις ἐφ' ἀμαξῶν φερομένους ἀνθρώπους αὐτὸ τοῦτο προστεταγμένους ἐπιπαριέναι τὴν πόλιν ἅπασαν καὶ στάντας ὅπου ἂν ἐθέλωσι, καὶ οἴκῳ παραστάντας ὅπου ἂν³¹ βουλευθῶσιν, ἄδειν τῷ ὄντι τὰ ἐξ ἀμάξης, οὐ τὰ ψευδῆ λοιδοροῦντας, ἀλλὰ τάληθῆ ὄνειδίζοντας. ἐπιμελὲς γὰρ εἶναι σφίσις ἀκριβῶς ἐξετάζειν τὰ ὄνειδη τῶν πολιτῶν

²⁸ The following passages mention this practice but do not provide any useful information and are not reproduced here: Photius s.v. πομπεία; Suda s.v. πομπεία π 2022; Menander *Perinthia* fr. 5 Arnott (=4 Körte=8 Sandbach); Demosthenes *Or.* 18.122; Julian *Ep.* 80.50; Philodemus *On the Good King according to Homer* fr. 20 Dorandi.

²⁹ This is the basis for Suda τ 19 s.v. τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀμαξῶν σκώμματα, which is identical.

³⁰ Thuc. 2.15.4 calls the Anthesteria the Older Dionysia (τὰ ἀρχαιότερα Διονύσια), and it may be to the Anthesteria that this testimonium refers; certainly no other source connects abuse from the wagons to the Dionysia proper.

³¹ δῆ is the manuscript reading; however, R. Janko has suggested to me the emendation ἄν on the ground that ΔΗ might easily be confused with ΑΝ. Certainly this would be more grammatically correct and better parallel the previous clause (ὅπου ἂν ἐθέλωσι), which this clause repeats.

καὶ ταῦτα ἀδεκάστως προφέρειν μετὰ ἀληθείας, ὥστε διὰ τοῦτο πάντας ἀποδιδράσκειν τὴν πονηρίαν.

Because the Alexandrians of old brought about a cleansing of spirits: for on appointed days men carried on wagons were enjoined to do this very thing and to journey through the whole city. They stood wherever they liked and took up a position alongside a house wherever they wanted, and they sang things from the wagon truly, not speaking lies in their abuse, but reproaching them with the truth. For it was their concern to seek out accurately the scandals of the citizens and to present these impartially with truth so that for this reason all men would avoid baseness.³²

Lenaea
T1

T4a. *Suda* ε 1530 s.v. ἐξ ἀμάξης· ἡ λεγομένη ἑορτὴ παρ' Ἀθηναίοις Λήναια, ἐν ἣ ἠγωνίζοντο οἱ ποιηταὶ συγγράφοντές τινα ἄσματα τοῦ γελασθῆναι χάριν· ὅπερ Δημοσθένης "ἐξ ἀμάξης" εἶπεν (Dem. 18.122). ἐφ' ἀμαξῶν γὰρ οἱ ἄδοντες καθήμενοι ἔλεγον τε καὶ ἦδον τὰ ποιήματα. λέγεται καὶ Ληναίτης χορός, ὁ τῶν Ληναίων.

From a wagon: there is a festival called the Lenaea among the Athenians, at which the poets used to compete by composing certain songs for the sake of laughter. Demosthenes meant this when he said "from a wagon." For the singers used to sit upon wagons and speak and sing their songs. The chorus is also called Lenaeian, that is, the one of the Lenaea.

T4b. Schol. in. Arist. *Equi.* 547c: ληναίτην] ἑορτὴ παρὰ τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις τὰ Λήναια, ἐν ἣ μέχρι νῦν ἀγωνίζονται ποιηταὶ συγγράφοντές τινα ἄσματα τοῦ γελασθῆναι χάριν. ὅπερ ὁ Δημοσθένης εἶπεν "ἐξ ἀμάξης" (Dem. 18.122): ἐπὶ ἀμαξῶν γὰρ οἱ ἄδοντες καθήμενοι λέγουσιν τε καὶ ἄδουσι τὰ ποιήματα.

Lenaeian: The Lenaea is a festival among the Athenians at which up until the present day poets compete by composing certain songs for the sake of laughter. This is what Demosthenes meant as from the wagon. For the singers sit upon wagons and speak and sing their poems.

Occasion Uncertain

T5. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.72.11-2: δηλοῦσι δὲ καὶ αἱ τῶν θριάμβων εἴσοδοι παλαιὰν καὶ ἐπιχώριον οὖσαν Ῥωμαίοις τὴν κέρτομον καὶ σατυρικὴν παιδιάν. ἐφεῖται γὰρ τοῖς κατάγουσι τὰς νίκας ἰαμβίζειν τε καὶ κατασκώπτειν τοὺς ἐπιφανεστάτους ἄνδρας αὐτοῖς στρατηλάταις, ὡς Ἀθήνησι τοῖς πομπευταῖς τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν ἀμαξῶν, πρότερον ἀμέτροις σκώμμασι παρορχοῦμένοις, νῦν δὲ ποιήματ' ἄδουσιν αὐτοσχέδια.

³² This testimonium shares important thematic connections with the Anthesteria, which was certainly celebrated in Alexandria. See below.

The entries of the triumphs show that mocking and satyric jest is an ancient and native rite for the Romans. For those celebrating triumphs are allowed to lampoon and mock the most illustrious men, generals and all, as it is permitted in Athens for those in the procession on the wagons, once jesting with unversified abuses but now singing improvised poems.

T6. Schol. in Arist. *Nub.* 296: οἱ τρυγοδαίμονες] οἱ ποιηταί, ἐπειδὴ τὴν τρύγα χριόμενοι, ἵνα μὴ γνῶριμοι γένωνται, οὕτως τὰ αὐτῶν ἦδον ποιήματα κατὰ τὰς ὁδοὺς ἀμάξης ἐπικαθήμενοι· διὸ καὶ παροιμία "ὡς ἐξ ἀμάξης λαλεῖ," ἦγουν ἀναισχύντως ὑβρίζει· τοῦτο δὲ ἐποίουν οἱ κωμικοὶ ποιηταί.

The trugodaimones: The poets, smearing themselves with lees, in order that they might not be known, in this way used to sing their poems sitting upon wagons on the roads. For this reason the proverb "he prattles as if from a wagon," that is, he shamelessly commits hubris. The comic poets used to do this.

Eleusinian Mysteries

T7a. *Suda* τ 19 <s.v. τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀμαξῶν σκόμματα:> ὅτι ἐπὶ τῆς ἀμάξης ὀχοῦμεναι αἱ γυναῖκες αἱ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, ἐπὶ εἰς Ἐλευσίνα ἐβάδιζον εἰς τὰ μεγάλα μυστήρια, ἐλοιδοροῦν ἀλλήλας ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ· τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν ἔθος αὐταῖς.

<The abuses from the wagons:> For the women of the Athenians riding on a wagon, when they were going to the temple at Eleusis for the great mysteries, used to mock each other on the journey. For this was their custom.

T7b. Schol. in Arist. *Plut.* 1014: ἐπὶ τῆς ἀμάξης] αἱ γὰρ τῶν Ἀθηναίων γυναῖκες ἐπὶ ἀμαξῶν ὀχοῦμεναι εἰς τὰ μεγάλα Ἐλευσίνα ἀπήρχοντο. ὡς ἐπὶ ἀμαξῶν οὖν ὀχοῦμένων αὐτῶν, ἐπὶ εἰς Ἐλευσίνα βαδίζωσιν εἰς τὰ μεγάλα μυστήρια, καὶ λοιδοροῦσιν ἀλλήλας ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦτο εἶπεν· ἔθος γὰρ ἦν αὐταῖς τοῦτο.

Upon the wagon: for the women of the Athenians used to ride upon wagons and set out to the great festivals at Eleusis. He said this because they used to ride on wagons and abuse each other on the journey whenever they were going to the Eleusinian festival for the great mysteries: for this was their custom.

Testimonia 7a and 7b connect the practice to the procession of the women during the Eleusinian mysteries.³³ It may well be that the ritual is associated with multiple festivals for multiple gods, but alternatively there may be some confusion with the *gephyrismos*, the practice

³³ On these passages, see Halliwell 2008, 171-2.

of shouting abuse from a bridge during the Eleusinian mysteries.³⁴ At any rate, these can be excluded; the others are of greater interest for our purposes. T1 connects the practice to the Choes (one of the festivals during the Anthesteria) and explains that the practice was later taken up at the Lenaea;³⁵ T2 and T3 probably link the practice generally to the Anthesteria. T4a and T4b, practically the same testimony, connect it only to the Lenaea. T5 and T6 assign no occasion, though they seem to be describing the same practice as T1-4.

The connection made by T1-3 with the Choes makes good sense. Small carts are regularly found as an icon on toy choes presented to children during the festival, sometimes along a small table.³⁶ The small carts are miniature versions of the processional wagons, just as the small tables are miniature tables for symposia.³⁷ The illustrations below from such fifth century red-figure toy choes show how the carts were incorporated into the iconography and reflect the wagon's connection to the festival:

Figure 3.2. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum 3772 (after van Hoorn 1951, pl. 214)³⁸

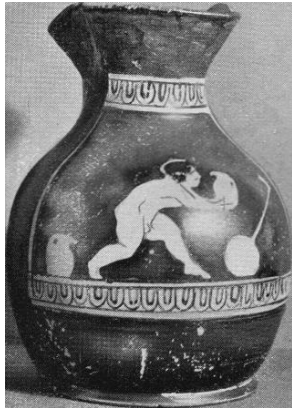


Figure 3.3. Edinburgh, National Museums of Scotland 1887.215 (after van Hoorn 1951, pl. 335)³⁹



³⁴ See, e.g., Hesychius γ 470 s.v. γεφυρισταί· οἱ σκῶπται· ἐπεὶ ἐν Ἐλευσίνι ἐπὶ τῆς γεφύρας τοῖς μυστηρίοις καθεζόμενοι ἔσκωπτον τοὺς παριόντας.

³⁵ Foucart 1904, 114, instead connects the wagons instead to the Pithoigia and hypothesizes that the wagons were carrying the new wine for the Anthesteria.

³⁶ Hamilton 1992, 105-6 correlates these images; for a full discussion and statistical analysis of the icons on these choes on Hamilton 1992, 83-111.

³⁷ Hamilton 1992, 117.

³⁸ No. 986 in his catalog.

³⁹ No. 506 in his catalog.

In figure 3.2, a boy loads a chous of wine onto a toy cart for transport. In figure 3.3, a boy rides in a toy cart drawn by a dog. The toy choes show in miniature the role of wagons in distributing wine and reveling during the Choes. They also echo Icarus' journey, as described in the *Erigone*.

This does not, of course, contradict the idea that the practice also occurred at the Lenaea, as some of the other testimonia say. T1, after all, says that, while it was first performed at the Anthesteria, they later took it up at the Lenaea as well. If abuse from wagons is, as I have suggested, connected to the Choes and Anthesteria, all that remains to be shown is the connection between them and the festival for Erigone, the Aiora. A fragment of Callimachus points to just such a connection:

ἤως οὐδὲ πιθοιγίς ἐλάνθανεν οὐδ' ὅτε δούλοις
ἦμαρ Ὀρέστειοι λευκὸν ἄγουσι χόες·
Ἰκαρίου καὶ παιδὸς ἄγων ἐπέτειον ἀγιστύν,
Ἀτθίσιν οἰκτίστη, σὸν φάος, Ἥριγόνη,
ἔς δαίτην ἐκάλεσεν ὀμηθέας ...

The day of the Pithoigia did not escape his notice nor when the Orestian Choes keep a white day for slaves; and he, keeping the yearly purification of Icarus and his child, your day, Erigone, most piteous for the Attic maidens, summoned his friends to the feast ...⁴⁰

In this fragment, an Athenian living in Egypt mentions to Callimachus three festivals, the Pithoigia, the Choes, and the Aiora. The first two are parts of the Anthesteria; partly on the basis of this fragment, the Aiora is sometimes identified with the third day of the Anthesteria, the Chytroi (see below). There is also an alternative aitiology for the Aiora that connects Erigone to the mythic system of Orestes and therefore the Aiora to the Anthesteria: in this other myth, Erigone is not the daughter of Icarus, as she is in Eratosthenes' *Erigone*, but the daughter of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. After Orestes slew them and went to Athens (thereby originating the Choes), she followed him there and hanged herself when he was acquitted for murder

⁴⁰ Fr. 178, 1-5 Pfeiffer.

(thereby originating the Aiora).⁴¹ Eratosthenes was, of course, not using this *aition* for the Aiora,⁴² but both it and the fragment of Callimachus show that the Aiora was intimately connected with the Anthesteria.

As was mentioned above, the Chytroi has sometimes been identified with the Aiora.⁴³ But they can hardly be exactly the same festival: the Aiora involves feasting, drinking, and swings, the Chytroi sacrifices to Hermes and Dionysus. It is probable that in fact the Choes, Chytroi, and Aiora are separate festivals that occur around the same time and perhaps even on the same day. The Aiora and the Choes in particular share a close connection: Hamilton has argued that the *aition* of the Choes involving the reception of Orestes in Athens was not the original *aition* for the festival.⁴⁴ For the *aition* involving Orestes leaves one important feature of the festival unexplained: when Orestes was received in Athens, the Athenians were already celebrating a feast.⁴⁵ The story that the Athenians dined in silence, each with his own chous, after receiving Orestes may explain certain solemn and purificatory features of the festival, but it

⁴¹ The story is only told thus at *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. αἰώρα, though the accounts in the secondary literature tend to take this version of Argive Erigone as the basic one. However, this Argive Erigone is to my knowledge said to have hanged herself only in the *Etymologicum Magnum* and Dictys Cretensis 6.4, with only the former mentioning her revenge on the living or a festival to propitiate her. Erigone is given as the daughter of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra in a few places, including section A25 of the Parian Chronicle (her name is almost entirely lost there, though its restoration must be correct), but in the other versions of her story the outcome is different: in Hyg. *Fab.* 122, Orestes plans to kill Erigone, too, but she is saved by Artemis and made a priestess; in Apollodorus epitome 28a, she marries Orestes. On this Argive Erigone, the various endings to her story, and her relation to the Icarian Erigone, see Maass 1883, 134-8; Körte 1916, 577; Maass 1921; Burkert 1983, 241-3; Rosokoki 1995, 113-4; Johnston 1999, 219-24 (with nn. 57-8 for citations of the different versions, though section A25 of the Parian Chronicle is incorrectly cited as section 40).

⁴² Maass 1883, 135, hypothesized that the Icarian Erigone may have even been invented by Eratosthenes, though he retracts this view in Maass 1921, 5. The Callimachus fragment shows that this could not be so, since in it Erigone is already the daughter of Icarius. But Eratosthenes probably popularized the Icarian version. On the debate about which version is older, see Rosokoki 1995, 110.

⁴³ Körte 1916, 578-9, and Rosokoki 1995, 109-10, argue that the Choes and the Aiora are separate but simultaneous festivals; Dietrich 1961 also regards it as simultaneous with the Choes and connects the Aiora quite closely to that festival. Hamilton 1992, 42-50, argues that the Choes and Chytroi were simultaneous and entertains the possibility that the Aiora happened around the same time as well. Immerwahr 1946, 259, regards the Aiora and the Chytroi as identical; Burkert 1983, 240-3, and 1983, 241, also connects the Aiora and Chytroi. Parker 2005, 301-2, says that the Aiora may be on the same day as the Chytroi, but he opines that it may have been a small festival on an unknown date. Parke 1977, 118-9, connects it generally to the Anthesteria.

⁴⁴ Hamilton 1992, 10-26. In particular, he argues that the drinking party towards the end of the *Acharnians* is more representative.

⁴⁵ *Suda* s.v. Χόες says that when Orestes came to Athens he found Pandion εὐωχίαν τινὰ δημοτελῆ ποιοῦντα.

cannot explain the festival itself. Indeed, Rosokoki suggests that the festival for Icarius and Erigone is the original basis, perhaps with the festival for Icarius and Erigone being the private part of the festival and the Choes being the public part.⁴⁶

The Aiora does share features with the Chytroi, too, but this is not problematic if the three parts of the Anthesteria are indeed on the same day and are themselves similar.⁴⁷ In particular, the part of the Erigone myth that describes how the Athenian maidens would hang themselves as Erigone did until she was propitiated with that festal day resonates: as Johnston argues, Erigone fits the model of the ghost of a person who died violently and prematurely and in death terrorizes the living until appeased.⁴⁸ It is not at all surprising, then, that the Anthesteria, which in part features a Day of the Dead in the Chytroi, is closely connected with the Aiora, a festival for a particularly troublesome ghost.⁴⁹ If am I right, the abuse from the wagons is connected to this propitiation: the Aiora reenacts Erigone's death, and the procession of the wagons reenacts the events leading up to it, i.e., Icarius' circuit as he introduces wine to Attica. T3, the description of the abuse from the wagons in Alexandria, makes this connection quite evident: they brought about a cleansing of spirits (καθαρμὸν ἐποιοῦντο ψυχῶν). The meaning of

⁴⁶ Rosokoki 1995, 109-110.

⁴⁷ See Hamilton 1992, 62, for a table of similarities between the Choes and Chytroi; each festival has nearly every major feature of the other.

⁴⁸ Johnston 1999, 223-4. Certainly the version of the myth in *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. αἰώρα says that Erigone upon dying became a προστρόπαιος—a vengeful ghost (on this term, see Johnston 1999, 142-3). Nilsson 1998, 18, 113 (=Nilsson 1940, 16, 90) says that Orestes himself was imagined to be a dangerous revenant who caused mischief at night by thrashing those whom he encounters and stealing their clothes; if this were so, it would bring Orestes and Erigone and the festivals that propitiated them closer together. While Nilsson does not cite his sources, he certainly had in mind *Acharnians* 1167 and *Birds* 708 and 1482-93; however, commentators take these passages to be jokes at the expense of a contemporary homonymous Orestes that liken the footpad to the hero rather than hints at how the heroic Orestes was actually regarded. *Birds* 1482-93 in particular suggests as much, where the reference to this Orestes follows a song by the chorus about the marvelous Cleonymus-tree that sheds shields instead of leaves. Given the *Birds* passage, and given the absence of references to it elsewhere, the revenant Orestes who steals clothes is probably a joke as well. See Dunbar 1995, *ad loc.*

⁴⁹ This very association is one argument for putting the Aiora and the Chytroi on the same day in the literature that divides the Anthesteria into three days. On the resemblance of the Anthesteria to days of the dead, see Staples 2004, who compares it at length to Hanal P'ixan (the "meal of the souls"), a Mayan version of South and Central American days of the dead—complete with a phantasm who, like Erigone, kills (or at least spirits away) maidens.

the phrase and the practice is twofold.⁵⁰ On the one hand, such abuse from the wagons is a means of redressing grievances and correcting faults, and this is how a Byzantine commentator seems to have understood T3: he equates correcting base action with the Egyptian practice of purifying the soul by means of abuse from the wagons.⁵¹ On the other, the purification of spirits also reflects an apotropaic practice according to which troublesome ghosts are appeased or driven away, precisely as the Chytroi and Aiora demand.⁵²

That the Byzantine interpretation of the practice which T3 describes emphasizes the corrective purpose of such abuse and elides the religious and ritualistic significance of the practice ought not trouble us. As we shall see in chapter 5, interpretations by later commentators, especially of the folk practices that supposedly lie at the origins of comedy, often consist of very literal, functionalist analyses that emphasize the political and ethical content and ignore the ritualistic context that must have enabled such behavior.⁵³

To summarize, the festival connected to Erigone and Icarius is thematically and temporally related to the Anthesteria. The *Erigone* would certainly have addressed the death of Erigone herself and the festival associated with it, the Aiora, which, as we have seen, is closely connected to the Choes and Chytroi and is sometimes identified with the latter. The Anthesteria, particularly the part of it called the Choes, features the transportation of wine on wagons and abuse from the wagons, and the *Erigone* must have had as a central plot point Icarius' circuit on the wagon as he distributed wine (this is so important to the story that he becomes a constellation that drives a wagon). Hyginus' account hints at the free and abusive speech associated with the

⁵⁰ See Halliwell 2008, 188, who notes that this description seems to conflate the following two ideas.

⁵¹ Nicephorus *Regia Statua* 207, 2-3 (13th c.): εἰ μὲν οὖν τὸ ἔργον μοχθηρόν, διορθωτέον, πλέον ἢ ' τοῖς ἐξ ἀμάξης' Αἰγύπτιοι, καθ' οὓς εἰώθεσαν ποιεῖσθαι ψυχῶν καθαρισμούς. Cf. Georgius Galesiotes' paraphrase of this work *loc. cit.*

⁵² Johnston 1999, 107-8, notes that "purifiers" laid claim to both the knowledge of preparing the souls of the living for the afterlife as well as the knowledge of driving away troublesome spirits.

⁵³ I mean in particular the aition that comedy arose from the activities of wronged farmers. On this aition, see §5.6.

procession in the *Erigone*.⁵⁴ It is quite likely, then, that Eratosthenes suggested a connection between that ritual and this part of the myth, and this, like the *askoliasmos*, hinted at one of the practices at the origin of comedy.⁵⁵

As we have mentioned, Horace describes Thespis as performing some kind of unserious proto-tragedy from the wagons,⁵⁶ but the abuse from the wagons is more closely connected to the origins of comedy in the testimonia. T4a, T4b, and T6 specifically link the abuse from wagons to the activities of the comic poets; T6 explicitly mentions the abuse from the wagons as a precursor to scenic comedy. Some such connection must underlie T1, which says that the abuse from the wagons was originally practiced at the Choes but was later continued at the Lenaea. Indeed, there is also some evidence of performance and spectacle at the Chytroi,⁵⁷ perhaps of a comic nature, and there must be a connection between the Chytroi and Lenaea inasmuch as both honor Dionysus and, most importantly, take place at the sanctuary of Dionysus ἐν Λίμναις, where the Lenaion theater may have been located.⁵⁸

Therefore, according to Eratosthenes' *aitia* and the history of comedy they suggest, Icarus' distribution of wine on wagons and the drunken abuse associated with it are the *aitia* for the abuse from wagons associated with the Aiora and Choes. This abuse prefigured the abuse of the comic poets. At some later point, this pre-scenic abuse from wagons turned into scenic performance at the Lenaea. Eratosthenes' *aition* for comedy in the *Erigone* need not have spelled out much of this. Just as the first dance around and for the wine skin gives the *aition* for the

⁵⁴ *De astr.* 2.4.167.

⁵⁵ Eratosthenes' inventiveness ought not to be underrated either. It has been suggested that he invented the version of the *Erigone* myth he expounds (see n. 42 above), though this impossible. Indeed, Latte 1957 argues that the version of the *askoliasmos* that Eratosthenes presents is itself a combination of two different practices. One is derived from ἀσκολιάζειν, and this was a dance that involved hopping on one foot; the other practice is a dance on a goat skin. Eratosthenes connected these through an etymology from ἀσκόζ.

⁵⁶ *Ars Poetica* 275-7.

⁵⁷ For a survey and brief discussion of the testimonia, see Hamilton 1992, 38-42.

⁵⁸ Provided that the theater for the Lenaea was indeed different from the theater for the Dionysia; see Slater 1986, 255-64, for an argument in favor of separate theaters and a survey of the evidence.

askoliasmos and hints at the origins of tragedy, describing the first drunken and abusive procession on wagons while Icarius first distributes wine would have hinted at this origin of comedy.

However, several important questions remain to be considered. Given this *aition* for comedy, what was the nature of the earliest comic abuse in Eratosthenes' view, and what was his history of comedy? If indeed the abuse from the wagons was the earliest stage of that history, then these accounts can guide us. T3 is peculiar, inasmuch as it alone attests to abuse from the wagons outside of Athens, and it alone says that this abuse was corrective. The entry markedly contrasts with the others in that it emphasizes these practitioners sang "in reality" (τῷ ὄντι) their verses from the wagons, uttering true reproaches (τάληθῆ ὀνειδίζοντας), not false abuse (οὐ τὰ ψευδῆ λοιδοροῦντας). The other testimonia, however, give no indication that their λοιδορία and σκῶμμα, as the practice is called in nearly all of the other descriptions, are aiming at corrective abuse. Rather, their abuse seems to correspond to the kind of inappropriate, drunken talk mentioned in Hyginus' account (*alia ac decebat loquebantur*),⁵⁹ if indeed such talk is connected to komastic abuse and τὰ ἐξ ἀμάξης. The license, and not the truth of such abuse, is what these accounts emphasize.

T3 must refer to an Alexandrian practice that parallels the Athenian; the Anthesteria was celebrated throughout Ionia,⁶⁰ and the fragment of Callimachus quoted above (fr. 178, 1-5 Pfeiffer) describes an Athenian in Alexandria celebrating it. The Aiora, or at least some kind of swinging ritual, is also attested at Colophon.⁶¹ But the claim that abuse from the wagons was used to rebuke wrongdoers is unusual and similar to the origin of comedy given in some of the treatises, namely that wronged farmers used to go to the house of whoever had wronged them

⁵⁹ *De astr.* 2.4.167.

⁶⁰ Thuc. 2.15.4.

⁶¹ Aristotle fr. 515 Rose; cf. Parker 2005, 301, who says such rites may be an old Ionian custom.

and rebuke them, including the point that the performers were later enjoined (presumably by the state) to rebuke the wrongdoers and were not pursuing private grudges.⁶² T3 may be a conflation of the two ideas—abuse from the wagons and the practice of the wronged farmers.⁶³ There is also some disagreement among some of the testimonia about who the target of the abuse from the wagons was. T1 says that the performers abused without concealment (*ἀπαρακαλύπτως*); T6, which explicitly connects songs from wagons to the early stages of comedy, says that the poets smeared themselves with lees so that they would not be recognized, which is also a recurring feature in the descriptions of the wronged farmers and points, of course, toward the origin of masks in comedy. T2 says that the performers would mock each other; this seems to be the case in T4a and T4b as well. Most of the rest are either explicit (T1, T3, T5) that the poets attack others or imply it (T6).

But in the *Erigone*, the abuse must have been among the drunken participants. In the original case of Icarius and his wagon, the abuse occurs when Icarius has stopped his wagon to introduce the shepherds to wine, and they say inappropriate things in their drunkenness. Reciprocal mockery is also, as we have seen, a central feature of Aristotle's account,⁶⁴ and this interpretation also tallies well with Horace's description of Fescennine license, which belongs to a body of theories that owe a debt to the Eratosthenic theory:⁶⁵

⁶² See §5.6.

⁶³ The reason for this conflation may be the connection of the abuse from wagons to the origins of comedy and the assumption that the earliest comic abuse was corrective. As I suggested above, this description, like those in some of the treatises, emphasizes the functional, practical importance of this sort of behavior rather than its ritual significance.

⁶⁴ See §2.4.

⁶⁵ See the next chapter.

Fescennina per hunc inuenta licentia morem
uersibus alternis opprobria rustica fudit,
libertasque recurrentis accepta per annos
lusit amabiliter, donec iam saeuos apertam
in rabiem coepit uerti iocus et per honestas
ire domos impune minax.

Fescennine license was found through this custom. It poured rustic insults with alternating verses, and that freedom, adopted through the passing years, played genially, until their jest, now savage, began to be transformed into manifest rage and to go among honorable houses with impunity.⁶⁶

The initial *opprobria* was among performers; they alternate verses (*uersibus alternis*). It evolves (degenerates) into unconcealed personal attack on others (*saeuos apertam / in rabiem coepit uerti iocus*).⁶⁷ The Eratosthenic idea may have likewise been that the abuse from the wagons was initially reciprocal among performers, as T2 says, but that at some later point it became directed against spectators. Much of the difficulty is that, aside from Dionysius of Halicarnassus in T5, who is only alluding to the Greek practice, all the testimonia are late and many of these authors are writing with the idea in mind that such abuse from wagons was a precursor to comedy and must prefigure important features of comedy: masks, corrective abuse, and the mockery of spectators. In these accounts, the wagon is also the prototype for the stage.

There may be room for the corrective abuse of a third party in the Eratosthenic account, even if that place is not, as in T3, in the original abuse. As we will see, the Varronian history supposes that Old Comedy came to be characterized by corrective personal humor for a time, and, on the basis of Donatus, Varro held that a pre-scenic stage of comedy featured corrective

⁶⁶ *Ep* 2.1.145-50.

⁶⁷ The lines *iam saeuos apertam / in rabiem coepit uerti iocus* recall Horace's description of Archilochus: *Archilochum proprio rabies armavit iambo* (*Ars Poetica* 79), as Brink 1971 on *Ars Poetica* 78 and Brink 1982 on *Ep*. 2.1.148-9 note. This may hint at a movement from amicable reciprocal abuse to abuse directed against a third party who is not a participant in the discourse, as is the case in Archilochus.

personal humor.⁶⁸ Given the debts that the Varronian theory owes to the Eratosthenic one, the latter, too, may have put corrective abuse at some point in pre-scenic comedy—though, as in Aristotle, it cannot have been an original feature. The fact that Eratosthenes seems to have followed the same tripartition as Varro, with the poets of Old Comedy being Cratinus, Aristophanes, and Eupolis rather than, like Diomedes, restricting it to an earlier generation of poets like Susarion who were uninterested in corrective personal attack, supports this suggestion.⁶⁹ Donatus does not say that those participating in corrective abuse smeared lees on their faces;⁷⁰ however, in him and in Horace the lees are already used as masks by the time of the first dramatic performances.⁷¹

We can distinguish, then, three possible strands in the development of comedy from these sources: (a) A rustic celebration in which a goat is killed for Dionysus; the *askoliasmos* is a part of this celebration, and from this source comedy and tragedy later emerge. This celebration provides the original occasion, one of the dramatic prizes, and the earliest performance. Following closely with this is a second practice: (b) Drunken abuse connected with the new wine and a procession with a wagon; in the original case, this abuse was probably directed against fellow performers. This episode provides the initial dramatic form in the wagon, which is a

⁶⁸ §4.3.2.

⁶⁹ In Eratosthenes' work *Περὶ τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμῳδίας*, frs. 2, 5, and 8 Bagordo, for example, treat poets of what we now call Old Comedy: Cratinus, Pherecrates, and Aristophanes. On Diomedes' division of comedy, see §4.3.1.

⁷⁰ Donatus *Commentum Terenti* I pp. 22-5 Wessner: *Athenienses namque Atticam custodientes elegantiam cum vellent male viventes notare, in vicos et compita ex omnibus locis laeti alacresque veniebant ibique cum nominibus singulorum vitia publicabant; unde nomen compositum, ut comoedia vocaretur*. See §4.3.2.

⁷¹ Horace *Ars Poetica* 275-7, where tragedy is his concern: *ignotum tragicæ genus inuenisse Camenæ / dicitur et plaustri uexisse poemata Thespis / quæ canerent agerentque peruncti faecibus ora* (*Ars Poetica* 275-7). Other sources describe other means, such as red cinnabar (see §4.2.2). In the case of comedy, the practice makes good sense: the performers needed to conceal their identity in this abusive performance associated with the new wine; the τρύξ, the lees, was the means by which they did it (and in some sources the τρύξ, the new wine, is also the prize: see, e.g., Diomedes *Gramm. Lat.* 1, 487-9 Keil, who gives this as one etymology for τρυγηδία). There is no comparable explanation, however, for why masks were invented for tragedy. The implication may be that tragedy and comedy evolved from a common source and enjoyed many of the same features, even to the extent that tragedy went on to employ the very device, the lees, by which the abusers had concealed their identities to escape retribution.

prototype for the stage, and the original content, revelry and reciprocal abuse. If indeed Donatus can tell us about Varro, and Varro can tell us about Eratosthenes, there may be a third element:

(c) The later addition of corrective abuse by wronged rustics. The Eratosthenic theory may have held that these rustics disguised their identities by painting their faces with lees, and that this practice provided the prototype for dramatic masks. When the reciprocal abuse evolved, as Fescennine verses did, into abuse against third parties, it took on this additional feature. This is, however, a tenuous supposition, and, with nothing to corroborate it, it must remain speculation.

§3.4. The Parian Chronicle and Related Accounts

If this reconstruction is accurate, *both* Old Comedy and tragedy emerged from mirthful, pre-scenic celebrations for Dionysus that featured unserious abuse among performers. Only later did they split and Old Comedy proper, with its characteristic abuse, emerge. Such an evolution helps to explain a curious tradition that comedy is in some sense the "mother" of tragedy, and not just its sibling.⁷² Tzetzes puts it quite plainly:

περὶ ποιητῶν πολλάκις ὑμῖν ἐδιδάξαμεν καὶ περὶ τῆς ἀγοραίας καὶ ἀγυιάτιδος κωμωδίας καὶ ἀγυρτίδος, ὅτι τε γεωργῶν εὐρημα καὶ ὅτι τραγωδίας μήτηρ ἔστι καὶ σατύρων.

Often we instructed you about poets and about the vulgar, common, and wandering comedy, that it is a discovery of farmers, and that it is the mother of tragedies and satyr plays.⁷³

Another source expounds on the same principle at greater length:

⁷² Meuli 1955, 126-7, collects a number of such sources and ascribes them to the Eratosthenic theory. See also Patzer 1962, 30-5, who argues that Eratosthenes and the Eratosthenic account are more interested in comedy and Icaria than tragedy and that the treatment of tragedy is a secondary concern. That may well be true, but, as I suggest below, Eratosthenes' views are not so radical as they appear.

⁷³ Koster XIa1,66-8.

"τὰ μηδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον"· τὴν κωμωδίαν καὶ τὴν τραγωδίαν ἀπὸ γέλωτος εἰς τὸν βίον φασι παρελθεῖν. καὶ <γὰρ>⁷⁴ κατὰ καιρὸν τῆς συγκομιδῆς τῶν γεννημάτων παραγενομένους τινὰς ἐπὶ τὰς ληνοὺς καὶ τοῦ γλεύκους πίνοντας σκώπτειν καὶ ποιήματά τινα⁷⁵ γράφειν, <ᾧ>⁷⁶ διὰ τὸ πρότερον ἐν <κώμαις ἄδεσθαι>⁷⁷ κωμωδίαν καλεῖσθαι. ἤρχοντο δὲ καὶ συνεχέστερον εἰς τὰς κώμας τὰς Ἀττικὰς γύψω τὰς ὄψεις κεχρισμένοι καὶ ἔσκωπτον. <ὔστερον δὲ> τραγικὰ παρεισφέροντες <ἐπὶ τὸ>⁷⁸ αὐστηρότερον μετῆλθον. ταῦτα οὖν καὶ ἐπεὶ τῷ Διονύσῳ πολέμιόν ἐστιν ὁ τράγος ἐπισκώπτοντές τινες ἔλεγον. <εἴρηται δὲ ἡ παροιμία>⁷⁹ ἐπὶ τῶν τὰ ἀνοικεία τισι προσφερόντων.

"Things that have nothing to do with Dionysus": They say that comedy and tragedy came into life from laughter. For at the occasion of the harvest of the produce, some used to go to the wine vats and drinking from the new wine used to mock and compose certain poems, which on account of originally being sung in the in the villages were called comedy. And they frequently would go to the Attic villages, smear their faces with gypsum, and mock. Later, they added tragic elements and changed to something more serious. So some used to say these things, too, in their mockery because the goat is an enemy to Dionysus. This proverb is said for those who adduce things which have nothing to do with other things.⁸⁰

This version has many features of the Eratosthenic account: the earliest celebrations for Dionysus at the harvest were mirthful and characterized by laughter and some form of mockery. It deviates a bit in describing the use of gypsum before the invention of the mask,⁸¹ and, while it mentions the enmity between Dionysus and the goat, which by now is quite familiar to us, it uses that episode for a rather surprising purpose by connecting it to the saying "Nothing to do with Dionysus."

As it is here, the saying is elsewhere connected to the evolution of tragedy. Supposedly, the audience said this when tragic poets began incorporating non-Dionysiac material and wrote

⁷⁴ Supplemented by Crusius.

⁷⁵ ποιήματά τινα is transposed to here by Koster; in the codices, it precedes σκώπτειν.

⁷⁶ Supplemented by Crusius.

⁷⁷ Supplemented by Crusius.

⁷⁸ Supplemented by Crusius.

⁷⁹ Supplemented by Koster.

⁸⁰ [Plutarch] *De proverbii Alexandrinorum* 30 (=Koster XVIIa); if the work is indeed not Plutarch's, it is at least roughly contemporary with him. See Crusius 1883, xviii-xxi.

⁸¹ Though see above and [§4.2]; there is some disagreement even among the Augustan authors about the material used to disguise the face before the invention of the mask.

about heroes and their sufferings, whereas previously they had been satyric.⁸² According to some of the explanations, the very reason that satyr play was attached to the tragic trilogy was because audiences felt that tragedy had deviated too far from its satyric (i.e., mirthful and unserious) origins.⁸³ In this passage, uniquely, the author draws a parallel between the saying "Nothing to do with Dionysus" and the god's hostility to the goat. The idea seems to be that just as the *τράγος* is an enemy of and estranged from Dionysus, *τραγωδία* is as well, because it now consists of something rather more serious than the original celebrations, which were more akin to comedy, did. Tragedy, by turning from its mirthful, celebratory origins to more serious content, has nothing to do with Dionysus. John the Logothete in his commentary to Hermogenes does not mention this proverb, but he describes a similar development: comedy was invented for celebrations at the harvest; tragedy was invented later to add a more solemn component.⁸⁴

These sources have comedy preceding tragedy; indeed, Tzetzes says explicitly that comedy is the genesis of tragedy. If we concern ourselves less with the labels of "comedy" and "tragedy" and more with the stages of development of drama, both of these passages are compatible with Eratosthenes. There was an early, mirthful stage characterized by laughter and insult; tragedy evolved from here, as did Old Comedy. In that earliest stage, there are unmistakably comic elements, which could itself easily be called "comedy" in the view of another theorist.

Given all of this, the Eratosthenic and related histories are not as incompatible with Aristotle as they first appear. I suggested in the last chapter that much of Aristotle's formulation of the history of drama is determined by his ethical views about genre. He argues that poets of a lofty character compose imitations of lofty characters and actions; of such a kind is tragedy.

⁸² See Plutarch *Mor.* 615a; Zenobius 5.40; Photius, *Suda*, Apostolios s.v. οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον.

⁸³ On this possibility, see Seaford 1984, 10-6.

⁸⁴ Koster XIXa (=Aristotle *On Poets* fr. 33a Janko, which Janko marks as doubtful).

Poets of a baser character compose imitations of base characters and actions; of such a kind is comedy. This dichotomy leads Aristotle to locate the origins of comedy and tragedy in different sources: phallic processions in the case of the former, and the dithyramb in the case of the latter. Yet even so, as we have also seen, Aristotle also famously describes the beginnings of tragedy thus:

ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν ὄψε ἀπεσεμνύθη.

From small plots and laughable language, on account of transforming itself from the satyric, it [sc. tragedy] at a late date became lofty.⁸⁵

Even Aristotle admits that tragedy at an earlier stage—perhaps before it even ought to be called tragedy—had comic elements, though he preserves his theory of genre and the characters of poets by insisting that tragedy does not derive from comedy or even from the same source as comedy, but only from a similar performance that had not yet attained its end.⁸⁶ Indeed, the explanation of the phrase "Nothing to do with Dionysus" quoted above perhaps owes something to the passage from the *Poetics*: its claim that the early dramatists, when introducing the tragic, changed into a more severe mode (<ἐπὶ τὸ> ἀσθηρότερον μετῆλθον) resembles Aristotle's statement that tragedy only became serious because it was transformed from the satyric (διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν). Both accounts, like that of Eratosthenes and, as we will see, Varro, assert that a phase characterized by comic elements preceded tragedy. Like Tzetzes, the author of the explanation of the proverb labels that earlier stage as comedy; in Eratosthenes, comedy proper may not have emerged until later. Aristotle, however, insists on a firm distinction between

⁸⁵ *Poetics* 4.1449a19-21. On this passage, its accuracy, and its relationship to Aristotle's account, see §2.6.

⁸⁶ Indeed, Shaw 2010, 16-8, argues that Aristotle's description of satyr play resembles Middle Comedy.

the comic and the satyric and has tragedy originating from the latter. At least some of his students would follow him in this.⁸⁷

Aristotle's interest in drawing a dichotomy between lofty poets and their lofty poetry and base poets and their base poetry is also perhaps a good reason why he does not concern himself with Thespis. While he surely knew of Thespis and perhaps mentioned him as the inventor of tragedy in *On Poets*,⁸⁸ Thespis' tragedy seems not to have been the lofty type that Aristotle would connect to tragedy. The ethical theory of genre that Aristotle expounds in the *Poetics* may have induced him to minimize Thespis' involvement with tragedy. Horace describes tragedy's origins and Thespis' activities thus:

ignotum tragicae genus inuenisse Camenae
dicitur et plaustris uexisse poemata Thespis
quae canerent agerentque peruncti faecibus ora.
post hunc personae pallaеque repertor honestae
Aeschylus et modicis instravit pulpita tignis
et docuit magnumque loqui nitiquo cothurno.

Thespis is said to have devised the unknown genre of the tragic muse, and to have brought on the wagons his poems which they sang and performed with their faces smeared with lees. After him, Aeschylus devised an honorable mask and robe and set the stage on moderate beams and taught how to speak in a lofty fashion and to walk tall in the buskin.⁸⁹

According to Horace, Thespis' tragedy has not yet become the lofty tragedy of Aeschylus. The mask and garb of his players are not yet *honestae*, nor do they yet wear the stately buskin, nor do they speak in an exalted fashion. On the contrary, they perform wearing the lees that are

⁸⁷ Chamaeleon fr. 38 Wehrli seems to expound a similar view. See Seaford 1984, 10-6. By a rather late date, at least, "comic" and "satyric" could be synonyms: see the Aristophanean hypothesis to the *Alcestis*: τὸ δὲ δράμα κωμικωτέραν ἔχει τὴν καταστροφὴν ... τὸ δὲ δράμα ἐστὶ σατυρικώτερον, ὅτι εἰς χαρὰν καὶ ἡδονὴν καταστρέφει (Dale 1954, xxxviii-xl, regards the former line to be genuinely Aristophanean and the latter to be a much later gloss; see also Porter 1994, 291-7, on this hypothesis).

⁸⁸ On Aristotle's knowledge of Thespis, and for another reason for Thespis' omission from the *Poetics*, see chapter 2 n. 64.

⁸⁹ *Ars Poetica* 275-80. See especially Brink 1971, 310-6 on this passage, but also Meuli 1955, 227, and Patzer 1962, 22-3, for its characterization of Thespis and its connection to the Eratosthenic account.

elsewhere associated with comedy and from a wagon that is elsewhere associated with comic abuse. Likewise, the *Life* of Aeschylus reports:

Πολλῷ χαλεπότερον ἦν ἐπὶ Θέσπιδι Φρυνίχῳ τε καὶ Χοιρίλῳ εἰς τοσόνδε μεγέθους τὴν τραγωδίαν προαγαγεῖν ἢ ἐπὶ Αἰσχύλῳ ἐπιόντα⁹⁰ εἰς τὴν Σοφοκλέους ἐλθεῖν τελειότητα.

It was harder by far after Thespis, Phrynichus, and Choerilus [sc. for Aeschylus]⁹¹ to advance tragedy to so great a height than for one coming after Aeschylus to come to the perfection of Sophocles.⁹²

The implication is that Aeschylus had the really hard job of advancing tragedy to greatness.

Likewise, the *Life* has near its beginning a quotation from the *Frogs* in which Aeschylus is

greeted: ἀλλ' ὃ πρῶτος τῶν Ἑλλήνων πυργώσας ῥήματα σεμνὰ / καὶ κοσμήσας τραγικὸν λῆρον

...⁹³ In the *Frogs*, the joke is that all tragedy is nonsense, but Aeschylus dresses it up. However,

the author of the *Life* has taken the lines as evidence for the history of drama. In the hands of his

predecessors, and especially Thespis, tragedy was nonsense; Aeschylus decked it out and

elevated it. Just as Aristotle has good reason to downplay the importance of satyr play and to

allude to it only briefly, he has good reason to downplay Thespis' role and the early nature of

tragedy.

A similar view is reported by Dioscorides,⁹⁴ a contemporary of Eratosthenes,⁹⁵ who writes two relevant epigrams, one on Thespis and one on Aeschylus:

⁹⁰ The codices transmit εἰπόντα, which Wilamowitz emended to εἰσιόντα. But, as R. Janko has suggested to me, ἐπιόντα is preferable: ΕΙΠΟΝΤΑ is an easy mistake for ΕΙΠΙΟΝΤΑ.

⁹¹ Thus the translation in Kannicht *et al.* 1991, 35 (Thespis T19): "Weit schwieriger war es (für Aischylos), die Tragödie nach Thespis, Phrynichos und Choirilos zu solcher Größe voranzubringen, als nach Aischylos aufzutreten und zu der Vollkommenheit des Sophokles zu gelangen."

⁹² p. 333, 19-21 Page.

⁹³ p. 331, 7-8 Page (=Frogs 1004). On the tendency of the *Life* to use the comedies, and, the *Frogs* in particular, for its information, see Lefkowitz 1981, 67-74.

⁹⁴ The most recent treatments of Dioscorides' corpus are Clack 2001 and Vioque 2001 (the most extensive commentary to date). For a general discussion of the poet, see Fraser 1972, 595-607.

⁹⁵ Dioscorides probably flourished in the second half of the third century: his dating is based on a funerary epigram for the poet Machon, who died in around 240 (see Fraser 1972, 595). He was, then, roughly contemporary with Eratosthenes, who, the *Suda* says, was born in around 270.

Θέσπις ὄδε, τραγικὴν ὄς ἀνέπλασα πρῶτος ἀοιδίην
κωμήταις νεαρὰς καινοτομῶν χάριτας,
†Βάκχος ὁ τετριθῦν κατάγοι χορόν, ᾧ τράγος ἄθλων
χῶττικὸς ἦν σύκων ἄρριχος ἄθλος ἔτι.†
εἰ δὲ μεταπλάσσουσι νέοι τάδε, μυρίος αἰὼν
πολλὰ προσευρήσει χᾶτερα· τὰμὰ δ' ἐμά.

I am Thespis here, who first shaped the tragic song,
devising new joys for the villagers,
May Bacchus lead the four-square(?) chorus, for which the goat and
the Attic basket of figs were the prizes still.
But if new folk alter these things, the countless ages
will devise many other things too; but these are mine.⁹⁶

Θέσπιδος εὔρεμα τοῦτο· τὰ δ' ἀγροῖωτιν ἀν' ὕλαν
παίγνια καὶ κώμους τούσδε τελειοτέρους
Αἰσχύλος ἐξύψωσεν, ὁ μὴ σμιλευτὰ χαράξας
γράμματα, χειμάρρω δ' οἷα καταρδόμενα,
καὶ τὰ κατὰ σκηνὴν μετεκαίνισεν. ᾧ στόμα πάντων
δεξιόν, ἀρχαίων ἦσθά τοι ἡμιθέων.

This is the discovery of Thespis; but up through the rustic wood
Aeschylus raised up these trifles and *komoï* to a
more perfect state, inscribing not chiseled letters,
but ones, as it were, watered by a torrent,
and he shaped anew the scenic elements. Oh mouth clever in all
things, you were one of the ancient demigods.⁹⁷

According to Dioscorides, tragedy before Aeschylus in Thespis' time was rustic παίγνια connected with the villagers (κωμῆται) and revelries (κῶμοι); it took Aeschylus to perfect the art and make it more lofty. The resemblances between Dioscorides' epigram on Thespis and the passage quoted above from the *Ars Poetica* have long been noted,⁹⁸ and they are certainly in some ways consonant with Aristotle's description of the development of tragedy in the *Poetics*: it

⁹⁶ A.P. 7.410 (=20 G.-P.). See Gow and Page for the possible textual problems in lines 3 and 4 of this epigram, as well as Glucker 1973 for a fuller discussion of textual emendations to the epigram.

⁹⁷ A.P. 7.411 (=21 G.-P.). For different interpretations and possible emendations, see Gow and Page 1965, *ad. loc.*; Clack 2001, *ad. loc.*; Vioque 2001, *ad. loc.*

⁹⁸ Heinsius was the first to print this epigram in 1612, and he did it in a discussion of the *Ars Poetica*; see Glucker 1973, 85.

emerged from a more lowly and laughable art form, and Aeschylus is the first representative of a more perfected tragedy. Indeed, Glucker argues not only that Dioscorides knew the passage from the *Poetics* well but also that the epigrams have verbal parallels with Aristotle's account.⁹⁹ It may be that he was also using Theophrastus' work *On Aeschylus* or Chamaeleon's *On Thespis*.¹⁰⁰

However, the first of these two epigrams points to the now familiar etymology that tragedy is from the prize for tragedy, the goat (τράγος), a feature of the Eratosthenic account and absent from Aristotle; the first and second refer to the κωμῆται and κῶμοι, respectively, perhaps pointing to the common origin of tragedy and comedy found in the same account. The epigrams certainly emphasize early tragedy's rustic and playful character.¹⁰¹ Indeed, as we saw in chapter 2, some sort of unserious dithyramb performed as part of a κῶμος seems to have preceded tragedy.¹⁰² While the epigram about Thespis has some corruption, it seems to be crediting Thespis with inventing tragedy by advancing or transforming the dithyramb (though the lofty content would only be developed by Aeschylus): as R. Janko has suggested to me, the word τετριθῶν ("four-sided"), one of the textual problems in the first epigram, is perhaps an adjective referring to the innovation of transforming the circular chorus of the dithyramb into the square chorus of tragedy. The unusual phrase κατάγοι χορόν—a collocation to my knowledge unattested elsewhere—is likewise rather mysterious, but I suggest the reference may be to the καταγωγή, a procession, perhaps during the Anthesteria, in which Dionysus was conducted from the harbor into Athens.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Glucker 1973; he also suggests that the epigram on Thespis is reminiscent of Themistius *Or.* XXVI, 316d (=Aristotle *On Poets* fr. 38 Janko).

¹⁰⁰ Cresci 1979, 253; di Castri 1995, 176.

¹⁰¹ Vioque 2001, *ad loc.* suggests that παίγνια indeed refers to the "carácter informal y casi lúdico" of Thespis' tragedy and connects the epigram to Aristotle's account, but resists seeing any references to comedy.

¹⁰² See §2.6.

¹⁰³ On the καταγωγή, see Deubner 1932, 103-4; Pickard-Cambridge 1968, 12-3; Burkert 1985, 196. However, as with so many other rites typically connected with it, Hamilton 1992, 57-8, warns that the καταγωγή and Dionysus' procession from the sea are not certainly associated with the Anthesteria.

Such a procession—a κῶμος—in honor of Dionysus is precisely the kind of circumstance under which the original dithyramps would have been performed. In a passage in the *Bacchae* the chorus of women refers to themselves as Διόνυσον κατάγουσαι, and Seaford sees a reference to the καταγωγή and such dithyramps.¹⁰⁴ In the epigram, if Dionysus is in fact the subject of the verb κατάγοι, the rite is being inverted: rather than the priest and the procession leading Dionysus back, it would be Dionysus himself leading the procession. Dionysus has taken on the identity of the priest in the procession or the διδάσκαλος of the performance. If, however, Thespis is the subject and the nominative Βάκχος is due to the lines' corruption, it is Thespis who is taking on the role of the priest leading the procession for Dionysus. A post-classical inscription from Ionia describes the καταγωγή thus:

τοῖς Καταγωγίοις καθηγήσεται τῶν συγκαταγόντων τὸν Διόνυσον

At the Katagogia, he [sc. the priest] will lead those who conduct Dionysus.¹⁰⁵

Thespis is being identified with the leaders of the dithyramb whose emergence from the chorus produced tragedy.¹⁰⁶ In Dioscorides, then, Thespis' tragedy is an adaptation of the original, unserious dithyramb; in fact, when Aeschylus makes tragedy more lofty, he is elevating what is still a κῶμος. It is, as in the Eratosthenic account, quite close to comedy in its origins and original form.

But a deviation of great importance from the Eratosthenic account is the reference in the first epigram to the prizes for the dramatic performance: not just the goat, but also a basket of dried figs (σύκων ἄρριχος). The latter is absent from Aristotle, Eratosthenes, Varro, and the

¹⁰⁴ Seaford 1981, 270-1, on *Bacchae* 85; cf. Dodds 1960, *ad loc.*

¹⁰⁵ No. 37, 21-2 (2nd century BC) in Sokolowski 1955.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Else 1965, 13, who notes that the relationship between poet and the chorus is analogous to the relationship between actor and chorus: when Thespis emerges as the poet who determines the activities of the chorus, he is also emerging as a single actor interacting with a chorus.

Augustan poets. Indeed, it is mentioned in only two other sources as a prize, Plutarch¹⁰⁷ and the Chronicle on the Parian Marble.¹⁰⁸ The Chronicle says that ἄθλον ἐτέθη πρῶτον ἰσχάδω[v] ἄρσιχο[ς] καὶ οἴνου με[τ]ρητή¹⁰⁹ and that, after Thespis introduced tragedy in Athens, [ἄθλον ἐ]τέθη ὁ [τ]ράγος.¹¹⁰ Cornutus hints at how the figs may feature in the account:

τὸν δὲ τράγον αὐτῷ θύουσι διὰ τὸ λυμαντικὸν δοκεῖν τῶν ἀμπέλων καὶ τῶν συκῶν εἶναι τοῦτο τὸ ζῶον, καθὸ καὶ ἐκδέροντες αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ἄσκον ἐνάλλονται κατὰ τὰς Ἀττικὰς κώμας οἱ γεωργοὶ νεανίσκοι.

They sacrifice the goat to him [sc. Dionysus] because this creature seems to cause ruin to vines and figs, for which reason the young farmers in the Attic villages turn it into a wineskin and leap upon it.¹¹¹

I am inclined to think that Cornutus is using a version that reconciles the accounts by adding to the goat's crimes damage to the figs as well as to the vine. For while Dionysus is indeed associated with figs elsewhere,¹¹² there is no sign that figs entered into the *Erigone*. Most of the *Erigone* has been lost, of course, but one would expect the Augustan and Varronian accounts to somewhere mention figs if indeed they featured in the story; however, as we will see in the next chapter, no figs are to be found there. Nor would this be the only way in which the Eratosthenic and Varronian accounts differ from the account in the Chronicle on the Parian Marble: the Chronicle has the goat established as the prize for tragedy after Thespis introduces it, whereas the Eratosthenic and Varronian accounts put the goat at the very beginnings of drama.

¹⁰⁷ Plutarch *Mor.* 527d: ἡ πατριος τῶν Διονυσίων ἑορτὴ τὸ παλαιὸν ἐπέμπετο δημοτικῶς καὶ ἰλαρῶς· ἀμορεὺς οἴνου καὶ κληματίς, εἶτα τράγον τις εἴλκεν, ἄλλος ἰσχάδων ἄρριχον ἠκολούθει κομίζων, ἐπὶ πᾶσι δ' ὁ φαλλός. Plutarch has the dramatic prizes as elements in the phallic procession during the Dionysia; this may be hinting at a view counter to Aristotle's argument that the origins of comedy are to be connected to the phallic procession, whereas tragedy derived from a wholly different source.

¹⁰⁸ The connection between the Dioscorides epigram and the Chronicle on the Parian Marble is often noted: see Patzer 1962, 21-4; Gow and Page 1965, *ad loc.*; di Castri 1995, 176-7; Vioque 2001, *ad loc.* Dioscorides also seems to owe a debt to the Chronicle in *A.P.* 9.340 (=35 G.-P.); see Gow and Page 1965, *ad loc.*

¹⁰⁹ *FGrH* A39.

¹¹⁰ *FGrH* A43.

¹¹¹ Cornutus p. 60, 20-4 Lang.

¹¹² Hesychius s.v. συκάτης gives this word as an epithet for Dionysus; Sosibius fr. 13 says that Dionysus introduced the fig and is called συκίτης (*sic*) in Sparta.

The Chronicle and related histories correspond, then, to the Eratosthenic account inasmuch as they place the origins of drama in Icaria and etymologize tragedy by way of *τράγος*, but the Chronicle seems to diverge both in the prizes and by placing Susarion and the origins of comedy a few decades before Thespis and tragedy, rather than having them emerge together from a common source.¹¹³ Given Dioscorides' portrayal of Thespis' tragedy as rather comic and that the Chronicle places comedy before tragedy, the account they represent seems to be rather in line with the one represented in Tzetzes and the explanation of the proverb "Nothing to do with Dionysus" quoted above.

As I have suggested, however, aside from the basket of figs and the chronology of the introduction of the prizes,¹¹⁴ they differ less in their descriptions of the origins of drama than in the labels they give to each stage. All of the accounts have a mirthful, pre-scenic, and perhaps abusive stage before comedy and tragedy proper are introduced to Athens. Dioscorides, the Chronicle, Tzetzes, and related accounts call this stage comedy, and the Parian Chronicle, at least, names Susarion as its inventor and sets it anterior to tragedy.¹¹⁵ Even Aristotle admits to this stage, though he resists calling it comedy. As a development on this performance, Thespis introduced a rustic, jesting kind of tragedy that Aeschylus later made lofty. I have suggested that, according to the Eratosthenic view, comedy proper, Old Comedy, perhaps characterized by corrective abuse, also emerged from the previous stage.

It is no surprise that some of the same sources that put Susarion and his abusive, but not necessarily corrective, humor (both of which preceded tragedy according to the Parian Chronicle and related accounts) at the first stage of comedy subscribe to a history of comedy according to

¹¹³ The Chronicle puts Susarion sometime between 582 and 560; Thespis introduces tragedy in around 540.

¹¹⁴ I.e., Dioscorides *A.P.* 7.410 and Plutarch *Mor.* 527d.

¹¹⁵ On Susarion, his name, the verses attributed to him, and his appearance in the Chronicle, see Rusten 2006, 42-4 and 59-60.

which what we call Old Comedy was a subsequent development. The treatises Koster V, XXIV (Diomedes), and Koster XXVII describe Susarion as the inventor of comedy, but make clear that comedy was at that initial stage only humorous and abusive, not corrective, and that its form was undeveloped. Koster V, 12-9, explains:

καὶ αὐτὴ δὲ ἡ παλαιὰ ἑαυτῆς διαφέρει. καὶ γὰρ οἱ ἐν Ἀττικῇ πρῶτον συστησάμενοι τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα τῆς κωμωδίας—ἦσαν δὲ οἱ περὶ Σουσαρίωνα¹¹⁶—καὶ τὰ πρόσωπα εἰσήγον ἀτάκτως, καὶ μόνος ἦν γέλως τὸ κατασκευαζόμενον. ἐπιγενόμενος δὲ ὁ Κρατῖνος κατέστησε μὲν πρῶτον τὰ ἐν τῇ κωμωδίᾳ πρόσωπα μέχρι τριῶν, στήσας τὴν ἀταξίαν, καὶ τῷ χαρίεντι τῆς κωμωδίας τὸ ὠφέλιμον προστέθεικε τοὺς κακῶς πράττοντας διαβάλλων καὶ ὥσπερ δημοσίᾳ μάστιγι τῇ κωμωδίᾳ κολάζων.

And ancient [sc. comedy] differs from itself. For those who first in Attica established the practice of comedy—they are those associated with Susarion—introduced the characters in a disorderly manner, and what was produced was only laughter. Cratinus followed upon them and first established the characters in comedy at three, ending its disorder, and he first added to the charm of comedy utility by mocking wrongdoers and punishing them with his comedy as if with a whipping in public.

Koster XXVII 3, from the *Ansileubus Glossary*, describes a similar development:

sed prior ac vetus comoedia ridicularis extitit; postea civiles vel privatas adgressa materias in dictis atque gestu universorum delicta corripiens in scaenam preferebat, nec vetabatur poetae pessimum quemque describere vel cui<us>libet¹¹⁷ peccata moresque reprehendere. auctor eius <Sus>a[|o]rion¹¹⁸ traditur; sed in fabulas primi eam contulerunt Magnes † † ita, ut non excederent in singulis versus tricenos.

But the earlier old comedy was laughable; afterwards, setting upon public and private materials with words and gestures of the usual sort, it seized upon misdeeds and brought them on stage. It was not forbidden for a poet to mark out each person who was very bad or to reprehend the wrong doings and characters of anyone. Susarion is transmitted as its inventor; but Magnes and ... composed it into stories in such a way that they did not go beyond three hundred verse for each.

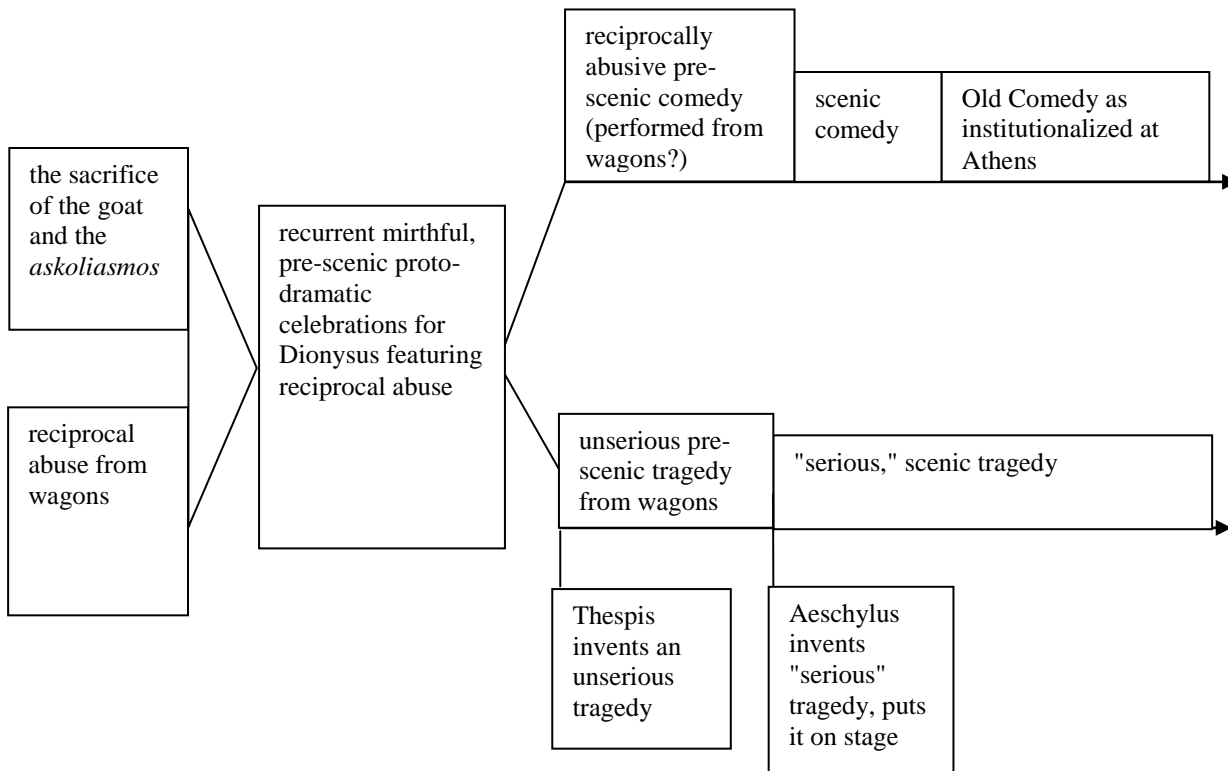
¹¹⁶ As Koster observes, this must have been meant instead of what is given in the manuscripts, Σαννυρίωνα or Σοννυρίωνα.

¹¹⁷ Koster supplements thus.

¹¹⁸ Thus Koster and previous editors.

These sources claim that, while Susarion may have in some sense invented comedy, it was not comedy proper until a later stage of evolution; in this regard, he is very much a Thespis figure. Just as Thespis' tragedy was deficient in form and content, so comedy took additional innovators to make it mature. Koster XXVII says that it was not Susarion, but his successors, who composed the comedies into stories (*fabulae*). If the idea is that Susarion's comedy was the rustic, pre-scenic, mirthful celebrations that evolved into comedy proper and tragedy, and the only question really at issue is whether it ought to be called "comedy," then the theories of the history of comedy are all compatible. Whether the jest that characterized the earliest humor of comedy was corrective or not depends only on such labeling rather than on the history of comedy itself. Figure 3.4 describes this model for the development of drama.

Figure 3.4. The Model of Eratosthenes and Related Accounts for the Development of Drama



There are good reasons why these theories about the origin and nature of comedy and drama are as similar and as compatible as I suggest. The Chronicle on the Parian Marble probably owes much to Peripatetic historiography; Demetrius of Phalerum has been proposed as an important source,¹¹⁹ and his influence was felt not only at Athens but also Alexandria. Eratosthenes himself studied in Athens for some time before immigrating to Alexandria¹²⁰ and can be connected to some of its important schools. He was perhaps best known for his association with the Academy—the *Suda*, in addition to saying that he was nicknamed βῆτα, explains that he was called a second or new Plato (δεύτερον ἢ νέον Πλάτωνα)¹²¹—and Strabo says that Eratosthenes boasted about the philosophers with whom he was surrounded during his time in Athens:

ἐγένοντο γάρ, φησὶν, ὡς οὐδέποτε, κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν ὑφ’ ἓνα περίβολον καὶ μίαν πόλιν οἱ κατ’ Ἀρίστωνα καὶ Ἀρκεσίλαον ἀνθήσαντες φιλόσοφοι

For there were, he [sc. Eratosthenes] says, as never before, in this time in one area and a single city the flourishing philosophers associated with Ariston and Arcesilaus.¹²²

Arcesilaus was a student of Theophrastus but later established the Middle Academy; Ariston of Chios, whom the *Suda* says was a teacher of Eratosthenes, was a Stoic.¹²³ Strabo goes on also to mention that Eratosthenes criticized Bion and claims that he was a student of Zeno of Citium.¹²⁴

Eratosthenes would certainly have been exposed to a range of ideas about the origins and history of comedy and drama: just as the Chronicle on the Parian Marble probably owes much to

¹¹⁹ Rusten 2006, 38 n. 7, following Jacoby 1961, 546.

¹²⁰ For a discussion of his biography, including his teachers and students, see Geus 2002, 18-47.

¹²¹ On Eratosthenes' appellations, see Geus 2002, 31-41.

¹²² Strabo 1.2.2.7-10.

¹²³ *Suda* s.v. Ἐρατοσθένης; Athenaeus 7.281c. On Arcesilaus, see D.L. 4.6; on Ariston of Chios (P.-W. II, 953-6), see D.L. 7.2.

¹²⁴ Strabo 1.2.2.13-22. Strabo also mentions that he associated with a certain Apelles, whose identity is unclear; candidates are a Stoic, an Epicurean, a student of Callimachus, and, most convincingly, a student of Arcesilaus. See Geus 2002, 24.

the philosophical schools of third century Athens, and especially to Peripatetic influence, the Eratosthenic account probably does as well. Indeed, Eratosthenes may have written the *Erigone* while still a resident of Athens¹²⁵ and when he was studying under Arcesilaus in particular. Certainly there is Platonic influence on the *Erigone*.¹²⁶

As was mentioned above, it is unlikely that the account of drama underlying the *Erigone* was described systematically and explicitly in the poem. Allusivity rather than explicit explanation was a likely feature of the poem's style, and in any case it seems to have been rather short: the author of *On the Sublime* calls it a little poem (ποιημάτιον).¹²⁷ As Solmsen observes, it seems far-fetched to imagine that Varro's history of drama, which, as we will see, has many similarities to Eratosthenes', would be based on such a poem;¹²⁸ surely he was instead using some kind of treatise. There is no evidence, however, that Eratosthenes ever wrote such an account, unless it somewhere appeared in the exegetical material in his *Περὶ τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμωδίας*, whose fragments, as we saw, show no signs of addressing this topic.

I suggest, then, that given the close relationship between the Eratosthenic account and the Peripatetic material that I have argued above, Eratosthenes' time spent studying in Athens and the likely provenance of the poem, and the absence of any evidence of a treatise by him on the subject, the account underlying the *Erigone*, which I have been calling Eratosthenic on account of its most influential witness, was not created by Eratosthenes. Instead, it probably arose in Athens and competed with, but did not significantly deviate from, the kind of history preserved on the Parian Marble. Given the history of Eratosthenes' intellectual development, it seems senseless now to draw firm distinctions between a Peripatetic and an Eratosthenic or even an

¹²⁵ Geus 2002, 54.

¹²⁶ Solmsen 1947.

¹²⁷ [Longinus] *On the Sublime* 33.5.

¹²⁸ Solmsen 1947, 273.

Alexandrian account of the origin of comedy and drama: Eratosthenes, though best known for his work at the Library, was, like Demetrius of Phalerum before him, strongly influenced by the main Athenian schools and produced important work while he was affiliated with them. It was because of his production there, after all, that he was later invited to Alexandria to work at the Library.¹²⁹

§3.5. A Kinship among Dithyramb, Comedy, and Satyr Play before Eratosthenes?

I have suggested that Aristotle's history of comedy and the versions associated with Eratosthenes and the Parian Chronicle emerged in Athens and trace comedy to mirthful, abusive performances at celebrations for Dionysus. Aristotle differs from these by insisting that comedy and tragedy developed along separate lines, with tragedy emerging from dithyrambs and comedy from phallic songs. But, as we have seen, this part of Aristotle's account is more philosophical or theoretical than historical, and Aristotle himself alludes to some complications: not only did tragedy develop from an unserious, satyric form, dithyrambs can, like comedy, be vulgar and abusive.¹³⁰ Though it is unfamiliar to us, the unified origin of drama described by Eratosthenes and the rest may not be as innovative or contentious as it seems; on the contrary, Aristotle's model may have been the more radical one.

As we will see in the next chapter, Varro and the Augustan poets used Eratosthenes' model, not Aristotle's. But there are some hints that even in Classical Athens some kinship between comedy, satyr play, and dithyramb (if not explicitly tragedy) was felt. We noted in §2.6

¹²⁹ He was invited to Alexandria by Ptolemy III; see *Suda* s.v. Ἐρατοσθένης. On this invitation, see Fraser 1970, 175-207, and Geus 2002, 26-30. On the connection between the Peripatetic school and Alexandrian scholarship, see Fraser 1972, 320: "[T]he Library ... has unmistakable links with those traditions of the Lyceum which account for the nature and trend of much of the intellectual life of Alexandria, with its emphasis on the collection and comparison of material ... and which at a later date led to the use of the word 'Peripatetic' as equivalent to 'Alexandrian'" (though of the two pieces of evidence for the latter point, one, the case of Satyrus, is very weak; see West 1974). On the debt of Aristarchus, at least, to Aristotle, see Schironi 2009.

¹³⁰ See especially §2.6.

that the dithyramb may have been performed by satyrs and that it could be called a κῶμος in Classical Athens as an archaism; κῶμος is, of course, an etymology given for κωμῳδία as early as Aristotle.¹³¹ One of the two sources for the archaism is the Law of Euegoros, cited in Demosthenes, which forbids taking sureties and seizing property from debtors during certain festivals, including the performances of the City Dionysia. It lists the events:

ἡ πομπή καὶ οἱ παῖδες καὶ ὁ κῶμος καὶ οἱ κωμῳδοὶ καὶ οἱ τραγωδοί

the procession, the boys' [sc. chorus], the *komos*, comedy, and tragedy¹³²

κῶμος must refer to the men's chorus, i.e., dithyramb as institutionalized at the Dionysia. The law may give the events by order of performance.¹³³ If this is so, and my reconstruction of these ancient theories about the origins of drama is correct, then this order also corresponds to their order of development, with serious tragedy emerging after komastic revelry and comic performance.¹³⁴ In any case, the word κῶμος alone may have connoted the dithyramb's potentially unserious character and pointed to a connection between it and comedy.

That the word κῶμος could have such implications in Classical Athens is corroborated by a suggestion of C. W. Marshall regarding the production of Euripides' *Alcestis* in 438. The *Alcestis* was the fourth play of the tetralogy, the slot normally reserved for satyr plays, but it does not have a chorus of satyrs. Marshall suggests that Euripides playfully misunderstood a recent law forbidding κωμῳδεῖν, the law of Morychides.¹³⁵ This law was probably intended to ban abuse by

¹³¹ Aristotle *Poetics* 3.1448a37.

¹³² Demosthenes *Or.* 2.10. The law is undated, and it is unclear when it was passed. The other source that uses κῶμος for the men's chorus is *IG II²* 2318.

¹³³ See Winkler and Zeitlin 1989, 4-5 (with n. 3). However, the order of performance remains controversial. See also Csapo and Slater 1995, 107.

¹³⁴ If this is the case, then the order of performance perhaps exerted some influence on theory, just as satyr play's connection to the tragic trilogy in performance pointed to a genealogical connection between them.

¹³⁵ This law is attested at Σ *Acharnians* 67.

name in comedy, but Euripides used the restriction on κῶμοδῆϊν as an opportunity to strike the κῶμος of satyrs and produce a satyr-less satyr play with the *Alcestis*.¹³⁶

Performers dressed as satyrs may have participated in the dithyramb before it shed most of the trappings of Dionysiac revelry when it was still processional (i.e., a κῶμος proper).¹³⁷ But, based on the visual evidence, there is a particular awareness starting in the 430s, the decade during which the *Alcestis* was produced, that satyrs are intimately connected to the κῶμος and, by extension, comedy.¹³⁸ A number of vases produced between 440 and 400 depict satyrs named Komos, sometimes engaging in revelry.¹³⁹ But most suggestive of all is an extraordinary bell-krater produced around 440 (figure 3.5) that depicts Hephaestus' return, a common motif on black-figure and red-figure vases.¹⁴⁰ According to the myth, Hera ejected Hephaestus from Olympus, and, in revenge, he constructed and sent to her a magical throne that bound her once she sat down in it. Of the gods, Hephaestus would parley only with Dionysus, who got Hephaestus drunk and assuaged his anger. These vases usually depict Dionysus and his retinue, typically composed of satyrs, conducting Hephaestus to Olympus.¹⁴¹ This is a scene that would very much lend itself to dithyramb: a drunken and triumphant procession—a κῶμος—of Dionysus and his satyrs (such a scene would also resemble, of course, Icarius' drunken

¹³⁶ Marshall 2000, 229-238; cf. §6.3.

¹³⁷ Seaford 1976; Seaford 1984, 10-6; and Seaford 1994, 267-8. See §2.6 on the change of the dithyramb from processional to stationary.

¹³⁸ I owe the insight that satyrs, satyr play, and κῶμοι came to be closely linked to comedy during this period to a paper delivered by C. Shaw at the APA in 2013 entitled, "Euripides' *Alcestis*, *komos*-song, and the Decline of Satyr Drama"; this paper also brought to my attention some of the vase paintings mentioned below. However, my interpretation of the evidence differs substantially from his, which is that Euripides himself and his application of the law against κῶμοδῆϊν to satyr play *created* the connection between comedy and satyr play. I suggest instead that Euripides could apply the law of Morychides to the *Alcestis* precisely because there was already a sense, which perhaps emerged in the beginning of that decade, that comedy and satyr play (as well as dithyramb) were intimately related—indeed, perhaps even had a common origin.

¹³⁹ A character labeled Komos is attested on 18 vases between 440 and 400; of these characters, sixteen are satyrs but three are children. On these vases, see Smith 2007, who conveniently collates the evidence on p. 153.

¹⁴⁰ For this motif in black-figure painting, see Carpenter 1986, 13-29; Hedreen 1992, 13-30. For red-figure, see Carpenter 1997, 41-9.

¹⁴¹ For this story, see Pausanias 1.20.3. In two cases, there are not satyrs but padded dancers. On this substitution, see Hedreen 1992, 130-6.

procession as he introduced wine).¹⁴² This particular depiction has a surprising member in the retinue.

Figure 3.5. Paris, Louvre G 421¹⁴³ (after *LIMC* VI.2, pl. 42)



Though they are illegible in figure 3.5, names are written above the characters. At the rear of the retinue on the left-most side is Hephaestus himself. On the right-most side, a satyr called Marsyas playing an aulos leads the group. Dionysus, holding a thyrsus in his right hand and a mixing bowl in his left, walks in front of Hephaestus. And, in front of Dionysus and just behind Marsyas, holding a thyrsus and mixing bowl herself, walks a woman labeled [K]ΩΜΩΙΔΙΑ. Comedy personified joins as a participant in a scene that is inextricably linked to Dionysiac processions and to satyric revelry—to dithyramb and to satyr play. Her head is thrown back in song; as she walks in the κῶμος, she sings an ᾠδή. The painter makes comedy part of the same complex as dithyramb and satyr play. Indeed, the return of Hephaestus myth is the subject

¹⁴² On the role of Dionysiac ritual in the visual depictions of the myth, see Hedreen 2004.

¹⁴³ *ARV*² 1037.1(=*LIMC* VI, Komodia 2).

of both satyr play and comedy.¹⁴⁴ Tragedy does not appear here, it is true. But, as we have seen, even Aristotle acknowledges that tragedy evolved from just this sort of satyric performance.

When Eratosthenes, the Parian Chronicle, and related accounts suggest a common origin for the different genres of drama, they may have drawn on an idea that was fomenting in Classical Athens. This idea was that comedy and satyric performance (and perhaps tragedy by extension) are intimately connected in celebrating Dionysus and representing his κῶμος. This is why Euripides could use a law against κωμῳδεῖν to eject the chorus of satyrs from a slot normally reserved for satyr plays; why the personification of comedy could be depicted in a scene, the return of Hephaestus, long connected with satyrs and Dionysiac processions; why satyr play and comedy could treat the same myths; and, for that matter, why comedies could have choruses of satyrs.¹⁴⁵ The proposition that all drama emerged from a unified source in mirthful celebrations for Dionysus may not have been as adventurous as it may now seem to us. On the contrary, the theories of Eratosthenes and the related accounts may have been drawing on a sense already attested in the 430s that the genres of drama were interrelated.

The antecedents of these ideas may be even earlier. A Corinthian skyphos (figure 3.6), produced ca. 590, depicts on the one side Heracles battling the hydra and on the other six padded dancers.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Achaëus wrote a satyr play called *Hephaestus* according to Athenaeus 12.641d; see Sutton 1974, 116. According to Photius s.v. Ἡρακῆος δεσμῶν ὑπὸ υἱέος, Epicharmus wrote a play with the double title Κωμῶσαι ἢ Ἡφαίστος.

¹⁴⁵ See §6.3.

¹⁴⁶ Paris, Louvre CA 3004. On the provocative but uncertain relationship between the padded dancers (sometimes called Corinthian komasts) and drama, see Green 2007.

Figure 3.6. Paris, Louvre CA 3004 (after Trendall and Webster 1971, I.5)



There are six dancers on the skyphos, but only five are labeled. As Trendall and Webster dryly note, "These are not the names of ordinary men."¹⁴⁷ From left to right, they are Lordios ("Bendy"), Whadesios ("Pleasing"), Paichnios ("Playful"), Kōmios ("Reveller"), and Loxios ("Crooked"). They are not satyrs, but they are laughable characters performing an amusing dance contiguous with a scene from mythology. As Steinhart argues, the name Komios, the potentially mimetic dance associated with myth, and the provenance (Corinth, which is connected to Arion and the origins of the dithyramb) point to a connection between the dance on the skyphos and dithyramb.¹⁴⁸ There may have also seemed to be a connection with comedy. We have already noted the etymological connection between κῶμος and κωμῳδία; in addition to this, the Dorians claim to have invented comedy, as we shall see in chapter 6. Finally, the Parian Chronicle has Susarion inventing comedy in Athens sometime after 582 and before 560,¹⁴⁹ at most a decade or two after the production of this painting (and by some traditions Susarion was said to be a Dorian himself).

I do not mean to suggest here that comedy actually emerged from the performance of such Corinthian padded dancers or that theorization about the history of drama dates so early;

¹⁴⁷ Trendall and Webster 1971, 18.

¹⁴⁸ Steinhart 2007, 209-17.

¹⁴⁹ *FGrH* A39.

drama was not even institutionalized at Athens until later in the sixth century. But I do suggest that well over a century before Euripides used the law against κωμῳδεῖν to eliminate his κῶμος of satyrs, before Paris, Louvre G 421, which shows comedy participating in a κῶμος with a satyr, was painted, and before the series of vases depicting satyrs named Komos started appearing in Athens, many pieces that could have enabled the connection of comedy to dithyramb and satyr play, the supposed precursors to tragedy, were already in place. If a sense did emerge in Athens in the 430s that the genres of drama were intimately related, it may have been suggested by such evidence.

§3.6. Successors to the Eratosthenic Account: An Alexandrian Approach to the History of Comedy?

The *Erigone* may, then, not be representative of a uniquely Alexandrian mode; even if it was written in Alexandria, it owes much to the Athenian schools. Given our other Alexandrian witness, Dioscorides, this ought not surprise us: as we have seen, the account he uses is akin to the one in the Parian Chronicle, which owes a great debt to Peripatetic scholarship. As I noted above, the Alexandrian theories are surely not discontinuous with these others. On the contrary, they probably drew from and expanded on these earlier theories, and a certain treatise on comedy seems to prove this. The treatise, Koster III, must have been enabled by and evolve from the histories of the evolution of tragedy, comedy, and comic abuse described above.¹⁵⁰ Like the

¹⁵⁰ On Koster III, see Nesselrath 1990, 45-51 and 174-5; Nesselrath 2000, 238-40; Harvey 2000, 114-5; Storey 2003, 42-3 and esp. 53-6; Konstantakos 2000, 173-196. Nesselrath and Konstantakos both suppose that the treatise is Alexandrian, the former primarily on the grounds that the treatise's "ästhetisch-literarhistorische" approach (Nesselrath 1990, 45) contrasts so strongly with the historical and ethical approaches among the Peripatetics and in the other treatises, and the latter because he supposes that such learning as the treatise exhibits must be owed to the Alexandrian library (Konstantakos 2000, 173). Indeed, Konstantakos 2000, 186-7, suggests that the treatise's information about the number of Antiphanes' plays may have come from Demetrius of Phalerum, who wrote a work περὶ Ἀντιφάνου (D.L. 5.81) and who, as has already been mentioned, fled to Alexandria, presumably bringing his writings with him.

accounts discussed above and like Aristotle's, it does not take corrective abuse, or even abuse, to be the *sine qua non* of comedy. For this treatise, Comedy's civic engagement and personal abuse are aesthetic attributes that are not original to the earliest form of comedy and that in fact fade away. And I will argue that, like the accounts discussed above, it supposes that the developments of comedy and tragedy are inextricably connected.

In the introduction to Koster III, its author says that Susarion invented comedy and that the etymology of κωμῳδία is from κῶμαι, though he adds that some say there were no κῶμαι around Athens but demes and thus it is from κωμάζειν.¹⁵¹ The treatise, despite its awareness of Epicharmus,¹⁵² seems to be implying that comedy emerged in Athens: instead of giving an alternative location for comedy's origin, it gives an alternative etymology for comedy. Nor does it note that Susarion himself is in some sources Megarian. The tradition that Susarion was either from Attica or was an immigrant to Attica must be implicit. It also explains that the term τρυγῳδία must derive from the prize at the Lenaea (τρύξις as the new wine) or from the wine lees that the earliest actors used in place of masks (τρύξις as the dregs).¹⁵³ All these propositions are by now quite familiar to us from the theories discussed above.

On these points, this treatise resembles the Eratosthenic and related histories, and it must be using one of them. Where it deviates and exhibits its innovations is in how it treats the development of comedy. Whereas the accounts discussed above address the general trends of comedy's development and locate the main factors in myth and ritual, this treatise emphasizes the roles of comic poets in the development of comedy. In this regard, it seems to owe a debt to Aristotle's methodology: poetry develops within itself as poets imitate, add to, or subtract from their predecessors' art. The contingencies of history, politics, or geography play no part in the

¹⁵¹ Koster III, 1-5.

¹⁵² Koster III, 12.

¹⁵³ Koster III, 5-7.

author's analysis. Personal abuse appears and disappears from comedy not because of, e.g., the decline of the democracy, but because the art evolves.

Koster III describes the development comedy by listing the most important poets at each stage in chronological order and discussing their careers. It is remarkable for the learning it brings to bear on the history of comedy: it describes the nationalities, dates, styles, influence on other poets, number of plays, and number of preserved plays of what it calls the most noteworthy (ἀξιολογώτατοι) poets of Old, Middle, and New Comedy. Indeed, of the treatises, this author is the only one to mention the poets Crates and Antiphanes.¹⁵⁴ For Old Comedy, it describes Epicharmus,¹⁵⁵ Magnes, Cratinus, Crates, Pherecrates, Phrynichus, Eupolis, and Aristophanes; for Middle, Antiphanes; for New, Philemon, Menander, and Diphilus. While this treatise is probably an epitome and the entries on these poets may have been abridged, the sequence on the Old Comic poets is in fact largely intact: the treatise introduces it by listing the most noteworthy poets of Old Comedy, and while the entry on Phrynichus is badly damaged and missing most of its information, every poet on that list has an entry.¹⁵⁶ The introductory section to the entries on Middle Comedy, in contrast, mentions two noteworthy poets, Antiphanes and Stephanus,¹⁵⁷ but only Antiphanes' entry remains. The introductory section on New Comedy lists six poets, but entries for only the three mentioned above remain.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ A bit surprisingly, Plato *comicus* is unmentioned. Nesselrath 1990, 48, notes that the text is probably an epitome, though this makes it all the more striking that Antiphanes appears and not Plato, who is quite often given as an important Middle Comic poet in these treatises. However, while Plato's comedies foreshadow certain fixtures of Middle Comedy (see Rosen 1995), he certainly was an Old, and not Middle, Comic poet, despite the assertion of many of the other treatises. This is perhaps another indicator of its author's erudition.

¹⁵⁵ His name has fallen out from the text, but it was supplemented by Dindorf; this must be correct, given that Epicharmus is mentioned earlier in the treatise as the first in a list of Old Comic poets.

¹⁵⁶ Koster III, 12-3. On Phrynichus and this entry, see Harvey 2000.

¹⁵⁷ Koster III, 46. "Stephanus" has long been suspect, and Dobree emended the name to Alexis.

¹⁵⁸ In addition to Philemon, Menander, and Diphilus, it lists Philippides, Posidippus, and Apollodoros.

The organization of Koster III is above all chronological,¹⁵⁹ but there is also a second mode of analysis that reveals its dependence on the Eratosthenic and related models. The treatise says that Cratinus, who is the third comic poet described after Epicharmus and Magnes, is more perfect than his predecessors: he is ποιητικώτατος, and the next three Old Comic poets mentioned, Crates, Pherecrates,¹⁶⁰ and Eupolis, are in part described in terms of how their style and career relate to Cratinus'.¹⁶¹ He is presented as a pioneer who inherited an imperfect art, improved it, and provided the model for his successors until the next innovator came along, Aristophanes, who is, unlike his own immediate predecessors, not described in terms of his relationship to Cratinus.

Personal abuse is mentioned in this context: the treatise does say that Pherecrates desisted from his predecessors' abuse and that Eupolis exhibited abuse.¹⁶² But, unlike some of the treatises we will see in chapter 5, abuse is not the means by which the treatise tracks the development of comedy. It makes no claims about how comic abuse affected audiences and how that relationship influenced the development of the genre. On the contrary, personal abuse is one of many artistic attributes that appear and disappear as the poets influence each other. As in Aristotle's philosophical account, poetry develops within itself.

But, unlike Aristotle, the treatise does not only suppose that the comic poets build upon each other. It also connects the development of comedy to the development of tragedy. It says

¹⁵⁹ And, indeed, the poets are given in the correct chronological order: see Nesselrath 1990, 50 n. 50.

¹⁶⁰ Phrynichus falls between Pherecrates and Eupolis, but, as has been mentioned, his entry is badly damaged.

¹⁶¹ The treatise explains, for example, that Crates was an actor for and then imitator of Cratinus, that he first introduced drunks onstage, and that he was γελοῖος and ἕλαρός; that Pherecrates, in turn, was an actor for and then imitator of Crates and was well known for introducing novel matters in his plays. Eupolis was vigorous in his language, imitated Cratinus, and displayed much abusiveness and clumsiness: πολὺ γοῦν λοῖδορον καὶ σκαιὸν ἐπιφαίνει. On this judgment of Eupolis see Storey 2003, 43, who notes that σκαιὸν is not elsewhere used in literary criticism and perhaps αἰσχρόν should be read, per the emendations of Geel and Kaibel (he repeats this suggestion in Storey 2011, 21 n. 3, the new Loeb of the fragments of Old Comedy). However, while it is not literary criticism of this kind, Polyphemus is criticized as a σκαιός singer at Euripides *Cyclops* 490.

¹⁶² Koster III, 30 and 34-5.

that Cratinus composed in the style of Aeschylus (κατασκευάζων εἰς τὸν Αἰσχύλου χαρακτήρα).¹⁶³ Cratinus is conceived of here in the context of comedy as Aeschylus was in the context of tragedy, and this treatise and the treatises related to it construct a history of comedy that depends on tragedy's development. If this is so, the account in Koster III and the related treatises must develop from the theories discussed above: while it moves beyond them in emphasizing the roles of individual poets in the development of comedy (and this is no surprise, given that those accounts focus on the earliest phases of comedy), this connection between the development of comedy and tragedy is a projection of the relationship that the theories discussed above assert. The Eratosthenic and related accounts held that comedy and tragedy originated from the same source and developed alongside each other; Koster III and its relations assume such an ongoing symbiotic relationship in the history of comedy.

As we have seen, Thespis' tragedy was something small and laughable, and Aeschylus made tragedy σεμνή and brought it εἰς τοσόνδε μεγέθους.¹⁶⁴ As we have also seen, comedy is in some cases described as undergoing an evolution from something disorganized and anarchic to something more evolved, even if the terminology about what comedy is and what its periods are is sometimes inconsistent. This idea appears in several of the other treatises on comedy. Koster XXVII, for example, explains that Susarion invented comedy and that Magnes first composed it into stories (*fabulae*), though they were originally very short;¹⁶⁵ Koster V says that Susarion and the early comic poets pursued only laughter and introduced characters in a disorderly manner (ἀτάκτως),¹⁶⁶ as does another treatise that describes the development with nearly identical

¹⁶³ Koster III, 24. For the connection between Cratinus and Aeschylus in Cratinus' own work, see Bakola 2010, 28-9.

¹⁶⁴ *Vita Aeschyli* p. 333, 19-21 Page, quoted above.

¹⁶⁵ Koster XXVII 3: *auctor eius <Sus>a[|o]rion traditur; sed in fabulas primi eam contulerunt Magnes † † ita, ut non excederent in singulis versus tricenos* (quoted more fully and translated above).

¹⁶⁶ Koster V, 13-5: καὶ αὐτὴ δὲ ἡ παλαιὰ ἐαυτῆς διαφέρει. καὶ γὰρ οἱ ἐν Ἀττικῇ πρῶτον συστησάμενοι τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα τῆς κωμωδίας—ἦσαν δὲ οἱ περὶ Σουσαρίωνα—καὶ τὰ πρόσωπα εἰσήγον ἀτάκτως, καὶ μόνος ἦν γέλως τὸ κατασκευαζόμενον (quoted more fully and translated above).

language.¹⁶⁷ Diomedes says that the earliest comic poets, who for him are Susarion, Magnes, and Mullus, engaged in crude jesting before Cratinus, Aristophanes, and Eupolis came along.¹⁶⁸ Koster V and XIb both give Cratinus as the one who first took steps to transform the genre, explaining that that he not only added a useful element by incorporating the mockery of wrongdoers but also that he ended its disorder and set the number of characters at three (κατέστησε μὲν πρῶτον τὰ ἐν τῇ κωμῳδίᾳ πρόσωπα μέχρι τριῶν, στήσας τὴν ἀταξίαν).¹⁶⁹ The idea must be that, prior to Cratinus, comedy did not have coherent plots with a set number of characters, but rather the earliest comic poets brought on many characters of many types and pursued only laughter.

Such developments in comedy parallel the developments in tragedy: as I have suggested, Susarion was imagined as a figure like Thespis, who invented an art form that was missing essential elements and had to be perfected. Here, Cratinus is very much like Aeschylus in that he transforms his genre's content and form. Aeschylus turned away from small and laughable material, whereas Cratinus incorporated more coherent plots, a more refined humor, and corrective personal mockery. Aeschylus added one or in some accounts even two actors;¹⁷⁰ Cratinus limits the disorder of his predecessors and sets the number of actors to three.¹⁷¹ Such a model underlies the treatise under discussion here, Koster III, and its association of Cratinus and Aeschylus. Indeed, Cratinus not only resembles Aeschylus in these accounts, but is an imitator of him. This also explains this treatise's treatment of Aristophanes.

¹⁶⁷ Koster XIb, 58-66.

¹⁶⁸ Koster XXIV, 46-59: *iocularia quaedam minus scite ac venuste pronuntiabant.*

¹⁶⁹ Koster V, 15-7.

¹⁷⁰ Aristotle in *Poetics* 4.1449a15-8 and *On Poets* frs. 38, 41, 42 Janko says Aeschylus added a second actor; *Vita Aeschyli* p. 333, 11-4 Page says that Aeschylus added the third actor as well, though it notes that Dichaearchus, like Aristotle, attributes the introduction of a third actor to Sophocles.

¹⁷¹ This treatment of Cratinus is a marked difference from Aristotle's account. There, Crates gives order to Athenian comedy.

Unlike his immediate predecessors, Aristophanes is not connected to Cratinus. Rather, he is said to be an imitator of Euripides:

Ἀριστοφάνης Φιλίππου Ἀθηναῖος. μακρῶ λογιώτατος Ἀθηναίων καὶ εὐφυῖα πάντας ὑπεραίρων, ζήλω δὲ Εὐριπίδου ††, τοῖς δὲ μέλεσι λεπτότερος.

Aristophanes, the son of Philippus, an Athenian: he was by far the most eloquent of the Athenians and exceeded them all in his excellence, with his emulation of Euripides . . . , and he was more clever in his songs.¹⁷²

With Aristophanes, the Aeschylean/Cratinean line ends; he begins a Euripidean line. The poet to whom Aristophanes is being compared with *λεπτότερος* is lost, but surely the comparison was to either Cratinus, who is the major innovator preceding Aristophanes, or Eupolis, who is in this treatise a close follower of Cratinus and whose entry immediately precedes Aristophanes.

Indeed, Aristophanes is regularly portrayed as remarkable for perfecting the art of Old Comedy by avoiding the vices of his predecessors, especially Cratinus and Eupolis. Platonius, e.g., describes him thus:

οὔτε γὰρ πικρὸς λίαν ἐστὶν ὥσπερ ὁ Κρατῖνος οὔτε χαρίεις ὥσπερ ὁ Εὐπόλις, ἀλλ' ἔχει καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας τὸ σφοδρὸν τοῦ Κρατῖνου καὶ τὸ τῆς ἐπιτρεχούσης χάριτος Εὐπόλιδος.

For he [sc. Aristophanes] is neither too biting like Cratinus nor too charming like Eupolis, but he has the vehemence of Cratinus against those who do wrong and the fluent charm of Eupolis.¹⁷³

Koster V, which says that Cratinus improved on his predecessors by settling the disorder of comedy and adding a useful element, describes Aristophanes as perfecting Old Comedy:

¹⁷² Koster III, 36-7.

¹⁷³ Koster II, 15-7 (=p. 39-40, 17-21, in Perusino 1989). On the terminology and methodology of this comparison, see Perusino 1989, 20-4; on Platonius' reliability, especially regarding what he says of Aristophanes' last plays, see Perusino 1987, 61-84.

ἀλλ' ἔτι μὲν καὶ οὗτος τῆς ἀρχαιότητος μετεῖχε καὶ ἡρέμα πως τῆς ἀταξίας. ὁ μὲντοι γε Ἀριστοφάνης, μεθοδεύσας τεχνικώτερον τῶν μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ τὴν κωμωδίαν, ἐνέλαμψεν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐπίσημος ὀφθείς ...

But he [sc. Cratinus] still had a share of the old style and a bit of disorder. Aristophanes, however, devised his comedy more artfully than his contemporaries and shone forth and was seen as remarkable among them all ...¹⁷⁴

The *Life* of Aristophanes makes much the same claim: Cratinus and Eupolis were the most important preceding poets of Old Comedy, but their art was deficient. Aristophanes brought it to a more perfect state:

πρῶτος δοκεῖ τὴν κωμωδίαν ἔτι πλανωμένην τῇ ἀρχαίᾳ ἀγωγῇ ἐπὶ τὸ χρησιμώτερον καὶ σεμνότερον μεταγαγεῖν, πικρότερόν τε καὶ αἰσχρότερον Κρατίνου καὶ Εὐπόλιδος βλασφημούντων ἢ ἔδει.

He [sc. Aristophanes] first seems to have transformed comedy when it was still wandering in the ancient way into something more useful and lofty, when Cratinus and Eupolis spoke more bitterly and shamefully than was appropriate.¹⁷⁵

This language—ἐπὶ τὸ χρησιμώτερον καὶ σεμνότερον μεταγαγεῖν—certainly sounds rather like the evolution of tragedy in some of the sources discussed above.¹⁷⁶ Euripides is credited likewise with perfecting his art form. In his biography of Euripides, Satyrus writes,

... [ἀλ]λά καὶ [ἡ]ξεν καὶ ἐ[τε]λείωσεν ὥστε τοῖς μετ' αὐτὸν ὑπερβολὴν μὴ λιπεῖν.

... but he even improved it and perfected it so that he did not leave a chance to surpass him to those who came after him.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Koster V, 15-22. cf XIb, 65-6, which says the same thing in very similar language.

¹⁷⁵ Koster XXVIII, 2-5. Koster XXIXa, 5-6 is quite similar to that account.

¹⁷⁶ *Poetics* 1449a19-21: διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν ὡς ἀπεσεμνύθη; Dioscorides *A.P.* 7.411 (=21 G.-P.): τὰ κατὰ σκηνὴν μετεκαίνισεν; [Plutarch] *De proverbii Alexandrinorum* 30: <ἐπὶ τὸ> αὐστηρότερον μετῆλθον.

¹⁷⁷ Satyrus fr. 8 col. 2, 3-8. The column is damaged before this sentence begins. Thomas Magister in his *Life of Aristophanes* says practically the same thing of Aristophanes: μᾶλλον δὲ οὐδὲ τοῖς ἐπιγινόμενοις παρήκεν ὑπερβολὴν (Koster XXXIII 1, 5-6).

In Koster III and the related accounts, comedy is imagined as developing alongside and symbiotically with tragedy, with Cratinus connected to Aeschylus and Aristophanes to Euripides. Sophocles is absent here, though he, like Eupolis,¹⁷⁸ has a rather unstable position in the tradition. He is indeed sometimes credited with bringing tragedy nearer perfection,¹⁷⁹ and in particular with adding a third actor.¹⁸⁰ But that is not unanimously reported; the *Life* of Aeschylus claims that it was in fact Aeschylus who added the third actor and emphasizes that Aeschylus had the really difficult job of advancing tragedy to greatness from its more humble origins.¹⁸¹ The inclusion of Sophocles would also disrupt the binary construction of archaic/new, staid/innovative, or imperfect/perfected, which is an important reason why Aristophanes himself excludes Sophocles from the contest in the *Frogs*. There, Sophocles yields to Aeschylus; indeed, the *Life* of Sophocles says that he was Aeschylus' student. The Aristophanes/Euripides parallel is also quite natural: Aristophanes, of course, parodied Euripides extensively, and the connection between the two was felt in their own day, with Cratinus famously coining the term εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζειν, conflating the two poets.¹⁸² Satyrus, too, is well aware of the connection,

¹⁷⁸ As we have seen, in Koster III and XXVIII, he is set alongside Cratinus and is stylistically similar; elsewhere, he is regarded as an exponent of a less bitter form of comedy (Koster II; Koster XVIIIa). On these different strands in the reception of Eupolis, see Nesselrath 2000, 233-46, and especially Storey 2003, 40-6. This is perhaps a natural feature of an evolutionary approach to the development of comedy: if the model is that Cratinus' comedy evolved into Eupolis' and that evolved into Aristophanes', who fixed the faults of the former two and perfected the art, then the similarities between Eupolis and Cratinus, and in particular their shared fault (excessive personal abuse), would be of primary interest. Koster II (Platonius), which opposes Cratinus to Eupolis, is in fact notable because it does not describe comedy's evolution through these three poets, but instead treats them as representative of different comic styles: Cratinus is one extreme, Eupolis is the other, and Aristophanes falls nicely in the middle.

¹⁷⁹ *Vita Aeschyli* reports that Sophocles was more perfect than Aeschylus: ὅτω δὲ δοκεῖ τελεώτερος τραγωδίας ποιητῆς Σοφοκλῆς γεγονέναι, ὀρθῶς μὲν δοκεῖ (p. 333, 17-8 Page).

¹⁸⁰ Aristotle *Poetics* 4.1449a15; *Vita Aeschyli* 3.11 says that Dicaearchus had the same belief as his teacher; *Vita Sophoclis* 4.

¹⁸¹ *Vita Aeschyli* p. 333, 19-21 Page: πολλῶ χαλεπώτερον ἢ ἐπὶ Θεσπιδι Φρυγίῳ τε καὶ Χοιρίῳ εἰς τοσόνδε μεγέθους τὴν τραγωδίαν προαγαγεῖν ἢ ἐπὶ Αἰσχύλῳ εἰσιόντα εἰς τὴν Σοφοκλέους ἐλθεῖν τελειότητα (translated above).

¹⁸² Fr. 342 K.-A.: τίς δὲ σύ; κομψός τις ἔροίτο θεατῆς. ὑπολεπτολόγος, γνωμοδιώκτης, εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων. See Nesselrath 1993, 185, on this word.

and immediately following the passage quoted above, in which he says that Euripides perfected tragedy, he writes:

[κ]ατὰ μὲν οὖν [τ]ὴν τέχνην [ἀ]νήρ τοιοῦτος· διὸ καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης ἐπιθυμεῖ τὴν γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ μετρηῆσαι "δι' ἧς τὰ λ[επ]τὰ ῥήματ' [ἐξ]εσμ[ή]χεται."

Well, he [sc. Euripides] was such a kind of man in his art: for this reason Aristophanes longed to take measure of that tongue of his "through which his clever speech was polished."¹⁸³

If Koster III and the related accounts rely on a model for the development of drama that connects the evolution of tragedy to comedy and the art of Aristophanes to Euripides, then this is a significant piece of proof in favor of a suggestion that Nesselrath makes in order to reconcile three conflicting statements about the origins of New Comedy and New Comic devices.¹⁸⁴

The first statement is Satyrus', who attributes their origins (or at least perfection) to Euripides:

τ[ὰ κ]ατὰ τὰς π[ε]ριπτείας, β[ι]α[σ]μοὺς παρθ[έ]νων, ὑποβολὰς παιδίων, ἀναγνωρισμοὺς διὰ τε δακτυλίων καὶ διὰ δεραίων, ταῦτα γάρ ἐστι δῆπου τὰ συνέχοντα τὴν νεωτέραν κωμωδίαν, ἃ πρὸς ἄκρον ἤγα[γ]εν Εὐριπίδης.

The devices involving reversals, rapes of maidens, foundling children, and recognitions through rings and through necklaces—for these are the things which make up New Comedy—are what Euripides brought to their zenith.

The second is from a *Life* of Aristophanes, which says something similar of its subject near the beginning of its account:

¹⁸³ Satyrus fr. 8 col. 2, 9-19, quoting Aristophanes fr. 656 K.-A.

¹⁸⁴ Nesselrath 1993.

πρῶτος δὲ καὶ τῆς νέας κωμωδίας τὸν τρόπον ἐπέδειξεν ἐν τῷ Κωκάλῳ, ἐξ οὗ τὴν ἀρχὴν λαβόμενοι Μένανδρός τε καὶ Φιλήμων ἐδραματούργησαν.

But he [sc. Aristophanes] even first indicated the style of New Comedy in the *Cocalus*, from which Menander and Philemon took their start and composed their dramas.¹⁸⁵

The *Life* expands on this towards the end:

ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ αἴτιος ζήλου τοῖς νέοις κωμικοῖς, λέγω δὴ Φιλήμονι καὶ Μενάνδρῳ. ψηφίσματος γὰρ γενομένου χορηγικοῦ, ὥστε μὴ ὀνομαστὶ κωμωδεῖν τινα, καὶ τῶν χορηγῶν οὐκ ἀντεχόντων πρὸς τὸ χορηγεῖν, καὶ παντάπασιν ἐκλειοιπυίας τῆς ὕλης τῶν κωμωδιῶν διὰ τούτων αὐτῶν— αἴτιον γὰρ κωμωδίας τὸ σκώπτειν τινάς—ἐγράψε κωμωδίαν τινὰ Κώκαλον, ἐν ᾗ εἰσάγει φθορὰν καὶ ἀναγνωρισμὸν καὶ ἄλλα πάντα, ἃ ἐζήλωσε Μένανδρος. πάλιν δὲ ἐκλειοιπότης καὶ τοῦ χορηγεῖν τὸν Πλοῦτον γράψας, εἰς τὸ διαναπαύεσθαι τὰ σκηνικὰ πρόσωπα καὶ μετεσκευάσθαι ἐπιγράφει "χοροῦ" φθεγγόμενος ἐν ἐκείνοις, ἃ καὶ ὀρῶμεν τοὺς νέους οὕτως ἐπιγράφοντας ζήλω Ἀριστοφάνους.

He was even the cause of imitation for the New Comic poets, I mean for Philemon and Menander. For after there was the decree about the chorus so that they did not mock anyone by name and after the choral producers did not hold out when it came to producing choruses, and the material for comedy through these very events had in every way disappeared—for mocking individuals is the reason for comedy—he [sc. Aristophanes] wrote a comedy called the *Cocalus*, in which he introduced rape and recognition and all the other things which Menander imitated. And again, since the production of choruses ceased, when he wrote the *Wealth* on the occasions of giving the play's characters a break or changing their costumes he wrote, "for the chorus," saying in those places what we also see the New Comic poets write in this way in emulation of Aristophanes.¹⁸⁶

According to the *Life*, Aristophanes is the most important predecessor of New Comedy. He is the precursor of the New Comic poets not only in that he perfected Old Comedy and stands at the point of its eclipse, or even in that his last plays proved an important model for them, but in that he even developed the plot devices that the New Comic poets used throughout their plays. These are the very plot devices Satyrus had attributed to Euripides.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Koster XXVIII, 5-8. Cf. Koster XXIXa, 7-8.

¹⁸⁶ Koster XXVIII, 50-8.

¹⁸⁷ On the importance of the *Cocalus*, see Nesselrath 1993, 182-3, who mentions that Clement claims that Philemon plagiarized from the *Cocalus* (*Strom.* 6.26.6) and suggests that such a statement, if true, must have gone back to Alexandrian scholarship and the Library when comparison of these plays was possible.

The third strand Nesselrath adduces is an assertion in the *Suda* in the entry on the Middle Comic poet Anaxandrides that he first introduced love affairs and rapes (πρῶτος οὗτος ἔρωτας καὶ παρθένων φθορὰς εἰσήγαγεν). To reconcile these three conflicting claimants, Nesselrath hypothesizes that the underlying theory was that Euripides popularized and perfected the devices and plots that would later become features of New Comedy, Aristophanes parodied Euripides and thereby incorporated these into comedy, and Anaxandrides finally shed the parodic frame, i.e., they were no longer wrapped up in the parody of tragedy, but stood on their own.¹⁸⁸

I suggest that Koster III and the related accounts rely on a model very much like the one Nesselrath hypothesized. I have already argued that, in their model for the development of comedy, the most important comic poets are described as analogs to and reliant on the most important tragic poets. Aristophanes is the analog to Euripides in the development of comedy, and Koster III is quite clear, despite the damage to the text, about Aristophanes' symbiotic relationship to Euripides (ζήλω δὲ Εὐριπίδου). In these accounts, and not only in those two sections of the *Life* adduced by Nesselrath that ascribe to Aristophanes the invention of the New Comic devices, Aristophanes seems to be the most extraordinary exponent of his own period of comedy, and also to have prefigured or contributed to the subsequent periods. Koster III is not explicit about this, though it does locate Aristophanes as the last artist of Old Comedy and may therefore imply that he pointed the way to the subsequent periods.¹⁸⁹ Another treatise, Koster V, is clear on this point; like the *Life*, it describes Aristophanes as the most excellent poet of his

¹⁸⁸ Nesselrath 1993, 195, summarizes his argument thus: "Euripides exhibited typical plot elements of the future New Comedy as an integral part of his own plays; Aristophanes parodied Euripides and thus incorporated these plot elements into his comedies (still with a tragic or, more exactly, paratragic 'coating'); and thirdly, Anaxandrides (if our sources have chosen the right man out of Aristophanes' successors), as probably the oldest of the subsequent generation of comic poets, at first continued parodying tragic plots, but then proceeded to invent similar plots without the former tragic trappings; from that point onwards, infant New Comedy could grow up, and parody as its midwife and nurse retire."

¹⁸⁹ Nesselrath 2000, 239-40, also suggests as much, and he connects the treatment of Aristophanes and Eupolis in the *Life* to their treatment in this treatise.

period and ascribes to him the development of certain characteristics of New Comedy, though it mentions only the *Wealth* and not the *Cocalus*:

καὶ γὰρ τὸ τούτου δράμα ὁ Πλοῦτος νεωτερίζει κατὰ τὸ πλάσμα· τὴν τε γὰρ ὑπόθεσιν ὡς ἀληθῆ ἔχει καὶ χορῶν ἐστέρηται, ὅπερ τῆς νεωτέρας ὑπῆρχε κωμωδίας.

For his drama the *Wealth* is innovative in its fiction; for it has a verisimilitudinous plot and it lacks choral parts, which was characteristic of New Comedy.¹⁹⁰

Here, too, Aristophanes is pointing the way to New Comedy through his innovations, though this treatise does not list the plot devices that the *Life* claims Aristophanes introduced. The manner with which Koster V summarizes this development does suggest a kinship with Koster III, however, and helps prove my suggestion that they rely on similar models: in Koster V, the innovative feature that moves the *Wealth* beyond the ken of Old Comedy was that it had a realistic plot (ὑπόθεσις ὡς ἀληθῆς). Koster III says that this is an important feature that Old Comedy lacked:

οἱ μὲν οὖν τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμωδίας ποιηταὶ οὐχ ὑποθέσεως ἀληθοῦς, ἀλλὰ παιδιᾶς εὐτραπέλου γενόμενοι ζηλωταὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας ἐποίουν.

The poets of Old Comedy used to hold their contests by aiming at not true plots but amusing jest.

While it does not fully explain the point, the transition from Old to Middle to New Comedy must therefore have involved the movement from παιδιὰ εὐτράπελος to ὑπόθεσις ἀληθῆς. To this group that puts Aristophanes as a kind of liminal figure we should also add Koster XVIIIa:

Καὶ τῆς μὲν παλαιᾶς πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν, ἐπίσημος δὲ Κρατῖνος ὁ καὶ πραττόμενος, μετέσχον δέ τινος χρόνου τῆς παλαιᾶς κωμωδίας Εὐπολῆς τε καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης.

And there were many poets of the old type, and Cratinus, the one who is studied,¹⁹¹ was notable, but Aristophanes and Eupolis had a part in the Old Comedy for some period of time.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Koster V, 24-7.

According to this account, Aristophanes was for a time a practitioner of the old, Cratinean comedy before advancing on to the next phase.¹⁹³

In not just the *Life*, then, which is Nesselrath's main piece of evidence, but also in Koster V and probably Koster III Aristophanes both perfects Old Comedy and points the way to New Comedy. Nor does this model for the development of comedy just conceive of Aristophanes as a transitional figure who, as Nesselrath suggests, imitated Euripides and thereby transmitted Euripidean elements to comedy. The model is more comprehensive than that and, as I have argued, constructs a comic history aligned with the tragic one: not only does it take into account Aristophanes, Euripides, and the relationship between them, but it also connects Cratinus with Aeschylus and likely Susarion with Thespis.

§3.7. Conclusion

Therefore, this treatise expands on the idea in the Eratosthenic and related histories that comedy and tragedy are from the beginning interconnected. Not only do comedy and tragedy share a common origin, the treatise postulates that they continued to intersect at important points during their developments. A continued relationship between them is unproblematic and makes good sense: they are two branches of the same family.

While this intimate connection between comedy and tragedy is un-Aristotelian, Koster III, the Eratosthenic and similar accounts, and Aristotle all approach comedy's development in the same fashion. They do not make comedy develop due to social, political, or geographical pressures; on the contrary, its development was largely self-contained. Aristotle divorces it from

¹⁹¹ For this meaning of *πράσσω*, see *LSJ* s.v. IV.2.

¹⁹² Koster XVIIIa, 39-41.

¹⁹³ On this text, see Nesselrath 1990, 37, who likewise suggests that the treatise is assigning Aristophanes and Eupolis to both Old and Middle Comedy, *pace* Storey 2003, 45. On this treatise and its partition of comedy, see Janko 1984, 246-50.

normal social experience by connecting it to the phallic songs and discounting the importance of non-reciprocal personal abuse. Koster III, very much like Aristotle, has drama develop within itself as individual poets advance the art. Some of these poets were notable for engaging in personal abuse, but some did not. When Aristophanes pointed the way towards New Comedy and comedy evolved, personal abuse does not enter into the calculation; rather, this evolution has to do with evolving artistic qualities, particularly with regard to the construction of plots. In Eratosthenes' history and the theories related to it, the original abuse did not target people who were not involved in the performance. Abuse of third parties was not an original feature of comedy, nor does it seem to have been an essential feature. And for Eratosthenes, at least, the corrective abuse of only one malefactor was essential for the origin of comedy: the goat itself.

Chapter 4

From Small Beginnings: Varro on the Origins of Comedy and Comic Abuse

§4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I reconstructed the views about the origins of comedy and the nature of its abuse that were held by Eratosthenes and his contemporaries. I argued that, unlike Aristotle, they put the genesis of both comedy and tragedy in rustic celebrations for Dionysus that included, at least for Eratosthenes, the dance around the goat (the *askoliasmos*) and abuse from wagons. But, while the concerns and methods of the theories in chapter 3 differ from Aristotle's in some important ways, they agree on a crucial point: the earliest form of comic abuse was restricted to performers, and corrective abuse and attacks on third parties were not original features of comedy. During that discussion, I adduced parallels from the Augustan poets Horace and Vergil;¹ the latter especially seems to have drawn on the *Erigone*. In this chapter, I will return to Roman scholarship on the origins of Old Comedy and the nature of its abuse. Here, too, no coherent theory or history survives, but one can be reconstructed—and these traces allow us to describe a theory more comprehensive and more revealing about the ancient interpretation of personal abuse than any we have seen so far.

Firstly, I will compare what the Augustan authors say about the origins of comedy and the nature of its abuse. Information about the origins of drama appears in Horace, Vergil, Tibullus and Livy. These reports resemble each other closely, and most scholars suppose that

¹ Primarily at §3.2.

they drew on a common source for their information. This source is today generally agreed to have been Varro, one of Rome's most influential scholars.² He could have treated the origins of comedy in at least six works: the *De actis scaenicis*; the *De actionibus scaenicis*; the *De scaenicis originibus*; the *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum*;³ the *De poematis*; and perhaps the *De poetis*.⁴ It is Varro's history of drama and theories about comedy that we seek to reconstruct.

After exploring the Augustan authors, I will turn to the treatises by grammarians that also use, explicitly or implicitly, Varro's history of drama.⁵ These are much later (the three whom we will study, Diomedes, Donatus, and Evanthius, wrote around the fourth century AD), and they preserve, as these treatises so often do, a mélange of information. However, as I will argue, through careful analysis, important features of Varro's theories can be extracted.

We will find that Varro's history resembles the Eratosthenic conception on three important points: (a) the common origin of the different genres of drama; (b) features of the earliest drama; and (c) the nature of the earliest comic abuse. But, as I have said, it is possible to reconstruct from the sources that rely on Varro a fuller history of the development of comic

² Hendrickson and Leo, who discuss the accounts of Horace and Livy in particular, argued that the history of drama in at least some of these Augustan authors is un-Varronian or pre-Varronian; see Hendrickson 1894, and especially Hendrickson 1898, 285-311; Leo 1904, 63-77 (retracting his ascription of this information to Varro in Leo 1889, 67-84). Hendrickson proposed Accius as the source instead. This view was opposed by Knapp 1912*a* and Knapp 1912*b* and has since met general rejection: Varroniana in other authors have been adduced to prove the reliance of the Augustan authors on Varro. See Muller 1923; Waszink 1948, (comparisons to Varroniana in Tertullian); van Rooy 1952 (comparisons to Varroniana in Valerius Maximus); Brink 1962, 191-2. However, Forsythe 1999, 113-4, descends from this view and supposes that Livy used a different source.

³ The material in the *Ant. div.* books 9-10 probably treated the *ludi scaenici* and therefore reproduced more concisely the material treated in *De scaenicis originibus*; the latter, in turn, probably used information already compiled in *De actis scaenicis* and *De actionibus scaenicis*. See Schmidt 1989, 106-10.

⁴ Dahlmann 1963, 111-2; but Schmidt 1989, 115 n. 98, is skeptical that the *De poetis*, a treatment of the individual poets, would have given a history of pre-scenic drama. In fact, as Janko 2011, 387, suggests, there is no reason to suppose that these were not two parts of the same work, with *De poetis* being its first book and *De poematis* being its later books. For a brief survey of Varro's work on drama, see Oakley 1998, 43-4.

⁵ The following studies also attempt to reconstruct Varro's views about the origins of drama and use the same method but focus on different areas: Brink 1962, 173-206, whose emphasis is on Horace; Schmidt 1989, who focuses on Livy and to a lesser extent Horace; Baier 1997, who treats this topic but also looks comprehensively at the uses of Varro in Cicero and the Augustans; and Oakley 1998, 40-58, whose analysis is brief and focuses on Livy.

humor, and, with this, the plot thickens. This theory, like Aristotle's and Eratosthenes', holds that the abuse at the origins of comedy was only reciprocal. But Varro does acknowledge that comic abuse came to be directed against third parties—with deleterious results. According to this theory, Old Comedy's abuse of politicians and other spectators was a deviation from the original form of comedy and was rightly curtailed for the good of the public.

§4.2. The Origin of Drama and Comedy in Vergil, Tibullus, Horace, and Livy

The Augustan authors Vergil, Tibullus, Horace, and Livy all give hints about the development of drama. Unfortunately, in no case is their main interest in describing a coherent theory of the origins of comedy and the nature of its abuse. Their reports are either allusions or digressions from their main subject, and, as we shall see, they occasionally have adapted the information to serve another purpose. But, of our sources, they are the most chronologically proximate to Varro; unlike the grammarians, who probably relied on second-hand reports for Varro's ideas, we can trust that these Augustan authors used Varro's writings directly. They are, therefore, our earliest and best source for the lost information.

§4.2.1. The Origins of Drama in Vergil

Vergil's account in *Georgics* 2.371-396, like some of the accounts discussed below, is an *aition* for both Roman and Greek drama. In their origins, at least, they developed along parallel lines. He mentions the Athenians at line 383, then the jests of the Ausonians two lines later at 385, and the Roman practice of hanging *oscilla* at 389. Therefore, while this history may be similar to Eratosthenes', it cannot be identical: Vergil has no interest in locating the origins of all drama in Icaria or in connecting it to Attic rites that have no Roman parallel. Varro and Vergil

are, therefore, not merely recounting obscure points of ancient history. They are describing general processes according to which drama emerges and evolves.

As in the *Erigone*, Vergil finds a common source for the dramatic genres in an original, undifferentiated custom. Comedy and tragedy both arose from rustic celebrations to Dionysus.⁶ He says that goats are sacrificed because they are dangerous for vines; with the sacrifice, ancient games (*veteres ludi*) emerged in the theater, farmers danced around the goatskin, and the Athenians established prizes (*praemia*) for their cleverness in the countryside and crossroads (*pagi et compita*). The prize must refer to the goat itself; Probus supposed as much,⁷ and Tibullus' account, discussed below, is explicit on this point. This, and the reference to dancing around the goatskin, must be an etymology for τραγωδία, as the *Erigone* surely suggested, while celebration of the festival in the *pagi* (i.e., κῶμαι) hints at the word κωμοδία,⁸ one of the etymologies I argued would have been implied by Icarus' κῶμος through the κῶμαι. That this pre-scenic festival has the seeds of both forms of drama is also hinted by its double nature. The performers wear fearsome masks (*horrenda ora*); yet these performances are also in jest and feature rough verses and unrestrained laughter (*uersibus incomptis risuque soluto*). Vergil is describing the same kind of proto-drama and proto-comedy that we saw in the last chapter.

Vergil's account also puts the dance around the goat (the *askoliasmos*) at the origins of drama, as the *Erigone* had, and it seems that Varro found an analog to the *askoliasmos* in the

⁶ Lines 385-9 are sometimes presumed to refer to a spring festival, perhaps the Liberalia, and lines 393-6 to a summer festival, perhaps the Vinalia Rustica, but Meuli 1955, 206-16, argues that the whole passage refers to the Compitalia. De Saint-Denis 1949, 708-12, argues that the Liberalia is described in both passages; he is followed by Schechter 1975, 376-7. However, Waszink 1948, 240-1 n. 38, is surely correct that, even if certain details correspond to definite festivals, Vergil is describing general celebrations of Dionysus.

⁷ Probus *ad* 2.382.

⁸ Meuli 1955, 210; Schechter 1975, 377, is unnecessarily skeptical.

Roman Consualia. As Waszink notes, Varro's description of a practice at the Consualia closely parallels the *askoliasmos*:⁹

etiam pellis bubulas oleo perfusas percurrebant ibique cernuabant. a quo ille versus vetus est in carminibus: ibi pastores ludos faciunt coriis Consualia.

They even used to dash and jump there over the ox-hides covered with oil. This is where that old verse in the poem comes from: "There, shepherds celebrated their games, the Consualia, with the hides."¹⁰

But the parallel is imprecise. Varro elsewhere says that the Consualia was named for the god Consus and celebrated in the Circus at Rome,¹¹ and Waszink argues that Varro held that the Consualia was the origin of the *ludi circenses*.¹² The Consualia would, then, be a festival set in the city, not the country, dedicated to Consus, not Dionysus, employ the hides of oxen, not goats, and would have had to do with the origins of the *ludi circenses*, not the *ludi scaenici* (as we will see, according to Livy, scenic performance in Rome is only traced to 364 BC). There is the added fact that in the *De lingua latina*, Varro describes the Consualia immediately after—and therefore chronologically proximate to—the Vinalia Rustica, a festival of wine.

Indeed, a second appealing, but inexact, analogy is the hanging of the little masks, *oscilla*, which Vergil also mentions in his *aition*.¹³ As we saw in the last chapter,¹⁴ the *Erigone* gave an aitiology of the Aiora, a festival at which maidens would swing in imitation of Erigone to avert her wrath. In Vergil, that rite has been reconfigured: masks swing instead of maidens.¹⁵

Furthermore, the participants hang them not for Erigone, but for Bacchus. Both Probus and

⁹ Waszink 1948, 242.

¹⁰ Varro *Vita populi Romani* 1 fr. 23 Riposati.

¹¹ Varro *De lingua latina* 6.20: *Consualia dicta a Conso, quod tum feriae publicae ei deo et in Circo ad aram eius ab sacerdotibus ludi illi, quibus virgines Sabinae raptae.*

¹² Waszink 1948, 230-3.

¹³ For a recent discussion of *oscilla* as an artifact and the hanging of *oscilla* as a rite, see Taylor 2005, 83-105.

¹⁴ §3.2.

¹⁵ On the hanging of *oscilla* as a reinterpretation of the swinging of the Aiora, see Immerwahr 1946, 258-9; Meuli 1955, 214-8; Schechter 1975, 377-8; Rosokoki 1995, 113.

Servius reinterprets the Attic ritual in light of the Roman one: Probus simply explains that the blighted Athenians consulted Apollo to determine why the maidens were hanging themselves, and, on his advice, executed Icarius' murderers, established a festival, and hanged *oscilla* that imitated the hanging of the maidens.¹⁶

Servius is rather more novel and perhaps shows some interest in reconciling the two practices. He explains that the oracle told the Athenians to locate the bodies of Erigone and Icarius, but, when they could not find them, they hanged ropes from trees and swung around as if they were searching even the air. After they fell down and gave up on this project, they constructed masks in the shape of their own faces, hanged these, and swung them instead to prove their devotion to the god.¹⁷ This version manages to combine, then, the Attic practice of swinging with the Roman practice of hanging masks, though, even here, there is a central unanswered question: if *oscilla* were invented by the Athenians to propitiate their crimes against Icarius and Erigone, why are they also hanged by the Romans? But, like the Roman equivalent of the *askoliasmos*, Vergil elides the details and mentions, but does not provide the aetiology for, the hanging of *oscilla*. The Greek and Roman rites are developed just enough to set them in parallel.¹⁸

This analogy between the Aiora and the hanging of *oscilla* may not be Varonian. For one thing, of these Augustan accounts, it appears only in Vergil; for another, Varro elsewhere gives what seems to be a contradictory explanation for the hanging of *oscilla*. In his commentary to the *Aeneid*, Servius explains that suicide, and hanging in particular, were reckoned shameful acts, and in this context he mentions Varro's explanation for the *oscilla*.

¹⁶ Probus *ad* 2.389. Cf. Lact. Plac. *ad* Statius *Theb.* 11.644, who gives a similar account.

¹⁷ Servius *ad* 2.389.

¹⁸ There are a number of aetiologies for the hanging of *oscilla*, some of which did not have to do with Erigone; see Taylor 2005, 285.

Varro ait suspendiosis, quibus iusta fieri ius non sit, suspensis oscillis, veluti per imitationem mortis, parentari.

Varro says that offerings are made for those who have hanged themselves, for whom it is not lawful to do the appropriate rites, by means of hanged *oscilla*, as if in imitation of their death.¹⁹

The hanging of the *oscilla* is here, as the swinging is in the story of Erigone and the hanging of *oscilla* apparently is in Vergil, a kind of offering for the dead that imitates their manner of death. But the rites for Erigone are not performed because the customary offerings are disallowed; on the contrary, such unusual measures are called for because the extraordinary wrong done to her requires extraordinary expiation. The issue is not, as it is for Servius and Varro, that the manner of her death is shameful, but that the actions leading up to it required recompense in the form of an unusual rite during a festival. The same idea certainly underlies all cases, since the aim must be to propitiate problematic or dangerous spirits: one averts the danger associated with such spirits by hanging an *oscillum* that acts as a proxy for the practitioner.

But Varro's explanation does not put the *oscilla* and swinging in the festal contexts that Vergil and Eratosthenes do, and therefore it seems disconnected from his history of drama. That being said, we must concede that Varro may have changed his views elsewhere or expressed them differently. After all, he could have addressed the origins of drama in at least six works (see §4.1 for the possibilities), and, even if his explanation for the *oscilla* is not fully compatible here, it is close and could be adapted. For Vergil's part, the rite of the *oscilla* must have been an attractive addition because it provides another *aition*: the *oscilla* not only correspond to the swinging of the Aiora, but are also the first masks.²⁰

Therefore, Vergil seems to have gone to great lengths to align the Roman origin of drama with the *aition* described by the *Erigone*, but at least some features of his history are

¹⁹ Servius in *Aen.* 12.603.

²⁰ Cf. Meuli 1955.

undeveloped. Indeed, what is for our purposes the most important feature of the origins of drama is unclear in Vergil, the nature of the earliest jest. He describes the performers as using rough verses and unrestrained laughter (*uersibus incomptis risuque soluto*). Their jests are certainly improvised, and they may be a type of personal mockery—a supposition that will be confirmed through comparison with the accounts in Horace and Livy.

§4.2.2. The Origins of Drama in Tibullus

In Tibullus, too, drama originates from rustic celebrations by farmers, but he also locates at the earliest stage the use of the pipe (*avena*) and makes clear that a chorus was involved.²¹ There is no mention of the *askoliasmos*, but Tibullus does say that a goat was given as a prize. He also adds the point, unmentioned in the other Augustan accounts, that the leading actor performed covered in red cinnabar, which corresponds to the claim in later accounts that in the earliest dramatic performances, before masks had been invented, actors applied pigment to their faces.²² He makes no attempt, however, to describe the jest that characterized this earliest form of drama.

§4.2.3. The Origins of Drama in Horace

In §4.2.1, we saw Vergil's interest in making the Greek and Roman rites parallel each other. Horace exhibits this interest, too, and he describes the development of drama, comedy, and abuse in two places, the *Epistles* and the *Ars Poetica*. In the *Epistles*, he discusses the so-called

²¹ 2.1.51-8. On this passage as an *aition* for drama, see Baier 1997, 122-3.

²² According to a scholium to *Knights* 522, actors used τὸ βατράχειον (a pale-green pigment) before the invention of masks; *Suda* s.v. Θέσπις says that Thespis first used ψιμύθιον (white lead) then ἀνδράχνη (a string of the flower purslane? See Pickard-Cambridge 1962, 76) before inventing masks; and the treatises on comedy frequently say that the first comic performers painted their faces with lees and derive the word τρυγηδία from this practice (e.g., Koster XVIIIa). An anecdote in *Life of Aristophanes* (Koster XXVIII, 16-7) most closely approach Tibullus' red cinnabar, according to which Aristophanes, when nobody would make a mask of Cleon, painted his own face with red chalk (μίλτος).

Fescennine license, which appears to be the Roman equivalent of Greek comedy and to exhibit comparable forms of abuse. In the *Ars Poetica*, he discusses Greek comedy proper.

His discussion of the Roman material in the *Epistles* at 2.139-60 once again gives drama and comedy rustic origins with the celebrations of farmers after the harvest (though here, it is the corn harvest and not the grape harvest).²³ After explaining that the farmers would propitiate Tellus with pork, Silvanus with milk, and their own Genius with wine, the description of the circumstances under which drama emerged immediately ends. Horace instead launches into a description of Fescennine license,²⁴ explaining only that it had been invented through the aforementioned celebrations.²⁵

He says that at first the performers poured forth rustic abuse in a genial fashion with alternating verses (*versibus alternis opprobria rustica fudit*). But, after a time, its jokes began to turn into open savagery and to attack honorable households (*iam saeuos apertam / in rabiem coepit uerti iocus et per honestas / ire domos impune minax*). Out of concern for the common good, a law was passed forbidding personal mockery (*poenaque lata, malo quae nollet carmine quemquam / describi*), and poets were made to bring their audience delight instead of abuse. Next, Horace discusses Livius Andronicus and the adaptation of Greek tragedy.

A parallel model is found in Horace's treatment of Greek drama in the *Ars Poetica*.²⁶ He begins from Thespis, who, Horace tells us, invented tragedy and originally conveyed his poems from wagons. The first performers are said to have covered their faces with lees (*peruncti*

²³ Porphyryon in his scholium to line 140 expresses some uncertainty about whether Horace could mean the grape harvest instead, but Brink 1982 *ad loc.*, argues that the reference is to the corn harvest.

²⁴ Horace's *Fescennina licentia* (2.145) must refer not to Fescennine verses proper, which are epithalamia consisting of improvised obscenity (cf. Servius *in Aen.* 7.695; Catullus 61.119ff. is an example), but to the license associated with Fescennine verses, i.e., outspoken invective; see Brink 1982, *ad loc.*

²⁵ Horace nowhere asserts a common origin for drama, but one may be hinted by the movement of his discussion: (a) rustic celebrations; (b) Fescennine license associated with comedy; (c) without transition from the subject of comedy (for none is needed, if they are both offshoots of those rustic celebrations), Roman tragedy.

²⁶ *Ars Poetica* 275-84.

faecibus ora). The latter may be an allusion to an etymology of τραγωδία, according to which it is so named because the first actors smeared lees on their faces,²⁷ which, as we saw in the last chapter, occasionally figured into accounts of comedy associated with Eratosthenes. Horace also implies the etymology for τραγωδία seen in Vergil, Tibullus, and Eratosthenes, that it is so named because the poets contest over a goat.²⁸ The allusion to presenting poetry from wagons was also discussed in the last chapter, where I argued that abuse from wagons was a feature of the Eratosthenic account of drama.²⁹ From this pre-scenic form of drama, Horace next describes Aeschylus and scenic drama before turning to Old Comedy and its place on the Greek stage.³⁰ According to the *Ars Poetica*, the *libertas* of Old Comedy, like that of Fescennine verses, was at first praiseworthy, but then fell into vice and had to be curtailed by law (*in vitium libertas excidit et vim / dignam lege regi*).³¹ At this point, Old Comedy ended.

These histories draw on the theories that we saw in the last chapter: like Eratosthenes, Horace proposes that the earliest stage of comedy (in both Rome and Greece) was characterized by rustic abuse with reciprocal verses. This abuse must also correspond to the *risus solutus* in the proto-dramatic performance described by Vergil.³² But Horace tells us more: the abuse *did* come to be directed against third parties. However, the abuse became dangerous as the poets misused their freedom of speech. Their mockery became too savage and unrestrained, they started to

²⁷ See n. 22 above.

²⁸ *Ars Poetica* 220.

²⁹ See §3.4. And, as we saw in the last chapter, Thespis' drama does not yet have the high character associated with tragedy.

³⁰ He says that *successit uetus his comoedia*, i.e., Old Comedy followed tragedy and its poets. The transition to comedy from Thespis, Aeschylus, and tragedy is so sudden that the meaning of this statement is not immediately clear. It cannot mean that the origins of comedy chronologically proceeded Aeschylus; I suspect that it merely means that comedy came later to the stage at the Dionysia (i.e., in 486, in contrast to tragedy, for which competitions were introduced sometime in the sixth century). As in the *Epistles*, the sudden transitions among the genres of drama when describing their history may hint at their common origin. See n. 25.

³¹ cf. *Ep.* 2.147-50, which likewise characterize the unrestrained speech of Fescennine license as *libertas*.

³² *Georgics* 2.386.

abuse by name third parties without warrant, and the state had to regulate them.³³ According to this model, it seems, the abuse of third parties was not an original feature of comedy, but rather a dangerous deviation from its appropriate form. But Horace's description is too brief and cryptic. He does say that Old Comedy was at one point praiseworthy, hinting at the possibility that the abuse may have been, at least for a time, beneficial. We will explore this possibility further below when we turn to the treatises that preserve Varronianana.

§4.2.4. The Origins of Drama in Livy

The final Augustan account is Livy's, which is quite dissimilar in both style and content.³⁴ Livy begins not from some rustic festival that preceded drama, but from a plague in the year 364. On account of this, the *ludi scaenici* were first introduced for apotropaic purposes,³⁵ and Livy divides the development of drama into five stages.³⁶ Firstly, dancers were summoned from Etruria, who performed accompanied by the flute. Secondly, the Roman youth began to imitate the dancers, adding jokes in alternating verse; these were akin to Fescennine verses in being improvised and uncouth (*Fescennino uersu similem incompositum temere ac rudem alternis*). Thirdly, professional actors took to the stage, who took part in *saturnae*, a dramatic performance whose song and dance were accompanied by the flute. The historicity of

³³ *Ep.* 2.146. The law described in 152-4 shows (*lex / poenaque lata malo quae nollet carmine quemquam / describi*) that the mockery that must be outlawed is abuse by name of third parties. See below on the connection between this law and the Twelve Tables.

³⁴ Livy 7.2. For a lucid discussion of this passage and the myriad interpretive problems surrounding it, see Oakley 1998, 40-58 (with bibliography on p. 40).

³⁵ It is tempting to see here, too, a parallel with the *Erigone*, where the festival associated with proto-drama is instituted to appease Erigone's wrath. However, as we shall see, Livy is only giving an account of scenic drama; pre-scenic drama's origins are much earlier, as Horace's account indicates.

³⁶ For schemes dividing the description in Livy 7.2 into distinct evolutionary stages, see Waszink 1948, 234; Duckworth 1952, 5-6; Szemerényi 1975, 302-3; Schmidt 1989, 84-106; and Oakley 1998, 41, whom I most closely follow here.

the *satura* has long been in doubt,³⁷ and even disregarding questions of historical accuracy, it is not at all clear whether Livy was trying to describe a medley of *cantica* that were not necessarily comedic,³⁸ a Roman analog to Greek Old Comedy (including its personal invective),³⁹ a Roman analog to the Greek satyr play,⁴⁰ or the product of a synthesis between Etruscan satyr dances and the *iocularia* of the Roman youth mentioned above in Livy's second stage of development.⁴¹ At any rate, it is an intermediate form that seems to combine the activities of professional actors with performance by the youths from the earlier stage (acting as the chorus?).⁴² Following the *satura*, Livy says that some time later Livius Andronicus introduced *fabulae* with *argumenta*. Finally, with the introduction of such *fabulae*, the unrestrained laughter and jest were curtailed (*ab risu ac soluto ioco res avocabatur*), and the Roman youth turned to the production of *exodia*, which were combined with the *fabula Atellana*.

While Livy's account is different from the rest, it comes in a different context: he is giving an annalistic history and is trying to describe discrete events that occurred in 364. Therefore, it seems to be a deviation that he begins his history of Roman drama with the importation of Etruscan dancers, which might preclude drama's origins in a Roman agricultural festival that gave rise to comedy and tragedy. And yet, as Waszink notes, the introduction of the

³⁷ Leo 1889, 67-84, argued that Livy's account derived from an attempt by Roman grammarians (Varro in particular) to hypothesize a Roman parallel to Greece's Old Comedy; the same point is argued by Hendrickson 1894, 1-39, who suggests a pre-Varronian Roman grammarian (possibly Accius) as the source. These papers have been opposed by Knapp 1912*b*, 125-48, but there is still skepticism about the existence of the dramatic *satura*: it is dismissed as an invention by Coffey 1976, 18-22, and Gratwick 1982, 160-2. Duckworth 1952, 9-10, suggests that the form of drama Livy is describing—an early Roman musical performance that preceded Livius Andronicus' introduction plays with Greek plots—surely existed, but it probably did not have the name *satura*. However, Szilágyi 1981, 2-23, connects Livy's dramatic *satura* to Etruscan satyr dances portrayed on vases and speculates that Livy is describing an historical dramatic form. Likewise, Beacham 1992, 11-2, suggests that we ought seriously to entertain the possibility that Livy is describing a kind of Roman satyr drama that developed from Etruscan influence. On the tradition of satyric abusive jest in Italy and the probability of Roman satyr plays, see Wiseman 1988, 1-13; Oakley, 1998, 55-8, views such a background as quite plausible. Schmidt 1989 connects the dramatic *satura* to *Rhinthonica*.

³⁸ Ullman 1914, 1-23.

³⁹ Hendrickson 1894, and Leo 1889.

⁴⁰ Waszink 1972, whom Gratwick 1982 follows.

⁴¹ Szilágyi 1981.

⁴² I follow Schmidt 1989 here in particular.

Etruscan dancers are not the only component: in the second stage of Livy's account, the Roman youths added to the dance their jesting which was akin to Fescennine verse. There is no indication that these rustic jests of the youths originated only after the introduction of the Etruscan dancers; they must have existed already, having originated, as the other accounts describe, in those rustic Roman festivals.⁴³ What Livy is specifically concerned with here is the events of 364 and their role in the later evolution of scenic drama, not drama's beginnings in rustic, prehistoric celebrations.⁴⁴ Whatever the nature of the dramatic *satura*, the preceding stage was certainly of a comedic sort, and, precisely as in Vergil's account of the jests in proto-drama, it was characterized by a *risus solutus* that comedy was later forced to abandon. Livy does not say, as Horace does, that it is due to a law forbidding personal mockery, but rather that it was given up when *argumenta* from Greek models were introduced to Roman drama.

§4.2.5. The Origins of Drama in the Augustan Authors

By comparing these scattered hints, it is clear that these authors accept the following features for the origins of drama and development of comedy:

(a) In both Rome and Athens, comedy and tragedy emerged from a single, undifferentiated, rustic proto-drama (Vergil, Tibullus, and hinted at by Horace).

⁴³ Waszink 1948, 229.

⁴⁴ van Rooy 1952, 238, shows that Livy is perfectly compatible with the probable source of the other Augustan accounts, Varro (see below), when the pre-scenic and scenic origins are distinguished. See, too, Oakley 1998, 43-51, who likewise argues that the accounts are compatible with each other as well as with Varro's views.

(b) This drama was originally celebrated by farmers in the Roman equivalent of the κῶμοι, and this is the etymology of κωμῳδία (hinted at Vergil). The goat is the prize for the best contestant, and this is the etymology for τραγωδία (Vergil, Tibullus, Horace).

(c) Comedy can be divided into three stages: a first stage characterized by *libertas* and reciprocal abuse with improvised jest, a second stage characterized by the abuse of third parties, and a third stage without such abuse (all three stages are in Horace; only two are in Livy).

But, as we have said, the nature of the personal abuse of third parties in this theory of comedy is not entirely clear. Horace says that Old Comedy was praiseworthy before it degenerated;⁴⁵ was it (or did it at least purport to be) morally censorious for a time, or did it pursue only laughter? His statement that the abuse of Fescennine license was curtailed because it became too vitriolic and began to attack honorable families, may imply that their abuse was earlier directed against those who were worthy of it, but this is certainly not explicit.⁴⁶

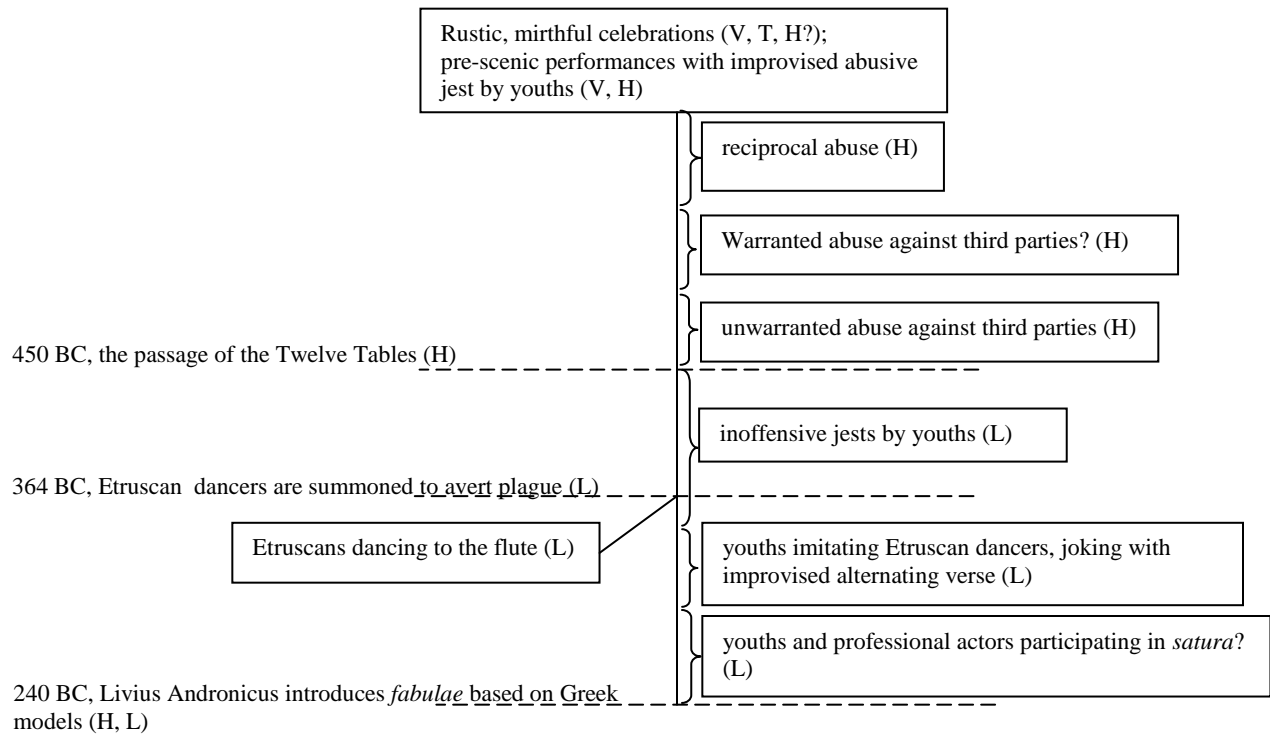
The following figure sketches out this model for the development of Roman drama (V=Vergil; H=Horace; L=Livy; T=Tibullus):⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Ars Poetica* 283.

⁴⁶ It is perhaps telling on this point that Braund 2004, 415-6, detects in *Ep.* 2 both the unwarranted, ribald abuse typically associated with Fescennine verses and the "Volksjustiz" of the *flagitatio*, i.e., the practice by which a victim goes outside the wrongdoer's house and publicly announces that he has been wronged.

⁴⁷ For an informative diagram depicting Schmidt's model of the development of the *satira* in particular, which includes much of this same information, see Schmidt 1989, 106.

Figure 4.1. Varro's Model for the Evolution of Drama at Rome



§4.3. Comedy and Abuse in the Grammarians

If these sources rely on Varro, as is generally accepted, we can flesh out his theory about comedy's origins and the nature of its jest by considering other, later sources that use Varro: Diomedes, Donatus and Evanthius.⁴⁸ In some cases, Varro is, thankfully, cited by name, but this is not always so. In what follows, I will use the results of the study above to locate further information that may derive from Varro. By seeing where the grammarians conform to the *aitia*, etymologies, and other ideas in the model above, we can identify places where they use Varro and can add to our understanding of his theories about the development of comedy and its personal abuse. I will argue that Donatus is an especially good source for Varroniana; his etymologies and reasoning are the most compatible with what we know about Varro's theories.

⁴⁸ Valerius Maximus 2.4.4 and Tertullian *De spec.* 5 give accounts about the origins of Roman drama that rely on Varro (see Waszink 1948 and van Rooy 1952), but they closely resemble Livy's account and do not help elucidate this problem.

The table on the following page illustrates the results of our study. I will suggest that, as we hypothesized, Varro indeed supposed that pre-scenic comedy and Old Comedy were for a time characterized by corrective personal abuse.

Figure 4.2. Important Features in the Development of Drama in the Histories of Eratosthenes, Varro, the Augustan Authors, and the Grammarians

X indicates that a feature is present.

/ indicates that a feature is implied or I regard the attribution as probable.

	Eratosthenes	Varro	Vergil	Tibullus	Horace	Livy	Diomedes	Donatus	Evanthius
τραγωδία < τράγος	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
τραγωδία < τρυγωδία (τρύξ=lees, the earliest mask)					/		X		
τραγωδία < τρυγωδία (τρύξ=new wine, the earliest prize)							X		
κωμωδία < κῶμαι	/	X	/				X	X	X
κωμωδία < κῶμος	/	X					X	/	X
κωμωδία < Κῶς							X		
<i>Askoliasmos</i>	X	/	X						
Reciprocal abuse in proto-drama	/	/	/		X	X			
Unified origins of drama	/	/	X	X	/		/	/	X
Comedy is an ἀκίνδυνος περιοχή							X	X	/
Old Comedy is censorious		X			X			X	X
Aristophanes is Old Comedy	X	X			X				X

§4.3.1. Diomedes

Diomedes, a grammarian writing in the late fourth century AD, discusses comedy and drama in a section of his *Ars grammatica*.⁴⁹ He cites Varro and the Augustan authors mentioned above throughout his initial discussion,⁵⁰ but, based on his etymologies and his model for the development of drama, he has incorporated other information as well and is not a fully reliable source for Varroniana.

Citing Varro, Diomedes explains that tragedy is so named because a goat is given as the prize and that the goat used to be sacrificed to Dionysus because it consumed the vine. This agrees with the Augustan authors, and Diomedes quotes from the passages of Horace and Vergil discussed above. Again citing Varro as his source, he gives the derivation of κωμῳδία from κῶμαι as a possibility and likens the development of drama in Rome to drama in Athens.

While Diomedes does not mention a common source for comedy and tragedy, he says nothing to preclude this possibility. Indeed, he gives an alternative etymology for tragedy, deriving it from τραγῳδία, and says that actors, before the invention of masks, used to perform with τρύξ smeared on their faces. As we saw, Horace implies this etymology, and Diomedes quotes him.⁵¹ This may suggest a common origin for comedy and tragedy: in its earliest uses, after all, τραγῳδία refers not to tragedy, but comedy,⁵² and, according to one ancient theory, τραγῳδία originally referred to *both* comedy and and tragedy before they were distinguished.⁵³ Finally, while he does not give his source, he distinguishes, as do Horace and Livy, a stage of

⁴⁹ On Diomedes and the nature of this work, which was probably composed for use in schools, see Kaster 1988, 270-2.

⁵⁰ *Gramm. Lat.* 1, 487-9 Keil (=Koster XXIV). Leo 1889, 74, and 1904, 75-6, accepts that Diomedes' source was ultimately Varro. Waszink 1948, 231-2, suggests that Diomedes was using Suetonius' *De poetis* for his information about Varro. On Diomedes' use of Varro, see as well Baier 1997, 104-6.

⁵¹ *peruncti faecibus ora* (*Ars Poetica* 277), compared with Diomedes' *peruncti ora faecibus*. Meuli 1955, 228-9, suggests that Diomedes' knowledge of this etymology for τραγῳδία ultimately goes back to Varro. This seems probable, given that Horace only implies this etymology and so is likely not Diomedes' only source for it.

⁵² *Acharnians* 499; cf. *Wasps* 650 and 1537 (where τραγῳδοί is used of comic actors).

⁵³ Koster XVI, XIXa, and XXIIb.

personal abuse from a stage where the comedians mitigated their vitriol and focused on using well developed plots.⁵⁴

But there are important points where Diomedes deviates from what we know about Varro, and with this his use of other sources manifests itself. Firstly, he gives a second derivation for τραγωδία, ascribing it to anonymous *alii*, and explains that some suppose that the word is from not the lees, but the wine itself, since the Athenians gave wine as the prize at the Dionysia.⁵⁵ This differs importantly from the first derivation, because if τραγωδία derives from τραυγῳδία, and this word, in turn, comes from the τρύξ awarded as a prize, then the goat that consumed the vine, is sacrificed to Dionysus, and is awarded as a prize to the victor is left out: it can be neither the prize for the competition nor the origin of the word.

This can perhaps be excused as an alternative etymology that Diomedes has included for the sake of thoroughness; he does, after all, introduce its proponents as *alii* before going on to quote Varro for one of the possible etymologies of comedy. More troubling are the alternative etymologies of comedy, two of which are not compatible with what can be attributed to Varro from other sources:

(a) Citing Varro, he gives the definition discussed above, namely that it derives from κῶμαι, the place where youths would sing the songs that would become comedy.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ [sc. Menander, Diphilus, et Philemon] *omnem acerbitatem comoediae mitigaverunt atque argumenta multiplicia gratis erroribus secuti sunt.*

⁵⁵ Diomedes says Lucilius is a *testis* for this etymology, and Warmington gives this passage after Lucilius fr. 464. But it is not clear whether any of the passage is a quotation of Lucilius and in what way he is a witness. Diomedes may merely mean that Lucilius says somewhere that wine is given as a prize at the Dionysia, rather than that the word τραγωδία is to be derived from this practice. Marx, in his discussion this fragment (437 in his collection), supposes that Lucilius gave the entire explanation: that wine was given as the prize at the Dionysia, that this is the etymology of the word τραυγῳδία, and that τραγωδία derives from τραυγῳδία.

⁵⁶ *comoedia dicta ἀπὸ τῶν κωμῶν—κῶμαι enim appellantur pagi, id est conventicula rusticorum: itaque iuventus Attica, ut ait Varro, circum vicus ire solita fuerat et quaestus sui causa hoc genus carminis pronuntiabat.*

(b) As a second etymology, Diomedes understands κῶμαι to refer not to country hamlets but to wards of the city and says that comedy may instead be from festivals on the city roads (*ludi vicinales*) that were established after the Athenians moved from the country into Athens.⁵⁷ This, he says, is an analog to the Roman Compitalia).⁵⁸

(c) Thirdly, Diomedes says that it may be from the fact that it features the fortunes of rustic families (*vel quod in ea viculorum, id est humilium, domuum fortunae comprehendantur*).

(d) Fourthly, Diomedes gives the possibility that it derives from κῶμος, because, he says, the κῶμοι of young lovers were sung in plays.⁵⁹

(e) Fifthly and finally, Diomedes gives an etymology that is disconnected from the other four (it comes after the subsequent discussion of comic plots and the partition of comedy) that the word derives from the island of Cos, where Epicharmus was born.⁶⁰

(a), (b), and (c) all derive κωμῳδία from κῶμαι, even if their rationales differ a little. Indeed, Waszink suggests that (b) is certainly Varronian on the ground that Varro regarded the Compitalia to be an important step in the history of Roman scenic drama.⁶¹ This is confirmed by

⁵⁷ See *LSJ* s.v. κῶμη II. Cf. Koster XXXIII 2, 2 (Thomas Magister), which gives the same etymology as Diomedes: κῶμας δὲ ἑκαλοῦν οἱ παλαιοὶ τοὺς στενωπούς.

⁵⁸ *aut certe a ludis vicinalibus: nam posteaquam ex agris Athenas commigratum est et hi ludi instituti sunt, sicut Romae compitalicii, ad canendum prodibant et ab urbana κῶμη καὶ φῶδῃ comoedia dicta est.*

⁵⁹ *vel ἀπὸ τοῦ κῶμου, id est comessatione, quia olim in eiusmodi fabulis amantium iuvenum κῶμοι canebantur.*

⁶⁰ *sunt qui velint Epicharmum in Co insula exsulantem primum hoc carmen frequentasse, et sic a Co comoediam dici.* Cf. n. 64 below.

⁶¹ Waszink 1948, 231-3. He cites a fragment from book three of Varro's *De scaenicis originibus* found in Nonius (196,8 M) as evidence: *ubi compitus erat aliquis*. Brink 1962, 184, also assigns this second etymology to Varro.

Vergil's account in the *Georgics*, where a connection with the Compitalia is implied (prizes are established *pagos et compita circum*).⁶²

The subsequent etymologies are more difficult to reconcile. Regarding (d), Varro does mention a derivation of κωμωδία from κῶμος. However, his etymology has nothing to do with young lovers specifically, but rather he connects it to the mirthful revelry that we have seen associated with the origins of drama and comedy in Vergil, Tibullus, and Horace.⁶³ This etymology does not contradict Varro's—the κῶμοι sung by young lovers can be mirthful and celebratory—but it does seem to be more restrictive and to look in particular to the romantic plots of New Comedy. The etymology (e), which derives the word comedy from the name of the island Cos, is, to my knowledge, unattested elsewhere.⁶⁴ To his credit, Diomedes seems dubious about this last, but it, too, is incompatible with what we know about Varro's ideas. We know, therefore, that Diomedes must be incorporating information from sources other than Varro, and caution is in order. After these etymologies, Diomedes describes the nature and evolution of comedy and its abuse. He says that comedy features love, the seizure of maidens, and recognitions,⁶⁵ he defines comedy as ἀκίνδυνος περιοχή, a definition often ascribed to Theophrastus;⁶⁶ and finally, he gives an account of the different phases of comedy and the abuse that characterized each.

⁶² Vergil *Georgics* 2.382. See Servius *ad loc.*, who also connects this reference to the Compitalia: '*compita*' unde *ludi compitalicii*.

⁶³ Varro *de Lingua Latina* 7.89: "*comiter*": *hilare et lubenter, quous origo Graeca κῶμος. inde "comissatio" Latine dicta; et in Graecia, ut quidam scribunt, "comodia" (sic).*

⁶⁴ Several sources connect Epicharmus to the invention of comedy: Aristotle *Poetics* 3.1448a31-34 (cf. *On Poets* fr. 34 Janko); *A.P.* 9.600 (Theocritus); *Suda* s.v. Ἐπίχαρμος. But Epicharmus is typically linked to Sicily, particularly Megara Hyblaea and Syracuse, rather than Cos. D.L. 8.78 solves this mystery: Diogenes (claiming to be using the writings of Epicharmus himself) says that Epicharmus was born in Cos, went to Megara Hyblaea when he was three months old, and then moved to Syracuse. However, the derivation of κωμωδία from the island Κῶς is still novel.

⁶⁵ Something has fallen from the text during this description.

⁶⁶ Fr. 708, 9-10 Fortenbaugh. On Diomedes' use of Theophrastus, see Dosi 1960, 599-672, with 601-3 for discussion of these definitions. See, too, Fortenbaugh 1981, 257-8; Janko 1984, 49-50; Fortenbaugh 2005, 29-31, and 352-64. Fortenbaugh 2005, 356-60 recommends caution about assigning the definition of comedy (and the definition of epic) in Diomedes to Theophrastus. His point is well-taken, and Diomedes certainly combines different kinds of material;

The first comic poets, he says, were Susarion, Mullus, and Magnes, whose jests (*iocularia*) were of the old type (*vetus disciplina*) and were less witty than those that followed. The poets in the second period (*secunda aetas*) were Aristophanes, Eupolis, and Cratinus, and they composed extremely biting comedies and carped on the faults of the powerful.⁶⁷ The poets of the third period (*tertia aetas*) were Menander, Diphilus, and Philemon, who mitigated all of the abuse and pursued complicated plots. Diomedes is presenting, therefore, an evolutionary scheme similar to some of the histories that we saw in the last chapter: the earliest stage of comedy was unrefined and pursued only laughter, but, in the second stage, Cratinus and Aristophanes revised the art and added a useful element.⁶⁸ As we also saw in the last chapter, while this model appears in multiple sources in this form, a recurrent discrepancy is how the stages are labeled. For some sources, including, probably, the Parian Chronicle, the first stage of comedy ("Old Comedy") is limited, as in Diomedes, to unrefined jest that pursued only laughter, which is a small evolution on the unrefined, reciprocal abuse at the origins of all drama. Other sources accept the same evolutionary process, but, for them, the first stage includes the politically oriented abuse of Cratinus and Aristophanes.

I also suggested in the last chapter that Eratosthenes accepted the latter system of labeling. His commentaries to Old Comedy, after all, do treat Aristophanes. Varro must have used the same system. In his well-known series of etymologies and definitions for *satura*, Diomedes begins:

however, for our purposes here, I will continue to refer to it as Theophrastean to distinguish it from the more properly Varronian material. But to this we should add an additional caveat: the very reason that Diomedes could know this Theophrastean definition is because Varro quoted it.

⁶⁷ *principum vitia sectati acerbissimas comoedias composuerunt.*

⁶⁸ See especially §3.4.

"Satura" dicitur carmen apud Romanos nunc quidem maledicum et ad carpenda hominum vitia archaeae comoediae caractere compositum ...

"Satire" is said to be a song among the Romans that speaks ill and is composed in order to carp at the faults of men in the manner of Old Comedy ...⁶⁹

This series of etymologies is typically assigned to Varro, even if there is some dispute over which Varro favored.⁷⁰ But the terminology used to describe comedy here is different from Diomedes' periodization of comedy. When he describes the *character* of comedy (a rather Hellenistic term), he speaks of *archaea comoedia* instead of *vetus disciplina* or *secunda aetas*. Furthermore, it is the *archaea comoedia*, and not a second or intermediate stage, that carps on men's faults. This conflicting description found in a series of Varronian etymologies must be more representative of his theory than that other description and partition of comedy and its abuse.

This terminology and usage also conform closely to Horace's in *Serm.* 1.4, where Aristophanes and the poets who would attack men's faults are said to be of the *prisca comoedia*.⁷¹ Therefore, Varro and the Augustan poets do suppose that Old Comedy was characterized by abuse of third parties—indeed, by *corrective* abuse. But to learn more about this corrective abuse and how it developed from the original unserious, reciprocal mockery, we must look elsewhere.

§4.3.2. Donatus

So much for Diomedes, then. The other two sources that are of use, Donatus and Evanthius, do not explicitly cite Varro, but do use Varroniana. Donatus' history provides less of a

⁶⁹ *Gramm. Lat.* 1 p. 485 Keil.

⁷⁰ Leo 1889, 71-2; Coffey 1976; van Rooy 1965, 2-4, 187-8; Baier 1997, 79.

⁷¹ *Serm.* 1.4.1-5, quoted below.

patchwork than Diomedes or Evanthius, and it contributes the most direct and convincing evidence for the specifics of this theory of comedy.⁷² Donatus's history⁷³ resembles Varro's closely enough to show that he was relying on him, possibly by way of Suetonius, who may have also been Diomedes' source.⁷⁴ Indeed, Donatus must be using sources similar to what Diomedes was using. He, too, gives the "Theophrastean" definition of comedy as an ἀκίνδυνος περιοχή. But then, quoting Vergil, he ascribes rustic origins to drama and says that the goat, being a danger to the vine, was awarded as a prize, whence tragedy got its name. His movement from comedy, to the rustic origins of drama with the goat as a prize, to tragedy may imply that he is relying on a theory that traces both back to a common source.⁷⁵ He also derives κωμῳδία from κόμη, and draws the Varronian analogy between the Compitalia and the beginnings of drama in Greece. Like Horace⁷⁶ and Livy,⁷⁷ who rely on Varro,⁷⁸ Donatus names Livius Andronicus as the founder of Roman drama.

Donatus mentions the same alternative etymology for τραγωδία that Diomedes gives and Horace implies, according to which it is derived from τρυγωδία, which, in turn, is so named because the earliest performers smeared lees on their faces before the invention of masks.⁷⁹ He does not, however, give the conflicting etymology in Diomedes that τρυγωδία was named because wine, and not a goat, was the prize. For the derivation of κωμῳδία from κόμη, Donatus offers three related explanations: (a) that it was at first performed in the κῶμαι;⁸⁰ (b) that it treats

⁷² On the use of Varro in this passage of Donatus, see, too, Brink 1962, 194-5, and especially Baier 1997, 110-3.

⁷³ *Donati Commentum Terenti* I pp. 22-5 Wessner (=Koster XXVI).

⁷⁴ Leo 1889, 71-2; Leo 1904, 76; Brink 1962, 184-5; Baier 1997, 76-80.

⁷⁵ See Meuli 1955, 228, and Brink 1962, 185.

⁷⁶ *Ep.* 2.161-3; see Brink 1982, *ad loc.*

⁷⁷ Livy 7.2.

⁷⁸ Dahlmann 1963, 28-9.

⁷⁹ *Ars Poetica* 275-84, discussed above.

⁸⁰ *comoediae autem a more antiquo dictae, quia in vicis huius modi carmina initio agebantur apud Graecos.*

the lives of those humble residents of the κῶμαι;⁸¹ and (c) that the participants in the earliest form of comedy would gather into the crossroads and κῶμαι (*in vicos et compita*). We have already seen that (a) is also given by the Augustan authors and Varro. While (b) does not appear in them, it is perfectly compatible with it. The final etymology, (c), is reminiscent of the lines in Vergil's account that give his etymology for comedy (*praemiaque ingeniis pagos et compita circum / Thesidae posuere*).⁸² In fact, Donatus quotes Vergil in the next sentence to describe the rustic origins of drama. The gathering involved in (c) may also be meant to connect it to the κῶμος, which, as mentioned above, is also a Varronian etymology.

And yet in this third etymology, Donatus explains more than Vergil:

Athenienses namque, Atticam custodientes elegantiam cum vellent male viventes notare, in vicos et compita ex omnibus locis laeti alacresque veniebant, ibique cum nominibus singulorum vitia publicabant; unde nomen compositum, ut comoedia vocaretur.

For the Athenians, because they were preserving their Attic propriety and wanted to mark those who were living evilly, mirthfully and swiftly used to come from all places into the hamlets and crossroads, and there they used to broadcast the vices of each individual person by name. From this source the name was composed so that it was called "comedy."

Given that Donatus' surrounding discussion of the origins of drama relies on Varro and is fully compatible with what we know of his theory from the Augustan sources, this, too, ought to be part of the history.⁸³ With this our hypothesis that Varro's history supposed that there was an early stage of corrective abuse finds confirmation. Unlike Diomedes, Donatus does not divide comedy into periods, but this description of comedy's pre-scenic form fully agrees with Varro's characterization of Old Comedy during his discussion of Roman satire, i.e., that satire, like Old Comedy, is composed for the purpose of attacking faults (*ad carpenda hominum vitia*).

⁸¹ ἀπὸ τῆς κώμης, *hoc est ab actu vitae hominum, qui in vicis habitant ob mediocritatem fortunarum*.

⁸² *Georgics* 2.382-3.

⁸³ Brink 1962, 194-5, and Baier 1997, 110-3, agree on this point.

This also states explicitly what Horace implies about Old Comedy (that, for a time, it was praiseworthy) and early Roman comedy (that it eventually turned to abusing *honestae domus* and had to be curtailed, hinting that, in an earlier period, it was directing its abuse against those who deserved it).⁸⁴ According to Varro, it seems, the proto-dramatic celebrations featured unserious, reciprocal abuse, and comedy proper emerged when that abuse began to attack third parties and adopted a corrective function.

§4.3.3. Evanthius

St. Jerome, writing a generation after Evanthius' death in the year 358, called him the most learned of the grammarians;⁸⁵ but, of our sources, he proves the most confused.⁸⁶ He begins by describing the origin of comedy and tragedy in the manner familiar to us from the Augustan authors: the beginning of both (*initium tragoediae et comoediae*) is in celebrations to Dionysus performed at the harvest. The goat, the enemy of the vine, was sacrificed at burning altars, from which tragedy gets its name. For this, Evanthius cites Vergil, as had Diomedes, and adds that the goat may have been the prize, as Vergil implies and Tibullus states. Later in the same chapter, Evanthius seems to contradict this account of their origins,⁸⁷ since he says that tragedy is known to have preceded comedy:

⁸⁴ §4.2.4.

⁸⁵ Jerome *Chronicon* on the year 358. On Evanthius, see Kaster 1988, 278-9.

⁸⁶ *De fabula*, in *Donati Commentum Terenti* I pp. 13-21 Wessner (=Koster XXV). Evanthius' account was interpolated into Donatus' introduction to his commentary on Terence, and, in its current state, immediately precedes Donatus' discussion about the nature and origins of comedy and drama. Leo 1904, 77, supposed that Evanthius was ultimately reproducing (among other things) information from Varro and Horace. Van Rooy 1965, 186-98, focuses on Evanthius' confusion, especially about satire and satyr play. Baier 1997, 106-10, focuses, as we do here, on Varroniana in Evanthius.

⁸⁷ Noted, too, by Baier 1997, 107.

itaque, ut rerum ita etiam temporum reperto ordine, tragoedia prior prolata esse cognoscitur. nam ut ab incultu ac feris moribus paulatim perventum est ad mansuetudinem urbesque sunt conditae et vita mitior atque otiosa processit, ita res tragicae longe ante comicas inventae.

Therefore, as the succession of both the matters and the times has been found, tragedy is known to have been brought forth earlier. For just as there was a gradual emergence into mildness from a lack of refinement and uncivilized manners, and cities were established, and life became gentler and leisurely, thus tragic matters were devised long before comic ones.

Evanthius' conception that the unrefined and rustic tragedy must have preceded the urbane and civilized comedy is startling. Certainly this contradicts the histories discussed above and in the last chapter, according to which mirthful, comic performances came before tragedy and comedy. Furthermore, Evanthius also contradicts himself: he earlier located the beginning of both comedy and tragedy in rustic celebrations at the harvest, and he also specifically described Attic comedy, at least, as developing in a rustic stage before the Athenians had gathered into their city. Furthermore, in the beginning of the next section, Evanthius describes how comedy was originally performed by choruses around smoking altars, surely recalling the burning altars at which the goat was sacrificed, mentioned at the beginning of his treatise.

His explanation of the word κωμῳδία also reveals a mix of sources. Despite his earlier statement that drama, both comic and tragic, derives from celebrations for Dionysus at the harvest, he also says that comedy came about from songs sung for Apollo Nomius or Agyiaeus around the *vici*, *villae*, *pagi*, and *compita*.⁸⁸ Evanthius explains the reasoning: Apollo Nomius is the god of the *pastores*, and Apollo Agyiaeus is the god of the *vici*.⁸⁹ We may add, too, that he is the god of the *compita*, and, once again, the Varronian connection to the Compitalia must be implied, even in this decidedly un-Varronian explanation that incorporates Apollo. Evanthius

⁸⁸ Compare Evanthius' *circum Atticae vicos villas pagos et compita festivum carmen solemniter cantaretur* with Vergil's *praemiaque ingeniis pagos et compita circum / Thesidae posuere* (*Georgics* 2.382-3).

⁸⁹ *at vero nondum coactis in urbem Atheniensibus, cum Apollini Νομίῳ vel Ἀγυιαίῳ, id est pastorum vicorumve praesidi deo, instructis aris in honorem divinae rei circum Atticae vicos villas pagos et compita festivum carmen solemniter cantaretur, ἀπὸ τῶν κωμῶν comoedia vocitata est ...*

adds two further etymologies: that κωμῳδία is from κῶμη, his preferred etymology (he follows it with *ut opinor*), or from κωμάζειν. Both have their place in Varro's theories; as we have seen, the former is found in the Augustan poets, and the latter appears in a fragment of Varro himself.⁹⁰

But his description of the earliest comic song is curious: Evanthius says that it was sung *solemniter*, a quite different characterization from the mirth of the early dramatic performances of the Varronian history, and, for that matter, the Eratosthenic.

So Evanthius is mixing together a few different sources, then. At minimum, he is conflating Varro's history with a more distinctly Peripatetic source, as Diomedes and Donatus had, though he is less clear where he is using each. Evanthius says that in comedy there are *parvi impetus periculatorum*, echoing the "Theophrastean" definition of comedy as ἀκίνδυνος περιοχή, used by both Donatus and Diomedes. This is especially true if *περιοχή* means not "episode" but is the equivalent of *περιπέτεια*, which Photius gives as a synonym.⁹¹ This idea also recalls Aristotle's proviso that comedy should not be too painful, which, as we saw, excludes certain types of plot and some forms of personal abuse. Evanthius also draws a distinction between Old and New Comedy, whereby the latter has historical fidelity whereas the former is completely fabricated.⁹²

⁹⁰ See n. 63 above.

⁹¹ Photius s.v. *περιοχή*. See, too, Fortenbaugh 1981, 258 n. 13, and Webster 1960, 178-9, on the term *περιοχή*.

⁹² Old Comedy is characterized by *historica fides verae narrationis*; New by *facta penitus argumenta*. This recalls a distinction between *ιστορία* and *πλάσμα* described by Asclepiades of Myrleia that is reported by Sextus Empiricus *Adv. gramm.* 263-4: *πλάσμα* refers to fictional, verisimilitudinous plots and *ιστορία* to true events. *πλάσματα*, we are told, are exemplified by comedy. On this passage in Sextus, see Blank 1998 *ad loc.* and *ad* 250. By this distinction, Old Comedy and its personal abuse would not be drawing on the material appropriate to comedy. Dosi, who is very liberal about what he assigns to Theophrastus, supposes that this distinction is Theophrastean (see Dosi 1960, 604-12, with 621-2). Janko 1984, 50-1, cautions that no text attributes this distinction to Theophrastus; on this problem see also Fortenbaugh 2005, 137.

Evanthius does not properly understand his sources, however. He says that Homer had provided the *exempla* for tragedy and comedy with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, respectively.⁹³ However, as we saw in chapter 2, Aristotle says that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are analogs of tragedy, and the *Margites* is the analog of comedy. Evanthius, being unfamiliar with the latter, has made a mistake. Certainly he has misunderstood his sources, whatever they were, in his discussion of satyr drama, where he describes it as a successor to Old Comedy and as criticizing faults without giving the names of those whom it attacked. I will argue in chapter 6 that there is a kernel of truth to the former observation, but the latter is demonstrably false. Caution is in order, then, as we turn to Evanthius' description of comedy's personal abuse and his periodization of comedy for information about Varro's theories.

As mentioned above, Diomedes puts Susarion, Mullus, and Magnes in the first stage (characterized by less clever jests), Aristophanes, Eupolis, and Cratinus in the second (characterized by assaults on men's faults), and Menander, Diphilus, and Philemon in the third, but Evanthius knows nothing of Susarion and this first stage. While he calls Thespis the inventor of tragedy, he says that Eupolis was the father of comedy along with Cratinus and Aristophanes. These latter three belong to what Evanthius calls the ἀρχαία κωμῳδία or the *vetus comoedia*, the period during which comic poets openly attacked men's faults. He quite curiously calls the middle period the *satyra*, a stage during which comic poets criticized faults without giving personal names. The third and final stage is νέα κωμῳδία with its wholly invented plots.

Unlike Diomedes, Evanthius' account resembles the Varronian account, and he must be relying on it. Varro referred to the first stage as the *archaea comoedia* and said it featured corrective personal abuse. Evanthius agrees on this, and his Old Comedy is characterized in the

⁹³ *Poetics* 4.1448b34-5. Evanthius' use of Aristotle was noted at nearly the same time by Scheidemantel 1883, 9-10, and Leo 1883, 327.

same way as Horace in particular describes it in the *Sermones*, namely that Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Eupolis were its most important exponents.

Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poetae
atque alii, quorum comoedia prisca virorum est,
siquis erat dignus describi, quod malus ac fur,
quod moechus foret aut sicarius aut alioqui
famosus, multa cum libertate notabant.

Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes, and the other poets who participated in Old Comedy used to mark anyone who was worthy of being called out, because he was bad and a thief or because he was an adulterer or assassin or in some way infamous, with great outspokenness.⁹⁴

This accords with what Horace says of Roman drama in his description of its origins, as discussed above: Horace says that early Roman comedy mocked freely and only ceased to abuse by name when a later law prevented it (*lex / poenaque lata, malo quae nollet carmine quemquam / describi*).⁹⁵ Donatus, as was mentioned, also placed personal mockery at the beginning of comedy proper: *Athenienses ... cum vellent male viventes notare ... cum nominibus singulorum vitia publicabant*.⁹⁶ Evanthius characterizes Old Comedy in the same way: *inest in ea* [sc. *comoedia*] ... *denominatio civium, de quibus libere describebatur*, and Evanthius even says that this was beneficial to the state (*idque suo tempore moribus multum profuit civitatis*).⁹⁷

Van Rooy has suggested that Evanthius is relying only on Horace for his characterization of Old Comedy and description of *satura*, the phase of comedy that Evanthius identifies with Middle Comedy and says employed veiled personal abuse, but this seems improbable.⁹⁸ As was mentioned above, Evanthius cites Vergil's account of the origins of drama, implies the Varronian connection between pre-scenic drama and the Compitalia, and describes the censorious activities

⁹⁴ *Serm.* 1.4.1-5.

⁹⁵ *Ep.* 2.153-4. *describi* probably refers to abuse by name; see Brink 1983, *ad loc.*

⁹⁶ p. 24 Wessner. cf. Brink 1962, 193-5, who also notes the similarity of Donatus to Horace.

⁹⁷ p. 16 Wessner.

⁹⁸ van Rooy 1965, 188-90.

at the origins of comedy's development in a way that reflects not only Horace, but also parallels Donatus, who, I have argued, is using a Varronian source for his information. Further proof that Evanthius is an important (if not always reliable) witness is his description of *satira* in his tripartition of comedy. This tripartition is not merely an "uncritical acceptance" of Horace *Serm.* 1.4.6.⁹⁹ Van Rooy is right that Evanthius is closely reading Horace and imitating some his language from the *Ars Poetica* for his description,¹⁰⁰ and it is true, as Leo says and as has been mentioned above, that Evanthius' discussion betrays an ignorance of the particulars of comedy, Lucilian satire, and satyr play.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, the use of Livy, Valerius Maximus, or some other Varronian history of the origins of Roman drama better explains Evanthius' incorporation of the dramatic *satira* into his history of comedy than the suggestion that he is parroting Horace.

In Livy, *satira* is an intermediate form, falling between *iocularia* akin to Fescennine verses¹⁰² and the *argumenta* of New Comedy. *Satira* has the same position in Evanthius, where it is a middle form falling between Old Comedy (characterized by its *historica fides* and mockery of contemporaries) and New Comedy (characterized by its *facta argumenta*). If Evanthius were unaware of the tradition of the dramatic *satira* and its intermediate position in the Varronian sources, and were merely trying to work Horace's statement about Lucilius's dependence on Old Comedy into his theory of comedy, surely he would not have hypothesized a dramatic *satira*, identified it with Middle Comedy, and then claimed that Lucilius' literary satires derive, in turn, from that. On the contrary, if he did hypothesize a dramatic *satira*, he ought to have identified it with Old Comedy and to have located the origins of Lucilius' satires in that source, which is what Horace says in *Serm.* 1.4.1-5, quoted above. That there are good reasons to connect satyr play

⁹⁹ i.e., *hinc* (sc. from the old comic poets) *omnis pendet Lucilius*.

¹⁰⁰ van Rooy 1965, 189.

¹⁰¹ Leo 1889, 72, and Leo 1904, 77.

¹⁰² Livy 7.2.7.

with Middle Comedy¹⁰³ and the dramatic *satyra* with satyr play or at least satyr dances¹⁰⁴ suggests that Evanthius and his more immediate sources are not so ignorant as they appear, and we ought not be so quick to regard Evanthius as inventing a history of comedy slavishly based on Horace and be so reluctant to see his testimony as confirming Varro's characterization of Old Comedy.

Significantly, Evanthius also deviates from Diomedes, as well as the other treatises on comedy, when he describes why Old Comedy and its personal abuse of third parties vanished. Many of the treatises say that the city's leaders forbade personal mockery so that they could do wrong without being punished. This led to Middle Comedy and its more oblique mockery, which was, in its turn, restricted likewise. In this history, comedy's outspoken personal attack is a champion of the public good which is curtailed when vice grew too prevalent and powerful (ἐπι πλεῖον προϊούσης καὶ ἐπικρατούσης τῆς κακίας).¹⁰⁵

But this does not appear in Evanthius. To be sure, Evanthius says that comic abuse was initially beneficial to the state. But he says that the increasing restrictions on personal abuse in comedy were owed not to wrongdoers who wanted to sin with impunity, but to the comic poets themselves, who started to abuse their license to mock:

sed cum poetae licentius abuti stilo et passim laedere ex libidine coepissent plures bonos, ne quisquam in alterum carmen infame componeret lata lege siluerunt.

But after [sc. Old Comic] poets began to abuse their pen rather more licentiously and at whim generally harm many good men, a law was passed that nobody could compose a defamatory poem against another, and they fell silent.

¹⁰³ See chapter 6.

¹⁰⁴ See Szilágyi 1981.

¹⁰⁵ E.g., Koster XVIIIa, 31-3: οὐ μετὰ πολλὸν χρόνον οἱ ἄρχοντες Ἀθήνησιν ἤρξαντο κωλύειν τοὺς κωμικοὺς τοῦ φανερωῦς οὕτω καὶ ὀνομαστί ἐλέγχειν τοὺς ἀδικοῦντας· αὐτοὶ γὰρ θέλοντες ἀδικεῖν καὶ μὴ ἐλέγχεσθαι, τούτου χάριν ἐπετίμων αὐτοῖς. On such narratives, see §5.6.

This corresponds to Horace's description of the same development on the Roman side in *Ep.* 2.145-55 and on the Greek side in *Ars Poetica* 282-4, and it must be owed to the history in Horace and Varro, according to which personal mockery at the earliest stages of comedy was censorious and socially corrective, but at some point became unjustifiably abusive.

With this, the decline of comedy's personal abuse seems to be correlated with the provision in the Twelve Tables against singing a *malum carmen* (a defamatory song).¹⁰⁶ Cicero in his *De republica* explicitly connects this law to personal attack in comedy. Cicero has Scipio first explain that the Greeks granted great license to comedy and that, while it may have attacked base men, it turned against good men too:

"numquam comoediae, nisi consuetudo vitae pateretur, probare sua theatri flagitia potuissent ... quem illa non adtigit, uel potius quem non uexauit, cui pepercit? Esto, populares homines, improbos, in re publica seditiosos, Cleonem, Cleophontem, Hyperbolum laesit. Patiamur," inquit, "etsi eius modi ciues a censore melius est quam a poeta notari. Sed Periclen, cum iam suae ciuitati maxima auctoritate plurimos annos domi et belli praefuisset, uiolari uersibus et eos agi in scaena non plus decuit, quam si Plautus," inquit, "noster uoluisset aut Naeuus Publio et Cnaeus Scipioni aut Caecilius Marco Catoni maledicere."

"Never could comedy have been able to demonstrate its depravities in the theater if the custom of life had not permitted it¹⁰⁷ ... Whom did comedy not attack, or rather whom did it not vex, whom did it spare? Let it be granted it harmed demagogues, base men, men treasonous to the republic, Cleon, Cleophon, and Hyperbolus. Let us suffer that," Scipio said, "even if citizens of that type are better chided by a censor than by a poet. But it is no more appropriate that Pericles, when he had presided over his city with the highest authority for many years at home and abroad, be befouled with verses and that those men be dragged on the stage than if our Plautus," he said, "or Naevius had wanted to malign Publius and Gnaeus Scipio or if Caecilius had wanted to malign Marcus Cato."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Ep.* 2.1.152-4: *lex / poenaque lata, malo quae nollet carmine quemquam /describi*. This connection between the law forbidding personal mockery in comedy and the Twelve Tables was first observed by Kiessling 1889, *ad* 2.1.147. This law against *mala carmina* originally referred not merely to magic but also to slander and was in operation at least until Naevius' day (after which point it was replaced by other laws against slander); see Fraenkel 1925; Momigliano 1942, 120-4; Smith 1942, 169-79. For our purposes, however, it is more important that in Varro's (and Horace's) day, it was thought to have restricted mockery by name. That this is so is clear from Cicero's description of the law, discussed below.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, who is our source for this section of the *De republica*, expands on this, explaining that the Greeks had allowed comedy by law to attack people by name: *et Graeci quidem antiquiores uitiosae suae opinionis quandam conuenientiam seruarunt, apud quos fuit etiam lege concessum, ut quod uellet comoedia, de quo uellet, nominatim diceret*.

¹⁰⁸ *De republica* 4.10-1 (cited in Augustine *De civitate dei* 2.9).

Cicero is describing the same mix of justifiable and unjustifiable abuse that in Horace and Evanthius causes Old Comedy's end. Cicero, again by way of Scipio, goes on to explain that such personal mockery was restricted among the Romans:

"Nostrae," inquit, "contra duodecim tabulae cum perpauca res capite sanxissent, in his hanc quoque sancendam putauerunt, si quis occentauisset siue carmen condidisset, quod infamiam faceret flagitiumue alteri."

"Although our Twelve Tables," he said, "in contrast, established capital punishment for very few crimes, they reckoned that this, too, ought to be set among them, namely the crime of singing or composing a song that causes infamy or disgrace to another."¹⁰⁹

Cicero is contrasting Greek and Roman comedy: Old Comedy was allowed too much license and attacked the good and the bad; the provision in the Twelve Tables was intended to prevent Roman poets from doing the same.¹¹⁰ He is silent about how the transition from Old to Middle Comedy happened and why personal abuse declined in Greek comedy.¹¹¹ But the history found in the Augustan authors and developed by Varro puts the developments of Greek and Roman comedy in parallel and advances a theory according to which *both* were curtailed by analogous laws after an initial period of license.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ *De republica* 4.12.

¹¹⁰ Baier 1997, 115, following Beckmann 1923, claims that legislation against personal abuse in comedy could not have been a feature of Varro's account because the law in the Twelve Tables legislated against black magic—as Pliny describes the law (*N.H.* 28.17)—and not against abusive speech. Horace and Cicero, Baier supposes, mistook the nature of the law, an error that Varro would not have made. However, if Pliny, Horace, and Cicero were referring to the same law, it would be absurd to exclude the testimonies of Cicero and Horace in favor of Pliny's. Rives 2002, 284-8, convincingly argues that these testimonies can be reconciled: personal abuse and magical injury were not regarded as qualitatively different, but the law regulated both simultaneously, just as the English word "curse," for example, collapses into one term both a damaging hex and obscene talk.

¹¹¹ His point here is how differently personal abuse on the stage was treated in Greece and Rome. He may have believed that personal abuse in Greek comedy *was* curtailed by legal or social pressure, but not until after it had done considerable damage. The Romans, in contrast, had the wisdom to ban it early on.

¹¹² Cicero may be supposing that for the Athenians a law explicitly *permitted* personal abuse in comedy, in contrast to the Roman law that forbade it; Augustine seems to think as much (see n. 107), and Halliwell 1991, 54 n. 27, ascribes this view to Cicero. Of course, Cicero himself describes the dispensation granted to comedy in Athens only as a *consuetudo*, and, despite Augustine's judgment, there is no reason to believe that Cicero held that it was permitted by law (and, as Halliwell shows, it probably was not).

§4.4. Varro's Model for the Development of Comedy and Its Abuse

To recapitulate, the Augustan authors and to varying degrees the grammarians Diomedes, Donatus, and Evanthius propose a common history of the nature and development of comedy that ultimately derives from Varro. I have tried to reconstruct the Augustan account and use it to identify further Varronian material in the grammarians. Diomedes is well aware of this account; however, most of what he says is based not on it, but relies on other sources. Donatus is aware of the other sources, but aside from giving a Theophrastean definition of comedy (which Varro himself may have quoted), his discussion is fully compatible with, and representative of, the Varronian account. Evanthius uses a variety of materials, and some of his discussion is self-contradictory or simply incorrect. When it comes, however, to the nature of Old Comedy and the different phases of comedy, he relies especially on Varronian information.

In summary, I suggest that Varro proposed the following:

- (a) Among the Greeks and Romans, both comedy and tragedy emerged from a rustic proto-drama celebrated at the harvest festival (Vergil and Tibullus; stated by Evanthius, who elsewhere contradicts himself; implicit in Horace, Diomedes, and Donatus).

- (b) The goat is sacrificed to Dionysus because it ate the grape vine (Vergil; Diomedes; Donatus, Evanthius). The original performers danced around it, giving rise to the rite known among the Greeks as the *askoliasmos* (Vergil only). Later, the goat was given as a prize, from which the name "tragedy" comes (Vergil; Tibullus; Horace; Diomedes; Donatus; Evanthius).

(c) The name for comedy derives from the κῶμαι, the villages where the proto-dramatic festival was held (Vergil; Diomedes; Donatus); or because it treats the κωμῆται (Diomedes; Donatus); or from the mirthful and censorious activities of the κῶμος (Varro; Donatus).

(d) The proto-drama had reciprocal personal abuse (Horace; Livy; implicit in Vergil). This jest later became censorious for a time (implied by Horace; Donatus). The personal abuse in the first phase of scenic comedy—among the Greeks, the Old Comedy of Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Eupolis—was also censorious (Horace's in *Serm.* 1.4 and implied by his account in the *Ars Poetica*; Diomedes quoting Varro's etymologies for *satura*; Evanthius).

(e) In both Greece and Rome, the license associated with the first phase of comedy was abused and led to indiscriminate mockery, which was curtailed by legislation for the good of society. Among the Romans, this took the form of the law against *mala carmina* in the Twelve Tables (Horace; Evanthius).

(f) After Livius Andronicus introduced Latin plays derived from Greek New Comedy to Rome, comedies were based on *argumenta* (Horace; Livy; Diomedes; Evanthius).

§4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the history of drama developed by Varro and used by the Augustan authors and the grammarians closely resembles the Hellenistic theories discussed in the last chapter and relies in particular on Eratosthenes'.¹¹³ According to Varro's theory, there

¹¹³ Hendrickson 1898, as mentioned above, denies the ascription of this account to Varro; he also connects it to Crates of Mallos, who, Henrickson thought, was using a modified Aristotelian account. But practically nothing is

was an initial phase in the pre-scenic Fescinnine verses that consisted of reciprocal abuse. These verses correspond to the earliest jest in the Eratosthenic theory: there, the jest in the *aition* was among drunken shepherds, and in at least some of the accounts of abuse from wagons the jest was also reciprocal.¹¹⁴

But I have argued that Varro's history tells us more: over time, the abuse became directed against third parties and took on censorious aims. However, the poets abused their freedoms, the mockery degenerated into unwarranted abuse, and it was curtailed by law. An intermediate stage followed that is perhaps to be identified with the dramatic *satira* on the Roman side, characterized by veiled abuse against deserving targets. Finally, Livius Andronicus introduced the Roman equivalent of New Comedy. Thus, as Livy concludes his account, drama grew from such small beginnings into a craze that could hardly be supported by wealthy kingdoms.¹¹⁵

The parallels that this account draws are particularly revealing. As I mentioned towards the beginning of this chapter, this history is not so interested in particulars; the origins of drama are not limited to Attica, Icarius, and the caprine malefactor whom he punishes. Instead, it emphasizes patterns of development that occur in both Greece and Rome: as Vergil describes it, goats eat vines, farmers sacrifice them, and from this source the elements of drama, including comic abuse, emerge. Therefore, when this theory proposes that unrestrained comic abuse ultimately degenerates into dangerous speech that must be curtailed by law, it is asserting something more general than it may first seem. It is not merely describing contingent events at the origins of comedy; it is making a claim about the nature of free speech and comic abuse. As I

known of Crates of Mallos' work on comedy—if he even worked on comedy. Herodicus, a student of Crates of Mallos, did write a *κωμωδοῦμενοι* that was cited by Athenaeus (see fr. 1-4 Düring). But such a prosopographical work is far from the kind of theoretical treatise that would have given an account such as this.

¹¹⁴ See §3.3.

¹¹⁵ Livy 7.2: *Inter aliarum parua principia rerum ludorum quoque prima origo ponenda uisa est, ut appareret quam ab sano initio res in hanc uix opulentis regnis tolerabilem insaniam uenerit.*

will argue in the next chapter, such ideas about the perils of unrestrained comic speech are intimately connected to criticisms of the societies that enable it—in particular, criticisms of democracy and democratic values.

Chapter 5

Comic Abuse as Class Warfare: The Politicization of Comic Abuse in Histories of Comedy

§5.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we have seen a series of theories that hold that abuse in comedy was originally very limited: comedy emerged from festival, and its abuse was initially directed at and exchanged among only the performers themselves. Aristotle's history and the histories discussed in chapter 3 hardly take abuse of third parties into account. For them, Old Comedy's mockery of politicians and other members of society was neither original nor central to comedy. This is nowhere clearer than in the treatise *Koster III*, which describes how some poets of Old Comedy did engage in personal abuse, but some did not. In this treatise, comedy evolved like tragedy (indeed, as I argued, symbiotically with tragedy), and comedy's interaction with spectators was not noteworthy. This methodology is similar to, and perhaps draws on, Aristotle's in the *Poetics*, which, as we saw, downplays the connection between comedy and society and rejects the proposition that civic engagement is a basic feature of comedy.

But Old Comedy *was* socially and politically engaged, and, even in the fifth century, its abuse was politicized and criticized. In the last chapter, we saw Varro's history, which does address Old Comedy's abuse of third parties. Like Aristotle and the Hellenistic theories, Varro's holds that, when comedy's abuse began to attack third parties, it quickly degenerated and had to be suppressed: the poets misused their freedom of speech. In this chapter, I will turn to more politically and historically oriented histories of comedy's development and interpretations of its

abuse. The outline of the narrative is this: comic abuse developed from some kind of discord between rustics and the rich; Old Comedy became institutionalized in the Athenian democracy and served the *demos*; something happened; comedy's right to abuse was abridged.¹

In this chapter, I will argue for the existence of two contrary narratives, both of which situate comedy's history in the context of political discord. As we shall see, they are attached to views about the kinds of danger free speech can pose and the perils of democracy. One narrative negatively values comic abuse, and it traces comedy's origins to unwarranted abuse by the *demos* of a radical democracy against the elite. The other is a positive valuation and supposes that comic abuse originated as a means for the *demos* to redress the wrongdoing of the powerful. This polemic about free speech, democracy, and comic abuse are important and long-running: the seeds of it are already present in fifth century Athens, Horace makes use of this polemic in his *Sermones*, and elements of the controversy appear in the late antique or Byzantine treatises on comedy. This is a movement from a religious analysis of comic abuse's origin and practice to a functionalistic one: comedy and comic abuse have their origins and context in their perceived function.

§5.2. Comic Abuse and the *Demos* in Athens

Aristotle's history of poetry in the *Poetics* situates the origins of comedy and the practice of personal abuse in a distinctly religious rather than political context.² As I have suggested, one of Aristotle's aims is to create a history of poetry that is largely self-contained: the forms of poetry emerge and evolve through the activities and interactions of the poets themselves;

¹ See Csapo 2000, 116, for a similar outline of this history.

² See ch. 2. This religious context in which Aristotle places drama is, of course, quite important and influential: Aristotle's account is the first to ascribe to comedy (and drama on the whole) an origin in ritual; see the articles in Csapo and Miller 2007 for modern perspectives on this view.

externals like the contingencies of politics and society are incidental to the development. Poetry revolving around politically engaged personal abuse, then, was not suited for achieving what Aristotle supposed its goals to be, nor was it productive in that it did not evolve into subsequent, superior forms of poetry.

But Aristotle of course does know that such a kind of comedy exists, and in the *Poetics*, before giving his more theoretical history of poetry, he mentions a political context in which the origins of the abusive, civically engaged comedy could be understood. When discussing the Dorians' etymological arguments in support of their claim to have invented comedy and tragedy, he mentions two places that claimed to be the site of comedy's beginnings, Megara in mainland Greece and Megara in Sicily (that is, Megara Hyblaea):

τῆς μὲν γὰρ κωμωδίας οἱ Μεγαρεῖς οἱ τε ἐνταῦθα ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς παρ' αὐτοῖς δημοκρατίας γενομένης καὶ οἱ ἐκ Σικελίας· ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ ἦν Ἐπίχαρμος {ὁ ποιητῆς} <οὐ>³ πολλῶ πρότερος ὢν Χιονίδου καὶ Μάγνητος.

For the local Megarians [sc. lay claim] to comedy on the ground that it came into being during their democracy. The Megarians of Sicily do so as well: for the poet Epicharmus came from there, though he is not much earlier than Chionides and Magnes.⁴

Greek Megara's claim to comedy is, then, contingent on the claim that comedy must have emerged under a democracy, as archaic Megara is supposed to have been for a time.⁵ The claim of Megara Hyblaea is that Epicharmus, an important comic poet who is said here to have

³ Unless Aristotle is drastically overstating the case, this insertion by Butcher is necessary: Epicharmus may be older than Chionides, but he could not be much older, since they were contemporaries (his *Suda* entry says that Epicharmus was producing plays in 486, just when Chionides seems to have; the *Suda* entry for Magnes says that Epicharmus was an older contemporary of his). Janko 1987, xxiv, suggests that ὁ ποιητῆς is a gloss that displaced οὐ.

⁴ *Poetics* 3.1448a31-34.

⁵ On this supposition, see below.

preceded the early Athenian comic poets Chionides and Magnes⁶ and who, later in the *Poetics*, is said to have had an influence on the development of Athenian comedy, comes from there.⁷

The Sicilian claim to Epicharmus contradicts the Megarians' on two points. Firstly, Epicharmus was an early and influential figure in the development of comedy, and the argument is that comedy was invented by him in Sicily rather than in mainland Greece.⁸ Secondly, his comedy is not characterized by the kind of personal abuse associated with Old Comedy; the implication is that Epicharmus' brand of nonabusive comedy is the real and original form, in contrast with the personal abuse associated with Old Comedy and Megarian comedy.⁹ The claim that comedy came from Megara assumes a connection between comedy and democracy, i.e., that such comedy must have developed in a democracy, but Epicharmus' comedy is not abusive and was not produced in a democracy: though he may have come from Megara Hyblaea, according to our sources, he lived and produced his comedies in Syracuse under the tyrants Gelo and Hiero.¹⁰ Indeed, Phormus (or Phormis), another Syracusan poet contemporary with Epicharmus, with whom Aristotle associates him, was a friend of Gelo and tutored the tyrant's children.¹¹

There are, therefore, already two competing traditions about politics and personal abuse in our earliest literary source for the origins of comedy. The first tradition associates its origins

⁶ Chionides and Magnes are the oldest Athenian comic poets known aside from Susarion (who is of uncertain origin: even in antiquity, he was claimed by both Megara and Athens, and he preceded the establishment of the state-sponsored festival). Chionides seems to have performed at the first performance of comedy at the Dionysia in 486 (*Suda* s.v. Χιονίδης, which says he put on a production in 486). Magnes is also among the earliest poets of the festival: he appears in the first extant victory list for comedy for the year 472 (IG II² 2318); as we saw in §3.4 and §3.6, in some sources he is said to have made important improvements to comedy.

⁷ *Poetics* 5.1449b5-9. This influence is explicit if the name of Epicharmus (and Phormus) are not interpolations; Else 1957, 197-8, deletes the names as later additions. But Epicharmus must at any rate be the poet whom Aristotle had in mind when he describes Sicilian influence on Crates; see as well *On Poets* fr. 34 Janko, from which the interpolation may have come (Janko 2011, 365 n. 2 and 366).

⁸ Cf. Aristotle *On Poets* fr. 34 Janko; Epicharmus is also given as the inventor of comedy in *A.P.* 9.600 (Theocritus) and his *Suda* entry. Plato *Theaet.* 152e likens him to Homer and describes him as supreme (ἄκρος) in comedy.

⁹ On the humor of Megarian comedy, see Kerkhof 2001, 17-38. See especially Eupolis fr. 261: Ἡράκλεις, τοῦτ' ἔστι σοὶ τὸ σκῶμμ' ἀσελγῆς καὶ Μεγαρικὸν καὶ σφόδρα ψυχρὸν.

¹⁰ E.g., *Suda* s.v. Ἐπίχαρμος; the Parian Chronicle at A55 says that he lived during Hiero's time.

¹¹ So *Suda* s.v. Φόρμος. Aristotle associates them at *Poetics* 5.1449b5-9 (if the names are not interpolations) and at *On Poets* fr. 34 Janko.

with Sicily, Epicharmus, and Phormus, and it asserts that the earliest comedy lacked personal abuse and emerged under the tyrants. The second conceives of a more abusive comedy originating in mainland Greece under the Megarian democracy. However, these two claims are not completely contrary to each other. As we saw in ch. 2, Aristotle's history of comedy places abuse at its origins by tracing it from lampoon, but, while this abuse continued into Old Comedy, "true" comedy did not emerge in Athens until the comic poets began to turn away from lampoon and compose generalized plots—under the influence of Sicilian comedy. This view, therefore, does not necessarily deny that the Megarians engaged in comic abuse during their democracy; rather, it denies that this performance was comedy proper in Athens until Epicharmus' influence was felt. As we have seen, Aristotle, for his part, rejects abuse of third parties as a central feature of comedy.¹²

Elsewhere, too, Aristotle may hint at a connection between the advent of abusive Old Comedy and the rise of the democracy in Athens. In the *Constitution of Athenians*, he reports that in 488 BC, after the victory at Marathon two years before, the *demos* became especially bold (θαρροῦντος ἤδη τοῦ δήμου) and carried out the first ostracism. Ostracism, Aristotle says, was instituted out of suspicion of the powerful and fear of tyrants,¹³ and its first targets in the years 488 to 484 were friends and relatives of the tyrants who had ruled Athens before the democracy. In addition, in 487/6, according to Aristotle, the archons began to be elected by lot rather than by a direct election that would favor the aristocrats.¹⁴ It is precisely in 487/6 that comedy was

¹² See §2.4 in particular.

¹³ *Ath. Pol.* 22.3: ἐτέθη διὰ τὴν ὑποψίαν τῶν ἐν ταῖς δυνάμεσιν, ὅτι Πεισίστρατος δημαγωγὸς καὶ στρατηγὸς ὢν τύραννος κατέστη. The connection between comedy and ostracism may be more profound than that the institution of both is connected to the ascent of the *demos*: Brenne 1994, 13, notes that the abusive language on ostraca is similar to that in comedy.

¹⁴ *Ath. Pol.* 22.5.

added to the City Dionysia and became funded by the state¹⁵ (prior to this, Aristotle tells us that comedy was performed by volunteers).¹⁶ There is, then, a correlation between the ascendancy of the *demos*, the use of their power against the elite, and the institutionalization of comedy in Athens. In Aristotle, these connections are more suggestive than definitive: the events occur during the same years, but he never explicitly describes the state's sponsorship of comedy as motivated by the *demos*.

However, the idea that abusive comedy may depend on and serve the *demos* is informed by the practice of the poets and their self-presentation. Aristophanes consistently presents himself as defending the city's interests by advising the people and attacking those who would lead it astray.¹⁷ He emphasizes that the targets of his abuse are not the common people but those in power. In the *Wasps*, he says the following of his practice:

οὐδ' ὅτε πρῶτόν γ' ἤρξε διδάσκειν, ἀνθρώποις φήσ' ἐπιθέσθαι,
 ἀλλ' Ἡρακλέους ὀργήν τιν' ἔχων τοῖσι μεγίστοις ἐπιχειρεῖν,
 θρασέως ξυστάς εὐθὺς ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτῷ τῷ καρχαρόδοντι,
 οὗ δεινόταται μὲν ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν Κύννης ἀκτῖνες ἔλαμπον,
 ἑκατὸν δὲ κύκλω κεφαλαὶ κολάκων οἰμωζομένων ἐλιγμῶντο
 περὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν, φωνὴν δ' εἶχεν χαράδρας ὄλεθρον τετοκυίας,
 φώκης δ' ὄσμῆν, Λαμίας ὄρχεις ἀπλύτους, πρωκτὸν δὲ καμήλου.
 τοιοῦτον ἰδὼν τέρας οὗ φησιν δείσας καταδωροδοκῆσαι,
 ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἔτι καὶ νυνὶ πολεμεῖ.

He says that, from when he first began to produce drama, he did not attack humans, but having the wrath of Hercules he laid his hands on the greatest, standing boldly from the start against the saw-toothed one himself, from whose eyes the most fearsome beams of Cynna flashed, and a hundred heads of damnable flatterers licked him in a circle around his head, and he had the voice of a torrent that begets ruin, and the stink of a seal, the unwashed balls of Lamia, and the ass of a camel. Though he saw such a monstrosity, he denies that he became afraid and took bribes, but still even now he contends on your behalf.¹⁸

¹⁵ This connection between the incorporation of comedy into the Dionysia and the growing power of the *demos* is noted, e.g., by Wilson 2003, 21; Rusten 2006, 57; Rusten 2012, 19.

¹⁶ *Poetics* 5.1449b2.

¹⁷ See Bakola 2008, who argues that Aristophanes presents himself as a poet-reformer along the lines of Solon.

¹⁸ *Wasps* 1029-37; cf. *Peace* 751-60, which repeats some of this verbatim.

Aristophanes is talking about his attack on the demagogue Cleon in the *Knights*, in which a character named Demos is freed from his controlling and deceptive slave Paphlagon, who is a thinly veiled parody of Cleon. As in the *parabasis* to the *Peace*,¹⁹ he claims that the targets of his abuse and satire are not the poor, but the powerful who deserve mockery; indeed, in the *Clouds*, asserting not only his poetry's novelty but also its value, he says that he stopped abusing Cleon when the latter was no longer powerful.²⁰

This stance does not fully reflect his practice: Aristophanes *does* sometimes mock the poor and weak,²¹ and he even mocks Cleon after his death in 422.²² Nor is he completely aligned with the common people against the elite. In the *Knights*, the chorus of knights with which Aristophanes presents himself as allied²³ are those citizens who are wealthy enough to ride horses in war, members of the traditional elite. And, although Cleon is wealthy and powerful, he is not a member of the traditional aristocracy, but is newly rich.²⁴ There is, nonetheless, a definite sense that comedy was aligned with the *demos* against the rich and powerful. The so-called Old Oligarch, who was perhaps a contemporary of Aristophanes, views comedy as an institution through which the *demos* immorally attacks the good (that is, the elite) while not countenancing criticism of itself.²⁵ He says the following of the *demos*:

¹⁹ *Peace* 734-764.

²⁰ *Clouds* 449-50: ὃς μέγιστον ὄντα Κλέων' ἔπαισ' ἐς τὴν γαστέρα, / κοῦκ ἐτόλμησ' αὐθις ἐπεμπηδῆσ' αὐτῷ κειμένῳ.

²¹ E.g., Lysistratos at *Acharnians* 856-9 or Amynias at *Wasps* 1265-74, both of whom are mocked for being poor and hungry; however, as MacDowell 1988 on *Wasps* 1971 suggests, the joke may be that Amynias was *once* rich and powerful but has lost his fortune from gambling.

²² *Peace* 47-8.

²³ See especially *Knights* 507-511.

²⁴ On Cleon's social standing and the origins of his wealth, see MacDowell 1995, 81-3.

²⁵ On attempts to date this work (and their problems), see Osborne 2004, 1-14, and Gray 2007, 57-8. On the viewpoint of its author and the critical tradition to which he belongs, see Ober 1998, 14-51.

κωμωδεῖν δ' αὖ καὶ κακῶς λέγειν τὸν μὲν δῆμον οὐκ ἐῷσιν, ἵνα μὴ αὐτοὶ ἀκούωσι κακῶς, ἰδίᾳ δὲ κελεύουσιν, εἴ τις τινα βούλεται, εἴ εἰδότες ὅτι οὐχὶ τοῦ δήμου ἐστὶν οὐδὲ τοῦ πλήθους ὁ κωμωδούμενος ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, ἀλλ' ἢ πλούσιος ἢ γενναῖος ἢ δυνάμενος. ὀλίγοι δὲ τινες τῶν πενήτων καὶ τῶν δημοτικῶν κωμωδοῦνται, καὶ οὐδ' οὗτοι ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πολυπραγμοσύνην καὶ διὰ τὸ ζητεῖν πλέον τι ἔχειν τοῦ δήμου· ὥστε οὐδὲ τοὺς τοιοῦτους ἄχθονται κωμωδομένους.

They do not allow them [sc. the comic poets] to mock or speak ill of the *demos* so that they do not hear ill of themselves, but they bid them to do it privately, if someone wants to mock someone else, since they know well that he who is mocked is not of the *demos* nor of the crowd for the most part, but is rich, noble, or powerful. Some few of the poor and common are mocked, and not even these except because of busibodiness and seeking to have more than the *demos*, so that they are not vexed that such men are mocked.²⁶

The Old Oligarch supposes, then, that comic abuse is not unfettered and does not root out injustice. Rather, it is licensed by the *demos* and is directed against the elite. While he admits that the comic poets sometimes attack the poor, he supposes that such targets must already be unpopular.

This much corresponds generally with Heath's reading of the role of political comedy in Aristophanes—that "Aristophanes told his audience what they wanted to hear; they rewarded him for it."²⁷ But, despite Heath's view that political comedy did not have a political aim, the Old Oligarch clearly holds that Old Comedy is one way in which the *demos* marginalizes his social and political class. That is, even if political comedy did not have a political aim, it had a political effect: while Aristophanes, at the most basic level, may have been pursuing the first prize by appealing to the *demos*' biases and had no coherent political agenda of his own,²⁸ his comedy would still have had the effect of enacting, for the whole audience, the jokes and abuse that appeal to the *demos*. Beyond the Old Oligarch's complaint, Cleon felt strongly enough about the

²⁶ [Xenophon] *Ath. Pol.* 2.18. On this passage and the Oligarch's perception of comedy, see Henderson 1998, 261-2; Rusten 2006, 57; Hunter 2009, 104.

²⁷ Heath 1987, 43.

²⁸ This is, of course, a thorny question, but it does not enter into our calculation here: whatever Aristophanes and the Old Comic poets intended, the important thing for our purposes is the reception of their comedies. For the politics (or lack thereof) underlying Aristophanes' comedies, see Gomme 1938; Dover 1972, 33-4; de Ste. Croix 1972, 355-74; Halliwell 1984a; Heath 1987; Cartledge 1990, 43-53; Henderson 1990; Carey 1994; Sommerstein 1996; Henderson 1998; Ober 1998; Rosenbloom 2002.

insults against him that he prosecuted Aristophanes (perhaps twice!),²⁹ and there were probably at least some laws passed (to be repealed shortly thereafter) against abuse by name in comedy.³⁰

In the fifth century, therefore, there was already sensitivity to comic abuse—a feeling that it achieved a social and political effect. Comedy and its abuse are connected not to ritual and religion but are instead seen as a form of social control: for the Old Oligarch comic abuse is an instrument by which the elite are subjugated by the masses of a radical (and immoral) democracy.

§5.3. The Origins of Comedy and Class Warfare in Archaic Megara

In this context, the claim that comedy originally emerged under the democracy of Megara before it was performed in Athens takes on a new dimension.³¹ Aristotle says nothing more in the *Poetics* about the democracy of Megara, but characterizes it elsewhere as radical and unduly abusive towards the elite.³² He mentions Megara's democracy in the *Politics* when describing how democracies fall. He says that demagogues exiled the rich so that they could steal their wealth and lavish it on the people. The exiles, however, banded together and returned, fought the *demos* and established an oligarchy.³³ Aristotle argues that the democracy's fall fits a pattern in which the rich form a faction because they come to despise the people's disorder and lawlessness. Indeed, he says it was because of that very disorder and lawlessness that Megara's

²⁹ On the suits against Aristophanes (and testimonia for them), see Sommerstein 2004.

³⁰ For a survey of these decrees, see Halliwell 1991; the majority are probably false inferences by scholiasts. As Halliwell shows, Morychides' decree (440/39), attested in the scholia to *Acharnians* 67, is the most credible. Syracosius' decree (415/4), attested in the scholia to *Birds* 1297, may also have been historical, on which see also Sommerstein 1986; Atkinson 1992; Henderson 1998, 262-3; Trevett 2000.

³¹ The Megarian democracy under consideration here existed at some time in the sixth century; for attempts to date it, see Robinson 1997, 116 n. 192. For the emergence of democracy in Megara during the Classical period, see Robinson 2011, 44-7.

³² On the ancient sources for the democracy of Megara, see Okin 1985, 9-21; Figueira 1985, 112-28; Robinson 1997, 114-7. They are, unfortunately, rather sparse: aside from Theognis, Aristotle and Plutarch discuss the democracy, but the latter probably relied on the former (see below).

³³ *Pol.* 5.1304b35-40; cf. *Poetics* 5.1300a16-9, which describes the same events.

democracy was defeated.³⁴ As in the Old Oligarch, abusive comedy is drawn into the sphere of the political: its very origins are connected to a dangerously radical *demos*. Note how temporally specific Aristotle's report that comedy emerged during the Megarian democracy is: the democracy may have lasted fewer than twenty years.³⁵

The disorder and lawlessness of the *demos* that Aristotle has in mind are clarified by Plutarch's discussion of Megarian democracy in his *Greek Questions*.³⁶ Plutarch's information probably comes from the *Constitution of the Megarians* written by Aristotle or one of his students, which is no longer extant.³⁷ Plutarch says that after expelling their tyrant, the Megarians were initially sensible (ἔσωφρόνησαν) but then became an unrestrained democracy (ἀκόλαστος δημοκρατία).³⁸ He says that the demagogues poured out too much unmixed freedom like wine, and, as a result, the people became corrupt in every way.³⁹

He enumerates their abuses: the poor would go to the homes of the rich and insist on being entertained and dined at great expense, but, if they were denied, they would use force and abuse against everyone (πρὸς βίαν καὶ μεθ' ὕβρεως ἐχρῶντο πᾶσι); eventually, they passed legislation forcing their creditors to return the interest they had paid (this legislation was called the *palintokia*).⁴⁰ Later, he reports that the *demos* robbed temples, and then he recounts a particularly dastardly act: when sacred envoys from the Peloponnese were traveling to Delphi, the ambassadors encamped in their wagons near Megara; some Megarians got drunk and, with abusiveness and savagery (ὕβρει καὶ ὠμότητι), rolled their wagons into a lake, drowning many of

³⁴ *Pol.* 5.1302b25-31: διὰ καταφρόνησιν δὲ καὶ στασιάζουσι καὶ ἐπιτίθενται, οἷον ... ἐν ταῖς δημοκρατίαις οἱ εὐποροὶ καταφρονήσαντες τῆς ἀταξίας καὶ ἀναρχίας, οἷον καὶ ἐν Θήβαις μετὰ τὴν ἐν Οἰνοφύτοις μάχην κακῶς πολιτευομένων ἢ δημοκρατία διεφθάρη, καὶ ἡ Μεγαρέων δι' ἀταξίαν καὶ ἀναρχίαν ἠττηθέντων.

³⁵ Legon 1981, 134 holds that the radical democracy may have taken control in around 600 and been ousted by 580 (or perhaps earlier).

³⁶ *Mor.* 295d (Question 18) and *Mor.* 304e-f (Question 59).

³⁷ Halliday 1928, 92-100; Legon 1981, 104-5; Okin 1985, 14-5.

³⁸ *Mor.* 304e (Question 59).

³⁹ *Mor.* 295d (Question 18).

⁴⁰ *Mor.* 295d (Question 18).

the ambassadors, as well as some of their wives and children. The democracy refused to punish the wrongdoers, and the Amphictyonic League had to take matters into its own hands.⁴¹

Some of the features that are commonly associated with comedy's emergence are present here, but they are represented as dangerous and degenerate. As we have seen, several accounts of comedy's origins relate them to drunken processions (κῶμοι),⁴² mockery,⁴³ celebrations by farmers in the country,⁴⁴ and, in at least one case, abuse from wagons.⁴⁵ In the accounts of the Megarian democracy, there is a kind of processional revelry perhaps akin to a κῶμος, but it culminates in violence: the poor go to the houses of the rich and abuse them not only verbally but physically and take their food. As Figueira has observed, alimentary themes may have been particularly typical of Megarian comedy and are connected to a conciliatory practice of sharing food among groups; yet in democratic Megara food and wealth are redistributed by force.⁴⁶ This supposedly conciliatory theme in comedy is reflected as precisely what comedy's detractors claim it to be, coordinated abuse on the elite by the *demos*.

Of particular interest is the theme of drunkenness, which, as we have seen, is a feature of the revelry in honor of Dionysus that lies at the origins of comedy.⁴⁷ In Plutarch's description, drunkenness is a metaphor for the lack of restraint that lets the *demos* run amuck. The democracy turned radical and immoral when the demagogues poured unmixed freedom like wine (ἄκρατον αὐτοῖς ἐλευθερίαν τῶν δημαγωγῶν οἰνοχοούντων).⁴⁸ Literal drunkenness is also what emboldens

⁴¹ *Mor.* 304f (Question 59).

⁴² The earliest is, of course, Aristotle *Poet.* 3.1448a37.

⁴³ As I argue, some form of mockery features in the origins of comedy of Aristotle (chapter 2), Eratosthenes (chapter 3), and Varro (chapter 4).

⁴⁴ See §3.3, §4.2, §4.3, and §5.6 below.

⁴⁵ See §3.3.

⁴⁶ Figueira 1985, 132-147. For the idea that the accounts of Aristotle and Plutarch reflect festivals of license that relieve tension between the people and the elite, see also Forsdyke 2005.

⁴⁷ This was especially prominent in Eratosthenes' *Erigone*, which, as I have argued in chapter 3, hinted at the origins of comedy while describing the first drunken procession in Attica.

⁴⁸ *Mor.* 295d (Question 18).

the Megarians who assaulted the sacred envoy. These criminals, whom the democracy refused to punish,⁴⁹ are called "wagon-rollers" (ἀμαξοκλισταί). Indeed, it is to the strangeness of the name that we owe much of our information: Question 59, one of the two questions that preserve information about the Megarian democracy, investigates why there is or was a group in Megara called the wagon-rollers. As we saw in ch. 3, an important ancient explanation for the origins of comedy was that it emerged from comic abuse among drunken revelers on wagons who honor Dionysus; here, however, the revelers are drunken brutes who roll wagons into a lake and commit sacrilege. The peculiarity of the anecdote suggests that we ought not think of it as an accurate report of events: it is unexplained in what sense these bold and drunken Megarians are assembled into a single persistent group, or why the sacred envoy was travelling with their wives and children, which is apparently without parallel.⁵⁰ Rather, the story is a polemical aitiology about democracy and accordingly, I suggest, about comic abuse. Democracy, comedy, and drunkenness are associated here with sacrilege, hybris, and physical violence of the *demos* against the rich.

Also attached to this account is a hint of discord between farmers in the country and aristocrats in the city. The legislation that required creditors to pay back the interest that their debtors had paid probably stood to benefit farmers the most, as did legislation in Athens in the same period.⁵¹ The account of democratic Megara makes the rustics one of the chief constituencies in this radically democratic state. As we have seen, drunken celebrations by

⁴⁹ Here, too, one of the complaints of the Old Oligarch about Athens is reflected: he says that the *demos* know who is good and bad, but tend to cultivate the bad and hate the good for their own benefit, and that it is easier to escape one's crimes in a democracy than in an oligarchy (2.19-20). Cf. Plato *Republic* 8.558A, which expresses a similar criticism, that even those who have been exiled or sentenced to death in a democracy can walk in public with impunity.

⁵⁰ Figueira 1985, 296-7. Figueira speculates that the wagon-rollers may have been a group inasmuch as they were discriminated against and attacked by the oligarchic government that subsequently seized power in Megara; the wagon-rollers would, therefore, be the representatives of the democracy. The explanation for their name would then be part of an anti-democratic polemic. For other instances of violence perpetrated against *theoroi*, see Dillon 56-7.

⁵¹ Oost 1973; Figueira 1985, 147-8.

farmers are an important recurrent feature in accounts of the origins of comedy; here in democratic Megara, the supposed birthplace of comedy, like so many other features of the origins of comedy, they are disparaged as part of a polemic against democracy and comedy. The farmers are not just drunken revelers honoring their god, but political activists who have taken over the state and are abusing and robbing the elite. This narrative asserts the perniciousness of comic abuse and opposes the claims of both the comic poets themselves and its supporters: the epigrammatist Honestus, for example, suggests that through comic abuse the drunkard can make the townsman sensible (μεθύων ἀστὸν ἐσωφρόνισεν).⁵² However, according to Aristotle and Plutarch, after driving out their tyrant, the Megarians were initially sensible (ἐσωφρόνησαν)—it is precisely when the *demos* becomes drunk on freedom that the Megarians *cease* to be sensible.⁵³

The formative elements of comedy are reduced to a kind of class warfare. The theory reported by Aristotle about the connection between comedy and Megarian democracy places comedy in a period of unjustified verbal, physical, economic, and political assaults on the elite by the *demos*. This theory hints at the same concerns that the Old Oligarch voices, that comedy is the tool of a radical and immoral *demos*, but it goes much further by suggesting that comedy's very origin is to be connected to such tensions. This narrative of comedy's origins is not merely an historical exercise: it is an important part of a polemic about how Old Comedy and comic abuse ought to be understood.

⁵² The positive evaluations will be discussed more fully below. This epigram of Honestus (*A.P.* 11.32) is discussed at length in the next chapter, where it is quoted in full.

⁵³ Plutarch *Mor.* 295d (Question 18).

§5.4. Politics and Histories of Comedy

Comedy and its abuse, therefore, are drawn from mythical origins and ritualized performance into a political context. Accordingly, they are transferred from the country into the city: as we have seen, while some accounts about the origin of comedy give it rustic origins, the real interest of interpretations like those above is its civic significance. The intent and effect of comic abuse take on a central importance. The abuse is no longer situated outside of the realm of daily life, and these interpretations must consider whether the abuse is warranted and whether it is effective.

The impetus to think about the origins and history of comedy in these terms comes ultimately from the comic poets themselves: the concerns expressed by the Old Oligarch and the above narrative of the origins of comedy are reactions to comedy's claims to civic engagement and the pursuit of justice. We have already seen that Aristophanes characterizes his comic abuse as beneficial to the people because it attacks those who are both powerful and deserving of abuse.⁵⁴ In the absence of much knowledge about the objects of Old Comedy's attacks and its audiences' understanding of its abuse, many later readers of Old Comedy assumed that Aristophanes could be taken at his word.⁵⁵ This is true of the ancient commentators on the comedies: as Stephen Halliwell has argued, the scholiasts' exegeses on the targets of Aristophanic comedy seem frequently to extract knowledge about who is abused from the plays

⁵⁴ For further claims by Aristophanes that his comedy educates the citizens of Athens, see, e.g., *Acharnians* 497-508, the famous claim that comedy (or, rather tragedy) knows justice; *ibid.* 628-658, that Aristophanes has taught the citizens of Athens to be less susceptible to flattery and will continue to produce just comedies (κωμωδήσει τὰ δίκαια); *Knights* 507-511, that Aristophanes fights against the powerful, hates the same people as his audience, and dares to say what is just (τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν μισεῖ τολμᾷ τε λέγειν τὰ δίκαια); *Peace* 734-774, that, whereas his rival poets mocked the poor or themselves engaged in licentious behavior, Aristophanes attacks the really powerful and fights on behalf of the audience.

⁵⁵ This is similar to the practice of the ancient biographers of the poets, who, lacking other sources of information, extrapolated biographical material from their poetry itself (as well as poetry about the poets, such as comedy). On this practice, see Fairweather 1974; Lefkowitz 1981.

themselves and to presume that the targets indeed deserve rebuke.⁵⁶ This is also true the hypotheses which identify corrective aims for the plays. For instance, a hypothesis to the *Wasps* says that the play mocks the Athenians for being litigious and chastens (σωφρονίζει) the people.⁵⁷

Other ancient critics likewise supposed that Old Comedy's abuse had a corrective function. As I will argue in ch. 7, Old Comedy's practice was brought into close proximity to that of the Cynics, who made attacking vice an important part of their mission.⁵⁸ To preview the discussion, a recurrent interpretation of Old Comic abuse is that it mixed frank speech (παρρησία) with pleasing humor in order to rebuke faults in its targets. As we have seen, the epigrammatist Honestus claims that comic abuse can produce moderation (σωφροσύνη).⁵⁹ Antipater of Thessalonica agrees: in an epigram purportedly inscribed on a collection of Aristophanes' plays, he praises the fearsome charms (φοβεραὶ χάριτες) in the comedies and says that he mocked the deserving.⁶⁰

There was, then, a debate about the intent and effectiveness of comic abuse. Aristophanes and these critics assert that it is educative, corrective, and in defense of the state, but the Old Oligarch, Aristotle, and Plutarch regard abuse of third parties as divisive, wanton, and typical of radical democracy. Accordingly, the debate takes in the origins of comic abuse: as we have argued, the latter view places it in the radical Megarian democracy, which assailed the elite and ultimately fell due to its own disorder and lawlessness.

⁵⁶ Halliwell 1984*b*.

⁵⁷ *Wasp* hyp. 1. For this tendency, see also *Birds* hyp. 3, as well as the hypothesis to the *Dionysalexandros* (*P. Oxy.* 663). For discussion of these, see §7.2 and Bakola 2010, 194-6.

⁵⁸ See §7.4.

⁵⁹ §5.3; but see especially chapter 6 on this epigram.

⁶⁰ *A.P.* 9.186. For other such evaluations, see, e.g., *Gramm. Lat.* 1 p. 485 Keil (Donatus probably quoting Varro); Horace *Serm.* 1.4.1-5 (quoted below); Quintillian *Inst.* 10.1.65; Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 11.6; and a host of evaluations to be found in the ancient treatises on comedy, such as Koster I, 5-8; Koster II, 15-17; Koster V, 15-22. See Quadlbauer 1960 for a wide-ranging survey of ancient literary judgments of Old Comedy. Many of these evaluations are adduced and discussed in ch. 7.

§5.5. Comic and Satiric Transformations in Horace

This negative idea of comedy's origins is connected to a narrative about comedy's decline. As we saw in chapter 4, Roman scholarship held that, while Old Comedy had a corrective aim when it was first institutionalized after the advent of tragedy, its abuse grew too indiscriminate and had to be curtailed. Horace says:

Successit vetus his comoedia, non sine multa
laude; sed in vitium libertas excidit et vim
dignam lege regi; lex est accepta chorusque
turpiter obticuit sublato iure nocendi.

Old Comedy followed upon these, not without much praise; but its freeness fell into a vice and hybris that warranted legal regulation. The legislation was passed, and the chorus fell silent in shame, for its right to do harm had been revoked.⁶¹

Horace approaches the question from a different angle than the other critics we have studied (he is writing about Old Comedy's end) and he is writing under different social and political circumstances. But writes from a similar critical tradition: he distrusts public free speech and comic abuse and portrays them as necessarily falling into, even if they had some initial virtue, misuse. As we saw, his narrative about Old Comedy's decline directly parallels his description of the decline of Fescennine license, which he portrays as, in at least some regards, the Roman equivalent of Old Comedy. Their freeness (*libertas*) declines into abuse and must be regulated by law.⁶²

⁶¹ Horace *Ars Poetica* 281-4. Evanthius *De fabula* 2.4 repeats the same narrative as Horace: *sed cum poetae licentius abuti stilo et passim laedere ex libidine coepissent plures bonos, ne quisquam in alterum carmen infame componeret lata lege siluerunt.*

⁶² *Ep.* 2.147-50; on this parallel, see chapter 4.

However, Old Comedy and its abuse have a place of central importance to Horace's work in the first book of his *Sermones*, published around 35 BC.⁶³ At the beginning of *Serm* 1.4,

Horace writes:

Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poetae
atque alii, quorum comoedia prisca virorum est,
siquis erat dignus describi, quod malus ac fur,
quod moechus foret aut sicarius aut alioqui
famosus, multa cum libertate notabant.
Hinc omnis pendet Lucilius, hosce secutus,
mutatis tantum pedibus numerisque, facetus,
emunctae naris, durus componere versus.

The poets Eupolis, Cratinus, Aristophanes, and the others who wrote Old Comedy used to chastise with much freeness of speech [*libertas*] anyone who deserved to be described because he was a bad person and a thief or because he was an adulterer or murderer or in some way infamous. On this source Lucilius completely depends, having followed them, with only the feet and meter changed; he was a clever man, with a well-blown nose, and was rough at composing verses.⁶⁴

Lucilius is central to the development of Roman satire, and, though he had been dead for seventy years by the time of *Serm.* 1.4, it is Lucilius' memory that Horace must confront when writing his own satires. Although Ennius predates Lucilius and left works called *Saturae*, Lucilius established the defining features of the genre in which Horace was working, with its principal feature being, as Horace claims here, freely spoken and corrective personal abuse.⁶⁵

This has some basis in Lucilius' poetry, which, though preserved only in fragments, suggests an

⁶³ This is a decade or two before the *Ars Poetica*, whose dating is problematic: 10 BC is credible, but dates as early as 28 BC have been proposed. See Dilke 1958.

⁶⁴ *Serm.* 1.4.1-8.

⁶⁵ According to Porphyryon *ad Horace Serm.* 1.10.46, Ennius left four books called *saturae*. But Horace himself implies that Lucilius is the *inventor* of satire at *Serm.* 1.10.48. Diomedes—probably quoting Varro—describes two types of satire, an earlier Ennian type of miscellanea and then a later Lucilian type that attacked men's faults: "*satira*" dicitur carmen apud Romanos nunc quidem maledicum et ad carpenda hominum vitia archaeae comoediae caractere compositum, quale scripserunt Lucilius et Horatius et Persius; at olim carmen quod ex variis poematibus constabat satira vocabatur, quale scripserunt Pacuvius et Ennius (*Gramm. Lat.* 1 p. 485 Keil). On the development of the term *satura* and the characteristics of the genre, see van Rooy 1965, 51-89.

interest in both free speech and attacking men's faults.⁶⁶ Note, however, that reducing Lucilian satire only to invective is a polemical move: his satires, after all, spanned thirty books, and many of the fragments that describe his method seem to come from a series in which Lucilius, as a character in his own poem, addresses an interlocutor, who, for all we know, is fictional.⁶⁷ However, Lucilius' *libertas*—and the invective that is evidence of it—seems to be what posterity seized on as the really important thing. This "canonization" of a single significant feature of a poet and a genre is paralleled, of course, by the ancient reception of Old Comedy and Aristophanes, whose personal abuse, while only one of many important features, received particular attention.

For *libertas* had taken on a special significance by the 30s when Horace was writing his satires, in that it was a watchword of the major political parties.⁶⁸ After his opponents used it as a slogan against him, Julius Caesar briefly took it up as justification for his own designs: he claims

⁶⁶ The following fragments seem to describe Lucilius' practice: fr. 696-7 Warmington: *mihi necesse est eloqui, nam scio Amyclas tacendo periisse* ("I must speak out, for I know that the city of Amyclae perished by being silent"); fr. 791-2 Warmington: *rem populi salutem* (perhaps meaning "the important thing is the safety of the people"); fr. 1070 Warmington: *quem scis scire tuas omnes maculasque notasque* ("who, you know, knows all your impurities and faults"—speaking of Lucilius?); fr. 1075 Warmington: *nunc, Gai, quoniam incilians nos laedis vicissim ...* ("Now, Gaius [Lucilius], since you injure us by your scolding in turn ..."—presumably an interlocutor is addressing Lucilius and complaining about the effect of his satires); fr. 1084 Warmington: *idque tuis factis saevis et tristibus dictis* ("and this by means of your savage deeds and unhappy words"—the same complainant as the previous?); fr. 1085 Warmington: *gaudes cum de me ista foris sermonibus differs* ("you enjoy it when you spread those things about me in public with your satires"—the same complainant as in fr. 1075 and 1084?); fr. 1086 Warmington: *et maledicendo in multis sermonibus differs* ("you pull me apart by speaking ill of me in many satires"—the same complainant as the previous?); fr. 1089: *quin totum purges devellas me atque deuras / exultes et sollicites* ("why not clean me out completely, pluck me, burn me, rejoice in it, and trouble me"—the same complainant?). On these elements of violent and outspoken language in Lucilius' poetry, see Waszink 1960, 32; van Rooy 1965, 54-5; LaFleur 1981, 1811-2; Keane 2006, 45.

⁶⁷ See Svarlien 1994, who adduces evidence that Lucilius' literary reputation was multifaceted. However, he pushes too hard against the idea that the salient characteristic of Lucilius' ancient reception was invective: the statement of Varro (transmitted by Diomedes) is proof enough of that (see n. 66, where it is quoted).

⁶⁸ On the role of *libertas* in partisan politics during this period, see Syme 1960, 154-6; Wirszubski 1950, 87-123; Freudenburg 1993, 86-7. In around 40 BC, Sallust could already object that engaging in public life is only for one who is willing to surrender his honor and liberty (*decus atque libertatem*) to the power of the few (*Iugurtha* 3).

that he left his province in part to restore *libertas* to the republic.⁶⁹ But Brutus and the conspirators minted coins after the assassination that pictured the goddess Libertas and icons emblematic of *libertas*,⁷⁰ and they made made freedom (ἐλευθερία) their slogan at Philippi.⁷¹ Julius Caesar's, as well as Octavian's, use of *libertas* seems rather limited in comparison, precisely because it was so much their enemies' byword.⁷² Most significantly for our purposes, after Caesar's death, Trebonius, one of the conspirators against him, associates the exercise of *libertas* with writing political invective in Lucilius' manner, as well as with Caesar's assassination. He writes in a letter to Cicero, to which the invectives must have been attached:

in quibus versiculis, si tibi quibusdam verbis εὐθυρρημονέστερος videbor, turpitude personae eius in quam liberius invehimur nos vindicabit. ignoscas etiam iracundiae nostrae, quae iusta est in eius modi et homines et civis. deinde qui magis hoc Lucilio licuerit adsumere libertatis quam nobis? cum etiam si odio pari fuerit in eos quos laesit, tamen certe non magis dignos habuerit in quos tanta libertate verborum incurreret. tu sicut mihi pollicitus es, adiunges me quam primum ad tuos sermones; namque illud non dubito quin, si quid de interitu Caesaris scribas, non patiaris me minimam partem et rei et amoris tui ferre.

If I seem to you to be rather too frank with certain language in these verses, the baseness of that person against whom we quite freely (*liberius*) inveigh will excuse us. You will even pardon our wrath, which is just against both people and citizens of that sort. Also, why should Lucilius be allowed to take up this freedom (*libertatis*) more than we? Even if he had equal hatred towards those whom he harmed, nevertheless surely he had no objects more deserving of being attacked with so much freedom (*libertate*) of language. As you promised me, please insert me into your dialogs as soon as possible. For I have no doubt that, if you wrote anything about the death of Caesar, you would not let me carry the smallest part of the affair and of your affection.⁷³

⁶⁹ Caesar *BC* 1.22.5: *se non malefici causa ex provincia egressum, sed ... ut tribunus plebis iniuria ex civitate expulsos in suam dignitatem restitueret et se et populum Romanum factione paucorum oppressum in libertatem vindicaret.*

⁷⁰ See Crawford nos. 498-508 for examples of these coins.

⁷¹ Dio 47.43.1.

⁷² Raaflaub 2003, 66-7, suggests that for this reason both Caesar and Octavian used the rhetoric of *libertas* briefly during their rise to power and then stopped.

⁷³ Cicero *Ad familiares* 12.16.3.

Thus Lucilius and his satires seem to have been adopted by the enemies of Caesar, Octavian, and Antony as a symbol of republican *libertas*;⁷⁴ indeed, Trebonius' Lucilian invectives may have been composed against Mark Antony himself.⁷⁵ By writing in this genre, then, Horace has taken on a series of problems that revolve around Lucilius and *libertas*. Horace is writing in a Rome fraught with especially dangerous political strife. Nor is he privileged with the high political and social standing of Lucilius (or, for that matter, Trebonius) that would have allowed him to speak so freely: Lucilius was a knight, had estates in Sicily and Italy, and was well connected politically.⁷⁶ Horace was the son of a freedman and had backed the losing side at the battle of Philippi; he was pardoned by Octavian, but lost his patrimony.⁷⁷ As Freudenburg argues, Lucilius could write abusive satires because he in fact had more *libertas* than Horace.⁷⁸ Significantly, Horace wrote with Maecenas as his patron and thus was closely connected to Octavian. Therefore, Horace in the satires was writing in a genre notable for its freeness of speech and whose chief author, Lucilius, had, as we have said, been taken up by Octavian's enemies as a symbol of republican values, *libertas*, and corrective abuse—but Horace was in no position to employ such abuse. Writing in this genre was, therefore, a difficult mission, but its undertaking was entirely voluntary. Horace did not have to write satire; this was a problem that he *chose* to solve.⁷⁹

Much has been written about this "Lucilius problem," as Freudenburg calls it, and how Horace must reconfigure the concept of *libertas* and the genre of satire to correspond to his own faculties—and accordingly, perhaps, to claim the concept of *libertas* for himself, his patron, and

⁷⁴ Anderson 1963, 62-87; DuQuesnay 1984, 29-32; Freudenburg 1993, 86-7.

⁷⁵ DuQuesnay 1984, 29-32.

⁷⁶ On Lucilius' wealth and connections, see Raschke 1987, who argues that, far from merely being a mouth piece of Scipio, his high social standing is what enabled their friendship and licensed his literary activities.

⁷⁷ On Horace's claims that his father was a freedman, see Williams 1995.

⁷⁸ Freudenburg 2001, 48-9.

⁷⁹ Thus DuQuesnay 1984, 30-2.

their party.⁸⁰ This modification entails, at least nominally, a movement away from politically engaged satire. When Horace engages in abuse in his satires, it is typically directed against private individuals for private vices (and even this abuse is rare).⁸¹ His project is part of a transformation of the concept of free and frank speech (*παρρησία*) according to which free speech is typical of the free man, who is careful, responsible, and well-meaning towards his friends. In short, the claim is that *libertas* is a private virtue, appropriately exercised courteously among likeminded individuals, rather than in an unrestrained fashion in a public forum.⁸² Horace can safely lay claim to this new kind of *libertas*, in comparison with which the *libertas* of Old Comedy and Lucilius is different and irresponsible—indeed, not true *libertas* at all.⁸³

In *Serm.* 1.4.1-8, quoted above, he has already reimagined both Lucilius' practice and the practice of Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Eupolis: when Horace describes their abuse, there is no hint of political engagement. Rather, they attack anyone who was living badly. This contrasts with how Lucilian invective was conceived of by his latter-day imitators. As we saw, Trebonius associated Lucilian invective with *libertas* of a particularly public and political kind, especially if his invective was indeed composed against Antony. According to Horace, Trebonius and the other imitators of Lucilius have deviated from their model.

When Horace draws Lucilius and his followers so thoroughly into Old Comedy's orbit, I suggest that he is connecting Lucilian satire to the narrative about Old Comedy's decline. I have

⁸⁰ On Horace's engagement with Lucilian personal abuse, see Hendrickson 1900; Knapp 1912*a*; Rudd 1957; LaFleur 1981; Freudenburg 1993, 52-108; Freudenburg 2001, 15-124.

⁸¹ On Horace's humor, see especially Freudenburg 1993, 86-108, who argues that Horace integrates the Aristotelian liberal jest with abuse in the style of Old Comedy, as well as Kempe 2010, 64-7. However, while Horace may be constructing such an integration in theory, it hardly seems successful in practice: Horace does not engage in much personal abuse by name, and, when he does, it is against safe (or even invented) targets (on which see Rudd 1966, 132-59).

⁸² On this refiguring of *libertas* in Horace and the importance of Aristotle and Epicureanism, see Hunter 1985, 486-90; Freudenburg 1993, 88-92; Ruffell 2003, 37-8. On the transformation of *παρρησία* more generally, see Konstan 1995; Konstan 1996; Konstan *et al.* 1998, 3-8.

⁸³ As we will see in ch. 7, Old Comedy is later criticized explicitly in this fashion.

shown above that in the fourth century there was a polemic against Old Comedy that connected its origins to the radical democracy of Megara, whose freedom was really a lawlessness that brought down the state. We have also seen above (and more extensively in chapter 4) that we know from Horace's later writings a narrative that Old Comedy declined because its practitioners became too free and irresponsible with their speech. As we have said, this narrative was probably recounted by Varro—and was, therefore, current when Horace was writing his satires.

Some parallel between satire and Old Comedy probably originated with Varro,⁸⁴ but Horace exaggerates this connection and makes the polemical nature of his engagement with Lucilius clear: the only difference between Lucilius and Old Comedy, he says, is that they have different meters! Horace is inventing a new genealogy for Lucilian satire and Lucilian *libertas*. Quintilian famously calls satire a wholly Roman invention;⁸⁵ but Lucilius' brand of satire is just slightly modified Greek Old Comedy, and its *libertas* was the same freeness that was found there. Lucilian satire and its *libertas* are not distinctly Roman and markers of republican freedoms. On the contrary, they are *Greek*. And, according to this tradition critical of Old Comedy, they have the potential to be very dangerous.

When Horace mentions Old Comedy and *libertas* at the beginning of *Serm.* 1.4, he is alluding to this tradition of dangerous and irresponsible *libertas* and pulling Lucilian satire into the mix. According to this tradition, such *libertas* is not merely discourteous or impolitic, but, as we saw, potentially a real threat to the integrity of the state. For it is not necessarily true, as Freudenburg says, that "Lucilius was a republican hero whose bitter invective, like that of the Old Comic poets, spoke for vanishing freedoms."⁸⁶ By this narrative about Old Comedy's decline, for which Horace is a chief witness, the freedoms vanished *because* of their abuse: the

⁸⁴ See *Gramm. Lat.* 1 p. 485 Keil, quoted at n. 65.

⁸⁵ Quintilian 10.1.93: *satura quidem tota nostra est*; cf. van Rooy 1955.

⁸⁶ Freudenburg 1993, 102.

Old Comic poets themselves, like the radical democracy of Megara, proved to be not free but lawless. Democratic Megara may at first have had σωφροσύνη, Old Comedy may at first have been praiseworthy, Fescennine license may at first have been amiable, and Lucilius' freely abusive satire may at first have been beneficial. But such unrestrained, free speech, by its nature, declined into dangerous abuse. The implicit argument is that the latter-day imitators of Lucilius (that is, the enemies of Octavian) practice a dangerous, divisive art that, far from representing vanished republican values, is comparable to a Greek form that vanished because it destabilized the state. The Lucilians are the true dangerous radicals. Horace, in contrast, claims a native source for his own brand of satire and his own *libertas*:

liberius si
dixero quid, si forte iocosius, hoc mihi iuris
cum venia dabis: insuevit pater optimus hoc me,
ut fugerem exemplis vitiorum quaeque notando.

If I say something too freely (*liberius*) or perhaps too jokingly, you will grant me this right with indulgence: my father, who was the best, instilled this in me, so that by chastising each of the faults through examples I might avoid them.⁸⁷

Horace has, therefore, developed two genealogies for satire that are attached to two different narratives. In the first place is Lucilian satire, whose history is traced back to Greece, Old Comedy, and the licentious talk that required the legislation that curtailed its freedom of speech and destroyed the genre. On the other hand, there is Horatian satire, which Horace traces to his own father, the prototype of the satirist.⁸⁸ A few lines later, Horace quotes his father saying that, in using satiric rebuke, it is enough for him if he preserves the custom of ancestors (*mi satis est*,

⁸⁷ *Serm.* 1.4.103-6.

⁸⁸ See especially Schlegel 2005, 50: "Lucilius, father of the genre of satire though he may be, is ejected by a better father who is apparently a more profound satirist, one who, with perfect Roman credentials, earns his son's reverence and is hence a support for patriarchy, the fundamental model for social order."

si / traditum ab antiquis morem servare).⁸⁹ There is a programmatic pun, in operation since the first satire,⁹⁰ on the etymological relationship between *satis* and *satura*: the pun implies that, for Horace, satire is keeping the custom of his ancestors—it is the *mos maiorum*.⁹¹

Horace, however, is circumspect when criticizing the poetry of Lucilius himself; his attacks focus on aesthetic criticisms of Lucilius' verse. In *Serm.* 1.4, he argues that his own satires are more refined, saying that, though Lucilius indeed marked wrongdoers in his satires, he was casual about his writing. He wrote too much too quickly and, as a result, incorrectly. In *Serm.* 1.10, he reiterates this complaint, conceding that, while Lucilius scoured the city with much salt, his verse was deficient in its composition.⁹² In discussing contemporary poetry, his criticisms are more explicit. He defends his own satires by saying that, while other poets may recite their abusive verses in public, he only recites his to his friends,⁹³ and he contrasts his humor with a more licentious kind:

saepe tribus lectis videas cenare quaternos,
e quibus unus amet quavis aspergere cunctos
praeter eum qui praebet aquam; post hunc quoque potus,
condita cum verax aperit praecordia Liber.

Often you may see four men dining on couches meant for three, one of whom loves to besmirch all of them however he likes, except for the one who proffers the water [i.e., the host]—but afterwards, when he is drunk, this man, too, when truth-telling Liber uncovers the hidden contents of his heart.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ *Serm.* 1.4.116-7.

⁹⁰ Hubbard 1981; Dufallo 2000.

⁹¹ As usual, such claims are not without irony: as Johnson 1993, 20-1, notes, that Horace's father was a freedman: "mos? maiorum? Which? Whose?"

⁹² On the stylistic theory underlying these criticisms and their exact nature, see Freudenburg 1993, 158-62, with Freudenburg 2001, 45-6 and 40-50.

⁹³ *Serm.* 1.4.21-25, but especially 1.4.63-78, where he may compare himself to satirists who recite their work and publically engage in personal attack; for this suggestion, see Ullman 1917, 116-8.

⁹⁴ *Serm.* 1.4.86-9.

Liber, i.e., "free," is an epithet for Bacchus; this is a criticism of the free speech associated with Lucilian satire. As Freudenburg notes, it functions as a refutation to one of the ancient etymologies of satire, that it is so called because men when filled with wine (that is, *saturati*) would freely (*libere*) rail against people's misdeeds.⁹⁵ Horace, however, depicts such unrestrained speech as in the service not of the public or even the private good, but rather as used by an intemperant and impolite guest to satisfy his own degenerate humor at the expense of his companions and the host. A few lines later, Horace speaks of this kind of free speech not as exposing vice, but rather as a kind of vice itself.

The very same criticisms, as we saw, are directed against Old Comedy, in particular the polemic connecting drunken abuse with dangerous and irresponsible speech and action rather than frank, morally corrective talk that increases the listeners' wisdom. It has also often been suggested that Horace's depiction of licentious speech corresponds to Aristotle's account of the irresponsible buffoonery that he associates with Old Comedy.⁹⁶ This is true, but the pedigree of the argument goes back further: this kind of criticism was already current in the fifth century when the Old Oligarch complained that Old Comedy's abuse, rather than attacking faults, was merely humoring the *demos*. As I have argued, Horace implicates Lucilius' latter-day imitators precisely in this critical tradition, with its claims about not only ethical but also political dangers associated with Old Comedy's personal abuse. Horace is fitting Lucilian satire into this narrative critical of Old Comedy, and, by doing so, suggests that the Lucilians are doing something both atavistic and foreign.

When I suggest that, by connecting Lucilian satire to this tradition critical of Old Comic abuse and the dangers of unrestrained speech, Horace is aiming at Octavian's enemies, I do not

⁹⁵ Pseudo-Acro intro. *ad Serm.* 1: *alii dicunt, quod ideo satyra vocitata sit, quod ita convitia et crimina hominum libere invadat, ut saturati homines idest ebrii*; cf. Freudenberg 2001, 47.

⁹⁶ Aristotle *EN* 4.1128a4-1128b3; see Hendrickson 1900.

mean to reduce him to a mouthpiece for Octavian or his satires to a simple political tool. Nor, while Horace's argument is part of a real polemic, do I suggest that it is entirely serious; for he carefully places a banana peel and slips on it right in front of us. Even from the first satire, Horace measures out and circumscribes the boundaries of free speech and the genre of satire, and then he brazenly exceeds them.⁹⁷ Here, too, there is subversion and, of course, playfulness. His argument that his satires are limited to his friends and that his humor is, therefore, more responsible and permissible is thrown into doubt by this very political dimension: his satires are not securely restricted to the realm of private, Menandrian humor.

It is true that Horace's satires, by necessity, do not participate in the same kind of personal abuse as Lucilius and his later imitators. However, if he claims to reconfigure *libertas*, he is arguing against a public, politically inclined humor with a similarly public, politically inclined humor. He has written a satire with political pretensions precisely by making a case against personal abuse, which is what a Lucilian poet would claim to be the *sine qua non* of satires that have political pretensions (that is, what such a poet would claim satires *are*). Another ancient etymology of satire derives it from the *lanx satura*, a plate overflowing with victuals;⁹⁸ Horace claims that he will not feast us, but he feasts us well—though, it is true, we will be hungry again in short order.

§5.6. Positive Narratives about the Origins of Comedy

I have argued above that there was a tradition of interpreting comedy's personal abuse in the context of political discord between the *demos* and the elite, and that there was a narrative according to which the freedom of comedy, like the freedom in democratic Megara, had within it

⁹⁷ Hubbard 1981; Dufallo 2000.

⁹⁸ *Gramm. Lat.* 1 p. 485 Keil.

the seeds of its misuse and destruction. Horace, used—or, rather, made a pretense of using—this narrative about the social and political dangers of comic abuse in his analysis of Lucilian satire: unrestrained comic abuse will *by its nature* fall into the hands of the rabble, become too free and dangerous, be turned against unwarranted targets, and need to be curtailed. As we have seen, this line of argument is a response to the comic poets' own characterization of the nature of their abuse and to the later tradition that this abuse was corrective and useful for the state. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that a counter-narrative would emerge among those who had a more positive view of Old Comic abuse. The analysis is no less functional: here, too, the religious and heterogenous features of comedy are stripped away.⁹⁹ It is still a political apparatus; but it is salutary, not detrimental.

This counter-narrative appears in its fullest form rather late among the anonymous treatises on comedy. With some variations, the story goes as follows: Old Comedy and its abuse first emerged when farmers were wronged by powerful men. The farmers, lacking other means of recourse and fearing retribution if identified, gathered together, went to the houses of those who had wronged them, and mocked them with the aim of shaming them before their neighbors and getting them to change their behavior. This practice was institutionalized because it was clear how useful it was to Athens. When the *demos* ruled, the Old Comic poets mocked generals, bad jurors, the greedy, and those who lived licentiously. However, when the oligarchs took

⁹⁹ To be fair, the heterogeneity of comedy and, for that matter, of other genres does not seem to enter explicitly into any theorists' calculations. Genres tend to be defined by just a handful of features, and deviations from these are often excluded as marginal cases rather than legitimate innovations that point in new and different directions. Thus, Old Comedy and Lucilian satire basically "become" vehicles for personal abuse and are evaluated on that basis. So, while Ennius may have written something called satires, the inventor of satire is Lucilius. One of the intriguing things about Horace's evaluation of Lucilius is that he makes gestures towards a different conversation, one that focuses on the aesthetic qualities of Lucilian poetry—that is, a different way of thinking about and evaluating the genre entirely. In histories of poetry and definitions of genres, however, a kind of generic essentialism certainly rules. Of all the histories of poetry we have considered, Aristotle, perhaps only owing to the fullness and coherence of his history as compared with the others', is by far the most honest about acknowledging marginal forms, e.g., tragedians who write "humanized" tragedy (*On Poets* fr. 12 Janko).

power and the rule of the *demos* ended, the right to abuse declined as well: the powerful, to avoid being chastised for doing wrong, first restricted comic abuse to foreigners and the poor and then, finally, to foreigners and slaves.¹⁰⁰

What is initially most surprising about this narrative is that the cast of characters is the same as the one we have already seen. It has farmers opposing the rich, the *demos* opposing the elite, and the comic poets—whose profession developed from the activities of the farmers themselves—standing with the *demos* against the powerful. But everything has been revalued.

The farmers have actually been wronged, and their abuse is not only justified but effective. For the situation described is, as in democratic Megara, clearly precarious: the gathering of the farmers outside the houses of the powerful to call for redress reflects the possibility of mob violence against the rich. But it stops just short of that and does not degenerate into wanton violence. In this regard, it reverses the events of democratic Megara. As Forsdyke has argued, the activities of Megara's *demos* probably correspond to festivals of license that temporarily invert the social standing of members of the community—e.g., the rich feast the poor—in order to release tensions.¹⁰¹ But, at least in Aristotle's and Plutarch's accounts, rather than releasing tensions, the *demos'* activities spin out of control, and their depravity culminates in the murder of the religious embassy. However, in these positive accounts the comic abuse is a successful form of social control, since it *prevents* mob violence and maintains the integrity of the community.

Similarly, the activities and success of the comic poets in Athens are revalued. They continue to side with the *demos*, but their comic abuse is directed against powerful offenders.

¹⁰⁰ Versions of this appear in the following treatises: Koster IV, XIb, XVIIIa, XXIV, and XXXIII 2 (comic abuse originated among wronged farmers); Koster I (Platonius), IV, XIa, XIb, XIc, XVIIIa, and XXb (comic abuse attacked powerful politicians and was attenuated by the increasing power of the oligarchs).

¹⁰¹ Forsdyke 2005.

Old Comedy does not decline because of the licentiousness of the comic poets, but because the powerful want to do wrong licentiously. Some features of this perspective become clear from a *Life of Aristophanes*, which, while it does not preserve the narrative about comedy's development, clearly belongs to the same tradition. Of Aristophanes it says:

μάλιστα δὲ ἐπὴνέθη καὶ ἠγαπήθη ὑπὸ τῶν πολιτῶν σφόδρα, ἐπειδὴ διὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ δραμάτων ἐσπούδασε δεῖξαι τὴν τῶν Ἀθηναίων πολιτείαν, ὡς ἐλευθέρα τέ ἐστι καὶ ὑπ' οὐδενὸς τυράννου δουλαγωγουμένη, ἀλλ' ὅτι δημοκρατία ἐστὶ καὶ ἐλεύθερος ὢν ὁ δῆμος ἄρχει ἑαυτοῦ.

He [sc. Aristophanes] was praised and beloved by the citizens a great deal, because through his dramas he endeavored to demonstrate that the government of the Athenians was both free and not enslaved by any tyrant, but that it was a democracy and the *demos*, being free, ruled itself.¹⁰²

The *Life* makes much of Aristophanes' opposition to Cleon and his attacks on him for his thefts and tyranny (τὸ τυραννικόν). It also recounts the story that during the Peloponnesian War Aristophanes' fame even reached the king of Persia, who inquired about which side Aristophanes served (this is a credulous reading of a joke in the *Acharnians*).¹⁰³ But the full extent of the reevaluation in this tradition is apparent from an anecdote that the *Life* reports immediately thereafter:

φασὶ δὲ καὶ Πλάτωνα Διονυσίῳ τῷ τυράννῳ βουλευθέντι μαθεῖν τὴν Ἀθηναίων πολιτείαν πέμψαι τὴν Ἀριστοφάνους ποιήσιν, τὴν κατὰ Σωκράτους ἐν Νεφέλαις κατηγορίαν, καὶ συμβουλευῆσαι τὰ δράματα αὐτοῦ ἀσκηθέντα μαθεῖν αὐτῶν τὴν πολιτείαν.

They say as well that, when the tyrant Dionysius wanted to learn about the government of the Athenians, Plato sent to him the composition of Aristophanes, the accusation against Socrates in the *Clouds*, and counseled him by studying his dramas to learn about their government.¹⁰⁴

This anecdote is the second of two that connect Aristophanes' dramas with autocrats: both the king of Persia and the tyrant of Syracuse are said to have heard of Aristophanes. The *Life*, which

¹⁰² Koster XXVIII, 36-9.

¹⁰³ *Acharnians* 643-654.

¹⁰⁴ Koster XXVIII, 46-9. The story is repeated in a more abridged version at Koster XXIXa, 33-5.

portrays Aristophanes positively throughout, seems to adduce these to show that Aristophanes' poetry is, for the autocrats, illustrative of Athenian democracy, as well as that his fame spread far beyond Athens. But there is a strong negative valuation underlying the second anecdote that is rarely noted: why in the world would Plato send Dionysius the *Clouds*?

Koster prints the text in full, but, because of this question, most other editors delete or modify that detail (τὴν κατὰ Σωκράτους ἐν Νεφέλαις κατηγορίαν).¹⁰⁵ Most scholarship, therefore, accepts the anecdote in the spirit that it is presented, that it positively represents Aristophanes.¹⁰⁶ But it is difficult to imagine that Plato would use the plays of Aristophanes to illustrate the democracy in anything but a negative manner, and the *Clouds* would be the most illuminating and damning exhibit.¹⁰⁷ Plato could only have sent the *Clouds* to Dionysius to demonstrate the *demos*' delight in and susceptibility to wanton comic abuse, and the fate of Socrates and Plato's own claims in the *Apology* about the effects of the *Clouds* must underlie his intent in the anecdote.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, rather than being part of a tradition that positively evaluates Aristophanes, the anecdote must originally have been among those that were critical of him and

¹⁰⁵ The phrase is deleted by Dindorf and Dübner; van Leeuwen leaves it but modifies it so that Plato is made to *exclude* the *Clouds* from the dramas he sends. Lefkowitz 1981 leaves the phrase out in her English translation of the *Life*, though she uses Koster's text.

¹⁰⁶ Riginos 1976, 176-8, at n. 42 admits that the point of the anecdote may be that Plato sent Dionysius the plays to illustrate the problems with the Athenian government, but then operates under the assumption that it was meant to show a positive relationship between Plato and Aristophanes (and in fact the former's dependence on the latter). Only Vickers 1997, 1-2 and 97, supposes that Plato indeed sent the *Clouds* to Dionysius in order to educate him about Athens, though, for Vickers, the real point that Dionysius was supposed to extract from the *Clouds* concerns the education of Pericles and Alcibiades, not the nature of the *demos*.

¹⁰⁷ It is true that there is a tradition according to which Plato enjoyed Aristophanes' poetry (see especially Olympiodorus *In Plat. Alc.* 2.65-75), and there is an epigram attributed to Plato that praises its beauty (XIV Page—though Page supposes that the subscription to Plato is "mere guesswork"). We need hardly add that Aristophanes appears as Socrates' companion in the *Symposium*. But Plato's problem here would not be with Aristophanes or his poetry *per se*, but with their effect on the *demos* and the government. If we are to suppose that Plato sent the *Clouds* to Dionysius so that the latter could learn about the nature of Athenian government (and not the beauty of the plays' poetry), the evaluation could only be negative.

¹⁰⁸ Plato *Apology* 18a-e; 19c.

his treatment of Socrates in the *Clouds*¹⁰⁹—and, accordingly, critical of comic abuse, the *demos*, and the democracy's irresponsible treatment of its better citizens.

But the *Life*, like this narrative is on the whole, is thoroughly positive: the author of the *Life* has misunderstood the anecdote or ignored its details. Indeed, this narrative admits less nuance than the more negative one. Horace, at least, could admit a stage in which the free and open abuse was useful before comedy degenerated. Here, however, it and the democracy are upstanding right until the end. If comic abuse is problematic, it is because it is too effective at attacking the wrongdoing of the powerful, and comedy's faculties, like those of the democracy itself, are abridged for the benefit of the elite. Nor is there any hint of the religious background at the origins of comedy. Comic abuse, in its origins, is presented as the reaction of the poor against the misdeeds of the elite, and it is institutionalized because it benefits the state. Its perceived function fully underlies its origin and nature. It was from the start an apparatus for social control, and, in this story, the *demos*, its rule, and its comedy were forces for justice against corrupt, anti-democratic oligarchs.

§5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to reconstruct two competing accounts about the political nature of personal abuse in Old Comedy and the origins and decline of Old Comedy. Both are narratives of decline that involve the *demos*, the rich, and the changing dynamics of their relationship. According to an account critical of comedy, its personal abuse was a product of democracy, and, even if it was initially useful and just, it declined into depravity and had to be

¹⁰⁹ See, e.g., *Clouds* hyp. 2; Aelian *VH* 2.13; D.L. 2.38; and Maximus of Tyre 3.3 and 12.8, which claim that Aristophanes was in fact in league with Socrates' accusers. Eunapius *Vit. Soph.* 6.2.4, while not putting Aristophanes in league with them, says that the comedy's success led to mockery of Socrates and emboldened his accusers to bring their charges against him.

curtailed. This history is, as I have suggested, based on a polemic against free speech and democracy. In the second account, comic abuse was in origin directed by the people against powerful wrongdoers who made abridging comic abuse part of their program of diminishing the democracy.

At this point, we may briefly speculate about the origins of these accounts. We have seen that features of the account that is critical of Old Comedy are old, for their outlines are visible in the Old Oligarch's criticisms of the fifth century. The story of democratic Megara's rise and fall, if it is wholly owed to Aristotle, would be from the 4th century. The negative account appears fully and explicitly, however, in the 1st century BC in Horace's *Ars Poetica*¹¹⁰ and implicitly in his *Sermones*, where Horace uses it and the polemic that underlies it against his opponents.

The pedigree of the opposing account is more elusive. Features of it are already present in Horace and probably Varro, who do admit an early, useful stage for comic abuse. However, the ultimate source for the claims about its usefulness during the Athenian democracy are, of course, the comic poets themselves. However, I suspect that the rest of the narrative about the origins and decline of comic abuse is late and responds to the more negative story. For, as we have seen, is it less nuanced, less concerned about details and context, and more functionalistic; also, it has left all the positives and inverted all the negatives in the other account. I even suspect that it may have emerged in a place and time when the perils of free speech in Athens (or Rome) seemed less relevant than more academic speculation, the idealization of democratic Athens, and the justification for reading Old Comedy and its (often ribald) abuse.

At this time, Old Comedy and its history must no longer have seemed such important political tools, and taking the Old Comic poets at their word and modifying comedy's history on that basis may have seemed sensible or, indeed, more reliable. Aristophanes claims that he

¹¹⁰ *Ars Poetica* 281-4 (with *Ep.* 2.147-50 for the equivalent Roman development).

pursues justice and serves the city's interests. All of the histories of drama trace its origins to celebrations by farmers, and Aristophanes' own plays often feature as their protagonists farmers who pursue justice and fight a corrupt system. Therefore, at the pre-scenic stage, farmers use comic abuse to attack the rich justly. Aristophanes objects that Cleon and others impede him; therefore, when Old Comedy disappears, it is because men like Cleon have finally won. It is less a history than an *aition*. The rough edges are shaved away—the unwarranted abuse, the religious origins, the jesting for jesting's sake—and what remains is a species of myth, recalling not what was but what should have been.

Chapter 6

The Admonishing Muse: Personal Abuse in Old Comedy and Satyr Play

§6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that the nature and function of socially and politically engaged abuse was a matter of serious polemic. One body of criticism supposed that, as the models of Aristotle and Eratosthenes suggest, personal abuse of third parties was not an original or essential feature of comedy and that its purportedly corrective personal abuse was really a form of social control that the masses exerted on the elite. A second body of criticism, however, asserted that, as the poets themselves claimed, educating the public and rebuking vice were comedy's main business and constructed a history of the genre around that premise.

In chapter 7, I will turn to evaluations of Old Comedy's humor, especially later ones; as we shall see, many of these indeed revolve around the idea that its humor, and in particular its personal abuse, has an ethical effect that ought to be praised or criticized. The personal abuse of third parties came to be essential to the construction and evaluation of the genre despite the models for the development of comedy that discount its role. In this chapter, however, I will turn to other genres. I will show that personal abuse of third parties came to be so much the defining feature in constructing the genre of Old Comedy that even other genres were connected to Old Comedy and folded into the history of comedy precisely because they employed personal abuse.

We have already seen that Roman satire was for this reason drawn into the orbit of Old Comedy.¹ In this chapter, we will take up satyr play.

§6.2. The Admonishing Muse

In a short epigram in the *Garland of Philip* dating to around the reign of Tiberius, the poet Honestus hails Sicyon as the city where Bacchus devised the admonitions of the playful muse:

Μούσης νουθεσίην φιλοπαίγμονος εὔρετο Βάκχος,
ὃ Σικυῶν, ἐν σοὶ κῶμον ἄγων Χαρίτων·
δὴ γὰρ ἔλεγχον ἔχει γλυκερώτατον ἐν τε γέλωτι
κέντρον· χῶ μεθύων ἀστὸν ἐσωφρόνισεν.

Bacchus devised the admonishment of the playful muse,
Sicyon, in you while conducting the *komos* of Graces.
For truly it has the sweetest rebuke and sting in laughter;
And the drunkard makes the urbane man wise.²

In the standard, and only, treatment of this epigram, Gow and Page note that it must refer to the establishment of satyr drama, as Sicyon and its neighbors Corinth and Phlius had long-standing and extensive connections to the invention and establishment of tragedy and satyr play.

But Honestus' description seems to fit comedy better, and Old Comedy specifically, in its purported aim of correcting faults through laughter. As we saw in the last chapter and will see more extensively in the next, this is a standard claim about the nature of Old Comedy's personal abuse. In addition, as we mentioned previously, the scenario of drunkards using comic abuse to correct the faults of the powerful is common in narratives about the emergence of Old Comedy,

¹ See §5.5.

² *A.P.* 11.32 (=Honestus 8 G.-P. [*Garland*]).

as is the opposition between farmers and the elite.³ We have also seen evaluations like the following, for example:

τῆς ἰσηγορίας οὖν πᾶσιν ὑπαρχούσης ἄδειαν οἱ τὰς κωμωδίας συγγράφοντες εἶχον τοῦ σκώπτειν καὶ στρατηγοὺς καὶ δικαστὰς τοὺς κακῶς δικάζοντας καὶ τῶν πολιτῶν τινὰς ἢ φιλαργύρους ἢ συζῶντας ἀσελγείᾳ.

When there was political equality for all, those who composed comedies took part without fear in mocking generals and jurors who judged badly, as well as those citizens who were either greedy or lived with licentiousness.⁴

οὔτε γὰρ [ὁ Ἀριστοφάνης] πικρὸς λίαν ἐστὶν ὥσπερ ὁ Κρατῖνος οὔτε χαρίεις ὥσπερ ὁ Εὐπόλις, ἀλλ' ἔχει καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας τὸ σφοδρὸν τοῦ Κρατίνου καὶ τὸ τῆς ἐπιτρεχούσης χάριτος Εὐπόλιδος.

For [Aristophanes] is neither too biting like Cratinus nor too charming like Eupolis, but he has the vehemence of Cratinus against those who do wrong and the easy charm of Eupolis.⁵

The second in particular approaches the description in Honestus' epigram. Platonius explains that Aristophanes was the greatest poet of Old Comedy precisely because he expertly mixed harsh criticism of wrongdoers with charm, just as Honestus explains that the muse has the sweetest rebuke and sting in laughter. Other treatises likewise describe Old Comedy's aim of correcting faults through mockery and laughter.

But no source claims that Sicyon was where Old Comedy was invented. Yet we must presume that Honestus knows what he is talking about. While he is said to be from Byzantium in one place, he is called Corinthian on two other occasions,⁶ and his epigrams treat Thebes,

³ See chapter 5.

⁴ Koster I, 5-8 (=p. 33, 6-10, in Perusino 1989).

⁵ Koster II, 15-7 (=p. 39-40, 17-21, in Perusino 1989). On the sources and schools potentially influencing this second treatise, see Perusino 1989, 20-4; Nesselrath 2000. Cf. Koster XXI (Tzetzes): ὁ κωμικὸς δὲ πως γελῶν κωμωδίας / ἄρπαγά τινα καὶ κακοῦργον καὶ φθόρον / τὸ λοιπὸν ἠδραῖωσεν εἰς εὐκοσμίαν and Koster XV (*Tractus Coislunianus*): ὁ σκώπτων ἐλέγγειν θέλει ἀμαρτήματα τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος.

⁶ The Palatine manuscript at 7.274 gives him the ethnic Βυζαντίου; he is called Corinthian in the Palatine at 9.216 and in the Planudean at 9.250.

Corinth, and Mt. Helicon.⁷ He was clearly an educated individual familiar with the area and its traditions, and he would have been exposed to contemporary satyr plays.⁸

But Honestus conflates Old Comedy and satyr play. As we will see, he is able to do this because the generic boundary between the two diminished in theory and practice as a consequence of satyr play's incorporation of personal abuse. Based on the fragments and fragmentary knowledge we have of satyr plays from the fourth century on, I will show that satyr play increasingly adopted features of comedy, particularly Old Comedy's personal abuse. Then, I will turn to sources in ancient scholarship that discuss satyr play. As we will see, this development in satyr play caused some ancient scholars to connect satyr play to Old Comedy, as Honestus had, and to identify satyr play as a class of comedy because of its supposed preoccupation with personal mockery.

§6.3. Comedy and the Classical Satyr Play

Satyr play and its rapprochement with Old Comedy have gotten deserved attention recently, though most discussion tends to focus on the fifth century.⁹ C. W. Marshall, for instance, has suggested that Euripides produced the pro-satyr *Alcestis* of 438 as a playful misunderstanding of a recent Athenian law forbidding κωμῳδεῖν in 439;¹⁰ such a law in 5th century Athens was probably directed against mockery by name, i.e., ὀνομαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν, but Marshall supposes that Euripides may have jokingly used this decree as an opportunity to jettison

⁷ Several of his epigrams are known not from the Anthology, but from inscriptions, including nine on statues of the muses at Mt. Helicon (the date of these inscriptions are also the reason for placing his *floruit* under Tiberius; for a discussion of these finds, see the references given by Gow-Page *ad* Honestus X-XXI).

⁸ The last known writer of satyr plays was, after all, Lucius Marius Antiochus of Corinth in the 2nd century AD (*TrGF* DID A 8,4).

⁹ See most recently Storey 2005; Bakola 2010, 81-112. For the possibility that this rapprochement coincided with a theoretical connection between comedy and satyr play, see §3.5.

¹⁰ Marshall 2000, 229-238. It was the law of Morychides concerning μὴ κωμῳδεῖν (and not the more typical μὴ ὀνομαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν) attested in Σ *Acharnians* 67.

his κῶμος. After all, satyr play, like comedy, has its own κῶμος, and the double significance of this word may have been what Honestus has in mind in line two of his epigram. Certainly Old Comedy could incorporate features from satyr play: Callias, Pherecrates, and Cratinus all produced comedies called *Satyroi* that featured choruses of satyrs.¹¹

As the fifth century went on, one feature that satyr play adopted was a certain topicality and propensity for criticizing contemporaries: the portrayal of Polyphemus in the Euripides' *Cyclops* has sometimes been seen as a criticism of contemporary sophism,¹² as has the depiction of Sisyphus in Critias' *Sisyphus*.¹³ A fragment of Euripides' *Skiron* mocks Corinthian courtesans,¹⁴ and a fragment of Achaeus criticizes the Delphians.¹⁵ But such portrayals and jokes are quite distant from mocking specific, contemporary individuals by name. No known classical satyr play engages in such abuse. Jeffery Henderson characterizes its language thus: "The very infrequent obscenities that we find in the fragments of satyr drama are ... casual, nonabusive double entendres, sly references or colorful slang intended to illicit a smile."¹⁶ Satyr play does adopt such abuse, but only after Old Comedy itself has faded away in the fourth century.

§6.4. Timocles and Post-Classical Satyr Play

The first known case of a satyr play that featured thorough-going personal abuse is Timocles' *Ikarioi Satyroi*, produced in Athens, probably in the 330s.¹⁷ The fragments of the play

¹¹ The comedies entitled *Satyroi* are merely the ones assured of having a chorus composed of satyrs; others, like the *Dionysalexandros*, did as well. See Storey 2005; Bakola 2010, 81-112.

¹² For discussion of (and opposition to) this view, see Sutton 1980a, 120-33.

¹³ See Dihle 1977, 28-42, with Sutton 1980a, 74.

¹⁴ Fr. 676. Unless otherwise noted, I follow the numbering of *TrGF* for the fragments of satyr plays discussed in this chapter.

¹⁵ Fr. 12.

¹⁶ Henderson 1975, 26.

¹⁷ Wagner 1905, 27, dates the play to around 342, as does Bevilacqua 1939, 25-62. Wilamowitz 1962 (=Wilamowitz 1889-90), 688, and Coppola 1927, 453-67, date it to 330-327 based on a possible reference to the famine in Athens during those years in fr. 18 K.-A. Coppola settles on the date 330/29, because Pythionice left Athens for Babylonia in 329; he presumes that the references to her in the play mean that she was still in the city when it was produced.

clearly resemble comedy, not least because of their biting personal mockery. The identity of the author and nature of the play were first discussed by Wilamowitz in 1890, who argued two points that have proven controversial: firstly, that the two dramatists named Timocles that we know of from this period—one an author of tragedy, the other of comedy—are the same person; and, secondly, that the *Ikarioi Satyroi* is a satyr play rather than a comedy. The basis of the former is an ambiguous statement in Athenaeus,¹⁸ while that of the latter is that, of the three times Athenaeus mentions the play, he once calls it *Ikarioi Satyroi* (9.407f), a form of title that is reserved exclusively for satyr plays.¹⁹ Nearly every treatment of the *Ikarioi Satyroi* since has opposed Wilamowitz on these two points.²⁰ Whether Timocles *comicus* is to be identified with Timocles *tragicus* is probably insoluble,²¹ but there is no compelling reason to deny that the play was a satyr drama.

The main arguments against its status as a satyr play are two: (a) its meter is more like that of comedy than of the classical satyr play (so first Körte),²² and (b) the content of the fragments, especially the personal mockery of politicians, is more typical of comedy (argued at

¹⁸ He does this on the basis of Athenaeus 9.407d: Τιμοκλῆς ὁ τῆς κωμωδίας ποιητής (ἦν δὲ καὶ τραγωδίας), interpreting this as "Timocles, the poet of comedy (and he was a poet of tragedy)." But this could instead be understood as "Timocles, the poet of comedy (and there was a poet of tragedy by the same name)." *IG II²* 2320 records that a Timocles won at the Dionysia with a satyr play called *Lycurgus* in 340.

¹⁹ Sutton 1980a, 84. As he observes, comedies that take their name from satyrs either take the title *Satyroi* or incorporate *-satyroi* into the title, such as another play by Timocles, *Demosatyroi*. A double name with *satyroi* as the second element appears to have been unique to satyr plays.

²⁰ He is opposed principally by Körte 1906, 410-6; Wagner 1905, 64-6; and Constantinides 1969, 49-61. The fragments of the *Ikarioi Satyroi* appear in collections of comic fragments: Kock, Edmonds, and Kassel-Austin all regard it as a comedy, and in only one case has a collection of tragic or satyric fragments included the play (Cipolla 2003, though Cipolla is ultimately uncertain about how it should be classified). Most recently in his Loeb edition of Athenaeus (2008), Olson repeats the claim that the title *Ikarioi Satyroi* "almost certainly belongs to a comedy" (402 n. 262). The exceptions to this opposition are Sutton 1980a, 83-5, who admits that Timocles *tragicus* may or may not be identical to Timocles *comicus* but argues that *Ikarioi satyroi* was certainly a satyr play, and Coppola 1927. Bevilacqua 1939 takes the uneconomical view that the comic author and the tragic author were the same, but that he wrote *two* plays—the *Ikarioi* (a comedy) and the *Ikarioi Satyroi* (a satyr play).

²¹ The *Suda* entries complicate rather than explicate matters: the *Suda* identifies two dramatists named Timocles, one a comic poet—and the other, too, a comic poet. Wagner 1905, 62-3, postulates corruption and suggests that in one of the entries, τραγικός was originally written instead of κωμικός.

²² Körte 1906.

greatest length by Constantinides).²³ Regarding (a), Körte's argument was primarily directed against fr. 15 K.-A.,²⁴ which Wilamowitz had reconstructed from Athenaeus' prose as ionics.²⁵ Most editors have since rendered them as iambic trimeters, and they, as well as the trimeters in fr. 16 K.-A.,²⁶ are unremarkable compared to the fragments of the satyr plays of Python and Lycophron, discussed below. Fr. 16 K.-A., which is preserved as trimeters by Athenaeus, has one major violation²⁷ of Porson's Law in its seven lines and no "comic anapests."²⁸ This sample size is too small to compare the frequencies usefully to those of the *Cyclops*,²⁹ but the types of violation may be significant: the three major violations in the *Cyclops* occur between a multisyllabic, non-lexical, non-appositive word and the definite article.³⁰ No violation in the *Cyclops*, or in any fragment from a classical satyr play, occurs between two lexical words, indicating that this degree of license was probably not permitted.³¹ The violation in fr. 16 K.-A. line 4 of the *Ikarioi Satyroi*, however, does imply such license (κέλευσον # σαργάνας). However, such a license is comparable to that taken by Python and Lycophron in their satyr plays: *Agen* fr. 1 in its eighteen lines has two comic anapests and two comparable violations of Porson's Law,³² and *Menedemus* fr. 2 in its nine lines has two comic anapests and one comparable violation of

²³ Constantinides 1969.

²⁴ =Athenaeus 8.339d.

²⁵ Wilamowitz 1962.

²⁶ =Athenaeus 8.339d.

²⁷ I.e., a violation that is unparalleled in tragedy.

²⁸ I.e., a resolved breve or anceps not in the first foot or a proper name.

²⁹ Based on the count in Seaford 1984, 45-6, there is about one comic anapest per 42 lines and one major violation of Porson's Law per 236 lines.

³⁰ Euripides *Cyclops* 210: ὕμῶν # τῷ ξύλῳ; 681: ποτέρας # τῆς χερός; and 682: αὐτῆ # τῆ πέτρα.

³¹ On this license and the acceptability of violations at appositive boundaries at Porson's Bridge, see Devine and Stephens 1983.

³² Line 16: πολίτην # γεγονέναι; line 18: ἐταίρας # ἀρραβῶν.

Porson's Law.³³ If anything, the scanty evidence indicates that *Ikarioi Satyroi* was at least as conservative with its trimeters as the satyr plays that would follow.³⁴

The other two surviving fragments of the play, fr. 18 and 19 K.-A., are not iambic trimeters, but trochaic tetrameters catalectic. While this meter commonly appears in comedy, especially in the epirrhemata of *parabaseis*,³⁵ it appears in satyr drama at least once.³⁶ For his part, Aristotle thought that in the satyric performances that preceded tragedy the trochaic tetrameter catalectic was used before the iambic trimeter was adopted.³⁷ In addition, the evidence shows that this period saw increased metrical innovation and license in satyr drama: Astydamas II fr. 4, from his satyr drama *Heracles*, is in eupolideans, a meter far more characteristic of comedy, and Chaerephon's mysterious polymetric drama,³⁸ the *Centaur*, may have been a satyr play.³⁹ Any metrical anomalies in the *Ikarioi Satyroi*, then, are well paralleled in other satyr plays of the period and fall short of proving that it should be otherwise classified.

As for the contents of the play, the fragments give little help in reconstructing its plot.

But its name is suggestive: we have seen that the deme of Icaria recurs as the birthplace of both comedy and tragedy and that the deme is named for Icarus, who was taught by Dionysus in

³³ Line 9: τρικλίνου # συμπότης.

³⁴ Of the *Agen*, Sutton 1980a, 77, writes, "These are the iambs of comedy, not satyr play." Snell 1971, 106-8, downplays the metrical looseness of the *Agen* and argues that it does not differ too much from tragedy, but his defense falls rather short: to excuse the resolved anceps in line 6 (διακείμενον) and in the brevia in lines 8 (Πυθιονίκης), 14 (διαπέμψαι), and 16 (μυριάδας), he proposes that Python was pronouncing iota as a consonant (i.e., as a y) before a vowel and after a long syllable (Γλυκέρας in line 17 is permissible because it is a proper name, and Πυθιονίκη in 8 could be excused for this reason too). Even if we accept this, he admits that the violations of Porson's law in lines 3, 16, and 18 are more typical of comedy than tragedy. To this list of violations, we may add Janko's emendation to line 2, ἀέτωμα, which exhibits a resolved anceps but cannot be excused by positing a different pronunciation for iota. Python is clearly taking more metrical license than would be permissible for classical satyr drama, and Timocles prefigures him in this.

³⁵ See, e.g., *Clouds* 575-94 or *Wasps* 753-68, with their antepirrhemata.

³⁶ Sophocles fr. 296c, perhaps a fragment of the *Inachus*. For discussion of this fragment, see Krumeich *et al.* 1999, 324-8.

³⁷ *Poetics* 4.1449a22-4: τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον τετραμέτρῳ ἐχρῶντο διὰ τὸ σατυρικὴν καὶ ὀρχηστικωτέραν εἶναι τὴν ποιήσιν, λέξεως δὲ γενομένης αὐτῆ ἢ φύσις τὸ οἰκεῖον μέτρον εὔρε; cf. *On Poets* fr. 20 Janko, with Janko 2011, 346. At *Rhet.* 3.1.1404a29-35 Aristotle repeats the claim that tragedy used the trochaic tetrameter before the iambic trimeter.

³⁸ So-called by Athenaeus 13.608e. Cf. Ar. *Poetics* 1.1447b,21.

³⁹ For discussion of this proposal, see Krumeich *et al.* 1999, 580-590.

viticulture and introduced wine to humanity. Certainly the drunkenness, revelry, and abuse associated with this story would be appropriate material for a satyr play. There is certainly visual evidence associating satyrs viticulture,⁴⁰ and, in one version of the story, a satyr accompanied Dionysus to Icaria.⁴¹ There may also be depictions on vases of Dionysus and a satyr companion meeting Icarius.⁴²

While other places have been proposed for the site of the play's setting,⁴³ a locale near Athens makes the most sense, since it engages with contemporary politics and mocks contemporaries by name in the manner typical of Old Comedy.⁴⁴ Fr. 15 K.-A. mentions Anytus ὁ παχύς, two mackerel that are the sons of Chaerephilus, and the courtesan Pythionice, who entertains them. The first, Anytus the fat, is perhaps the politician who would become συντριήραρχος in 323.⁴⁵ Chaerephilus was a fishmonger, and at least one of his sons would serve as trierarch; those sons are also targeted in comedy.⁴⁶ Pythionice, also mentioned in fr. 16 K.-A., is a well known courtesan who was derided not only in comedy,⁴⁷ but also in the satyr play *Agen*, discussed below. The politician Hyperides is mocked in fr. 17 K.-A., evidently for taking bribes,⁴⁸ and other orators and politicians seem to be attacked in fr. 18 K.-A.⁴⁹ Aristomedes and

⁴⁰ Hedreen 1992, 185-6, lists such representations in black-figure painting.

⁴¹ Pausanias 1.23.5.

⁴² Many vase paintings from the archaic period show Dionysus (sometimes with a satyr) meeting a bearded man, but it is unclear whether that bearded man is Icarius (for example, Oxford, Ashmolean 1965.126 [ABV 242.34]). See Carpenter 1986, 45-7, and Shapiro 1989, 95-6, who are skeptical. One case from the fifth century, Malibu, Getty 81.AE.62 (=LIMC V, Ikarios I, B 10) does seem to show Dionysus and Icarius sacrificing a goat (although Dionysus and the goat are mostly lost) while a satyr and a maenad stand in the background. On this vase, see Robertson 1986.

⁴³ Edmonds 1959, 612, advances two other possibilities: Dionysus was abducted by pirates while journeying from Icaria to Naxos according to Pseudo-Apollodorus 3.5.3 (though Ovid *Met.* 3.595 puts the site of his abduction in Chios); and, according to Theocritus 26.33, Dionysus was born on Mt. Dracanus on the island of Icarus.

⁴⁴ Arnott 1996, 212 n. 1, says of the *Ikarioi Satyroi*: "[T]he extant frs ... are wholly comic in spirit."

⁴⁵ He appears in *IG II²* 1632, and this is the identification preferred by K.-A. Coppola 1927, 454, instead identifies him as one of the witnesses in Dem. 59.61 (*Against Neaira*). The latter may be right, given that Timocles wrote a comedy called *Neaira* about the courtesan (fr. 25-6 K.-A.).

⁴⁶ The sons are mocked in Alexis fr. 77 K.-A. and Timocles fr. 23 K.-A. (from the comedy *Lethe*). See Coppola 1927, 455.

⁴⁷ She appears in Timocles fr. 27 K.-A. (from the *Orestautocleides*) in a list of courtesans; Alexis fr. 143 K.-A.; Antiphanes fr. 27 K.-A.; and Philemon fr. 15 K.-A. (alongside Harpalus, on whom see below).

⁴⁸ He is mentioned as well in Timocles fr. 4 K.-A. (from the *Delos*) among politicians who take bribes.

Autocles are mentioned in fr. 19 K.-A., the latter perhaps the trierarch of 356⁵⁰ and the former a pederast who is ridiculed in comedy.⁵¹

The argument that, because of such mockery, the *Ikarioi Satyroi* could not have been a satyr play ultimately relies (as does any argument objecting to its meter) on the premise that satyr play could not have so converged with comedy that they would be so difficult to distinguish.⁵² This is unproven, and it is in fact the thesis of this chapter that in this period satyr play adopted features of comedy, particularly personal mockery, to such an extent that later poets, like Honestus, and scholars, like Evanthius, would indeed connect or conflate the two genres. Timocles with his *Ikarioi Satyroi* is problematic only because he would be the first example of this trend and may even have been its originator. We can advance some good reasons why these changes may have happened in around 330 at his hands. As Sutton has noted, the victory list for the Dionysia of 340 marks the earliest known occasion when separate prizes were awarded for satyr play and tragedy.⁵³ In that year or shortly before, satyr play was dissociated from the tragic trilogy, surely giving greater opportunity for innovation in the genre. Even if we reject the proposition that the same poet could write tragedy and comedy,⁵⁴ there may have been nothing to

⁴⁹ Thudippus, Dion, Telemachus, and Kephisodorus are named. Telemachus is also mentioned in Timocles fr. 23 K.-A. (from the *Lethe*). For attempts to identify these, see Coppola 1927, 455-8, and Cipolla 2003, 324-5.

⁵⁰ *IG* II 794d 28, 1006; cf. Coppola 1927, 463.

⁵¹ He is mentioned in Theophilus fr. 2 K.-A. and is usually identified with the Autocleides described as one of Timarchus' lovers in Aesch. 1.52. He is surely the butt of mockery in Timocles' play *Orestautoclides* (fr. 27 K.-A.), in which he is hounded by a troop of courtesans just as Orestes was by the Eumenides. Coppola 1927, 462-3, thinks he is to be identified with a certain Autocles who was one of the generals in an expedition against the Odrysians.

⁵² Körte 1906, 413: "merkwürdig wäre es dagegen, wenn Satyrdrama und Komödie um 340 einander so ähnlich gesehen hätten, dass man im Ton keinen Unterschied merken kann." In this methodology, he is followed by Constantinides 1969.

⁵³ *IG* II² 2320, the very victory list in which a certain Timocles—either a tragic poet, a comic poet, or both—won first place with the satyr drama *Lycurgus*. On these developments, see Sutton 1980a, 85. This dissociation seems to have persisted; later inscriptions from Athens, Anatolian Magnesia, Samos, and elsewhere suggest that, into the 2nd century AD, there were separate contests and prizes for comedy, tragedy, and satyr play. See Seaford 1984, 25-6 for a survey of these inscriptions.

⁵⁴ Sutton 1980a, 83 n. 276, hesitantly mentions Philiscus as a possible poet of both Middle Comedy and tragedy, and Coppola 1927, 464, points to Iophon and Chairemon as possible authors of both genres, but none of these possibilities are very convincing. The arguments for Philiscus and Chairemon are based on the observation that the *Suda* calls them both comic poets even though we know from other sources that they were tragic poets; the *Suda*

stop the same poet from composing comedy and satyr play. Timocles himself does seem to have been rather ingenious and original, at least when it came to attacking contemporaries and combining politics with mythology,⁵⁵ and comedy subsequently would move away from this: after all, fewer than ten years after the *Ikarioi Satyroi* was produced Menander's first play would appear on the Athenian stage. It seems likely that satyr play, which was now divorced from tragedy, already featured humorous plots adapted from mythology, and had a history of cross-pollinating with comedy,⁵⁶ picked up where Old and Middle Comedy had left off as comedy itself moved in a different direction.

§6.5. Personal Abuse in Python's *Agen*

The topicality and personal mockery in Timocles' *Ikarioi Satyroi* are paralleled in the satyr play *Agen*, probably performed for Alexander in India about five years later. Constantinides objects to using the *Agen* as a point of comparison and as an indicator for the development of satyr play during this period because it was a short drama performed at the edge of the world; but

may be mistaken or corrupt. Iophon's case is more interesting and perhaps relevant to our discussion: Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 1.3.24 writes: Ἰοφῶν τε ὁμοίως ὁ κωμικὸς ἐν Αὐλώδοις σατύροις ἐπὶ ῥαψωδῶν καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν λέγει· "καὶ γὰρ εἰσελήλυθεν / πολλῶν σοφιστῶν ὄχλος ἐξηρτυμένος." An Iophon *comicus* is unknown, and it is unlikely that Iophon, the son of Sophocles and well-known for his tragedies, was composing comedy, tragedy, and satyr play. While σοφισταί here refers to musical specialists and not teachers of philosophy or rhetoric, he could have been influenced by comedy's penchant for mocking sophists and saw some resemblance there (see, for instance, Antiphanes fr.120 K.-A.). On the other hand, Clement quotes Cratinus in the previous sentence, and it may be more likely that calling Iophon ὁ κωμικὸς was a mistake.

⁵⁵ Meineke 1839, 428, writes of him: "Timocles, poeta, quantum e fragmentis conicere licet, unus omnium maxime ingeniosus summaeque, ut temporibus illis, in dicendo libertatis." Constantinides 1969 argues that the *Ikarioi Satyroi* and the fragments of Timocles more closely resemble Old Comedy than Middle Comedy for, among other reasons, the subject matter of his comedies and the vitriol of his attacks on contemporaries.

⁵⁶ Shaw 2010 suggests that Middle Comedy had an especially close relationship to classical satyr play in that the latter's mythic plots of were an important source of inspiration for the direction in which comedy moved in the fourth century.

these seem like stronger reasons to look for precursors and to reject the supposition that its topicality and personal mockery somehow arose *ex nihilo*.⁵⁷

Of the satyr play *Agen*, written by the otherwise unknown Python, two fragments that form a nearly continuous passage are preserved by Athenaeus. Most of the play seems to have treated the dissolute behavior of Harpalus, one of Alexander's lieutenants. During his campaigning, Alexander had left Harpalus in charge of the royal treasury of Babylon, and Harpalus was known for squandering his money on two courtesans: first Pythionice, for whom he built two temples upon her death,⁵⁸ and then Glycera, for whom he paid a large sum and to whom he insisted that his subjects pay royal honors, including *proskynesis*.⁵⁹ In 324, Harpalus stole from the treasury and fled to Greece.

<A> ἔστιν δ' ὅπου μὲν ὁ κάλαμος πέφυχ' ὄδε
 φέτωμ⁶⁰ ἄορνον, οὐξ ἀριστερᾶς δ' ὄδε
 πόρνης ὁ κλεινὸς ναός, ὃν δὴ Παλλίδης
 τεύξας κατέγνω διὰ τὸ πρᾶγμ' αὐτοῦ φυγῆν.
 ἐνταῦθα δὴ τῶν βαρβάρων τινὲς μάγοι
 ὀρῶντες αὐτὸν παγκάκως διακείμενον
 ἔπεισαν ὡς ἄξουσι τὴν ψυχὴν ἄνω
 τὴν Πυθιονίκης ...

(5)

... ἐκμαθεῖν δέ σου ποθῶ,
 μακρὰν ἀποικῶν κείθεν, Ἀτθίδα χθόνα
 τίνες τύχαι ἴκαλοῦσιν ἢ πράττουσι τί.

(10)

 ὅτε μὲν ἔφασκον δοῦλον ἐκτῆσθαι βίον,
 ἱκανὸν ἐδείπνουν· νῦν δὲ τὸν χέδροπα μόνον
 καὶ τὸν μάραθον ἔσθουσι, πυροὺς δ' οὐ μάλα.
 <A> καὶ μὴν ἀκούω μυριάδας τὸν Ἄρπαλον
 αὐτοῖσι τῶν Ἀγῆνος οὐκ ἐλάττονας
 σίτου διαπέμψαι καὶ πολίτην γεγονέναι.
 Γλυκέρας ὁ σίτος οὗτος ἦν· ἔσται δ' ἴσως
 αὐτοῖσιν ὀλέθρου κοῦχ ἑταίρας ἀρραβῶν.

(15)

⁵⁷ Constantinides 1969, 54: "Neither the *Agen* nor the *Menedemus* can be used as a criterion for the Athenian satyr play ca. 330 BC. The former was produced at the far end of the world conquered by Alexander; Athenaeus himself qualifies his description of the play by calling it σατυρικὸν δραμάτιον 'a short satyr play' (13.596D)."

⁵⁸ See Theopompus *FGrH* 115F 253.

⁵⁹ See Arrian 4.10.5-12.5 for an indication of how controversial and problematic *proskynesis* was when Alexander required it from his Macedonian subjects.

⁶⁰ On the possible emendations to this, see below.

<A> But there is, where this reed grew, a birdless . . . , and here on the left is the illustrious temple of the whore. Pallides built it and condemned himself to flight because of the business. There, some *magoi* of the barbarians saw that he was in a terrible plight and persuaded him that they would summon up the spirit of Pythionice . . . But I long to learn from you, since I live far from there, what fortunes the Athenians have(?) and how they fare.

 When they used to say that they had their living like a slave, they ate enough. But now they eat only pea mash and fennel, and not much wheat.

<A> But in fact I hear that Harpalus sent myriads of bushels of grain to them, no less than those of Agen, and that he has become a citizen.

 This was the grain for Glycera: perhaps it will be security for their ruin and not for the courtesan.⁶¹

There is some controversy over the date and circumstances of performance: Athenaeus, in whose work the play's fragments are found, seems to give two contradictory statements about where and when it was performed.⁶² He says that the production occurred when Alexander was, on the one hand, on the Hydaspes (i.e., the river Jhelum in India) and, on the other hand, after Harpalus took flight. Alexander was on the Hydaspes in 326; Harpalus fled in 324. Most commentators accept the latter date.⁶³ The most convincing argument for this is the suggestion that Hydaspes is an error for Choaspes with XO written for YΔ.⁶⁴

If this is the case, the Choaspes refers to the river near Susa, and therefore the play would have been performed when Alexander was in Susa in March/April 324. However, as Adams argues, it is hard to imagine that Athenaeus would have referred to so illustrious a city as Susa with the obscure phrase "on the river Choaspes," while we might expect just such a phrase as

⁶¹ *Agen* fr. 1 (=Athen. 13.595f-596b + 586d).

⁶² Athenaeus 13.595f-596b.

⁶³ Beloch 1927, 434-6, first put the performance in 324 at Ecbatana. This dating and location is the one generally followed and is accepted by Lloyd-Jones 1966, 16-7; Sutton 1980*a*, 78-80; Worthington 1986, 63-76; and Krumeich *et al.* 1999, 594. However, Droysen 1872, 498 n. 36, suggests that it was performed in 324 in Susa instead, and this dating and location are accepted by Wikarjak 1950, 49, and Kotlińska 2005, 44-53. I have not had access to Wikarjak's article and rely on Kotlińska's summary of his views.

⁶⁴ First suggested by Droysen 1872, 498 n. 36, who ascribes the mistakes to Athenaeus himself. Wikarjak 1950, 49, suggests a copyist's mistake; he is followed by Kotlińska 2005, 46.

"on the river Hydaspes" for celebrations in Alexander's encampment in India.⁶⁵ Moreover, if the fragment refers to Harpalus' dealings with the Athenians, then March/April 324 is too soon: Harpalus would not reach Athens until the summer, and his destination and intentions would not have been clear until then.⁶⁶ Finally, to my knowledge, there is no indication that Alexander celebrated the Dionysia during his stay in Susa.

Snell, however, has argued for the date of 326, when Alexander was on the Hydaspes.⁶⁷ He suggests that holding a Dionysia needs only a few resources,⁶⁸ though Alexander did occasionally receive substantial resources and reinforcements from his allies.⁶⁹ Alexander certainly did hold games during his Indian campaign, including on the Hydaspes, though Arrian reports only gymnastic and equestrian contests.⁷⁰ Snell argues that the *Agen* would have been more dramatically effective if it were performed in 326 before Alexander's battle-weary army in India. I am inclined to agree with his dating, though on a different ground that, I think, reconciles Athenaeus' statements about the chronology.

The *Agen* could indeed have been performed when Alexander was in India and after Harpalus' flight occurred—provided that Harpalus' flight refers not to the later and more famous flight of 324 that finally estranged him from Alexander, but to his earlier flight of 333 before the battle of Issos, described in Arrian 3.6.4-7.⁷¹ This dating has the added benefit that φουγῆν in line 4 can be understood to be not merely, as Snell thought, a coincidence, or, as the supporters of the later chronology would have it, an allusion to Harpalus' current dangerous and traitorous

⁶⁵ Adams 1901, 127-9.

⁶⁶ As argued by Worthington 1986.

⁶⁷ Snell 1971, 117-121.

⁶⁸ Furthermore, the *Agen* was a particularly short play: Athenaeus calls it a σατυρικὸν δράματιον (13.586d and 595d), i.e., a little satyr play.

⁶⁹ After crossing the Indus and before reaching the Hydaspes, Arrian 5.3 says that Alexander was sent 200 talents of silver, 3,000 oxen, 700 horsemen, 30 elephants, and 10,000 sheep by his allies.

⁷⁰ Games are held on the Hydaspes in 5.20. Contests are also mentioned in 5.3 on crossing the Indus.

⁷¹ For the circumstances of this earlier flight, see Heckel 1977, 133-5.

activities,⁷² but a dig at his past cowardice. Such an attack on him would be especially fitting given the dramatic setting. In the fragment, he has fled to the temple he built for Pythionice. In a letter from Theopompus to Alexander, which describes circumstances like those depicted in Python's play, Theopompus criticizes Harpalus for building the temple to Pythionice instead of building memorials to honor the Greek dead from their battles against the Persians, including the battle of Issos.⁷³ The temple itself and his so-called φωνγή to it recall both Harpalus' cowardice before and his misbehavior after one of Alexander's greatest victories.

If there was such a consistent emphasis on Harpalus' cowardice—and, accordingly, on the bravery of Alexander and his fellows—this sheds some light on the textual problem in line 2, the nonsensical φετωμ'. Pezopulos, *apud* Kolokotsas, suggested the emendation πέτρωμα;⁷⁴ he had good reason for this, as we shall see, but Süss made the decisive criticism that a rock so lofty that birds cannot reach its heights has no place in this scene. Süss himself, following Meineke, supposed that it must be some word for lake or swamp, since such places that are called ἄορνος (*avernus*) are associated with passage to the underworld and necromancy.⁷⁵ But they can offer no suggestions aside from the unattested ἔλωμα, and von Blumenthal, who also follows Meineke, is left supposing that the corrupted word may be Babylonian or a local name.⁷⁶ Janko has proposed the solution ἀέτωμ', i.e., a gable or pediment.⁷⁷ The speaker is, therefore, referring to part of the temple complex. This has the obvious attractions that Φ would be a small error for A, that it corresponds to a structure we would expect on the scene, and that it is a joke. The word ἀέτωμα

⁷² Badian 1961, 16-43, describes the circumstances of the time; Harpalus, the Athenians, and Alexander's other enemies in Greece and Persia posed a real menace.

⁷³ Theopompus *FGrH* 115F 253.

⁷⁴ Pezopulos' suggestion is reported in Kolokotsas 1938; I have not yet seen this work and rely on Süss 1939, 211-2.

⁷⁵ Süss 1939, 211-2, following Meineke 1867, 280.

⁷⁶ von Blumenthal 1939, 219.

⁷⁷ Forthcoming in *Classical Quarterly* (2013).

derives from ἀέτος because a pediment resembles an eagle with outspread wings;⁷⁸ but this one is "birdless," i.e., it is a building, not a bird.

Most importantly for our purposes, however, this corresponds to what must surely have been another dig at Harpalus. For one of Alexander's greatest victories in the East was his storming of a citadel that was so mighty that even Heracles had failed to sack it.⁷⁹ Its name: the Aornos Rock, Ἄορνος Πέτρα. This reference was why Pezopulos proposed and Kolokotsas accepted the unlikely emendation πέτρωμα. The battle immediately preceded Alexander's journey to the Hydaspes, and, if I am correct about the play's dating, Alexander conquered the fortress just a year before the play was performed. Alexander, therefore, sacked a mighty fortress higher than the birds can fly; Harpalus has built a memorial (indeed, a temple) for his lover, complete with a birdless gable. The mockery directed against Harpalus may be comparable to that directed at, e.g., the coward Cleonymus in Aristophanes. Like the attacks on politicians and other public figures in Old and Middle Comedy, Harpalus is a well-known, recurrent target of abuse: he is attacked elsewhere in comedy and appears alongside Pythionice in Philemon fr. 15 K.-A.

As Snell reconstructs the play, it has a chorus of satyrs who play *magoi* that will conjure up from the underworld Pythionice, Harpalus' dead courtesan; later Glycera arrives and the satyrs show excessive reverence to her by *proskynesis*. Alexander seems to be the titular Agen, which must derive from ἄγω and mean leader;⁸⁰ at the end of the play, he would appear, perhaps in the guise of Dionysus, and corral the satyrs, as well as Harpalus and Glycera.⁸¹ In some ways, the

⁷⁸ Photius s.v. Αετός: τό τε πτηνὸν ζῷον καὶ τὸ ἐπὶ τῷ προπυλαίῳ, ὃ καὶ νῦν ἀέτωμα λέγεται· ἢ γὰρ ἐπὶ τοῖς προπυλαίοις κατασκευὴ αἰετοῦ μιμεῖται σχῆμα ἀποτετακότος τὰ περὰ.

⁷⁹ Arrian 4.28-30.

⁸⁰ von Blumenthal 1939, 216-7, discusses the formation of this name and points to, among other parallels, the name Ἀρχήν in Herodian 1, 14 Lenz.

⁸¹ Snell 1971, 116-7.

play seems like a sequel to the *Ikarioi Satyroi*: the latter play at least in part treats Pythionice and her lovers (fr. 15 and 16 K.-A.), apparently during an Athenian grain shortage (fr. 18 K.-A.).

The *Agen* begins with her newest lover, Harpalus, mourning her death and having recently sent grain to Athens to relieve their lack and procure a new courtesan.⁸²

However the action proceeded, one feature of the play's style is clear from the extant 18 lines: the people whose faults will be mocked, Pythionice, Glycera, and Harpalus, are mocked directly. As Athenaeus tells us before excerpting the passages, Harpalus in line 3 is referred to as Παλλίδης, which Snell interpreted as the equivalent of Φαλλίδης, i.e., son of a phallus.⁸³ It is also a comic formation from his own name (Har-palus). The primary reference, however, may be to the verb πάλλω and Harpalus' aversion to military service, that is, the trembling or quivering that renders him unfit to serve.⁸⁴ This is a passive sense of πάλλω; in the active the verb refers to the act of brandishing a weapon, and, if this sense is meant as well, it is a sarcastic gibe at someone who does not take up arms. Arrian tells us, after all, that Alexander appointed Harpalus as steward of the treasury rather than to the army because Harpalus was lame,⁸⁵ and perhaps mockery was made of his physical limitations and appearance too.

Pallides, who, one of the interlocutors says, is παγκάκως διακείμενος, is like the lover who wastes away in longing for his beloved of New Comedy,⁸⁶ though he has one lover, Glycera, on the way, and another, Pythionice, about to be summoned for a time by *magoi*. But he is also like the gullible braggart soldier: he is credulous for trusting the satyric *magoi* and, as

⁸² The connections are strong enough that Coppola 1927, 464-7, suggests that the *Agen* was written by Timocles or a close imitator.

⁸³ Snell 1971, 107. See Sutton 1980*b*, 96, for opposition to this understanding of the appellation. Schiassi 1958, 83-94, connects the name to Βαλλίων, a name apparently meaning ἄσωτος and perhaps itself formed from φαλλός.

⁸⁴ Suggested by Süß 1939; compare the word τρεστής, derived from τρέω, meaning a coward (Hesychius s.v. τρέστης). As Sutton 1980*b*, notes, though, the name surely recalls, too, Harpalus' connection to the city of Pallas (cf. line 16, where one of the two interlocutors says that he has been made a citizen of Athens), and Sutton sees this as the primary pun.

⁸⁵ Arrian 3.6.6.

⁸⁶ These New Comic types in the *Agen* are discussed by Schiassi 1958.

Snell suggests, he will soon demand extraordinary honors for himself and his courtesan—though he is far from being a soldier, as his nickname, his behavior, his physical appearance, his "flight" to the temple, and the latter's very existence all remind us. If the *Agen* was performed primarily before battle-weary soldiers in India in 326, such mockery of Harpalus' cowardice and softness would be particularly fitting and be designed to buttress their spirits by criticizing the weakness of those who stayed behind.

§6.6. Lycophron's *Menedemus*

Snell calls the *Agen* a unique satyr play, but we have seen personal attacks on contemporaries' faults in a way reminiscent of comedy in the *Ikarioi Satyroi*; it recurs as well in a satyr play by Lycophron, the *Menedemus*, produced in either Athens or Eretria in 280.⁸⁷ The play's structure and content are less clear. Menedemus was a philosopher and politician in Eretria,⁸⁸ and Athenaeus tells us that Lycophron wrote the play in mockery against Menedemus and criticized the philosophers' dinners.⁸⁹

Athenaeus quotes the play to demonstrate the meanness of Menedemus' symposia: Silenus seems at first to praise the banquet, telling the satyrs that it excels dinners in Rhodes, Caria, and Lydia; then he dashes their expectations by describing how niggardly the provisions are. The other fragments likewise seem to parody the dinners and congress of Menedemus and his pupils.

⁸⁷ van Rooy 1965, 127.

⁸⁸ See D.L. 2.126-144.

⁸⁹ Athenaeus 2.55d: Λυκόφρων δ' ὁ Χαλκιδεὺς ἐν σατυρικῷ δρᾶματι, ὃ ἐπὶ καταμωκῆσει ἔγραψεν εἰς Μενέδημον τὸν φιλόσοφον, ἀφ' οὗ ἡ τῶν Ἐρετρικῶν ὀνομάσθη αἴρεσις, διασκώπτων τῶν φιλοσόφων τὰ δεῖπνά φησι ...

ΣΙΛΗΝΟΣ

παῖδες κρατίστου πατρὸς ἐξωλέστατοι,
ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμῖν, ὡς ὀράτε, στρηνιῶ·
δεῖπνον γὰρ οὔτ' ἐν Καρία, μὰ τοὺς θεοῦς,
οὔτ' ἐν Ῥόδῳ τοιοῦτον οὔτ' ἐν Λυδία
κατέχω δεδειπνηκῶς. Ἄπολλον, ὡς καλόν

ἀλλὰ κυλίκιον

ὑδαρὲς ὁ παῖς περιῆγε τοῦ πεντωβόλου,
ἀτρέμα παρεξεστηκός· ὅ τ' ἀλιτήριος
καὶ δημόκοινος ἐπεχόρευε δαψιλῆς
θέρμος, πενήτων καὶ τρικλίνου συμπότης.

Silenus:

Most accursed children of the mightiest father, I, as you see, am running riot: for neither in Caria, by the gods, nor in Rhodes, nor in Lydia have I eaten and held in my belly such a meal. Apollo, how fine *** But a boy brought around a little watery cup of wine worth five obols and it had gone completely sour. And the cursed and common legume danced in abundance, the companion of poor men and a small dining room.⁹⁰

A difficulty in evaluating the criticism in the *Menedemus* is that, while Athenaeus says that it was written in mockery of the philosopher, Diogenes Laertius in his life of Menedemus says that it was an ἐγκώμιον.⁹¹ But Lycophron would not have been alone in mocking Menedemus; Diogenes says that Menedemus early in life was disliked by the Eretrians, who called him a cynic and a trifler.⁹² He tells us as well that Menedemus was parodied by contemporary philosophers: both Crates of Thebes and Timon of Phlius mocked his pomposity, the latter calling him a puffed up and haughty purveyor of pretensions.⁹³

⁹⁰ *Menedemus* fr. 2 (=Athen. 10.420b).

⁹¹ D.L. 2.140.2-3: Λυκόφρων ἐν τοῖς πεποημένοις σατύροις αὐτῶ, οὓς Μενέδημος ἐπέγραψεν, ἐγκώμιον τοῦ φιλοσόφου ποιήσας τὸ δρᾶμα.

⁹² D.L. 2.140.8: Τὰ μὲν οὖν πρῶτα καταφρονεῖτο, κύων καὶ λῆρος ὑπὸ τῶν Ἐρετριέων ἀκούων.

⁹³ D.L. 2.126.7-11: φαίνεται δὴ ὁ Μενέδημος σεμνὸς ἰκανῶς γενέσθαι· ὅθεν αὐτὸν Κράτης παρωδῶν φησι· "Φλιάσιόν τ' Ἀσκληπιάδην καὶ ταῦρον Ἐρέτρην." ὁ δὲ Τίμων οὕτως· "ὄγκον ἀναστήσας ἰώφρωμένος ἀφροσιβόμβασξ."

Even if the mockery was gentler than in the *Agen*, it is still difficult to reconcile Diogenes' ἐγκώμιον with Athenaeus' καταμώκησις.⁹⁴ It may be that Diogenes had only a limited acquaintance with the play, given that he makes no note of its criticisms when he says that Menedemus was very hospitable and held many symposia where he welcomed musicians and poets—among whom was Lycophron.⁹⁵ Diogenes has enough information, however, to quote from the play, and Athenaeus and Diogenes may have used the same source, Antigonus of Carystus,⁹⁶ for their information about the life of Menedemus, as well as, perhaps, for their knowledge of the play.⁹⁷

The humor in Diogenes' quotation is rather subtle, however:

ὡς ἐκ βραχείας δαιτὸς ἢ βαιὰ κύλιξ
 αὐτοῖς κυκλεῖται πρὸς μέτρον, τράγημα δὲ
 ὁ σωφρονιστῆς τοῖς φιληκόοις λόγος.

As after a short feast, a small cup is circulated moderately, and for those who liked to listen there is wise discussion for dessert.⁹⁸

Fr. 3 must be taken along with fr. 2 to see that Menedemus' dinner is being mocked for its meagerness, not merely praised for its moderation: the feast is short, the cup is small, and the dessert is not food, but conversation. Fr. 4 is likewise subtle:

⁹⁴ Steffen 1951, 331-7, thinks that D.L. was correct and the dinners of other philosophers (and not Menedemus) were mocked and believes that Athenaeus' view that the play was meant in mockery against Menedemus was mistaken. This view is opposed by Wikarjak 1948, 127-137, and van Rooy 1965, 128-134; the latter, 142 n. 39, observes that it is inconceivable that Lycophron would have written a satyr play called *Menedemus* but mock not Menedemus but other philosophers. Xanthakis-Karamanos 1997, 121-143, accepts Athenaeus' evaluation, supposing that the play's mockery was rather mild.

⁹⁵ 2.133.

⁹⁶ Cited by Athenaeus for his information about Menedemus' symposia at 10.15.2. Diogenes cites Antigonus for some unrelated information about Menedemus in 2.136, but he does not say where he learned about Menedemus' symposia, Lycophron's satyr play, or Lycophron's relationship with Menedemus. However, his description of Menedemus' dinners in 2.140, given before quoting the play (*Menedemus* fr. 3), is quite close to Athenaeus', suggesting a common source. Steffen 1951, 333-4, suggests that Diogenes relied on Athenaeus for this description, but this seems untenable since Diogenes does quote Antigonus elsewhere.

⁹⁷ The treatment of the play in Krumeich *et al.* 1999, 618-23, supposes as much.

⁹⁸ *Menedemus* fr. 3(=D.L. 2.140.5-7).

πολλάκις
συνόντας αὐτούς
ἐπὶ πλείον ὁ ὄρνις κατελάμβανε
τὴν ἕω καλῶν
< ≡ – ∪ – ≡ > τοῖσι δ' οὐδέπω κόρος

Often the bird calling out the dawn caught them when they were long consorting, and they were not yet sated.⁹⁹

Given the other fragments, the joke must be a pun on κόρος: come morning, the guests have had their fill of neither talk nor food. If these fragments are typical of the rest of the play, it becomes clear how Diogenes might have regarded it as an encomium and Athenaeus as mockery: the mockery at least partly consisted of jokes about the asceticism of Menedemus and his school and their commitment to philosophy. Who is doing the mocking is significant, too. The speaker in fr. 3 and fr. 4 is unclear, but Athenaeus tells us that the speaker in fr. 2 is Silenus. He is, like his satyrs, notoriously hedonistic, and his mockery of Menedemus and his dinners may be humorous and even true, but it would not be especially damning or offensive coming from him. Mockery from such a character can in its own way be an honor, and that double-sidedness is apparent in fr. 3-4. In noting the meagerness of the fare, they are also noting the moderation of Menedemus and his guests and their devotion to conversation.

Like Crates and Timon, Lycophron may have gone further and the mockery may have been more extensive, though, once again, it may have been a sort of praise. In the collections of *chreiai* that were becoming popular,¹⁰⁰ the ones treating cynic sages in particular depict philosophers who speak frankly (sometimes even obscenely), make great use of humor, have

⁹⁹ *Menedemus* fr. 4 is found in Athenaeus 10.420c and is given by Athenaeus there partly as a prose paraphrase. The text here is as printed in *TrGF*.

¹⁰⁰ Machon's iambic *Chreiai*, for instance, date to the middle of the third century, and, like Lycophron, he wrote in Alexandria (he was also a comic poet of some bitterness, since Dioscorides says that he wrote with an artfulness worthy of Old Comedy; see *A.P.* 7.708).

little regard for social conventions, and are devoted to living and teaching their philosophy.¹⁰¹ Menedemus might fit such a model: Diogenes Laertius tells us that he was cutting and straight-talking,¹⁰² that he was unconcerned about keeping his school well-ordered, letting students sit and listen wherever they liked,¹⁰³ and that he once insulted his host, King Nicocreon, by insisting that it was always appropriate to listen to philosophers, rather than just at the present feast—and as a result incurred the king's wrath and was nearly killed.¹⁰⁴ If the mockery consisted of depicting Menedemus as bitingly out-spoken, unconcerned with worldly pleasure (such as richly provisioned symposia),¹⁰⁵ and devoted to the philosophy to the point of unruliness and rudeness, such a depiction could, like those of Menedemus' symposia in the above fragments, be both laughable and encomiastic. In any event, the *Menedemus* seems to have continued the trend, adapted from comedy, of mocking contemporaries for their faults, and the mockery of Menedemus and his school is paralleled not only in Old Comedy, but also in the mockery of philosophers and their schools in Middle Comedy, such as the sophists (mocked as emaciated in Antiphanes fr.120 K.-A.) and Pythagoreans (called dirty vegetarians in Antiphanes fr. 166 K.-A.).¹⁰⁶

§6.7. Sositheus and Cleanthes

The final author of satyr drama whom we will consider is the latest satyrographer of whom fragments of much length survive: Sositheus, a contemporary of Lycophron and his

¹⁰¹ For the connection between comedy and the activities of Diogenes of Sinope in particular, see Bosman 2006, 93-104. See also Cruces 2004, who argues that at least some of the quotations attributed to him were cited in comedy.

¹⁰² D.L. 2.127.3-4: ἐπικόπτης καὶ παρρησιαστής.

¹⁰³ D.L. 2.130.9-131.1.

¹⁰⁴ D.L. 2.129.5-130.8.

¹⁰⁵ Nor was his frugality due to insufficient means; D.L. 2.138.3 tells us that Menedemus and his friend Asclepiades lived quite cheaply, though they had great resources (συσζήσας τῷ Μενεδήμῳ σφόδρα εὐτελῶς ἀπὸ μεγάλων).

¹⁰⁶ Note, too, that Lycophron was quite familiar with Old Comedy: we are told that in Alexandria under Ptolemy Philadelphus Lycophron was charged with editing the comedies (Koster XIa, 1-5 [Tzetzes]; Koster XIc, 1-3). See Xanthakis-Karamanos 1997, 131-143, who detects many allusions to both Old and Middle Comedy in the fragments.

colleague in the so-called Alexandrian pleiad. We know the title of only one of his satyr plays, *Daphnis or Lityerses*.¹⁰⁷ Unlike the previous two cases, the play has a mythic plot, like satyr plays from the fifth century. The preserved fragments do not refer to or mock individuals and appear to recall and allude to Euripides' satyr plays, particularly his *Theristae*, which also dealt with the myth of Lityerses.¹⁰⁸ Scholars regard Sositheus as restoring satyr drama to its original form and subject matter by returning it its pastoral origins and eschewing the personal mockery we have discussed.¹⁰⁹ An epigram of Dioscorides appears to confirm this view:

κῆγὼ Σωσιθέου κομέω νέκυν, ὅσσον ἐν ἄστει
 ἄλλος ἀπ' αὐθαίμων ἡμετέρων Σοφοκλῆν,
 Σκίρτος ὁ πυρρογένειος. ἐκισσοφόρησε γὰρ ὠνήρ
 ἄξια Φλιασίων, ναὶ μὰ χορούς, σατύρων
 κῆμὲ τὸν ἐν καινοῖς τεθραμμένον ἤθεσιν ἤδη
 ἤγαγεν εἰς μνήμην πατρίδ' ἀναρχαΐσας,
 καὶ πάλιν εἰσώρμησα τὸν ἄρσενά Δωρίδι Μούσῃ
 ῥυθμόν, πρὸς τ' αὐδῆν ἐλκόμενος μεγάλην
 εὐαδέ μοι θύρσων κτύπος¹¹⁰ φύχερι καινοτομηθεὶς
 τῆ φιλοκινδύνῳ φροντίδι Σωσιθέου.

And I, the red bearded *skirtos*, tend the corpse of Sositheus, just as in the city another from my kin tends Sophocles. For the man wore the ivy in a manner worthy of Phliasian satyrs, by the choruses, and he led me, who had been reared among new customs, to my ancestral character and made me old again. Once more I set out on a masculine rhythm with the Doric muse, and, dancing to the loud sound, the beat ... of the *thursoi* delights me, devised by the risk-loving mind of Sositheus.¹¹¹

In this epigram, a *skirtos*—a kind of satyr¹¹²—praises Sositheus for restoring him, who had been reared among newfangled customs, to his ancestral character. This must include

¹⁰⁷ The play is called a drama, not a satyr play, when its title is given in Athenaeus 10.415b; it is presumed to be one based on its plot and content. See Krumeich *et al.* 1999, 605.

¹⁰⁸ For a commentary on the fragment focusing on these allusions, see Xanthakis-Karamanos 1997.

¹⁰⁹ E.g., Sutton 1973, 173-6; Seaford 1984, 20; Krumeich *et al.* 1999, 602-4.

¹¹⁰ Emended by Jacobs from ἐπτά δέ μοι ἔρσων τύπος.

¹¹¹ A.P. 7.707 (=23 G.-P.).

¹¹² See Cornutus *De natura deorum* 30, where the *skirtoi* appear among the satyrs and silenoi: ἐκστάσεως σύμβολόν εἰσιν οἱ Σάτυροι τὴν ὀνομασίαν ἐσχηκότες ἀπὸ τοῦ σεσηρέναι καὶ οἱ Σκίρτοι ἀπὸ τοῦ σκαίρειν καὶ οἱ Σιληνοὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ σιλαίνειν καὶ οἱ Σευῖδα ἀπὸ τοῦ σεύειν, ὃ ἐστὶν ὀρμᾶν. A *skirtos* appears, too, in SEG 39.1334, a fragment of an

returning the setting of satyr play to the country, away from the more urban setting where both the *Agen* and the *Menedemus* occur. It also includes tightening the meter, which had in the fourth and third centuries permitted greater license and become more like that of comedy.¹¹³ In the extant fragments of Sositheus, there are no metrical anomalies like those in the *Ikarioi Satyroi*, *Agen*, or *Menedemus*. However, we should beware of over-estimating Sositheus' archaizing tendencies.

Firstly, since most of the fragments of the *Daphnis or Lityerses* are preserved by later mythographers and scholiasts explaining mythological allusions, they may not be representative of the rest of the play. Just as Athenaeus quotes from the *Menedemus* to show how philosophers dined, these quotations from mythographers may not illustrate of the style of the play. After all, Dioscorides calls Sositheus risk-loving (φιλοκίνδυνος), and we know that he was innovative because he restored some earlier features of satyr drama: the plot of his *Daphnis or Lityerses* is an innovation, as Daphnis does not appear in the traditional story of Lityerses, and it seems that Sositheus has incorporated elements from the bucolic genre.¹¹⁴

Webster understands Sositheus' restoration of satyr play not as specifically a reaction to the "new" style of Timocles, Python, and Lycophron, but to the satyr plays of Sophocles. In another epigram by Dioscorides, the satyr adorning Sophocles' tomb says that he had before been rough and hard like oak, but Sophocles changed his form to gold and dressed him in a delicate purple robe.¹¹⁵ Dioscorides' epigram about Sositheus may be praising him for restoring the satyr from such newfangled luxuriousness to his original, rustic character.¹¹⁶ If Sositheus' archaizing

epigram that mentions Pratinas, satyr play, and Sicyon. On this latter epigram, see Kerkhecker, 1991, 27-34; Lehnus 1996, 295-7.

¹¹³ On the increased metrical license in satyr plays, see §6.4.

¹¹⁴ See Krumeich *et al.* 1999., 606-8 for testimonia about the myth and Sositheus' modifications to it.

¹¹⁵ *A.P.* 7.37.

¹¹⁶ Webster 1963, 534-7. Likewise, Sifakis 1967, 124-6, supposes that Dioscorides is referring specifically to modifications or restorations Sositheus made to the chorus of satyrs.

tendencies are a reaction to trends started by Sophocles regarding the chorus, Dioscorides may not be referring specifically to the attacks on contemporaries found in Python and Lycophron. Even if Sutton is right to read these two epigrams separately,¹¹⁷ the *skirtos* in Dioscorides' epigram about Sositheus refers specifically to meter and dance and says nothing about style and humor.

For Sositheus did insert personal abuse into his satyr plays. Diogenes Laertius tells us that, in an unnamed play, Sositheus mocked the stupidity of a contemporary among the audience, Cleanthes the Stoic,¹¹⁸ and incurred the audience's wrath:

Σωσιθέου τοῦ ποιητοῦ ἐν θεάτρῳ εἰπόντος πρὸς αὐτὸν παρόντα "οὐς ἢ Κλεάνθους μωρία βοηλατεῖ," (=Sositheus fr. 4) ἔμεινεν ἐπὶ ταυτοῦ σχήματος· ἐφ' ᾧ ἀγασθέντες οἱ ἀκροαταὶ τὸν μὲν ἐκρότησαν, τὸν δὲ Σωσίθεον ἐξέβαλον.

When the poet Sositheus said to him [sc. Cleanthes] while he was present in the theater, "Those whom the stupidity of Cleanthes drives like cattle," he remained of the same bearing. At this the listeners were astonished, and they applauded Cleanthes and drove Sositheus from the stage.¹¹⁹

There is no indication, however, that the play was entirely about Cleanthes. Presumably Diogenes would have mentioned it if it were, but he quotes only a single line that refers to him. Rather than specifically removing personal mockery, Sositheus may have restored some formal features of satyr drama by using a more traditional versification and dance, setting his dramas in the country, and using a mythical plot, rather than writing about historical individuals in a more urban setting.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Sutton 1983.

¹¹⁸ Cleanthes was perhaps a popular target, and he, like Menedemus, was mocked by their contemporary Timon (D.L. 7.170). Timon, like Sositheus, makes fun of Cleanthes' stupidity.

¹¹⁹ D.L. 7.173. I.e., they applauded Cleanthes and hissed Sositheus' actors off stage. See Demosthenes 19.337: ἐξεβάλλετ' αὐτὸν καὶ ἐξεσπρίττετ' ἐκ τῶν θεάτρων.

¹²⁰ Krumeich *et al.* 1999, 614-6, accept that the play was probably not entirely about Cleanthes as the *Menedemus* was about Menedemus. However, they suggest that the play was early in Sositheus' career and he changed his style later in life, for which there is just as little evidence as for my suggestion. One need look no farther than the *Birds* to

§6.8. Problems of Genre and Abuse

Such is the evidence from the fragments of post-classical satyr play.¹²¹ While most of them come from just four plays, it is clear that from the 330s onwards satyr play underwent an extensive rapprochement with comedy and adapted from comedy new subject matters and jokes, including personal mockery in particular. As was discussed above, it cannot have been by chance that in those same years as New Comedy emerged satyr drama began to parallel Old and Middle Comedy closely: it mocked the very same individuals in some cases as Middle Comedy (Harpalus and Pythionice) and the same types of individuals (philosophers like Menedemus and Cleanthes, as well as their schools). This new form of satyr play was not a series of isolated experiments, but must have had a lasting impact on the Athenian stage. The date and locale of the *Menedemus* is uncertain, though it may have been performed in Athens fifty years after the *Ikarioi Satyroi*.¹²² Since Sositheus' play mocking Cleanthes was performed in Athens, sometime between 262, when Cleanthes succeeded Zeno as head of the Stoa, and 230, when he died, this "new" form of satyr drama continued to be current on the Athenian stage as much as a century after Timocles had pioneered it.

This long and extensive interaction between satyr play and comedy led to a theoretical problem about the nature and classification of satyr play. As we have seen, one theory supposed that personal abuse of third parties (especially for corrective purposes) was a central feature of comedy, even if another body of criticism attacked this idea. This theory, combined with some of satyr play's other borrowings from comedy, threatened to blur the genres.

find a drama that is set far from the city and has mythological themes, but still retains jokes and allusions to contemporary people and events.

¹²¹ There are remnants of only one other significant fragment; they are from a play about Atlas written by an unknown author (adesp. fr. 655 [=P. Bodmer 28]). The fragment exhibits asigmatism, and Turner 1976, in his publication of the play, suggests that it was a revision of a fifth century play, though Sutton 1980a, 87-8, is doubtful. For further discussion, including possible dates for its composition, see Krumeich *et al.* 1999, 624-631.

¹²² van Rooy 1965, 127, suggests Athens or Eretria in around 280.

The Aristotelian model avoids this problem by appealing to a historical argument for the generic distinction: Aristotle does not mention satyr play *per se*—at least in his discussion in the first book of the *Poetics*, there is no room for it when he divides drama and dramatists into only two categories, the more lofty (σεμνότεροι) and the more low (εὐτελέστεροι)¹²³—but explains that tragedy gained its loftiness after it was transformed from the satyric and emerged from small plots and laughable language.¹²⁴ As the historical predecessor of tragedy, it is a subclass of the genre of tragedy. Chamaeleon probably subscribed to the same model of the dramatic genres as his teacher, since he too appears to have thought satyr play to be a form of proto-tragedy.¹²⁵ Demetrius, the author of *De eloc.*, also closely connects satyr play to tragedy, perhaps relying on the same principle: he explains that satyr play is what would result from trying to write a sportive tragedy.¹²⁶

In Aristotle, probably writing before the production of the *Ikarioi Satyroi* and the emergence of the "new" form of satyr drama, the seeds of the generic problem had already appeared: he explains that satyr play, or at least the satyric, has small plots and laughable language, features that certainly recall comedy.¹²⁷ Indeed, the author of *De eloc.* is explicit in likening satyr play to comedy in its γέλωσ and χάρις,¹²⁸ even if he goes on to call it a sportive tragedy. This dyadic model of the dramatic genres is able to maintain a generic distinction only from the historical claim that satyr play is the predecessor of and a subclass to tragedy

¹²³ *Poetics* 4.1448b24-6.

¹²⁴ *Poetics* 4.1449a19-20: ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν ὧσέ ἀπεσεμνύνθη. See §2.6 for more on the status of satyr play in Aristotle's system.

¹²⁵ *Suda* s.v. Οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον· τὸ πρόσθεν εἰς τὸν Διόνυσον γράφοντες τούτοις ἠγωνίζοντο, ἅπερ καὶ σατυρικά ἐλέγετο. ὕστερον δὲ μεταβάντες εἰς τὸ τραγωδίας γράφειν κατὰ μικρὸν εἰς μύθους καὶ ἱστορίας ἐτρέπησαν, μηκέτι τοῦ Διονύσου μνημονεύοντες, ὅθεν τοῦτο καὶ ἐπεφώνησαν. καὶ Χαμαιλέων ἐν τῷ Περὶ Θέσπιδος τὰ παραπλήσια ἱστορεῖ.

¹²⁶ Demetrius *De eloc.* 169: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐπινοήσειεν ἄν τις τραγωδίαν παίζουσαν, ἐπεὶ σάτυρον γράψει ἀντὶ τραγωδίας. On the dating, identity, and intellectual tradition of this author, see the introduction in Chiron 1993.

¹²⁷ With the phrase ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας (4.1449a19), Shaw 2010, 16-8, believes that Aristotle "tacitly associate[s] the playful, comic style of satyr drama with that of Middle Comedy."

¹²⁸ Demetrius *De eloc.* 169.

(confirmed, perhaps, by its position as the fourth element of the tetralogy), and that there are therefore only two dramatic genres: comedy and tragedy.¹²⁹

However, this historical claim was vitiated by a competing theory about the origins of drama, according to which tragedy did not develop from satyr play. We are familiar with this view by now, which was most notably proposed by Eratosthenes.¹³⁰ According to this theory, the three dramatic genres are genetically related, and, without historical grounds for distinguishing comedy from satyr play, the distinction depends on aesthetics and function.

Horace's discussion is the best instance of a triadic distinction: the three genres are separated according to what they ought to be like and what they ought to achieve. In the *Ars Poetica*,¹³¹ he warns against the dilution of the dramatic genres and describes what is appropriate to each. For satyr play, he cautions against urban satyrs—surely referring to those of Timocles, Python, and Lycophron—and the offensiveness associated with them, namely uncouth talk and, perhaps, personal mockery:¹³²

¹²⁹ However, the impetus to distinguish fully the three dramatic genres is perhaps already apparent in Aristoxenus, another pupil of Aristotle, who delineates three distinct forms of dramatic dance (fr. 103, 104, and 106 Wehrli): ἐμμέλεια (tragic), κόρδαξ (comic), and σίκυννις (satyric).

¹³⁰ See chapter 3.

¹³¹ It is tangential to our discussion whether Horace is talking about Greek satyr plays or contemporary Roman ones, if Roman satyr plays even existed. But, as Wiseman 1988, 1-13, argues, satyrs had a long history in Roman and Etruscan art and ritual, and there is ample evidence for Roman satyr plays in Horace's day. The simple fact that Horace devotes thirty lines to satyr play in his handbook for the Pisones on writing poetry is evidence enough.

¹³² There is precious little evidence about what Horace more precisely may be reacting to, since, of course, not only do no satyr plays from this period survive, but it is even debated whether Horace is discussing satyr plays of his own day with these verses. However, Wiseman 1988, notes a tradition in Rome of satyrs mocking members of the audience, and Horace may indeed have personal mockery in mind. Wiseman suggests as well that a letter from Cicero to Quintus may be evidence for the nature of contemporary satyr plays. Quintus, while in Caesar's camp in Gaul, had produced an adaptation of Sophocles' satyr play *Syndeipnoi*; Cicero writes that he does not approve, even if it was put on festively (*QF* 11.16.3). *Syndeipnoi* concerned the snubbing of Achilles by the other Greeks at Tenedos, and Wiseman suspects that the adaptation was concerned with mocking those who have mistreated or snubbed Caesar. That much of the rest of Cicero's letter cautions against offending others may support this, and there is some similarity, too, to the *Agen*, which was probably produced in Alexander's camp.

silvis deducti caveant, me iudice, Fauni,
ne velut innati triviis ac paene forenses.
aut nimium teneris iuvenentur versibus umquam
aut inmunda crepent ignominiosaque dicta.
offenduntur enim, quibus est equus et pater et res,
nec, siquid fricti ciceris probat et nucis emptor,
aequis accipiunt animis donantve corona.

In my opinion, let the Fauni, drawn from the woods, beware that they not be, as it were, born at the crossroads or the marketplace, or that they ever cavort like youth with too soft verses or clamor dirty and ignoble words. For those who have horses, a father, and property are offended, nor do they receive with a level mind or gift with the crown what the buyer of chickpeas and roasted nuts approves.¹³³

Such satyrs and such a kind of satyr play are too close to the genre of comedy for Horace,¹³⁴ who argues for a firm differentiation among satyr play, comedy, and tragedy, with satyr play occupying a kind of stylistic mid-point between the latter two. Like Horace, Eustathius asserts that satyr play is stylistically halfway between comedy and tragedy.¹³⁵ Vitruvius says that a rustic setting befits satyr play, whereas the house is the right setting for comedy and the palace for tragedy.¹³⁶

Such formulations of the triadic model differentiate the genres by insisting on what is stylistically appropriate for each, rather than by formally defining them; and, as I have argued, a series of important satyr plays deviates from these prescriptions. A different theory of generic classification, which tracks and defines the genre of comedy according to the use of personal mockery, makes that model collapse and instead results in the proposition that satyr play is a subset of comedy, rather than a third genre or a subset of tragedy. Indeed, it would also help to explain an etymology of the Roman *satura* that was not only quite popular in Honestus' day, but

¹³³ *Ars Poetica* 244-250.

¹³⁴ See Brink 1971, 293 (on lines 248-50): "I conclude that, although the *via media* between tragedy and comedy was taken seriously by H., it was the proximity of comedy from which he wanted to remove the New Satyric drama."

¹³⁵ Eustathius *Comm. Od.* vol. 2 p. 184 Stallbaum.

¹³⁶ Vitruvius 5.6.9.

even persisted through the Renaissance: the derivation of *satira* from *σάτυροι*.¹³⁷ The similarity between the words may have suggested the etymology in the first place, as well as the tradition of an early kind of Roman drama called the *satira*,¹³⁸ but the tendency of satire to criticize and mock the faults of wrongdoers certainly helped cement it. That penchant connects satire to Old Comedy, as we have seen, as well as to satyr play. In describing the origins of Roman satire, Diomedes first explains that it is like Old Comedy in rebuking men for their faults and then tells us that Roman satire got its name because, like the satyrs, it discusses laughable and shameful matters.

"Satura" dicitur carmen apud Romanos nunc quidem maledicum et ad carpenda hominum vitia archaeae comoediae caractere compositum, quale scripserunt Lucilius et Horatius et Persius ... satura autem dicta sive a satyris, quod similiter in hoc carmine ridiculae res pudendaeque dicuntur, velut quae a satyris proferuntur et fiunt ...

"Satire" is said to be a song among the Romans that speaks ill and is composed in order to carp at the faults of men in the manner of Old Comedy, such as Lucilius, Horace and Persius wrote ... and satire is named either from the satyr play,¹³⁹ because likewise in this song laughable and shameful matters are said, just as those things which are put forth and done by satyrs ...¹⁴⁰

This explanation is probably Varronian,¹⁴¹ and it stops just short of identifying satyr play as a subclass of comedy.

The early fourth century grammarian Evanthius draws a closer connection. Relying on a theory of comedy that tracks the genre and identifies its subsets based on the criterion of personal

¹³⁷ van Rooy 1965, 124-139, puts the origins of this etymology in the first century BC, though he argues that it was only in the fourth century AD that the Roman satire began regularly to be spelled *satyra*. This change in orthography may have begun as early as the second century AD, however. Apuleius refers to *satyrae* that he has written in *Florida* 9.27-8 and that Xenocrates has written in 20.5, though van Rooy 1965, 157, is quick to discount these as changes by a fourth century copyist.

¹³⁸ See chapter 4.

¹³⁹ *Satyri* is the term for a satyr play as well as the plural of satyr.

¹⁴⁰ p. 485 Keil.

¹⁴¹ See §4.3.

mockery, he explains that, after laws were passed that forbade Old Comedy, a new form of drama arose:

Ne quisquam in alterum carmen infame proponeret, lege lata siluere. Et hinc deinde aliud genus fabulae, id est satyra, sumpsit exordium, quae a satyris, quos in iocis semper ac petulantiis deos scimus esse, vocitata est, etsi alii aliunde nomen prave putant habere. Haec satyra igitur eiusmodi fuit, ut in ea quamvis duro et velut agresti ioco de vitiis civium, tamen sine ullo proprii nominis titulo, carmen esset. Quod idem genus comoediae multis offuit poetis, cum in suspicionem potentibus civium venissent, illorum facta descripsisse in peius ac deformasse genus stilo carminis. Quod primus Lucilius novo conscripsit modo, ut poesis inde fecisset, id est unius carminis plurimos libros ... Coacti omittere satyram, aliud genus carminis τὴν νέαν κωμῳδίαν, hoc est, novam comoediam, repperere poetae.

When a law was passed that nobody put forth a defaming song against another, they [sc. the poets of Old Comedy] fell silent. From this point, then, another class of play, that is the *satyra*, took its beginning. It was named from the satyrs, whom we know to be gods always in wantonness and laughter, although others wrongly think that it has its name from another source. This *satyra*, then, was of such a kind that in it there was a song with harsh and, as it were, rustic jesting about the faults of the citizens, but with no designation of a proper name. This same kind of comedy caused trouble for many poets, because they came under the suspicion among those of the citizens who were powerful that they had described their deeds for the worse and had spoiled the genre with the style of their song. Lucilius first composed this in a new mode, so that from there he created a composition, that is, many books of a single poem ... After they were compelled to give up *satyra*, the poets devised another kind of song, New Comedy.¹⁴²

We have already discussed the provenance of some of Evanthius' information.¹⁴³ Leo suggested that he was reproducing an earlier treatise on drama mixed with material from Varro and Horace;¹⁴⁴ van Rooy sees his statements as a confused mishmash and calls this the climax of the confusion in the literary theory of Roman satire.¹⁴⁵ And there is much confusion here. Satyr play did not end where New Comedy began and, as we have seen, some satyr plays did mock by name. Evanthius was clearly unacquainted with post-classical satyr play. His main interest was probably Roman Comedy, as we know he wrote a commentary on Terence.

¹⁴² *De fabula* 2.5-6. With this use of the word *poesis*, Evanthius reveals that, like Horace and Varro, at least some of his sources are Hellenistic.

¹⁴³ See §4.3.3.

¹⁴⁴ Leo 1889, 67-84.

¹⁴⁵ van Rooy 1965, 186-198.

But in giving the history of comedy, the data he is using and his analytical mode are clear and very much in accordance with the trend I have identified: after the fifth century, satyr play became closely connected to, and adapted important features from, comedy. This is so much the case that Evanthius, or rather his source, theorized that it was a genetic descendant of Old Comedy. With rough and harsh jokes, it attacked people's faults. Evanthius thought that this was the central reason for its development; he even supposed that this is the source from which Lucilius derived his own art.

In Evanthius, satyr play has become the missing link between comedy and Lucilian satire: while Horace in *Sermones* 1.4 says that Lucilius depended on Old Comedy, Evanthius deemed satyr play such an important intermediate step that he argues that Lucilius depends on satyr play, which in turn depends on Old Comedy, for his attacks on men's faults. And, most significantly for our purposes, for Evanthius, who defines comedy and follows its history based on personal mockery, satyr play has become a *genus comoediae*. Owing to this same principle, Roman satire is for Evanthius a category of comedy, too, as it is in other late scholarship. John Lydus refers to Roman satire as ἡ σατυρική κωμῳδία!¹⁴⁶

Evanthius' method entails conflating satyr play with Middle Comedy. He not only places it between Old and New Comedy, but also describes satyr play in a manner elsewhere reserved for Middle Comedy. In a history of comedy that frequently appears in the treatises, the distinction between Old and Middle Comedy is typically that the former mocked openly, whereas new laws attenuated the mockery in the latter, restricting it to mocking obliquely or by innuendo rather than by name. The scholia to Dionysius Thrax describe it thus:

¹⁴⁶ Ioannes Lydus *De magistr.* 1.41; cf. Isidore *Orig.* 7.7.7.

οὐ μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον οἱ ἄρχοντες Ἀθήνησιν ἤρξαντο κωλύειν τοὺς κωμικοὺς τοῦ φανεροῦς οὕτω καὶ ὀνομαστικῶς ἐλέγχειν τοὺς ἀδικοῦντας· αὐτοὶ γὰρ θέλοντες ἀδικεῖν καὶ μὴ ἐλέγχεσθαι, τούτου χάριν ἐπετίμων αὐτοῖς· ὅθεν ὥσπερ αἰνιγματωδῶς καὶ οὐ φανεροῦς ἠλέγχοντο ὑπὸ τῶν κωμικῶν ... καὶ ἡ μὲν καλεῖται παλαιά, ἡ ἐξ ἀρχῆς φανεροῦς ἐλέγχουσα, ἡ δὲ μέση, ἡ αἰνιγματωδῶς ...

After a short time, those in power in Athens started to prevent the comic poets from rebuking wrongdoers openly and by name; for they wanted to do wrong and not be rebuked, and on this account they censured them. From then on, they began to be rebuked by the comic poets enigmatically, as it were, and not openly ... The former is called "old," the one which from the start rebuked openly, and the latter is called "middle," the one which rebukes enigmatically ...¹⁴⁷

Later the comic poets were prevented from doing even this, and New Comedy arose.¹⁴⁸

Evanthius preserves the distinction between Old Comedy and its successor by explaining that, while it attacked faults, it did so *sine ullo proprii nominis titulo*. The development in Evanthius is the same as that found in the treatises—mockery by name followed by oblique or enigmatic mockery—but the labeling is different. The scholia to Dionysius Thrax and the other treatises call dramas of the second stage Middle Comedy, but Evanthius calls them *satyra*.

Why an ancient literary critic would have made such a connection ought to be clear from our discussion above. In the 330s BC, a certain Timocles, probably himself a poet of Middle Comedy, began or was involved in a new literary movement in which the personal mockery of contemporaries was incorporated into satyr play. Even after Middle Comedy gave way to New, satyr play continued to include personal mockery, sometimes in a manner reminiscent of Middle Comedy, as in the mockery of philosophers in the *Menedemus* or Sositheus' play that attacked Cleanthes. The use of personal mockery, especially for supposedly corrective purposes, is, as we have seen, a feature of comedy that is either praised or attacked by critics.¹⁴⁹ Whether or not this feature of satyr play was still current by Horace's day, Horace thought it important enough, at

¹⁴⁷ Koster XVIIIa.

¹⁴⁸ A similar history of comedy appears in Koster IV, XIa, XIc, and XXIa. On such the ideology and politics attached to such histories, see chapter 5.

¹⁴⁹ See especially chapters 5 and 7.

least on a theoretical level, that he needed to argue against the use of personal mockery to preserve a firm differentiation between the genres. Satyr play may appear in this history of comedy in the place of Middle Comedy because of that longevity (as we have seen, it persisted at least through much of the third century BC), but it is also surely because of its connections to Roman satire and Old Comedy.

This is precisely why Honestus can conflate comedy and satyr play. When Honestus was writing under Tiberius, Old Comedy had long ceased to be written and performed, but satyr play was: in dramatic competitions in Greece, new satyr plays were performed until the second century AD.¹⁵⁰ Though we have little sense of their nature, and even of whether they had given up reproaching faults, satyr play was a living art form with a tradition of having picked up where Old Comedy had left off: in a theory of comedy that relies on criticizing and mocking faults to describe the nature and history of the genre, satyr drama becomes not only Old Comedy's descendant but itself a class of comedy.

§6.9. Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that, like Roman satire, satyr play was drawn into the orbit of Old Comedy because of its personal abuse. The theories that discounted the importance of personal abuse for comedy were not dominant; rather than construct comedy as a genre that, in its origin and early phases, could or could not (and perhaps should not) be centered around personal abuse, the opposite happened. Personal abuse became the essential feature for Old Comedy—a necessary and sufficient feature that marked other genres that had it as descendants or subcategories of Old Comedy. This is why satyr drama could be reconfigured as a subgenre of

¹⁵⁰ Seaford 1984, 25. See, too, Slater 1993.

Old Comedy; and this is why Honestus could suppose that satyr play, too, had an admonishing muse.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Part of the impetus for Honestus, too, may have been the writers who helped shape this admonishing muse in satyr drama: Lycophron and Sositeus were Alexandrian poets, and most of Honestus' epigrams are, after all, preserved in a garland meant to imitate the *Garland of Meleager*.

Chapter 7

Fearsome Charms: Aesthetic and Ethical Evaluations of Old Comedy

§7.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that there was a long-running polemic about the role of personal abuse in comedy's development. I suggested that some early accounts—notably Aristotle's and Eratosthenes'—held that personal abuse of third parties, such as politicians, was not an original or essential feature of comedy and that there was a body of criticism that connected the unrestrained abuse of comedy to an irresponsible *demos* run amuck. I set alongside this a counter-narrative about the development of comedy that proposed not only that Old Comedy mainly abused wrongdoers but also that comedy has its origins in such attacks. I argued that personal abuse became such an important generic criterion that, after satyr drama incorporated such abuse in the fourth and third centuries BC, it began to be generically reclassified: Horace expresses concern about satyr drama becoming too much like comedy, and by the fourth century AD Evanthius had incorporated satyr play into the history of comedy as a successor to Old Comedy.

In this penultimate chapter, I will turn from the development of comedy and the role of personal abuse in defining other genres to consider evaluations of Old Comedy itself. Given that, as I have shown, the history of comedy and the bounds of the genre were largely defined by controversies about the nature of its personal abuse, it is no surprise that evaluations of Old Comedy's humor emphasize its social and ethical implications rather than its aesthetic qualities.

While I begin by examining the judgments that most closely approximate aesthetic evaluations, we will see that most sources veer from aesthetic into social and ethical concerns, with Old Comedy's personal abuse and its didactic pretensions being of primary interest.

On this point, an epigram about the New Comic poet Machon is instructive:

τῷ κωμωδογράφῳ, κούφη κόνι, τὸν φιλάγωνα
κισσὸν ὑπὲρ τύμβου ζῶντα Μάχωνι φέροις.
οὐ γὰρ ἔχεις κύφωνα παλίμπλυτον, ἀλλὰ τι τέχνης
ἄξιον ἀρχαίης λείψανον ἠμφίεσας.
τοῦτο δ' ὁ πρέσβυς ἐρεῖ· "Κέκροπος πόλι, καὶ παρὰ Νεῖλω
ἔστιν ὄτ' ἐν Μούσαις δριμὺ πέφυκε θύμον."

Light earth, may you bear living ivy that loves the contest over the tomb of the comic poet Machon. For you have no twice-washed garment, but you clothe a worthy remnant of the ancient art. The elder will say this: City of Cecrops, sometimes on the Nile, too, bitter thyme grows among the Muses.¹

Dioscorides praises Machon because his plays are worthy of Old Comedy and likens his poetry to thyme, a comparison that typically indicates elegance.² But the thyme of Machon's comedy is bitter (δριμύ): it is worthy of Old Comedy because it is not only elegant but also biting. This combination of the aesthetically pleasing with the biting appears elsewhere, and I will show that in certain anonymous treatises and in other sources, such as epigrams like Dioscorides', there is a pattern of judgment about Old Comedy. These judgments intertwine the aesthetic with the didactic and use the recurrent formulation that Old Comedy is best when it mixes a serious (and usually abusive) didactic element, which Dioscorides calls δριμύ, with appropriate grace or charm.

¹ A.P. 7.708 (= 24 G.-P.).

² On this point and on this epigram, in addition to Gow and Page's commentary, see Gow 1965, 4-5. See, too, Quadlbauer 1960, 45, 51. Gow 1965, 7, puts Machon's *floruit* in the middle of the third century. It is noteworthy that Machon—who lived in Alexandria and produced his plays there (Athenaeus 14.664a)—seems to be experimenting with incorporating the Old Comic mode into New Comedy only a little after Lycophron and Sositeus had incorporated it into satyr play (chapter 6). Indeed, Machon is implicitly compared to those poets, who were both members of the tragic Pleiad: Athenaeus says of Machon ἦν δ' ἀγαθὸς ποιητῆς εἴ τις ἄλλος τῶν μετὰ τοὺς ἐπτὰ.

This formulation is, I suggest, related to what Demetrius calls the Cynic mode³ and what is sometimes referred to as τὸ σπουδογέλοιοιον,⁴ the seriocomic. Via this connection, Old Comedy is imagined, at least by the Second Sophistic, as prefiguring Cynicism and engaging in the same project as Cynicism. As we will see, by that time the seriocomic mode, and the didactic or even philosophical aims of Old Comedy, had to be considered in any serious critique of it. On this basis, Dio Chrysostom compares Old Comedy to Cynicism and finds the former wanting; Aelius Aristides criticizes Old Comedy as ineffective in its supposed aims, but still admits that such aims may exist; and even Plutarch's critiques, which relentlessly attack the propriety of Old Comedy, must take into account its corrective pretensions and seriocomic manner. As we will see in the final chapter, this formulation proves so influential that, even in the twelfth century, John Tzetzes evaluates Old Comedy on precisely these terms.

§7.2. Aesthetic Evaluations of Old Comedy's Humor

While, as I have suggested, the questions of whether Old Comedy's personal abuse is salutary and whether it is original and central to comedy were the main points of debate in ancient discussions of Old Comedy's humor, there was also some more purely aesthetic criticism of Aristophanes and Old Comedy. I will begin with Aristotle, whose evaluative mode allows for a more purely aesthetic reading. Next, I will turn to other sources that seem to evaluate comedy on aesthetic grounds: Plutarch; the Atticists who use Aristophanes; the scholia and the hypotheses; and an anonymous treatise on comedy. However, as we will see, few of them refrain from turning to social or ethical criticism.

³ That is, the Κυνικός τρόπος (*De eloc.* 170); see below.

⁴ Used first in Strabo 16.2.29 of Menippus of Gadara, a Cynic satirist. See below.

It is generally accepted that Aristotle on the whole preferred the *ὑπόνοια* of the New Comedy to the abusive language of the Old. As we saw in chapter 2, his system allows for certain types of personal abuse, but that abuse must be ancillary: corrective or civically engaged personal abuse is neither an original nor an essential feature in his conception of comedy. But his esteem for Aristophanes, at least, is certain; the fact that he mentions Aristophanes alongside Homer and Sophocles is evidence enough,⁵ and his lost discussion in the second book of the *Poetics* about the laughable—the types of men, words, and deeds that are appropriate to the comic⁶—would presumably have reflected this high valuation, even if he rejected the centrality of personal abuse to Aristophanic comedy. That Aristotle had room for an aesthetic evaluation is suggested elsewhere when he describes the following kind of jest:

καὶ τὰ εὖ ἠνιγμένα διὰ τὸ αὐτὸ ἡδέα· μάθησις γάρ ἐστι καὶ μεταφορά, καὶ (ὃ λέγει Θεόδωρος) τὸ καινὰ λέγειν. γίγνεται δὲ ὅταν παράδοξον ᾖ, καὶ μὴ, ὡς ἐκεῖνος λέγει, πρὸς τὴν ἔμπροσθεν δόξαν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς γελοίοις τὰ παραπεποιημένα (ὅπερ δύναται καὶ τὰ παρὰ γράμμα σκώμματα· ἐξαπατᾷ γάρ), καὶ ἐν τοῖς μέτροις· οὐ γὰρ ὥσπερ ὁ ἀκούων ὑπέλαβεν· "ἔστειχε δ' ἔχων ὑπὸ ποσσὶ χίμεθλα."

Good riddles are enjoyable for the same reason: for a metaphor is understanding, as is novel speech (as Theodorus says). It comes about whenever there is something unexpected, and it is not, as that man says, in accordance with expectation, but like plays on words in jests (jokes with letters, too, can do this: for they deceive) and in verses. For it is not as the listener expects: "And he marched on, having under foot his—frozen feet!"⁷

Aristotle explains that the humor arises here because the listener expects the quotation to end with "sandals," and that expectation is thwarted. This observation concerns play with words and letters in particular, but in it Morreall sees the traces of what is today termed "incongruity

⁵ *Poet.* 1448a24-8. On Aristotle's view of Aristophanes, see Cooper 1922, 18-41; Janko 1984, 66-9, 204-6; Watson 2012, 249.

⁶ Per the division of the laughable and the allusion to the *Poetics* in *Rhet.* 1.11.1371b36-72a2. Cf. Koster XV, 13-30 (*Tractatus Coislinianus*).

⁷ *Rhet.* 3.11.1412a24-31. On this passage and its difficulties, see Cope 1877 *ad loc.* and Janko 1984, 182-3.

theory,"⁸ that is, a theory of humor according to which laughter results from thwarted expectation and is the "perception of the incongruous."⁹ This contrasts with the theory of humor found in Plato and elsewhere in Aristotle,¹⁰ the so-called "superiority theory," according to which laughter arises from a sense of superiority over another person,¹¹ and with this passage and with his division of the laughable into not just people but also words and things Aristotle indicates an awareness that laughter can arise from sources other than reproach and dominance over others.¹² Such a theory regards laughter as the result of a cognitive shift in the subject and does not need a comparison with another person to arise; in this regard, it may lack an ethical component and might best suit a more aesthetic appreciation of comedy.¹³

However, superiority and incongruity are not mutually exclusive. In a different context, Aristotle describes the following scenario:

εἴ τις λούσασθαι φαίη μάτην ὅτι οὐκ ἐξέλιπεν ὁ ἥλιος, γελοῖος ἂν εἶη· οὐ γὰρ ἦν τοῦτο ἐκείνου ἔνεκα.

If someone should say that he washed in vain because the sun was not eclipsed, he would be laughable; for the former was not for the sake of the latter.¹⁴

There is here an incongruity between a proposed cause and effect, but it is not merely the proposition that is laughable—the man who adduces it is γελοῖος because the proposition seems

⁸ Morreall 1989, 248 (where the passage is wrongly cited).

⁹ Described thus by Lowell 1890, 132. On this theory, first formulated by Francis Hutcheson in 1750 and later elaborated by Kant, Schopenhauer, and other adherents up to the present, see Morreall 1989, 248-9.

¹⁰ As we saw in chapter 2, for Aristotle the laughable, τὸ γελοῖον, in comedy at least is connected to a mistake or source of shame (ἀμάρτημά τι καὶ αἴσχος). We might add that shame (αἴσχος) is characteristic of the shameful man (ὁ αἰσχροῦς), who can be opposed to the good man (ὁ καλός): these qualities, too, are not only aesthetic but ethical. On Aristotle and superiority theory, see Fortenbaugh 1975, 20-1, with clarification and revision on pp. 120-6; cf. Halliwell 1986, 270 n. 26.

¹¹ Hobbes describes this principle thus in his *The Treatise on Human Nature*: "Laughter is nothing else but a sudden Glory arising from a sudden conception of some Eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the Infirmary of others." de Sousa 1987, 226-9, calls such laughter *phthonic*, per Plato's discussion in the *Philebus*.

¹² Fortenbaugh 1975, 120-6. Fortenbaugh also notes that Aristotle was aware of strictly physiological sources of laughter (*PA* 673a2-12).

¹³ Cf. Morreall 2009, 70-5, for a discussion on the aesthetics of humor.

¹⁴ *Phys.* 2.6.197b27-29.

absurd to his listeners. Similarly, Fortenbaugh offers the following example from *Rhet.* 3.11.1412b13, where Aristotle gives an example of homonymy: Ἀνάσχετος οὐκ ἀνασχετός ("Mr. Borne can't be borne.").¹⁵ In this case, wordplay is combined with a kind of mockery so that the humor arises from both a clever combination of words and a sense of superiority over the target. Note, too, that on the comic stage jests do not occur in isolation. One character uttered, and another character was mocked in, the first joke that I cited (ἔστειχε δ' ἔχων ὑπὸ ποσσὶ χίμεθλα). Depending on the context, the speaker or the referent may be an object of laughter, rather than only his incongruous phrase, just as the person who suggests a causal connection between washing and a solar eclipse was laughable. Even in such puns, laughter is directed against a human target: in drama, at least, someone, and not only something, is γελοῖος. This is not at all surprising, given our discussion in chapter 2. As we saw, for Aristotle, comedy treats base characters who engage in base actions, and he defines laughter—τὸ γελοῖον—as an error or source of shame on the part of a character.¹⁶ Such errors are intimately connected to their own baseness.¹⁷ Aristotle describes comic characters in such a way that there is necessarily an ethical relationship between the spectator and the characters, and the spectator is superior.

But, as we also saw in chapter 2, Aristotle limits the number of parties that should be involved in comedy. I argued there that one feature of the evolution of comic abuse for Aristotle was that it developed from being in a performance that involves three parties (the poet who abuses, a poet who is abused, and the spectator) to one that involves only two (the self-contained comedy and the spectator). While comedy for Aristotle may involve laughing at and feeling superiority over a target, that target is a character in the play (despite the ancillary forms of personal abuse that, I argued, are permissible in Aristotle's system). Comic laughter for Aristotle

¹⁵ Fortenbaugh 1975, 126.

¹⁶ *Poet.* 5.1449a35: τὸ γὰρ γελοῖόν ἐστιν ἀμάρτημά τι καὶ αἴσχος ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν.

¹⁷ See n. 10 above.

may involve a sense of ethical superiority, but his system is careful to direct it against the characters in the comedy rather than one's fellows by limiting the kinds of abuse comedy can admit.

Plutarch treats devices similar to those described by Aristotle. In his *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander* he, too, considers the humor derived from word-play, citing antithesis, homoeoteleuton, and paronymy as categories of comic speech.¹⁸ He criticizes Aristophanes for using such devices in a haphazard or desultory way, for using vulgar language, and for having characters speak in an unbecoming fashion that does not befit their social station or profession. Thus he is concerned, as he is elsewhere when discussing comedy,¹⁹ with appropriateness of discourse.

But this notion of linguistic propriety also involves ethical appropriateness, and Plutarch's aesthetic of the comic proves to be owed primarily not to Aristotle but to Plato.²⁰ He asserts that Menander's language has wit without malice (αἱ Μενάνδρου κωμωδίαι ἀφθόνων ἀλῶν καὶ ἰλαρῶν μετέχουσιν), but that the wit of Aristophanes is harsh and biting (οἱ δ' Ἀριστοφάνους ἄλεξ πικροὶ καὶ τραχεῖς ὄντες ἐλκωτικὴν δριμύτητα καὶ δηκτικὴν ἔχουσι). As we have already seen in Machon's epigram, the quality of bitterness is used elsewhere of Old Comedy's personal abuse, as is the idea that comedy bites those whom it targets. That Plutarch's evaluation of the language of Old Comedy is also an evaluation of its ethical and social qualities becomes quite clear at the end of the *Comparison*, when he turns from evaluating poetry to evaluating those who enjoy it:

¹⁸ This work survives in epitome in *Mor.* 853A-54d. On this work, and the influence of Aristotle and the peripatetic school on it, see Plebe 1952, 99-112. But see especially Hunter 2000 (with Hunter 2009, 14, 89), who emphasizes the influence of Plato.

¹⁹ The other passages in which Plutarch evaluates comedy are discussed at the end of this chapter.

²⁰ Thus Plebe 1952, 106, writes, "quindi egli combatte il lessico di Aristofane non tanto perché linguisticamente impuro, quanto perché moralisticamente sconveniente."

οὐδενὶ γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔοικε μετρίῳ τὴν ποίησιν γεγραφέναι, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν αἰσχρὰ καὶ ἀσελγῆ τοῖς ἀκολάστοις, τὰ βλάσφημα δὲ καὶ πικρὰ τοῖς βασκάνοις καὶ κακοήθεσιν.

For the man (sc. Aristophanes) seems to have written his poetry for no moderate person, but shameful and licentious things for the intemperate, and obscene and bitter things for the envious and ill-natured.²¹

Given Plutarch's account of democratic Megara, one claimant for the birthplace of comedy, such criticisms ought to come as no surprise: as we saw in chapter 5, he associates abusive comedy with the licentiousness of the lower classes and their maltreatment of the elite.²² We will return to Plutarch's views on comedy below.

Plutarch veers from the aesthetic to the social and ethical. Elsewhere, too, a more aesthetic appreciation of Old Comedy is rarer and more abbreviated than are approaches that connect its aesthetic qualities with ethical concerns. A well-known epigram attributed to Plato is among that rare group:

αἱ Χάριτες, τέμενός τι λαβεῖν ὅπερ οὐχὶ πεσεῖται
ζητοῦσαι, ψυχὴν εὖρον Ἀριστοφάνους.

The Graces, seeking to gain a sanctuary that would never fall,
Found the soul of Aristophanes.²³

This epigram does not appear in the Anthology and is perhaps to be connected to a revisionist attempt by late pro-Athenian sources to downplay Plato's stylistic connection to the Syracusan Sophron by connecting him instead to his countryman, Aristophanes.²⁴ Among the places where the epigram is cited is the *Life* discussed in §5.6, which mentions that Plato sent Aristophanes'

²¹ *Mor.* 854d.

²² See especially §5.3.

²³ XIV Page.

²⁴ Riginos 1976, 176-8.

Clouds to the tyrant Dionysius.²⁵ Riginos is surely correct to note the significance of Plato sending Athenian poetry to the Syracusan monarch.²⁶ The inspiration for this may have arisen from the Atticists of the 2nd century, who chose Aristophanes as a representative of good Attic: Moeris, Pollux, and especially Phrynichus. The latter sets Aristophanes alongside Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides as the ἄριστον παράδειγμα of pure and clear Attic language in the poets²⁷ and seizes every opportunity to rail against Menander's diction.²⁸ Even if these critics had ulterior motives for praising Aristophanes, their evaluations emphasize the beauty, elegance, and immortality of his poetry rather than its effect on audiences or society.

More specific observations are found in the scholia and hypotheses. The former often explain jokes by describing words or actions as χαριέντως, κωμικῶς, or γελοίου χάριν. The kind of jokes described above by Aristotle that rely on a subversion of expectation, or, as the scholia sometimes call them, are παρ' ὑπόνοιαν, are noted especially often. For instance, a scholium to the *Wealth* explains:

ἀντι τοῦ εἰπεῖν "ἠγοῦμαι σε εὐνούστατον καὶ φρονιμώτατον," τὸ παρ' ὑπόνοιαν ἐπήγαγε κωμικῶς παίζων.

Instead of saying "I think you're the most well-disposed and wise," he, having a joke in the manner of comedy, added something contrary to expectation.²⁹

²⁵ It is found in *Olymp.* 2.71-2; three *Vitae* of Aristophanes (Koster XXIXa; XXIIb; XXXIII 2); and in *Proleg. to Plato* 73.4 Westerink

²⁶ Riginos 1976, 176-8.

²⁷ *Praep. Soph.* excerpted in Phot. *Bibl.* 158.101b4. On the Atticists' use of the comic poets, see Plebe 1952, 90, 94, and 98; de Falco 1958, 191-2.

²⁸ See especially *Eclog.* s.v. σύσημον, a rather long criticism of those who extol Menander, and s.v. καταφαγᾶς, where he apostrophizes the poet and criticizes him for using less pure Attic than Aristophanes: πόθεν, Μένανδρε, συσσύρας τὸν τοσοῦτον τῶν ὀνομάτων συρφετὸν αἰσχύνεις τὴν πάτριον φωνήν; τίς γὰρ δὴ τῶν πρὸ σοῦ τῷ καταφαγᾶς κέχρηται; ὁ μὲν γὰρ Ἀριστοφάνης οὕτω φησὶν ...

²⁹ *ad Plut.* 27-8, where Chremylus tells his servant ἀλλ' οὐ σε κρύψω· τῶν ἐμῶν γὰρ οἰκετῶν / πιστότατον ἠγοῦμαι σε καὶ κλεπτίστατον.

As for the hypotheses, what is probably the oldest stratum tend to give a general aesthetic judgment after recounting the play's plot.³⁰ Of these, the following offer some kind of aesthetic judgment, usually at or towards the end:³¹

Acharnians hyp. 1: τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα τῶν εὖ σφόδρα πεποιημένων. ("The drama is among those composed especially well.")

Clouds hyp. 3: τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα τῶν πάνυ δυνατῶς πεποιημένων. ("The drama is among those composed quite powerfully.")

Frogs hyp. 1: τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα τῶν εὖ πάνυ καὶ φιλολόγως πεποιημένων. ("The drama is among those composed quite well and eloquently.")

Knights hyp. 1: τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα τῶν ἄγαν καλῶς πεποιημένων. ("The drama is among those composed particularly finely.")

Wasps hyp. 1: πεποιήται δ' αὐτῷ χαριέντως. ("It has been composed gracefully by him.")

Peace hyp. 3: τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα τῶν ἄγαν ἐπιτετευγμένων.³² ("The drama is among those that are particularly refined")

But, like the scholia, these hypotheses frequently adduce a practical aim for the play, and they, too, present evaluations beyond the aesthetic. *Peace* hyp. 3 asserts that the point (τὸ κεφάλαιον) of the comedy is to recommend peace among the Athenians, the Spartans, and the rest of Greece;³³ *Acharnians* hyp. 1 immediately follows the aesthetic judgment cited above with the interpretation that the drama in every way calls for peace (τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα τῶν εὖ σφόδρα

³⁰ These are the so-called "descriptive hypotheses," which have been grouped together due to certain commonalities in style and content and are dated to the first or second century AD. On these see Körte 1904, 481-494; Radermacher 1921, 74-85; van Rossum-Steenbeek 1998, 37-9; and most recently Bakola 2010, 193-8. Radermacher, who dates them some time after Didymus but does not ascribe them to Symmachus, identifies these as *Acharnians* hyp. 1; *Clouds* hyp. 3; *Frogs* hyp. 1; *Knights* hyp. 1; *Lysistrata* hyp. 1; perhaps *Wealth* hyp. 3 + 4; and perhaps *Peace* hyp. 3, which, he suspects, belonged to this set but has since undergone modification. Körte ascribes these to Symmachus and identifies the same set with the additions of *Birds* hyp. 3, *Wasps* hyp. 1, and *Wealth* hyp. 2 instead of hyp. 3 + 4; he notes, too, that the hypothesis to the *Dionysalexandros* is of the same kind.

³¹ So Körte 1904, 497.

³² Unlike the others, this judgment does not come at the end, and, as Radermacher 1921, 78, notes, this hypothesis has other important deviations from the rest in form and style.

³³ See Bakola 2010, 194-6 on this hypothesis especially. It also asserts that not only the *Acharnians* but the *Knights* as well were written for the purpose of peace.

πεποιημένων, καὶ ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου τὴν εἰρήνην προκαλούμενον); *Wasps* hyp. 1 explains that the play mocks the Athenians for being litigious and chastens (σωφρονίζει) the people; and *Birds* hyp. 3 suggests that the σκοπός³⁴ of the drama is to criticize Athenian litigiousness. Quite revealing here is the well-known judgment at the end of the hypothesis to the *Dionysalexandros*,³⁵ which, as Bakola observes, mixes an aesthetic judgment with a practical aim: κωμωδεῖται δ' τῷ δράματι Περικλῆς μάλα πιθανῶς δι' ἐμφάσεως ὡς ἐπαγηχῶς τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις τὸν πόλεμον.³⁶ These commentators may praise a play as composed ἄγαν καλῶς, but connect such aesthetic evaluations, sometimes quite tendentiously, to a didactic aim, as is the case of the *Birds*.³⁷

One anonymous treatise on comedy is quite exceptional in giving detailed and essentially aesthetic evaluations of Old Comedy. This is Koster III, which, as we saw, is probably Alexandrian and closely connected to the Aristotelian and Eratosthenic theories.³⁸ As we saw in chapter 3, the treatise is primarily a chronological list that gives information about the life and art of the important poets of Old, Middle, and New Comedy. Unlike the other evaluations, the author has no concern for ethical or didactic aims; his primary interest is in tracing lines of influence among the comic poets rather than their influence on spectators or society. He explains, for instance, that Cratinus was ποιητικώτατος and composed in Aeschylus' manner; that Crates acted for and then imitated Cratinus, first introduced drunks on stage, and was γελοῖος and ἰλαρός; and that Pherecrates, in turn, acted for and then imitated Crates and was well known for

³⁴ On this word, see van Rossum-Steenbeek 1998, 33-4.

³⁵ *P. Oxy.* 663, edited by K.-A. in *PCG* 4, pp. 140-1 and most recently in Bakola 2010, 322-3.

³⁶ Bakola 2010, 196-8.

³⁷ I have focused here on the general aesthetic evaluations that fall at the end of these hypotheses, but more specific aesthetic evaluations are scattered throughout the scholia. Their phrasing is quite comparable to those found in the scholia: *Acharnians* hyp. 1 describes Dicaeopolis' carping on Pericles as οὐκ ἀχαρίτως; *Clouds* hyp. 3 says Socrates talk about physics οὐκ ἀπιθάνως; *Knights* hyp.1 says that the sausage seller prevails over Cleon μάλα γελοίως; *Lysistrata* hyp. 1 says the women attempt to desert μάλα γελοίως; and *Frogs* hyp. 1 describes the torture of Dionysus and Xanthias as οὐκ ἀγελοίως and the contest between poets as οὐκ ἀπιθάνως.

³⁸ See §3.6, where this work is discussed at length.

introducing novelties. Significantly, the author says that Pherecrates imitated Crates and abstained from abuse (τοῦ μὲν λοιδορεῖν ἀπέστη). No mention is made of the effects of abuse or why it is absent in Pherecrates' dramas. That the author is thinking in such terms becomes even clearer from his evaluation of Eupolis: the author explains that he was vigorous in his language, imitated Cratinus, and displayed much abusiveness and clumsiness. Abuse is viewed as an artistic quality like clumsiness that is to be compared or contrasted with that of his predecessors and successors; it is not the defining feature of a poet's work, much less comedy on the whole.

However, this treatise is singular for acknowledging Old Comedy's abuse but still engaging in a generally aesthetic evaluation. The other sources for the aesthetic evaluation of Old Comedy and its abuse are either superficial (e.g., the Atticists, who have nothing to say about mockery) or glide from the aesthetic into the ethical or didactic. In the next section, as we will see, by the first century the evaluation of Old Comedy was controversial but the terms of the debate had crystallized: Old Comedy was regarded as combining some degree of enjoyment with a morally corrective aim.

§7.3. Fearsome Charms: The Aesthetic and the Ethical Intermixed

We have seen in earlier chapters that, although some accounts about the development of comedy minimize or criticize Old Comedy's abuse, this nonetheless came to be regarded as an essential feature of the genre. Indeed, that didactic element was so important that by Evanthius' time in the beginning of the fourth century it justified the assimilation of satyr play into the genre of comedy. Honestus claimed that the admonishments of the muse have the sweetest rebuke and sting in laughter, i.e., that such forms of drama achieve their morally corrective aim by combining the pleasing with the biting.

Antipater of Thessalonica, perhaps a contemporary of Honestus and likewise collected in the *Garland of Philip*, has a similar formulation:

βίβλοι Ἀριστοφάνευσ, θεῖος πόνος, αἴσιν Ἀχαρνεὺς
κισσὸς ἐπὶ γλοερὴν πουλὺς ἔσεισε κόμην·
ἠνίδ' ὅσον Διόνυσον ἔχει σελῖς, οἶα δὲ μῦθοι
ἠχεῦσιν φοβερῶν πληθόμενοι χαρίτων.
ὦ καὶ θυμὸν ἄριστε καὶ Ἑλλάδος ἦθεσιν ἴσε,
κωμικέ, καὶ στύξας ἄξια καὶ γελάσας.

Books of Aristophanes, a god-like labor, upon which
the Acharnian ivy plentifully brandished its green foliage:
See how much Dionysus its pages have, how its
stories, filled with fearsome charms, ring out.
Oh you comic poet who were best in courage and a match for the
habits of Greece, when you hated and mocked what was deserving.³⁹

Aristophanes' poetry is admirable because it is full of inspiration and charm—charms that are φοβεραί. The epigram also slips from the aesthetic into the ethical: as Gow and Page *ad 27* suggest, φοβερὰ χάρις can be a stylistic observation marking Aristophanes' occasionally serious or severe style.⁴⁰ That Aristophanes could employ the lofty style is noted elsewhere.⁴¹ Horace has a similar formulation: in *Serm.* 1.10.1-17, he compares Lucilius and Old Comedy and asserts that the poets of Old Comedy—unlike Lucilius—were well aware that *ridiculum acri / fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res*. This is in part an argument about style: as Freudenberg has argued, in the context of the poem and contemporary poetics, the claim is that the Old Comic poets knew how to blend appropriately the *acre* of the high style with the *ridiculum* of the middle.⁴² Likewise, Cicero calls the Aristophanic mode both charming (*suavis*) and weighty

³⁹ A.P. 9.186 (=Antipater of Thessalonica 103 G.-P. [*Garland*]). Most editors print ἴσα in line 5, but Gow-Page are surely correct that emendation is necessary.

⁴⁰ As a comparandum, they cite Dionysius *Ep. ad Pomp.* 3.21.4-5: τὸ μὲν Ἡροδότου κάλλος ἰλαρὸν ἐστί, φοβερὸν δὲ τὸ Θουκυδίδου.

⁴¹ Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.65 says that Old Comedy is both exceptional at attacking vices and that its style is *grandis et elegans et venusta*.

⁴² Freudenburg 1990, 191-2; Freudenburg 1993, 101-2.

(*gravis*).⁴³ But this language has the hint of the ethical about it, and *acre* is sometimes taken instead to refer to castigation and personal attack;⁴⁴ it is comparable to the *δριμύ* that characterized Machon's dramas. With its final line, the epigram confirms that this is not just an aesthetic evaluation: although Aristophanes' charms may be *φοβεραί* because his poetry has elements of the lofty style, his charms are particularly *φοβεραί* because they are fearsome for those whom they attack.

We saw in the last chapter Platonius' rather schematic formulation of the same principle:

οὔτε γὰρ πικρὸς λίαν ἐστὶν ὥσπερ ὁ Κρατῖνος οὔτε χαρίεις ὥσπερ ὁ Εὐπόλις, ἀλλ' ἔχει καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας τὸ σφοδρὸν τοῦ Κρατίνου καὶ τὸ τῆς ἐπιτρεχούσης χάριτος Εὐπόλιδος.

For he [sc. Aristophanes] is neither too biting like Cratinus nor too charming like Eupolis, but he has the vehemence of Cratinus against those who do wrong and the easy charm of Eupolis.⁴⁵

This evaluation of Aristophanes' poetry is based on its skilful mixture of *χάρις* with biting personal attack on wrongdoers.⁴⁶ Earlier in the treatise, Platonius explains how the other two poets go wrong. He discusses Cratinus and then Eupolis:

οὐ γὰρ, ὥσπερ ὁ Ἀριστοφάνης, ἐπιτρέχειν τὴν χάριν τοῖς σκώμμασι ποιεῖ, τὸ φορτικὸν τῆς ἐπιτιμήσεως διὰ ταύτης ἀναιρῶν, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν "γυμνῆι τῆι κεφαλῇ" τίθησι τὰς βλασφημίας κατὰ τῶν ἀμαρτανόντων ... εὐστοχος δὲ ὢν ἐν ταῖς ἐπιβολαῖς τῶν δραμάτων καὶ διασκευαῖς, εἶτα προίων καὶ διασπῶν τὰς ὑποθέσεις οὐκ ἀκολουθῶς πληροῖ τὰ δράματα. Εὐπόλις δὲ εὐφάνταστος μὲν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν ἐστὶ κατὰ τὰς ὑποθέσεις ... ὥσπερ δὲ ἐστὶν ὑψηλὸς οὕτω καὶ ἐπίχαρις καὶ περὶ τὰ σκώμματα λίαν εὐστοχος.

⁴³ *Ad Quint.* 3.1.6.

⁴⁴ E.g., Rudd 1957, 333-5.

⁴⁵ Koster II, 15-7 (=p. 39-40, 17-21, in Perusino 1989). On Platonius' terminology, which may derive from Peripatetic theory, see Perusino 1989, 20-4, and *ad loc.*

⁴⁶ Storey 2003, 44, suggests that *χάρις* was connected with Aristophanes in particular early on, and Platonius, in trying to advance a tripartite system with Aristophanes as the mean between the two poets, has assigned this quality to Eupolis (Cratinus was perhaps established as biting even in his own day). *χάρις* is often a quality ascribed to Aristophanes; in addition to the instances cited above, Athenaeus habitually assigns him the epithet *χαρίεις* (4.47.20; 6.92; 7.3.3; 9.14.4; 9.58.9; 9.58.40; 13.25.26; and, in epitome, 2.5.18; 2.18.25; 2.107.28). However, as Storey himself notes, *χάρις* is occasionally connected with other comic poets and Old Comedy in general (to his list of such citations, one might add *A.P.* 13.29, an epigram in which Cratinus is called *χαρίεις* by way of a quotation from one of his plays); as we will see, the principle of mixing *χάρις* with corrective abuse is not restricted to Platonius' judgment of Aristophanes or Old Comedy.

For he [sc. Cratinus] does not, like Aristophanes, make charm pervade his jests, removing the coarseness of his reproach through this charm, but simply, as the proverb says, "with a bare head" makes up abuse against wrongdoers ... Although he is clever in the premises and set-ups of his plays, when he continues and draws out the plots he does not complete the plays logically. But Eupolis is extremely imaginative in his plots ... and, as he is lofty, so he is charming and quite clever in targeting his jests.⁴⁷

Although Cratinus has some aesthetic aims, he is generally sloppy and preoccupied with personal attack. Because of his carelessness, his reproaches have a coarse vulgarity (τὸ φορτικόν) that diminishes the quality of his poetry. Eupolis' poetry is aesthetically pleasing, but it is not particularly noteworthy for attacking wrongdoers.⁴⁸ The evaluation of the individual poets may differ, but the mechanics are consistent: Old Comedy is best when attacking wrongdoers is balanced with charm and artistic excellence. In another treatise on comedy, Cratinus is credited with introducing to comedy morally corrective personal attack, but is once again considered deficient in artistic ability:

ἐπιγενόμενος δὲ ὁ Κρατῖνος κατέστησε μὲν πρῶτον τὰ ἐν τῇ κωμῳδίᾳ πρόσωπα μέχρι τριῶν, στήσας τὴν ἀταξίαν, καὶ τῷ χαρίεντι τῆς κωμῳδίας τὸ ὠφέλιμον προστέθεικε, τοὺς κακῶς πράττοντας διαβάλλων καὶ ὡσπερ δημοσίᾳ μάστιγι τῇ κωμῳδίᾳ κολάζων. ἀλλ' ἔτι μὲν καὶ οὗτος τῆς ἀρχαιότητος μετεῖχε καὶ ἡρέμα πως τῆς ἀταξίας. ὁ μὲντοι γε Ἀριστοφάνης μεθοδεύσας τεχνικώτερον τῶν μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ τὴν κωμῳδίαν ἐνέλαμψεν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐπίσημος ὀφθεῖς οὕτως ...

Cratinus followed upon them [sc. Susarion and the earlier comic poets] and first established the characters in comedy at three, settling its disorder, and added to the charm of comedy utility, by mocking wrongdoers and punishing them with his comedy as if with a public whipping. But he still had a share of the antiquated style and a bit of disorder. Aristophanes, however, devised his comedy more artfully than his contemporaries and shone forth and was seen as remarkable among them all ...⁴⁹

Unlike Platonius, this treatise takes an evolutionary approach: it tells us that Cratinus' predecessors pursued only laughter and were rather disordered in their compositions; Cratinus

⁴⁷ For Platonius' literary terminology, see Perusino 1989, *ad loc.* and Storey 2003, 46-51.

⁴⁸ In this account, this quality of Eupolis is, as Storey 2003, 44, comments, an afterthought.

⁴⁹ Koster V, 15-22.

added personal abuse for the purpose of moral correction, but was still insufficiently artful; finally, Aristophanes perfected the form and became the best comic poet of his period by applying his superior artistic abilities.⁵⁰

According to this approach, then, Old Comedy is at its best when it properly combines artistic ability with an educative function in the form of morally corrective abuse. The poets of Old Comedy are not alone in being described as useful; the grammarians suppose that New Comedy is, too. Comparing New to Old Comedy, Evanthius says that New Comedy gave less bitterness (*minus amaritudinis*) to the spectators, offered much delight (*multum delectationis*), and was useful for the γνῶμαί it advanced (*utilis sententiis*);⁵¹ Diomedes also notes that New Comedy diminished the bitterness of Old's abuse.⁵² Donatus emphasizes the didactic quality of comedy on the whole, and not just Old Comedy, when he defines it thus: "comedy is a story containing various arrangements of the conditions of citizens and private individuals, by which one learns what is useful in life and what, on the other hand, should be avoided" (*comoedia est fabula diversa instituta continens affectuum civilium ac privatorum, quibus discitur quid sit in vita utile, quid contra evitandum*).⁵³

However, as we will see below, Old Comedy is the genre that is discussed most consistently and most schematically in these terms. New Comedy may be called useful or more pleasurable, as by Evanthius, but it is not described as trying to strike a balance between being pleasurable and morally corrective. For New Comedy was never in danger of being too abusive

⁵⁰ Cf. Koster XXVIII and XXIXa, which describe Aristophanes as not just being a more artistically adept successor to Cratinus, but also as diminishing personal abuse in comedy and pointing the way towards and even practicing New Comedy (on which see §3.6). On the significance of these treatises for a variant tripartition of comedy with Cratinus representing the Old and Aristophanes the Middle, see Janko 1984, 244-50. An epigram of Christodorus about a statue of Cratinus (A.P. 2.357-6) also attests to the tradition of Cratinus as an innovator in comedy: καὶ τύπος ἄβρὸς ἔλαμπεν ἀριστονόοιο Κρατίνου, / ὅς ποτε δημοβόροισι πολιτισσοῦχοισιν Ἴόνων / θυμοδακεῖς ἐθώσεν ἀκοντιστήρας ἰάμβους, / κῶμον ἀεξήσας, φιλοπαίγμονος ἔργον ἀοιδῆς.

⁵¹ p. 17, 11-8 Wessner.

⁵² *Gramm. Lat.* 1, 489, 5-6 Keil.

⁵³ p. 22, 14-8 Wessner.

or biting: by treating fictional characters in fictional situations, it avoids causing pain to real individuals. But, for this very same reason, it is less engaged with reality and perhaps seemed less effective as a moral corrective. Its chief didactic use came to be not its illustrations of good and bad behavior, as Donatus suggests, but the *gnomai* extracted from the plays and used in schools. Indeed, the widespread incorporation of *gnomai* into anthologies may be a reason that his plays themselves ultimately perished.⁵⁴ The elegant sayings, and not the plots and characters, seemed to have been the really useful thing.

It may even be that the idea that New Comedy could benefit its audiences morally and deter them from vice is an extension of or response to the claims made about Old Comedy. As we have seen, the Old Comic poets themselves claimed that attacking wrongdoers and benefitting their audiences was their mission, and at least some histories of comedy accepted this proposition.⁵⁵ Even Horace, who subscribes to a narrative of decline for Old Comedy, accepts that Old Comedy was initially praiseworthy.⁵⁶ When the grammarians make moral correction the aim of New Comedy, too, they are trying to incorporate it into an evolutionary history according to which all Greek comedy serves a single function and can be partitioned based on how each phase of comedy achieves it. This asserts a continuity among the different phases of Greek comedy by finding a way to put Old and New Comedy, which are so different in so many ways, under the same generic umbrella. The magnitude of this interest to build a system and find a continuity is clear from the treatises that explicitly state that the different phases of comedy can be distinguished by their freedom to abuse wrongdoers: a common claim is that Old Comedy abused without restraint; Middle Comedy continued to abuse the powerful, but used metaphors

⁵⁴ Easterling 1995.

⁵⁵ See especially §5.6.

⁵⁶ For Horace's views, see §5.5.

and obfuscation; and New Comedy was reduced to abusing only foreigners and slaves.⁵⁷

According to this model, New Comedy, by being compelled to treat fictional characters, is an attenuation on Old Comedy.

In contrast, Old Comedy and its abuse of real people is, as we have seen and will see, a central problem for critics. Its didacticism is based on abusing real people, and such a mixture can easily degenerate. As we saw in chapter 4, Horace in *Ep.* 2.1 describes what occurs when the abuse becomes unrestrained: Fescennine verses, the analog to Old Comedy, was at first endowed with great *libertas* and jested charmingly (*amabiliter*); however, over the years it lost its interest in charming the audience, degenerated into unwarranted personal abuse, and ultimately had to be regulated by law.⁵⁸ Horace, of course, claims that Old Comedy degenerated in much the same way.⁵⁹ For comedy's personal abuse to be effective and socially acceptable, it must admit restraint and charm.⁶⁰

§7.4. Old Comedy, Cynicism, and the Seriocomic Mode

The evaluative principle that Old Comedy is of the highest quality and functions best when it mixes charm with morally corrective abuse must be connected with the seriocomic mode (i.e., τὸ σπουδογέλοιοι) that functions by mixing jest with serious, and often abusive, didacticism.⁶¹ Indeed, the earliest traces of a concept of the seriocomic and the mixture of τὸ σπουδαῖον with τὸ γελοῖον appear in a well-known passage of Aristophanes himself, and Old

⁵⁷ Variations of this appear in Koster IV; XIa; XIb; XIc; XVIIIa; XXIa; XXIII.

⁵⁸ *Ep.* 2.1.147-50.

⁵⁹ *Ars Poetica* 281-4.

⁶⁰ The mixture may be by its nature unstable. As I suggest in chapter 5, the critiques of Old Comedy's personal abuse seem to suppose that its free speech will necessarily degenerate into wanton abuse.

⁶¹ Sometimes spelled σπουδαιογέλοιοι. On this mode in Greek literature, see van Rooy 1965, 90-116; on its appearance in Cynic discourse, see Grant 1924, 53-61; Döring 1993, 337-52; Halliwell 2008, 372-87. For a general survey, see Giangrande 1972.

Comedy has a marked tendency to mix the laughable with the serious.⁶² The seriocomic as a fully articulated style is, however, typically connected to the Cynics.⁶³

Freudenberg has argued that Cynicism's appropriation of this seriocomic mode, the *παρρησία* that it shared with Old Comedy, and its didacticism influenced later critics of comedy, who in some way regarded them as analagous.⁶⁴ Freudenberg observes that, while Platonius mentions that the Old Comic poets attacked corrupt political figures, he also says that they attacked others who engaged in more common forms of vice: the greedy, those who gain money by committing injustices, and those who live wickedly. Freudenberg writes: "For Platonius, the Old Comic poets made their jests in the manner of the later Cynics who, when the freedom to lampoon important political figures was no longer an option, directed their jibes at nonpolitical figures and against common vices, not specific crimes."⁶⁵ This argument as it stands is not fully convincing, since Platonius is quite right: the poets of Old Comedy *do* attack antisocial but unpolitical vices, both specifically and in general.⁶⁶ Although Platonius does not give an origin of comedy, the accounts found in some of the other treatises about comedy do not even place political censure at its beginnings. Rather, according to them, comedy began in the country with farmers abusing wrongdoers, and only later was it brought into the city and given a political

⁶² *Frogs* 389-93: καὶ πολλὰ μὲν γελοῖά μ' εἶπεῖν, πολλὰ δὲ σπουδαῖα, / καὶ τῆς σῆς ἑορτῆς ἀξίως παῖσαντα καὶ σκώψαντα νικήσαντα / ταινιοῦσθαι. On this passage, see van Rooy 1965, 101-8, and on the seriocomic and the chorus throughout *Frogs*, see Baier 2002, 189-204; for examinations of the seriocomic elsewhere in Aristophanes, see the other articles in that same volume, as well as Zimmermann 2005, 531-546.

⁶³ Cf. Demetrius *De eloc.* 170 and 259. Crates of Thebes, the pupil and successor of Diogenes of Sinope, is usually credited with fully articulating and adopting the seriocomic mode. Gerhard 1909, 41, suggests that Crates pioneered this style as part of a project to develop a kindlier and less abusive form of Cynicism (Gerhard terms it "Hedonischer Kynismos") compared with that of Diogenes; in this, he is followed by Grant 1924, 53-5. Giangrande 1972, 34-5, also supports this view. But even if Crates was thought to diminish the bitterness of Diogenes, jest and humor are sometimes associated with Diogenes' discourse: see Branham 1996, 92-104, and, for Diogenes' use of the comic and the appearance of his sayings in comedy, Bosman 2006, 93-104. However, the term *σπουδογέλιος* is first used by Strabo 16.2.29 to describe Menippus of Gadara, a pupil of Crates, the originator of Menippean satire.

⁶⁴ Freudenburg 1993, 82-6.

⁶⁵ Freudenburg 1993, 85.

⁶⁶ E.g., Cleonymus is mocked as a glutton and coward at *Acharnians* 844; Cleisthenes is mocked for being effeminate at *Clouds* 355; Simon, Cleonymus, and Theorus are mocked as oath-breakers at *Clouds* 400; Callias is mocked as a pathetic at *Frogs* 428-30; Patrocles is mocked as a wealthy miser at *Wealth* 85-6.

purpose.⁶⁷ Therefore, the kind of targets Platonius describes do not necessarily indicate Cynic influence.

However, I suspect Freudenberg's general proposition is correct: Cynicism shaped the reception of Old Comedy. The evaluative mode I have studied above—the mixture of χάρις and morally corrective abuse—closely resembles descriptions of the Cynic seriocomic style. Indeed, Demetrius explicitly compares comedy and Cynicism in this regard:⁶⁸

καίτοι ἐστὶ πολλαχοῦ ἐκ παιδιᾶς παραμειγμένης δεινότης ἐμφαινομένη τις, οἷον ἐν ταῖς κωμωδίαις, καὶ πᾶς ὁ Κυνικὸς τρόπος, ὡς τὰ Κράτητος "πήρη τις γὰρ ἔστι μέσῳ ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ." καὶ τὸ Διογένους τὸ ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ, ὅτε τοῦ ὀπλίτου δραμόντος ἐπιτρέχων αὐτὸς ἐκήρυττεν ἑαυτὸν νικᾶν τὰ Ὀλύμπια πάντα ἀνθρώπους καλοκάγαθία. καὶ γὰρ γελάται τὸ εἰρημένον ἅμα καὶ θαυμάζεται, καὶ ἡρέμα καὶ ὑποδάκνει πως λεγόμενον ... καὶ ὅλως, συνελόντι φράσαι, πᾶν τὸ εἶδος τοῦ Κυνικοῦ λόγου σαίνοντι ἅμα ἔοικέ τῳ καὶ δάκνοντι. χρήσονται δ' αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ ῥήτορες ποτε ...

And yet often from intermixed playfulness a certain forcefulness appears, as in comedies and the entire Cynic style, like the words of Crates: "There is some land called Rucksack amid the wine-dark sea"; and the story of Diogenes at the Olympics: when the armed race was run he himself ran out and announced that he defeated all the people at the Olympics in the contest of nobility. For what he said was both laughed at and marveled at, and it even when said somehow bites a little ... To summarize, the entire style of Cynic discourse is like one who both fawns and bites. Orators sometimes will use it too ...⁶⁹

While Demetrius does not specify the aim of that forcefulness in the case of Old Comedy, descriptions of this style elsewhere more closely approach the formulations in the evaluations of comedy. Diogenes Laertius reports that Monimus, a student of Diogenes and Crates, composed παίγνια σπουδῆ λεληθυία μειγμένα,⁷⁰ and Julian describes Crates' style thus: ἐπετίμα δὲ οὐ μετὰ πικρίας, ἀλλὰ μετὰ χάριτος.⁷¹ Julian's phrasing is close to Platonius' judgment about

⁶⁷ Treatises Koster IV; XIb; XVIIIa; XXIa; XXVI, among others.

⁶⁸ On this author's identity, years of operation, and school, see the introduction in Chiron 1993.

⁶⁹ Demetrius *De eloc.* 259-61. Cf. *De eloc.* 170: χρήσονται δὲ ποτε καὶ οἱ φρόνιμοι γελοίοις πρὸς τε τοὺς καιροῦς, οἷον ἐν ἐορταῖς καὶ ἐν συμποσίοις, καὶ ἐν ἐπιπλήξεσιν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς τρυφερωτέρους ... τοιοῦτος δὲ ὡς τὸ πλέον καὶ ὁ Κυνικὸς τρόπος· τὰ γὰρ τοιαῦτα γελοῖα χρεῖας λαμβάνει τάξιν καὶ γνώμης.

⁷⁰ D.L. 6.83.

⁷¹ *Or.* 6.201C.

Aristophanes, namely that he is superior because he is not too πικρός, as Cratinus was, but that he reprimands while maintaining the χάρις typical of Eupolis.⁷²

That Old Comedy was in some way thought to prefigure the Cynics' activity and was therefore evaluated on like terms was surely owed not only to Old Comedy's tradition of the seriocomic and the παρρησία that would come to be associated with Cynicism,⁷³ but to the early Cynics' literary production.⁷⁴ Crates composed parodies of Homer and Solon⁷⁵ and mocked in verse the contemporary philosophers Stilpo and Menedemus;⁷⁶ the latter was, of course, also the target of a satyr play reminiscent of Old Comedy, Lycophron's *Menedemus*.⁷⁷ Cercidas, the Cynic poet and statesman of the generation after Crates, wrote iambic poetry criticizing the vices of his contemporaries, perhaps drawing specifically on Aristophanes.⁷⁸ Likewise, Kindstrand has argued for the influence of comedy on Bion of Borysthenes,⁷⁹ a poet with Cynic leanings and a pioneer of the diatribe. Porphyry compares Bion's wittiness to that of Aristophanes,⁸⁰ and Bion's mockery of a philosopher was compared to comedy's mockery of tragedy.⁸¹ Given that we saw in chapter 6 that comedy's purportedly corrective personal abuse could be a necessary and sufficient condition for inclusion in the genre of comedy, such forms could have been connected to Old Comedy by the same line of argument as Roman satire or post-classical satyr play.

⁷² Indeed, just as Aristophanes is sometimes said to have tempered the abuse of his predecessor, Cratinus, Crates is said to have tempered the bitterness of his predecessor, Diogenes. See n. 63.

⁷³ Kindstrand 1976, 45, lists the following similarities between Old Comedy and the activities of the Cynics: an emphasis on παρρησία; the seriocomic style; the use of humor and satire; and the use of vulgar language.

⁷⁴ For a survey of their literary production, see Branham 1996, 83-7.

⁷⁵ For Homer, see *De eloc.* 259, quoted above; the same parody is quoted at greater length and more correctly at D.H. 6.85 (=fr. 6 Diehl). For Crates' parody of Solon, see fr. 1, 5 Diehl.

⁷⁶ D.L. 2.118 (=fr. 3 Diehl); Menedemus: D.L. 2.126 (=fr. 4 Diehl).

⁷⁷ See §6.6.

⁷⁸ On Cercidas, see Williams 2006; for the most recent treatment of his fragments, see Cruces 1995.

⁷⁹ Kindstrand 1976.

⁸⁰ Porphyry *ad* Horace Ep. 2.2.60: *Bion Aristofanis comici par dicitur fuisse magnae dicacitatis*.

⁸¹ D.L. 4.10.

Certainly Marcus Aurelius supposes that Old Comedy and its παρρησία prefigured Diogenes and his practice.⁸²

While Crates and his successors may have used less personal abuse than his predecessors, Cynic seriocomic discourse still maintained a delicate balance: the word σπουδογέλοιος is first used of Crates' pupil Menippus of Gadara, who wrote satirical verse.⁸³ The conflicting descriptions about him reflect how precarious the seriocomic mode can be. Diogenes Laertius claims that there is nothing serious about him and that his work is full of mockery (φέρει μὲν οὐδὲν σπουδαῖον οὐδέν· τὰ δὲ βιβλία αὐτοῦ πολλοῦ καταγέλωτος γέμει), and Marcus Aurelius calls him a χλευαστής.⁸⁴ Dio Chrysostom reproves Cynics who, though they know things that are true and useful, stand on street corners, heap abuse on everyone, seek alms, and thereby discredit philosophy.⁸⁵ Epictetus, too, regarded the correct integration of charm as a central feature of effective Cynic discourse, commenting that in its absence the Cynic is nothing but a sneerer.⁸⁶

These conceptions of the seriocomic are a reason for the analogous formulations in the evaluation of Old Comedy and Aristophanes. That Old Comedy could be imagined as engaging in the same activities as the Cynics and therefore evaluated on the same terms becomes clear from the *Ars Rhetorica*, once wrongly attributed to Dionysius of Halicarnassus; chapters 8-11 perhaps date to the early second century AD.⁸⁷ The author of those chapters is concerned with a

⁸² Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 11.6: ἡ ἀρχαία κωμῳδία παρήχθη, παιδαγωγικὴν παρρησίαν ἔχουσα καὶ τῆς ἀτυφίας οὐκ ἀχρήστως δι' αὐτῆς τῆς εὐθυρρημοσύνης ὑπομιμνήσκουσα· πρὸς οἷόν τι καὶ Διογένης ταυτὶ παρελάμβανεν.

⁸³ Strabo 16.2.29.

⁸⁴ D.L. 6.99; Marcus Aurelius *Med.* 6.47.

⁸⁵ *Or.* 32.9: τῶν δὲ Κυνικῶν λεγομένων ἔστι μὲν ἐν τῇ πόλει πλῆθος οὐκ ὀλίγον, καὶ καθάπερ ἄλλου τινὸς πράγματος καὶ τοῦτου φορὰ γέγονε· νόθον μέντοι γε καὶ ἀγεννῆς ἀνθρώπων οὐθέν, ὡς εἰπεῖν, ἐπισταμένων, ἀλλὰ χρεῖων τροφῆς. οὗτοι δὲ ἐν τε τριόδοις καὶ στενωποῖς καὶ πλωῶσιν ἱερῶν ἀγείρουσι καὶ ἀπατῶσι παιδάρια καὶ ναύτας καὶ τοιοῦτον ὄχλον, σκώμματα καὶ πολλὴν σπερμολογίαν συνείροντες καὶ τὰς ἀγοραίους ταύτας ἀποκρίσεις. τοιγαροῦν ἀγαθὸν μὲν οὐδὲν ἐργάζονται, κακὸν δ' ὡς οἷόν τε τὸ μέγιστον, καταγέλαν ἐθίζοντες τοὺς ἀνοήτους τῶν φιλοσόφων.

⁸⁶ Epict. *Diss.* 90-1: δεῖ δὲ καὶ χάριν πολλὴν προσεῖναι φυσικὴν τῷ Κυνικῷ καὶ ὀξύτητα (εἰ δὲ μή, μύξα γίνεται, ἄλλο δ' οὐδέν), ἵνα ἐτοίμως δύνηται καὶ παρακειμένως πρὸς τὰ ἐμπίπτοντα ἀπαντᾶν. ὡς Διογένης πρὸς τὸν εἰπόντα "σὺ εἶ ὁ Διογένης ὁ μὴ οἰόμενος εἶναι θεοῦς;" "καὶ πῶς," ἔφη, "σὲ θεοῖς ἔχθρὸν νομίζω<ν>;"

⁸⁷ On these sections, see Russell 1981, 124-5; Russell 2001; Heath 2003.

particular rhetorical device that he calls σχῆμα or σχηματισμός. By this he means the technique of saying one thing while aiming to achieve another: one cloaks content that might otherwise be rejected in form that makes it effective on the audience. In 8.10, he gives an example from tragedy, explaining that in Euripides' *Melanippe* the titular character gives a philosophical speech, but has the hidden motive of saving her children. At the same time, this covers a hidden motive of Euripides himself, to commemorate the teachings of his former teacher, Anaxagoras, whose opinions Melanippe utters. In 8.11, before turning to another subject, the author briefly mentions comedy:

ἡ δέ γε κωμῳδία ὅτι πολιτεύεται ἐν τοῖς δράμασι καὶ φιλοσοφεῖ, ἡ τῶν περὶ τὸν Κρατῖνον καὶ Ἀριστοφάνην καὶ Εὐπολιν, τί δεῖ καὶ λέγειν; ἡ γὰρ τοι κωμῳδία αὐτῆ⁸⁸ τὸ γελοῖον προστησαμένη φιλοσοφεῖ.

Why should I even mention that in the dramas the comedy of Cratinus, Aristophanes, and Eupolis participates in civic life and engages in philosophy? For this comedy, while setting forth the laughable, engages in philosophy.

The author states this proposition in very general terms. In the case of tragedy, he gave a single example, where the philosophical discourse is on the level of the play's action rather than the ulterior motive. On the second, extra-dramatic level, Euripides may have the ulterior motive of commemorating Anaxagoras' philosophy, but that is not a general practice: Euripides does it because he once had a personal relationship with the philosopher. However, the author seems to reckon it general knowledge that Old Comedy is engaging in not only political but philosophical business and that it does this by clothing those activities with the laughable.

⁸⁸ Usener and Radermacher in their Teubner print αὐτή, but R. Janko has suggested to me that we instead read αὔτη, as given here. This makes rather more sense: the comedy of Cratinus, Aristophanes, and Eupolis is being distinguished from other forms of comedy that do not make a point of engaging with politics and philosophy—that is, New Comedy in particular, which has no need for the rhetorical device under discussion, σχηματισμός.

This is similar to Eratosthenes' description of Bion's poetry: τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἄνθινα ἐνέδυσεν;⁸⁹ it is also close to the aforementioned description of the Cynic Monimus' activities (παίγνια σπουδῆ λεληθυία μεμιγμένα).⁹⁰ It fits with Demetrius' connection of Old Comedy to the Cynic style;⁹¹ if this is how the project of Old Comedy is imagined, the evaluative formulations adduced above must be understood in this context. In Platonius' estimation, Cratinus is wanting because his plays were too bitter and lacked sufficient charm to be successful comedy and meaningfully corrective. He is like Epictetus' Cynic who, in the absence of charm, is a sneerer rather than a successful philosopher.

This conception of Old Comedy and its abuse stands in direct competition with the model we saw in chapter 5 in particular: its speech is not licensed by and designed to flatter the *demos*; rather, it aims to expose and correct the audience's faults by mixing in just enough charm with its rebuke that it is palatable. It is not a political tool whose genesis is in class warfare against the elite; rather, it is a form of philosophy. It does not destabilize the state and lead to society's degeneration; rather, it is, like Cynic discourse, salutary. Indeed, I suggest that Dio Chrysostom directly compares Cynicism and Old Comedy using this very model.

§7.5. Dio Chrysostom on Old Comedy

Dio Chrysostom, one of the most eminent orators of the Second Sophistic, mentions Old Comedy and its didactic aims in two places, *Or.* 32 and 33. These two passages apparently say contradictory things: in the former oration, he praises Old Comedy's methods; in the latter, he compares it to the practice of philosophy and finds Old Comedy wanting. I will argue that he was quite familiar with Cynicism, the seriocomic mode, and the idea that Old Comedy employed it,

⁸⁹ D.L. 4.52. On the meaning and origin of this saying, see Kindstrand 1976, 51-2 and 153.

⁹⁰ D.L. 6.83.

⁹¹ Demetrius *De eloc.* 259-61, quoted above.

and I will suggest that in *Or.* 33, the speech critical of Old Comedy, he, probably as a rhetorical exercise designed to amuse his audience, adopts the *persona* of a humorless Cynic street preacher and evaluates Old Comedy on how well it lived up to the mission of Cynicism. In this *persona*, Dio claims that the poets of Old Comedy did not live up Cynicism because they delighted the audience *too much* instead of abusing and correcting them mercilessly.

Dio's views on comedy have already been explored by Plebe and Di Florio, both of whom argue for strong Platonic and Peripatetic influences on his poetics.⁹² Reacting against earlier scholars who insisted on a more or less exclusively Antisthenic-Cynic-Stoic line of influence,⁹³ they unreasonably downplay Cynicism's influence on Dio's evaluation of comedy. Dio is eclectic in his philosophy; even before his exile and supposed conversion from rhetoric to philosophy, he uses Cynic *topoi* and once likens himself to a Cynic.⁹⁴ He is certainly well aware of the Cynic seriocomic mode: in *Or.* 13, he illustrates it and employs it by telling an anecdote about Diogenes and Alexander.⁹⁵ Elsewhere, he describes it quite clearly:

εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ καὶ τὸν Αἴσωπον οἴονται τοιοῦτόν τινα γενέσθαι, σοφὸν μὲν καὶ φρόνιμον, αἰμύλον δὲ ἄλλως καὶ ξυνθεῖναι λόγους ἰκανὸν οἴων <οἱ> ἄνθρωποι ἥδιστ' ἂν ἀκούοιεν. καὶ τυχὸν οὐ παντάπασι ψευδῆ οἴονται, καὶ τῷ ὄντι Αἴσωπος τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἐπειρᾶτο νοθετεῖν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἐπιδεικνύναι αὐτοῖς ἅττα ἀμαρτάνουσιν, ὡς ἂν μάλιστα ἠνείχοντο αὐτόν, ἠδόμενοι ἐπὶ τῷ γελοίῳ καὶ τοῖς μύθοις, ὥσπερ τὰ παιδιά ταῖς τίθταις μυθολογουμένας προσέχουσί τε καὶ ἠδονται. ἀπὸ δὴ τῆς τοιαύτης δόξης, ὡς καὶ παρ' ἡμῶν ἀκουσόμενοί τι τοιοῦτον οἶον Αἴσωπος ἔλεγεν ἢ ὁποῖον Σωκράτης ἢ ὁποῖα Διογένης, προσίασι καὶ ἐνοχλοῦσι καὶ οὐ δύνανται ἀπέχεσθαι ὃν ἂν ἴδωσιν ἐν τούτῳ τῷ σχήματι ...

Some people think that Aesop is some such person [sc. as the Seven Sages are], wise and knowing, but also cunning, and that he was capable of composing stories of the sort of things that they themselves would most gladly hear. Perhaps they are not altogether mistaken, and Aesop really tried to admonish humans in this way and show to them what wrongs they did, since they would suffer him if they enjoyed the humor and the stories, just as children pay

⁹² Plebe 1952, 82-97; Di Florio 2001 (following Plebe).

⁹³ Plebe 1952, 82.

⁹⁴ Moles 1978. See *Or.* 32.9: οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνο λαμβάνει με, ὅτι τοὺς ἐν τούτῳ (i.e., Dio's own) τῷ σχήματι σύνηθες μὲν ἐστὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς Κυνικοὺς καλεῖν (only especially notable if indeed this oration is pre-exilic).

⁹⁵ Moles 1983, 274-5. On Dio's use of Diogenes, see Billerbeck 1996, 211-3, with bibliography on n. 38.

attention to and delight in their nurses when they tell tales. Indeed, from such a belief—that they will hear from us some such thing as Aesop, Socrates, or Diogenes used to say—they approach us and bother us and cannot keep away from whomever they see in this garb ...⁹⁶

Dio here describes the kind of attraction his humble dress has for passers by: they come up to him expecting some sort of seriocomic story along the lines of Aesop, Socrates, or Diogenes, all of whom, like Dio himself, have a Cynic pedigree.⁹⁷ So when Dio discusses Old Comedy and evaluates it on similar grounds, we need not look far for the source of his evaluative principles. Nor can Platonic and Aristotelian influence fully explain Dio's views, since invective is an essential, and praiseworthy, element in Dio's evaluation of comedy.⁹⁸ As Di Florio comments, after tracking the Platonic and Aristotelian elements in Dio's poetics, "[a]d ogni modo proprio l'elemento indispensabile alla commedia per il Crisostomo, l'invettiva, non è accettato né da Platone né da Aristotele."⁹⁹ Plebe suggests that Dio's opinions about invective and Old Comedy deviate from Platonic and Aristotelian views in large part because of the Atticists' sympathy for Old Comedy,¹⁰⁰ but this does not explain the ideological underpinnings of his use and evaluation of comedy. Plebe ultimately offers a second reason, that Dio admired the Old Comic poets not only for stylistic reasons but also "in vista della sua lodevole libertà di parola."¹⁰¹ Thus he

⁹⁶ *Or.* 72.13.

⁹⁷ On Aesop himself as a kind of Cynic figure (partly based on the model of Diogenes), see Jedrkiewicz 1990-92, 124-5 (with bibliography in n. 50). On the adaptation of fables to include Cynic themes, see Adrados 1999, 538-48 (but *pace* Adrados see Zafiroopoulos 2001, 34-6). The Cynics claimed, by way of Antisthenes, a lineage from Socrates, and he frequently appears as a kind of Cynic hero. Dio himself mentions Socrates and Diogenes as similar figures two chapters earlier (72.11), and Plato observed that Diogenes was like a mad Socrates (D.L. 6.54; Ael. *VH* 16.33). Crates is also likened to Socrates (D.L. 7.2-3). On Socrates as an antecedent to Cynicism, see Long 1996, 28-46.

⁹⁸ Dio hints at a definition of comedy that embraces invective: τὰ δὲ γέλωτος ἔνεκεν ἢ λοιδορίας πεποιημένα ὥσπερ τὰ τῶν κωμωδιστῶν (Or. 2.4). Cf. Plebe 1952, 89, and Di Florio 2001, 75, who note the similarity of this formulation to Plato's in *Laws* 7.816e-17a: ὅσα μὲν οὖν περὶ γέλωτά ἐστιν παίγνια, ἃ δὴ κωμωδίαν πάντες λέγομεν, οὕτως τῷ νόμῳ καὶ λόγῳ κείσθω. In Dio, unlike Plato, comedy is expressly a matter of laughter and abuse.

⁹⁹ Di Florio 2001, 79.

¹⁰⁰ Plebe 1952, 90, 92.

¹⁰¹ Plebe 1952, 94.

concedes that that Dio was interested in them for their *παρρησία*—an especially Cynic concern, particularly in Dio, whose use of Cynicism is manifest.

His most extensive treatment of Old Comedy is in *Or.* 33, the rather mysterious first Tarsian oration, in which Dio inveighs against his audience for some vice common to all the Tarsians. But he describes it only by euphemism; at one point he connects the fault to the verb *ρέγκειν*, meaning to snore or snort.¹⁰²

He begins the speech by mentioning sophists who say things that are pleasing to hear but confer no benefit and quacks who present medical exhibitions that are entertaining to watch but cure no ills. True physicians, Dio says, cure the sick with remedies that are often painful; likewise, a true philosopher will speak not for the audience's pleasure, but for their benefit (33.1-8). In this connection, Dio mentions Old Comedy:

Ἀθηναῖοι γὰρ εἰωθότες ἀκούειν κακῶς, καὶ νῆ Δία ἐπ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο συνιόντες εἰς τὸ θέατρον ὡς λοιδορηθησόμενοι, καὶ προτεθεικότες ἀγῶνα καὶ νίκην τοῖς ἄμεινον αὐτὸ πράττουσιν, οὐκ αὐτοὶ τοῦτο εὐρόντες, ἀλλὰ τοῦ θεοῦ συμβουλευσάντος, Ἀριστοφάνους μὲν ἤκουον καὶ Κρατίνου καὶ Πλάτωνος, καὶ τούτους οὐδὲν κακὸν ἐποίησαν. ἐπεὶ δὲ Σωκράτης ἄνευ σκηνῆς καὶ ἰκρίων ἐποίει τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πρόσταγμα, οὐ κορδακίζων οὐδὲ τερετιζῶν, οὐχ ὑπέμειναν. ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γὰρ ὑφορώμενοι καὶ δεδιότες τὸν δῆμον ὡς δεσπότην ἐθώπευον, ἡρέμα δάκνοντες καὶ μετὰ γέλωτος, ὥσπερ αἱ τίτθαι τοῖς παιδίοις, ὅταν δέη τι τῶν ἀηδεστέρων πιεῖν αὐτά, προσφέρουσι μέλιτι χρίσασαι τὴν κύλικα. τοιγαροῦν ἔβλαπτον οὐχ ἥττον ἢπερ ὠφέλουν, ἀγερωχίας καὶ σκωμμάτων καὶ βωμολοχίας ἀναπιμπλάντες τὴν πόλιν. ὁ δὲ φιλόσοφος ἤλεγχε καὶ ἐνουθέτει.

For the Athenians were accustomed to hear ill of themselves, and, by Zeus, they used to gather for this very purpose at the theater in order that they might be abused. They established a contest and prize for the ones who did it quite well, not having themselves devised it, but by the recommendation of god. They used to listen to Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Plato, and they did no ill to them. But when Socrates without a set and stage carried out the commands of the god, neither dancing the cordax nor playing the pipe, they did not suffer it. For those comic poets, suspecting and fearing the people, used to flatter them like a master, biting them just a little and with humor, just like nurses who, whenever infants have to drink something rather bitter, smear honey on the cup and then offer it to them. Therefore, the comic poets used to harm no less than

¹⁰² There are sundry suggestions for what the vice was: among others, Welles 1962, 68 proposes the neglect of philosophy; Jones 1978, 73-4, proposes the the literal act of snoring; and, most recently Kokkinia 2007, 407-22, has suggested that Dio refers to breaking wind (on this suggestion, see below).

they helped, infecting the city with arrogance, mockery, and buffoonery. But the philosopher used to rebuke and admonish.¹⁰³

Dio's ultimate evaluation of the Old Comic poets is negative, but not as a matter of principle. He explicitly states that comedy has divine, rather than human, origins, and accepts that Old Comedy has a beneficial aim, namely to rebuke faults, as he also explains in *Or.* 32.¹⁰⁴ There, he inveighs against his audience, the Alexandrians, for their frivolity and unseriousness. He criticizes their preference for dances and mimes, but insists that he is not recommending that they give up all entertainment. As an example of a form of entertainment that aims to rebuke faults and improve the audience, he cites Old Comedy, whose *παρρησία* he says is salutary because it attacked whoever did wrong, including the city itself.¹⁰⁵

In *Or.* 33, his view of Old Comedy's activities corresponds quite closely to descriptions of the Cynic seriocomic mode. He says that the comic poets were *ἡρέμα δάκνοντες καὶ μετὰ γέλωτος*, just as Demetrius had said of the Cynic mode that *γελάται τὸ εἰρημένον ἅμα καὶ θαυμάζεται, καὶ ἡρέμα καὶ ὑποδάκνει πως λεγόμενον*. But Dio's complaint proves to be that the

¹⁰³ *Or.* 33.9-10.

¹⁰⁴ This view is specific to Old Comedy; he does not see New Comedy (or, for that matter, tragedy) as having a particularly corrective function for audiences. In his comparison of the three tragedians in *Or.* 52, he praises various useful elements in Euripides' poetry: that it has a strong gnomic element, contains incitements to virtue, and is useful for an orator (52.11, 13, 17). In *Or.* 18.8, he praises both Menander and Euripides: *πολὺ δ' ἂν ἔργον εἶη τὸ λέγειν ὅσα ἀπὸ τούτων χρήσιμα: ἢ τε γὰρ τοῦ Μενάνδρου μίμησις ἅπαντος ἤθους καὶ χάριτος πᾶσαν ὑπερβέβληκε τὴν δεινότητα τῶν παλαιῶν κωμικῶν, ἢ τε Εὐριπίδου προσήγεια καὶ πιθανότης τοῦ μὲν τραγικοῦ ἀναστήματος καὶ ἀξιώματος τυχὸν οὐκ ἂν τελέως ἐφικνοῖτο, πολιτικῶ δὲ ἀνδρὶ πάνυ ὠφέλιμος, ἔτι δὲ ἦθη καὶ πάθη δεινὸς πληρῶσαι, καὶ γνώμας πρὸς ἅπαντα ὠφελίμους καταμείγνυσι τοῖς ποιήμασιν, ἅτε φιλοσοφίας οὐκ ἄπειρος ὢν*. The educative use that Dio finds in both Euripides and Menander is for the training of orators because of their realistic portrayal of characters and the usefulness of their *gnomai*. It is not because they offer moral correction or education to laymen. On Dio's evaluation of Menander, see Plebe 1952, 94-5, who suggests that Dio is primarily concerned with defending Menander from certain Atticists, like Phrynichus (cf. n. 28 above). Plebe and Di Florio 2001, 71-3, believe that Dio is more interested in and shows greater approval for Old Comedy. On Dio's comparison of the tragedians and evaluation of Euripides, see Luzzatto 1983, 42-7.

¹⁰⁵ *Or.* 32.6: *ἀλλ' ἀξιῶν ὑμᾶς, ὥσπερ τούτοις ἐτοιμῶς καὶ συνεχῶς αὐτοὺς παρέχετε, οὕτω καὶ λόγου χρηστοῦ ποτε ἀκοῦσαι καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τῷ συμφέροντι δέξασθαι παρρησίαν• ἐπεὶ καὶ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους, ὧν μικρῶ πρότερον ἐμνήσθην, οὐ πάντως εὐρήσομεν ἀμαρτάνοντας• ἀλλὰ τοῦτό γε ἐκεῖνοι καὶ πάνυ καλῶς ἐποίουν, ὅτι τοῖς ποιηταῖς ἐπέτρεπον μὴ μόνον τοὺς κατ' ἄνδρα ἐλέγχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κοινῇ τὴν πόλιν, εἴ τι μὴ καλῶς ἔπραττον*.

Old Comic poets bit *too little* and did not live up to the Cynic ideal.¹⁰⁶ In this regard, he is following precisely the line of criticism that we saw in chapter 5: as the Old Oligarch and others suggested, comedy, despite its pretensions to moral improvement, used its abuse to flatter the *demos*.

Dio's negative evaluation of Old Comedy is predicated on the fact that, as Diogenes said, one needs a whip and a master, not a flatterer.¹⁰⁷ But the comic poets treated the people like their master and let their jest degenerate into flattery,¹⁰⁸ even though they had the perfect opportunity and means to rebuke and educate their spectators, that is, a comic context and the same *παρρησία* that the Cynics had.¹⁰⁹ Dio is evaluating Old Comedy on the same terms as were used by Honestus, Antipater, and Platonius—i.e., in terms of the Cynic seriocomic style and aim; this is why Dio, like the author of *Ars Rhetorica* 8, can liken Old Comedy to philosophy.¹¹⁰

Of course, Dio comes to a different conclusion from that of Antipater and the other supports of Old Comedy: while it access to *παρρησία*, it abandoned it and degenerated because the Old Comic poets, unlike Socrates, feared the people and devoted themselves to the laughable instead of to the corrective. In this, Dio is simultaneously applying the Cynic seriocomic evaluation and the negative Platonic evaluation: the laughter and abuse of Old Comedy *could*

¹⁰⁶ Dio's accusation that comedy filled the city with *ἀγερωχία* is especially damning—rather than alleviating the spectators' *τῦφος*, they increased it.

¹⁰⁷ [Diogenes] *Ep.* 29.4: σκύτους οὖν δεῖ σοι καὶ δεσπότου, οὐχ ὅς σε θαυμάσει καὶ κολακεύσει· ὡς ὑπὸ γε τοιοῦτου ἀνθρώπου πῶς ἂν τίς ποτε ὠφελῆθει, ἢ πῶς ὁ τοιοῦτος ὠφελήσειέ τινα;

¹⁰⁸ This of course contradicts Aristophanes' own claim that he does *not* flatter his audience: φησὶν [sc. Aristophanes] δ' ὑμᾶς πολλὰ διδάξειν ἀγάθ', ὥστ' εὐδαίμονας εἶναι, / οὐ θωπεύων οὐδ' ὑποτείνων μισθοὺς οὐδ' ἐξαπατόλλων, / οὐδὲ πανουργῶν οὐδὲ κατάρδων, ἀλλὰ τὰ βέλτιστα διδάσκων (*Ach.* 656-8).

¹⁰⁹ Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 11.6 explicitly compares Old Comic and Cynic *παρρησία*, and, like Dio, regards it as comedy's central means of education: ἡ ἀρχαία κωμῳδία παρήχθη, παιδαγωγικὴν παρρησίαν ἔχουσα καὶ τῆς ἀτυφίας οὐκ ἀχρήστως δι' αὐτῆς τῆς εὐθυρρημοσύνης ὑπομνησκουσα· πρὸς οἷόν τι καὶ Διογένης ταυτὶ παρελάμβανεν. Aurelius is clearly imagining Old Comedy as a kind of Cynicism before Cynicism, *τῦφος* being a regular target of Cynic attack. On *τῦφος*, see Declava Caizzi 1991.

¹¹⁰ See Plebe 1952, 91-2, and Di Florio 2001, 83-4, who suggest that Dio is conceiving of comedy as a kind of pre-philosophy or imperfect philosophy.

have been morally useful, but instead they infected the city with buffoonery.¹¹¹ At least Dio comes to such a conclusion in *Or.* 33; but in *Or.* 32, as we have mentioned, he praises Old Comedy for its educative *παρρησία* while giving no hint of its dissolution. In *Or.* 33, he has adopted a history of comedy like the ones espoused by Horace and Evanthius, according to which Old Comedy misuses its license.¹¹²

Dio holds these apparently contradictory views because of the style that he adopts in *Or.* 33: here, he claims that he will *not* use the seriocomic style and, instead, explicitly tells the Tarsians that he will speak of painful and unpleasant things that will *not* be enjoyable for them.¹¹³ He is making a show of being like that other kind of Cynic who travels in rags and, like Diogenes or Antisthenes, avoids clever or seductive language in favor of frank rebuke.¹¹⁴ In this regard, Dio is also like Socrates, from whom the Cynics could claim their origin¹¹⁵ and whose *persona* Dio occasionally adopts elsewhere.¹¹⁶ Socrates, Dio says, made no use of stagecraft, did not resort to blandishments, and rebuked and admonished the people, just as he himself promises to do. Dio's assertion that comedy arose because of the god's recommendation (τοῦ θεοῦ συμβουλευσαντος) surely belongs to the comparison between Old Comedy and these philosophers: the comic poets, like Socrates—and, for that matter, Diogenes, Zeno of Citium,

¹¹¹ In particular, *Republic* 10.606c, the suggestion that taking pleasure in buffoonery in comedy may lead to its imitation at home.

¹¹² See chapters 4 and 5. But Dio deviates from this history in that his complaint is that the Old Comic poets did not use their license *enough* and that they should have accosted their spectators more brutally. The history given by Horace and Evanthius, in contrast, asserts that the Old Comic poets became too indiscriminate and brutal in their abuse. Dio is characterizing them as flatterers, which, as we will see below, contraindicates true frankness of speech.

¹¹³ At *Or.* 33.44, he likens himself to the physician he had mentioned at the start of the speech who cures patients even if it pains or annoys them. Cf. D.L. 6.4 (of Antisthenes): ἐρωτηθεὶς διὰ τί πικρῶς τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐπιπλήττει, "καὶ οἱ ἰατροί," φησί, "τοῖς κάμνουσιν."

¹¹⁴ Earlier in his speech, Dio warns his listeners that they will hear not praise but rebuke, explaining of himself: ὅταν δὲ ἀχμηρόν τινα καὶ συνεσταλμένον ἴδητε καὶ μόνον βαδίζοντα, πρῶτον αὐτὸν ἐξετάζοντα καὶ λοιδοροῦντα, μὴ ζητεῖτε παρὰ τοῦ τοιοῦτου μηδεμίαν θωπεῖαν μηδὲ ἀπάτην, μηδὲ τὸν δεξιὸν ἐκεῖνον καὶ προσηνῆ λόγον, ὃς δὴ μάλιστα διατρίβει περὶ δῆμους καὶ σατράπας καὶ τυράννους (*Or.* 33.14).

¹¹⁵ See n. 97 above.

¹¹⁶ On Dio's habitual use of Socrates and Diogenes as *personae* that he adopts, see Moles 1978.

and Dio himself—were motivated by the god's counsel,¹¹⁷ but the comic poets, unlike Socrates, could not live up to it.

That Dio likens himself to Socrates here necessitated a different evaluation of the comic poets. Any evaluation of them that is based on the proposition that Old Comedy used the laughable for serious, even philosophical, ends—an idea that I have suggested was a common interpretation by this time—must grapple with the comic poets' treatment of Socrates.¹¹⁸ There was certainly a tradition that Socrates took little offense at his treatment and even that he or Plato enjoyed Old Comedy.¹¹⁹ But another view during this period is that comedy could be quite powerful and achieve positive results, but owing to personal enmity or corruption the Old Comic poets used it for harmful purposes.¹²⁰ Such a judgment is based on a reading of the *Clouds* that extrapolates from poetry to biography, sometimes quite fancifully:¹²¹ a common assertion is that Aristophanes was in league with Anytus and Meletus when he wrote the *Clouds*,¹²² though nearly a quarter of a century intervened between the performance and the trial and, according to

¹¹⁷ The idea that comedy has a divine origin, as we have seen, recurs in histories of comedy. As for consultations with gods being the impetus for the pursuit of philosophy, Diogenes consults either the Delphic or Delian oracle at D.L. 6.20; Zeno of Citium consults an oracle at D.L. 7.2; Dio discusses his consultation at *Or.* 13.9. However, the date of *Or.* 33 is unknown: Desideri 1978, 122-129, dates it to Vespasian's reign and puts it before Dio went into exile (meaning that this speech would have been given before he consulted the oracle). However, Jones 1978, 137, puts the speech during Trajan's reign and, therefore, after the exile and oracular consultation (in this he is followed by Kokkinia 2007, 420 n. 62).

¹¹⁸ On Socrates' importance during this period as an exemplar for Cynic and Stoic philosophers in particular, see Moles 1978, 98.

¹¹⁹ The following sources report such a tradition: Σ *Clouds* 96 claims that Aristophanes' criticisms were not directed at Socrates in particular, but either at philosophers who make such silly claims in general or at Hippon, who advanced such views (and it notes that Eupolis attacked Socrates more viciously than Aristophanes did). Musonius—once Dio's teacher—*Dis.* 10.27-30 claims that Socrates enjoyed the *Clouds* so much that he invited Aristophanes to write another play about him. D.L. 2.36 (in contrast to D.L. 2.38) reports that Socrates said that they ought to give themselves over to the comic poets so that, if the poets said anything which pertained to them, they might correct it. [Plutarch] *De liberis educandis* 10cd says that Socrates regarded being mocked in the theater like being mocked at a symposium. Choricus 1.82 says that Socrates endured and overlooked comic mockery.

¹²⁰ Quite exceptional in this regard, however, is hyp. 1 to the *Clouds*, which claims that Aristophanes wrote the *Clouds* not out of personal enmity, but as a kind of indictment of Socrates on the ground that he was indeed improperly instructing the youth.

¹²¹ On this phenomenon, especially in the *Life* of Aristophanes, see Lefkowitz 1981, 105-16. Of course, the references to the *Clouds* in the Plato's *Apology* are also responsible.

¹²² This claim is reported in *Clouds* hyp. 2; Aelian *VH* 2.13; D.L. 2.38; Maximus of Tyre 3.3, 12.8, and 18.6. Σ *Clouds* 627 says that some allege that Aristophanes wrote the *Clouds* because he was in league with Anytus and Meletus, but then refutes this by noting that a long time intervened.

Aristophanes himself, the *Clouds* was a failure.¹²³ This tradition underlies Dio's evaluation, and he adopts it because it befits his *persona* in *Or.* 33: the charm and humor of comedy are powerful tools that can be used for educative purposes, but, owing to the deficient characters of the comic poets, the audience learned the wrong things. Dio, in contrast, will not err and lead the Tarsians astray as the comic poets had. It is no accident that the accounts that blame Aristophanes for Socrates' trial tend to emphasize his comedies' aesthetic attraction.¹²⁴ The true philosopher, like Socrates, Diogenes, and Dio, is fearless in pursuing truth and rebuking faults and has no need of aesthetic embellishment. Therefore, Dio, too, is using the Cynic seriocomic mode as a model for evaluating comedy, even if he evaluates it negatively and rejects it in this speech.

There is a second, correlated reason for this negative evaluation. While Dio claims that he will address his audience with merciless honesty and makes a show of rejecting comedy, this may all be part of the joke. I noted above that the subject of *Or.* 33 is mysterious. It is not clear what fault he is criticizing in the audience, but he connects it to the verb *ρέγκειν*. Kokkinia argues that the speech is a typically sophistic exercise in arguing a laughable and impossible point, and the vice that Dio is criticizing in his audience is farting.¹²⁵ There are a few hints that Kokkinia adduces, including *Or.* 33.50, where Dio says that it is a kind of sickness upon their noses. Another important hint is a line from the Aristophanes' *Knights* that couples *ρέγκειν* with *πέρδεσθαι*;¹²⁶ one of the keys to understanding the ridiculous subject of Dio's speech is the very art form he criticizes at its beginning. This revelation illuminates a claim he makes at 33.34 that

¹²³ Eunapius 6.2.4, while not putting Aristophanes in league with Socrates' accusers, says that the comedy's success led to mockery of Socrates and emboldened his accusers to bring their charges against him.

¹²⁴ Aelian *VH* 2.13 in particular asserts the high artistic quality and novelty of the drama: ὁ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνης λαβόμενος ὑποθέσεως εὖ μάλα ἀνδρικῶς, ὑποσπείρας γέλωτα καὶ τὸ ἐκ τῶν μέτρων αἰμύλον καὶ τὸν ἄριστον τῶν Ἑλλήνων λαβὼν ὑπόθεσιν ... ἄτε οὖν ἄηθες πρᾶγμα καὶ ὄραμα παράδοξον ἐν σκηνῇ καὶ κωμῳδία Σωκράτης, πρῶτον μὲν ἐξέπληξεν ἢ κωμῳδία τῷ ἀδοκίτῳ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ...

¹²⁵ Kokkinia 2007.

¹²⁶ *Knights* 107.

jest and mockery have done nothing to curb this vice. Of course laughing at it does not stop it; farting is a comic *topos*—it gives rise to laughter.¹²⁷

Therefore, his seriousness is comic. The vice against which he inveighs at such length, a vice so terrible that he can only refer to it obliquely, is breaking wind. But there may still be truly serious elements to the speech. For, as Kokkinia observes, while discussing this strange and trivial topic Dio manages to mention several more serious vices in the process: sexual license, susceptibility to flattery, and effeminate behavior in men, among others. He pretends to criticize Old Comedy, but really he is using the seriocomic mode himself.

§7.6. Some Objectors to Old Comedy: Aristides and Plutarch

Thus Dio's rejection of Old Comedy is, firstly, necessitated by the *persona* he adopts for that speech (a philosopher whose discourse was more in line with Socrates or a Cynic street preacher than a comic poet) and, secondly, hardly a rejection at all (though he affected to renounce the seriocomic mode of Old Comedy, it was the main mode of discourse in the speech). We have seen so far only one earnest objector to Old Comedy, Plutarch in his *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander* (to whom we will return);¹²⁸ we will see that his objections are similar to those raised by Aelius Aristides. These are best understood in the context of the problems that Old Comedy and its discourse pose for readers under the Empire in particular.

We have already studied in chapter 5 a narrative that is highly skeptical of the frankness of speech associated with Old Comedy. This distrust of Old Comedy's pretensions to corrective abuse and the democratic values associated with it already existed in the fifth century, but the

¹²⁷ In addition, if Dio is adopting a Cynic *persona* along the lines of Diogenes, then such a character inveighing against farting is especially unexpected and humorous. Along with outspokenness and shamelessness of speech, farting and shamelessness with one's bodily functions are Cynic *topoi* especially associated with Diogenes, on which see Krueger 1996, 226-7.

¹²⁸ See §7.2.

problems had become particularly acute by the Second Sophistic. Discussing the problem of reading the literature of Classical Athens under the Empire and especially during this period, Connolly locates a basic dissonance in the use of Classical texts.¹²⁹ They are, on the one hand, both a point of cultural pride to which Greek aristocrats could turn¹³⁰ and a means of instructing young citizens who might someday enter political life. On the other hand, they represent a period and a city whose values were quite contrary to the political realities under the Empire: ἰσηγορία, παρρησία, and the rule of the δῆμος.

Using such texts required, Connolly suggests, re-contextualization and re-understanding, and, as we have seen, παρρησία in particular had long been in the process of being revalued.¹³¹ Our case in point has been Horace, who re-interpreted the *libertas* of satire not as the public, biting abuse of Lucilius but as a mode of discourse to be exercised privately and courteously among friends for their edification.¹³² As Konstan notes, frank speech is a characteristic of true friendship; it differs from flattery, which seeks to benefit not the addressee but rather the speaker himself.¹³³ This is, of course, precisely the fault that Dio found (or, rather, claimed to find) in Old Comedy.

In *Or.* 29, a speech entitled Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν κωμωδεῖν, Aristides considers the usefulness and propriety of Old Comic personal abuse. His speech aims to persuade the Smyrnaeans to halt a dramatic performance comparable to Old Comedy. The evidence for such performances is scarce: the reperformance of Old Comedy was uncommon after the third century BC, and evidence for the staging of new comedies in the style of Old Comedy under the Empire

¹²⁹ Connolly 2001.

¹³⁰ Thus Bowie 1973, 209.

¹³¹ See Konstan 1995; Konstan 1996; Konstan *et al.* 1998, 3-8, for discussion of this development; cf. Hunter 2009, 104.

¹³² See §5.5.

¹³³ See especially Konstan 1996.

is scarce. I prefer to believe that the speech is a sophistic exercise intended to explore the issues associated with such humor.¹³⁴ Aristides makes the same charges as Dio: that the comic poets do not perform a corrective function by attacking the bad, but rather have ulterior motives for their abuse;¹³⁵ such mockery corrupts the spectators.¹³⁶ But unlike Dio, Aristides also criticizes comedy on principle. He says that comedy's supporters argue that wrongdoers are rebuked by comic abuse and become σώφρονες as a result,¹³⁷ but rails against this proposition. He rebukes it on the same grounds for which it is elsewhere praised: he criticizes its abuse and shameful talk, i.e., its παρρησία;¹³⁸ he suggests that such open criticism permanently harms everyone's reputation;¹³⁹ he argues that the people ought to have specially selected teachers, not mere poets;¹⁴⁰ and he attacks the seriocomic style itself:

δεῖ γὰρ τὸν γε διδάσκαλον οὐκ εἰς τὰ θέατρα βαδίζειν κάκεῖ νουθετεῖν· ταῦτα μὲν γὰρ ταῖς ἡδοναῖς καὶ ταῖς ψυχαγωγίαις ἀνάκειται· ἀλλ' εἰσὶ τόποι δῆπουθεν ἐπώνυμοι τοῦ προσρήματος, οὗ δεῖ φιλοσοφεῖν, καὶ οὐδ' ἐν τούτοις τοῦτον, οἶμαι, τὸν τρόπον χλευάζοντα καὶ κακῶς ἀνέδην ἀγορεύοντα, ἀλλ' ὡς χρή τοὺς ἐλευθέρους παιδεύοντα καὶ προσδιδάσκοντα πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην φυλάττεσθαι.

For the teacher ought not go to the theaters and there admonish; for theaters are established for pleasure and enjoyment. But there are, of course, places named after this title, where one ought to engage in philosophy, and, I think, not in these places in this way, mocking and speaking ill without restraint, but, as is appropriate for free men, instructing and teaching in particular how to guard against idleness.

¹³⁴ Jones 1993, who surveys the evidence for the performance of Old Comedy after the fifth century, is much too ready to accept that this speech is concerned with actual dramatic production.

¹³⁵ *Or.* 29.22-6.

¹³⁶ *Or.* 29.29-30.

¹³⁷ *Or.* 29.16: καίτοι τοιμῶσί τινες λέγειν ὡς ἀγαθὸν τὸ κακῶς ἐξεῖναι λέγειν ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ, τοὺς τε γὰρ κακῶς βεβιωκότας ἐξελέγεσθαι καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους φόβῳ τοῦ κωμωδεῖσθαι σώφρονας παρέχειν αὐτούς.

¹³⁸ *Or.* 29.4-15.

¹³⁹ *Or.* 29.27.

¹⁴⁰ *Or.* 29.17-9. At *Or.* 29.16, he suggests that the comic poets or the performers claiming to educate are drunkards and expresses doubt that μεθύοντας αὐτούς ἐτέρους ποιεῖν σωφρονεῖν; cf. the last line of the Honestus epigram discussed throughout chapter 6 and above at §7.4: χῶ μεθύων ἀστὸν ἐσωφρόνισεν.

As we have seen, comedy and philosophy are compared,¹⁴¹ but Aristides rejects the seriocomic mixture altogether. Towards the end of his speech, he returns to this argument:

ἡδέως δ' ἂν ἐροίμην τοὺς χαίροντας τῷ λαιδορεῖν πότερον παίζουσιν ἢ σπουδάζουσιν. εἰ μὲν γὰρ παίζουσι, τί προσποιῶνται νουθετεῖν; εἰ δὲ σπουδάζουσιν, αὐθις αὖ πυθέσθαι καλὸν αὐτῶν πότερόν ποτ' ἀληθῆ ταῦτα λαιδοροῦσιν ἢ ψευδῆ. εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἀληθῆ, τί μαθόντες οὐ χρῶνται τοῖς νόμοις;

I would gladly inquire of those who delight in abuse whether they are jesting or serious. For if they are jesting, why do they pretend to admonish? But if they are serious, it would be worthwhile to ask them whether they speak their abuse truly or falsely. For if it is true, on what ground do they not employ the laws?¹⁴²

The latter passage in particular is an especially clear indictment of the seriocomic mode, with its collocation of *παίζειν* and *σπουδάζειν* and the claim that the laughable and the serious ought not be combined.¹⁴³ This is related to claim that there ought to be specific, set venues for education and moral instruction: courts for those who have broken the law, and schools for those who are to learn philosophy.

In one passage, Aristides does praise Old Comedy, but he is careful to contextualize it both historically and within the plays themselves. On the only occasion in the speech when he distinguishes Old Comedy proper from the hypothetical modern comedy that he attacks, he says that Old Comedy at least had *parabaseis* with *νουθεσία καὶ παιδευσίς*.¹⁴⁴ Aristides' point must be, firstly, that such parabolic material is distinct from the abusive humor under discussion and, while perhaps admirable, is no longer relevant: his "modern" comedy does not have such passages and personal abuse is the real topic in question. Secondly, parabolic material is itself

¹⁴¹ §7.4.

¹⁴² *Or.* 29.32.

¹⁴³ Noted by Plebe 1952, 97-8. Behr 1981, 389 n. 11, detects another possible dig at the Cynics and τὸ σπουδογέλοιον at 29.18, but the text is corrupt. Behr observes that the seriocomic mode is also criticized in *Or.* 3.628 and 34.57.

¹⁴⁴ *Or.* 29.28.

demarcated within the play: the poet, after all, emerges and speaks of purportedly serious matters, and the lines between actor and character, seriousness and humor, and fiction and reality are at least putatively clearer.¹⁴⁵

Aristides rejects not only comic abuse but all morally corrective abuse. He is mainly concerned here, as elsewhere, with matters of reputation and propriety: using the ancient Athenians as an example, he says that nearly all their writings conferred honor on them, but comedy alone criticized them—and still gives the Athenians' enemies a means of defaming them.¹⁴⁶ Such criticisms of *παρρησία*, lack of concern for reputation, and the seriocomic could just as well be made against the Cynics, whom Aristides disliked and elsewhere did attack for their frank talk in inappropriate places.¹⁴⁷ For Aristides, being *σώφρων* is a matter of being circumspect, having good taste, and recognizing that different modes of discourse demand different venues and audiences, i.e., that proper behavior demands careful appreciation of and adherence to one's social roles. Old Comedy's frank, unrestrained speech is not an appropriate model, because it does not acknowledge such boundaries but rather exposes everything on stage before the people. This is an essential problem that Old Comedy's abuse poses; as we saw, Horace dealt with this issue by insisting in *Serm.* 1.4 that his satires were meant not for the public at large, but for a carefully demarcated group, his friends.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Aristides would have good reason to excuse the Athenians and Old Comedy at least a little. Aristides cites the Old Comic poets with some frequency and was a sufficiently strict Atticist that he even had an admirer in Phrynichus, whose conservatism and use of Old Comedy were noted above in §7.2. On Phrynichus and Aristides, see Jones 2009.

¹⁴⁶ *Or.* 29.27: *μόνη δὲ ἡ κωμῳδία διέσυρε καὶ παρέσχε τοῖς βουλομένοις βλασφημεῖν ἔτι νυνὶ λαβᾶς· ἔδοξαν γὰρ αὐτοὶ παρ' αὐτῶν ἐξελέγχεσθαι.* This reminds one of Critias' evaluation of Archilochus preserved in Aelian *VH* 10.13, where Critias criticizes Archilochus neither for the quality of his poetry nor even its effect on its immediate listeners, but because Archilochus put all of his faults on display and left such a reputation for himself. On Critias' evaluation and such a stance on iambic and comic poetry, see Rosen 2007, 248-55.

¹⁴⁷ *Or.* 3.654-94.

¹⁴⁸ See §5.5; cf. Hunter 2009, 99-106.

In this context, Plutarch's criticisms of Old Comedy come more clearly into focus. In his comparison of Aristophanes and Menander, he argued that Aristophanes wrote shameful, licentious, obscene, and bitter things for immoderate men (οὐδενὶ γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔοικε μετρίῳ τὴν ποίησιν γεγραφέναι, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν αἰσχρὰ καὶ ἀσελγῆ τοῖς ἀκολάστοις, τὰ βλάσφημα δὲ καὶ πικρὰ τοῖς βασκάνοις καὶ κακοήθεσιν) and faulted him for inconsistency in his language and characters (τοσαύτας διαφορὰς ἔχουσα καὶ ἀνομοιότητας).¹⁴⁹ Such a response, of course, rebuts the claim that Old Comedy—like the Cynic mode—is a tool for moderating and correcting such kinds of vice.¹⁵⁰ Likewise, his evaluation in the *Quaestiones Convivales* of the seriousness and outspokenness of Old Comedy now appears quite pointed:

ἢ τε γὰρ ἐν ταῖς λεγομέναις παραβάσεσιν αὐτῶν σπουδῆ καὶ παρρησία λίαν ἄκρατός ἐστι καὶ σύντονος, ἢ τε πρὸς τὰ σκώματα καὶ βωμολοχίας εὐχέρεια δεινῶς κατάκορος καὶ ἀναπεπταμένη καὶ γέμουσα ῥημάτων ἀκόσμων καὶ ἀκολάστων ὀνομάτων.

For the seriousness in the so-called *parabaseis* and its outspokenness is too immoderate and intense, and its readiness at jests and buffoonery is terribly excessive, impudent, and full of intemperate words and licentious language.¹⁵¹

Unlike Aristides, Plutarch does not even concede that the *parabaseis* were useful or could be a useful model. He rejects Old Comedy on the whole, accusing it of being excessive, immoderate, and base, and he thereby inverts the justification and evaluation of Old Comedy's proponents, who had asserted that its frank talk, vulgar language, and personal abuse were tools for correcting those who are base or immoderate. In another passage, he denies Old Comedy a place

¹⁴⁹ *Mor.* 854d.

¹⁵⁰ Indeed, whereas Plutarch says that Old Comic poets wrote things that were ἀσελγῆ, Platonius in *Koster* I, 8, says that they attacked those συζώντας ἀσελγεία.

¹⁵¹ *Mor.* 711f-712a. As in the *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander*, the more obviously aesthetic evaluations also prove to be ethical. Among his complaints against Old Comedy and its use at symposia here is that symposiasts would need grammarians to sit beside them and explain the identity of each person who is mocked. This criticism is more directly against the unintelligibility of Old Comedy compared with Menander, whose writing, Plutarch says, is sweet, familiar, and plain. However, at the same time, Plutarch is also acknowledging that in reading Old Comedy one must always deal with the fact that it treats and abuses real individuals, not fictions as New Comedy.

in the sphere of the seriocomic. As Dio had, he likens a person who aims at honest rebuke to a doctor, and he explains that outspokenness only admits a certain kind and degree of humor:

ἡ παρρησία δέχεται τὸ ἐπιδέξιον καὶ τὸ ἀστεῖον, ἂν ἡ χάρις τὴν σεμνότητα σφίξει, θρασύτης δὲ καὶ βδελυρία καὶ ὕβρις προσοῦσα πάνυ διαφθείρει καὶ ἀπόλλυσιν ... ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῖς κωμικοῖς πολλὰ πρὸς τὸ θέατρον αὐστηρὰ καὶ πολιτικὰ πεποιήτο· συμμεμιγμένον δὲ τὸ γελοῖον αὐτοῖς καὶ βωμολόχον, ὥσπερ σιτίοις ὑπότριμμα μοχθηρόν, ἐξίτηλον ἐποίει τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ ἄχρηστον, ὥστε περιῆν κακοηθείας δόξα καὶ βδελυρίας τοῖς λέγουσι, χρήσιμον δὲ τοῖς ἀκούουσιν οὐδὲν ἀπὸ τῶν λεγομένων.

Outspokenness admits cleverness and urbanity, provided that its charm preserve solemnity, but boldness, shamelessness, and outrageousness, when present, completely ruin and destroy it ... for many serious political matters had been treated in the theater by the comic poets; but laughter and buffoonery when mixed up with them, just like a bad mash with bread, used to make the outspokenness faded and useless, so that the appearance of poor character and shamelessness remained for those who spoke, and nothing useful from what was said remained for those who listened.¹⁵²

Here, Plutarch does not deny the seriocomic mode altogether, as had Aristides; nor, rather unexpectedly given his objections cited above, does he even deny that the Old Comic poets had serious social and political concerns. His complaint is against their language and type of jest, which, he claims, obscure their *παρρησία* and make it useless to the spectators. In this regard, the three objections found in Plutarch—*Mor.* 854d; 711f-712a; 67f-68c—are all quite different in their particulars. The first objects that Aristophanes wrote immoderate poetry for immoderate men using inconsistent language; the second objects to the immoderation of Old Comedy's *παρρησία* and jest; the third objects that such immoderation ruins any serious aims and confers no benefit. On the contrary, in this third passage, he says that not only is it ineffective, but it corrupts the *δόξα* of the poets, just as Aristides had said that Old Comedy damaged the reputation of Athens.¹⁵³

¹⁵² *Mor.* 67f-68c.

¹⁵³ Given that this passage is about how one ought to rebuke one's friends, concern for the reputation of the one who rebukes is quite natural. That Plutarch is giving examples of modes of rebuke among friends is also surely why he

Plutarch's argument against Old Comedy has entailed redefining the terms. For Plutarch, appropriate *παρρησία* is not frank, unrestrained speech before the *demos*; he has reconfigured it just as Horace reconfigured *libertas*. Such free speech is dangerous and ineffective, and the *demos* is not the appropriate audience in any case: we have already seen Plutarch's distrust of it and of democratic values in general.¹⁵⁴ Rather, *παρρησία* ought to be exercised among friends, where, while harshness may sometimes be called for, it is properly contextualized.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, Old Comedy's freeness of speech and freeness with language is not characteristic of the free man; Plutarch asserts that this humor is φορτικὸν καὶ θυμελικὸν καὶ βάνανσον, which Hunter argues are characteristics associated with not just the man who is uneducated or boorish but also not free—ἀνελεύθερος.¹⁵⁶ The appropriate and truly effective seriocomic mode is to be found not in Old Comedy but Menander:

ἢ τε τῆς σπουδῆς πρὸς τὴν παιδιὰν ἀνάκρσις ἐπ' οὐδὲν ἂν πεποιῆσθαι δόξειεν ἀλλ' ἢ πεπωκότων καὶ διακεχυμένων ἡδονὴν ὁμοῦ καὶ ὠφέλειαν.

The mixture of the seriousness and playful [sc. in Menander] would seem to have been done for no other purpose than for the pleasure and profit of those who are drunk and relaxed.¹⁵⁷

As in Aristides, Old Comedy fails as a model in Plutarch because its humor, and in particular its personal abuse, are so often predicated on a lack of concern for appropriate speech, social roles, and boundaries. It is not surprising, then, that Plutarch prefers Menander and his useful

grants here, unlike elsewhere, that Old Comedy had serious political interests; it is so that he can reject the mode of Old Comedy as ineffective on principle. Likewise, the slightly different valuations of Old Comedy in the other two cases are due to their different contexts. The first, from the *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander*, has the most generally aesthetic concerns and evaluates what kinds of humor are enjoyed by what kinds of men. The second is concerned with comedy at symposia, and there Plutarch is preoccupied with what comedy is most appropriate for symposiasts and what comedy's effect on them will be.

¹⁵⁴ See especially §5.3.

¹⁵⁵ Connolly 2001, 362; Hunter 2009, 104-5.

¹⁵⁶ Hunter 2009, 81-2.

¹⁵⁷ *Mor.* 712b.

illustration of types of characters.¹⁵⁸ Aristophanes and his Athens represent a system of values and discourse that he does not and cannot share: they are uneven, undifferentiated, wild, and much too biting. Plutarch rejects Old Comedy by taking the values ascribed to it elsewhere, reassessing their meanings, and declaring Old Comedy a failure on the basis of the very terms on which its supporters had judged it praiseworthy.¹⁵⁹

Hunter traces Plutarch's views on poetry and democracy ultimately back to Plato,¹⁶⁰ whose narrative of the history of poetry and democracy in the *Laws* is of particular interest: according to Plato, the genres of poetry were once separate, but after a time, in their pursuit of pleasing the audience, poets began to innovate and mix forms, beginning a lawlessness alien to the muses (τῆς ἀμούσου παρανομίας) that would eventually cause a lawlessness in the spectators with regard to music (παρανομίαν εἰς τὴν μουσικὴν). Poets began to violate the laws of genre to gain the approval of the crowd, rather than of the educated few. As a result, the common people began to judge poetry, which had been reserved for the educated elite, and this democracy in the theater developed into political democracy and a breakdown in the appropriate social order:

νῦν δὲ ἤρξε μὲν ἡμῖν ἐκ μουσικῆς ἢ πάντων εἰς πάντα σοφίας δόξα καὶ παρανομία, συνεφέσπετο δὲ ἐλευθερία. ἄφοβοι γὰρ ἐγίνοντο ὡς εἰδότες, ἢ δὲ ἄδεια ἀναισχυντίαν ἐνέτεκεν· τὸ γὰρ τὴν τοῦ βελτίονος δόξαν μὴ φοβεῖσθαι διὰ θράσος, τοῦτ' αὐτό ἐστιν σχεδὸν ἢ πονηρὰ ἀναισχυντία.

But now, from the musical art, the opinion that all men are wise in all things and lawlessness began, and freedom followed. For they became fearless as if they had knowledge, and fearlessness begot shamelessness: for not fearing the opinion of one's better because of boldness, this very thing is basically vile shamelessness.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ See Hunter 2009, 84-6.

¹⁵⁹ In particular, Old Comedy's *παρρησία* is reassessed as servile flattery: rather than a means of rebuking faults wherever they lie, it is used to please and flatter the *demos* (see Connolly 2001, 363). As we have seen, this view was incipient in the Old Oligarch, and it appeared in Dio's (or rather Dio's persona's) evaluation of Old Comedy.

¹⁶⁰ Hunter 2000; Hunter 2009, 14, 89.

¹⁶¹ Plato *Laws* 3.700a-701b.

This, of course, resembles the narrative critical of comedy that we saw in chapter 5, that the origin and development of comedy's personal abuse is caused by, and is a cause of, social and political chaos. In this case, the development of comedy is once again fundamentally connected to the emergence of democracy. Plutarch criticizes Old Comedy's verbal unevenness, its abusiveness, and its inappropriate mixture of the serious and the comic. But, as Plato shows, the problem runs deeper: poetry that disregards established systems makes its listeners disregard them too.

But Old Comedy, of course, makes it its business to disregard such systems. We saw above how, in his *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander*, Plutarch complains that Aristophanes has characters use inconsistent and immoderate language,¹⁶² and inconsistent language is concomitant with inconsistent behavior. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, Mnesilochus can turn from a buffoon into a wit as the comedy demands; in the *Frogs*, Dionysus' changeability of character alters the outcome of the play.¹⁶³ In criticizing Old Comedy's inconsistency, Plutarch perhaps has in mind paratragic speech in particular.¹⁶⁴ Having a low character speak in high language would be quite in line with his concerns about Old Comedy's violation of social hierarchies and traditional systems. Here, too, language is often associated with behavior,¹⁶⁵ and Trygaeus, for example, can not only act like a Bellerophon, but even triumph where the latter

¹⁶² §7.2.

¹⁶³ Silk 2000 terms such characters or recreate themselves as the situation demands "recreative" and argues that they have little or no continuity of speech or behavior (though he admits some exceptions, such as Strepsiades). Whether or not one is willing to accept such a strong claim, the important thing is that such inconsistency is diametrically opposed to the ideal approached by Menander's characters. On inconsistency of plot in Old Comedy, which Plutarch does not specifically mention, see Lowe 2000, 86-8.

¹⁶⁴ *Mor.* 85d3: ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἀπὸ κλήρου ἀπονέμει τοῖς προσώποις τὰ προστυχόντα τῶν ὀνομάτων, καὶ οὐκ ἂν διαγνοίης εἶθ' υἱὸς ἐστὶν εἴτε πατήρ εἴτ' ἄγρικοι εἴτε θεὸς εἴτε γραῦς εἶθ' ἥρωες ὁ διαλεγόμενος.

¹⁶⁵ As I argue above, Plutarch's criticisms in the *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander* are clearly contingent on the belief that the language one enjoys reflects one's own character and behavior, though he does not approach this in so schematic a way as Plato in *Laws* 3.700a-701b, quoted above, in which undifferentiated poetry produces an undifferentiated (i.e., democratic) state.

fails.¹⁶⁶ From this perspective, such parody is dangerous not merely because it is a lower form ridiculing a higher form, nor even because it is a lower form in competition with a higher form. The problem would be simpler were relationship only antipathetic rather than sympathetic, but the parodic act is more complex and pernicious than that: it is a lower form interfacing with a higher form and producing a synthesis.¹⁶⁷ In comedy and tragedy, the higher form becomes a part of the lower form and generates something new—a miscegenation that must have looked problematic to Plutarch, who had no recourse to arguments that the different genres emerged from different sources. As I have suggested in chapters 3 and 4, Aristotle's idea that tragedy and comedy were originally distinct forms with separate lines of development encountered opposition early on.¹⁶⁸ The view that comedy had a common origin with tragedy is at least as early as Eratosthenes.

But Old Comedy contained even more dangerous forms of transgression and confusion of the traditional systems which would increase the purported threat to the audience. A real person of high standing, such as Lamachus, could be brought on stage and made to speak and behave like a fool; and recent or past historical events could be reimagined and rewritten so that lofty and important acts are brought low.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps most dangerously of all, Old Comedy had little regard for so-called dramatic illusion, and personal abuse could be directed against spectators by characters on the stage. By claiming that Old Comedy engages in a seriocomic discourse that

¹⁶⁶ Indeed, a low character behaving like a lofty one is the inversion of the sort of complaints leveled against Euripides in the *Frogs*. At *Frogs* 1064-5, e.g., he is blamed for clothing kings in rags and making rich men act like poor men.

¹⁶⁷ On parody as synthesis rather than mere ridicule, see Rose 1979 and Rose 1993.

¹⁶⁸ See also §2.6 for some of the tensions in Aristotle's own model for the development of the different genres of drama.

¹⁶⁹ In *Acharnians* 496-540, e.g., the beginnings of the Peloponnesian war are so rewritten that the war becomes a personal vendetta by Pericles because the Megarians stole some courtesans. As for ancient history, while no Old Comic mythological burlesque survives, the *Dionysalexandros* rewrote the origins of the Trojan War, making it a great misunderstanding. Indeed, Sells 2011, 67-8, entertains the possibility that the Trojan War was averted at the end of the play.

uses personal abuse for corrective purposes, the proponents of Old Comedy are disavowing a firm break between drama and reality, and not even that basic differentiation is left.¹⁷⁰ The danger is not merely that the audience could be induced to behave badly by seeing low characters do and say low things. The relationship pretends to be much more direct: low characters actually interact with the audience—and Old Comedy's proponents claim that it is *useful*!¹⁷¹

§7.7. Conclusion

These are the reasons why Plutarch and Aristides are so eager to revalue Old Comedy's purported virtues, particular its parrhesiastic, corrective personal abuse.¹⁷² As we have noted throughout, the complaints of Plutarch, Aristides, and to some extent Dio are of the same stripe as the negative narratives about Old Comedy's origin and development that were discussed in chapter 5: they form a school of thought that rejects Old Comedy's pretensions to corrective, frank personal abuse because they have a different perspective on the nature of frank speech. These critics supposed that comedy's frank speech was licentious, vile, and ruinous to the state; indeed, they sometimes charged that it was not true frank speech at all, but servile flattery that further corrupted its audience.

However, such criticism is uncommon, and, as I have shown, most sources praise Old Comedy's use of the seriocomic mode. We have seen that Old Comedy's frank speech was judged to be analogous to the Cynic mode of discourse, and praise of it is found in epigrams,

¹⁷⁰ Evanthius criticizes Plautus, too, for this fault: *illud quoque mirabile in eo [sc. Terentio] ... quod nihil ad populum facit actorem uelut extra comoediam loqui, quod uitium Plauti frequentissimum (De fabula 3.8)*. On the reception of Plautus, which is in some ways quite similar to Aristophanes', see Hunter 2009, 89-99.

¹⁷¹ As we saw in chapter 2, this is a basic problem that Aristotle's system has with some forms of comedy and iambus.

¹⁷² Old Comedy may not have uniquely posed these problems. Mime in particular may have mixed systems in some of these same ways, though it could not lay claim to the same democratic pedigree as Old Comedy and its abuse was not justified as being corrective. This coupled with Old Comedy's place in the literary canon made it an important object of critique. In contrast, mime needed no such sustained criticism. On the subversiveness of mime, see Hunter 2009, 643-62 (esp. 650-5), reprinting Hunter 2002.

scholia, hypotheses, the treatises, and elsewhere. These interpret Old Comedy in a more credulous fashion, taking the poets at their word, as did the positive narrative about Old Comedy's development in chapter 5. As we will see in the final chapter, the views of Plutarch and those critical of Old Comedy were on the whole rejected.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, we have seen a range of criticisms of Old Comedy's abuse and several attempts to promote a different kind of comedy. In chapters 2, 3, and 4, I reconstructed early and influential histories of comedy that connect its origins to festival and reciprocal abuse. These accounts reject the idea that personal abuse of third parties was an original or essential feature of comedy, and Aristotle, the Varronian history, and the negative account in chapter 5 make cases for why comedy ought not center around such personal abuse. In the previous chapter, we saw that Plutarch was especially critical of Old Comedy and attacked the idea that its abuse could be useful: rather than benefitting audiences, he proposed that it blurs boundaries and upsets society (as he would presumably claim democracy itself does). But the belief that corrective abuse was comedy's function trumped these arguments, so much so that comedy's history and even the definition of the genre came to be constructed around it. As we saw in chapter 6, even satyr play, like Roman satire, was absorbed into the genre and its history.

In the fourth century AD, Aristophanes, it seems, began to be used in schools more widely than Menander, who, as we mentioned in the last chapter, survived mainly in short *gnomai* excerpted from his plays.¹ Aristophanes was probably attractive not only because of his good Attic Greek but also because, unlike New Comedy, his plays preserved *realia* about

¹ On the survival (i.e., loss) of Menander, see Easterling 1995.

Classical Athens.² They had such material precisely because Old Comedy engaged with politics and society through, for example, personal abuse. But, if the plays were being read to learn about Athens and the Athenians, the historical figures mocked in them could not be ignored or dismissed as fictions. The view that I explored in the last chapter must have seemed particularly salient: Aristophanes' humor may have been viciously abusive towards historical individuals, but it was for a good cause. It was a mixture of the laughable and the serious that pursued a moral aim, one that was comparable to philosophy in general and Cynicism in particular. This rationalization may have validated Old Comedy's vulgar and abusive humor and contributed to its survival.

No such rationalization survives for why Aristophanes was studied and copied and entered into the manuscript tradition, nor does any counter-argument to Plutarch. But many centuries later, the Byzantine scholars John Tzetzes and Thomas Magister still supposed that comedy developed as a kind of moral correction. They held the view that Old Comedy mixed mockery with a didactic goal and was, therefore, a moderating force. Tzetzes says that Old Comedy drove the dissolute to εὐκοσμία;³ in his second *Life* of Aristophanes, Thomas Magister explains that comic poets mocked wrongdoers and gave instruction in what was appropriate.⁴

This Byzantine view extends to the judgment of individual plays and is not merely theoretical. In his hypothesis to the *Frogs*, Tzetzes says that the play was composed as criticism

² Wilson 1983, 20.

³ Koster XXIIa, 69-71.

⁴ Koster XXIII 2, 10-3: ἐτάχθησαν ἐπὶ τοῦτο οἱ κωμικοὶ ποιηταὶ ἐν μέρει παιδιᾶς σκώμματά τε τῶν ἀδικούντων καὶ διδαχὴν, ὧν προσήκεν, ἐργαζόμενοι; cf. XXIII 1, 9-15 (Thomas's first *Life*), which especially emphasizes that Aristophanes' plays were full of χάρις: δράματα δὲ τέσσαρα πρὸς τοῖς πενήκοντα γέγραφεν, ἅπαντα εὐμουσίας καὶ χάριτος ἄττικῆς μεστὰ καὶ πείθοντα τοὺς ἀκούοντας θαυμάζειν τε καὶ κροτεῖν. οὕτω δὲ τοῦ τῆς πολιτείας συμφέροντος ἐποιεῖτο λόγον, ὡς μηδένα τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς λαμπρᾶς τύχης μηδέποτε ἀποσχέσθαι τοῦ σκώπτειν, εἰ ἀδικούντος ἦσθετο· ὅθεν τὴν παρρησίαν αὐτοῦ δεδιότες οἱ τοιοῦτοι μετρίους σφᾶς αὐτοὺς παρεῖχον ἀεὶ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ λυσιτελοῦντας.

of poets who are flat, high-talking, false, and talentless, but who, in their madness and lack of self-knowledge, think that they are best. Turning to the play's political content, Tzetzes writes:

τοῖς δὲ γελοίοις τούτοις ὁ κωμικὸς μεθόδῳ δεινότητος ἀνύει πάνυ γενναῖα καὶ σπουδαιότατα.

With these jests, the comic poet in his clever method accomplishes aims that are altogether noble and of the utmost seriousness.⁵

Thus the analysis that Old Comedy's jest was used for a serious, political end persisted into Byzantine times. Based on the evidence available, it seems to have completely overshadowed the more purely aesthetic evaluations, like those found in Koster III, the treatise that evaluated the comic poets based on their influences and style,⁶ and the negative evaluations, like Plutarch's.

Likewise, the theory of comedy underlying Tzetzes' analysis, that Greek comedy could (and perhaps ought to be) civically engaged, must have overshadowed the theories that rejected such engagement. For both Tzetzes and Magister are proponents of the idea that Old Comedy's main business was attacking misdeeds and that Old Comedy and its corrective abuse vanished because evildoers passed laws to curtail them.⁷ Middle and New Comedy were, therefore, attenuated forms—forms that did not survive for Tzetzes and Magister and were, by this analysis, perhaps not great losses.

I noted at the beginning of this study how unsatisfying such a theory can seem. Its functionalist analysis of comedy is thoroughly reductionist: Aristophanic comedy is comparable to a Cynic screed, only it is more attractive and effective. In contrast, in the previous chapter, we saw a fine epigram about Aristophanes that may seem more palatable:

⁵ Tzetzes hyp. 1, 40-1. This evaluation is rather surprising because, while Tzetzes has a very high opinion of some of Aristophanes' other plays (especially the *Clouds*), he otherwise evaluates the *Frogs* quite poorly. His commentary even on the first line says as much (see, too, e.g., *ad* 100a). Nonetheless, here and on line 1 he finds praise for the play's political aims.

⁶ On this treatise, see §3.6 and §7.2.

⁷ See Koster XIa; XXIa; XXXIII 2.

αἱ Χάριτες, τέμενός τι λαβεῖν ὄπερ οὐχὶ πεσεῖται
ζητοῦσαι, ψυχὴν εὖρον Ἀριστοφάνους.

The Graces, seeking to gain a sanctuary that would never fall,
Found the soul of Aristophanes.⁸

The epigram is remarkable both for its elegance and for praising the beauty of Aristophanic comedy. There is no mention of an admonishing muse who accompanies the Graces, as in the first two lines of Honestus' epigram;⁹ here, Aristophanes' poetry is eternal because of his artistic genius. But, if I am right, the ancient controversy about the interpretation of personal abuse and its proper role in comedy helped inform how the genre was constructed, what comedy survived, and how it continued to be interpreted even after antiquity. Through the proposition that its vulgarity, viciousness, and abusiveness really did attack wrongdoers and benefit the democracy, such comedy could be justified and, perhaps, survives for us. The Graces may have proved right in their calculation only because of the admonishing muse.

⁸ XIV Page.

⁹ A.P. 11.32 (=Honestus 8 G.-P. [*Garland*]): Μούσης νουθεσίην φιλοπαίγμονος εὔρετο Βάκχος, ὃ Σικυών, / ἐν σοὶ κῶμον ἄγων Χαρίτων; the epigram is quoted in full and translated at §6.2.

Appendix

Summaries of Certain Treatises on Comedy in Koster

Throughout this study, I have made extensive use of the materials on comedy compiled by Koster 1975 in the *Prolegomena de Comoedia*. While I call the compilation treatises throughout for the sake of convenience, this is something of a misnomer. Some are indeed treatises appended to manuscripts of Aristophanes,¹ but much of the collection comes from other sources that discuss the history and nature of Greek comedy. Koster XVI, for example, is an entry from the *Etymologicum Magnum*; XXVIII is a *Life of Aristophanes*. Many of these sources are anonymous and undated, and it is often unclear how ancient or how accurate their information is. Some are certainly late. Diomedes, Evanthius, and Donatus (Koster XXIV-XXVI) wrote around the fourth century AD, and the works of John Tzetzes and Thomas Magister are Byzantine. But these sources can preserve very old information. For example, Diomedes quotes lost works of Varro and Theophrastus; Koster III, one of the anonymous treatises appended to a fourteenth century manuscript of Aristophanes, is an epitome of an especially learned source and is thought to have derived from Alexandrian scholarship.

Because some of these are very obscure and discussions about them can be difficult to follow, I have summarized the salient points of the treatises that I have used. The summaries below are not comprehensive. They record only the points important for our discussion, such as

¹ See Koster 1975, v-vi, for a convenient table of the treatises and the codices to which they are attached.

etymologies of κωμῳδία, descriptions of the history of comedy and its abuse, evaluations of personal abuse, etc. I give first the author (if known) followed by the name of the work.

I: Attributed to Platonius; entitled Περὶ διαφορᾶς κωμῳδίας. Aristophanes, Eupolis, and Cratinus are given as the main poets of Old Comedy, which flourished during and was enabled by the democracy. The poets would abuse generals, bad jurors, the greedy, and the licentious. When the democracy declined and oligarchs took power, Old Comedy ceased abusing wrongdoers. Middle Comedy mocked bad poets. In Old Comedy, portrait masks were used, but in Middle and New they used truly ridiculous masks so that they would not offend their Macedonian rulers even by chance.

II: Attributed to Platonius; entitled Περὶ διαφορᾶς χαρακτήρων. The treatise compares the styles of Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Eupolis. Cratinus is sloppy with his plots and very abusive against his targets. Eupolis is especially imaginative and pleasing. Aristophanes is the best of both styles, being both abusive towards those who error and poetically pleasing.

III: Anonymous. Comedy was founded by Susarion. The word κωμῳδία is from κῶμη or κωμάζειν; the word τραγῳδία was coined because γλεῦκος was the prize at the Lenaia or because lees were used for masks. The treatise then describes the most important poets of each phase of comedy. On this treatise, see §3.6.

IV: Anonymous. The word κωμῳδία derives from κῶμαι, because villagers who were wronged used go to the house of the wrongdoer at night and abuse them (but they refrained from saying his name). The city saw that this was an effective means of averting wrong and institutionalized

it as comedy, and poets were allowed to mock without restraint. Lees were used as masks because the performers were afraid that the powerful would seek retribution against them. The wealthy and powerful eventually prevented poets from mocking openly; this was the end of Old Comedy, whose chief representatives were Aristophanes and Eupolis. In Middle Comedy, whose chief representative was Plato, the poets mocked obliquely or through metaphor, until this, too, was prevented. In New Comedy, represented by Menander, the poets mocked foreigners and the poor.

V: Anonymous. Old Comedy itself has two phases: comedy originally pursued laughter, but then Cratinus advanced it and added a useful element by criticizing wrongdoers. But he, too, had a share of the older, more disordered form. Aristophanes was the most artful and outshone the other poets. He practiced Old, Middle, and New Comedy.

XIa: Tzetzes; his Proemium I to Aristophanes. Susarion invented comedy; his only surviving verses abuse his wife, who was bad and left him. Old Comedy abused by name; Middle abused obliquely or metaphorically; New only abused slaves and foreigners. Politicians, who were doing wrong, did not want to be held accountable and increasingly restricted the poets' freedom of speech.

XIb: Anonymous (called Anonymus Crameri I); titled in one manuscript Ἐκ ποίας αἰτίας ἢ συνέστη κωμῳδία. Farmers who had been wronged in the κῶμαι came into Athens at night and mocked those who had wronged them without giving the wrongdoer's name; this practice seemed salutary and was institutionalized. Susarion was the first comic poet. The Old Comic poets

mocked those who lived badly and delighted in wrong; but, soon, the wealthy and powerful prevented poets from mocking by name. Middle Comedy mocked obliquely or metaphorically. The poets were prevented from this, too, and in New Comedy mocked only foreigners and the poor. Old Comedy differs within itself: the poets originally pursued laughter, but Cratinus added a useful element by attacking wrongdoers. Aristophanes was the best and most artful.

XIc: Anonymous (called Anonymus Cramerii II). Old Comedy mocked openly, but a law was passed mandating that they mock only obliquely or metaphorically. This was curtailed, too, and New Comedy mocked only slaves and foreigners.

XIIb: Anonymous. Comedy was named from κῶμα, because farmers used to sing at night, or from κῶμαι, because they used to go and sing there mocking those who had done wrong.

XV: Anonymous; the *Tractatus Coislinianus*. Comedy differs from abuse because the latter treats what is bad openly, but comedy requires innuendo. The mocker seeks to rebuke faults of the mind and body.

XVI: Anonymous; excerpted from the *Etymologicum Magnum*. Among the several etymologies for τραγωδία, it suggests that τραγωδία may have derived from τρυγωδία, which was once the common name for comedy and tragedy. Comedy was so named because it was performed at festivals for Dionysus and Demeter in the κῶμαι; or it is from κωμάζειν; or it derived from a song sung at night time (κῶμα); or it was so-named because it is a song of the κωμηταί. Farmers

who had been wronged used to go around the streets and announce the harms against them anonymously, which caused the wrongs to stop.

XVIIa: [Plutarch]; excerpted from *De proverbii Alexandrinorum*. The writer explains that tragedy and comedy emerged from laughter: people used to drink the new wine and engage in abuse at the harvest, with their faces painted with gypsum. κωμῳδία derives from κῶμαι, where the songs were originally sung. Tragedy emerged when some poets turned to more serious pursuits.

XVIIIa: Attributed to Melampus or Diomedes; excerpted from the scholia to Dionysius Thrax. The word κωμῳδία derives from κῶμα or κωμηταί. Comedy originated when farmers who had been wronged came into Athens to reproach the wrongdoer at night and abused him anonymously. Because this prevented wrongdoing and served the common good, the Athenians bade them do this in the theater. Originally, they would paint their faces with lees because they were afraid. Susarion was the first comic poet. The comic poets mocked those who lived badly or delighted in wrong, but those in power wanted to do wrong with impunity and curtailed their freedom of speech. They were reduced to mocking obliquely or metaphorically (Middle Comedy) and then to mocking only foreigners and slaves (New Comedy). Cratinus was the most distinguished poet of Old, although Aristophanes and Eupolis had a part of it too. Plato was distinguished in Middle Comedy; Menander was remarkable in New.

XVIIIb 1 and 2: Attributed to Melampus or Diomedes (1) or Heliodorus (2); excerpted from the scholia to Dionysius Thrax. Comedy is public abuse before the people. The word κωμῳδία derives from κῶμαι.

XIXa: John the Deacon; excerpted from his commentary to Hermogenes Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος. After men turned to farming and dedications of the first fruits and feasts were established, comedy was invented. Susarion was the first to compose it in meter. Tragedy was subsequently invented. τραγωδία may have derived from τρυγωδία, which was once the common name for comedy and tragedy.

XXIa: Tzetzes; from his Στίχοι περὶ διαφορᾶς ποιητῶν. Tzetzes explains that τρυγωδία was the original name for tragedy, comedy, and satyr play. Comedy mocked thieves, evil-doers, and the bad and induced them to good behavior. Susarion invented comedy, and it was first characterized by open abuse. In the second phase, to which Cratinus, Eupolis, Pherecrates, Plato, and Aristophanes belong, the abuse was concealed. In the final phase, during which Menander and Philemon were poets, the abuse was concealed except against slaves, foreigners, and barbarians.

XXIIb. Tzetzes; from his prolegomena to Lycophron. Tzetzes says that comedy, tragedy, and satyr play all took either the goat (τράγος) or the new wine (τρύξις) as their prize. The word κωμῳδία derives from κῶμα; or from κῶμαι; or from κῶμος.

XXIII. [Andronicus]; entitled Περὶ τάξεως ποιητῶν. Old Comedy abused openly; its most important poets were Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Eupolis. Middle Comedy abused

metaphorically or obliquely; its most important poet was Plato. New did not abuse at all except against slaves and foreigners; its most remarkable poets were Menander and, among the Romans, Plautus and Terence.

XXIV. Diomedes; excerpted from his *Ars grammatica*. For a description of this work, see §4.3.1.

XXV. Evanthius; excerpted from his *De fabula*. For a description of this work, see §4.3.3.

XXVI. Donatus; excerpted from his *De comoedia*. For a description of this work, see §4.3.2.

XXVII 1. Festus; from his *De verborum significatu*. Comedy is named for the *vici* (i.e., the κῶμαι) in which the youths used to gather and sing.

XXVII 2. Isidore; from his *Etymologiae*. Comedy is named for the *pagi* (i.e., the κῶμαι) or for the *comissatio* (i.e., the κῶμος).

XXVII 3. Ansileubus; from the *Glossarium Ansileubi*. Comedy is named for the *pagi* (i.e., the κῶμαι) or for the *comissatio* (i.e., the κῶμος). The earliest comedy was purely laughable. Afterwards, comedy seized on public and private matters and attacked misdeeds on the stage. The poets were not forbidden from rebuking anybody. Susarion invented it, but Magnes (and Chionides?) first composed comedies with plots, although these were not more than 300 lines. Eventually, the poets lost their right to abuse and took to writing about the lives of private individuals.

XXVIII. Anonymous; the *Life of Aristophanes*. When comedy had been going astray and Cratinus and Eupolis were more biting than was necessary, Aristophanes transferred comedy to a more useful and lofty style. He was especially praised and beloved because his plays showed that the city was free and ruled by no tyrant, but rather by the *demos*, and he attacked Cleon for his tyranny. The reason for comedy is abusing individuals; but, when abuse by name was banned, Aristophanes pointed the way to New Comedy by composing plots with rapes and recognitions.

XXXIII 1. Thomas Magister; Thomas's *Life of Aristophanes*. Aristophanes was superior to all comic poets before and after him, and all of his drama were charming and won his audience's acclaim. Since it benefited the state, he composed his poetry such that he did not spare from anybody, even the powerful, if he saw them doing wrong. Wrongdoers feared his freedom of speech and became well-behaved and profitable for the *demos*.

XXXIII 2. Thomas Magister; Thomas's *Life of Aristophanes*. The word κωμῳδία derives from κῶμαι, from processions for Dionysus, or from κῶμα. People who had been wronged used to go covertly to the streets where the wrongdoer lived and announce that he had done wrong. The guilty party would moderate his behavior afterward. Since this was beneficial for the city because it deterred wrong and promoted justice and good behavior, comic poets were assigned for this purpose.

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