WHO "INVENTED" COMEDY? THE ANCIENT CANDIDATES FOR THE ORIGINS OF COMEDY AND THE VISUAL EVIDENCE

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Abstract. The formal beginning of comedy is firmly dated to the Dionysia of 486 B.C.E.[1] For what preceded it there were at least three ancient candidates: phallic processions, Doric comedy and Susarion. Each is supported by visual evidence of the sixth century B.C.E., each explains certain features of Old Comedy, but all have some anomalies as well. Striking is how many forms of performance attested in the sixth century contained comic elements. All these other forms ceased with the introduction of comedies to the Dionysia in 486 B.C.E., which coincides with the ascendancy of the demos; yet it was not until forty years later that comedy becomes unabashedly political.

THERE IS CERTAINLY NO LACK OF RECENT SCRUTINY of the murky early stages of tragedy and dithyramb.[2] Less studied recently is the same process of comedy, for which, in contrast to tragedy and dithyramb, a fortunate combination of epigraphic and literary evidence allows us to date the official beginnings in Athens quite precisely:[3] the first competition at the Dionysia in Athens was in 487/6 B.C.E., and Chionides was

[1] In what follows I use lower-case "comedy" or "comic" to denote humorous or laughable performance in general, whereas "Comedy" designates the genre of performance as known from Aristophanes. On the other hand my use of such terms as "invention," "origin," "birth," or "precursor" for what preceded the comedy of 486 B.C.E. is deliberately fluid, to avoid over-defining a process that I try to sketch only at the end of this study (see fig. 6 below). For abbreviations, see the Bibliography.

[2] West 1974; Connor 1990; D'Angour 1997; Ieranò 1997; Wilson 2000; Scullion 2002. It is now generally assumed that the testimonium of the Parian Marble on the first performance of Thespis (*FGrHist* 239 A 43, 535 B.C.E.) refers to an earlier performance in the Attic countryside, not yet incorporated into the Dionysia until perhaps 501. The testimonium on the first victor for men's choruses (i.e., dithyramb) for 510–508 (*FGrHist* 239 A 46) is more likely to refer to a contest at the Dionysia, but some would argue that this is also too early. For an overview of the question, see Anderson 2003, 178–84.

[3] The four pieces of evidence are Aristotle's *Poetics* chap. 5 1449b, IG II^2 2325 (the lists of poets and their victory-totals for each festival), IG II^2 2318 (the didascalia for the

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the first victor. But even before this date, and despite Aristotle's warning on the lack of earlier evidence for comedy,[4] there has never been a shortage of candidates for its ultimate origins, both ancient[5] and modern.[6] Usually it is assumed that there are two major ancient ones, both from Aristotle, but the Parian Marble adds a third independent candidate, the much-suspected "Susarion," whose curious name, mid sixth-century date, and possible connection to Attic visual evidence make a very interesting alternative. Comedy's origin in ancient theorizing turns out to be anything but a derivative afterthought to tragedy; not only Aristotle's *Poetics*, but also Peripatetic fragments[7] and the Parian marble of 264 B.C.E., suggest it was a topic of considerable interest in the late fourth and early third centuries, even before Alexandrian literary scholars such as Callimachus, Eratosthenes, and Aristophanes of Byzantium took a systematic interest in the genre. Rather than too little for us to go on, there is, in a way, too much.

Nor do the ancient theories seem invented to suit some neat scheme; for every apparent connection these candidates offer to Old Comedy, there is also a significant misfit. A review of all the alleged candidates

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Dionysia), and the Suda's biography of Chionides ("eight years before the Persian War" = 487/6 with inclusive reckoning). The arguments were first made by Capps 1903, especially 5 nn. 4 and 29, and, despite disagreements from Koerte (in Wilhelm 1906, 242–44), are now adopted by Mette 1977, xv and 2, DTC2, 189, DFA2, 82, CAD, 121, and elsewhere. Capps 1903, 25, originally thought that Old Comedy at the Lenaia was introduced at the same time but corrected this in Capps 1907, 186–87, realizing that IG II^2 2323 is the first column of the list, not the second, so that comedy at the Lenaia was not introduced until the 440s (see Rusten, forthcoming).

[4] *Poetics* 1449a32–b9: "Whereas the stages of tragedy and the names of their originators have not been lost, comedy is unknown, because it was not taken seriously at the start; for it was late that the archon gave it a chorus; instead, there were volunteers."

[5] Beyond those studied below there is a passing attempt to explain the origins of comedy in Scholia on Theocritus ed. Wendel p. 2 (tr. DTC2 155); and Old Comedy itself probably offered theories of its own origins as well, to judge from Aristophanes *PCG* fr. 264, Callias fr. 26 (Athenaeus cites both as speaking "about the antiquity of comedy"); cf. Pherecrates fr. 199 (all anapaestic and thus from parabases), Sommerstein 1992. But these are likely to have been idealizing or facetious.

[6] Attempts to derive comedy conceptually rather than historically have been made by Zielinski 1885 and Sifakis 1992 (folk tales), Süss 1908 (character types), and Cornford 1993 (fertility festivals). A discussion of the performative and mythopoeic complexities involved in this process is found in Sifakis, forthcoming.

[7] *AMK* 162–165, on studies of comedy by Theophrastus, Dicaearchus, Demetrius of Phaleron, Chamaeleon of Heraclea, and Eumelos. In fact, the work of Demetrius of Phaleron on Archons, his περὶ ποιητῶν, and his later activity in Alexandria would seem to make him an excellent candidate for a main source of the Parian Marble; Jacoby 1961, 546.

can, I believe, divide them into three basic types, each with a visual as well as a literary source. Finally, their very multiplicity, and the fact that none is in itself a totally satisfactory candidate, may offer some insight into the process by which Athenian Comedy was born.

PHALLIC PROCESSIONS

The best-known candidate for comedy's origins, songs at the phallic processions, is Aristotle's own (*Poetics* chap. 4, 1449a2–14).[8] The antiquity and comic elements of the phallic procession are indeed well-attested by two images on an Attic cup now in Florence,[9] where the phallus itself and distended belly and buttocks of a figure riding the phallus seem to prefigure the costume of Old Comedy.[10] Except for the fact that this theory leaves the satyr without a place in the rise of drama,[11] it is simple and elegant; it has the advantage of making not only tragedy but also comedy develop from a fusion of the two genres of the ritual poetry of Dionysus, the dithyramb, and the phallic songs, respectively, with the pre-existing genres of non-Dionysiac poetry, epic, and iambus (see fig. 1).

[8] The attempt by Leonhardt 1991 to reverse the standard interpretation of this passage and associate comedy with the dithyramb is refuted by Patzer 1995.

[9] Black-figure Attic cup, 575–525 B.C.E., Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, 3897, not illustrated here, but pictured frequently, e.g., in DTC2 pl. 4, CAD pl. 19 , and in color in Boardman, La Rocca, and Mulas 1978, 40 (A). For details, see especially Csapo 1997.

[10] For this costume, see especially Stone 1981 and most recently Foley 2000, to which should be added the best illustration, from an Attic chous of the end of the fifth century found in Phanagoria on the Black Sea and now in the Hermitage (St. Petersburg, Hermitage State Museum, 1869.47) = HGRT 45 fig. 184, PHV2 no. 6. It shows two young men dressing for a performance, each wearing the body-stocking called *somation* (*PCG* Plato comicus fr. 287), with padded stomach and buttocks, and the phallus, one rolled-up, one hanging.

[11] The satyr's omission here is a notable inconsistency in Aristotle's theory, since on the one hand, as far as concerns the phallus, obscenity, and ridicule, it is the satyr who is the Dionysiac character *par excellence*, and we can see him mounted on the phallus on one side of the Florence cup. On the other hand, satyrs as actors are associated with the origins of tragedy, in that satyr-plays remain as a vestige after three tragic dramas, and elsewhere in the *Poetics* (1449a20–22) Aristotle himself mentions that tragedy was a development ἐκ σατυρικοῦ. Is it therefore possible that Aristotle imagines satyrs as contributing to the origin of *two* genres of drama? Or, perhaps, of *neither*? For some attempts by modern scholars to integrate the satyr into Aristotle's schemes, see Voelke 2001, 16–18. The visual evidence for archaic satyr-performances in general is considered by Hedreen 1992, chaps. 5–6.

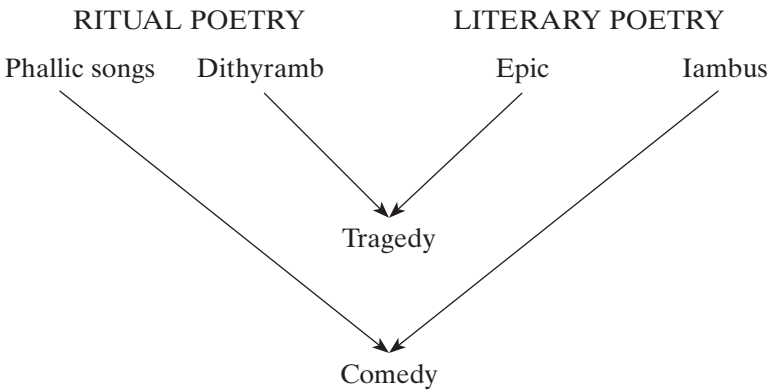

Fig. 1. Aristotle's theory of the origins of comedy and tragedy in *Poetics* chap. 4, 1449a2–14. Author's diagram.

DORIC COMEDY

The second candidate is also mentioned by Aristotle but as a competing theory of comic origins, that of the Dorians (*Poetics* 1448a28).[12] Whereas the phallic-procession theory was simple and neat, this one is an agglomeration of different arguments that are mutually exclusive,[13] to which have been added other items of evidence by scholars ancient[14] and modern.[15] Important support for this argument also comes from sixth-century art, where vases which begin ca. 630 B.C.E. first in Corinth and perhaps Laconia (i.e., Doric areas), then in Attica and elsewhere, show many examples of happily dancing males with drinking-horns or around a krater, sometimes

[12] All the testimonia on Doric comedy are collected in *PCG* I pp. 1–5 and discussed by Kerkhof 2001, 1–50.

[13] *Either* comedy was born during a time of democracy in the Greek city of Megara, *or else* it was invented by Epicharmus in the Sicilian city of Megara, *or else kōmōidia* was from "village" (*kōmē*, which is supposed non-Attic), since its first performers were banished from cities and performed in villages (i.e., not in either city of Megara; this last argument seems to be Doric in general, not merely Megarian).

[14] A scholion to Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1123a21 = *PCG* comoedia dorica test. 7 (vol. I p. 4) which cites references to Megara in 5th-century Old Comedy and the "Megarian" Susarion (see Appendix).

[15] Especially Koerte 1893 and 1921.

with a piper.[16] Some of the Corinthian vases, especially, depict groups of male figures with padded or overly fat buttocks and bellies, dancing and gesturing comically (outward-bent arms and legs, bottom-slapping) and (occasionally) with phallus or erect penis: such a costume (though without masks) resembles that of later fifth-century Athenian Comedy.[17] Koerte 1893 and others have pointed to the report of "a sort of old comic play" in Sosibius' *On the mimes of Sparta* (Athenaeus 14.621D = *FGrHist* 595 F 7 = PCG I *Comoedia Dorica* test. 2; cf. Suda sigma 859 = *FGrHist* 595 T 1 = PCG test. 3) in which "someone used to imitate, in simple language, men stealing fruit, or a foreign doctor." An illustration of such a farce (with men stealing wine, not fruit, then being punished) has been argued to exist in a Corinthian column crater in the Louvre E632 = Seeberg 1971, 4 no. 226, Amyx 1988, 233–34.[18]

This agglomeration of different evidence under a heading of "Doric farce" has many inconsistencies[19] and presented a ripe target to Breitholtz 1960 to attack. That Breitholtz's sweeping dismissal of any and all "Doric comedy," which has influenced many recent scholars, went too far is shown by Kerkhof 2001; yet the growing body of research on the archaic symposium tends to conclude that its prime evidence, the dancers of the *kōmos* vases, do not suggest a chorus or a dramatic narrative but a sort of symposium, the crater or drinking horn being even more central than the piper. Thus, komast vases may have affinities with comedy, but they always seem to belong to a different type of performance.[20]

[16] Corinthian items are catalogued by Seeberg 1971; the rest have been studied by Smith 1997, which I have not seen, but Smith 1998 and Smith 2000 stress the symposium-setting, and on the krater, see Lissarrague 1990a. Pemberton 2000 examines links with Corinthian cults and the roles of women on the vases. Seeberg 1995 studies their possible migration from the symposium to comedy. These and other paintings showing possible performances are studied in Steinhart 2004, 32–64.

[17] For the costume of Old Comedy, see n. 10 above.

[18] Illustrated also IGD I.5, DTC2 fig. 40. For recent arguments in favor of this interpretation, see Kerkhof 2001, 24–29; for the case against, see CAD 95 no. 2, and especially Steinhart 2004, 44–49.

[19] In addition to the problems with Susarion (see Appendix) and the setting of the *kōmos* vases (see next note), the supposed derivation of comedy from "village" rather than "revel" is belied by the name "reveler" *Komios* on one of the best known *Kōmos* vases, a Corinthian black-figure kotyle by the Samos painter, 600–575 B.C.E., Paris, Louvre CA 3004, Seeburg 1971, no. 202, Amyx 1988, 190–91, 561–62, pl. 73.2.

[20] See n. 16 above. Despite comedy's derivation from *kōmos*, Athenaeus 10.428F–29A notes that some scholars alleged that the first drama to portray men drunk was by Epicharmus, and the first Attic one Crates' *Neighbors*.

SUSARION

The third candidate is independent of Aristotle but less than a century later than the *Poetics*. The Parian marble, composed in 264/3 B.C.E., is an important repository of literary history before the Hellenistic scholars; it is especially rich in biographical information on tragedians[21] and choral lyric.[22] For comedy it contains chronological information on Epicharmus (A55), Anaxandrides (A 70), and Menander (B14), but also this notice of comedy's "inventor" (Jacoby *FGrHist* 239 A 39= PCG Susarion test. 1).

> ἀφ' οὗ ἐν Ἀθ[ήν]αις κωμω[ιδῶν χο]ρ[ὸς ἐτ]έθη, [στη]σάν[των πρώ]των Ἰκαρίεων, εὐρόντος Σουσαρίωνος, καὶ ἆθλον ἐτέθη πρῶτον ἰσχάδω[ν] ἄρσιχο[ς] καὶ οἴνου με[τ]ρητής, [ἔτη . . . ἄρχοντ]ος [Ἀθήνησιν . . . .]
>
> Since the time when a chorus of comic performers was established at Athens, the Icarians having been the first to stage it, Susarion having invented it, and as the first prize was established a wicker basket of figs and a bulk measure of wine [it was . . . years, when the archon at Athens was. . . .]

The exact year of Susarion's invention is not preserved, but its position among the fragments of the inscription limits it to some year between 582 and 561 B.C.E. A list in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.79.1 = *PCG* Susarion test. 2, agrees with the Parian chronicle here (as it does with several other of the chronicle's literary events), and several further texts are part of the same tradition (*PCG* Susarion test. 2–4, 6; see appendix below).

As a candidate for the inventor of comedy, Susarion offers both problems and intriguing possible connections, starting with his name: it seems to be formed not from the diminuitive -ίων, which is so common among Greek names[23] (this would require an original form "Susaros," which does not exist) but rather from a compound of two elements, the second of which recalls the dolphin-riding inventor of the dithyramb, Arion, the only classical name known to derive from it.[24] The first element of Σουσαρίων remains, however, very obscure: Pape-Benseler 1911, 1428,

[21] The births, deaths, and first victories of all three tragedians, and Thespis' first performance.

[22] Items on fifth- and fourth-century dithyramb, but also Terpander's invention of the nome and the date (508 B.C.E.) of the first choral competition in Athens.

[23] See the introductory note of Hunter 1983 on Eubulus' play Ἀγκυλίων.

[24] Here I am indebted not only to the volumes of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* but also to the online reverse dictionary of names at its website (http://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/). Other early names that seem to end in -arion all turn out to be diminutives

derived it from σεύω (rush),[25] Wilamowitz from σοῦσον (lily), which is also claimed as the etymology of the Persian city of Susa.[26] It is scarcely clear what "Rushing-Arion" or "Lily-Arion" (or "Susa-Arion"? cf. Metagenes' comedy entitled *Thouriopersai*) might mean, but such an outlandish name might prefigure the later tradition of compound names to designate pastiches of different authors or characters: names like *Choirilecphantides* (Cratinus fr. 520), or Cratinus' play *Dionysalexandros*, or the verb *Euripidaristophanizein* (Cratinus fr. 332), or the titles of parodies like *Aeolosicon* of Aristophanes and *Sphingocarion* of Eubulus, *Orestautocleides* of Timocles, and later *Icaromenippus* of Lucian.[27] Some such compounds use elements that are not names, like Polyzelus' title *Demotyndareus*, or Timocles' *Demosatyroi*, or "Dionysio-barber-Pyrons" Cratinus fr. 223, or Aristophanes' Δημολογοκλέων, or Κομηταμυνίας (*Wasps* 342, 466).

Even beyond his name, the difficulties with Susarion are formidable. Not only is the tradition about him contaminated with some gnomic verses that create a completely false trail,[28] but even the date and details of the Parian chronicle itself raise more questions than they answer:

1. His range of dates is far too early to relate to the introduction of comedy at the Dionysia of 486 B.C.E.[29]

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in -ίων instead (like Thearion from Thearos) or are Hellenistic or imperial (Pistharion, Dizarion, Damarion, Liparion).

The usual genitive of Susarion's name (-ίωνος, already in the Parian marble, in contrast to Arion's normal genitive in -ίονος) would seem to work against such an identification, as would the short iota of its scansion (the iota in Ἀρίων is long) in the iambic verses attributed to him; but these "verses" are a later accretion to the tradition (see the Appendix), and the genitive quantity might well differ under the influence of a new compound. For the declension in general, see Frei-Lüthy 1978, 76–79.

[25] For such names, Bechtel 1964, 403, cites two examples: a Spartan name "Soos" (Plato, *Cratylus* 412B) and "Laossoos" or Lasos, of Hermione (the very man who is said to have brought Arion's invention, the dithyramb, to Athens in the time of Peisistratus). But Alan Nussbaum points out to me that the nominative ending -ος is unlikely to be retained in the first element of a compound name.

[26] Wilamowitz 1918, 742.

[27] See Kassel and Austin in *PCG* III.2, introduction to Aristophanes' *Aeolosicon* p. 34.

[28] Breitholtz 1960; West 1974; Kerkhof 2001; for these other sources, see the Appendix.

[29] Jacoby (comm. on *FGrHist* 239 A 39) suggested that the date is made early to counter Megarian claims of priority, whereas West 1974, 184, suggested it was chosen to harmonize with them. In either case, 580 B.C.E. is not early enough to achieve the desired effect, since the tyrant Theagenes, whose fall introduced democracy, was firmly in the seventh century (Thucydides I.126.3–5, Legon, 1981, 93ff.).

2. The alleged first production of Athenian Comedy is dated three decades before the first performance by Thespis in the same chronicle (A 43, of 536/5 B.C.E.), evidently implying that Athenian Comedy is earlier than tragedy.
3. The specification of the prize of wine and figs is not necessary to explain anything, in contrast to tragedy where the prize was a *tragos*.
4. The people of Icaria are well-known for early Dionysiac drama, but only for tragedy, not Athenian Comedy.[30]

At the very least, so many unwelcome details do not look like the result of a simplistic attempt to fabricate an appropriate "inventor" for comedy.[31] Nor could a Susarion the comic poet have been found in any didascalic records (they did not predate 486 B.C.E.),[32] nor is there a trace of him in any Icarian traditions either. Of the details mentioned, Icaria was perhaps a natural enough site for any early performance, and the prize may have been borrowed from Dionysiac tradition (the same prizes are mentioned by Plutarch [*De Cupiditate* chap. 8, 527D] as characteristic of the earliest Dionysia); but Susarion's name and his date in the chronicle seem to come from nowhere.

RIDER GROUPS IN SIXTH-CENTURY VASE-PAINTING: COMIC CHORUSES?

What form could Susarion's comic choruses possibly have taken around the middle of the sixth century? One answer is provided by an Attic black-figure amphora dated by J. R. Green (1985) to 540–530 B.C.E., allegedly found at Cerveteri and now in the Antikensammlung in Berlin (fig. 2).[33]

[30] Icaria boasts a statue of Dionysus and a sculpted cantharus that may belong to it from the mid sixth century, important choregic inscriptions from the fifth century, and a theater. It is later the setting for Eratosthenes' poem *Erigone* about Icarius and the origin of tragedy, Solmsen 1947, but images of Dionysus, Icarius, and the goat have been alleged already in the sixth century (Shapiro 1995, 95–96, Angiolillo 1981).

[31] Kleingünther 1933, 128, n. 71, notes that the attempt by Jacoby 1904, xiii, to isolate a catalogue of inventions as a major source of the Parian Marble is questionable; Atthidographers and ancient treatises on literary genres (both plausible sources of the Parian Marble) often use the terminology of invention as well.

[32] West 1974, 183–84, Scullion 2002, 81.

[33] This Attic vase was first connected with Old Comedy by Poppelreuter 1893, 6ff (at the suggestion of his teacher Carl Robert), the same year that Koerte published his own theory of the Doric origins of Old Comedy based on the phallus and padded costume of the Corinthian *kōmos*-vases. By the time of his *RE* article on "Komödie" (Koerte 1921,

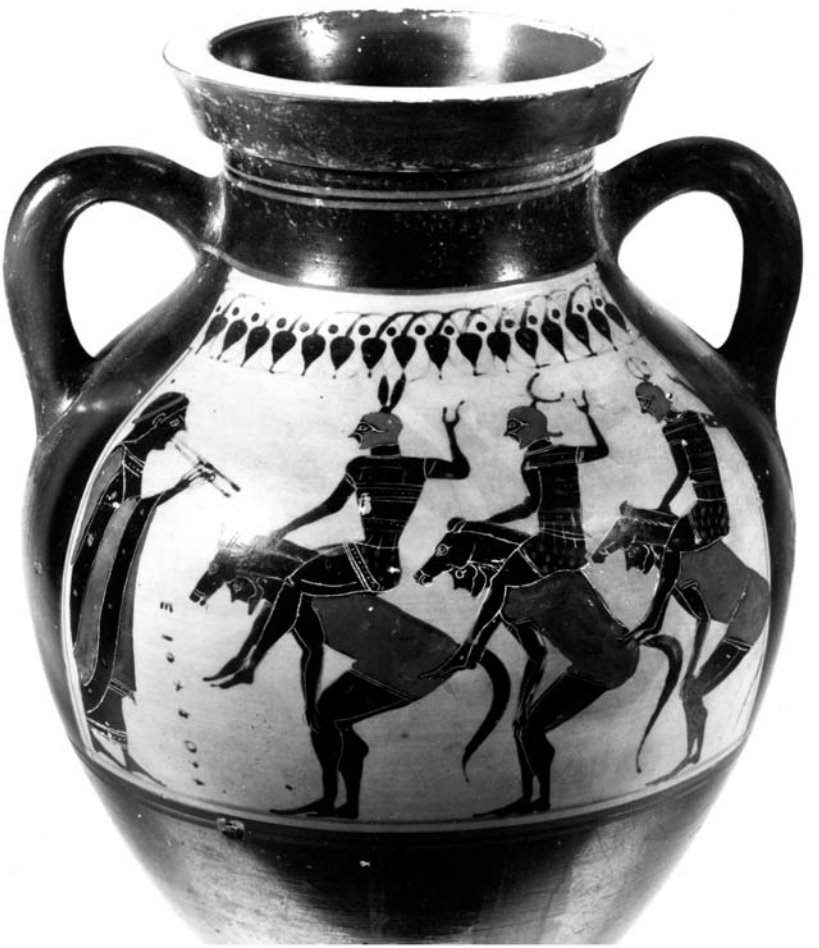

Fig. 2. The Berlin *Knights* (Attic black-figure amphora by the Painter of Berlin 1686, ABV 297, 17; Para. 128, *Addenda* 78, Green 1985, nr. 3, fig. 6). Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz, F 1697. Photo: Karin März.

1219–20), Koerte's position had become so hardened that he denied that the Berlin Knights could have anything to do with Old Comedy because they are not costumed with phallus and padding. The shifts of opinion by Wilamowitz on the Doric vs. Athenian origins of comedy, documented by Kerkhof 2001, 7, are perhaps influenced by these two schools of thought.

It presents three men, wearing helmets with outlandish crests, mounted on the backs of other men costumed with the heads and tails of horses. Off to one side plays the aulete, the elaborately cloaked player of the double-pipe, who provides the music for what must be the performance of a dance. The group of three riders shows variation of detail in dress (helmet, corselet design), but their basic uniformity of appearance suggests a chorus.[34]

This image would surely be judged a plausible illustration of an Aristophanic comedy, the *Knights*, if only it were not more than one hundred years too early.[35] Instead, what we have is clear evidence of some kind of costumed choral performance—and it scarcely seems a serious one—not only more than a century before the first plays of Aristophanes, but more than fifty years before the beginning of the comic victors' lists.[36]

It happens that a mounted chorus, usually with a piper, is a feature of several other vases dating from 540–480 B.C.E., and its vehicle becomes even more incongruous.[37]

Stiltwalkers, an Attic black-figure amphora by the Swing painter (also dated ca. 540–530 B.C.E. and now in Christchurch, New Zealand), shows five men on stilts, once again wearing short tunics and a variety of corselets (fig. 3). Instead of helmets they wear long pointed hats that show their beards. There is no piper. (On the other side are pictured three centaurs attacking a fallen warrior.)

Dolphin/Ostrich Riders is another black-figure vase, a skyphos in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (20.18, Green 1985, nr. 17) and dated 500–490 B.C.E., which is a variation on a standard scene and is clearly

[34] For the uniformity/variation antithesis, see Green 1991, 27–28; it recurs among the figures on the vase from Christchurch and the Oltos-vase described below. For the satyrs on the other side, see n. 35 below.

[35] In *Knights* 243ff, the chorus are told to "ride"(ἐλᾶτε) and perform various equestrian manoeuvres; in 595–610, they praise their horses, which implies a chorus of riders at least during the parabasis (for the importance of the first entry, see Green quoted p. 52 below). Of commentators, van Leeuwen 1900, xvi, draws a direct comparison to the Berlin knights, cf. Stone 1981, 378–79. Sommerstein 1981, 4 concludes there is no horse-chorus but adds "certainty is unattainable."

[36] West 1974, 183, followed by Kerkhof 2001, 46, seems to assume that nothing at all could have been known about comedy in Attica before the victory lists began in 486. Neither discusses this vase, and it is also omitted from the discussion in CAD 53 and 412.

[37] The pioneering study of Green 1985 catalogues all images that might be plausibly associated with early comedy; presented below are only those that feature comic riders. For the others, see nn. 38 and 56.

Fig. 3. The Christchurch *Stiltwalkers* (Attic black-figure amphora by the Swing Painter, Para. 134, 31 bis, *Addenda*. 81, Green 1985, nr. 4, fig. 7; Cohen and Shapiro 1995, 7–8). Christchurch, New Zealand, James Logie Memorial Collection, University of Canterbury 41/57.

to the point.[38] It shows on each side six riders, with long cloaks and carrying spears, but now on real animals. On one side (fig. 4a) they ride dolphins and wear helmets, and on the other (fig. 4b) they ride ostriches (whose long legs resemble the stilts of the Christchurch figures, while their rounded backs resemble the dolphins on the reverse of the same vase). A nearly identical piper plays facing the riders on each side, but facing the ostrich riders there is an additional figure, a bearded cloaked

[38] Steinhart 2004, 21, gives some parallels for the suggestion that the ostrich riders and the short figure in front of the piper might be pygmies. An even more striking variation between sides in a scene without riders is an Attic black-figure skyphos of ca. 480 B.C.E. from Thebes, Thebes B.E. 64.342, Green 1985, nr. 12 fig. 15a–b. On one side it shows six old men carrying sticks and torches following a piper, on the other side the same six men but now standing upside down on their outstretched hands, while the piper remains right side up. Note that the reverse of the Berlin knights has a group of three ithyphallic satyrs and two women, led by a satyr preparing to play a pipe, which may indicate a complementary genre of performance; see Hedreen 1992, 136–38.

Fig. 4a. The Boston *Ostrich/Dolphin Riders*: dolphin side; Fig. 4b. The Boston *Ostrich/Dolphin Riders*: ostrich side (Attic black-figure skyphos, ca. 500–490, ABV 617, Green 1985, nr. 17, fig. 20a–b). Boston Museum of Fine Arts 20.18. Photographs © 2004 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

man who is only half the height of the piper, and who gestures toward the riders by holding up his right arm under his cloak.

Oltos' Dolphin Riders recur in a novel way in a red-figured psykter by Oltos dated ca. 510 B.C.E.[39] As on the Boston skyphos, there are six men in helmets carrying spears and riding dolphins, but now they carry shields as well, each with a different and contrasting device (fig. 5). When the psykter was filled with wine and placed in a bowl of water to cool, the dolphins would appear to be jumping over the water's surface.[40] That is perhaps why the piper is omitted here—he would have appeared to be walking on the water.[41] But instead of a piper we have a different indication that this is a chorus: the phrase "epi delphinos" is inscribed coming out of the mouth of each of the six riders, a clear indication that they are singing.[42]

From this point on the dolphin rider in armor with a piper seems to become a standard. An Attic black-figure cup ca. 490–480 B.C.E. from the Louvre (CA 1924) shows all around its outside surface eight dolphin riders with helmets, corselets and spears in each hand (but without cloaks or shields) and piper.[43] The form is also adapted on two Attic black-figure lekythoi, one by the Theseus painter, another by the Athena painter both ca. 490–480 B.C.E., showing two dolphin riders only, but still with a piper.[44]

These images begin ca. 540 B.C.E., tolerably close to Susarion's date in the chronicle before 560 B.C.E., and T. B. L. Webster even suggested that "Susarion may have written for some of them."[45]

[39] See Greifenhagen 1965; Lissarrague 1990b 115–20; Sifakis 1971, 88–90.

[40] Greifenhagen 1965; Lissarrague 1990b.

[41] So Sifakis 1971, 88.

[42] Sifakis 1967. Compare the Attic red-figure column crater in Basel, Antikenmuseum BS 415, illustrated in CAD no. 124 pl. 1A, where illegible letters also come out of the mouths of the dancers; similarly, nonsense letters come out of the mouth of one dolphin rider on the vase by the Athena painter in Palermo (see below), where there is a piper as well.

[43] Attic black-figure cup ca. 490–480, ARV^2 1622, foot; Para. 259, *Addenda* 130; Green 1985, nr. 16 fig, 19a–c, Paris, Louvre CA 1924.

[44] Theseus painter dolphin riders: Attic black-figure lekythos by the Theseus painter, Athens, Kerameikos 5671, ABV 518, *Addenda* 129; Green 1985, nr. 13, fig. 16a–b. Athena painter dolphin riders: Attic black-figure lekythos by the Athena painter, ca. 490–480, Palermo CAT 2816 (from Selinus); Green 1985, nr. 14, fig. 17, IGD I.14. Note also Basel, Collection H.A. Cahn, 849 = Green 1985 nr.15; this has only a single rider and no piper. An unpublished dolphin rider is noted by Green 1989, 71. For later dolphin riders possibly comic, see Crosby 1955, 83.

[45] DTC2 187. The two earliest images not riding any animals that are catalogued as possible comic choruses by Green 1985, 1–2 (see n. 56 below) actually date from 560.

Fig. 5. Oltos' *Dolphin Riders* (Attic red-figure psykter, ca. 510, ARV^2 1622, 7 bis; Para. 259, 326, *Addenda* 163, Green 1985, nr. 6, fig. 9). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Norbert Schimmel Trust, 1989 (1989.281.69). Photograph, all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

WHO ARE THE RIDERS?

Now it must be admitted that the "chorus" on this group of images may have more than one possible identity; they might be dancers, or singers, or clowns, or warriors, or symposiasts—perhaps several of these at once. A further ambiguity arises when the riders are in armor, since armor combined with a piper would link them with black-figure representations of dances in armor. Indeed, two of the same painters who give us dolphin riders are also credited with armed dancers on similar vases (although the Athena painter's dolphin riders are differentiated from his armed dancers also by what appear to be letters of a song emanating from one rider's mouth).[46] On the other hand, dolphin-riding figures who are not in armor and pipers associated with dolphins might be quite at home in the symposium, where most of these vases had their immediate context.[47] Yet the three earliest vases, and especially the contrasting sides of the Boston skyphos, present the riders most clearly as a chorus, capable of riding any number of things (horse-men, stilts, and ostriches as well as dolphins).

It must also be stressed that, in the strictest sense, most of these images cannot be "illustrations" of a performance and might almost seem to preclude the very idea of literal performance by giving their "chorus" such outlandish things to ride.[48] The question must be judged separately for every image since it is possible that any one scene is a purely imaginary one, providing no evidence at all for an actual performance. But

[46] For depictions of armed dancers with pipers, see especially Poursat 1968, Ceccarelli 1998, and Lesky 2000, where, however, the dolphin riders in armor with piper are not compared. For examples of both types attributed to the same painter, compare the Theseus painter in Green 1985 no. 13 and Ceccarelli 1998 no. 27 (black-figure lekythos, Athens National Museum 18567) and no. 29 (black-figure lekythos Athens National Museum 19761) and the Athena painter, Green 1985 nr. 14, and Ceccarelli nr. 63 (black-figure pelike in San Antonio Museum of Art, 86.134.157).

[47] Especially Csapo 2003, 78–90, who illustrates the diversity of treatments: dolphin groups paralleling groups of men, men turning into dolphins, dolphins with legs, even one dolphin with arms, playing a pipe; see also Lissarrague 1990b, 115–20; a Corinthian black-figure kylix, Louvre MNC 674 (= DTC2 fig. 6, 307 no. 43) even puts a dolphin under the handle among padded dancing komasts; Csapo 2003, 86, notes there is a half-man/half-fish under the opposite handle. For the popularity of dolphin riders of all sorts (warriors, *erōtes*, unidentified youths) in late archaic painting, see Kurtz and Boardman 1995, 88–89; Vidali 1977.

[48] Kurtz and Boardman 1995, 88: "late archaic Athenian Painters are interested in unusual mounts." Note that horseback riders are sometimes combined with Corinthian padded dancers, Pemberton 2000, 88.

it is of course also quite possible that in an original performance men were dressed as the animals to be ridden and that these animals have been transformed by the painter into their real counterparts, in the same way that tragic myths are later illustrated "realistically" without any hint of the theater.[49] The second possibility is kept in the foreground by the fact that the Berlin *Knights*—the earliest of the series—unambiguously depicts the animals as performing, disguised men. If there is in fact some form of performance behind the chorus of riders, scholars have noted that it must have been an impressive one. Sifakis says "The originality of disguise must have been an important factor in the success of the production" (1971, 92); Green adds "the perception of the importance of this first entry must have survived a long time" (1991, 24). It is the total effect of the group that matters.

The reason these vases had all been connected with Old Comedy was the inherent silliness of an animal-riding chorus.[50] Yet apart from this incongruity, there is nothing else about a chorus of men, often in armor but never costumed or masked, riding animals (often dolphins) to the accompaniment of the pipe, that necessitates Old Comedy.

If there is any kind of choral performance underlying the images, it would be easier to think rather of the early dithyramb, sung and danced by a male chorus to the accompaniment of the pipe, that flourished and diversified in sixth-century Athens.[51] Arion's musical invention (Herodotus 1.23) spread widely, and the dithyramb was introduced to Athens by Lasos of Hermione in the mid sixth century and eventually incorporated into the city Dionysia .[52] The sixth-century dates of most of these images,

[49] Green 1991, 33ff.

[50] On this one comic feature of the animal riders there seems agreement, although how subjective such judgments might be is made clear by the comment of Brommer 1942 on his nr. 8 (a black-figure lekythos, London B658 = Green 1985, nr. 18), that a gruesome scene of three helmeted men carrying the decapitated heads of their still-helmeted enemies "am deutlichsten für Komödie spricht" (p. 75).

[51] So Csapo 2003, 86–90, who notes that in Pindar's second dithyramb, Dionysus "is thrilled by the dancing choruses of beasts" (fr. 70b.22–23). Before Csapo, the dolphin riders were seen as a dithyrambic chorus by Schamp 1976, in a general survey of the dolphin in legend, and Bielefeld 1946–7, who however assumed they represented an Athenian dithyramb telling the story of Phalanthus, saved by a dolphin when he founded Tarentum (Pausanias 10.13.10). The suggestion was rejected by IGD on I.14, and these vases were not discussed by Froning 1971. That the strictly mythical narratives of fifth-century dithyramb in Pindar and Bacchylides were not original is suggested by the story connected with the proverb "nothing to do with Dionysus" (Zenobius V.40 = Ieranò 1997 no. 65).

[52] DTC2 13–15, Ieranò 1997, 34–36; Privitera 1965, and see n. 2 above.

the occasional indications of singing in the "words" emanating from their mouths, and (except for the Berlin "horses") the absence of masks (see Froning 1971, 24–25) all suggest a sort of dithyramb. The proper name for a dithyrambic chorus is *kyklios choros*, in which case some of the vases even put them in their proper dance formation.[53]

Additional support for the dithyramb might come from the emblematic presence of the dolphin[54] since the dithyramb's "inventor" Arion, associated with Periander of Corinth at the beginning of the sixth century, was famous for the story of his dolphin ride, and Herodotus attests a statue of him *epi delphinos* (the words on the Oltos vase) at Taenarum. A poem attributed to Arion by Aelian is an address to Poseidon and a description of how

> beasts swimming with gills,
> dance around you in a circle,
> leaping with feet thrown on tiptoe,

which Bowra conjectured was a fourth-century dithyramb sung by a single artist surrounded by a chorus dressed as dolphins.[55]

Choruses of dolphin riders, possibly in a dithyramb, recall Arion; does Arion lead to Sus-Arion? Just as we began this survey of images of comic riders because the date of the earliest of them suits Susarion, so the subject matter of the last of them partly suits the second half of his name. The important qualification "partly," which is becoming a recurring one in this analysis, is required because of what is not explained thereby: why is Susarion dated before 560 B.C.E. if the dolphin riders become standard at the end of the series? Why are the dolphin riders armed? Are they a subset of armed choruses in general?[56] Has an original

[53] Although D'Angour 1997 argues that circularity only became characteristic of the dithyrambic chorus in the later sixth century, and Bielefeld 1946–7, 48, assumed from the slight overlap that the Boston dolphin riders are in rows three men deep and the Louvre riders four deep.

[54] For the dolphin swimming to the pipes, see Pindar fr. 140b. The dolphin is of course too ubiquitous an image to make dithyramb the only possible interpretation (see n. 47 above). But in the present cases the dolphin is also combined with a piper and a male "chorus."

[55] *Nature of animals* 12.45 = Page *PMG* 939, Furley and Bremer 2001, 9, 10; see Bowra 1970; Ieranò 1997, 187–88. Csapo 2003, 70–78, connects mentions of dolphin choruses in Euripides' "new music" with a parallel innovation in dithyramb.

[56] Of the other vases listed by Green 1985 as possibly comic, nos. 9–10 and 18 also feature a helmeted "chorus."

illustration of a choral performance moved completely to the realm of the imaginary in art?[57]

It is not, however, a problem that a name perhaps suggesting comic dithyramb is called the inventor of comedy; it is much easier to imagine that a popular and versatile genre of performance in the sixth century, the dithyramb, had its occasionally comic perversion than that full-fledged Old Comedy existed seventy years too soon.[58] And a similar displacement is known for Arion, who is also called the inventor not only of dithyramb but also of tragedy (again far too soon).[59] And it would make sense for the Parian Marble's "inventor" of Athenian Comedy to have been borrowed from another genre since that is what seems to have happened in the case of Aristotle's candidate, the phallic songs (from Dionysiac cult) or the frequent modern one of the *kōmos* vases (from the symposium).

MULTIPLE COMIC FORMS IN SIXTH-CENTURY ATHENS

Each of the ancient theories has its points of contact with Old Comedy: phallic songs offer obscenity in the cult of Dionysus, the komast vases prefigure the grotesque costume of Old Comedy, and Susarion and the comic riders give us a chorus and animals. Each partially accounts for comedy as we know it from Aristophanes. But is that a crucial criterion? If we reflect how much comedy changed in the years from Aristophanes to Menander, we can free ourselves from the prejudice that the earliest comedies must necessarily have been proto-aristophanic.

So the search for Old Comedy's "origin," as Aristotle hinted, remains a speculative or perhaps even a vain one; it is inherently improbable that a genre so rebellious and so diverse as comedy should have a single

[57] Bielefeld 1946–7 suggested that the dolphin riders might have been taken from the choregic monument for a dithyrambic performance (compare the Lysicrates monument with Wilson 2000, 225), although the first such vases seem too early for this to be possible.

[58] Of the ten possibly comic choruses catalogued by Green 1985 that are not riding anything, all but one (see n. 38 above) fit into three distinct groups that could also represent comic dithyrambs: a. the two earliest images (Green 1985, 1–2), ca. 560 B.C.E., of men dancing to a piper, some wearing ankle-length robes and with small "asses' ears" (hard to interpret securely since this is the only element of a costume) on their heads; b. animal-men, two groups of bull-men without pipers (Green 1985, 5–6) ca. 520–500 B.C.E., and two of bird-men with pipers (Green 1985, 8, 11) ranging 500–480 B.C.E.; c. two groups of helmeted men without pipers (Green 1985, 9–10) ca. 490 B.C.E., and one of helmeted men carrying a sword in one hand and a decapitated, helmeted head in the other (Green 1985, 18, 475–450 B.C.E., see n. 50 above).

[59] Suda s.v. Arion, and Johannes Diaconus, see Ieranò 1997, 31, 183.

inventor or an orderly pattern of growth. What remains striking is how many forms of performance there seem to have been in the sixth century that contained comic elements. We have Susarion and Aristotle's Dorians (not to speak of Epicharmus in Sicily) and also the riding choruses just discussed, the padded dancers of the *kōmos* vases, and the phallic processions (fig. 6).[60]

All these forms of "pre-comedy" show some evidence of existing at the beginning of the fifth century—until, that is, just after the year 486 B.C.E. (see fig. 6 below). While almost all these forms were available to Chionides and his competitors to exploit and imitate in their new "Comedy,"[61] by the end of the 480s there seems to be only one, the officially authorized *kōmōidoi.*

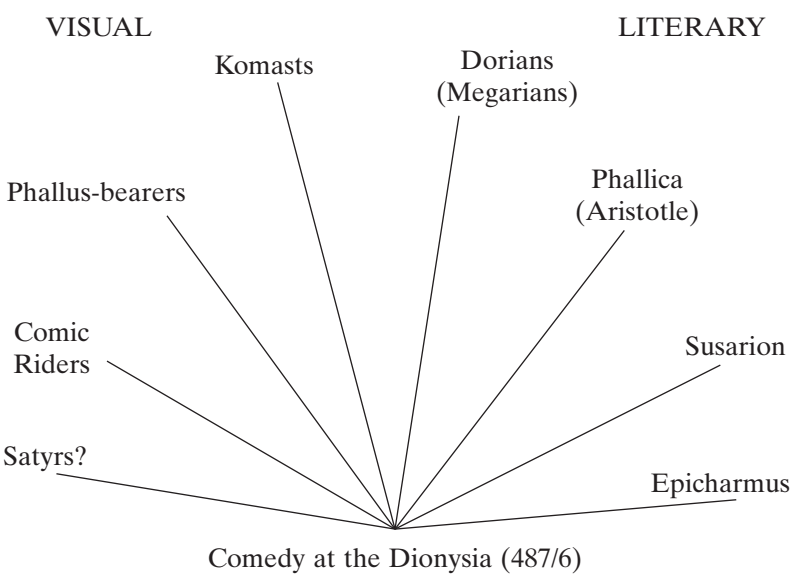

Fig. 6. "Official" Comedy and its precursors. Author's diagram.

[60] And for good measure we might even add the satyrs too! (cf. nn. 11 and 38 above).

[61] A combination of different genres would best explain why Old Comedy seems to combine the costume of *kōmos* vases with the chorus of the comic riders (cf. n. 33 above).

It is possible that the heading of the didascalic inscription in IG II^2 2318 preserves a mention of these multiple pre-comedy performances. It reads (one or two columns of header preceded):

]τον κῶμοι ἦσαν τ[ῶι Διονύσ]ωι τραγωιδοὶ δ[

The enigmatic κῶμοι has been interpreted and supplemented as if it was a general term including all the festival performances[62] or a synonym for dithyramb, which is presumed to have preceded tragedy;[63] both are problematic. Given the uncertainty of any restoration, we cannot exclude that κῶμοι retained its normal meaning of group celebrations and hinted at the undocumented precursors of the dithyrambs, tragedies, and comedies officially listed in the text that follows.

THE POLITICS OF THE INTRODUCTION OF COMEDY INTO THE DIONYSIA

Recent studies of dithyramb, tragedy, and even satyr-play have given prominence to speculation about the political or social consequences of their introduction to the festival.[64] Comedy, with its potential for direct political intervention, presents an even more intriguing case: was its introduction intended to promote a new form of public discourse, or was it perhaps an attempt, as frequently alleged for comedy later in the fifth century,[65] to channel and, in effect, limit satire? An extended consideration of this question is not appropriate to the current study, and in any case is scarcely possible with the evidence available. But we can venture several tentative, and perhaps contradictory, statements on the first generations of Old Comedy in Athens:[66]

[62] Capps 1943, 9, who proposed [ἀπὸ ----------, ἐφ' οὗ πρῶ]τον κῶμοι ἦσαν τ[ῶι Διονύσ]ωι τραγωιδοὶ δ[ημοτελεῖς ----ἀγωνίσαντες ἐν ἄστει οἵδε νενίκασιν]. The difficulty with this is that tragedies are not the only winners listed below, nor even the first in order.

[63] See DFA2 102–103, with the proposal: [ἐπὶ --- ἄρχοντος πρῶ]τον κῶμοι ἦσαν τ[ῶι Διονύσ]ωι τραγωιδοὶ δ[ὲ ἐπὶ ---, κωμωιδοὶ ἐπὶ Τελεσίνου]. But κῶμοι would be a odd term for dithyramb, and the supposed parallel (along with Pindar *Pythian* 5.22), Demosthenes, *In Meidiam* 10, is itself unexplained (MacDowell 1990, 232–33).

[64] Stoessl 1974; Winkler 1990; Connor 1990; Osborne 1993; Voelke 1996; Wilson 2000; Anderson 2003; Pritchard 2004.

[65] Cf. Seeberg 1995, 6. For allegations of political attempts to censor Athenian Comedy, see CAD 165–185, "Freedom of Expression."

[66] See also Sifakis, forthcoming; Stoessl 1974, 238–41; Wilson 2000, 21.

1. *"Official" comedy seems to have replaced the above-mentioned, previously attested forms of comic performance*. It seems that from 486 B.C.E. onward only those comic writers and performers ready to compete in the Dionysia could be chosen by the archon and "receive a chorus" (which meant that a wealthy Athenian was required to pay the costs). The attention of the public and of poets was focused on this performance, while its predecessors waned.[67]
2. *The introduction of Comedy at the Dionysia is associated with the ascendancy of the demos*. The date of Comedy's inclusion in the festival (487/6) is significant for Aristotle (*Constitution of Athens* 22.3–5): "once they had won the battle of Marathon . . . two years later (488/7), when the demos was accordingly confident, they first made use of the law on ostracism . . . and in the very next year, when Telesinos was archon (487/6), they chose the nine archons by lot . . . they had previously been elected." The introduction of publicly sponsored comedy amidst four straight years of ostracisms (Aristotle *Constitution of Athens* 22.3–6) is particularly striking and may lie behind the "Old Oligarch's" explicit characterization of comedy as a tool of the demos (*Constitution of the Athenians* 2.18): "[The Athenians] do not allow anyone to put the *dēmos* in a comedy or to speak ill of it; but in the case of private individuals they encourage it, knowing quite well that the *kōmoidoumenos* is not usually from the *dēmos* or the masses, but a wealthy or noble or powerful man; and few of the poor or the democratic-minded are mocked in comedy, and these only for being busybodies or more greedy than the *dēmos*, so that they are not bothered by their being mocked in a comedy."[68]
3. *The meager remains of comic writers known from the 480s through the 450s*[69] *do not suggest any overtly political discourse*. Of the few titles attested, only *Persians* and *Assyrians* (Chionides) and *Lydians* (Magnes) could conceivably be political, others being *Heroes*, *Beggars* (Chionides), *Barbitists*, *Frogs*, *Dionysus 1 and 2*, *Birds*, *Women Gleaning Grass*, *Pytacides*, *Fruit-Flies* (Magnes), *Peirai* ("Try-Outs"?) and *Satyrs* (Ecphantides), this at a time when the tragedies of Phrynichus

[67] The last comic riders are ca. 480, the komasts stop about 520; the phallic processions become part of the political spectacle of the Athenian empire; see Cole 2001.

[68] For the demos as audience of later Old Comedy, see Henderson 1990.

[69] Chionides, Magnes, Euphronius and Ecphantides (note that in the list of earliest victors at the Dionysia [IG II^2 2325 column 8, Mette 1977 page 166] there are three additional names that cannot be restored); Myllos and perhaps Euxenides are given as names for very early Athenian comic poets in *Suda* s.v. Epicharmus = *PCG* Epicharmus test. 1.

(*Capture of Miletus* and *Phoenissai*) and Aeschylus (*Persians*) tackled recent history, Pratinas (TrGF fr. 3 Snell) seems to have criticized new music, and tragic choregoi included Themistocles and Pericles.[70]

4. *The taste of the earliest comic audience was far from sophisticated*. Aristotle *Poetics* 1449a32–49b9 implies that at Athens Comedians originally wrote in a lampoon-form, from which Crates was the first to depart (ἀφέμενος τῆς ἰαμβικῆς ἰδέας).[71] Aristophanes, in chastising the audience for their abandonment of his predecessors in their old age, says that Magnes was eventually rejected "because he ran short of insults" (ὅτι τοῦ σκώπτειν ἀπελείφθη, *Knights* 525).

Thus despite a suggestive start-date, the first four decades of Old Comedy were for ancient critics scarcely known, and perhaps scarcely worth knowing. Things changed in the 440s, with two new directions: Crates began one of them, abandoning mythological plots, and inventing stories that were free of invective. Another, almost opposite new direction began (according to an attractive hypothesis by Carlo Russo) when Comedy was once more introduced into a new festival, the Lenaia:[72] in that venue, in the hands of Cratinus, and later of Aristophanes and especially Eupolis, Old Comedy became at last unabashedly political.[73]

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[70] Known comic *choregoi* during this period are Xenocleides for Magnes in 472 B.C.E. (IG II^2 2318 col. 4; a Xenocleides of Aphidna was choregus for Aeschylus in 458, but presumably the demotic is added to distinguish them), Thar[rias for an unknown writer (col. 5, 459 B.C.E.), Euryclides for Euphorion (col. 5, 458 B.C.E.), and Thrasippus for Ecphantides (Aristotle *Politics* 8.6 1341A.30). The date at which the *choregoi* began to be supplied by the tribes rather than the archon (Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens* 56) is not known.

[71] What he means by "iambic form" is clarified in *Poetics* 1451 b14, where he distinguishes the generalizing plots of comedy in his own day, "and they do not write about a specific individual as the iambic poets."

[72] Russo 1994, 4, 19. On the introduction of Old Comedy into the Lenaia, see n. 3 above. On Cratinus' satire in particular, see Ruffell 2002.

[73] The occasion to re-think this evidence was provided by the need to organize it in the first chapter of a forthcoming translation of a selection of the comic fragments in *PCG*, as well as further thoughts on the interesting study of Rainer Kerkhof 2001, which I reviewed in BMCR 2001 (December 23, 2001). I am grateful to an audience at the University of Lille III (and especially to Fabienne Blaise) for suggestions and reactions, and for important corrections and *caveats* to Alan Shapiro, Rudolf Kassel, Hayden Pelliccia, and the anonymous referees of *AJP*. For advance knowledge of forthcoming work, I am indebted to Eric Csapo, Gregory Sifakis, Tyler Jo Smith, and Ursula Kästner. Obviously, on such a speculative topic their complete assent to all my arguments above should not be assumed.

APPENDIX

The Verses of Susarion the Megarian

> "The tradition that makes Susarion a Megarian is later than that which makes him an Icarian."
>
> (K. J. Dover in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* [3d ed. 1996] s.v. "Susarion")

There is an understandable tendency among students of literary history to value any actual poetic verses, regardless of their quality, over any third-party testimony: that seems to be why the semi-legendary Susarion (like Thespis among others) had some verses attached to him and why they have been taken so seriously in recent scholarship. But in this case we can trace the process in which the verses intruded and how they contaminated the tradition.

1. Susarion the inventor of Athenian Comedy (first in Parian Marble = *PCG* Susarion test. 1) is attested to by PCG Susarion test. 2–4 and 6 (Clement of Alexandria, two prolegomena on comedy,[74] and the Latin glossary Ansileubi), a tradition that knows nothing about Megara. (Two other texts [test. 11–12] are eccentric, making him the inventor of iambus or tragedy, perhaps because they used defective inventors' lists.)

2. Once an inventor of drama was named, the lack of texts was palpable. Thespis, for example, was a shadowy figure of whose dramas little could be said, but that did not stop verses being attributed to him, either fabricated (as Heraclides of Pontus was accused of doing) or taken from elsewhere. The same happened to Susarion in test. 5 (Diomedes *De poem.*) and Stobaeus' version of fr. 1:

> ἀκούετε, λεῴ· Σουσαρίων λέγει τάδε,
> κακὸν γυναῖκες· ἀλλ' ὅμως, ὦ δημόται
> οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖν οἰκίαν ἄνευ κακοῦ.
>
> "Listen you people: Susarion says the following: Women are an evil thing. But yet, my demesmen, one cannot inhabit a household without evil."

This pastiche of phrases from Aristophanes (see PCG on Susarion fr. 1) in the gnomic style of iambus (see West 1974, 183) and with standard misogynistic content has nothing to do with comedy, and its metrical technique is at best the style of later comedy (West 1974, 184, Kerkhof 2001, 46–47).

3. In test. 9 (the scholia to Dionysius Thrax) there is an additional verse, grammatically independent, between the first and second:[75]

[74] One of these is Prolegomena III Koster, the best-informed and most judicious of them all (AMK 45–51).

[75] Despite his theory that this one verse—which, unlike the rest, is not necessarily Attic—goes back to writers of *Megarika*, Piccirilli 1974 still acknowledges the Parian Marble as the oldest source on Susarion and that the verses come from another tradition.

υἱὸς Φιλίνου, Μεγαρόθεν, Τριποδίσκιος·

"Son of Philinos, Megarian, from Tripodiskos"

4. This verse attesting a Megarian home for Susarion, although it conflicts especially with the address to "demesmen" and the other Attic phrases in the verses, was known as a variant to test. 10 (Scholia on *Nicomachean Ethics*, perhaps of the second century C.E.)[76] and leads him to connect Susarion with what Aristotle says about Megarian comedy: "if, that is (εἴπερ), Susarion was Megarian."

5. Finally, in test. 7 (Johannes Diaconus' commentary on Hermogenes in the ninth century) the verses are used to fabricate an account of Susarion's "first performance." This story is repeated by John Tzetzes in the twelfth century (test. 8).

This account of the confusion is not really new; it was assumed by Kaibel (1899) and Jacoby (1904, 106) and underlies the order of the testimonia in *PCG* Susarion. It is only in the context of imagined battles over "Megarian comedy" (which is not yet an issue in the Parian Marble) or frustration over the difficulty in sorting out the tradition[77] that the Susarion tradition has become so contentious. Our only independent source for Susarion is the Parian marble, which, certainly among this collection of sources, deserves to be considered independently because of its age, its use of fifth- and fourth-century sources, and the character of its other entries on literary history.

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