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'*My kids for sale*': THE MEGARIAN'S SCENE IN ARISTOPHANES' *ACHARNIANS* (729-835) AND MEGARIAN COMEDY*

1. Megarian comic theatre

No-one is inclined nowadays to doubt the existence of the so-called "Megarian comedy" or "Megarian farce", a type of comic drama reportedly produced at Nisaean Megara, at least during the classical period. The extreme position of Breitholz,[1] who sought to deny the reality of Megarian comedy, mostly with hair-splitting argumentation and counterproductive agnosticism, never gained much approval among classicists and historians of the theatre. At any rate, even Breitholz was obliged to admit that some kind of comic drama must have been cultivated at Megara in the 4th century, within Aristotle's lifetime. As the latter records (*Poet.* 1448^{a} 29–1448^{b} 2), the Megarians maintained that the genre of comedy first originated in their region, as soon as democracy was established there (meaning presumably the period after the overthrow of the tyrant Theagenes, in the early 6th century).[2] This assertion would have been untenable, unless some

* I wish to thank the anonymous referee of the *Logeion* for his useful comments.

1. Breitholz (1960) 31–32, 38–50, 55–82, 87–95. See the critical remarks of Kerkhof (2001) 9–12, who surveys the mostly unfavourable reception of Breitholz's study in subsequent scholarship.

2. Arist. *Poet.* 1448^{a} 29ff.: *διὸ καὶ ἀντιποιοῦνται τῆς τε τραγῳδίας καὶ τῆς κωμῳδίας οἱ Δωριεῖς* (*τῆς μὲν γὰρ κωμῳδίας οἱ Μεγαρεῖς οἵ τε ἐνταῦθα ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς παρ' αὐτοῖς δημοκρατίας γενομένης* etc.); see in the last instance Kerkhof (2001) 13–17. For the connection with Theagenes' expulsion see Breitholz (1960) 55-56; Pickard-

distinctly local species of comic spectacle existed at Megara, at least in the period around the composition of the *Poetics*.[3] Indeed, this regional type of performance must have been demonstrably old by Aristotle's days — old enough for its roots to seem lost in the past. It must have reached back beyond the memory of the living generations of the time, so that its origins and age would have appeared impossible to fix. In this way, the Megarians would have been able to declare that their own comedy stemmed from an exceedingly early period, before the institution of Athenian comic performances, without running the risk of being immediately contradicted.[4] Whether there was any truth in the Megarian claim, or whether Aristotle himself believed it, is a different matter, which need not concern us here.

Once the existence of Megarian comic theatre has thus been established for the classical age, it is plausible to connect this same type of spectacle with the occasional references made by 5th-century Athenian comic poets to "Megarian comedy", "Megarian jokes" or "Megarian laughter".[5] It cannot be argued that the word "Megarian" in those comic passages is not used literally, in a geographical sense, but metaphorically as a derogatory attribute, meaning "low", "vulgar" or "stupid".[6] At least Ekphantides fr. 3 is unsuitable for such an interpretation:

> *Μεγαρικῆς κωμῳδίας †ἅσμα δίειμαι†*
> *αἰσχυνόμενος τὸ δρᾶμα Μεγαρικὸν ποιεῖν*

Cambridge (1962) 132, 178; Piccirilli (1975) 142.

3. See Breitholz (1960) 38–50, 55–57. The same plausible conclusion is drawn, among others, by Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 132, 178–179; Piccirilli (1975) 144, 146–148.
4. Cf. Breitholz (1960) 47–48, 55–57, who acknowledges that Megarian comic performances must have had a tradition of about one hundred years before Aristotle's time. It is odd that this local Megarian drama does not seem to have left any material evidence in the form of related archaeological findings (I owe this information to the referee of the *Logeion*). Nonetheless, the absence of such artefacts cannot contradict the literary testimonies of Aristotle and other sources. In particular, the fact that no remains of a stone theatre have been excavated in the region of Megara may have to do with the folk and improvised nature of Megarian comic plays (see below).
5. See Ar. *Wasps* 57–60; Ekphantides fr. 3; Eupolis fr. 261. Another poet of Old Comedy, Myrtilos, must also have referred to Megarian theatre in his *Titanopanes* (fr. 1). His words were cited by the anonymous scholiast on Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1123^{a} 23–24 (*CAG* XX, 186.9–20 Heylbut), along with the other comic passages mentioned above, but perished in a lacuna.
6. Thus Breitholz (1960) 62–71, reviving a proposal of the young Wilamowitz.

The text here is partly corrupt and unmetrical. But the corruption can be confined to the end of the first line; for the rest, the meaning of the passage is clear. The poet explicitly speaks of "Megarian comedy" and "Megarian drama", indicating by name a local Megarian genre of comic play. He wishes to dissociate his own writing from that kind of "shameful" (note *αἰσχυνόμενος*) performance.[7] Aristophanes' wording in *Wasps* 57 (*μηδ' αὖ γέλωτα Μεγαρόθεν κεκλεμμένον*) is also significant. In a phrase such as "stolen from Megara", the expression of provenance is most naturally taken in a concrete, geographical sense. Besides, "stolen" implies plagiarism and thus points to a specific, alien genre of laughter-provoking spectacle, which the dramatist declines to imitate.[8] Therefore, as agreed by the vast majority of experts, the Attic playwrights' utterances must be aimed at that kind of Megarian comic drama which is also independently attested by Aristotle some decades later.[9]

Megarian comic theatre was doubtless known in classical Athens. The poets of Old Comedy are familiar with its form, jests and motifs. It is significant that they only need to use the term "Megarian comedy" or "Megarian joke", and the spectators are supposed to understand what kind of play is meant, without further explanations. This indicates that Athenian audiences of the 5th century were acquainted to some extent with the nature and tricks of Megarian light drama. Megara was exceedingly close to Athe-

7. See MacDowell (1971) 136 and Kerkhof (2001) 19–20, who accept the fragment as valuable evidence (against Breitholz 1960, 71–74); cf. Csapo (2010) 99. Kerkhof also notes that Ekphantides' text is ultimately derived from a knowledgeable and reliable source: Adrastos of Aphrodisias, a Peripatetic of the 2nd c. A.D. and an excellent connoisseur of earlier Greek literature.

8. Cf. Kerkhof (2001) 23.

9. See von Salis (1905) 14; Süss (1905) 31; Rennie (1909) 204; Körte (1921) 1221–1223; Norwood (1931) 11–13; Herter (1947) 40; Giannini (1960) 138, 213; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 137, 179–183, 186; Pohlenz (1965) 509; MacDowell (1971) 136–137; Piccirilli (1975) 144, 146–147; Landfester (1977) 50; Handley (1985) 366–367; Imperio (1998) 70; Bühler (1999) 202–204; Wilkins (2000) 42, 92; Olson (2002) 261; Florence (2003) 41, 48–50; Storey (2003b) 286; Tedeschi (2003) 793–794; Tedeschi (2007) 58–59; Olson (2007) 2–3, 67–68; Rothwell (2007) 24; Olson (2010) 60; Csapo (2010) 99; Storey (2010) 180–181; Rusten (2011) 16, 49–50. Many of these scholars also discuss our sources of information for Megarian comedy, as well as its nature and probable motifs. Especially the important study of Kerkhof (2001) 4–24, 30–38 has offered valuable service, refuting Breitholz's fallacies, judiciously examining the available testimonies for Megarian comedy, and expounding what we can really know about it.

nian territory, situated at the very border of Attica, about 40 kilometres from the city of Athens. It would have been easy for Athenians to journey there and witness Megarian comic productions on location. It was also convenient for Megarian troupes of players to visit neighbouring Attica and perform their theatrical pieces there, especially in the countryside and the rural demes, during times of festivities and celebration.[10] This theatrical traffic between Megara and Attica presumably ceased during the Peloponnesian war, when Megara sided with Sparta and was thus reckoned an enemy of Athens. But it could have been resumed after the end of the war and continued into the 4th century. Aristotle seems to be familiar with Megarian productions;[11] and it will be argued below (section 2) that a comic fragment of the early 4th century possibly alludes to a Megarian farcical situation.

The Attic comic poets standardly denounce Megarian comedy as vulgar and buffoonish (*φορτική*, Ar. *Wasps* 66). Its jokes are deemed frigid and indecent (Eupolis fr. 261). The Attic poet would be ashamed to imitate it (Ekphantides fr. 3). Such judgments, coming from Athenian authors, may

10. This is a natural assumption, frequently made by scholars: see e.g. von Salis (1905) 10; Romagnoli (1918) 261–263; Körte (1921) 1222; Radermacher (1936) 23; Herter (1947) 40; Kerkhof (2001) 5; Rothwell (2007) 24–25. Breitholz (1960) 11–12, 79–80 unfairly makes fun of it.

11. Apart from the passage of the *Poetics* cited above, there is another reference in *Eth. Nic.* 1123[a] 19–24. Aristotle describes there the "vulgar" (*βάνανσος*) man that spends excessively on matters of small expenditure, thus displaying tasteless exhibitionism. As an example, the philosopher adduces a *choregos* of comedy "introducing purple cloth in the *parodos*, like the people at Megara" (*κωμῳδοῖς χορηγῶν ἐν τῇ παρόδῳ πορφύραν εἰσφέρων, ὥσπερ οἱ Μεγαροῖ*). On the possible interpretations of this phrase see Breitholz (1960) 55–62; Kerkhof (2001) 17–18; and Sifakis (2007) 175–205, all with further references. The text may mean that the tasteless *choregos* decorates the entrances (*πάροδοι*) to the performance area with expensive purple cloth, in the form e.g. of hangings or curtains (Kerkhof); or that he brings in the Chorus dressed in purple garments (Sifakis). The second explanation accords better with the phrasing of the Greek text; but the first one is supported by the scholia on Aristotle's passage. In either case, it is unclear what the implications are with regard to Megarian drama. The text need not be taken to indicate the existence of a Chorus in Megarian comedy. "*ὥσπερ οἱ Μεγαροῖ*" might mean more broadly that Megarian spectacles entailed practices comparable to those of the exemplary vulgar *choregos*: e.g. performers (not necessarily Chorus-men) dressed in purple, or purple decorations used around the performance space. The *parodos*, like the *choregos*, may relate only to Attic drama (Aristotle's primary example), not to the subsidiarily mentioned Megarian one. At any rate, Aristotle has in mind a specific type of Megarian performance, which he must have witnessed or heard about.

be biased, affected by a spirit of local chauvinism. The Attic dramatists, perceiving Megarian comedy as a rival, purposefully denigrate its quality, so as to exalt by contrast the sophistication of their own art.[12] Nonetheless, there appears to be a historical basis in these derogatory claims. As far as we can guess, Megarian drama must have been a popular, improvised form of performance. It is significant that no authors of Megarian plays are historically attested in extant sources; not a single genuine line of Megarian comedy is transmitted anywhere.[13] Evidently, no texts of this genre survived to the Alexandrian library, to be excerpted by later anthologists and polymaths. This indicates rather a form of folk, extempore theatre, with improvised jests and no fixed written scripts.[14] Such an art form would be unlikely to reach the sophistication and complexity of mature Attic comedy.

As to the themes and motifs of Megarian drama, the available testimonies allow only a few limited glimpses. Aristophanes (*Wasps* 57–60) connects two specific comic routines with the Megarian genre: a pair of slaves throwing nuts from a basket to the audience (presumably a primitive device for eliciting the spectators' favour); and the hungry Heracles who is cheated of his meal. These two motifs are clearly adduced in the Aristophanic text as examples of "laughter stolen from Megara". They are closely bound to each other and demarcated as a distinct group by means of the double con-

12. See MacDowell (1971) 136; Wilkins (2000) 42; Florence (2003) 48–50; Storey (2010) 181; Csapo (2010) 99.

13. The only attested author sometimes brought into connection with Megarian theatre is Sousarion. This enigmatic figure, purported to have "invented" comedy and traditionally placed in the early 6th century, is claimed to have been a Megarian in a few late sources. See test. 7–10 and fr. 1 in Kassel – Austin (1983–2001) VII 662–664; *Prolegomena de comoedia* XIa I 78–86, XVIIIa 19–25, XIXa 8–18, XXIa 81 and schol. *ad loc.* (pp. 26, 70–71, 76, 88 Koster); Rusten (2011) 52–55. Other authors, however, describe Sousarion as an Attic man from the deme of Icaria. Traditions about this personage are confused; it is not known whether he is based on a historical personality or a purely legendary figure. The single fragment attributed to him (fr. 1), written in regular Attic idiom and echoing known passages from Athenian Old Comedy, is clearly not a specimen of Megarian drama. The testimonies about Sousarion's Megarian provenance are to be ultimately connected with the Megarians' vindication of the origins of comedy (recorded by Aristotle). Reports of this sort must have been originally used (or perhaps fabricated) in order to support the Megarian claim. See Breitholz (1960) 74–82; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 183–187; Piccirilli (1975) 141–150; Kerkhof (2001) 38–50; Rusten (2006) 42–44, 59–60; Olson (2007) 328–330.

14. Cf. Kaibel (1899) 75; Rennie (1909) 204; Körte (1921) 1222; Pohlenz (1965) 509; Bühler (1999) 204.

junction *οὔτε … οὔθ'*.[15] By contrast, they are distinguished from the following couple of comic themes (parody of Euripides and political satire against Kleon), which are marked out as a separate category by a different pair of conjunctions, *οὐδ' αὖθις … οὐδ'… αὖθις*.[16] This second couple serves to illustrate the *λίαν μέγα* of *Wasps* 56, the kind of grand comedy on important intellectual or political issues, which Aristophanes has presented on other occasions but (purportedly) declines to exploit in the play at hand.[17] Of course, both these comic routines are also present in Attic comedy;[18] but this does not mean that they could not pertain to Megarian farce as well. Since Megarian plays were known and probably performed in Attica, interaction and exchanges of material between the two neighbouring comic traditions might conceivably have occurred at any time.[19]

There are also testimonies about a standard character or recurring role of the Megarian comic repertoire: Maison, a kind of cook and probably also a glutton.[20] In either case, this personage had a connection to food, preparing it, consuming it, or both. The same holds true for the other two known motifs of Megarian dramaturgy: the slaves throwing foodstuffs to the spectators, and Heracles tricked out of his meal. This emphasis on food in every known item of Megarian theatre is significant, even if we allow for the accidents of tradition. Megarian comic play seems to have thematised food and eating in a range of variations.

2. *Acharnians* 729–835: A Megarian micro-comedy and meta-drama

One piece of evidence should occupy pride of place in the discussion of Megarian comedy: the Megarian's episode in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*

15. *Wasps* 58–60: *ἡμῖν γὰρ οὐκ ἔστ' ο ὔ τ ε κάρυ' ἐκ φορμίδος / δούλω διαρριπτοῦντε τοῖς θεωμένοις, / ο ὔ θ ' Ἡρακλῆς τὸ δεῖπνον ἐξαπατώμενος.*
16. *Wasps* 61–63: *ο ὐ δ ' α ὖ θ ι ς ἐνασελγαινόμενος Εὐριπίδης·/ ο ὐ δ ' εἰ Κλέων γ' ἔλαμψε τῆς τύχης χάριν, / α ὖ θ ι ς τὸν αὐτὸν ἄνδρα μυττωτεύσομεν.*
17. See the textual analysis of Kerkhof (2001) 20–21; cf. Murphy (1972) 173.
18. For the slave tossing edibles to the audience, see *Peace* 962–967 and below, section 2. Aristophanes repudiates again this comic procedure in *Wealth* 789–801. On Heracles cheated of his meal, see Storey (2003b) 282–290; Konstantakos (2011); and Konstantakos (forthcoming, c), with detailed discussion of texts and images.
19. Cf. Norwood (1931) 11–13; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 180–181; Murphy (1972) 173; Piccirilli (1975) 144, 146; Handley (1985) 366; Florence (2003) 48–49; Tedeschi (2003) 793–794; Tedeschi (2007) 58–59; Csapo (2010) 99.
20. On Maison see discussion and references below, in section 2.

729–835. This is the only scene of extant Greek drama in which Megarian characters (a man and his two daughters) appear on stage, speaking furthermore in a theatrical version of the Megarian local dialect — i.e. broadly the same form of speech in which the performances of Megarian comedies must have been conducted.[21] As will transpire below, the characters and the dialect are not the only Megarian components in this scene. The plot, staging and action teem with motifs that are demonstrably or arguably traceable back to Megarian farce.

The Megarian's episode opens the second half of the *Acharnians*, after the parabasis. At the end of the first part the protagonist, Dikaiopolis, managed to convince the entire Chorus of Acharnian elders, appease their hostility and disparage Lamachos, the representative of the war party (620–627). Henceforward, Dikaiopolis is free to enjoy his private peace with Sparta and its ensuing pleasures. Immediately after the parabasis, he institutes his personal market, where peace conditions prevail and people from enemy regions (the Peloponnese, Boeotia, and Megara) are welcome to trade with the hero (719–728). The first to arrive is a man from Megara (729ff.). He is presented as famished: Megara is plagued by famine, because of the restrictive Megarian decree and the Athenian war raids on Megarian territory. Consequently, the man has no possession of value to trade with Dikaiopolis. He fetches instead his two little daughters, planning to sell them to the hero; in this way, the girls will escape starvation. To render their sale possible, the Megarian disguises the girls as young pigs, instructing them to put on effigies of trotters and snouts, and covering the rest of their bodies in a sack (733–747). He then presents them to Dikaiopolis as porkers fit for sacrifice in the Mysteries. Dikaiopolis, of course, soon becomes aware of the disguise; but he plays along, and this gives occasion for a juicy sequence of obscene double entendres (764–810). In the end, the hero agrees to buy the "pigs" for a negligible price, a bunch of garlic and a measure of salt — the very commodities that used to be the staple products of Megara before the Athenian invasions (811–817). Suddenly, an informer (*sykophantes*) appears and threatens to publicly denounce the Megarian as a smuggler of enemy goods. But Dikaiopolis chases the rascal away with a whip and completes his transaction with the Megarian visitor, who departs fully satisfied (818–835).

21. On the Megarian dialect and its theatrical use in the *Acharnians* see most notably Colvin (1999), especially 119–263, 296–308; Tedeschi (2003) 783–794.

This Aristophanic scene has often been considered as an allusion to the low-brow Megarian farces of the time, which would have been familiar to Athenian playwrights and audiences alike. Some scholars further regard it as an imitation or parody of such spectacles, from which Aristophanes must have drawn material in order to construct this piece of ribald scenic humour. Special attention has been awarded to the words by which the Megarian man describes his plan to disguise the girls as pigs: he calls this scheme a "Megarian artifice" (*Μεγαρικά τις μαχανά*, 738). The ancient scholion *ad loc.* gives a trivializing explanation, namely that the Megarians were notorious for their cunning and duplicity.[22] However, modern interpreters are right to take this phrase as a double-edged and essentially poetological or metatheatrical expression. On a deeper level, the entire scene built around the Megarian's disguise trick may indeed be termed a "Megarian (dramatic) artifice", meaning a scenic invention like those of Megarian comedy, a piece of "Megarian theatrical machination". Aristophanes thus implicitly designates his creation as an adaptation or parody of Megarian comic theatre.[23]

What has scarcely been analyzed hitherto is the specific material borrowed from Megarian comedy, and the way Aristophanes has exploited it. Which particular motifs or routines of the Aristophanic scene might stem from Megarian farces? It is possible to detect some of them by paying close attention to the parallels or analogies between the Aristophanic text and the information provided by other sources either on Megarian or more generally on Doric comic drama. Some of the connections proposed below seem fairly secure; others will be deemed more speculative. But all of them, taken together, create the impression that the Athenian comic master, in this particular section of his play, is drawing and reworking materials of Megarian farce on a considerable scale.

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22. Schol. on Ar. *Ach.* 738a (p. 97 Wilson): *ἀντὶ τοῦ πονηρά, πανοῦργος μηχανή. διεβάλλοντο γὰρ ἐπὶ πονηρίᾳ οἱ Μεγαρεῖς, <ὡς> ἄλλα μὲν λέγοντες, ἄλλα δὲ ποιοῦντες*. Cf. schol. on 738b.

23. See von Salis (1905) 14–15, 17; Süss (1905) 31; Starkie (1909) 156; Rennie (1909) 204; Körte (1921) 1221; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 181; Murphy (1972) 170; Piccirilli (1975) 144, 149; Landfester (1977) 50; Sommerstein (1980) 194; Reckford (1987) 168–170, 515 n. 63; Russo (1994) 59; Kerkhof (2001) 21–22; Slater (2002) 62, 260 n. 85; Brockmann (2002) 260–267; Olson (2002) 261; Tedeschi (2003) 792–794; Orfanos (2006) 84–85, 183, 250–251; Tedeschi (2007) 62–65; Olson (2010) 60.

a) *Tossing fruit*

Dikaiopolis, who has easily seen through the little girls' piggy disguise, decides eventually to test the eating habits of these "porkers", which seem so eager for food. Will they gladly eat, for instance, dried figs? For this reason, Dikaiopolis orders figs to be brought from inside the house. A slave, played by an extra, promptly emerges carrying the figs, presumably in a basket or other container, and starts throwing them to the girls/pigs. They catch and munch the fruit with great appetite, making loud chomping noises (804–807).[24] The stage action at this point is similar to a scenic routine attributed to Megarian comedy by Aristophanes himself in *Wasps* 57–59: the slaves casting nuts from a basket to the audience. In the *Acharnians* as well, a slave appears carrying a container with dried fruits and tosses them, though this time to characters on stage (the girls), at least according to the scripted text.

Nonetheless, it is a reasonable assumption that the slave would not target only the Megarian maidens. It would have been easy for him to hurl some of the fruits towards the audience as well. Perhaps he started by throwing a few figs to the girls, as commanded by his master; but then he might turn towards the spectators and cast the rest of his goodies in their direction.[25] Such a scenic gag need not have been recorded in the wording of the text. It would have been a purely physical jest, integrated in the performance and immediately perceptible to the audience without need of explanatory words. If this reconstruction of the stage show is correct, Aristophanes included in his scene a favourite routine of Megarian farce.

24. 805–807: *(ΔΙ.) ἐνεγκάτω τις ἔνδοθεν τῶν ἰσχάδων / τοῖς χοιριδίοισιν. ἆρα τρώξονται; βαβαί, / οἷον ῥοθιάζουσ'.* For *τις* signifying here a household slave see van Leeuwen (1901) 135; Russo (1994) 72; Olson (2002) 274–275. *ἔνδοθεν* is of course to be taken with *ἐνεγκάτω*, not with *τις*. The same indefinite *τις* is often used for household slaves in comedy. See notably *Ach.* 1096–1098 (*τις* is immediately followed by the vocative *παῖ παῖ*, in the sense of "slave"; similarly *Birds* 463–464); *Clouds* 1490 (the order given to *τις* is coupled with another command addressed to a named slave, Xanthias, 1485ff.); *Wasps* 529, *Birds* 1579, 1693, *Thesm.* 238, *Wealth* 228, 1194–1196. The referee of the *Logeion* points out that the *τις* in these cases may refer to an unmasked stage assistant. Even so, the personage coming out of Dikaiopolis' house and obeying his command would be naturally identified as a slave of the hero.

25. See Starkie (1909) 166–167; Olson (2002) 275.

b) *Stealing fruit*

While the figs are being tossed towards the girls or the audience, the Megarian man stealthily snatches one of the fruits for himself. He admits his humble feat shortly afterwards, demonstrating his trophy to the audience (809–910: *ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πάσας κατέτραγον τὰς ἰσχάδας. / ἐγὼν γὰρ αὐτᾶν τάνδε μίαν ἀνειλόμαν*).[26] The word *ἀνειλόμαν* need not imply that the Megarian picked the fig up from the ground, where it had accidentally fallen after being thrown to the piglets. The verb *ἀναιρεῖσθαι*, in this usage, properly describes misappropriation of an object not rightly belonging to the taker. Compare the same idiom, for improperly seizing food intended for others, in *Clouds* 981–982 (*οὐδ' ἀνελέσθαι δειπνοῦντ' ἐξῆν κεφάλαιον τῆς ῥαφανῖδος, / οὐδ' ἄννηθον τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἁρπάζειν οὐδὲ σέλινον*, for the modest boys of old times, who were forbidden to lay hands on the appetizers of the elders).[27] For all we know, the Megarian might have snatched the fig in the air, as the slave was hurling it up, or even grabbed it from his daughters, before they had time to munch it. The prefix *ἀν-* simply suggests that the man seizes the fruit from below and lifts it upwards.

The Megarian's action recalls a gag recorded elsewhere as a stock routine of ancient Doric comedy. Sosibios, a writer of local history of Laconia, probably active in the 3rd century B.C., describes in the following manner the old, presumably extempore comic spectacles of Sparta:

> Among the Lacedaemonians there was an ancient form of comic play, produced with no great means, because even in these matters Sparta pursued simplicity. In plain language one would imitate, for instance, persons stealing fruit or a foreign doctor, talking in such and such a manner.

There follows fr. 146 from Alexis' *Mandragorizomene*, where the speaker mocks a doctor's Doric accent and the jargon of his prescriptions.[28]

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26. On the stage action cf. Starkie (1909) 167; Sommerstein (1980) 115.
27. See Starkie (1909) 167; Olson (2002) 275. Cf. LSJ^{9} s.v. *ἀναιρέω* B.2.
28. Sosibios, *FGrHist* 595 F 7 (= Athen. 14.621d–e): *παρὰ δὲ Λακεδαιμονίοις κωμικῆς παιδιᾶς ἦν τις τρόπος παλαιός, ὥς φησι Σωσίβιος, οὐκ ἄγαν σπουδαῖος, ἅτε δὴ κἀν τούτοις τὸ λιτὸν τῆς Σπάρτης μεταδιωκούσης. ἐμιμεῖτο γάρ τις ἐν εὐτελεῖ τῇ λέξει κλέπτοντάς τινας ὀπώραν ἢ ξενικὸν ἰατρὸν τοιαυτὶ λέγοντα.* Sosibios' expression (*κωμικῆς παιδιᾶς*) implies a kind of acted play, not a one-man dance with mimetic elements, as Breitholz (1960) 115–121 believes. The performance included speech (*ἐμιμεῖτο ... ἐν εὐτελεῖ τῇ λέξει*), i.e. articulate role-playing. The pronoun *τις* may be taken in

Sosibios may be drawing his information from the local popular farces of his own age. Nevertheless, it is significant that he designates this kind of Spartan performances as "old" (*παλαιός*). Sosibios was an antiquarian author writing extensively on the earlier history, literature and customs of Sparta.[29] He presumably had access to older sources and, based on his knowledge, he found reason to believe that the popular plays he was recording were of some antiquity, not merely a product of his own times.[30]

Sosibios is speaking, of course, about comic spectacles of Sparta. However, it is an easy assumption that the rudimentary motifs of the latter, such as the man stealing fruit, might be more widely spread in the traditions of Doric folk theatre, as a kind of "common ancient heritage" of popular performances among the Doric populations. There are indications to support this hypothesis. Epicharmos appears to have described a similar situation in one of his plays (fr. 239):

> The Sicilian steals sour grapes (lit. "is being sour-graped"). This proverb is applied to people stealing worthless objects. It is taken from the habit of the Sicilians, who use to steal inedible sour grapes. Epicharmos uses this expression.[31]

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an indefinite sense ("one", cf. French "on"). It need not indicate that the performer was only one, successively undertaking the various roles. Cf. Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 163; Norwood (1931) 72–73; Olson (2007) 4. Anyhow, even if the spectacle was a monodramatic imitative dance, this would make no difference to the present discussion.

29. Note the titles of his works: *Χρόνων ἀναγραφή* (*Record of times*), *Περὶ τῶν ἐν Λακεδαίμονι θυσιῶν* (*On sacrifices in Sparta*), *Περὶ Ἀλκμᾶνος* (*On Alcman*), *Περὶ τῶν μιμηλῶν ἐν Λακωνικῇ* (*On mimetic performances in Laconia*), *Περὶ <τῶν ἐν Λακεδαίμονι> ἐθῶν* (*On the customs of Sparta*); see *FGrHist* 595 T 1 and F 1–8.

30. *Pace* Breitholz (1960) 120–121, who misses this important point. Significantly, Plutarch (*Lyc.* 17.3–5) records the following custom as part of the traditional education of Spartan youths, supposedly instituted by Lycurgus: the smaller boys were required to steal vegetables (*λάχανα*), either by breaking in gardens or by stealthily sneaking into the communal messes of grown men, and bring them to their captain. This resembles the situation mimetically represented in Sosibios' farces. Since this practice formed part of Spartan boys' traditional training, it reinforces the impression that the corresponding routine of popular plays was of considerable antiquity. See Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 135–136; De Martino (1998) 55–56; cf. Bierl (2001) 315 for other instances of Spartan ritual or mimetic food-stealing.

31. Epich. fr. 239 = Zenob. Ath. 3.133, Zenob. (vulg.) 5.84: *Σικελὸς ὀμφακίζεται· ἐπὶ τῶν τὰ μηδενὸς ἄξια κλεπτόντων λέγεται ἡ παροιμία. μετ<εν>ήνεκται δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν Σικελῶν, τὰς ἀβρώτους ὄμφακας κλεπτόντων. μέμνηται ταύτης Ἐπίχαρμος.*

It is not clear whether Epicharmos simply mentioned the proverb or also reported its background, the circumstances from which it sprung. If the latter was the case, the poet would be exploiting, to some extent, the old comic motif of the man stealing fruit. Some scholars even imagine an actual scene of fruit-pilfering, of the kind familiar from Sosibios, staged in a comedy of the Sicilian playwright. This cannot be excluded, although it remains hypothetical.[32]

Epicharmos was a writer of sophisticated literary comedies, not a producer of extempore folk spectacles, like those recorded by Sosibios. Still, the fruit-theft might have been an element inherited from the popular comic tradition of Doric Sicily. The occurrence of this motif in different Doric regions and diverse forms of Doric comic spectacle (Spartan farce, Sicilian comedy) indicates that it was widely shared by Doric comic traditions — to which Megarian farce also belonged.[33] Food-stealing in general must have played some part in Megarian plays. One of their stock motifs was "Heracles cheated of his meal" (*Wasps* 60), which implies that some personage fraudulently deprived the great mythical eater of his food. One of the simplest ways to achieve this would have been the theft of the foodstuffs intended for Heracles.

This hypothesis of a shared comic heritage, relating the old Spartan farces to other types of Doric spectacle, is reinforced by a second link, this

32. See Crusius (1892) 290; von Salis (1905) 21–22; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 136, 171; De Martino (1998) 53–54; Bierl (2001) 315.

33. There is another possibly relevant piece of evidence. The so-called "Dümmler vase", a Corinthian column krater of the early 6th century (Louvre E 632), depicts two naked figures (labelled Eunos and Ophelandros) carrying between them a large krater; on their right a third man (Omrikos), equipped with a huge phallus and holding two sticks in his hands, seems to be pursuing or controlling them, extending one of the sticks in their direction. This illustration has often been interpreted as an episode from an early Corinthian farce or mimetic dance on the old comic theme of theft: the two naked carriers have stolen a krater of wine, and the man with the sticks is striving to catch them. See e.g. Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 171; Handley (1985) 365; and most recently Kerkhof (2001) 24–30, who surveys earlier discussions. In that case, the picture would attest the presence of the food-theft routine in proto-comic performances of Corinth (yet another Doric area) at a considerably ancient age. The item stolen here is not fruit, but it is at least the direct product of a kind of *ὀπώρα* (grapes). However, this interpretation of the Dümmler krater has been seriously contested by other scholars: see in the last instance Csapo – Slater (1994) 95 and Steinhart (2007) 212–216 (with further literature), who propose very different readings of the picture.

time directly between Spartan and Megarian drama. Another stock element of Spartan plays, according to Sosibios, was the foreign doctor, pompously appearing and presumably speaking in foreign accent and jargon (to judge from fr. 146 of Alexis' *Mandragorizomene*, which is adduced as a parallel to the doctor's manners in the old Spartan performance). A similar personage seems to have occurred in Megarian comedies. The speaker of Theopompos fr. 3 compares the situation inside his house to "the medicine chest of a Megarian druggist" (*κίστην γεγονυῖαν φαρμακοπώλου Μεγαρικοῦ*). This simile suggests that the Megarian pharmacist was a well-known, quasi proverbial character. Perhaps, then, Theopompos is here referring to a personage of Megarian comedy — just as Aristophanes (*Wasps* 57–60) mentions in passing a few commonplaces of that same kind of show.[34] The drug-seller is a comic figure akin to the doctor. Both are liable to be portrayed as comic *alazones*, bragging about the efficacy of their medicaments and cures. In this respect, the Megarian pharmacist is the theatrical sibling of the foreign doctor of Spartan farces.[35] Once again, a distinctive dramaturgical element occurs in geographically diverse types of Doric comic drama, suggesting a common folk background for them.

Fruit-purloining would also suit another attested motif of Megarian comedy: the casting of nuts to the spectators. Stealing the fruits and throwing them to the audience form a well-matched pair of collateral comic routines. One can function as a sequel or complement of the other. Both of them offer variations on the same essential pattern of fruit traffic and misappropriation. It is no accident that in the *Acharnians* the theft of the fig is so fittingly combined with the fruit-tossing slave.

In conclusion, Aristophanes' Megarian man performs the same basic act as the antique Spartan — and perhaps also Sicilian and Megarian — comic hero: stealthily misappropriating a fruit.[36] In this way, Aristophanes incor-

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34. See Süss (1905) 30–31; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 137, 181; Kassel –Austin (1983–2001) VII 710.
35. See Süss (1905) 30–31; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 181. The doctor also appeared in Sicilian comedy, another indication that he belonged to the common background of Doric comic theatre: see Deinolochos' *Iatros* (test. 3.2) and perhaps Pseudo-Epicharmos fr. 295; Turner (1976) 48–60; Rossi (1977) 82–83; Imperio (1998) 72–73; Kerkhof (2001) 110–111. On the affinities between the comic roles of the doctor and the drug-seller see Rossi (1977) 83; Arnott (1996) 312–313, 329, 431–432. Generally on the physician as a comic character see Imperio (1998) 63–75 and Konstantakos (2004) 37–39 with further bibliography.
36. Note that figs, like grapes, are *par excellence* the kinds of fruit defined as *ὀπώρα* (al-

porates another recurrent motif of Doric comedy into the action of his scene. Admittedly, the stealing of foodstuffs is a widespread motif, found in many forms of comic theatre, including Attic Comedy. It is practised on a large scale in Aristophanes' *Knights* (theft of cakes, meat or cooked food is described in *Knights* 52–57, 417–428, 745, 1031–1034; hare's meat is actually stolen on stage in 1192–1205). It also appears on South Italian comic vase-paintings, presumably related to Athenian theatre.[37] However, both in the *Acharnians* and in the old Doric farces the object of the theft is specifically fruit, not other foodstuffs (e.g. meat or cakes, as in the *Knights* and the vases). This similarity closely binds the Megarian's scene with the Doric parallels, distinguishing them from the other manifestations of the theft routine. The *Acharnians* imitates a special variation of the food-purloining motif, apparently peculiar to the Doric/Megarian world.[38]

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though the figs in the *Acharnians* are dried, not fresh). See Plat. *Leg.* 844d–845b; Galen. *Alim. fac.* 2.8, 9, 40 (VI 570–573, 624 Kühn); Cassio (1985) 140.

37. See e.g. the Apulian bell krater in Milan (*PhV*^{2} 45): a slave, labelled Xanthias, is hiding a flat-cake into his clothes and slipping away, while an elderly couple (Philotimides and Charis) are eating goodies from a tray; Taplin (1993) 42, 112, pl. 12.5; Storey (2011) III 439–440; Rusten (2011) 444. Xanthias has presumably stolen his cake from the couple (probably his masters) and now runs away to secretly enjoy it. For other vase-paintings depicting comic theft of foodstuffs (mostly cakes) see De Martino (1998) 54–55; Storey (2003b); Storey (2011) 447–450; Konstantakos (forthcoming, c). Generally on this motif cf. von Salis (1905) 21–22; Breitholz (1960) 122–123; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 134–136, 163, 171; Murphy (1972) 174, 179–180, 188–189; De Martino (1998) 52–56; Bierl (2001) 315.

38. The staged food-theft in the *Knights* (1192–1205) is described with a noteworthy expression. Paphlagon has just offered Demos hare's meat, a delicacy which the Sausage-Seller has nothing to counter with. The latter, therefore, exhorts his soul to devise "some buffoonish trick" (1194, *ὦ θυμέ, νυνὶ βωμολόχον ἔξευρέ τι*), in order to surpass his opponent. He presently comes up with such an artifice: distracting Paphlagon's attention, he steals from him the dish with the hare's meat and serves it himself to Demos. The food-theft is here designated as *βωμολόχον*, properly meaning "a trick of vulgar, buffoonish comedy" (see Kidd 2012 on this term). Compare *Peace* 748, where Aristophanes calls *βωμολοχεύματ' ἀγεννῆ* the coarse motifs of low comedy, which he claims to have expurgated from his own productions (739–747): scenic jests like the beating of slaves or the hungry Heracles — this latter one, significantly, a recurrent personage of Megarian farces. If food-theft was similarly perceived as a routine proper to Megarian theatre, like the hungry Heracles, then *βωμολόχον* is the *mot juste* for it. Aristophanes' satirical point would then be that Athenian politicians resort even to the coarsest clownery, like that of the despised Megarian farce, in order to win the people's favour.

c) *Obscene puns*

The humour of the Megarian's scene largely reposes on obscene puns and sexual double entendre. The Megarian disguises and presents his daughters as pigs (*χοῖροι*) for sale. The word *χοῖρος*, however, apart from "young pig", was also a slang term for the vagina. Once Dikaiopolis becomes aware that the supposed "porkers" are actually girls in masquerade, an extensive repartee develops between him and the Megarian visitor, fully exploiting this semantic ambiguity (764–808): the girls are simultaneously *χοῖροι*/piglets and *χοῖροι*/vaginas. This central obscenity is combined with a series of complementary sexual puns on other double-edged expressions: the piglets do not have a tail (*κέρκος*) at present, but they will obtain "a long, thick, red one" when they fully grow up (*κέρκος* meaning both tail and penis, 785–787). The porkers are to be sacrificed to Aphrodite (792–794) — implying the girls' exploitation for sex. Their meat will be delicious if "skewered on a spit" (795–796, the phallic "spit" symbolically denoting the penis). They gladly eat chick-peas (*ἐρεβίνθους*) and figs (*ἰσχάδας*) — further double entendres for the male genitals (801–802).[39]

Several scholars have noted that such ribald sexual calembours, in the context of this "Megarian" episode, may have been intended as examples of the coarse Megarian humour. Aristophanes bases the entire scene on these obscene puns in order to allude once again to the comic model he is parodying, the vulgar Megarian comedy with its indecent jests.[40] That the Megarian genre must have abounded in obscenities of this kind is implied by Eupolis fr. 261. The first speaker of that fragment has just made a low-brow joke, and his interlocutor responds by indignantly exclaiming: "This jest of yours is indecent and Megarian and totally frigid!" He deems it the kind of crude stuff that only makes "little children giggle".[41] The actual joke has unfortunately not been transmitted; the citation begins shortly before the second speaker's exclamation. But *ἀσελγές* ("indecent, licentious, ribald") suggests an obscene jest, probably of scatological or sexual nature. Interpreters have imagined either a fart or some banter with the actor's

39. On the obscene word-play with *χοῖρος* and the other double entendres of this scene see Dover (1972) 63–65; Sommerstein (1980) 194–196; Henderson (1991) 60–61, 118–119, 123, 128, 131–132; Olson (2002) 261, 267–274; de Cremoux (2005) 125–130.
40. See von Salis (1905) 14–15; Reckford (1987) 168–170; Kerkhof (2001) 22.
41. Eupolis fr. 261: *(A.) τὸ δεῖν', ἀκούεις; (B.) Ἡράκλεις, τοῦτ' ἔστι σοι / τὸ σκῶμμ' ἀσελγὲς καὶ Μεγαρικὸν καὶ σφόδρα / ψυχρόν. † γελᾶς ὁρᾷς τὰ παιδία.*

comic phallus.[42] It is this second kind of spectacle (the thick, dangling, red-tipped leather phallus) that is similarly said to provoke the laughter of small boys in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (538–539).

Perhaps the choice of the pun on *χοῖρος* is not accidental in this respect. The slang sexual meaning of this word is frequent in the texts of Aristophanes and other Attic comic writers.[43] But the same ribald double entendre is one of the few sexual jokes that can be traced in the remains of Doric comedy. A Doric fragment (Anon. Dor. fr. 22 Kassel-Austin), transmitted in paroemiographical collections, states:

> *ἁ Κορινθία, ἔοικας χοιροπωλήσειν*
>
> You, Corinthian woman, you appear to be in for some pig-selling.

As the sources explain, *χοιροπωλήσειν* is taken here in its obscene sense: the woman referred to is a prostitute about to sell her sexual favours (Corinth was indeed famous for its hetairai).[44] In the same way, the Megarian man in Aristophanes introduces himself as *χοιροπώλας Μεγαρικός* (818), an allusion to the fact that he is essentially selling his daughters into prostitution: the girls will be used by their buyer, Dikaiopolis, for his own sexual gratification (cf. 791–796). The Doric fragment is sometimes attributed to Epicharmos, the Doric comic author with the most substantial surviving remains.[45] In any case, it provides a further instance of parallelism between the scene of the *Acharnians* and the Doric comic tradition.

Perhaps Aristophanes purposefully chose to build his Megarian section around this particular pun on *χοῖρος*, precisely because the latter was also used in Megarian farces. Indeed, he seems to implicitly acknowledge the Megarian provenance of his joke. At the beginning of the related dialogue,

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42. See Kassel – Austin (1983–2001) V 450 with earlier bibliography; Storey (2003a) 242, 350; Olson (2007) 68.
43. See Henderson (1991) 131–132, who collects all the material.
44. Anon. Dor. fr. 22: *ἁ Κορινθία, ἔοικας χοιροπωλήσειν· ἐπὶ τῶν παρ' ὥραν λέγεται θρυπτομένων γυναικῶν. οἱονεὶ ἔοικας μισθαρνήσειν ἐν Κορίνθῳ διὰ τὸ πλείστας ἑταίρας εἶναι ἐν αὐτῇ. λέγεται δὲ χοῖρος τὸ γυναικεῖον αἰδοῖον.* On the sources (Zenob. Ath. 3.130, [Plut.] *Prov.* 1.92, Suda χ 601, and other proverb collections) see *CPG* I 334–335; Kassel – Austin (1983–2001) I 300.
45. So assigned by Kaibel (1899) 132 (Epich. fr. *238); cf. von Salis (1905) 15 and Kerkhof (2001) 22, who also note the connection with the *Acharnians*. Kassel and Austin prefer to include it among the Anonyma Dorica. The sources mention no author's name.

as soon as the hero has realized the true identity of the girls in pig disguise, the comic exploitation of the word-play on *χοῖρος* begins with Dikaiopolis' bewildered query about the geographical origins of these "piglets" (768): "What are you talking about? What is the provenance of this *χοῖρος*?" The Megarian immediately retorts: "Megarian, of course. Or don't you think this is a *χοῖρος*?"[46] Like most elements of the scene, this repartee can be taken in a double sense. On one level, the Megarian's *χοῖρος*/"piglet" comes of course from Megara. But in another, metatheatrical reading, the *χοῖρος*-joke is also "Megarian", because it is a favourite element of Megarian comedy.

The fact that the same word-play was also current in Attic comedy suggests once again cross-generic interaction between the two neighbouring comic traditions.

d) *Hunger and voracity*

The Megarian man of the *Acharnians* is famished. His homeland is supposedly reduced to the point of starvation due to the Megarian decree, which excluded its citizens from trading within the Athenian empire, and also due to the Athenian invasions, which destroyed the crops in the countryside. The Megarian repeatedly refers to the hunger tormenting him, his daughters and his fellow-countrymen (732–734, 743, 751, 758–759, cf. 835). He colourfully highlights the girls' longing for food, making punning jokes about their belly (733, "pay your belly to me", a *para prosdokian* for "pay attention to me") and about barley-cakes (732, "come up here to the cake", another unexpected jest, instead of "to the door" or "to the stage"; 835, "strike your cake on salt", perhaps an obscene word-play).[47] It is presumably because of his hunger that he seizes the fig in 809–810, conceivably snatching it from his own daughters (see above, b). He doubtless goes on to munch it greedily before the spectators' eyes. The girls also display signs of both hunger and voracity. They would gladly eat whatever Dikaiopolis offers them on any occasion (797ff.). Indeed, they react with loud squeals to the hero's proposal of various edibles, showing their excitement for food (800–804). When the figs are tossed to them, the maidens eagerly grab and

46. 768–769: *(ΔΙ.) τί λέγεις σύ; ποδαπὴ χοῖρος ἥδε; (ΜΕ.) Μεγαρικά. / ἦ οὐ χοῖρός ἐσθ' ἅδ';* Cf. on this point von Salis (1905) 14.

47. For the joke in 835 (*παίειν ἐφ' ἁλὶ τὰν μάδδαν*, an audible pun on *ἐφ' ἁλί* ~ *φαλλός*) see Henderson (1991) 113; Olson (2002) 280.

munch them with loud chomping noises. Especially the emphasis on the physical aspects of food consumption (the belly joke in 733, the noisy munching) comically underlines all these characters' greedy desire for food.[48] Throughout the scene, the hunger of the Megarian visitors is treated as an object of fun. They are the butts of the comedy, and the audience is expected to laugh with their starving condition, not to pity it or to detect any dark undertones.[49]

This image of the starving Megarians is a comic exaggeration. The Megarian decree and the Athenian raids had doubtless caused an aggravated financial situation for Megara and its citizens; but the city was not reduced to starvation. The Athenian embargo banished Megarian merchants from all harbours and markets of the Athenian empire. However, Megara could still trade with nearby Boeotia and Peloponnese, as well as overseas with Sicily and South Italy in the west. In addition, the Megarians could also use middlemen (whether metics living at Megara or interested businessmen from other states), in order to convey their products even into Athenian dominions, as well as to import what goods they needed from other regions. Megarian commerce inevitably sustained some damage. Local products must have decreased in value, and the price of all goods imported to Megara (presumably including grain and other staple foodstuffs) will have increased. The poorer population in particular must have suffered to some extent. But Megara still had outlets for trading and procuring food. Further, the Athenians must have been largely aware of this, however much the pro-war demagogues emphasized or exaggerated the effects of the city's aggressive policy against Megara.[50]

Aristophanes, therefore, has overstated the hardships of the Megarians in comically presenting them as miserable starvelings. The question is why.

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48. Similar emphasis on the physical aspects of eating (biting, chewing, swallowing, and the bodily organs and noises involved) is a standard characteristic of the comic parasite; see Konstantakos (2000) 235 with examples. It is also a feature of the gluttonous Heracles of comedy; see below.

49. Thus correctly Carey (1993) 248–249; Moorton (1999) 37–38, 50; and Olson (2002) xliii–xliv, 276, against scholars who find the Megarians' plight disturbing (e.g. Bowie 1993, 33). To offer an illuminating parallel, Modern Greek audiences have good fun with the hunger of Karagiozis, the perennially famished hero of popular shadow theatre, without pausing to ponder whether laughing at a hungry man is politically correct or acceptable to the sensibilities of the intellectual elite.

50. See especially Carey (1993) 251–252; cf. Olson (1998) 178; Olson (2002) xxxiv–xxxv; Brockmann (2002) 259–260.

Obviously, on one level, the scenic portrayal of hunger and ravenousness guaranteed a good laugh; it has been a favourite comic means of popular theatre at many ages. Another possible reason was that these motifs afforded one more link with Megarian farce and its subject-matter. As noted above (section 1), Megarian comic drama thematised food and the preoccupation with food in several amusing variations. In particular, it seems to have enjoyed presenting hungry or voracious characters on stage. Of special interest in this respect are the testimonies about a character of Megarian comedy called Maison.

According to Aristophanes of Byzantium (fr. 363 Slater), Maison was a Megarian comic actor (nr. 1594 Stefanis) who created the personage or role of a cook. This personage was then also named Maison after his inventor. The actor Maison further invented the figure of a servant (*θεράποντος*). These two characters, cook and servant, used to make distinctive jokes, suited to their personalities, and jests in this style were hence identified as *maisonika*. The Roman grammarian Festus, also ultimately drawing (at least in part) from Aristophanes of Byzantium, defines Maison more broadly as "the comic figure of a cook or a sailor or of other such sorts".[51] The Stoic Chrysippos adds that Maison was an ignorant and gluttonous character, intent on the demands of his belly; for this reason Chrysippos speculates that the name ought to be derived from *μασᾶσθαι*, "chew".[52]

From these testimonies it can be concluded that a personage called Maison played some part in Megarian farces. It has been doubted whether there is any historicity in the tradition about a "Megarian actor" originating and naming this role; but this is irrelevant to the present investigation. The character Maison was apparently a cook, although Festus attributes to him a wider repertoire of dramatic roles: cook, sailor and other functions "of this kind". Perhaps Aristophanes' somewhat mangled statement about Mai-

51. Athen. 14.659a–b: *ἐκάλουν οἱ παλαιοὶ τὸν μὲν πολιτικὸν μάγειρον Μαίσωνα, τὸν δ' ἐκτόπιον Τέττιγα.* (…) *Μαίσων γέγονεν κωμῳδίας ὑποκριτὴς Μεγαρεὺς τὸ γένος, ὃς καὶ τὸ προσωπεῖον εὗρε τὸ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ καλούμενον Μαίσωνα, ὡς Ἀριστοφάνης φησὶν ὁ Βυζάντιος ἐν τῷ Περὶ προσώπων, εὑρεῖν αὐτὸν φάσκων καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεράποντος πρόσωπον καὶ τὸ τοῦ μαγείρου. καὶ εἰκότως καὶ τὰ τούτοις πρέποντα σκώμματα καλεῖται Μαισωνικά.* Festus p. 118.23–25 Lindsay: *Maeson persona comica appellatur, aut coci, aut nautae, aut eius generis. Dici ab inventore eius Maesone comoedo, ut ait Aristophanes Grammaticus.*

52. *SVF* III 200.29–31, fr. 13 Arnim = Athen. 14.659a: *Χρύσιππος δ' ὁ φιλόσοφος τὸν Μαίσωνα ἀπὸ τοῦ μασᾶσθαι οἴεται κεκλῆσθαι, οἷον τὸν ἀμαθῆ καὶ πρὸς γαστέρα νενευκότα.* Cf. similarly Hesych. *μ* 96.

son creating "both the cook's and the servant's role" implies something similar: the character Maison, apart from playing the cook, might also appear in the guise of a servant. In this latter case, Maison must have been a kind of standard figure, liable to undertake different occupations or roles from play to play, like the Maccus of the Atellan farce or the Karagiozis of Modern Greek shadow theatre.[53]

Chrysippos' etymology from *μασᾶσθαι* is regularly rejected by modern experts.[54] Nevertheless, the rest of his information, with regard to Maison as "preoccupied with his belly", need not be deemed fallacious for this reason. At least the first half of Chrysippos' characterization (*ἀμαθῆ*, "an ignoramus") is confirmed by the testimony of Philodemos, who casually adduces Maison as an example in his treatise on rhetoric. Philodemos compares the careless and stylistically defective manner of speech, which does not observe the rules of rhetorical manuals, to the talk of "the digger with the mattock and Maison". Here Maison, coupled with the rustic earth-labourer, is once again held up as a paradigm of ignorance and uncouthness.[55] It is thus likely that the second part of Chrysippos' description, concerning Maison's interest in his belly, also contains some truth. Indeed, Chrysippos could hardly have come up with his fanciful etymology, unless Maison did actually display traits of a glutton in his stage behaviour.[56] If Maison was a cook,

53. On all this, see especially the illuminating chapter of Kerkhof (2001) 30–38; see also Körte (1921) 1222–1223; Radermacher (1924) 27–28; Körte (1928) 609; Radermacher (1936) 16–20; Giannini (1960) 137–141, 212–214; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 181–182; Dohm (1964) 11–15, 18–22; Gigante (1971) 65–68; Ghiron-Bistagne (1976) 136–138; Bühler (1999) 202–204.

54. See Radermacher (1936) 17–18; Bühler (1999) 203 and Kerkhof (2001) 35–36 with further references. Giannini (1960) 140 and Dohm (1964) 13–14 defend it, in spite of the linguistic difficulties.

55. Philodemos, *Περὶ ῥητορικῆς* 4, col. VIIa 12–17 (I 189 Sudhaus): *Ὀ[κνῶ γὰ]ρ εἰπεῖν, ὅτι τὸν τρό[πον] τοῦτον, ὃν διὰ τῶν [πα]ραδειγμάτων οὗτος ὑπέδειξεν, ὁ σκαπανεὺς καὶ Μαίσων μόνος λαλεῖ.* Cf. Radermacher (1924) 27; Körte (1928) 609; Radermacher (1936) 16–17; Gigante (1971) 65–66; Bühler (1999) 203; Kerkhof (2001) 32, 37. Another, difficult and lacunose passage of Philodemos, from his work *Περὶ παρρησίας* (*PHerc.* 1471, col. XII), also appears to connect Maison with the countryside: see Gigante (1971) 66–68.

56. Cf. Kaibel (1899) 76; Körte (1921) 1222–1223; Radermacher (1924) 27–28; Körte (1928) 609; Giannini (1960) 137–141; Dohm (1964) 12–15, 19, 21; Gigante (1971) 68; Kerkhof (2001) 36–37. I do not think that Chrysippos' *πρὸς γαστέρα νενευκότα* means something essentially different from "glutton" or "guzzler". Chrysippos clearly takes Maison for a great eater, in so far as he derives his name from *μασᾶσθαι* (note the emphasis on the physical aspect of food consumption, a typical trait of other glut-

his preoccupation with eating would not be discordant with his profession; he would be as eager to consume the food as to prepare it. On the other hand, if he was a kind of stock personage plying diverse trades in various plays of the repertoire, his desire for food might have been the reason motivating him to try out all these different jobs (cf. again the Modern Greek Karagiozis).

Megarian comedies also featured another comparable figure: Heracles cheated of his meal (see *Wasps* 60). Heracles is presented as an inveterate gross eater in the entire Greek comic tradition. Especially in Megarian farce, since he was regularly deprived of his meal, he would experience keen hunger as a result. It thus appears that Megarian theatre had a penchant for presenting hungry and voracious personages, fixed on the needs of their belly. Aristophanes' humorously exaggerated portrayal of the Megarian and his daughters, his emphasis on their hunger, and the scenic representation of their enthusiastic guzzling may all be connected with that trend of Megarian spectacle.

Significantly, Aristophanes associates the most trenchant instance of his Megarian personages' ravenousness precisely with the figure of the greedy Heracles. When the two girls grab and noisily chomp the tossed figs, Dikaiopolis exclaims in amazement: "Wow, with what clamour they are munching them, by holy Heracles!" The invocation of Heracles is apt at this point, because this hero was the archetype of voracity.[57] It is exactly in this particular aspect that Heracles was also a typical character of Megarian farce. Thus, Aristophanes implicitly links his theatrical portrayal of the hungry Megarians with the stock guzzler of Megarian comedy.

Another similarity is worth highlighting. The Aristophanic episode lays stress on the physical, concrete aspect of food consumption: the Megarian girls make loud chewing noises with their mouths and teeth, as they are munching the figs (807). Possibly their father also crunched the stolen fruit in the same way. Thanks to this physicality, the Megarians' hunger is materialized before the eyes of the audience, acquiring a tangible stage dimen-

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tonous comic figures; see above, n. 48). Hesychius' gloss (*μ* 96: *μαίσων· μάγειρον. ἄλλοι βορόν* [i.e. voracious, gluttonous]*· ἀπὸ τοῦ μασᾶσθαι*) indicates that he understood Chrysippos' passage in the same way.

57. 806–807: *βαβαί, / οἷον ῥοθιάζουσ', ὦ πολυτίμηθ' Ἡράκλεις*. Cf. Rennie (1909) 210; Olson (2002) 275. Generally on Heracles as a comic glutton, see Wilkins (2000) 90–97; Casolari (2003) 249–295; Bruzzese (2004) 144–147, 150, 155; Konstantakos (2011) 237, 241–244; Konstantakos (forthcoming, c).

sion. The same emphasis on the physical organs and procedures of gobbling marks Epicharmos' depiction of Heracles devouring his food (fr. 18 from *Bousiris*). The clamour of chewing teeth, working jaws and gulping gullet dominates this passage as well:

> First of all, if you watched him eating, you would die of terror. A roar comes from inside his throat, his jaw rattles, his molars bang, his canine teeth squeak, he snorts with his nose and wiggles his ears.[58]

Once again Aristophanes' peculiar collocation of motifs (the greedy Heracles together with the emphasis on the bodily realities of eating) is paralleled in the Doric comic tradition.

e) *Selling one's own children*

The Megarian uses the expression *Μεγαρικά τις μαχανά* for his plan to disguise his daughters as piglets, in order to conceal their true identity and sell them under false pretence. Therefore, some scholars have guessed that disguise tricks of this sort were a typical motif of Megarian farces.[59] Unfortunately, there is no parallel to corroborate this hypothesis. Two attested Megarian or Doric comic routines, fruit-stealing and "Heracles cheated of his meal", would tally with disguise employed for the purposes of deception. The fruit-robber or the personage swindling Heracles might change his appearance or use some kind of masquerade, in order to remove the coveted *ὀπώρα* or the hero's food. However, the use of disguise was not necessary in either case.

Nonetheless, another motif of Megarian farce might be possible to trace in the Megarian's overall scheme: the very sale of the children, the situation of the man trading off his own offspring into slavery in order to acquire food (a bunch of garlic and a little salt in the *Acharnians*, 813–814); in other words, the central comic incident of the Aristophanic scene. An indication that this component may be inspired by Megarian theatre is provided by another piece of evidence, dateable a few decades after the *Acharnians*.

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58. Epich. fr. 18: *πρᾶτον μὲν αἴ κ' ἔσθοντ' ἴδοις νιν, ἀποθάνοις· / βρέμει μὲν ὁ φάρυγξ ἔνδοθ', ἀραβεῖ δ' ἁ γνάθος, / ψοφεῖ δ' ὁ γομφίος, τέτριγε δ' ὁ κυνόδων, / σίζει δὲ ταῖς ῥίνεσσι, κινεῖ δ' οὔατα.* Cf. Carrière (1979) 200; Wilkins (2000) 91, 93, 321–322; Kerkhof (2001) 117; Casolari (2003) 252, 269–270, 294; Olson (2007) 40–42.
59. See von Salis (1905) 17–18; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 181; Murphy (1972) 170.

This is the beginning of Comic Adespoton fr. 1062, preserved on a papyrus, unfortunately without poet's name or play-title:

> "What do I care about your troubles?", one of you
> might say. But I shall quote that verse of Sophocles:
> "Alas, the evils I have suffered!" Old Cronus
> drinks up and gobbles all my children,
> but hands me over no share at all.
> Instead, he manages with his hands, takes the children off to Megara,
> sells whatever I have given birth to and spends the money on eating.[60]

Such an expository monologue, expounding the background of the dramatic situation, is likely to come from the prologue of the play. The speaker is obviously Rhea, Cronus' wife and the mother of his children. The comedy took as its subject-matter the primeval cosmic myth about Cronus devouring his own offspring. It was doubtless a mythological burlesque and probably bore a title such as *Διὸς γοναί* or something similar. However, in this play the eating of the divine infants takes on an unexpected metaphorical dimension. Cronus does not really swallow his children; instead, he takes them to the market at Megara, sells them there as slaves, and spends his earnings on food and drink. This comic idea reposes on a pun with the idiomatic sense of the Greek verbs *ἐσθίειν* and *πίνειν* ("eat/drink", but also "consume one's property or money on food/drink").[61] By means of this word-play, the terrible child-eating god is transformed into a profligate glutton and drunkard, surrendered to the pleasures of his stomach and not hesitating to sell off his own offspring, so as to finance his carousals. This kind of rationalization was a favourite strategy of Attic mythological burlesques for dealing with the marvellous and supernatural elements of myth.[62]

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60. Com. Adesp. fr. 1062.1–7: *"τί οὖν ἐμοὶ τῶν σ[ῶν μέ]λει;" φαίη τις ἂν / ὑμῶν. ἐγὼ δ' ἐρῶ [τ]ὸ Σοφοκλέους ἔπος· / "πέπονθα δεινά". πάντα μοι γέρων Κρ[όνος] / τὰ παιδί' ἐκπίνει τε καὶ κατεσθίει, / ἐμοὶ δὲ τούτων προσδίδωσιν οὐδὲ ἕν, / ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἔρδει χειρὶ καὶ Μεγαράδ' ἄγων / ὅ τι ἂν τέκω 'γὼ τοῦτο πωλῶν ἐσθίει.* On this delightful comic piece see Körte (1930); Nesselrath (1990) 229–233; Xanthakis-Karamanos (1994); Nesselrath (1995) 22–27; Olson (2007) 125–126; Konstantakos (forthcoming, a) and Konstantakos (forthcoming, b).
61. See Xanthakis-Karamanos (1994) 337; Konstantakos (2000) 80–81.
62. On this comic strategy see Nesselrath (1990) 216–218, 220–221, 229–236, 240; Casolari (2003) 23–24, 273–275, 288, 298–299; Konstantakos (forthcoming, a) and Konstantakos (forthcoming, b).

Comic plays about the birth of various gods (usually entitled with the formula "god's name + *γοναί*", e.g. *Ἀφροδίτης γοναί*) formed a distinct thematic tendency within Attic mythological burlesque — a tendency, however, of limited time duration. They seem to have been overwhelmingly produced in the period between the end of the 5th century and the 380s or the 370s. They were particularly favoured by a few tardy writers of Old Comedy (Philiskos, Polyzelos, and also Nikophon and Demetrios), who made their theatrical debuts at the close of the 5th century and extended their activity into the first decades of the 4th. The theme was also briefly taken up by some poets of the first generation of Middle Comedy (Araros, Anaxandrides, Antiphanes), who started producing comedies in the 380s. Such a distribution of the material strongly suggests the period from ca. 410–400 to ca. 380–370 as the likeliest dating for all comedies about gods' births. The Middle Comedy authors presumably did not persevere with plays of this kind beyond the early phase of their careers.[63] The unidentified play containing fr. 1062 must have belonged to this same time-span. It is often attributed to Philiskos, the keenest exponent of this thematic tendency and the only comic playwright known to have composed a *Διὸς γοναί*. Nesselrath has alternatively proposed Antiphanes, the greatest star of Middle Comedy, as author. The inventiveness and high quality of comic writing, which distinguish Rhea's ingeniously punning tirade, seem indeed more suitable to a major dramatist such as Antiphanes, than to the obscure Philiskos.[64]

According to this text, Cronus takes his children to Megara in order to sell them. Of course, this detail is bound up with the fundamental comic process used in fr. 1062: the domestication and "Atticization" of the myth. This is a central dramaturgical strategy in Attic mythological burlesque: the mythical world is reconstructed on the model of the Athenian society of the poet's own age. The gods and heroes assume the traits of recognizable professional or social types of classical Athens and are placed within a setting that copies Athenian urban and domestic life of that period. Thus, in fr. 1062 Cronus and Rhea are turned into a petty bourgeois couple (respectively a profligate husband and a wretched complaining wife) with a good

63. See Nesselrath (1990) 229–230; Nesselrath (1995) 1–22.
64. See Körte (1930) 474–475; Edmonds (1959) 8–9; Kassel – Austin (1983–2001) VIII 355; Nesselrath (1990) 229–230; Xanthakis-Karamanos (1994) 339–343; Nesselrath (1995) 24–27; Olson (2007) 125; Storey (2011) III 395.

deal of marital problems. In this respect, Megara is an additional touch of familiar urban colour, enhancing the transplant of the mythical story to a trivialized everyday milieu: Cronus journeys to Megara, just as a 4th-century Athenian fellow might do for business.[65]

Still, the question is pertinent: Why Megara in particular? Why not sell the children in Athens itself, or somewhere in Attica? Or, if an alien place was deemed necessary for such an extraordinary (and by Attic law illicit) transaction, why was not another neighbouring territory chosen, e.g. Boeotia, Euboea, or Corinth? These regions were also close enough to Athens and would equally serve the comic purpose of Atticization. The special choice of Megara creates a striking parallel with the situation in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*: in both cases a character sells his own children in exchange for acquiring food, and in both plays this is associated with Megara. The mention of this latter city in fr. 1062 need not be taken as a mere casual reference of topical colouring, without significance for the rest of the plot. For all we know, the anonymous comedy on Cronus and his offspring may have further exploited Cronus' sale and its Megarian location. For instance, Cronus might be portrayed setting off for Megara or returning from his journey and describing his experiences and business transactions in that place. Or the setting might shift to Megara itself, and Cronus could thus be actively shown trading off one or the other of his children there.[66] Such scenes would make the parallel with the *Acharnians* even stronger.

This similarity led a few scholars to conjecture that fr. 1062 may contain an echo or an allusion to the Megarian's scene in the *Acharnians*. This hypothesis, however, seems unlikely, because of the large interval separating the two comedies.[67] The *Acharnians* was performed in 425, while the play about Cronus, as demonstrated above, must have been produced at some point between the end of the 5th century and the 370s, viz. twenty to fifty years after the Aristophanic work. Although plays of Old Comedy seem

65. On the "Atticization" technique see Nesselrath (1990) 231–233; Xanthakis-Karamanos (1994) 338, 340–341; Nesselrath (1995) 23–26; cf. Olson (2007) 125 on the choice of Megara in this connection.
66. Such changes of setting were common in Old Comedy, including late Aristophanic plays such as the *Frogs* and the *Ecclesiazusae*. They might have survived in comic practice during the early decades of the 4th century.
67. So Körte (1930) 473 and Xanthakis-Karamanos (1994) 338; cf. Brockmann (2002) 262.

to have been revived in South Italy during the early 4th century,[68] there is no indication that such revivals were taking place in Athens at that period. Moreover, a comedy such as the *Acharnians*, so intrinsically bound with the historical situation of its time, the causes of the Peloponnesian war and the conditions prevailing during its early years, would have been very difficult to stage again in Athens after the end of the relevant war phase and the obliteration of the peculiar circumstances surrounding its original production. Once the Peloponnesian (or indeed the Archidamian) war was over, a re-performance of the *Acharnians* would mean little to the Athenian audience.[69] Consequently, one would have to reckon with a comedy of ca. 400–370 alluding back to an Aristophanic episode performed two to five decades earlier. It seems unlikely that the Athenian spectators could have recalled the *Acharnians* at such a temporal distance. If the author of the Cronus-play intended an allusion to the *Acharnians*, this would have met with little recognition on the part of his audience — if with any at all.

There is, however, another possibility: namely, that both the *Acharnians* and the anonymous fr. 1062 are indebted to a common model or source. The latter could be Megarian comedy, a genre still alive and performed during the 4th century, as indicated by Aristotle's references. If Megarian farces entailed a similar comic situation (i.e. a character selling his own children in order to buy food), this would account both for the episode of the *Acharnians* and for the choice of Megara in fr. 1062. In that case, Aristophanes will have borrowed from Megarian theatre the central comic idea of his episode. And the author of the Cronus-play, some decades later, would be again alluding to the Megarian comic tradition (still thriving in his days) and perhaps also exploiting its farcical material, like several of his Old Comedy predecessors.

A final parameter that should be stressed is the marked metatheatrical flavour of the Megarian's act in the *Acharnians*. The Megarian man func-

68. The South Italian vase-paintings provide clear indications of this: see handily Taplin (1993); Csapo (2010) 38–67, 74–82; and Storey (2011) III 425–427, 429–436, 438–450 with further references.

69. A later revival outside Athens (e.g. in Magna Graecia) is of course a different matter. Indeed, a series of Apulian mould-made oil cans (*gutti*), dating from ca. 330 B.C., may actually be illustrating a pivotal scene of the *Acharnians*: Dikaiopolis taking a charcoal basket as hostage and threatening to slaughter it with a sword (331ff.). See Csapo (2010) 64–65, 81, with further bibliography.

tions somewhat like an author and director of theatre, organizing his show as a little play within the play. As soon as he appears before the audience, he addresses his daughters and calls them to "come up to the barley cake", as long as they can find it (732, *ἄμβατε ποττὰν μάδδαν, αἴ χ' εὕρητέ πα*). The peculiar verb used (*ἀναβαίνειν*) indicates stage movement: the girls are standing in the *orchestra*, and their father commands them to ascend on the stage platform destined for the actors. In other words, like a theatrical producer, the Megarian provides the members of his troupe with appropriate stage directions; he literally brings them on stage, on to the scenic space marked out for their performance.[70]

The metadramatic markers become denser in the lines that follow. The Megarian disguises his daughters as porkers; like a costume designer and dresser, he makes them don "theatrical" costumes, so as to play the corresponding roles in the show he is preparing. The girls place effigies of pig trotters around their forehands and bind swine snouts like masks on their faces (739–740, 744); essentially, they dress up like actors, putting on the props of their roles. Finally, the father-producer instructs his girls how to perform their parts: he gives them directions to imitate the squealing of pigs, to reproduce their characteristic noises and peculiar attitude (741, 746–747). He thus becomes a theatre director, guiding his actors through their roles, coaching them for a convincing and realistic performance.[71]

In this way, the Megarian's plan of action is set up like a theatrical spectacle. The Megarian himself participates as the chief comic actor, alongside his girls. Like the early Athenian playwrights, perhaps also like the entertainers of extempore Megarian farce, he is at the same time author and actor, producer and performer in his show. To be on the safe side, he continues to operate as director in the course of the performance: he gives the cue to the other players, reminding them of his stage directions, to ensure a flawless execution (777–779). Dikaiopolis, on his part, functions as the audience of this Megarian mini-drama. Like the audience in the theatre, he knows that the spectacle he witnesses is pretence and the participants mere role-players (he swiftly realizes that the porkers are girls in disguise, 767ff.). But he accedes to this make-believe, suspends disbelief and acts as though

70. See Olson (2002) 260; Tedeschi (2003) 792; de Cremoux (2005) 126. For similar theatrical uses of *ἀναβαίνειν* see *Knights* 149; *Wasps* 1341.
71. See Tedeschi (2003) 792–793; Orfanos (2006) 85; Tedeschi (2007) 64.

accepting the reality of what is shown to him — just as the spectators of drama are willingly taken in and drawn into the world of the play.[72]

These metatheatrical artifices strongly colour the Aristophanic episode and condition its reception. Together with the materials from Megarian farce, which are amply exploited throughout this section, they mark the entire scene as a Megarian micro- and meta-drama: a Megarian comedy in miniature, engrafted within Aristophanes' play. The Megarian and his daughters do not represent only the return of Megarian traders, who were excluded from Attic markets since the eve of the war and are now allowed into the private peaceful world of Mr. Just-City. They possibly also incarnate the troupes of Megarian comic players, who might have toured the countryside of Attica, bringing their farces to the local Attic audiences, in the good old pre-war times. Those travelling companies would presumably also have been prohibited from entering the enemy Athenian territory after the outbreak of hostilities in 431 B.C. Now one of them returns to Dikaiopolis' exclusive rural domain and puts on its long-missed Megarian performance, for the personal entertainment of the hero.

Inevitably, Aristophanes caps this fabrication with a humorous twist of his own. The Megarian man of the *Acharnians*, despite his self-proclaimed cunning, is thoroughly duped and gets a very bad deal from Dikaiopolis. His allegedly crafty "Megarian machination" only leads him to sell his daughters into sexual slavery. In exchange, he receives scandalously little: merely a small, worthless amount of the products (garlic and salt) which Megara used to produce in abundance before the war. Dikaiopolis has hoodwinked him. And yet the Megarian appears so silly, as to imagine he has driven a brilliant bargain (816–817): he frankly wishes he might be able to sell his wife and his mother as well for such an excellent price!

Thus, the *Μεγαρικὰ μαχανά* is completely inverted, turning against its own inventor; and, in the metadramatic reading of the episode, so is Megarian comedy. The Megarians, as noted above, were reputed for their cunning and craftiness.[73] In their own regional comic drama, the native man

72. Note also that the girls' success in their role-playing is directly connected with their chances of obtaining a meal: only if they are convincing as pigs and manage to get sold, will they find enough to eat in Athens and escape the famine of Megara. This recalls the plight of so many actors in theatre troupes (especially popular touring companies), ancient and modern, whose next meal is immediately dependent on the success of their performance and the consequent earnings.

73. See the Schol. on *Ach.* 738a (above, n. 22).

of Megara would doubtless appear in the role of the clever hero, the triumphant deceiver and trickster, brilliantly outwitting his antagonists. In the Aristophanic scene this scenario is overturned: the Megarian man is now a dupe, taken in by the far craftier comic hero of Athens. He appears as a wretched poor devil, deprived of every valuable possession, despoiled even of his precious family members in return for trifles. Aristophanes has borrowed the Megarian farcical material, only to turn it upside down. The scene of the *Acharnians* is not only "meta-Megarian" but also "para-Megarian": a parody of Megarian comedies, humorously reversing their traditional plots, conventions and role distribution, to the greater glory of the much more ingenious Athenian comic hero and his superior theatrical genre.

3. The Megarian's scene in the context of the play

Why did Aristophanes construct the Megarian's scene on the model of Megarian farces? What was his purpose in replicating and parodying all those elements of Megarian theatre? Some scholars regard this episode as a mere entertaining interlude, without particular significance for the overall structure of the play. Aristophanes finds occasion to exploit the crass jokes and ridiculous obscenities of popular Megarian farce, in order to please the low-brow and least cultured part of his audience. At the same time, he subverts and parodies Megarian routines, thus satirizing the "primitive" comic genre of Athens' neighbours and distinguishing his own, far more sophisticated art from it. In this manner, he both uses the crude comic stuff, to raise hearty laughter, and shifts the blame for it on the Megarians. Otherwise, the scene is not supposed to serve any broader narrative strategy. It might easily be omitted without causing damage to the plot of the *Acharnians*.[74]

74. Thus Landfester (1977) 50 and Orfanos (2006) 85. On the episode as a concession to the unsophisticated section of the audience, cf. also Tedeschi (2003) 793–794 and Tedeschi (2007) 62–64. Brockmann (2002) 260–267 reads the scene as a dramaturgical experiment of Aristophanes, intended to test the limits of his art. The poet uses the coarsest and most ludicrous comic stuff in order to bring before his audience a very serious matter: the terrifying situation of famished Megara and the grave consequences of the Athenian aggressive war policies. He thus draws attention to this severe issue in a manner more palatable and acceptable to comedy. The Megarians' terrible plight becomes the object of laughter, but behind the jokes the spectators may discern the serious background and are incited to reflect on it. Reckford (1987) 191–193 also makes stimulating remarks on the combination of side-splitting comedy

By contrast, I should like to suggest that the Megarian's scene, apart from its evident entertaining value and parodic function, also has a place and a purpose within a careful broader design underlying the composition of the comedy. This artful scheme, which runs through the drama and consolidates its structure, arises from the interplay of the two great dramatic genres, tragedy and comedy, as reflected in the course of the *Acharnians*. This interplay, in turn, is intrinsically connected with the main thematic concern of the work, the antithesis between war and peace.

In the *Acharnians* the contrasting worlds of war and peace are constructed, *inter alia*, as an opposition between theatrical genres. War is consistently associated with tragedy, while peace is connected with comedy. Within Aristophanic drama, of course, tragedy takes the form of tragic parody or paratragedy: this is how the grand sibling genre is reflected in the distorting mirror of comic fiction. Thus, war is depicted in paratragic manner, its circumstances and representatives loaded with allusions to texts of tragedy and mock-tragic expressions or motifs. The image of peace, on the other hand, is developed through routines and techniques typical of comedy — often indeed through elements pertaining to the simplest, most elementary form of comic delight. Thus, the construction of war and peace interlaces with the poet's reflection on the nature of his art.[75]

The *Acharnians* begins inside the Athenian *polis* at wartime. Accordingly, already the first scenes, depicting the hardships and political corruption of the war-waging city, are interspersed with allusions to tragedy. Dikaiopolis' opening monologue contains a few tragic quips, meaningfully placed at strategic points of its structure: v. 8 (*ἄξιον γὰρ Ἑλλάδι*, from Euripides' *Telephos*, fr. 720), near the beginning of the speech, initiating the sequence of Dikaiopolis' preliminary examples of his pleasures and pains; and v. 27 (*ὦ πόλις πόλις*, with a ring of paratragic pathos, cf. Soph. *OT*

with grave subject-matter in this scene. However, I would be weary to overstate the "serious" background of the Megarian's scene, precisely because this latter personage is so strongly portrayed as a complete dupe and butt of laughter. There seems to be no appeal to feel pity for him, sympathize with his plight or reflect on the political implications of his misery.

75. A similar pattern, based on the generic interplay of tragedy and comedy, may be detected also in the *Peace*. In that play Aristophanes takes up again the scheme of the *Acharnians*, in order to further refine it. I hope to offer detailed analysis of this aspect of the *Peace* in a future essay.

629), at the first explicit statement of Dikaiopolis' main theme, peace.[76] The following scene of the Persian embassy (61–125) possibly echoes Aeschylus' *Persians*. Especially Pseudartabas, the purported Achaemenid official, whose equipment and movements are compared to a ship (94–97), combines in his appearance various elements from Aeschylus' description regarding the destruction of the Persian fleet. The ambassadors and their false "Persian" envoys are presenting a show in order to deceive the Athenian people: they put up a "Persian" performance with evident Aeschylean overtones.[77]

As soon as Dikaiopolis concludes his private peace treaty, the atmosphere changes. The hero is immediately transported to his country farm, to celebrate the Rural Dionysia with a phallic procession (241–279). His celebration will soon prove precarious, and Dikaiopolis will have to undergo more adventures and perils before securing his triumph. Nonetheless, the hero's festival is an act characteristic of peace, a peaceful interlude within the play's first, war-dominated part. In this respect, it is noteworthy that Dikaiopolis' phallic ceremony and song can be regarded as a kind of primordial comedy. Less than a century later, in a notorious passage of the *Poetics* (1449[a] 10–13), Aristotle will track down the origins of comedy to the "leading singers" (*ἐξαρχόντων*) of *τὰ φαλλικά*. This derivation has been repudiated by some modern experts as pure Aristotelian speculation, as a hypothesis formulated by the philosopher without the support of concrete evidence.[78] On the other hand, there are also approbatory voices in modern scholarship, acknowledging at least some ties between phallic rites or revels, as we know them from the ancient world, and the primeval core of comic performances.[79]

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76. Dikaiopolis' speech also contains other occasional smatterings of high-style, perceptibly tragic discourse, enhancing the paratragic effect: e.g. *δέδηγμαι τὴν … καρδίαν* (1), *βαιά* (2), *κέαρ* (5), *στνγῶν* (33). For all these tragic echoes see Rau (1967) 185–186; Olson (2002) 65, 68, 76–77; Mai (2011) 255–259.
77. For this interesting proposal see Brockmann (2003) 42–56, 82–127.
78. See e.g. Körte (1921) 1217–1219; Norwood (1931) 8–10; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 133–147; Storey (2010) 180–181; cf. the overview of such opinions in Bierl (2001) 303.
79. See notably Herter (1938) 1676–1678, 1699–1701; Herter (1947) 9–39; Giangrande (1963) 2–21; Pohlenz (1965) 497–510; Sifakis (1975) 119–138; Carrière (1979) 18–21; Reckford (1987) 444–498; Csapo – Slater (1994) 93, 96, 98–100, 104; Csapo (1997) 267–268; Pütz (2003) 161–164; Rusten (2006) 39, 54–57; Csapo – Miller (2007b) 8–16; Nagy (2007) 122–124; Depew (2007) 126–131, 138; Rothwell (2007) 22, 25–27, 37; Rusten (2011) 16–18, 45–49. Cf. Ghiron-Bistagne

At any rate, the scholarly answer to this dilemma is not of much concern for the present investigation. What matters is that Aristotle, based on his observation of phallic rites and songs still current in his time, and possibly also on his knowledge about their past tradition, must have noticed specific analogies between them and literary comedy. These parallels presumably led him to his conclusion that the genre of comedy was developed out of the performances of phallic chants. Furthermore, such links and resemblances would naturally have been visible also to Aristophanes and his audience some decades earlier.[80] Therefore, the latter would also have been able to spot common points between phallic rituals and comic theatre. Perhaps they might even draw inferences of broadly the same kind as Aristotle later did, concerning the possible genetic relationship between *phallika* and comedy.

(1976) 208–216, 225; Handley (1985) 362–364; and Bierl (2001) 303–306, 311–325, 346–350, who do not rule out the possibility of such a link. Some scholars, especially more recent ones (Reckford, Rusten, Rothwell), believe that many types of early revels and ritual performances contributed to the development of the composite construction of comedy; each one furnished different components to that complex and multifaceted genre. Among those diverse performances (animal masquerades, dances of padded komasts, carnival celebrations, choral contests, festive ritual singing and invective, improvised role-playing etc.), phallic processions must also be included. Such an eclectic stance seems closer to the truth.

80. Cf. Herter (1947) 23, 38; Csapo – Miller (2007b) 10; Depew (2007) 131; Hedreen (2007) 157. Modern scholars especially point out analogies between the performances of the *ithyphalloi* and *phallophoroi* described by Semos of Delos (*FGrHist* 396 F 24 = Athen. 14.622a–d) and the core structure of the parabasis of Old Comedy. The *phallophoroi* first sang a hymn to Bacchus, and then picked out members of the audience and began mocking them. Similarly, the epirrhematic part of the parabasis often consists of a lyric hymn to a god, followed by a recited tirade (*epirrhema*) of invective against public figures of Athenian society. Invective and obscenity (*aischrologia*) were overall prominent elements in Attic comedy (especially in its early stages, according to Arist. *Poet.* 1449^{b} 7–9). Further, the *ithyphalloi* apostrophized the audience, just like the Chorus in the comic parabasis; and they wore masks, like drama performers. The entrance of the *ithyphalloi* and *phallophoroi* in the theatre, along with their entry songs, resembles the *parodoi* of Old Comedy. Generally, the songs of Semos' phallic performers are comparable, in their function and meaning, to the choral pieces of Aristophanic plays. See Herter (1947) 31–32; Giangrande (1963) 5, 17–18; Pohlenz (1965) 502–503; Sifakis (1975) 119–138; Handley (1985) 363; Reckford (1987) 487–489; Bierl (2001) 305–306, 315–316, 323–325, 346–350; Pütz (2003) 162–163. Such analogies might already have been noticed by 5th-century audiences.

In the light of these considerations, it does not seem fortuitous that Dikaiopolis' first act, as soon as he has obtained his longed-for peace, is to arrange and perform a phallic ceremony, complete with a *phallophoria* procession and a ribald song. Dikaiopolis' ritual is a kind of proto-comedy.[81] Significantly, it is organized and presented as a little play within the play. Dikaiopolis acts as the producer/director of the show, giving instructions to the performers (his daughter and the slaves carrying the phallus) with regard to their parts and the proper presentation of them (242–244, 253–260). He is also himself a performer, singing the phallic song, like the *ἐξάρχων* mentioned by Aristotle.[82] In this way, Dikaiopolis displays a double nature: he is simultaneously involved in the performance and stepping out of it, in order to function as director. He is both in and out of the theatrical play, and thus becomes the prototype of the Aristophanic actor, who may simultaneously play his role and step out of it, preserve the dramatic pretence and also rupture it at any moment. Further, Dikaiopolis fictionalizes the space of his performance. The procession takes place in front of his country house, in the *orchestra* which is left virtually empty, since the Chorus-men have hidden themselves from his sight (probably at the back zone, near the *skene* or the *eisodoi* of the theatre, 239–240).[83] Nevertheless, Dikaiopolis pretends to be in a crowded place (257–258). The little spectacle also has its internal audience. Dikaiopolis' wife is watching it from the roof of the house, an area clearly demarcated and separated from the performance space, as well as located higher than it. Similarly, the spectators' rows in the theatre auditorium are distinguished from the area of the performance and mostly situated on a higher level than the latter; like Di-

81. This has been suggested by numerous scholars: see Starkie (1909) 63–64; Giangrande (1963) 3–4; Edmunds (1980) 6–7; Reckford (1987) 47, 444; Foley (1988) 39; Hubbard (1991) 43; Habash (1995) 574; Kugelmeier (1996) 152–154; Bierl (2001) 350–361; Slater (2002) 49, 253; Pütz (2003) 162–163; Orfanos (2006) 72, 243; English (2007) 208; Rothwell (2007) 16; Kavoulaki (2010) 240, 254–255. On the ritual aspects of Dikaiopolis' procession and its connections to actual phallic rites see most notably Herter (1947) 24–26; Cole (1993) 26–28, 32–34; Habash (1995) 560–567; Csapo (1997) 284; Xanthou (2010) 311–313; Kavoulaki (2010) 233–256; further references in Bierl (2001) 350.

82. On Dikaiopolis as *exarchon* of an imaginary chorus see Körte (1921) 1219; Herter (1938) 1676–1677; Herter (1947) 37; Breitholz (1960) 210–211; Csapo (1997) 268; Bierl (2001) 354. On his metatheatrical function as director of the spectacle cf. Bierl (2001) 354–355; Slater (2002) 49, 253; Kavoulaki (2010) 239–241, 254–255.

83. See Russo (1994) 46, 48–49; Olson (2002) 141.

kaiopolis' wife, the audience in the theatre looks on the show from above. Finally, Phales, the divinity celebrated in the hero's song, is apostrophized from the beginning with the word *ξύγκωμε* (264–265): this may also indicate that the song in his honour is a minimal *κωμῳδία* (literally an *ᾠδή* to the *ξύγκωμος*). Dikaiopolis first and foremost peace ritual is essentially a return to the roots of comedy.

However, this celebration of peace is only a brief interlude in a world still dominated by war. Dikaiopolis' ceremony meets a violent end when the Acharnians attack him; he is thus dragged back into the realm of war, where comedy has no place. It is rather the opposite genre, tragedy, which holds sway here. Already in the parodos, the Chorus entering in martial pursuit of the enemy (204–236) recalls tragic models, such as the chase of Orestes by the Chorus of Furies in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (143ff.).[84] The Acharnian elders' aggressive persecution of the traitor is notably invested with a military dimension: they repeatedly describe their action with the verb *διώκειν* (204, 216, 221, 235), the same term they use later in the parabasis for their martial charge at Marathon against the Persians (698). Their attack against Dikaiopolis is war, just like the one they fought at Marathon. In their eyes, the hero is an ally of the Spartans, against whom the Chorus-men are waging "a strong-waxing hate-filled war" (223–228). Thus, in the Chorus' entrance-song the martial and the tragic are inextricably connected, as though versions of the same experience.

In such a world, Dikaiopolis himself is soon obliged to resort to tragedy and its intrigues. His reaction to the Chorus' attack is a parody of a tragic sequence from Euripides' *Telephos*: the hero brings forth a coal-basket, holding it as a captive, in order to halt the Acharnians' bloody-minded onslaught on him and gain the right to address them a speech (325–346). This comically reflects the notorious deed of Telephos, who similarly seized the child Orestes as hostage in the Euripidean tragedy.[85] Significantly, Dikaiopolis'

84. See Starkie (1909) 52–53; Rau (1967) 26–27; Jouan (1989) 25; Pöhlmann (1995) 123–126; Brockmann (2003) 75. Other tragic models have also been proposed: Handley – Rea (1957) 33 suggest the search for the spy in Euripides' *Telephos*; Brockmann (2003) 77–81 detects echoes from the invocation of Dareios in Aeschylus' *Persians*.

85. A lot has been written on the parody of *Telephos* in the *Acharnians*. The most useful discussions are Rau (1967) 26–42; Foley (1988) 34–47; Jouan (1989) 17–27; Olson (2002) liv–lxi. See also recently Thévenaz (2004) 77–80, 83–92; Orfanos (2006) 149–160; Mai (2011) 255–265. On the hostage scene in particular see Rau (1967) 28;

plan of action is also a characteristically martial operation: taking captives was a common practice of war.[86] Once again, the military and the tragic are interconnected and reflecting each other.

The associations with tragedy are further developed in the following episodes, Dikaiopolis' visit to Euripides (393–479) and his long speech to the Chorus (496–556). Once again the action is based on the parody of Euripidean tragedies, especially of the *Telephos*. Dikaiopolis' account of the war is cast in the mould of a lengthy tragic *rhesis* and replete with quips from Euripides' drama.[87] The hero retains his connections to the universe of comedy, explicitly acknowledging them both before his visit to Euripides (377–382) and at the beginning of his oration (499–508), where he practically identifies himself with the comic poet. But he is enclosed in the world of war and must therefore disguise himself as a tragic personage. He has to cover his comic identity under a tragic hero's costume and wear the persona of tragedy in order to speak about the war — *par excellence* a tragic theme. Euripides' atelier, with its parade of heroes afflicted by pain, misery and bodily infirmities and dressed up in ragged, lacerated clothes, may be read as an allegory of the war condition — itself an experience of pain and affliction, corporal mutilation and lacerated bodies. The final scene before Dikaiopolis' conclusive victory and the consolidation of his peace consists in his confrontation with Lamachos, the bombastic exponent of the war-mongering military (566–625). This episode is also peppered with high-style paratragic affectation (especially in Lamachos' pompous pronouncements) and a couple of citations from *Telephos*.[88]

In this way, the first part of the play constructs war and peace via an antithesis between tragedy and comedy. The post-parabatic scenes develop this contrast. The former half depicted the *polis* of war and was therefore marked by a strong presence of tragedy; peace was only parenthetically staged as a brief comic interlude. In the second half the situation is reversed. Dikaiopolis has now secured his peace, which prevails in his idyllic private

Olson (2002) lviii–lix, 164; Orfanos (2006) 151–153; Mai (2011) 262.

86. See conveniently Pritchett (1991) 203–312 with a vast collection of ancient Greek material.

87. On the parody of Euripides in these scenes see Rau (1967) 29–40; Foley (1988) 35–45; Jouan (1989) 21–26; Olson (2002) lix–lxi, 177–198, 200–205, 213–214, 219; Orfanos (2006) 153–160; Mai (2011) 259–264.

88. See Rau (1967) 40–42; Olson (2002) 221–224; Kavoulaki (2010) 257.

world. Thus, the predominant mood is that of comedy, while paratragic elements are isolated invaders, associated with war and its representatives.

It is in this context that the Megarian's episode can be understood in its proper function. The Megarian's visit is Dikaiopolis' first encounter after the firm establishment of his peace. With this scene and its transactions, Dikaiopolis inaugurates anew his peaceful world, after his abortive initial attempt (241–279, the phallic ceremony), which came to a premature end because of the Acharnians' bellicose intervention. Now the reign of peace makes another, fresh beginning, and this time it is destined to last and thrive. The Megarian's scene, in this respect, corresponds to the phallic rite in the first half of the play: in both these sections Dikaiopolis institutes his pacific microcosm and begins to enjoy its pleasures. The Megarian's episode resumes the violently interrupted phallic rite, continuing and completing what was started there.

Precisely in order to highlight the close ties between these two scenes, Aristophanes constructed the Megarian's episode as a metatheatrical version of Megarian farce. As noted above (section 1), Megarian comic drama was apparently a popular, extempore, sub-literary kind of performance, liable to be perceived as low and primitive by the writers and audiences of more developed Attic comedy. To this extent, the Megarian episode of the *Acharnians*, filled as it is with material borrowed from Megarian farce, may also be deemed a species of proto-comedy, just like Dikaiopolis' phallic rite. Both these scenes represent elementary, primitive forms of comic spectacle, a kind of recourse to the roots and rudiments of comic theatre. Peace and its pleasures are first established and then re-established by means of a reversion to the fountainheads of comic enjoyment.

To further emphasize the equivalence of the two scenes, Aristophanes forges an additional link between them, again in the form of a popular comic motif. The Megarian's episode exploits the device of the fruit theft, an ancient routine of the Doric farcical tradition (809–810, see above, section 2). Dikaiopolis' phallic song includes a similar detail: the singer imagines that he catches a young and pretty slave-girl stealing wood, and rapes her on this pretext (271–275). Although the object of the theft here is not fruit, it is still an agricultural product, and the scene is set in a rural milieu, well fitted also to the purloining of fruit from gardens and orchards.[89] Thus, the two

89. Cf. van Leeuwen (1901) 51–52; Habash (1995) 566; and Bierl (2001) 356–357, all of them noting the similarity to the comic motif of fruit theft, as recorded by Sosibios.

enactments of proto-comedy within the play are bound together also by their common use of broadly the same primitive comic gimmick.

The entwinement of peace and comedy does not end with the Megarian's scene. The entire second half of the *Acharnians* develops the same association through a long sequence of stereotypical comic elements. The scenes after the parabasis are replete with motifs which Aristophanes regularly denounces as low-brow in the poetological parts of his writings (parabaseis or prologues).[90] The concentration of such tricks in this part of the play, the one dedicated to the world of peace, reinforces the latter's ties with the most elementary forms of comic delight. Here is a list of examples:

— The Boeotian trader and his slave enter carrying heavy loads on their backs; the former complains loudly about his hump that hurts from this burden (860–861). This brings to mind the comic routine condemned by Dionysus in the opening lines of the *Frogs* (1–20): the man carrying heavy luggage and grumbling that it is weighing him down.

— In the exodos (1198ff.) Dikaiopolis appears in the embrace of two naked prostitutes, with his phallus accordingly erect. He repeatedly makes jokes about his aroused penis, calling the girls to masturbate it (1216–1217, 1220). This recalls the obscene jests with the "dangling, red-tipped, thick leather phallus", deprecated in *Clouds* 538–539. Compare also the verbal banter about the bridegroom's penis, which will be detached from his body and remain at home with the bride (*Ach.* 1058–1066).

— The sycophant, who threatens to denounce the Megarian's goods, is chased away by Dikaiopolis with a whip. Perhaps he also receives a couple of whacks from the angry comic hero, as he is running to escape (824–828). This broadly corresponds to the slapstick scenes of thrashing, which Aristophanes repeatedly repudiates for their coarseness (*Clouds* 541–542; *Peace* 742–747).

— The Chorus-men sing a lampoon against a certain Antimachos, apparently an avaricious *choregos* who disappointed his Chorus (see below). Among other imprecations, they pronounce the following curse: Antimachos should receive a hard blow on the head from some drunkard, while

90. For such Aristophanic lists of repudiated comic tricks see *Clouds* 537–544; *Wasps* 57–60; *Peace* 739–751; *Frogs* 1–30. Generally on these low jokes, which Aristophanes deprecates and yet amply uses in his own plays, see Murphy (1972) 170–174; Wilkins (2000) 41–44; Tedeschi (2003) 793–794; Konstantakos (2004) 18–19 (with more references); Tedeschi (2007) 57–60, 67–69.

walking home at night; then, searching around in the darkness for a stone, in order to retaliate, he should pick up by mistake a fresh turd and hurl it, only to hit Kratinos (1162–1173). Scatological jokes of a similar kind are vehemently disavowed in the opening scene of the *Frogs* (1–18).

— The post-parabatic episodes teem with characters cheated or otherwise deprived of an expected meal. The Chorus-members complain that they were left without their rightful dinner at a recent Lenaia festival: the stingy Antimachos, their *choregos* on that occasion, neglected his traditional duty of offering them a feast after the production. In retaliation, they curse him to experience the same misfortune: when he will be about to eat a well-fried squid, already placed on the table, sizzling and appetizing, a dog should suddenly snatch it from under his nose and make away with it (1150–1161). Lamachos (whose name ominously rhymes with Antimachos') is also repeatedly debarred from enjoying his food. He first sends his slave to buy from Dikaiopolis some delicacies for his table (thrushes and eels, highly esteemed dainties for Athenian gourmets). But the hero refuses to sell him anything: Lamachos will have to limit himself to cheap salt-fish, if he can obtain any (959–970). Later on, as Lamachos is preparing to feast during the festival of the Choes, along with the rest of the Athenian population (1000ff.), a messenger appears and orders him to go on campaign: he must keep watch on the north passes of Attica, against a possible invasion of the Boeotians (1071–1077). Thus, Lamachos is excluded from the celebration and its concomitant banqueting (see his complaint in 1079). The contrast with Dikaiopolis, who sets off precisely for a dinner-party, carrying a number of delicious foods in his basket, highlights Lamachos' dinnerless predicament (1085ff.).[91] All these personages missing their meal offer as many variations of an age-old popular comic routine: "Heracles cheated of his dinner", included among the tricks of Megarian farce in *Wasps* 60.

Aristophanes also exploits elsewhere in his plays these stock entertainments of broad comedy, despite his repudiation of them. Neither he nor the other comic playwrights could resist drawing on such resources of popular amusement, which would raise rollicking laughter among the audience. In the *Acharnians*, however, the accumulation of all these tricks is not built up only for fun. It forms part of the poet's careful artistic plan, serving to emphasize the links of peace with comedy. The routines of broad popular farce

91. On this theme cf. Moulton (1981) 18–24, who points out the similarities between Antimachos and Lamachos.

constantly pop up in Dikaiopolis' world in order to celebrate the comic nature of peace.

The central thematic antithesis of the play reaches its climax in the last scenes, through the confrontation of Dikaiopolis, the man of peace, with Lamachos, the representative of war. As would be expected, their opposition is also a contrast between comedy and tragedy. Lamachos was already tainted with paratragic colours in his first appearance (572ff.). Later, his slave described him (965) with a parody of an Aeschylean locution (*Sept.* 384–385). In the final sequence, Lamachos is called to war duty by a messenger appearing with a gloomy visage, like a tragic *angelos* bearing bad news (1069–1070). The ensuing dialogue between this personage and Lamachos is fraught with high-style tragic expressions (1071–1072, 1078, 1083).[92] Subsequently, Lamachos orders his slave to fetch him piecemeal his armour and weapons, thus expanding a common motif of tragedy: tragic heroes similarly call for their arms when preparing for an expedition.[93] By contrast, Dikaiopolis is invited to a banquet (1085ff.), in a manner familiar from comic dramaturgy: compare similar invitation scenes in *Frogs* 503ff. and *Ecclesiazusae* 1136ff. As Dikaiopolis is comically echoing the lines of paratragic Lamachos (1097–1142), he assumes the stance that comedy typically maintains towards tragedy: he is in fact parodying the pronouncements of Lamachos the "tragic hero", just as comedy does with tragic discourse. Dikaiopolis thus embodies the satirical spirit of comedy, which ludicrously distorts the tragic text.[94]

The same pattern of opposition is repeated in the exodos. A servant enters and delivers an overt parody of a tragic messenger speech, describing

92. On the paratragic elements in these scenes see Rau (1967) 137–138; Olson (2002) 331–334; Thévenaz (2004) 83–84; Kornarou (2007) 551–555.

93. See Aesch. *Sept.* 675–676; Eur. *Her.* 942–943, *Heraclid.* 698ff., *Phoen.* 778ff. The parody, therefore, is not aimed only at the arming scenes of Homeric epic (so Harriott 1979, 95).

94. Cf. the remarks of Thévenaz (2004) 84. Even the technique used for mocking Lamachos' lines corresponds to the usual parodic mechanisms of comedy. Dikaiopolis substantially repeats Lamachos' statements, only changing one or more significant words. Comic effect is generated precisely by means of this substitution, which transposes the parodied verse to a context different from the original one. Thus Dikaiopolis transfers Lamachos' martial pronouncements to culinary matters (see e.g. 1105–1106, 1118–1119, 1124–1125, 1134–1135). The same mechanism is frequently employed in Aristophanic parody; see Rau (1967) 14 and Tsitsiridis (2010b) 367–368 with examples.

in mock-tragic style how Lamachos was wounded (1174–1189). Presently, the wounded man himself is brought on stage, supported by attendants, like a suffering personage of tragedy (compare e.g. Euripides' Hippolytus or the Heracles of the *Trachiniae*). He bursts into a lyric lament, in imitation of the *threnoi* concluding so many tragedies, permeated by tragic locutions (1190ff.).[95] Lamachos has been injured on the leg, his ankle was dislocated (1177–1179), and his fine garments have been presumably reduced to tatters. He is now lame and dressed in rags, just like the Euripidean characters ridiculed earlier in the play (Oeneus, Phoenix, Philoctetes, Bellerophontes, Telephos, Ino, Thyestes, 418–470). War victims are similar to tragic heroes.[96]

As for Dikaiopolis, he once again assumes the parodic attitude of comedy, transferring Lamachos' cries of pain to the sphere of sexual pleasures. In addition, his victory in the drinking contest of the Choes festival is merged with the anticipated victory of Aristophanes' comedy in the dramatic *agon*. Dikaiopolis asks to be brought to the "judges" (κριτάς) and the *archon basileus*, in order to be awarded his due prize for the drinking competition (1224–1225). But these κριταί clearly allude to the judges of the dramatic contest, and the *basileus* was the official presiding over the festival of the Lenaia and its theatrical shows — the very occasion in which the *Acharnians* was produced. In this way, Dikaiopolis is practically identified with comedy.[97] As he exits revelling in the company of the Chorus, he is celebrating a prototype *komos*, thus symbolically pointing back to the origins of comedy, both the generic and the etymological ones.[98] His last, triumphant act in his peace world is a perfect equivalent of his first one, the phallic rite: a journey back to the roots of comic spectacle.

In her recent study of parody in the *Acharnians*, Despina Mai aptly remarks: "The poet's main interest in this play, perhaps even more than the issue of the victory of peace over war, is the promotion of *the art of comedy*

95. On paratragedy in the exodos see Rau (1967) 139–144; Ketterer (1991) 51–60; Olson (2002) lxi, 352–363; Thévenaz (2004) 85; Kornarou (2007) 555–563.
96. This holds true also for Derketes of Phyle, who was presented earlier in the play as a victim of the war (1018–1036). He is blind (like Phoenix) and comes to beg for a little peace (cf. the beggars Philoctetes and Telephos).
97. See Edmunds (1980) 24–25; Foley (1988) 39; Hubbard (1991) 43, 58; Slater (2002) 65–66; Olson (2002) lxiii, 363–364; Kornarou (2007) 557, 561–563; Kavoulaki (2010) 253.
98. Cf. Hubbard (1991) 43; Habash (1995) 573–574; Pütz (2003) 165–167.

by relation to that of tragedy".[99] Indeed, as I have attempted to show, Aristophanes has proceeded even further: throughout the *Acharnians* the opposition of war and peace is consistently correlated to the antithesis between the two great dramatic genres, tragedy and comedy. The Megarian's scene occupies a vital place in this scheme, connecting the dominion of Dikaiopolis' peace with the primitive wellsprings of comic entertainment.

In the end, Aristophanic theatre contains and transcends both comedy and tragedy. It incorporates both the main dramatic genres, just as it assembles within itself all the conflicting situations of human life — war and peace, celebration as well as destruction, joy confronted with suffering. The true nature of comic drama lies, of course, in the glorification of peace, which is conceived as a reversion to the roots of the comic event. But Aristophanic comedy can also speak about war, just as it speaks about tragedy, for in the end it can speak about everything. In this respect, Aristophanes' creation resembles that magical "sweet book", proposed by Marlowe's Mephostophilis to the insatiable Doctor Faustus, a marvellous all-encompassing work containing every element of the world.[100] Fortunately, the Aristophanic compendium is offered us at a much more reasonable price.

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99. Mai (2011) 264: "πιο πολύ, ίσως, και από την υπόθεση της επικράτησης της ειρήνης έναντι του πολέμου, στο έργο αυτό τον ποιητή τον ενδιαφέρει η προβολή της *κωμικής τέχνης* σε σχέση με την αντίστοιχη τραγική".

100. Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* 2.1.158ff.

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