

A CALYX-KRATER BY THE VARRESE PAINTER  
AND A GLIMPSE OF ALEXIS' *AGONIS OR HIPPISKOS*



ABSTRACT: The fragments of Alexis' comedy *Agonis or Hippiskos* suggest a scenario based on a love intrigue: a young man is in love with a hetaira but is impeded by a foreigner; he therefore puts to practice a cunning scheme, which involves duping the obstructing character with a false display of wealth. The *hippiskos*, a kind of garment, probably functioned as a recognition token. The use of an item of clothing as a means of *anagnorisis* — instead of more standard objects, such as necklaces and jewels — was Alexis' deliberate innovation, intended to breathe new life into the trite *topos* of recognition by tokens. Alexis drew attention to his innovation by naming his comedy after a garment, a virtually unique phenomenon in the Greek comic canon. A key scene of *Agonis or Hippiskos* may be illustrated on a calyx-krater of the Varrese Painter (Naples, 118333, ca. 340 B.C.), in which the main love triangle of Alexis' scenario is shown on stage. No other South Italian vase showcases a piece of clothing offered in this way, and the uniqueness of the image matches the singularity of Alexis' unconventional title. The elderly man's figure in the vase-painting suggests that the foreigner of Alexis' play was not a *miles gloriosus* but was either a pimp or a *senex amator*. The *Agonis or Hippiskos* must have been produced in Magna Graecia soon after its original performance in Athens in the 340s. The vase-painting provides an interesting testimonium for the evolution of comic costume and footwear in the later phases of Middle Comedy. In combination with the textual fragments, it indicates Alexis' skill in the representation of dramatic characters.

IT IS NOW A QUARTER century since the publication of Geoffrey Arnott's exhaustive volume on the works of the poet Alexis, the greater part of which was written at a time when Middle Comedy was a much less popular subject than it is now.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, research on fourth-century comedy has proliferated. A few years ago another valuable commentary on the

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1. W. G. Arnott, *Alexis: The Fragments. A Commentary*, Cambridge 1996.

fragments of Alexis was published by Felice Stama,<sup>2</sup> a product of the flourishing school of Italian philological scholarship, which has recently offered many highly useful editions and commentaries on the fragmentary remains of ancient drama. Nevertheless, Arnott's massive volume has remained a fundamental and exemplary work of reference, a methodological model for subsequent commentaries on dramatic fragments, and a mine of learning on many facets of the history and interpretation of ancient comedy. Alexis' fragments had been the topic of Arnott's PhD in Cambridge in 1960, and he lived with it until he finally relieved himself of its burden in 1996. He was a kind and generous man, and we hope he would have gained some pleasure from the observations that follow.

The comic poet Alexis is called Thurian (*Θούριος*) in the *Suda* (α 1138).<sup>3</sup> If this means that he was actually a native of Thurii in Magna Graecia,<sup>4</sup> he must have been one of the many non-Athenian comic writers who established themselves in Athens in the course of the fourth century and enjoyed a fruitful career in the Attic theatre.<sup>5</sup> What effect his origins may have had

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2. F. Stama, *Alessi: testimonianze e frammenti. Testo, traduzione e commento*, Castrovillari 2016. We are grateful to Dr. Stama for generously providing us with copies of his work.
  3. For collection and discussion of the ancient testimonia on Alexis' life and career, see Arnott, *Alexis*, 3–18; Stama, *Alessi*, 13–23, 32–37.
  4. This is the most straightforward interpretation of the ethnic adjective. See G. Kaibel, "Alexis (9)", *RE* I 1 (1894) 1468; A. Presta, "Il gusto della parodia e della satira in Alessi di Turii", *Cultura e scuola* 7 (1968) 17–18; L. Gil, "Alexis y Menandro", *EClás* 14 (1970) 313–315; W. G. Arnott, "The *Suda* on Alexis", in *Studi di filologia classica in onore di Giusto Monaco*, vol. I, Palermo 1991, 336–337; Arnott, *Alexis*, 4, 11–13; A. R. Navarrete Ocerca, "Alexis y la comedia media", *Humanitas* 59 (2007) 65; S. D. Olson, *Broken Laughter. Select Fragments of Greek Comedy*, Oxford 2007, 11, 402; C. W. Dearden, "Whose Line Is It Anyway? West Greek Comedy in Its Context", in K. Bosher (ed.), *Theater Outside Athens. Drama in Greek Sicily and South Italy*, Cambridge 2012, 281; Stama, *Alessi*, 15–17. In the lemmata of the *Suda* referring to comic poets, the poet's name is almost standardly accompanied by such an adjective which indicates his place of origin (e.g. *Πόδιος*, α 1982; *Κιανός*, ὡς δέ τινες *Σμυρναῖος*, α 2735; *Γελῶνος*, α 3405; *Κασανδρεύς*, π 2111; *Σικωνῶνιος ἢ Θηβαῖος*, σ 881; *Συρακούσιος*, ρ 327; *Ἀθηναῖος*, α 1572, α 2734, α 3409, α 3737, α 3922, α 4115, δ 50, δ 1246, ε 3386, ε 3929, κ 213, κ 2339, π 1708, τ 623, χ 318 etc.); cf. A. Lorenzoni, "Ateneo nella *Suda* (*specimina dai bio-bibliographica comicorum*)", *Eikasmos* 23 (2012) 325, 330–331, 343. Nevertheless, this is not the only possibility, especially in view of another tantalising piece of information recorded in the same *Suda* lemma, according to which Alexis was an uncle (*πάτρωος*) of Menander, the Athenian poet. If this refers to blood ties between Alexis and Menander's family — and not, e.g., to kinship by adoption or to a misunderstood relationship of teacher and disciple between the older and the younger comic poet (see below) — then Alexis might have been born in Athens, in a family which originated from Thurii and was identifiable for this reason.
  5. See I. M. Konstantakos, "Conditions of Playwriting and the Comic Dramatist's Craft in the Fourth Century", *Logeion* 1 (2011) 159–162.

on his theatrical activity remains unknown. It is not possible to detect any non-Attic usage in Alexis' language, style, or dramaturgy, on the basis of the extant materials. But it may be hypothesised that his connections with his South Italian homeland helped him in some way to promote his comedies for performance or re-performance in Magna Graecia, at a time when Attic comic theatre was rapidly gaining Panhellenic diffusion and Athenian plays were exported to many places of the Greek world.<sup>6</sup>

As far as can be judged from the remains of his plays — nearly 340 longer or briefer citations from 132 comedies — Alexis was a prolific and efficient craftsman of the theatre. He was particularly inventive and skilful in handling standard comic routines and plot patterns, such as expository prologues, foundlings and supposititious infants, recognition by tokens, staged symposia and scenes of drunken revelry, reckoning of accounts, episodes in the market and altercations with fishmongers, teaching an insipid pupil, and men in love.<sup>7</sup> He also excelled in portraying and developing comic characters, from the loquacious cook, the hedonistic parasite, and the *alazon doctus* to the gluttonous Heracles, the boastful soldier, the profligate, the stupid *agroikos*, the chatterbox lady, the shrewish wife, the bibulous old woman, and the coaxing hetaira. He enlivened all these characters with a colourful scenic language, a vivid grasp of theatrical effect, and sometimes a sense of innovation.<sup>8</sup>

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6. On the Panhellenic diffusion of comic theatre in the fourth century, see mainly J. R. Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society*, London/New York 1994, 67–69, 106–108; E. Csapo, *Actors and Icons of the Ancient Theater*, Chichester 2010, 83–116; Konstantakos, “Conditions”, 145–183; A. Hughes, *Performing Greek Comedy*, Cambridge 2012, 10–16, 40–41; A. Hartwig, “The Evolution of Comedy in the Fourth Century”, in E. Csapo – H. R. Goette – J. R. Green – P. Wilson (eds.), *Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century B.C.*, Berlin/Boston 2014, 216–227. On the performance of Attic comedies in South Italy, the bibliography is vast: see most notably O. Taplin, *Comic Angels and Other Approaches to Greek Drama through Vase-Paintings*, Oxford 1993; C. W. Dearden, “Plays for Export”, *Phoenix* 53 (1999) 222–248; O. Imperio, “Ὅδδὲν πρὸς τὴν Πόλιν? Il teatro attico in Sicilia e in Italia meridionale”, *Dioniso* n.s. 4 (2005) 278–293; Csapo, *Actors*, 38–82; J. R. Green, “Comic Vases in South Italy. Continuity and Innovation in the Development of a Figurative Language”, in Boshier, *Theater Outside Athens*, 289–342.
7. See Arnott, *Alexis*, 18–33 and his comments on fr. 15, 16, 20, 27, 47, 50, 55, 57, 59, 70, 76, 78, 85, 91, 93, 102, 112, 113, 115, 116, 124, 125, 130, 131, 133, 140, 160, 167–169, 172, 175, 181, 204, 212, 216, 217, 224, 228, 232, 234, 236, 242, 246, 247, 249, 252, 253, 257, 263, 272, 278, 286, 287, 290, 293, 295, 304. See also Gil, “Alexis y Menandro”, 315–317, 329–332; Stama, *Alessi*, 26–27.
8. See Arnott, *Alexis*, 21–23 and his comments on fr. 24, 37, 48, 49, 60, 63, 83, 84, 88, 89, 92, 96, 98, 99, 100, 103, 110, 113, 115, 117, 120, 121, 128, 129, 132, 138, 140, 146, 149, 150, 153, 159, 163, 177–180, 183, 188, 190–194, 200, 205–207, 215, 222, 223, 232–235, 241, 243, 248, 255, 258, 259, 262–264, 271, 273, 281, 291. See also R. Argenio, “Parassiti e cuochi nelle commedie di Alessi”, *RSC* 12 (1964) 237–255 and *ibid.* 13 (1965) 5–22;

These qualities, combined with his exceedingly long theatrical activity (a career of six or seven decades, from his debut in the 350s to his death in the 270s) and his enormous output (245 comedies), made Alexis one of the leading figures of fourth-century comic theatre, especially through the crucial decades of change and development from Middle to New Comedy.<sup>9</sup> In the earlier part of his career Alexis must have competed at festivals against the other major poets of Middle Comedy, such as Antiphanes, Anaxandrides, and Eubulus, who were still in their prime in the 350s. Subsequently, Alexis would have been a senior rival to the first generation of the poets of New Comedy, in particular the great triad of Diphilus, Philemon, and Menander. He was also fated to survive after Menander's death and continue his activity by the side of the second generation of New Comedy dramatists, such as Apollodorus of Carystus, Poseidippus, and the younger Philemon, who debuted around the beginning of the third century. The chronological range of his career makes Alexis a unique case in the history of Greek comedy: a cross-generational poetic phenomenon that oversteps the boundaries of generic periods and writers' generations and defies the categorisations of literary history.

According to some sources, Alexis had a close relationship with Menander in particular, being Menander's uncle (*Suda*  $\alpha$  1138) or his teacher and mentor (*Prolegomenon de Comoedia* III 58, p. 10 Koster). Especially the latter testimonium comes from a well-informed and very reliable treatise on the history of comedy, which draws on excellent Alexandrian sources and provides solid prosopographical and bibliographical data on many comic poets, from Epicharmus to Menander and Diphilus.<sup>10</sup> In any case, it is virtually certain that the young Menander would have seen

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Presta, "Il gusto", 21–31; Gil, "Alexis y Menandro", 315–329; H.-G. Nesselrath, *Die Attische Mittlere Komödie. Ihre Stellung in der antiken Literaturkritik und Literaturgeschichte*, Berlin/New York 1990, 294–295, 302–308, 313–317, 327–328; Navarrete Orcera, "Alexis", 68–71; J. Rusten (ed.), *The Birth of Comedy. Texts, Documents, and Art from Athenian Comic Competitions, 486–280*, Baltimore 2011, 530; Stama, *Alessi*, 27–30; H.-G. Nesselrath, "Alexis", in A. H. Sommerstein (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Greek Comedy*, Hoboken 2019, I 36–38.

9. Cf. P.-E. Legrand, *The New Greek Comedy*, transl. J. Loeb, London 1917, 10, 15; Nesselrath, *Mittlere Komödie*, 198–199, 332–333; Arnott, *Alexis*, 16–25; Navarrete Orcera, "Alexis", 61–79; B. Zimmermann, *Die griechische Komödie*, Frankfurt 2006, 173–174; Rusten, *The Birth of Comedy*, 530; C. Orth, "Die Mittlere Komödie", in B. Zimmermann – A. Rengakos (eds.), *Handbuch der griechischen Literatur der Antike*, vol. II: *Die Literatur der klassischen und hellenistischen Zeit*, München 2014, 1023–1024; Stama, *Alessi*, 24–31.

10. See Nesselrath, *Mittlere Komödie*, 45–51, 56–57, 174–175.

Alexis' comedies in the theatre in Athens; perhaps he could also have read and studied some of Alexis' scripts, in the context of the rising book culture at the beginning of the Hellenistic age. Even if the information about Menander's discipleship under Alexis is not taken as literal truth,<sup>11</sup> there can be no doubt that the younger dramatist knew Alexis' works and could have drawn ideas from them. A number of striking similarities of motifs, plot patterns, and dramatic techniques can be observed between the fragments of Alexis and Menander's known plays or their Latin adaptations.<sup>12</sup> In view of all this, it seems highly likely that Alexis' dramaturgy exercised some influence on Menander's oeuvre. Relevant observations will also be made in the course of the present essay with regard to the handling of plot motifs and especially the construction of comic characters by the two poets. It may be surmised that the elder author paved a way which was then pursued by the young genius to the point of completion and perfection. Alexis, as a good master craftsman, taught his disciple the tenets and skills of dramatic craft; Menander raised the lessons to the summit of high art and marked them with his own unsurpassable talent.

#### ALEXIS' *AGONIS*: "KABALE UND LIEBE"

Alexis' comedy *Agonis* or *Hippiskos* (*Ἀγωνίς ἢ Ἰππίσκος*, frs. 2–6 Kassel-Austin) seems likely to date to the late 340s. The main chronological indication is the mention of Misgolas in fr. 3, an eminent Athenian citizen who became known for his homosexual passion for young men. Misgolas was mentioned in this connection in Aeschines' speech of prosecution against Timarchus, delivered in 345 B.C. (Aeschin. 1.41–53). The orator introduced Misgolas as "a man who has a phenomenal passion for this thing and is accustomed to having citharodes and cithara-players in his company" (1.41, *περὶ δὲ τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦτο δαιμονίως ἐσπουδακώς, καὶ ἀεὶ τινας ἔχειν εἰωθῶς περὶ αὐτὸν κιθαρῳδοῦς ἢ κιθαριστάς*). A number of comic poets then ridicule Misgolas exactly for his liking for citharodes (Alexis fr. 3, Anti-

11. Cf. Arnott, *Alexis*, 12–13, 26.

12. See G. Zuntz, "Interpretation of a Menander Fragment", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 42 (1956) 234–242; Gil, "Alexis y Menandro", 313–345; W. G. Arnott, "The Greek Original of Plautus' *Aulularia*", *WS* 101 (1988) 181–191; Arnott, *Alexis*, 26–31, 627–628; L. Schaaf, "Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der nachgestellten Prologrede in der attischen Komödie und zum Verhältnis von Alexis und Menander", *WJA* 33 (2009) 53–80; Orth, "Die Mittlere Komödie", 1023–1024, 1028.

phanes, *Halieuomene* fr. 27.14–18) or more generally for young striplings in their bloom (Timocles, *Sappho* fr. 32).<sup>13</sup>

It is plausible to suppose that this small vogue of comic invective is connected with Aeschines' prosecution, which exposed Misgolas' passion and must have brought much public attention upon it. Therefore, the aforementioned comedies can be dated after 345. Some scholars dispute this assumption and note that Misgolas' predilections are likely to have been known to the audience already before Timarchus' trial.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the coincidence is striking, especially if it is taken into account that *κίθαροφδοί* in particular are expressly designated as the specific object of Misgolas' desire both in Aeschines' oration and in two of the comedies. A notorious public judicial scandal, like the prosecution of Timarchus, would have been an ideal occasion to kindle the comic poets' satirical vein and trigger a volley of comic mockeries against one or another of the persons involved in the case.<sup>15</sup> There is no way to calculate with certainty for how long this kind of joke could be used against Misgolas in comic scripts, after the exposure of his soft spot in the context of Timarchus' trial. Once a man had entered the list of *komoidoumenoi* in Attic comedy, he might remain on it virtually for life and continue to be ridiculed for the same stereotyped shortcomings for very long; an instructive case is Cleisthenes, who is mocked for effeminacy in seven Aristophanic comedies over two decades, from the *Acharnians* (425 B.C.) to the *Frogs* (405 B.C.).<sup>16</sup> It may be assumed that even a

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13. On Misgolas and the comic ridicule against him, apart from Arnott, *Alexis*, 63, see I. M. Konstantakos, *A Commentary on the Fragments of Eight Plays of Antiphanes*, Diss., Cambridge 2000, 64, 84; N. Fisher, *Aeschines: Against Timarchos*, Oxford 2001, 170–172; K. Apostolakis, *Timokles. Translation and Commentary*, *Fragmenta Comica* 21, Göttingen 2019, 228–230.
14. Arnott, *Alexis*, 54; Fisher, *Aeschines*, 172; Apostolakis, *Timokles*, 227.
15. One may compare Demosthenes' rhetorical quibble on *διδόναι* versus *ἀποδιδόναι* ("giving" as opposed to "giving back") in the affair of Halonnesus, the island which Philip offered to the Athenians in 342; this quibble was readily parodied in a number of comedies during the years that followed (Antiphanes fr. 167; Alexis fr. 7, 212; Anaxilas fr. 8; Timocles fr. 12, 20.4–5). See T. B. L. Webster, "Chronological Notes on Middle Comedy", *CQ* 2 (1952) 19; Arnott, *Alexis*, 70–71, 606–607; Konstantakos, *A Commentary*, 141–143; H.-G. Nesselrath, "The Polis of Athens in Middle Comedy", in G. W. Dobrov (ed.), *The City as Comedy. Society and Representation in Athenian Drama*, Chapel Hill 1997, 275–276.
16. See *Ach.* 117–122; *Eq.* 1373–1374; *Nub.* 355; *Av.* 829–831; *Lys.* 1092; *Thesm.* 235, 574–654; *Ra.* 57, 422–424. Cf. N. Fisher, "The Bad Boyfriend, the Flatterer and the Sykophant: Related Forms of the *Kakos* in Democratic Athens", in I. Sluiter – R. M. Rosen (eds.), *Kakos. Badness and Anti-Value in Classical Antiquity*, Leiden 2008, 203; G. Cuniberti, *Cleonimo di Atene, traditore della patria*, Alessandria 2012, 140–148. A range

topical and specialised personal jest, such as the one about Misgolas' predilection for cithara-players, could remain popular at least for some years after the initial occasion that inspired it — perhaps until 340 or thereabouts. As suggested below, a scene from *Agonis* may be illustrated on an Apulian calyx-krater painted not later than ca. 340. This connection would reinforce the dating of *Agonis* in the late 340s.

Webster adduced another possible chronological indication, based on the same fr. 3, which contains an amusing parody of Euripides' *Orestes* 255–257 (see below).<sup>17</sup> This Euripidean drama is attested to have been revived in the City Dionysia in 341/0 B.C. (IG II<sup>2</sup> 2320.20–21).<sup>18</sup> The performance of Euripides' tragedy might have inspired Alexis to funnily rework one of its scenes in his comedy of the following year. It should be remembered, of course, that parodies of Euripidean tragic passages are frequent in Middle and New Comedy, and *Orestes* in particular is quoted or imitated in various plays of Menander, produced decades later (*Aspis* 424–425, 432, *Epitrepontes* 910, *Sikyonioi* 176ff.).<sup>19</sup> It is not practically possible to correlate every one of these citations and comic adaptations with a specific re-performance of the corresponding Euripidean tragedy in one of the Athenian dramatic festivals. Euripides' plays were generally popular and familiar to the Greek audiences. Thus, the re-performance of *Orestes* at the Dionysia of 340 is not enough to warrant a dating of Alexis' *Agonis* after that year.

Nevertheless, the temporal proximity of the revival of *Orestes* to the exposure and comic exploitation of Misgolas' affairs is striking.<sup>20</sup> It might be

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of other examples can be found in Fisher, “The Bad Boyfriend”, 199–208, and A. H. Sommerstein, “How to Avoid Being a *Komodoumenos*”, *CQ* 46 (1996) 327–356.

17. Webster, “Chronological Notes”, 21; cf. Stama, *Alessi*, 55.

18. See B. W. Millis – S. D. Olson, *Inscriptional Records for the Dramatic Festivals in Athens. IG II<sup>2</sup> 2318–2325 and Related Texts*, Leiden/Boston 2012, 56, 61–69; S. Nerveña, “Staging Scenes or Plays? Theatrical Revivals of ‘Old’ Greek Drama in Antiquity”, *ZPE* 162 (2007) 15–18; A. Duncan, “Political Re-Performances of Tragedy in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC”, in A. A. Lamari (ed.), *Reperformances of Drama in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC: Authors and Contexts*, Trends in Classics 7.2, Berlin/Boston 2015, 308–310.

19. See N. W. Slater, “Play and Playwright References in Middle and New Comedy”, *LCM* 10 (1985) 103–105; Arnott, *Alexis*, 63; C. Cusset, *Ménandre ou la comédie tragique*, Paris 2003, 31–52; Olson, *Broken Laughter*, 178–179; J. Hanink, *Lycurgan Athens and the Making of Classical Tragedy*, Cambridge 2014, 160–190; J. Hanink, “Literary Evidence for New Tragic Production: The View from the Fourth Century”, in Csapo – Goette – Green – Wilson, *Greek Theatre*, 191–200; M. C. Farmer, *Tragedy on the Comic Stage*, Oxford 2017, 41–111.

20. Cf. Hanink, *Lycurgan Athens*, 161; Farmer, *Tragedy*, 81.

hypothesised that the re-performance of *Orestes* had been scheduled and announced quite some time before the corresponding Dionysia, perhaps in order to whet the audience's appetite (this particular tragedy seems to have been one of the most popular Euripidean works from the fourth century onwards). In that case, Alexis could have been working on his comedy with the prospective revival of *Orestes* in mind and have targeted this latter tragic drama for parody, calculating that his own production would temporally coincide with or slightly precede the staging of the Euripidean model. Thus, the *Agonis or Hippiskos* could be allocated to one of the dramatic festivals (Dionysia or Lenaia) of 340 or even of 341 B.C. This is, of course, a speculative proposal, forwarded here as a possible guess. It is good to remember that the inscriptions of the so-called *Didascaliae* (IG II<sup>2</sup> 2320), which record the full programme of tragic and comic performances of every year at the City Dionysia, are extremely lacunose and survive in a very incomplete state. The preserved portions furnish the titles of the "old" (*παλαιᾶ*) tragedies revived in 342/1 (Euripides' *Iphigenia*) and 341/0 (Euripides' *Orestes*), but do not cover any of the previous years.<sup>21</sup> Given the great popularity of Euripides in fourth-century theatre, an earlier revival of *Orestes*, staged e.g. around 347, 346, or 345 B.C., cannot be excluded. It might have been such a revival that actually inspired Alexis' parody in the late 340s. It is also possible (though entirely unknown) that *Orestes* was performed in one of the deme theatres in the Rural Dionysia during those years.

As to the content and plot of the comedy, fr. 2 is the most substantial piece of surviving text and offers the best clues. According to Athenaeus, the speaker is a young man in love who is showing off his wealth to his lady-love (6.230b, *νεανίσκον παράγων ἐρώωντα καὶ ἐπιδεικνύμενον τὸν πλοῦτον τῇ ἐρωμένῃ ταῦτα ποιεῖ λέγοντα*):

ἀπῆντων τῷ ξένῳ

εἰς τὴν κατάλυσιν †ησονη† αἴθων ἀνήρ.  
 τοῖς παισὶ τ' εἶπα (δύο γὰρ ἦγον οἴκοθεν)  
 τὰκπώματ' εἰς τὸ φανερόν ἐκλελιτρωμένα  
 θεῖναι· κύαθος δ' ἦν ἀργυροῦς †τὰκπώματα† 5  
 ἦγεν δύο δραχμάς, κυμβίον δὲ τέτταρας  
 ἴσως ἐτέρας, ψυκτηρίδιον δὲ δέκ' ὀβολούς,  
 Φιλιππίδου λεπτότερον. (B.) ἀλλὰ ταῦθ' ὄλωσ  
 πρὸς ἀλαζονεῖαν οὐ κακῶς νενοημέν' ἦν

21. See the bibliography given above, n. 18, and Hanink, *Lycurgan Athens*, 61–62, 215.

- (A.) I was meeting the stranger in my lodgings ... a fiery man. And I told my slaves — you see, I brought two of them from home — to clean the cups with soda and place them somewhere for all to see. Now, there was a silver ladle, it weighed two drachmas; and a rimmed cup weighing perhaps four more; and a small cooler that fetched ten obols, slenderer than Philippides.
- (B.) Well, this was not at all badly conceived for boasting.

Although the text is corrupt in two passages (vv. 2 and 5),<sup>22</sup> the fragment yields some useful indications with regard to the cast and storyline of the comedy. There was a kind of love triangle: an enamoured young man, his girlfriend, and a foreigner (ξένος, fr. 2.1) who may have played the role of the blocking character, being the young man's rival or presenting an obstacle in the fulfilment of his plans. The young man, as attested by Athenaeus, is the first speaker in fr. 2 and describes his encounter with the *xenos* (vv. 1–8). He is addressing his ladylove (cf. Athenaeus again), who may be identified as the second speaker, responding to her lover's description with a comment of approval (vv. 8–9).

One of the two alternative titles of the play, *Ἀγωνίς*, is a woman's name and is classified as a hetaira's name in the Suda (α 335, ὄνομα ἑταίρας). It is thus likely that the young man's girlfriend is the title heroine, the hetaira Agonis, and that the comic storyline revolved around a scheme very familiar from later Middle and New Comedy, the love affair between a youth and a hetaira. Alexis' comedy provides the only known attestation of the name Agonis in Attica, obviously a fictive example; it is likely that the lemma of the Suda ultimately depends on the title of Alexis' play. There are a few more attestations recorded in inscriptions and literary sources for other parts of the Greek world (Peloponnese, Aetolia, Alexandria, Sicily), dating from the fourth or third to the first century B.C., but overall the name seems to have been very rare.<sup>23</sup> Alexis may well have thought up Agonis as a suitable speaking name for the heroine of his comic love plot: she is the girl that makes the young lover undertake an *agon* in order to gain her favours, the target and prize of the youth's erotic contest.

Athenaeus notes that the young man is “showing off his wealth” to his girlfriend, but the text of fr. 2 points to a rather different situation. In fact,

22. On the restoration of the text in these passages and the conjectures proposed, see the detailed discussion of Arnott, *Alexis*, 54–58; on v. 2 in particular, cf. below.

23. See the relevant lemmata in *LGN* vol. II and III.A, *s.v.*; Arnott, *Alexis*, 52.

the young man attempted to show off his purported wealth to the *xenos*. He arranged to meet the foreigner in a kind of lodging (*κατάλυσον*) he was keeping, separately from his own house (see vv. 2–3). In this lodging the young man exhibited a number of silver vessels, well polished and positioned in a prominent manner. The description of the vessels (vv. 5–9) shows that they are actually lightweight and inexpensive items, with very small inclusion of precious metal: silver to the weight of two or four drachmas or a few obols, on its own, would have sufficed only for the fabrication of tiny miniatures of vessels, with a size of only a couple of cm<sup>3</sup>.<sup>24</sup> Possibly the bulk of the vessels was made of a different, cheaper material, and the silver was only used for superficial plating.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the placement and set-up of the objects indicates that they were purposefully arranged to impress the visitor: well cleaned with soda, so as to have a shiny appearance, and displayed in a highly visible manner, they seem to serve some design to deceive the beholder and make him think that they are valuable items.

The girl, commenting on her lover's report, also points out that the arrangement was well thought out for the purpose of boasting or charlatanry (v. 9, *πρὸς ἀλαζονείαν*). This corroborates the suspicion that the vessels and their exhibition were employed as part of a scheme to dupe the foreigner who would cursorily see them in the young man's lodging. Apparently, the young man wished, for some reason, to give the *xenos* a false impression of wealth. This was the true purpose of the "show-off" that was slightly misunderstood by Athenaeus. The young man is presumably satisfied with his ruse and narrates it with brio to his ladylove; the latter approves and may have been herself an accomplice in the intrigue.

Indeed, the girl may have interposed a similar comment also at a previous point of the fragment. The corrupt second half of v. 2 (†*ησονηη† αἰθων ἀνήρ*) has been considered hitherto by all critics and editors as part of the young man's narrative, and all the proposals for emendation have aimed at integrating these words into the youth's description of his encounter with

24. See the expert technical comments of Arnott, *Alexis*, 58. The *ψυκτηρίδιον* ("small cooler") in particular is described as "slenderer than Philippides", a notoriously skinny Athenian politician of the pro-Macedonian faction, standardly ridiculed in Middle Comedy for his extreme thinness. See now E. Galbois – S. Rougier-Blanc, "Maigres et minces dans le monde gréco-romain. Réflexions autour du livre XII, 550 f – 522 f des *Deipnosophistes* d'Athénée", in E. Galbois – S. Rougier-Blanc (eds.), *Maigreur et minceur dans les sociétés anciennes. Grèce, Orient, Rome*, Bordeaux 2020, 18–19, 25, 34–35.

25. On silver-coated vessels of clay, see most recently A. Taliano Grasso, "La ceramica argentata in Calabria", *Orizzonti* 20 (2019) 27–46.

the *xenos*.<sup>26</sup> However, the phrase may also be constructed as an interjection of the hetaira, who briefly interrupts her lover's narration in order to praise his bold and brilliant scheme, his great nerve and audacity in facing the foreigner in this manner. The transmitted text can be emended e.g. into ἤσθα μὴν αἶθων ἀνήρ ("you were indeed a fiery man!", "you were indeed hot stuff!").<sup>27</sup> Such a statement would be suitable on the enamoured girlfriend's lips and makes a change of speaker perfectly operable at this point. The young man has, so to speak, "lit a fire" with his plan to confront and deceive the stranger, and the hetaira expresses her stunned admiration for his fiery and dynamic attitude. After the girl's interjection, the young man continues his story from the beginning of v. 3 (τοῖς παισὶ τ' εἶπα ...).

Thus, the outline of a scenario of love and intrigue may be discerned, however dimly. The young man is enamoured of the hetaira Agonis; possibly with her assistance, he designs and executes a cunning scheme to trick a third personage, a foreigner, who must be induced to think that the youth is much richer than in reality. It is reasonable to suppose that this deception is somehow connected to the young man's love affair. Probably the *xenos* has some interest in the hetaira, although it is unclear whether he is a rival in love, who antagonises the young protagonist for the woman's favours, or the pimp who owns the girl and demands a large sum of money for conceding her to her lover.

Arnott hypothesised that the foreigner might be a boastful soldier with a claim on Agonis, thinking that the adjective αἶθων ("fiery, impetuous") in fr. 2.2 refers to him; but he did not rule out the possibility of a pimp.<sup>28</sup> The alternative distribution of speaking parts proposed above, of course, shows that the adjective αἶθων might also have been pronounced by the hetaira

26. For an overview of the proposals, see Arnott, *Alexis*, 54–56, and the apparatus criticus of Kassel – Austin (*PCG*, II 25).

27. On this emphatic use of unaccompanied μὴν, cf. J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*, 2nd ed., Oxford 1954, 330–331. It is rare in Attic but has a few parallels in Plato and Sophocles (though not in extant comedy). In the colloquial Attic of comedy it would have been more usual to say ἤσθά γε μὴν αἶθων ἀνήρ or ἤσθα δῆτ' αἶθων ἀνήρ; but these phrases are palaeographically more remote from the ἡσονην of the paradosis, and ἤσθά γε μὴν would further involve analysis of the second breve.

28. Arnott, *Alexis*, 55–57; Stama, *Alessi*, 54, 57; see also Webster, "Chronological Notes", 24; T. B. L. Webster, *Studies in Later Greek Comedy*, Manchester 1970, 64, 73, 76; Gil, "Alexis y Menandro", 330; M. M. Henry, *Menander's Courtesans and the Greek Comic Tradition*, Frankfurt 1985, 38–39; J. Henderson, "Comedy in the Fourth Century II: Politics and Domesticity", in M. Fontaine – A. C. Scafuro (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Comedy*, Oxford 2014, 193.

with reference to the young man. Even if the phrase *αἴθων ἀνὴρ* is considered as part of the young man's discourse, it is not obligatory to interpret it as a characterisation of the *xenos*. The words may constitute a kind of self-praise which the young speaker bestows on himself, exulting in the boldness of his own scheme and its execution. Given the state of the transmitted text, this possibility cannot be excluded.<sup>29</sup> Anyhow, the comparison with the comic scene illustrated on an Apulian vase-painting, which will be attempted below, will shed further light on the stranger's identity.

The young man's ruse would probably serve as a temporary subterfuge. In the love scenarios of New Comedy young male lovers are usually short of funds and lack the means for buying their beloved girl or securing her favour. The young hero of *Agonis* or *Hippiskos* would similarly be devoid of money but would pretend to possess considerable wealth. In this way, he would either give the pimp the impression that he has the funds to complete the transaction and acquire the cherished girl; or he would make his rival think that he is facing a young *anterastes* with a great personal fortune, and thus lose his nerve. With such artifices the young man and the hetaira would presumably gain some time, in order to pursue their love affair or implement another scheme for achieving their union. Ultimately the opponent, being a *xenos* in an Athenian context and therefore by definition an outsider, was bound to be defeated by the lively young Athenian hero.

Other extant fragments of the comedy may be loosely tied to this putative scenario. Frr. 3 and 4 come from scenes of frenzy and visionary ecstasy. In the former the speaker parodies a passage from Orestes' fit of madness in the homonymous Euripidean play (*Or.* 255–257). The tragic Orestes, in a paroxysm of frenzy, thinks he sees his murdered mother's ghost shaking before him the dreadful faces of the Furies, who attack him (*ὦ μῆτερ, ἰκετεύω σε, μὴ ᾽πίσειέ μοι / τὰς αἵματωπὸνδς καὶ δρακοντώδεις κόρας· / αἴται γὰρ αἴται πλῆσιον θρόψκοουσ' ἐμοῦ*). The comic character exclaims instead, anticlimactically: "Mother, I implore you, do not shake Misgolas before my eyes; I am not a citharode" (*ὦ μῆτερ, ἰκετεύω σε, μὴ ᾽πίσειέ μοι / τὸν Μισγόλαν· οὐ γὰρ κιθαρωδός εἰμ' ἐγώ*). In fr. 4 one character claims to see several people before him, of whom one at least is known to be dead; another speaker then comments with wry humour on the dead man's description:

29. The emendations put forward for v. 2 by A. Meineke (*FCC*, III 384: *εἰς τὴν κατάλυσιν τ' ἤγον· ἦν δ' αἴθων ἀνὴρ*) and R. Ellis (*AJP* 6 [1885] 288: *εἰς τὴν κατάλυσιν ἤγον· ἦν αἴθων ἀνὴρ*) work very well with such a supposition, since *ἦν* can be taken as first-person past tense: "I met the stranger, I guided him to the lodging; I was (i.e. I showed myself, I became) a fiery man!"

ὁ τρίτος οὗτος δ' ἔχει  
 σύκων κυλιστὸν στέφανον. (B.) ἀλλ' ἔχαιρε καὶ  
 ζῶν τοῖς τοιούτοις

(A.) This third one has a garland of figs for whirling. (B.) Well, he loved this kind of fruit when he was alive.

The most likely setting for such a dialogue is a vision or hallucination which the first speaker experiences (or pretends to experience). This would point again to a fit of madness. In some plays of New Comedy the young lover, when he is frustrated in his love pursuit and reaches a point of despair, feigns to fall into frenzy and performs a madman's antics, often imitating or parodying the madness of famous tragic heroes, such as Ajax, Orestes, or Heracles: see e.g. Alcesimarchus in *Cistellaria* 273–304 and Charinus in *Mercator* 930–956.<sup>30</sup>

This routine tallies with the love intrigue suggested in fr. 2. The young man doubtless faced obstacles in his love pursuit, and hence a deceptive trick against his rival or the pimp was deemed necessary. At some point in the play the young lover might be induced to despair, due to the difficulties and procrastinations in the consummation of his desire, and might give vent to his emotions through simulated madness, like the other young men in Roman adaptations of New Comedy; or he might feign an attack of frenzy as part of another cunning scheme.<sup>31</sup> Overall, the extant remains of *Agonis* or *Hippiskos* point to a plot which revolved around a love liaison between a young man and a hetaira and included obstacles to their love and cunning intrigues concocted by the lovers in order to overcome the obstacles.<sup>32</sup>

30. See Legrand, *The New Greek Comedy*, 233, 470; Presta, “Il gusto”, 27; Webster, *Studies*, 69, 76, 83; Arnott, *Alexis*, 64. In Alexis' fragment the hallucinatory spectacle of dead people may imply that speaker A is experiencing a visionary *katabasis* or consultation with ghosts in the underworld. Parody of this mythical motif was common in ancient comedy: see I. M. Konstantakos, “Aristofane poeta di Atene”, *Nuova Secondaria Ricerca* 37.7 (2020) 310 with further references.

31. Cf. Webster, *Studies*, 73, 76, 83; Arnott, *Alexis*, 53–54, 62–66; Cusset, *Ménandre*, 47–48; Stama, *Alessi*, 57–58.

32. See Webster, *Studies*, 64, 73, 76; Gil, “Alexis y Menandro”, 330–331; W. G. Arnott, “From Aristophanes to Menander”, *G&R* 19 (1972) 76–77; Henry, *Menander's Courtesans*, 38–39; Arnott, *Alexis*, 52–64; Zimmermann, *Die griechische Komödie*, 174; Stama, *Alessi*, 54–58; Orth, “Die Mittlere Komödie”, 1028; Henderson, “Comedy in the Fourth Century”, 193. For this type of plot in the plays of later Middle and New Comedy, see I.

*HIPPISKOS*: A DRESS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE

Apart from the hetaira's name, the comedy also bears an alternative title, *ἰπίσκοσ*, which means a garment or dress, a kind of little *chiton* (Pollux 7.58, *καὶ ταῦτα εἶδη χιτωνίσκων*).<sup>33</sup> Obviously, given its mention in the title of the play, the garment must have had a crucial function in the plot; it may have occupied a central position in the intrigue or determined in some way the development of the heroes' adventures and the outcome of their story. It is noteworthy that plays named after a kind of garment or an item of clothing are an extremely rare phenomenon in the Greek comic canon. There is only one more or less certain parallel for Alexis' *Hippiskos*: Philemon's *Πτερύγιον*, a term glossed as *τὸ ἥμισυ τοῦ χιτωνίσκου* ("half a small *chiton*") by Pollux 7.62.<sup>34</sup> Given that Philemon started producing comedies in the late 330s,<sup>35</sup> his *Pterygion* was doubtless written later than Alexis' play. Other possible parallels are doubtful. Alexis' *Kalasiris* might well be

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M. Konstantakos, "Towards a Literary History of Comic Love", *C&M* 53 (2002) 141–171, citing earlier bibliography; U. Auhagen, *Die Hetäre in der griechischen und römischen Komödie*, München 2009, 59–135.

33. Cf. Cratinus Junior fr. 5, cited by Pollux in this connection. The word is also assigned an alternative meaning: an article of jewellery (LSJ<sup>9</sup> *s.v.*; Arnott, *Alexis*, 52; Auhagen, *Die Hetäre*, 60; Stama, *Alessi*, 54). But this meaning is never attested in the comic corpus and seems in any case unlikely for Alexis' play, in view of the South Italian vase to be discussed below, in which a garment features prominently. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the supposed evidence for this second sense, Hesychius *ι* 809 (*ἐπίθεμα κεφαλῆς, ἢ γυναικεῖον κόσμιον*), need not signify jewellery. The word *ἐπίθεμα*, "cover", is applied to all kinds of superimposed materials — from the lid of a vase or a box to the saddle of a pack-animal, from a medical bandage or cataplasm to an architectural architrave. In Hesychius' lemma it might well mean a piece of cloth or scarf which is used to cover the head. As for *κόσμιον*, "decoration, ornament", this is a general term which may also include luxurious and ornamented clothing, apart from jewels and other accessories. In Plut. *Mor.* 141d–e the *κόσµια* sent as gifts to Lysander's daughters consist in *ἱμάτια* and *πλόκια*, "garments and necklaces"; cf. Hdt. 5.92η.3, where *κόσµω* clearly refers to the festive clothes of the Corinthian women, which were burned by the tyrant Periander. In view of these data, Hesychius' entry may also be interpreted as a reference to clothing and thus entail no substantial difference from Pollux's explanation.
34. Even in this case an alternative explanation of the title has been suggested: a military decoration or badge (cf. perhaps Plautus' *Cornicula*). See C. A. Dietze, *De Philemone Comico*, Diss., Göttingen 1901, 33; Webster, *Studies*, 127–128.
35. See L. Bruzzese, *Studi su Filemone comico*, Lecce 2011, 13–35 for a full examination of the testimonia. Philemon won his first Dionysian victory in 328/7 B.C. (Parian Marble, *FGrHist* 239 B 7) and is said to have started producing before the 113th Olympiad (328–324 B.C., *Prolegomenon de Comoedia* III 56, p. 10 Koster). No play of his can be dated before ca. 330.

a character's name (cf. the homonymous Egyptian sage in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*) and need not signify an Egyptian-style tunic.<sup>36</sup> In Timocles' and Xenarchus' *Porphyra* the title could refer to a hetaira's name and not to a purple-dyed cloak.<sup>37</sup>

The title *Hippiskos* thus appears to represent an exceedingly idiosyncratic choice. The scarcity of this kind of title may also explain another peculiar condition, the existence of two alternative titles for Alexis' comedy. As transpires from ancient didascalical inscriptions and extant records, the Greek dramatic poets themselves did not use alternative appellations but gave only one title to their plays, almost invariably in the form of a single word. It is commonly acknowledged by modern scholars that whenever a second, alternative title is transmitted, this was added to the original one later by a grammarian or scholar, who may have resorted to this addition for a number of reasons. Quite often the aim was to distinguish a comedy from others of the same title.<sup>38</sup> This factor, however, cannot apply to Alexis' comedy, because both *Agonis* and *Hippiskos* are unique and unparalleled titles in the known comic corpus. It seems highly unlikely that there existed other comedies with the same unusual title, which necessitated the provision of an alternative word for reasons of distinction.<sup>39</sup>

The cause of the addition must be sought rather in the rarity and uncommonness of Alexis' original title. It can be assumed that the poet named his play *Hippiskos*,<sup>40</sup> after an item of clothing, following an extraordinary practice which could be hardly paralleled in the repertoire of Greek comedy. The scholars of Alexandria were surprised by this unaccustomed type of title and added the alternative appellation *Agonis*, after the name of a

36. Arnott, *Alexis*, 283; Stama, *Alessi*, 209.

37. H. Breitenbach, *De genere quodam titulorum comoediae Atticae*, Diss., Basel 1908, 165–166; Kassel – Austin, *PCG*, VII 796.

38. For the phenomenon of alternative titles, see the discussions of N. Terzaghi, *Fabula. Prolegomeni allo studio del teatro antico*, vol. I, Milano 1911, 5–142; A. H. Sommerstein, “The Titles of Greek Dramas”, *SemRom* 5 (2002) 1–16; and I. M. Konstantakos, “Antiphanes' Agroikos-Plays: An Examination of the Ancient Evidence and Fragments”, *RCCM* 46 (2004) 11–15, with select earlier bibliography. Further references are provided by M. Pellegrino, “Metagene”, in A. M. Belardinelli – O. Imperio – G. Mastromarco – M. Pellegrino – P. Totaro, *Tessere. Frammenti della commedia greca: studi e commenti*, Bari 1998, 292. The most recent contributions are E. Castelli, *La nascita del titolo nella letteratura greca. Dall'epica arcaica alla prosa di età classica*, Berlin 2020, 140–149; and F. Lupi, “I ‘dimenticati’ Aleadi di Sofocle, tra testo e fortuna”, in G. Zanetto (ed.), *Teatro tragico greco. Ricostruzioni e interpretazioni*, Pisa/Roma 2020, 36–38.

39. Cf. Arnott, *Alexis*, 51.

40. Cf. Terzaghi, *Fabula*, 76–77; Arnott, *Alexis*, 51; Stama, *Alessi*, 54.

leading character of the play, which was a regular and conventional way to name dramatic works in Classical antiquity. Thus, the Alexandrian librarians made the comedy conform to the standard and acceptable title-giving practices of the Greek theatrical canon. All these factors indicate the great importance that the *hippiskos* must have had in the plot of Alexis' play. By naming his script after this article of dress, the poet made an extremely unconventional decision, virtually unique in the repertoire of his contemporary drama and bound later to be almost frowned upon by the learned Alexandrians. The *hippiskos* must have been of truly critical significance for the action and the storyline of the comedy.

A long-standing and often repeated theory is that the garment served in Alexis' plot as a recognition token, doubtless in connection with the title heroine, the hetaira Agonis.<sup>41</sup> The hetaira might have preserved this clothing item from the time she had been exposed or kidnapped, as evidence of her origins and identity. Thus, the *hippiskos* would prove instrumental in helping the hetaira find her true parents again and be established as a freeborn citizen's daughter, in which case she would be able to become the young hero's lawful wedded wife — a type of scenario familiar from many plays of New Comedy. What is less familiar is the use of a garment as the means of recognition: this represents another unusual option in the overall repertoire of Greek comedy.

The artefacts most commonly employed by Greek dramatists for engineering a recognition were rings, amulets, jewels, and other small items of ornamentation. When Aristotle codifies the various types of *anagnorisis* in his *Poetics* (1454b19–1455a21), he mentions the recognition through external tokens, like necklaces and infant's trinkets, as one of the commonest and most frequently used poetic artifices.<sup>42</sup> Clearly, by the 330s the use

41. This possibility was first raised by Webster, "Chronological Notes", 24–25; cf. Webster, *Studies*, 64, 73, 76; Gil, "Alexis y Menandro", 330; Henry, *Menander's Courtesans*, 38–39; Arnott, *Alexis*, 52–53; Auhagen, *Die Hetäre*, 60; Orth, "Die Mittlere Komödie", 1028; Henderson, "Comedy in the Fourth Century", 193; Stama, *Alessi*, 27, 54–55.

42. *Poet.* 1454b19–25: εἶδη δὲ ἀναγνωρίσεως, πρώτη μὲν ἡ ἀτεχνολάττη καὶ ἡ πλείστη χροῦνται δι' ἀπορίαν, ἢ διὰ τῶν σημείων. τούτων δὲ [...] τὰ δὲ ἐκτός, οἷον τὰ περιδέραια καὶ οἷον ἐν τῇ Τυροῦ διὰ τῆς σκάφης, "As for the kinds of recognition, the first one is the least artistic, and it is this kind that poets use most commonly because of uninventiveness, namely the recognition by tokens. From among the tokens [...] others are external things, such as the necklaces and such objects as the boat in Sophocles' *Tyro*". Cf. D. Munteanu, "Types of Anagnorisis: Aristotle and Menander. A Self-Defining Comedy", *WS* 115 (2002) 113, 126. Note the definite article in τὰ περιδέραια, which clearly implies that Aristotle knew many instances of this particular device (D. W. Lucas, *Aristotle: Poetics*, Oxford 1968, 167).

of such trinkets had become a stock motif in the dramatic repertoire. The Hellenistic biographer Satyrus, in his *Life of Euripides*, also highlights “the recognitions by means of rings and necklaces” as one of “the constitutive elements of New Comedy, which were brought to perfection already by Euripides”.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, many plays of Middle and New Comedy (by Alexis, Amphis, Timocles, Philemon, and Menander) are entitled *Δακτύλιος*, “The Ring”, and at least in some of them the ring would have served as a token of recognition, as it functions in Menander’s *Epitrepontes* (387–556), Plautus’ *Curculio* (601–658) and *Vidularia* (fr. xiv, xv), Terence’s *Heauton Timorumenos* (614–667) and *Hecyra* (811–880), and an anonymous papyrus of New Comedy (Adesp. Com. fr. 1084.22ff.). In other fourth-century comic fragments further relevant objects are employed for this purpose, such as cups and vessels (Eubulus fr. 69; Alexis fr. 272).<sup>44</sup> A recurrent type of comic scene, reproduced on a series of sculptures from the early Imperial period (ca. 50 B.C.–A.D. 50) that illustrate New Comedy, shows a slave who sits on an altar and holds a ring in his left hand.<sup>45</sup> The ring, which is thus prominently showcased as a key element, may have functioned as a recognition token in the corresponding comic plot.

By introducing a garment as an instrument of recognition, Alexis was perhaps deliberately reacting against the frequent use of such items, which had presumably become a stereotyped and even hackneyed motif in the comic productions of his time. Indeed, Alexis seems to have often resorted to this innovative practice, as did also Antiphanes and other major authors of Middle Comedy. Stock elements of the comic repertoire were subjected by these poets to playful and innovative treatment. The dramatist might upturn the usual structure of these stereotyped components, reverse their standard conventions, or give them an original and amusing twist. In this way, he created a novel variation and infused new breath into materials that were becoming trite from overuse.<sup>46</sup>

43. *Vit. Eur.*, F 6 fr. 39 VII 12–22 Schorn: ἀναγνωρισμοὺς διὰ τε δακτυλίων καὶ διὰ δεραίων. ταῦτα γὰρ ἔστι δῆπον τὰ συνέχοντα τὴν νεωτέραν κωμωδίαν, ἃ πρὸς ἄκρον ἤγα[γ]εν Εὐριπίδης. See S. Schorn, *Satyrus aus Kallatis. Sammlung der Fragmente mit Kommentar*, Basel 2004, 260–261.

44. See Webster, *Studies*, 76–77; Arnott, *Alexis*, 153–154, 760–762; M. Huys, *The Tale of the Hero Who Was Exposed at Birth in Euripidean Tragedy: A Study of Motifs*, Leuven 1995, 198–238; Munteanu, “Types of Anagnorisis”, 115–122.

45. *MNC*<sup>3</sup> 4XS 4 (vol. II, 374–375) and frontispiece in vol. I.

46. See I. M. Konstantakos, “Tendencies and Variety in Middle Comedy”, in S. Chronopoulos – C. Orth (eds.), *Fragmente einer Geschichte der griechischen Komödie — Fragmentary History of Greek Comedy*, Heidelberg 2015, 178–197 with discussion of many examples.

Alexis' substitution of a clothing item for the usual jewels or trinkets may be considered a modest example of these tactics of poetic refurbishment. Of course, the use of textiles as a means of recognition had precedents in Euripidean tragedy. In *Ion* 1412–1436 a decorated woven cloth, in which the hero had been swaddled when exposed in infancy, serves as one of the pieces of evidence (together with golden necklaces and an olive crown) that bring about the *anagnorisis* between Creusa and her long-abandoned son Ion. In the lost tragedy *Alope*, whose plot is summarised by Hyginus (*Fab.* 187, *Alope* test. iib Kannicht), a royal robe (*veste regia*) led to the recognition of Alope's exposed baby, which was dressed in it.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, no comic example of a garment functioning in this manner is traceable before Alexis' *Hippiskos*. Euripidean drama may have provided the initial inspiration, but the comic poet exploited the tragic background in order to innovate within the context of his own genre. Perhaps Alexis reworked a recognizably Euripidean motif in order to indicate something about the character or the status of his heroine Agonis.

If the cloth of *anagnorisis* is seen as an innovative variation of Alexis, it may be understood why the poet resorted to the virtually unique practice of naming his comedy after an item of clothing: this latter item represented one of his most original and inventive contributions to the refurbishment of the typical comic plot. The *hippiskos* garment was the novel kind of token that allowed the dramatic recognition, in place of the usual jewels and trinkets, and would therefore have been noted by the audience as an unfamiliar motif, a reversal of their ordinary expectations, a generator of scenic surprise and renovation. By placing this garment in the very title of the play, Alexis proudly drew attention to his innovation and highlighted the creative singularity of his plot. Why should he be concerned if future grammarians, in a city not yet founded, might disapprove of such an irregular practice and tidy up their bibliographical record with a conventional alternative title? He was confident that his audience would appreciate his *coup* of theatrical renewal.

Alexis' innovation was subsequently admitted into the comic repertoire and taken over by the poets of New Comedy. Menander repeatedly includes vestments and fabrics among the *gnorismata* used to engineer the recognition in his plays.<sup>48</sup> In the *Perikeiromene* (742–828) a child's garment embroidered with animals' images is the decisive item which causes Pataecus

47. See A. M. Belardinelli, *Menandro, Sicioni*, Bari 1994, 192–193; Huys, *The Tale*, 211–224, 230–232; Arnott, *Alexis*, 52–53.

48. See Belardinelli, *Sicioni*, 191–193.

to recognize Glycera as his long-lost daughter; a fine-spun cloak (*χλανίδιον*), together with a series of other objects (necklaces, a crimson belt, a golden tiara), serves then to bring about the *anagnorisis* between Pataecus and his son Moschion. In the *Sikyonioi* (280–285) a half of a woman’s dress (*πτέρυξ χιτωνίσκου γυναικείου*), dyed in bright colours, is included among the tokens of identity proving that the officer Stratophanes is Smicrines’ son. The dress presumably formed part of a longer list of infant’s accessories, which Smicrines and his wife examine on stage in the course of the recognition scene, although the rest of the catalogue has disappeared in the gaps of the papyrus.<sup>49</sup> In the *Epitrepontes* a crimson cloth (*πορφυρᾶ πτέρυξ*) closes the long enumeration of trinkets which accompany the foundling adopted by Syrus (376–405), although in the end only one of these items, a ring, proves to be instrumental to the *anagnorisis*. In an anonymous papyrus of New Comedy, which possibly preserves the remains of a Menandrian play (Adesp. Com. fr. 1084),<sup>50</sup> half of a tattered and moth-eaten cloak (*χλαμύδο[ς] ἡμισυ διεσπαραγμένης παλαιᾶς, ὑπὸ [σέ]ων σχεδόν τι καταβεβρωμ[έν]ης*, vv. 24–26) is similarly listed among other *gnorismata* of a child’s identity (a ring, necklaces, and an anklet, vv. 22–38).

Thus Menander absorbed his master Alexis’ innovative device and put it to regular use, making the garment a frequent component of the recognition apparatus employed in his plays. On the other hand, in the known Menandrian comedies the items of clothing are always inserted into broader groups of trinkets, which collectively serve as means for the *anagnorisis*;<sup>51</sup> but the textiles do not have the singular and capital importance that the garment must have borne in Alexis’ *Hippiskos*, to judge by its prominent showcasing in this latter play’s title. In this respect, Menander reconnects with Euripides’ tragic examples, such as the *Ion*, in which the garment is part of a longer catalogue of recognition tokens and coexists side by side with more usual trinkets, such as rings, necklaces, and ornaments. Menander followed the lesson of his theatrical teacher Alexis but also hearkened back to his greater and ultimate literary model, the œuvre of Euripides. Sometimes a poet can serve two masters, if both of them are good.<sup>52</sup>

49. See Belardinelli, *Sicioni*, 189–193; A. Blanchard, *Ménandre*, vol. IV: *Les Sicyoniens*, Paris 2009, 45.

50. See Kassel – Austin, *PCG*, VIII 375.

51. Cf. Belardinelli, *Sicioni*, 192–193; Huys, *The Tale*, 198–238; M. De Poli, “La gioia nelle scene di riconoscimento: tragedia attica e commedia nuova (Menandro)”, in M. De Poli (ed.), *Il teatro delle emozioni: la gioia*, Padova 2019, 58–59.

52. The function of the *hippiskos* as a recognition token, although the most popular hypo-

A CALYX-KRATER AT NAPLES:  
"THE APPAREL OFT PROCLAIMS THE PLAY"

It seems likely that an important scene from Alexis' *Agonis or Hippiskos*, featuring the garment of the title and presumably representing the culminating moment of the plot, is illustrated on a well-known South Italian vase, a calyx-krater in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, attributed to the Varrese Painter (figures 1–3).<sup>53</sup> This is one of the over 200 extant western

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thesis, is not the only conceivable one. The scenario of Plautus' *Menaechmi* indicates another possible use of a garment as a key element in a comic plot (cf. Arnott, *Alexis*, 53; Orth, "Die Mittlere Komödie", 1028). In Plautus' play one of the identical twins, Menaechmus of Epidamnus, steals a mantle (*palla*) from his wife's wardrobe and offers it as a present to his girlfriend, the hetaira Erotium. Henceforth, the mantle becomes a central element in the misunderstandings and errors produced by the identical appearance of the twins. The situation depicted on the calyx-krater (see below) tallies with the initial stages of this Plautine scenario. The young lover is bringing the dress to the hetaira apparently as a gift, and she seems eager and delighted to receive it. It is thus possible that the *hippiskos* did not serve as a means of *anagnorisis* but was a lover's offering to the heroine, which then played some role in the intrigues and misunderstandings of the comic action. As indicated by fr. 2, Alexis' plot revolved, to some extent, around cunning schemes and deceptions carried out with the aid of objects (the silver vessels). The *hippiskos* may conceivably have been used as an instrument in another such scheme.

53. Naples 118333, from Armento. Ht 38.5 cm. *PhV*<sup>2</sup> 53, no. 83; *RVAp* I 339, no. 13/12 (with attribution to the Varrese Painter). See W. Dörpfeld – E. Reisch, *Das griechische Theater. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Dionysos-Theaters in Athen und anderer griechischer Theater*, Athen 1896, 323–324, fig. 79; E. R. Fiechter, *Die baugeschichtliche Entwicklung des antiken Theaters. Eine Studie*, München 1914, 37ff. and fig. 35; E. Wüst, "Φλόακες", *RE* XX 1 (1941) 298, no. 45; L. M. Catteruccia, *Pitture vascolari italiote di soggetto teatrale comico*, Roma 1951, 48, no. 45; A. D. Trendall, "Fliacici, vasi", in *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica*, vol. III, Roma 1960, 708; L. M. Catteruccia, *Premessa ad uno studio dei tipi scenici nelle commedie di Aristofane*, Roma 1961, pl. 6; M. Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*, 2nd ed., Princeton 1961, 139, fig. 507 (drawing); L. Forti (ed.), *Letteratura e arte figurata nella Magna Grecia*, Fasano 1966, no. 195 (ill.); G. Pugliese Carratelli (ed.), *Megale Hellas. Storia e civiltà della Magna Grecia*, Milano 1983, fig. 698; S. Gogos, "Bühnenarchitektur und antike Bühnenmalerei — zwei Rekonstruktionsversuche nach griechischen Vasen", *JÖAI* 54 (1983) 62, fig. 4 (drawing); C. E. Bryld, *Den græske tragedie: temaer i tekst og billeder*, Copenhagen 1985, 107 (ill.); U. Albini, *Il teatro greco*, Novara 1985, 11; L. Forti, "La vita quotidiana", in G. Pugliese Carratelli (ed.), *Magna Grecia. Vita religiosa e cultura letteraria, filosofica e scientifica*, Milano 1988, 319, fig. 394 (colour ill.); C. Courtois, *Le bâtiment de scène des théâtres d'Italie et de Sicile. Étude chronologique et typologique*, Providence 1989, 26, fig. 9; S. Cassani (ed.), *La Magna Grecia nelle collezioni del Museo Archeologico di Napoli (I Greci in Occidente)*, Napoli 1996, 44–45, no. 4.2 (ill.); J. R. Green, "Comic Cuts: Snippets of Action on the Greek Comic Stage", *BICS* 45 (2001) 43, fig. 2 (colour ill.); A. D'Amicis et al., *Attori e maschere del teatro antico*, Taranto 2004, 7, fig. 5; Rusten,



Fig. 1. Apulian calyx-krater by the Varrese Painter, ca. 340 B.C.  
Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 118333.



Fig. 2. Apulian calyx-krater by the Varrese Painter.  
A photograph of the whole vase.

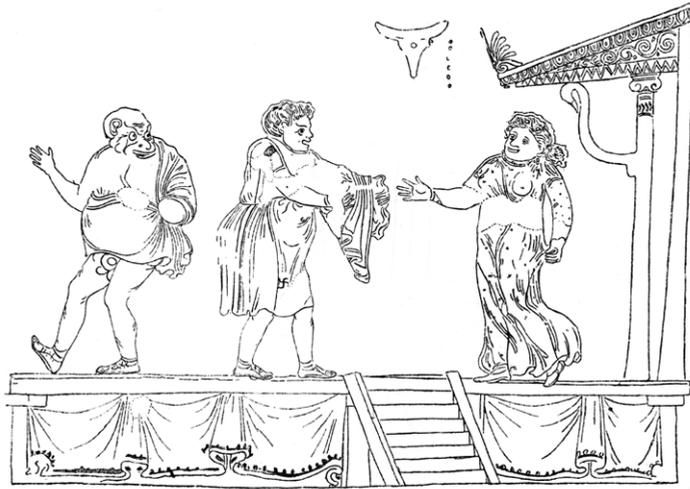


Fig. 3. Apulian calyx-krater by the Varrese Painter.  
Drawing from Dörpfeld – Reisch, *Das griechische Theater*, 323, fig. 79.

Greek vases (once called “phlyax vases”) that preserve scenes from comedy, mostly Classical Athenian fifth- or fourth-century comedy, as has been firmly established by modern research.<sup>54</sup> Most of them were manufactured in the wake of performances of Athenian plays in Magna Graecia or Sicily, and in fact principally in Taranto.<sup>55</sup>

*The Birth of Comedy*, 449 (ill.); M. R. Borriello et al. (eds.), *Histrionica. Teatri, maschere e spettacoli nel mondo antico*, Milano 2010, 119, fig. V.12 (colour ill.); M. Salvadori – A. Marchetto, “Vasi magno-greci e sicelioti a soggetto fliacico: riflessioni sulla resa dello spazio scenico”, in A. Coppola et al. (eds.), *Gli oggetti sulla scena teatrale ateniese. Funzione, rappresentazione, comunicazione*, Padova 2016, 293, fig. 12; E. Keramari, *Η ενδυμασία στην αρχαία κωμωδία. Εξέλιξη, κωμική χρήση και σκηνική λειτουργία. Μια χαρακτηριστική προσέγγιση*, Athens 2020, 485.

54. See the works cited above, n. 6, and also Green, “Comic Cuts”, 37–64; J.-J. Maffre, “Comédie et iconographie: les grands problèmes”, in J. Jouanna (ed.), *Le théâtre grec antique: la comédie*, Paris 2000, 295–310; A. Piqueux, “Comédie ancienne et vases ‘phlyaxes’: un rapport problématique”, *Pallas* 67 (2005) 55–70; J. R. Green, “The Material Evidence”, in G. W. Dobrov (ed.), *Brill’s Companion to the Study of Greek Comedy*, Leiden/Boston 2010, 75–90; I. C. Storey, *Fragments of Old Comedy*, Cambridge MA/London 2011, III 425–427, 429–436, 438–450; Rusten, *The Birth of Comedy*, 434–454. Further detailed *bibliographie raisonnée* in J. R. Green, “Theatre Production: 1996–2006”, *Lustrum* 50 (2008) 98–99, 198, 200, 205–206, 208–215.
55. See Green, “Comic Vases in South Italy”, 289–342, and especially the statistics on p. 341.

The calyx-krater dates from ca. 340 B.C. or perhaps a little before.<sup>56</sup> As often in these paintings, the scene from the comic play is acted on a stage. In this case the stair, which connects the raised platform with the orchestra, has eight steps, indicating that the vase-painter was thinking of the higher stage (ca. 1,6–1,8 m. in height) which was introduced across the Greek world from about 370 B.C.<sup>57</sup> A door surmounted by a sloping porch, at the right edge of the stage, is the only element of theatrical scenery (apart from the boukrania or aigokrania hanging in the background).<sup>58</sup> It is worth noting how smart and elaborate the door is by comparison with most that can be seen on “phlyax” vases.

In the centre of the picture a triumphant-looking young man holds the cloth in his outstretched hands. He brings it to a young woman, who is seen on the right, coming from the doorway (probably her doorway).<sup>59</sup> The woman moves towards the young man, extending her right hand in greeting and acceptance, while daintily clutching at her skirt in a gesture that one sees quite frequently in Attic and Tarentine vase-painting among young women who feel a man’s attractiveness. She tilts her head in a manner that the vase-painter has captured well. She wears a necklace, earrings and adornment in her hair, fine footwear, and an elaborate diaphanous *chiton* that shows off her body — presumably the kind of thing that is mentioned in Eubulus’ *Nannion* (fr. 67) with reference to the ranks of prostitutes seen lining the street in Athens and displaying their bodies through their dresses against the sunlight.<sup>60</sup> She wears a hetaira mask type X with elaborate

56. Ian McPhee kindly confirms that date, adding that he could not see the vase as belonging any later.

57. See H. R. Goette, “Die Basis des Astydamas im sogenannten lykurgischen Dionysos-Theater zu Athen”, *AntK* 42 (1999) 21–25; Green, “Comic Cuts”, 37–64, together with the comments of Green, “Theatre Production: 1996–2006”, 58.

58. See Dörpfeld – Reisch, *Das griechische Theater*, 323–324; Green, “Comic Cuts”, 53–54; Hughes, *Performing Greek Comedy*, 71–72.

59. The object in the young man’s hands is evidently a garment, not a swaddled infant, as hypothesised by T. B. L. Webster, “South Italian Vases and Attic Drama”, *CQ* 42 (1948) 22 and Bieber, *The History*, 139. The cloth looks too small to enfold a baby, and there is no sign of a human limb in it (cf. Dörpfeld – Reisch, *Das griechische Theater*, 323; Trendall in *PhV*<sup>2</sup> 53). There doubtless was more than one door in the setting of the play, as is usual in Middle and New Comedy (see now I. M. Konstantakos, “Πόρτα, παραθύρι, παλκοσένικο: Ενδείξεις της αριστοφανικής κωμωδίας για τη διάταξη του σκηνηικού χώρου”, *Logeion* 9 [2019] 243–300); but only one of the doorways has been pictured on the vase. Cf. below, n. 85.

60. For a good overview of the perception of the dress of hetairai, though not involving theatre performance (except as implied in the texts of Aristophanes and other dramatists), see

hairdo. Her dainty gait and entire bodily attitude suggest the flirtatious coquetry of the courtesan.

Over at the left edge of the stage there is a third figure: an old man with white hair and beard; he walks away but turns his head to look back at the two other characters. He is captured superbly by the vase-painter, like a dog slinking off with its tail between its legs.<sup>61</sup> The old man's character is typified in his mask, indicated by his large curving nose and his greasy beard. He does not represent an ideal Athenian; he wears a mask of type G, given to men who could be made to look like fools.<sup>62</sup> His right foot touches the ground only with the heel, while the rest of the sole is in the air, curving upwards at a steep angle. It is not clear whether this detail is intended to show the old man's reluctance at leaving. His right hand, lifted, with palm open, seems at the very least to acknowledge his dismay.

This is the only "phlyax" vase known to us in which a textile is offered on stage in such a way. Its uniqueness, in this respect, matches well the singularity of the title of Alexis' comedy, *Hippikos*. The vase-painting, like all South Italian and Sicilian monuments of this kind, must depict a key scene of the corresponding comedy, a characteristic or impressive episode with considerable significance for the plot — and also one that would identify the play for the participants in a symposion, such as the vase was created for. The layout of the scene, in turn, suggests that the garment carried by the young man to the hetaira was a crucial element in the action. The cloth is literally depicted "centre stage", at the very middle of the picture, so as to immediately attract the viewer's attention. The young man is zealously offering it with outstretched arms, and the hetaira's gesture indicates that

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A. Dalby, "Levels of Concealment: The Dress of *Hetairai* and *Pornai* in Greek Texts", in L. Llewellyn-Jones (ed.), *Women's Dress in the Ancient Greek World*, Swansea 2002, 111–124 (especially 115ff. on the transparency of dress). On the woman's costume in the calyx-krater, see now also Keramari, *H ενδυμασία*, 485.

61. In some ways comparable (as pointed out already by Webster, "South Italian Vases", 21–22) is the old man at the far left on the famous Sicilian calyx-krater at Lentini, which illustrates a scene from a mythological comedy about Heracles and Auge (*PhV*<sup>2</sup> 51, no. 79; *LCS* 596, no. 74, pl. 231.3 [drawing]). See e.g. E. Zevi Fiorentini, "Il cratere di Leontini con scena di commedia", *Memorie della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 6 (1942) 39–52, pll. 1–2 (with earlier references); P. E. Arias, "Cratere a calice di Lentini", *Cronache di Archeologia* 1 (1962) 36–42; F. Giudice, "I ceramografi del IV secolo a.C.", in G. Pugliese Carratelli (ed.), *Sikanie. Storia e civiltà della Sicilia greca*, Milano 1985, fig. 294 (colour ill.). See also the old man on the Messina krater discussed below.

62. The feeble and foolish Zeus is regularly given this mask in scenes of mythological burlesque and in comic figurines; see below. The old man is obviously not a slave (cf. Webster, "South Italian Vases", 22, *pace* Bieber, *The History*, 139).

she is just as eager to receive it. The centrality of the cloth in the action is persuasive in connecting this portrayal with Alexis' *Hippiskos*, in which the dress highlighted in the title must have occupied an equally central position in the storyline. On present evidence absolute certainty is of course impossible, but the correspondence between comic title and image is impressive.<sup>63</sup>

The cast portrayed in the vase-painting also tallies with the available information about Alexis' comedy. The illustrated scene depicts a trio of characters which coincides exactly with the love triangle indicated by Alexis fr. 2. The hetaira of the vase-painting may be identified with Agonis; the young man, who brings her the garment, will be her lover, the main speaker of fr. 2. As for the old man who walks away in dismay, he represents the *xenos* who has been duped by the young couple's intrigues, so as to lose Agonis and withdraw crestfallen. If these identifications are accepted, the vase-painting may offer some clues for establishing the dramatic identity of the *xenos*, which cannot be determined with certainty on the basis of fr. 2 alone. As already noted, Arnott hypothesised that the foreigner might be a braggart soldier, mostly due to the adjective *αἰθωρ* ("impetuous"), although he did not rule out the possibility of a pimp. How may the Varrese Painter's work contribute to the solution of this dilemma?

In the image the retreating old *xenos* wears a short *himation* and still exhibits a *phallos*, although his *phallos* is relatively small and curled up. The size is not surprising; other roughly contemporary depictions of comic scenes show characters with the *phallos* smaller still. The important thing is that the vase-painter has made sure that the *phallos* is seen. By contrast, the young man cuts a more decent figure: even though he is still visibly equipped with padding on the belly and buttocks, he wears a longer, knee-length *chiton*, which hides the *phallos*. In this respect, this vase-painting of ca. 340 B.C.

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63. It has also been hypothesised that the calyx-krater illustrates a mythological burlesque which travestied the tragic story of Deianeira (Bieber, *The History*, 139; Trendall in *PhV*<sup>2</sup> 53; Webster in *MMC*<sup>3</sup> 24, 26, 107; Keramari, *H ενδυμασία*, 485). The latter, portrayed here as a comic hetaira, would be handing over the fatal garment to Lichas, to be transported as a gift to Heracles (as in Sophocles, *Trachiniai* 598–632). However, the characters' body movements and the gestures of their hands (especially the woman's hands) seem to exclude such a scenario: the young man is clearly bringing the dress to the hetaira, not receiving it from her. Moreover, in an illustration of a myth burlesque of this kind, one would expect Heracles to be also portrayed in some way, at least in an inset vignette representing a different scene of the play; since Heracles was one of the most popular figures both in Attic mythological comedies and in their South Italian illustrations, the vase-painter would have hardly missed the opportunity to include him. Yet, instead of the expected Heracles, we get the ridiculous old man, who cannot be tied to Deianeira's story.

is an important piece of dating for the evolution of comic costume in the later phases of Middle Comedy. At this date, as it seems, the male characters of a play could be differentiated on the basis of the propriety of their appearance, given that some of them displayed the comic *phallos*, while others did not. The visibility of the *phallos* could thus function as a visual indicator of a character's particular idiosyncrasy or of his role in the plot.

In the case of the *xenos* on the calyx-krater, the *phallos* most probably brands him as a worthless old man, a figure of low moral stature destined to be ridiculed and defeated. At the same time, it must be noted that the old fellow has his left arm well wrapped in his *himation*, as a proper gentleman should. Perhaps he was pretentious. Given his old age, he cannot be a *miles gloriosus*, and thus Arnott's first and most favoured proposition cannot hold if the vase-painting is accepted as a scene from *Agonis or Hippiskos*. The alternative possibility, that the man is a pimp, is of course feasible. The *phallos* would then indicate the *pornoboskos*' low social status and also his connection with the sex business, from which he earns his living. Nonetheless, other details of the vase-painting seem to tell against this scenario. The hetaira does not look like a slave-girl in a pimp's service. Her fine dress, rich jewellery, and self-confident coquetry would rather suggest a free courtesan who is her own mistress and conducts her own independent activity. In addition, the situation depicted on the vase, the relative positions and movements of the personages in the theatrical space do not tally with the old man's role as a *pornoboskos*. If the young lover is bringing the garment to the hetaira as a gift, why should the pimp walk away with such obvious disappointment? Normally, the owner of a slave-prostitute should be glad if the girl in his service receives a nice and substantial gift from a client. The old *xenos*' dismay in view of the meeting of the young lover and the hetaira, from which he distances himself with reluctance and at which he looks back with an apparently negative disposition, would better suit a rival in love — someone who perceives that his younger opponent has outdone him with a superior presentation and has achieved greater success with the hetaira they both desire.

If all this is taken into account, the old *xenos* may perhaps be identified as an elderly rival who competes with the young man for the favours of the beloved girl. He is an old man in love with a hetaira, a representative of the well-known comic type of the *senex amator*.<sup>64</sup> The visibility of the

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64. This ridiculous comic type is well attested in the history of ancient comedy, from Aristophanes' *Wasps*, Pherecrates' *Korianno*, and Plato Comicus' *Phaon*, via Middle Comedy

*phallos*, in this case, would suit the undignified, base, and ungentlemanly character that is usually attributed to the elderly lover in the comic tradition. Furthermore, the G mask-type, usually borne by a foolish and gullible old man, was apt for the figure of the *senex amator*, who is standardly discomfited and ridiculed in comedy for his unbecoming, indecorous, and belated erotic passion. On a famous bell-krater of Asteas in the Vatican, which illustrates a scene from a mythological burlesque dramatising a love affair of Zeus, Zeus himself is portrayed as a *senex amator* and prepares to climb to his ladylove's window with a ladder at night. He characteristically wears the G mask.<sup>65</sup> The same applies to the old man on a Gnathia calyx-krater in Boston, who is shown running with a stick, while cakes and fruits are falling out from beneath his cloak. The other side of the vase portrays a draped young woman, and it may easily be imagined that the old fellow is running towards her.<sup>66</sup> He is presumably in love with the young lady and carries the

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(Philetaerus, *Kynagis* fr. 6–9), to Menander, Diphilus, Philemon, and the Plautine adaptations (*Bacchides*, *Casina*, *Mercator*, *Asinaria*). See most notably F. Wehrli, *Motivstudien zur griechischen Komödie*, Zürich/Leipzig 1936, 56–66, 70–73; F. Conca, “Il motivo del vecchio innamorato in Menandro, Plauto e Terenzio”, *Acme* 23 (1970) 81–90; J. M. Cody, “The *senex amator* in Plautus’ *Casina*”, *Hermes* 104 (1976) 453–476; S. L. Walker, *The senex amator in Plautus. A Study in Development*, Diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 1980; K. C. Ryder, “The *senex amator* in Plautus”, *G&R* 31 (1984) 181–189; M. M. Bianco, *Ridiculi senes. Plauto e i vecchi da commedia*, Palermo 2003, 55–138; G. Petrone, “...Magis...unicust...pater. Crisi dell’ autorità senile”, in T. Baier (ed.), *Generationenkonflikte auf der Bühne. Perspektiven im antiken und mittelalterlichen Drama*, Tübingen 2007, 101–111.

65. Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, 17106. Ca. 350 B.C. *PhV*<sup>2</sup> 46, no. 65; *RVP* 124, no. 176. See further Catteruccia, *Pitture vascolari*, 18–19; Bieber, *The History*, 132, fig. 484; A. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, 2nd ed. by J. Gould – D. M. Lewis, Oxford 1968, 217, fig. 106; T. B. L. Webster, *Greek Theatre Production*, 2nd ed., Manchester 1970, 108–109, 114–115, fig. 20; A. D. Trendall – T. B. L. Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama*, London 1971, 134, no. IV.19; B. Brandes-Druba, *Architekturdarstellungen in der unteritalischen Keramik*, Frankfurt 1994, 163, 167, 295–296; J. R. Green, “Theatrical Motifs in Non-Theatrical Contexts on Vases of the Later Fifth and Fourth Centuries”, in A. Griffiths (ed.), *Stage Directions. Essays in Ancient Drama in Honour of E. W. Handley*, London 1995, 109, fig. 10b; Konstantakos, “Towards a Literary History”, 159–160.
66. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 00.363, by the Konnakis Painter. Mid-fourth century B.C. *PhV*<sup>2</sup> 79, no. 177; J. M. Padgett *et al.*, *Vase-Painting in Italy. Red-Figure and Related Works in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Boston 1993, 191–192, no. 108. See further Catteruccia, *Pitture vascolari*, 64, no. 77; Bieber, *The History*, 138, fig. 502; J. R. Green, “Some Gnathia Pottery in the J. Paul Getty Museum”, *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum* 3 (1986) 115–117, fig. 3; Maffre, “Comédie”, 298–299, fig. 20; Green, “Comic Vases in South Italy”, 335, no. 36.

edible dainties as gifts to her. Once again the G mask pertains to an incompetent *senex amator*.

The old man in love seems to have been a known comic type in the theatre of Alexis and to have played a role in various comedies. In the *Wounded Man* (*Tραυματίας*), fr. 237 (τὸν γὰρ ὕστατον / τρέχων διάυλον τοῦ βίου ζῆν βούλομαι, “Running the last race of life I want to live”) is clearly spoken by an elderly man at the later phase of his life.<sup>67</sup> His insistence on ζῆν may imply that he wishes to “truly live”, i.e. to enjoy life at his age, and characteristically corresponds with the words of fr. 236 of the same comedy,<sup>68</sup> in which the speaker identifies ζῆν with being in love:

τίς οὐχί φησι τοὺς ἐρῶντας ζῆν μόνους;  
 <οὐδς> δεῖ γε πρῶτον μὲν στρατευτικωτάτους  
 εἶναι, πονεῖν τε δυναμένους τοῖς σώμασιν [...]

Who denies that only people in love are truly alive? First of all, they have to be very much like soldiers, capable of bodily labour etc.

The emphatic use of ζῆν in the same sense of a worthy manner of living closely connects the two fragments<sup>69</sup> and suggests that the old fellow of fr. 237 may also understand “true life” in terms of a lover’s experience, as stated in fr. 236. In that case, the cast of the comedy would have contained an enamoured elderly man. Furthermore, in Alexis fr. 284, from an unnamed play, the speaker deplores the fact that hetairai favour only young men and not old ones, in contrast to their preference for old wine: ἄτοπὸν γε τὸν μὲν οἶνον εὐδοκιμεῖν σφόδρα / παρὰ ταῖς ἑταίραις τὸν παλαιόν, ἄνδρα δὲ / μὴ τὸν παλαιὸν ἀλλὰ τὸν νεώτερον (“It is strange that hetairai keenly praise the old wine, but concerning men they prefer not the old but the young one”). This implies that an older man amorously pursuing a hetaira was part of the scenario of the comedy.<sup>70</sup> Two other fragments, fr. 46 (from *Demetrius or Philetaerus*) and fr. 280 (from an unnamed play), also use the comparison of the aged man with old wine, so as to comment on the pleasantness or un-

67. See Webster, *Studies*, 131; Arnott, *Alexis*, 663–664, 668–669; Stama, *Alessi*, 429.

68. On the textual tradition of fr. 236 and its assignment to Alexis’ *Traumatiás*, see Arnott, *Alexis*, 664.

69. The correspondence is noted by Arnott, *Alexis*, 666, 669.

70. See Arnott, *Alexis*, 779–780.

pleasantness of the old man's character — although they contain no express reference to love or hetairai.<sup>71</sup>

If the old man on the vase is a *senex amator*, he may be added to the foregoing list of examples. If the epithet *αἰθων* in Alexis fr. 2.2 refers to the *xenos*, it might signify the old lover's impetuosity, as demonstrated presumably in the keenness of his lustful passion. The lovelorn old foreigner of the *Hippiskos* would be, in this respect, a worthy counterpart of the amorous Plautine *senes* such as Demipho, Demaenetus, Lysidamus, and the two *patresfamilias* at the finale of the *Bacchides* — and every bit as ludicrous. On the whole, however, it seems more probable that *αἰθων* is associated with the young man, either as self-praise or as an interjection of admiration on the hetaira's lips. Attempts to emend the text of fr. 2 should henceforward be targeted accordingly.

#### TRAVELLING PLAYERS, MOVING DATES

The calyx-krater of the Varrese Painter belongs to ca. 340 B.C., if not a little earlier, and it was proposed above that *Agonis or Hippiskos* is most likely to have been produced around the same date, in the late 340s. The surviving fragments of Alexis' play belong to a script written for performance in Attica, as becomes clear from the topical references to three local celebrities of Athens: Misgolas (fr. 3), the minor pro-Macedonian politician Philippides (fr. 2.8), and Pheidippus, the son of the salt-fish merchant Chaerephilus, who was eventually awarded Athenian citizenship at Demosthenes' instigation (fr. 6).<sup>72</sup> These men were prominent in Athenian public life and known to the Attic milieu, but none of them seems to have been a personality of wider, Panhellenic renown. If the comedy was originally destined for an audience outside Attica, there would have been little point in referring to such individuals of purely local Athenian reputation.

The representation on the Apulian vase indicates a re-performance of *Agonis or Hippiskos* in Magna Graecia (presumably Taranto), which inspired the work of the Varrese Painter. The transportation and revival of the comedy in South Italy must have been effected quite quickly, very soon after its premiere in an Athenian festival, given that both the topical references of the Athenian production and the dating of the calyx-krater point

71. See Arnott, *Alexis*, 160–164, 774–775; Stama, *Alessi*, 126, 489.

72. See Arnott, *Alexis*, 60–61, 69–70, and Stama, *Alessi*, 60, with further references.

to the vicinity of 340. Such temporal proximity is admittedly different from the practice revealed by some earlier South Italian “phlyax” vase-paintings, which have been identified as illustrations of plays of Old Comedy: in those cases a large gap of several decades exists between the original Attic performance of the play and the chronology of the vase (which in turn must be indicative of the date of the South Italian revival). For example, Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae* premiered in Athens in 411 B.C., and a scene from it is depicted on a famous bell-krater at Würzburg, painted in the 370s.<sup>73</sup> If another commonly proposed identification is accepted, the opening of the *Frogs* (405 B.C.) was somewhat maladroitly rendered on a now lost Apulian bell-krater of ca. 375–350, which was once in Berlin but was destroyed or plundered during World War II.<sup>74</sup>

This phenomenon, however, must not be considered as a general rule which applies to all South Italian vase-paintings of comic scenes. It should be kept in mind that the plays of fifth-century Old Comedy are so far the only ones that have provided more or less definite identifications with specific “phlyax” vase-paintings, for the simple reason that these plays happen to be better known in terms of their contents. By contrast, no conclusive connections have been traced between vase-paintings and specific works of Middle Comedy, precisely because neither full scripts nor well-documented plots are preserved from the time of Middle Comedy to correlate with the South Italian images. There should be no doubt that, as the fourth century progressed, contemporary comedies, which had proved successful in Athenian festivals, would have been exported from Athens, taken up by travelling troupes, and, sooner rather than later, revived in theatre-loving Magna Graecia.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, there are a few demonstrable or arguable cases in which the temporal interval between the Athenian premiere of a tragic, satyric, or

73. Würzburg, Martin-von-Wagner Museum, H 5697. *RVAp* I 65, no. 4/4a. See Taplin, *Comic Angels*, 36–41; E. Csapo, “A Note on the Würzburg Bell-Crater H5697 (‘Telephus Travestitus’)”, *Phoenix* 40 (1986) 379–392.

74. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, F 3046. *PhV*<sup>2</sup> 29, no. 22. See Taplin, *Comic Angels*, 44–47 and pl. 13.7; Csapo, *Actors*, 58–61; I. C. Storey, *Fragments*, III 432–433; E. W. Handley, “Going to Hades: Two Passages of Aristophanes, *Frogs* (786–794; 1–37)”, *AAntHung* 40 (2000) 151–160.

75. Already Webster (“South Italian Vases”, 19–27) correlated the “phlyax” vases with their contemporary fourth-century Attic comedy, pointing out abundant parallels between the images of the former and the fragments of the latter. For other such connections, see Konstantakos, “Tendencies”, 189–190 and the bibliography cited there. On the process of the transmission, see J. R. Green, “Tragic Chorusmen in Taranto and Athens”, *Ostraka* 21 (2012) 155–164.

comic play and the South Italian painting based on this play appears to have been much smaller; these examples indicate similarly a quicker process of exportation and restaging in Magna Graecia. The most impressive specimen is the well-known early Lucanian calyx-krater, dating from ca. 415–410 B.C., which shows Odysseus' companions as they prepare to blind the sleeping Cyclops, in the company of two dancing satyrs. This image is commonly taken as an illustration of Euripides' *Cyclops*.<sup>76</sup> The date of this satyr play is a disputed matter;<sup>77</sup> but if it is indeed a creation of the latest phase of Euripides' career, first produced in the years around 410, the re-performance in Magna Graecia, which inspired the Lucanian vase-painting, should have taken place almost immediately after the Athenian production. Similarly, a Lucanian pelike by the Policoro Painter, dated close to 400 B.C., portrays the punishment of Dirce, whom Amphion and Zethus, the two sons of Antiope, are about to bind onto the back of an enormous bull. This lively representation must have been inspired by the messenger speech of Euripides' *Antiope*, produced most probably between 411 and 408;<sup>78</sup> the pelike was found in a tomb at Policoro (ancient Heracleia) among a group of vases which also includes other illustrations of Euripidean tragic scenes, notably from the *Medea* and the *Heracleidae*.<sup>79</sup> In this case too,

76. British Museum, 1947.7–14.18. *LCS* no. 85 and pl. 8.1; Trendall – Webster, *Illustrations*, 36, no. II.11; B. Fellmann, *Die antiken Darstellungen des Polyphemabenteuers*, München 1972, 32–33; A. A. Lamari, *Reperforming Greek Tragedy. Theater, Politics, and Cultural Mobility in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC*, Berlin/Boston 2017, 15, 137–141. See however the reservations expressed by O. Taplin, *Pots & Plays. Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-Painting of the Fourth Century B.C.*, Los Angeles 2007, 272–273; R. L. Hunter – R. Lämmle, *Euripides: Cyclops*, Cambridge 2020, 46–47.

77. Recent surveys of the scholarly arguments about the possible date of the *Cyclops* are offered by R. Lämmle, *Poetik des Satyrspiels*, Heidelberg 2013, 327–330; P. O'Sullivan – C. Collard, *Euripides, Cyclops and Major Fragments of Greek Satyric Drama*, Oxford 2013, 39–41; Hunter – Lämmle, *Euripides: Cyclops*, 38–47.

78. On the date of Euripides' *Antiope*, see Schol. Ar. *Ran.* 53 (*Antiope* test. ii, *TrGF* V.1, p. 274 Kannicht): διὰ τί μὴ ἄλλο τι τῶν πρὸ ὀλίγον διδαχθέντων (i.e. shortly before the *Frogs* of 405 B.C.) καὶ καλῶν Ὑφιπύλην, Φωνίσσας, Ἀντιόπην; ἢ δὲ Ἄνδρομέδα ὀγδόῳ ἔπει προσεῖ>σῆλθεν. See further J. Kambitsis, *L'Antiope d'Euripide. Édition commentée des fragments*, Athènes 1972, xxxi–xxxv; C. Collard – M. J. Cropp – J. Gibert, *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays*, vol. II, Oxford 2004, 269; M. L. Bernardini, "L'Antiope di Euripide: l'intellettuale fra tradizione sapienziale e nuove istanze politico-culturali", *Prometheus* 42 (2016) 32–60. The metrical criteria (low resolution rates in the surviving trimeters), which are sometimes invoked as evidence of an earlier dating (M. Cropp – G. Fick, *Resolutions and Chronology in Euripides. The Fragmentary Tragedies*, London 1985, 74–76), cannot be regarded as a safe guide, given the fragmentary nature of the remains of the play.

79. Policoro, Museo Nazionale della Siritide, 35297. *LCS* no. 288, pl. 27.4; Trendall – Web-

given the relative dates of the tragedy and the vase-painting, the restaging of Euripides' *Antiope* in a South Italian context must have occurred within a few years of its Athenian premiere.

On the side of comedy, a possible instance is offered by a Lucanian bell-krater, probably from Metaponto, published recently by Richard Green, which depicts a comic parody of the dialogue scene between the love-stricken Phaedra and her nurse.<sup>80</sup> In the original publication a date around 400 B.C. or a little before had been proposed; Green prefers now an even earlier dating of the vase, about 410 or slightly before. As argued by Christian Orth, the illustrated comic travesty may belong to Aristophanes' *Anagyros*, a play produced between 420 and 412 B.C., most probably about 418 or 417. This Aristophanic comedy apparently contained extensive parody of elements from Euripides' *Hippolytus*, including the conversation between the passion-ridden Phaedra and her nurse (fr. 53).<sup>81</sup> Following the new dating of this Metapontine krater in the late 410s, the temporal distance between the vase and the corresponding play consists again only in a few years.

In Alexis' case, in particular, his South Italian background may also be taken into consideration. Alexis was born in or at least originated from South Italy, hailing from Thurii on the gulf of Taranto. His origins in that area may have enabled him to keep and cultivate connections with the Hellenic cities of Magna Graecia and their local theatrical markets. In that case, he would have been in a privileged position with regard to the exportation and re-performance of his comedies in the South Italian festivals and theatres.<sup>82</sup> This factor may explain how it would have been possible for a play by Alexis to be transported and revived in Magna Graecia so soon after its Athenian premiere. The author himself may have divided his professional

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ster, *Illustrations*, 82–83, no. III.3.14; O. Taplin, “Narrative Variation in Vase-Painting and Tragedy: The Example of Dirke”, *AntK* 41 (1998) 33–39; O. Taplin, “Spreading the Word through Performance”, in S. Goldhill – R. Osborne (eds.), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*, Cambridge 1999, 40–41; Taplin, *Pots & Plays*, 187–188; O. Taplin, “How Was Athenian Tragedy Played in the Greek West?”, in Bosher, *Theater Outside Athens*, 230–236.

80. University of Sydney, Nicholson Museum, 2013.2. See J. R. Green, “Two Phaedras: Euripides and Aristophanes?”, in S. D. Olson (ed.), *Ancient Comedy and Reception. Essays in Honor of Jeffrey Henderson*, Berlin 2014, 94–131.

81. C. Orth, *Aristophanes: Aiolosikon – Babylonioi* (fr. 1–100). *Übersetzung und Kommentar*, *Fragmenta Comica* 10.3, Heidelberg 2017, 222–236; C. Orth, “Fragmentary Comedy and the Evidence of Vase-Painting: Euripidean Parody in Aristophanes' *Anagyros*”, in A. A. Lamari – F. Montanari – A. Novokhatko (eds.), *Fragmentation in Ancient Greek Drama*, Berlin/Boston 2020, 481–500.

82. Cf. Dearden, “Whose Line”, 280–281.

activity between his adopted city, the great theatrical capital of Athens, and his native South Italian homeland, which would have welcomed the plays of its illustrious scion and provided an important outlet for the diffusion of his dramatic works.

#### ICONOGRAPHY, SCENERY, AND THE EVOLUTION OF COSTUME

The Varrese Painter was gifted with notable powers of observation. He was generally attentive to architectural details throughout much of his work. The treatment of the porch from which Agonis emerges on our calyx-krater is characteristic. It comprises a singularly narrow, fluted Ionic column with necking ring just below the capital, and from it and supporting the extension of the roof of the porch is a swan-neck strut. The detailing of the parts of the roof is carried out in finely-drawn white, as is the palmette akroterion. That this is not simply a creation of the vase-painter's imagination is suggested by a more poorly-drawn version of what seems to be the same thing on a skyphos in the British Museum where a young woman, doubtless a hetaira, emerges through such a doorway (figure 4).<sup>83</sup> Again the curious swan-neck motif on the right of the scene on the Zewadski bell-krater in St Petersburg, Florida, is probably an echo that caught the eye of that painter too.<sup>84</sup> That these were all done by different hands suggests that the vases give a hint of the architecture of the left and right doorways on the stage of the theatre at Taranto at this date.<sup>85</sup> The construction must have been of timber, as is suggested by the curve of the swan-neck element and the very

83. British Museum, 1849,0518.15 (F 124). *PhV*<sup>2</sup> 57, no. 94; *RVAp* I 304, no. 11/182a; A. Kossatz-Deissmann, "Medeas Widderzauber als Phlyakenparodie", *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum* 6 (2000) 198, fig. 7.

84. Apulian bell-krater, ca. 360–340 B.C., in the W. Zewadski collection, Florida. *RVAp* Suppl. II 64, no. 10/60c, pl. 11.1–2. See e.g. Taplin, *Comic Angels*, 113, pl. 13.10; E. Günther – S. Günther, "Alles nur Maskerade? Masken auf Komödienvasen und Münzen der griechisch-römischen Welt", *Geldgeschichtliche Nachrichten* 53.300 (2018) 351–352, 358, fig. 3 (colour ill.).

85. Doorways were of course of vital importance in the construction of contemporary and later comedy. Little has been written on their physical appearance because little is known except from the evidence of the vases: see S. Caciagli – D. De Sanctis – M. Giovannelli – M. Regali, "Usci, soglie e portinai. *Thyra* nella commedia greca", *Lessico del comico* 1 (2016) 6–54, who do not in fact consider vases; also M. G. Mikedaki, "Η σημασία της θύρας του σκηνηκού οικοδομήματος στο αρχαίο δράμα", *EEAth* 36 (2004–2005) 185–200. Green will be discussing the matter further in his forthcoming publication on phlyax vases.



Fig. 4. Apulian skyphos, ca. 375–350 B.C. British Museum, 1849,0518.15 (F 124).  
Photograph © The Trustees of the British Museum.

thin Ionic column. It was evidently highly decorated, whether in carving or in paint (or both), as the Varrese Painter made very clear. It is fascinating evidence of elaborate Tarentine style applied to their theatre, of the possibilities of the use of timber for the *skene*, and of the effort applied by the Tarentines to what was a central feature of their city and their communal life.

As has already been noted, our calyx-krater is an important testimony for the evolution of comic costume during the later phases of Middle Comedy. The hetaira's costume and its rich decoration have been discussed above. She has full, rich hair and it is exposed, drawn into a thick bunch at the back. She wears jewels (perhaps of glass?) in her hair, earrings, a necklace, and a bracelet or bracelets (the area of her left wrist is damaged). She has dainty footwear, emphasised with added white; there seem to be buttons or the like at the sides — unless they are a gap.<sup>86</sup>

86. See now the splendid catalogue by L. Camin – C. Chiarelli – F. Paolucci (eds.), *Ai piedi*



Fig. 5. Sicilian calyx-krater attributed to the Manfredia Painter, ca. 330 B.C. Milazzo, Antiquarium, 11039, from Messina.



Fig. 6. Sicilian calyx-krater attributed to the Manfredia Painter. Another view of the vase.

An important feature of the hetaira's costume is that her sleeves are decorated. This is a new phenomenon. Something of the sort can be seen again on a Sicilian calyx-krater found in Messina, which portrays a comic scene with a slave dressed up as a girl, most probably a bride (figures 5–6). In this vase-painting, which dates from ca. 330 B.C., both the pretend bride (the slave) and the real bride are given purple-red sleeves.<sup>87</sup>

The Sicilian vase makes a very useful point of comparison in several respects, besides the use of decorated sleeves. The old man on the right, who is shut out of the action (figure 6), is also given a visible *phallos*, and the young man at the centre of the picture looks very like the one on the Varrese

*degli dei. Le calzature antiche e la loro fortuna nella cultura del Novecento*, Firenze 2019, esp. 49, 146–147.

87. Now Milazzo, Antiquarium, 11039, from Messina, via S. Marta (1989) t. 33. See e.g. U. Spigo, “Nuovi rinvenimenti di ceramica a figure rosse di fabbrica siceliota ed italiota da Lipari e dalla provincia di Messina”, *Mediterranean Archaeology* 5–6 (1992–1993) 34–39, pll. 32.2–3 and 33.1; L. Bernabò Brea – M. Cavalier, *Maschere e personaggi del teatro greco nelle terracotte liparesi*, Roma 2001, 55, 58, fig. 48; G. M. Bacci – U. Spigo (eds.), *Prosopon-Persona. Testimonianze del Teatro Antico in Sicilia*, Palermo 2004, 18, fig. 4 and 32 (colour ill.); Green, “The Material Evidence”, 84–85, fig. 6a–b. A less elaborate example is to be found on the slightly later krater fragment in Entella for the sleeves of a woman in refuge on an altar: see e.g. Taplin, *Pots & Plays*, 263, no. 106 (with ill.), where the vase-painting is wrongly taken as tragic. Sleeves had been decorated in tragedy from the time of Euripides, as can be seen from the figure labelled Aigisthos on the famous Choregos Vase, which is clearly to be taken as archetypically tragic: e.g. Taplin, *Pots & Plays*, 28, fig. 7. The adoption of the practice in comedy could be taken as an indication that the body-costume was now viewed in a more objective, even metatheatrical way.

Painter's krater.<sup>88</sup> The young man on this latter vase is a sturdy young fellow. As already noted above, he still has the padding at front and back inherited from earlier generations of actors in comedy; contrast the figure of the hetaira, where the padding is entirely done away with. His tunic comes down to just cover his knees, so that no *phallos* is visible. His sleeves and leggings are plain, although the vase-painter has applied a wash to darken their colour a little.<sup>89</sup> His tunic is full as well as decorated: notice the swastikas on the skirt and on the chest. His mask is very like that of the young man on the Sicilian vase and the hair is thick. He has elaborate sandals.

The indications, therefore, are that the young man on the Naples calyx-krater is fairly well-to-do. Like many well-bred young lovers of Middle and New Comedy, he is presumably the offspring of a wealthy family, although his stern father or other adverse family factors may temporarily deprive him of funds to pursue his liaison with the hetaira. Hence the need to concoct a cunning intrigue, display false wealth, and outwit the blocking character, as indicated in Alexis fr. 2.

The hetaira's footwear is also worth observing. She is shown wearing rather special soft shoes, much the same, significantly, as Eros is given in contemporary vase-painting, where he also wears jewellery like that of young women. Furtwängler, already in 1874, noted Meleager's description of Eros as *ἀβροπέδιλος* (*Anth. Pal.* 12.158), an inventive and apt adjective.<sup>90</sup> Gow and Page commented on this passage: "*ἀβροπέδιλος* unique; here merely decorative, a rarity in M."<sup>91</sup> In suggesting this, they did Meleager

88. The difference in appearance between the two young women, the bride of the Messina vase and the hetaira of the Naples krater, is also striking. It tells one a lot about their respective social statuses and about their dramatic characters.

89. This is done fairly commonly: see for example the oinochoe now in Leipzig which must be of the same period or slightly later (T 5126); e.g. R. Vollkommer, "Ein Komödiant im Antikemuseum der Universität Leipzig", in *Festgabe anlässlich der Winkelmannsfeier des Instituts für Klassische Archäologie der Universität Leipzig*, Leipzig 1997; J. R. Green, "Pictures of Pictures of Comedy. Campanian Santia, Athenian Amphitryon, and Plautine *Amphitruo*", in J. R. Green – M. Edwards (eds.), *Images and Texts. Papers in Honour of Professor Eric Handley*, *BICS* Suppl. 129, London 2015, 61, fig. 14 (colour ill.). It is exaggerated on the calyx-krater Taranto 9120–9121 (e.g. P. Ciancio Rossetto – G. Pisani Sartorio, "A teatro con gli antichi", *Archeo* 153, Nov. 1997, 60, with colour ill.). It is of course more obvious on vases decorated in the Gnathia technique.

90. A. Furtwängler, *Eros in der Vasenmalerei*, München 1874, 75 (= *Kleine Schriften*, vol. I, München 1912, 48). The point was picked up by K. Erbacher, *Griechisches Schuhwerk. Eine antiquarische Untersuchung*, Würzburg 1914, 52 n. 5.

91. A. S. F. Gow – D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, vol. II, Cambridge 1965, 657.

a severe injustice, itself a rarity. Furtwängler had seen that the poet was picking up on Eros' visual appearance, especially in fourth-century Apulian vase-painting, noting how his appearance often reflected that of women, and, one might add, particularly of hetairai. Eros' hair, for example, is not infrequently done in what Pollux (and his source in the later fourth century B.C.) called the *lampadion* or "little torch" hairstyle, which was common for the hetairai of the comic stage (cf. the New Comedy hetaira mask 42).<sup>92</sup> The love-god's footwear offers another point of contact with the comic courtesan's world. It is possible too that Meleager used *ἀβροπέδιλος* with the implication that Eros could sneak up on one unannounced. Eros is shown not infrequently in contemporary art tying or rather untying a sandal, with the implications that such a motif would carry.

There has recently been a flurry of publications on feet and footwear, as scholars have rushed to what they have perceived to be an untilled field, most in ignorance of Erbacher's study of 1914, even if his interests did not have current sophistications or, for that matter, assumptions.<sup>93</sup> One of the best of these has been D. B. Levine's study.<sup>94</sup> Among much else, he reminds us of the young prostitute-dancer and the Scythian archer near the end of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*.<sup>95</sup> Euripides, disguised as an old procuress, brings in the young girl to seduce the archer and distract him from his watch. For this purpose, Euripides instructs the prostitute to sit on the Scythian's knees and put out her feet, so that he can remove her footwear for the dance. The Scythian is very much excited by this erotic gesture (*Thesm.* 1182–1185). Only a little over a decade earlier than the *Thesmophoriazusae* is the Washing Painter's hydria in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, on

92. It is interesting, as Furtwängler also saw, that *Anth. Pal.* 12.55 (attributed to Artemon, ca. 250 B.C.) uses the adjective *ἀβροζόμυς* for Eros.

93. See Erbacher, *Griechisches Schuhwerk*. Not to be ignored is the very useful article by A. A. Bryant, "Greek Shoes in the Classical Period", *HSPH* 10 (1899) 57–102, with its full examination of the literary sources.

94. D. B. Levine, "EPATON BAMA ('Her Lovely Footstep'): The Erotics of Feet in Ancient Greece", in D. Cairns (ed.), *Body Language in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Swansea 2005, 55–71. There is a well-founded introduction by S. Blundell, "Beneath Their Shining Feet. Shoes and Sandals in Classical Greece", in G. Riello – P. McNeil (eds.), *Shoes: A History from Sandals to Sneakers*, Oxford/New York 2006, 30–49, 410–411. For references to footwear in Old Comedy, see also D. M. Lewis' invaluable "Commodities in Classical Athens: The Evidence of Old Comedy", in E. M. Harris – D. M. Lewis – M. Woolmer (eds.), *The Ancient Greek Economy. Markets, Households and City-States*, Cambridge 2016, 395–396.

95. D. B. Levine, "EPATON BAMA", 61.

which Eros is shown attending to Helen's sandals.<sup>96</sup> One also thinks of the hundreds of versions, in marble, bronze, and terracotta, of the naked Aphrodite bending forward and balancing on one leg to remove her sandal.<sup>97</sup>

All this should be tempered by the knowledge that, in so far as the extant theatrical monuments indicate, on-stage characters in Old Comedy hardly ever wore footwear: they were still "improper".<sup>98</sup> It is only during the earlier phase of Middle Comedy (ca. 380–350 B.C.) that comic personages begin to do so. Initially this applies only to the more elite characters, and soon it is extended to free citizens in general, but not to slaves. By the middle of the fourth century, however, all comic characters are equipped with some type of shoes or sandals, sometimes with varying degrees of elaboration. The likelihood is that, since the use of footwear was a relatively new phenomenon in comic theatre around 340, when *Agonis or Hippiskos* was produced, the spectators would pay attention to the kinds of footwear attributed to the various comic figures. Audiences would be gradually learning to distinguish between different types of stage shoes and foot accessories, and to perceive them as a system of signs which indicated a character's social status, professional activity, or character idiosyncrasy (more or less like other semiotic systems, such as clothing, mask physiognomies, and coiffures).

As in a sense with Eros, a light or soft shoe of fine leather was part of a hetaira's professional attire. In *Agonis'* case, on the calyx-krater at Naples, the fine footwear thus serves as an indicator of social status and profession, but it is doubtful whether it was charged with further implications (e.g. about character qualities). The shoes may be recognized as *Περσικαί* (cf. Pollux 7.92: ἴδια δὲ γυναικῶν ὑποδήματα Περσικαί· λευκὸν ὑπόδημα, μᾶλλον ἔταιρικόν).

A singular aspect of the depiction on our vase is the colouring of the masks. Even though employing the red-figure technique, which is essentially bichrome though with select additions of white, the vase-painter has

96. 19.192.86. *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1130, no. 152; BAPD 214962; G. M. A. Richter – L. F. Hall, *Red-Figure Athenian Vases in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New Haven 1936, 183–184, no. 146, pl. 148. Eros seems to do something much the same on the squat lekythos in the J. Paul Getty Museum, 86.AE.259, BAPD 29168. See also BAPD 9024856 and 2129.

97. See more recently K. Tsakalou-Tzanavari, *Πήλινα ειδώλια από τη Βέροια. Ταφικά σύνολα της ελληνιστικής εποχής*, Athens 2002, 165–170, with further references.

98. This is in keeping with S. Blundell's observation "that bare feet were seen as the mark of a person who lived outside normal society, and so existed in the realm of physis rather than nomos": "One Shoe Off and One Shoe On. The Motif of *Monosandalism* in Classical Greece", in S. Pickup – S. Waite (eds.), *Shoes, Slippers and Sandals. Feet and Footwear in Classical Antiquity*, Abingdon/New York 2019, 225.

reddened the mask of the youth, used a pale pinkish colour for the young woman's mask, and seemingly applied a pale brown for that of the old man. Certainly by the time of New Comedy, a brownish red was employed for the masks of the kinds of young men who were constantly out and about; these personages were thus characterised as extrovert, as distinct from the paler masks of young men who led a more sheltered life. For example Pollux (4.146–147) in his list of comic masks, drawing on a late fourth-century or early Hellenistic source which must have reflected the conditions of performance in the transitional period from Middle to New Comedy, describes the *πάγχεριστος νεανίσκος* (“most excellent young man”, Mask 10) as “ruddy, athletic, and tanned” (*ὑπέρουθρος, γυμναστικός, ὑποκεχρωσμένος*); the curly-haired youth (*οἰῶλος*, Mask 12) is also described as having a ruddy complexion (*ὑπέρουθρος τὸ χροῶμα*), whereas the delicate youth (*ἀπαλός*, Mask 13) is said to be “white” (*λευκός*). Given the state of the material evidence, and the poorly preserved paint of most surviving terracottas, it is hard to say how far back this usage goes, but there can be no doubt into which sort of category the young man of our krater is to be placed.

A relatively well-preserved terracotta mask of a young man from Lipari (figure 7) illustrates this colouring and can be adduced for comparison — though it should be noted that this mask is of a New Comedy type: both hairstyle and nose are different.<sup>99</sup> Within the terms of fourth-century physiognomy, the loose wavy hair would suggest a leonine personality.

The young woman's mask is pale — as it should be — although it is interesting that it would not seem to be deliberately whitened. This fact might well be read as implying that the girl is not a hard-core prostitute, given that

99. Lipari, Museo Archeologico Regionale Eoliano Luigi Bernabò Brea, inv. 12965, from trench 37, bothros. *MNC*<sup>3</sup> 1ST 24. See L. Bernabò Brea, *Menandro e il teatro greco nelle terracotte liparesi*, Genova 1981, 171, no. 1, fig. 266 and pl. 28; Bernabò Brea – Cavalier, *Maschere e personaggi*, 195–197, figs. 264–265; *La Sicilia greca. Det Grekiska Sicilien* (exhibition catalogue, Malmö, Rooseum, 1989), Palermo 1989, 131, 210, no. 168 (ill.); G. Pugliese Carratelli, *The Western Greeks. Classical Civilization in the Western Mediterranean*, London 1996, 716, no. 241 (ill.); H. Hellenkemper, *Die Neue Welt der Griechen. Antike Kunst aus Unteritalien und Sizilien* (exhibition catalogue, Römisch-Germanisches Museum der Stadt Köln, 1998), Mainz 1998, 194, no. 135; U. Pappalardo – D. Borrelli, *La cultura teatrale antica: archeologia e letteratura*, Napoli 2007, no. 185 (colour ill.); N. de Chaisemartin, “Identifier les masques de comédie antiques: l’apport des décors architecturaux d’Aphrodisias de Carie”, in S. Basch – P. Chuvin (eds.), *Pitres et pantins. Transformations du masque comique: de l’Antiquité au théâtre d’ombres*, Paris 2007, 41, fig. 4; P. Minissale, “Le piante delle isole Eolie fonte di ispirazione, ieri per il pittore di Lipari, oggi per i giardini di Efesto e di Afrodite”, in M. A. Mastelloni (ed.), *Lipàra ed il teatro in età tardoclassica ed ellenistica*, Palermo 2015, 44, fig. 15.



Fig. 7. Terracotta mask of a young man, ca. 325–250 B.C. Lipari, Museo Archeologico Regionale Eoliano Luigi Bernabò Brea, inv. 12965.

she has not treated her face with white lead, as prostitutes are often reported to do in ancient sources.<sup>100</sup> Her lips are darkened, nevertheless, as if there had been an attempt to redden them. The fairly pale brown of the mask of the *xenos* is a standard treatment for older males. This remarkable treatment of the masks of the performers emphasises yet again the Varrese Painter's interest in detail, and more especially his engagement in representing theatrical performance. He was taking delight in conveying the occasion. This makes his reliability the more convincing. As noted above, no parallel is known for such a treatment of masks in red-figure vase-painting. The artist must have been conscious of colouring in the Gnathia

technique, and we may wonder if he himself practiced it.

How the vase came to be found in Armento, in the province of Potenza in the Basilicata, is a question that cannot be answered. There is no evidence on the discovery of the vase and no accompanying finds; it is unknown how it came to be carried away from Taranto in antiquity. Nevertheless, as Ted Robinson has pointed out, the elite among the native peoples of the region seem to have gone to some trouble to attend dramatic festivals, and presumably they would have had fluent enough Greek to appreciate the performances.<sup>101</sup> The krater cannot have been a cheap item.

100. See e.g. Alexis fr. 103.17–18; Eubulus fr. 97; *Anth. Pal.* 11.374; Alciphron 4.12; Plaut. *Most.* 258ff. Much has been written on whiteness and the use of white lead as women's cosmetics in antiquity. See especially B. M. Thomas, "Constraints and Contradictions: Whiteness and Femininity in Ancient Greece", in Llewellyn-Jones, *Women's Dress*, 1–16; E. Welcomme – P. Walter – E. Van Elslande – G. Tsoucaris, "Investigation of White Pigments Used as Make-Up during the Greco-Roman Period", *Applied Physics A: Materials, Science & Processing* 2006, 551–556; cf. F. Gherchanoc, "La carnation naturelle et 'jaunâtre' de Phryné. Du bon teint en Grèce ancienne", in V. Boudon-Millot – M. Pardon-Labonnelie (eds.), *Le teint de Phryné. Thérapeutique et cosmétique dans l'Antiquité*, Paris 2018, 181–196.

101. E. G. D. Robinson, "Reception of Comic Theatre amongst the Indigenous South Italians", *Mediterranean Archaeology* 17 (2004) 193–212.

## EPILOGUE: VIEWING CHARACTERS

The Varrese Painter deserves better recognition in modern scholarship.<sup>102</sup> He was an artist with keen powers of observation and alert to the nuances of dramatic characters. His rendering of the stage presentation of Alexis' comedy (if the hypothesis forwarded here is accepted) shows that Agonis was a bouncy, extrovert young woman — and probably well met in this respect by the young man. In looking at this artist's work, it is no exaggeration to say that his treatment both of the hetaira and of the young man is notably individual. He was at the same time fully capable, in both his routine and his more special pieces, of depicting young women as more refined, even winsome.

Green has written elsewhere about the tension between a vase-painter's normal practice and his attempts to depict what he thought he remembered from the stage.<sup>103</sup> In this case the Varrese Painter has spaced his three figures across the surface of the pot fairly evenly in what one might call a normal arrangement, if with some emphasis on the right of the scene. But the figures themselves, and especially the young man and the woman, are very different from his norm in clothing and form. They are very much influenced by what the painter had seen in the theatre. This aspect is emphasised by his seemingly unique colouring of the characters' masks to match those seen on stage. We are thus justified in interpreting the characterisation of Agonis in such a way as a reliable impression of what Alexis had created.

The textual fragments of Alexis' comedy corroborate this impression, as they indicate a lively and individual treatment of the characters in the play. The hetaira is not well represented in the fragments, but the young lover comes through with a set of colourful and graphic qualities. We sense in his words (fr. 2) the brio and audacity with which he carried out the cunning plan to dupe his rival. His attachment to his ladylove is evident in his enthusiastic effort to impress her with the description of his clever feats;

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102. Aside from the characterisation of this artist's work in Chapter 13 in A. D. Trendall – A. Cambitoglou, *The Red-Figured Vases of Apulia*, vol. I, Oxford 1978, in which some 160 items were attributed to him, there are some comments in A. D. Trendall, *Red Figure Vases of South Italy and Sicily. A Handbook*, London 1989, 83–84. Then, *inter alios*, see K. Schauenburg, “Der Varrese-maler in Kiel”, *JDAI* 106 (1991) 183–197; M. Denoyelle – M. Iozzo, *La céramique grecque d'Italie méridionale et de Sicile. Productions coloniales et apparentées du VIII<sup>e</sup> au III<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.*, Paris 2009, 144–145.

103. Green, “Comic Vases in South Italy”, 289–342.

this trait is well matched in the vase-painting, which highlights the young man's eagerness to please the hetaira with his gift. His ardour and passion are reflected also in the scenes of frenzy (fr. 3, 4), be it real or simulated. The range of artifices he seems to have employed for the success of his love affair (display of false wealth, intrigue involving an item of clothing, perhaps feigned madness) implies that he was a versatile and resourceful character. This is a rare phenomenon in the *adulescentes* of New Comedy, who are usually not endowed with great cleverness, are mystified and helpless in the face of difficulties, and need to rely on the assistance of some wily helper, such as a crafty slave or parasite. Fr. 2 also affords a glimpse into the character of the *xenos*, apparently a gullible personage who becomes a target of deception. The vase-painting supplements this sketch, showing the *xenos* as a worthless and downcast old man, probably a ridiculous *senex amator*.

Overall, the combination of textual and visual testimonia reveals how Alexis enlivened a trio of highly individualised and amusingly idiosyncratic characters on stage, and dexterously manipulated their interactions in the context of an enticing plot. Already around the middle of the fourth century or shortly afterwards, Alexis was developing consistent dramatic personalities and artfully handling an extensive gallery of comic personages. As observed indeed by Nesselrath, in a recent work already cited at the beginning of this article, "Alexis' most important contribution to comedy's further development may have lain in the area of character portrayal".<sup>104</sup> Alexis' lessons in this area would be well absorbed by Menander, in the next generation, who carried his master's heritage to a level of perfection unprecedented in the history of Greek comedy.

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104. Nesselrath, "Alexis", 38; cf. above, n. 8.