

## History from Comic Hypotheses: Stratocles, Lachares, and *P.Oxy.* 1235

*Lara O'Sullivan*

IN PERIODS for which accounts are critically lacking, even the most unpromising of material is pressed into service as historical evidence. This is certainly the case for Athenian history of the very late fourth and early third centuries B.C. These are years for which the narrative record of the city enters a stretch of almost total darkness, and the loss of, for example, Diodorus' account leaves us with only the sketchy outlines of an increasingly chaotic situation. We can for instance chart the fall from favour of King Demetrius Poliorcetes, whose rapturous welcome as a liberator in 307/6 gave way to a growing disenchantment with his arrogant and cavalier disregard for Athens' autonomy. Demetrius left the Greek mainland in late 302 to join his father, Antigonos Monophthalmus, in Asia Minor; there, at Ipsus, the Antigonids suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of a coalition of enemies in mid-summer 301. The defeat struck a death-blow to Antigonos, and a keen blow too to his son, who almost immediately found Athens declaring its neutrality and closing its gates against him. This much is spelled out by Plutarch (*Demetr.* 30.2–4), and inscriptions from Athens itself fall neatly into line with this picture. There the politician Stratocles, prominent as the most energetic and vociferous of Demetrius' Athenian promoters, makes an appearance as the author of a decree on 22 Metageitnion 301/0 (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 640); his name then disappears from the epigraphic records until 293/2 (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 649), after Athens had staged a rapprochement with the king. The close correspondence between the battle of Ipsus and Stratocles' disappearance from the inscriptional record confirms that Poliorcetes' supporters in Athens suffered a reverse in the wake of the

*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 49 (2009) 53–79

© 2009 GRBS

battle. At some time after this—and perhaps not long afterwards—Athens found itself in the hands of a tyrant called Lachares. Information about him is frustratingly lacking: Pausanias provides a few snippets, indicating a period of initial popularity followed by a seizure of power through the backing of Poliorcetes’ ardent rival Cassander, king of Macedon. The precise dating of Lachares’ reign is notoriously difficult, but its general parameters in the years after Ipsus appear confirmed by the fragmentary yet highly detailed chronographic treatise *P.Oxy.* XVII 2082 (= *FGrHist* 257a, sometimes attributed to Phlegon of Tralles).<sup>1</sup>

Into this sketchy but reasonably established historical framework intrudes an uncomfortably incongruous papyrus, *P.Oxy.* X 1235. Its text, identified plausibly if speculatively with the *Summaries of Menander’s Plays* (Περιοχὰι τῶν Μενάνδρου δραμάτων) of the second-century A.D. writer Homerus Sellius, contains information about two plays by Menander.<sup>2</sup> It is the material about the second of these, Menander’s *Imbrians*, that is pertinent here, for lines 105–112 contain what purports to be information about the historical circumstances of the play’s performance:<sup>3</sup>

ταύτην [ἔγρα]-  
ψεν ἐπὶ Νικοκλέο[υς ἔκ]-

<sup>1</sup> On these events see particularly W. S. Ferguson, “Lachares and Demetrius Poliorcetes,” *CP* 24 (1929) 1–31; M. J. Osborne, *Naturalization in Athens* II (Brussels 1982) 144–153; Chr. Habicht, *Athen: Die Geschichte der Stadt in hellenistischer Zeit* (Munich 1995) 87 ff.; B. Dreyer, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des spätclassischen Athen* (*Historia Einzelschr.* 137 [1999]) 49 ff. On Lachares in general, H. Berve, *Die Tyrannis bei den Griechen* (Munich 1967) 387–389, 707–708.

<sup>2</sup> G. Zuntz, *The Political Plays of Euripides* (Manchester 1955) 138; H. D. Jocelyn, “The Fate of Varius’ *Thyestes*,” *CQ* 30 (1980) 387–400, at 390 n.21.

<sup>3</sup> With supplements suggested by M. Gronewald, “Bemerkungen zur Menander,” *ZPE* 93 (1992) 17–23, at 20–21. In his publication of the papyrus, Hunt had given τύραννο[ν] in 110; for another possibility, see W. Luppe, “Nochmals zur *Imbrioi*-Didaskalie,” *ZPE* 96 (1993) 9–10 (on which see below, 76). See also Kassel-Austin, *PCG* VI.2 p.140. The restoration of Callippus as the actor is reasonably sure: he may be the Callippus known from the 307/6 agonothetic monument of Xenocles (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 3073).

την καὶ ἑβδομηκοστ[ήν· ἕξι]-  
 ἔδωκεν εἰς ἐργασίαν [εἰς]  
 Διονύσια, οὐκ ἐγένετο δ[ὲ διὰ]  
 Λαχάρην τὸν τυραννή[σαν]-  
 τα· ὑπεκρίνετο Κάλ[λιπ]-  
 πος Ἀθηναῖος.

He [i.e. Menander] wrote this, his 7[6?]th play, in the archonship of Nicocles. He produced it for performance at the Dionysia, but it did not take place because Lachares had become tyrant. Callippus the Athenian was the actor.

These lines raise a number of problems, of which some concern the performance itself. How did the compiler of this information know that *Imbrians* was to be performed for a festival that did not take place? Does its mention of the actor, Callippus, signal that the play was eventually performed (perhaps in a later year)?<sup>4</sup> Another question, and one that has garnered more attention in the scholarship, concerns the historical implications of the apparent claim that the Dionysia of 302/1 did not happen “because of Lachares.” This implication of disturbances by Lachares sits rather ill with our other indications about that year. Demetrius Poliorcetes is known to have had Athens still in his sway at this time, and it is scarcely credible, in this context, that Lachares could have established himself as tyrant as early as the Dionysia of spring 301. Various solutions to the dilemma have been proposed, none of them satis-

<sup>4</sup> It is tempting to understand the imperfect ὑπεκρίνετο in some kind of conative or inceptive sense and to translate “Callippus was going to be the actor,” thereby resolving the apparent incongruity that arises from the stated cancellation of the Dionysia. It is more likely, however, that the imperfect simply echoes the imperfect tenses employed on Athenian didascalical inscriptions (cf. below, n.12), even though these did sometimes undergo modification in the literary hypotheses to become aorist: thus the hypotheses assembled by H. J. Mette, *Urkunden dramatischer Aufführungen in Griechenland* (Berlin/New York 1977) 153–158, with esp. Hypoth. 3 Ar. *Pax* at end, and *P.Bodm.* IV for ὑπεκρίνατο. Perhaps the *Imbrians* received a performance after the 302/1 Dionysia, with Callippus acting; if so, it must be assumed that the compiler of the *P.Oxy.* 1235 hypothesis has omitted the circumstances of the successful staging.

factory.<sup>5</sup> The solution given tacit approval by most is that first argued by Ferguson in 1929. Noting that the papyrus technically states that *Imbrians* was *written* in the archonship of Nicocles, he proposed that the performance was slated for the Dionysia of the next year (thus 301/0), and that it was this next festival that Lachares disrupted.<sup>6</sup> This is indeed a context in which Lachares may be more comfortably accommodated as a major political player,<sup>7</sup> but such an interpretation is scarcely credible. Are we really to believe that our ancient scholar saw fit to record the date in which a play was merely written? Where—and why—would such detail have been preserved, and of what interest could it possibly have been? Preservation of a date of a play's composition, as distinct from its performance, is (to my knowledge) unparalleled; it seems a much more natural interpretation to take the archon date as a reference to the date of the intended performance, and Ferguson's suggestion would surely not have been ventured, let alone approved, were it not for the historical difficulties around Lachares. Another approach worthy of mention is that of Wilamowitz, who suggested the correction of the name of the archon, Nicocles, to that of a later and similarly named archon such as Nicias (296/5) in whose year Lachares probably was in power.<sup>8</sup>

What all these approaches have failed to take into sufficient account, in all the effort to manufacture a suitable context for

<sup>5</sup> The least economical solution suggests a brief period of tyranny by Lachares in 302/1, with a similarly brief reassertion of supremacy by Stratocles in 301 before Lachares' more prolonged spell as tyrant after Ipsus: A. C. Johnson, "Studies in the Financial Administration of Athens," *AJP* 36 (1915) 424–452, at 434 n.1.

<sup>6</sup> See esp. Ferguson, *CP* 24 (1929) 12–14.

<sup>7</sup> P. Green, *From Alexander to Actium* (Berkeley 1988) 124 n.35; also Habicht, *Athen* 90, "es muß sich um die Dionysien des Jahres 300 handeln, da an denen des Vorjahres und noch etwa sechs Monate danach Stratocles noch die beherrschende Figur der Politik war." We might still on this understanding need to take Lachares' "tyranny" as proleptic, in order to accommodate the period of popular rule that Pausanias ascribes him before his tyranny proper. Cf. Dreyer, *Geschichte* 47.

<sup>8</sup> Wilamowitz, cited by Johnson, *AJP* 36 (1915) 434 n.1.

Lachares, is the genre of the material in *P.Oxy.* 1235. The papyrus preserves typical didascalical notes of a sort that, after the model established by the great Alexandrian scholar Aristophanes of Byzantium, became the standard learned apparatus for texts of Greek drama. The codex containing Menander's *Dyscolus* preserves similar information, where it is attributed (not all of it plausibly<sup>9</sup>) to Aristophanes of Byzantium himself. Thus *P.Bodm.* IV 13–15:

ἔδιδάξεν εἰς Λήναια ἐπὶ Δημογένους ἄρχοντος] καὶ ἐνίκα.  
ὑπεκρίνατο Ἀριστόδημος Σκαρφεύς. ἀντεπιγράφετ[αι] Μισάν-  
θρωπος.

He [i.e. Menander] produced it at the Lenaea in the archonship of Demogenes, and was victorious. Aristodemus of Scarphe acted. It is alternatively entitled *Misanthrope*.

The material in *P.Oxy.* 1235, although unlikely to be the product of the same author as that of *P.Bodm.*,<sup>10</sup> belongs in this same scholarly tradition. Along with the didascalical information about the production of Menander's *Imbrians* it contains a synopsis of the plot (lines 113–121), and it may well come from a compendium of hypotheses for Menander's (complete?) oeuvre ranged in alphabetical order, since our papyrus preserves a part of a hypothesis for Menander's *Hierai* immediately before the material on the *Imbrians*.

The key question is the reliability of the material produced by the compilers of such literary hypotheses, and the answer is not at all uniform. Some data will have been available through the official Athenian epigraphic records (notably *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 2318, the *didascaliae* 2319–2323,<sup>11</sup> 2325, and also the inscriptions

<sup>9</sup> E. W. Handley, *The Dyskolos of Menander* (London 1965) 121–124.

<sup>10</sup> The synopsis of *P.Bodm.* is verse, of *P.Oxy.* 1235, prose. As the *Suda* entry on Homerus Sellius lists his Menandran summaries among his prose works (with the relevant part of the *Suda* list headed *καταλογάδιον*), it is more apt to associate him with *P.Oxy.* 1235 than with *P.Bodm.* IV—if indeed he is to be associated at all with either.

<sup>11</sup> These may be based upon Aristotle's work *Didascaliae* (itself based on archon records) and supplemented with information for the years after the publication of that work: see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968) 81.

erected by individual officials such as 3073). Part of the didascalical information of our papyrus may have been drawn from such a reputable source, as the language of line 109 strikingly echoes that found throughout *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2323*. This portion of the Attic didascalical inscriptions records information about comedies only, and it lists a number of years during the second century B.C. in which no comedies were produced. A single line suffices for the archon-year 169/8, for example, for in that year the competition (of comedies at least) did not happen (οὐκ ἐγένετο). The entry formula οὐκ ἐγένετο used for this year is repeated, with varying levels of restoration, for a number of archon-years in the second century (see 2323.221–222, for years 164/3 and 162/1, and 2323.230–231, for 157/6 and 156/5). This is clearly the standard phraseology of the official records, and when we find the same phrase employed in *P.Oxy.* 1235.109, it is tempting to assume that reflected here is the origin of this part of the report in the didascalical record.<sup>12</sup> Such comparison of the papyrus with the didascalical inscriptions urges two further observations. First, these inscriptions indicate that archon years preserved in literary hypotheses should not be dismissed too lightly, for it was under archon headings that much of the didascalical material was organised (thus for example in *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2319–2323*);<sup>13</sup> Wilamowitz's ready emendation of the archon-date given in *P.Oxy.* 1235.106 must be regarded with suspicion.<sup>14</sup> What the inscriptions do *not* contain,

<sup>12</sup> The naming of Callippus may also derive from a didascalical inscription, for the terminology of *P.Oxy.* 1235.111–112 ὑπεκρίνετο Κάλ[ιπ]πος Ἀθηναῖος recalls that of the didascalical records, where ὑπεκρίνετο + actor's name is completely standard (cf. the didascalical use of the imperfects ἐχορήγει and ἐδίδασκε for the activities of the *choregos* and the producer).

<sup>13</sup> For preferring dates given in the scholia over the substance of the explanatory material compare S. Halliwell, "Comic Satire and Freedom of Speech in Classical Athens," *JHS* 111 (1991) 48–70, at 57–59, 64, and R. W. Wallace, "Law, Attic Comedy and the Regulation of Comic Speech," in M. Gagarin and D. Cohen (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Law* (Cambridge 2005) 357–373, at 362–363 on schol. *Ar. Ach.* 67.

<sup>14</sup> Wilamowitz's down-dating of the non-performance of *Imbrians* is further complicated by the difficulties this would impose on Menander's output in the last years of the poet's life. Menander died in 292/1, and is credited

on the other hand, is much by way of explanatory material or extraneous historical detail. In no instance is the entry οὐκ ἐγένετο in *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2323* accompanied by any historical data. This permits our second conclusion, namely that the historical cause offered in line 110 of the papyrus probably does not come from an official source, and that the ascription to Lachares of the festival disruption of 302/1 should thus be treated with caution. One might, indeed, go further and note that some of the historical explanation offered in the papyrus is couched in language that clearly does not derive from the official records: the claim that Menander brought [his *Imbrians*] εἰς ἐργασίαν introduces a use of ἐργασία for a dramatic production that is not found in official parlance, and seems in fact to be unprecedented.

What we seem, then, to be dealing with in *P.Oxy.* 1235.109–112 is the fleshing out of the bare bones afforded by the official record by the literary scholars of Alexandria and their successors. The means by which these early scholars sought to supplement their records do not in general encourage confidence. The scrutiny of the texts of plays themselves for any hint of something that could be fashioned into an historical fact is known to have been a common solution. On rare occasions, this approach may have been fruitful,<sup>15</sup> but we may doubt that any reliable statement about Lachares and the suspension of the 302/1 Dionysia was made by Menander himself in the

---

with over one hundred plays (Menander test. 1, 3, 46, 63 K.-A.); if *Imbrians* was (at the latest) his 79<sup>th</sup> (depending on restoration of *P.Oxy.* 1235.106), his last years will have been terribly busy!

<sup>15</sup> Aristophanes seems to be making autobiographical allusions in the parabasis of his *Acharnians*, where (at 630–631) there is mention of accusations against the poet for insulting the city and the *demos*; the resulting claim at schol. Ar. *Ach.* 378 that Aristophanes (or his producer, Callistratus: see schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 1284e) had been taken to task by Cleon over the inflammatory play *Babylonians* from the previous year may well be correct. More controversial is the extent to which the claims made by the character Dicaeopolis at 377–378, 502–503, should be understood as applying to the poet himself. See H. P. Foley, “Tragedy and Politics in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*,” *JHS* 108 (1988) 33–47; E. L. Bowie, “Who is Dicaeopolis?” *JHS* 108 (1988) 183–185.

*Imbrians*. As far as the extant fragments of his works indicate, Menander does not seem to have indulged in the kind of explicit authorial intrusion in his plays that might (in for example the prologue of a restaged version of the play) have made the circumstances of the play's (initial?) non-performance clear; he offers nothing to match the historical detail found in the prologue of Terence's *Hecyra*, from which the audience learns that there had been two abortive attempts to stage the play before its eventual successful staging.<sup>16</sup> Scholars' use of plays as the source of historical detail more often than not produced absurdities (as when the scholiasts declare Aristophanes to have been an Egyptian on the basis of his mention of the Nile in *Clouds* 272!), and in confronting Lachares' alleged disruption of the Dionysia we may be dealing with a similarly insecure inference from a dramatic text.

The need for caution is underlined still further by Stephen Halliwell's work on the question of political and legal censorship of Athenian comedy. Halliwell observed that explicit evidence for laws curtailing comic freedom of speech is almost entirely confined to the scholiasts, and he was able to show that much of the scholiasts' belief in the regulation of comedy is not based in historical fact, but is rather a by-product of Hellenistic literary speculation which favoured political explanations for cultural phenomena.<sup>17</sup> In their survey of Athenian drama

<sup>16</sup> On the circumstances of the two disrupted *Hecyra* performances, see F. H. Sandbach, "How Terence's *Hecyra* Failed," *CQ* 32 (1982) 134–135, and H. N. Parker, "Plautus vs. Terence: Audience and Popularity Re-examined," *AJP* 117 (1996) 585–617. Terence's lines refer very clearly to his own experiences, and are not adapted from the Greek model on which *Hecyra* was based.

<sup>17</sup> Halliwell, *JHS* 111 (1991), esp. 63–64. The most plausibly attested instance of comic regulation remains a restriction imposed during the crisis years of the Samian war, 440/439–437/6, although its formulation as a general prohibition on comedy as given by the schol. Ar. *Ach.* 67 must be wrong: see Wallace, in *Cambridge Companion* 362. A restriction imposed in the aftermath of the mutilation of the Herms (on which see schol. Ar. *Av.* 1297, cf. Phrynichus fr.27 K.-A.) remains a remote possibility, its historicity accepted by J. Henderson, "The *demos* and the Comic Competition," in J. J. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin (eds.), *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?* (Princeton 1990) 271–313, at 289, but questioned by Halliwell 59–63.



across the fifth to third centuries, Hellenistic scholars were confronted with obvious changes in the genre: the intense topicality and pointed political content of Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Eupolis in the fifth century had given way to the more universal and restrained theatre of Menander. Recourse to putative legislative restraints offered a way to explain the trend, a way more satisfyingly concrete than an appeal to a vague notion about changing tastes. This preference for political explanations can be followed into the traditions around the cultural changes of the Hellenistic period itself: witness the claims that the stylistic changes in Attic oratory (changes later perceived as a “decline” in the genre) were caused by Athens’ subjugation by Macedon, or, again, that the increasingly distorted faces on dramatic masks were the product of a fear that Macedonian monarchs would recognise their own faces in the masks and take offense.<sup>18</sup>

An entry in the *didascaliae* showing that the competition for comedy in 302/1 did not happen may have attracted just such an easily formulated political explanation from the literary scholars, scholars predisposed to perceive direct political interference in the workings of comic theatre. It is, in fact, rather doubtful that other apparent disturbances in the festival proceedings are to be understood in directly political terms; there is no immediately obvious political disruption to account for the many years in the second century B.C. for which the *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2323* records of the competition for comedies οὐκ ἐγένετο. The reasons for the failure to hold a competition (for comedies at least) in all the years thus listed are, in fact, entirely unclear. Poor weather conditions might impede the festival (and indeed Plutarch attests to a cancellation of the Dionysiac *pompe* because of an unseasonable cold snap during the period of Polior-

<sup>18</sup> Oratory: see Demetrius of Phalerum frs.121, 122, 125 in W. W. Fortenbaugh and E. Schütrumpf, *Demetrius of Phalerum* (New Brunswick/London 2000). On comic masks: Platonius *On the Differences of the Comedies*, in W. Koster, *Scholia in Aristophanem* I.1 (Groningen 1975) I.59–63 (pp.5–6). The latter is curiously reminiscent of *Ar. Eq.* 230–232, where Aristophanes claims—surely in jocular fashion—that the mask makers were too scared to make a Cleon-esque mask.

cetes' domination of Athens: *Demetr.* 12.4), but inclement weather seems more likely to have delayed than entirely derailed the dramatic contests.<sup>19</sup> Financial problems may have been a factor. So too perhaps may have been the competing demand for performers exercised by more prestigious events, particularly in an age of ever more festivals and of increasing mobility among elite actors;<sup>20</sup> pressures of supply seem to have prompted the cities of Euboea to regulate their festival organisation in the third century (*IG XII.9* 207). In this connection, it may be pertinent that at about the very time of the Athenian festival disruption (302/1), Antigonus Monophthalmus was organising a great festival, complete with athletic and dramatic competitions, to inaugurate his new capital of Antigoneia-on-the-Orontes. Diodorus (20.108.1) reveals explicitly that Antigonus had gathered from all around the most renowned athletes and actors; we might well imagine that the actor Callippus—the man noted on *P.Oxy.* 1235.111–112 as the (eventual?) performer of Menander's *Imbrians*—could have been among them, for he was an actor of some note.<sup>21</sup> Antigonus' festival was never to take place, for the looming clash with the coalition of Lysimachus, Cassander, and Ptolemy prompted him to disband the assembled competitors; but the attested scale of his compensation for the disappointed performers at “not less than

<sup>19</sup> Intercalations in the Attic month of Elaphebolion are not uncommon, and may reflect postponements made to accommodate the Dionysia in cases of (for example) bad weather. See B. D. Meritt, *The Athenian Year* (Berkeley 1961) esp. 147–150, 161–165, 208. Meritt himself suggested that the unseasonal cold spell that disrupted the Dionysiac *pompe* while Poliorcetes was in power (cf. also Philippides fr.25.4, quoted below) occurred in 307/6 and is evident in the calendrical manipulations of that year: B. D. Meritt, “The Seventh Metonic Cycle,” *Hesperia* 5 (1936) 201–205, at 205.

<sup>20</sup> The increasing professionalisation of the actor's craft and the growing trend for actors to travel widely for performances across the Greek world led to the creation of guilds of actors, attested first in the third century. See A. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1988) 279–321, with *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 460 and *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1132.

<sup>21</sup> His Athenian victories are recorded by *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 2323a (Dionysia), 2325.200 (four victories at the Lenaea, one of which belongs to 307/6, cf. *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 3073).

two hundred talents” gives some idea of the enticements that could have induced the best actors and playwrights of the Greek world to offer their services to Antigonos instead of Athens. The wealth of the Macedonian court had been creating an international demand for elite performers for some time: Alexander enticed “the most famous performers and artists” from Greece for his games at Memphis in 332,<sup>22</sup> while the Athenian actor Athenodorus was fined for missing Athens’ Great Dionysia in order to compete at a festival held by Alexander in Tyre in 331 (Plut. *Alex.* 29.1). Any number of such reasons may explain the lack of the competition in comedies in 302/1, and we might do well to remain suspicious of the Hellenistic scholar’s propensity to resort to political explanations whenever his sources fell silent. “Because of the tyrant Lachares” would be a solution easily concocted by a scholar who was not painstaking enough to check his dates thoroughly, and who thus did not notice that this particular tyrant did not quite fit this particular playbill.

The historical record allows us, on rare occasions, to trace the development of the scholars’ politicising and legalistic inferences with some precision. This seems to be the case for claims that appear in the scholia in connection with Cleon’s accusations against Aristophanes (or his producer, Callistratus) in 425. The evidence of Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* prompted scholars not only to comment on Cleon’s (possible) “indictment” of the poet,<sup>23</sup> but also to posit a series of legal restrictions on comedy in the wake of *Babylonians*, the latter almost certainly without historical justification. Thus the scholiast on Ael. Arist. 3.8 L.-B. claims that a law was passed against named ridicule (ὄνομαστί κωμωδεῖν, III 444 D.), a claim perhaps encouraged, as Halliwell notes,<sup>24</sup> by Ar. *Eq.* 230–233. More seriously, the scholiast on Ar. *Vesp.* 1291 imagines—surely on the basis only of *Ach.* 502–505<sup>25</sup>—that Cleon moved a decree

<sup>22</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 3.1. Some 3000 artists and athletes were summoned for Hephæstion’s funeral games: 7.14.10.

<sup>23</sup> Schol. Ar. *Ach.* 378, schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 1284e, with n.15 above.

<sup>24</sup> Halliwell, *JHS* 111 (1991) 56.

<sup>25</sup> Halliwell, *JHS* 111 (1991) 56, condemns the scholiastic record as

banning comedy outright. Both scholia demonstrate the tendency for dramatic texts themselves to provide the basis for historical fabrications, and reveal further the degree to which a personal dispute, in this instance between a politician (Cleon) and a poet (Aristophanes), could be magnified into legislative activity against comedy as a whole in the later tradition.

The paradigm offered by *Acharnians* and the related scholia is significant, because it may provide a model on which may be reconstructed the evolution of the claim made in *P.Oxy.* 1235 about the Dionysia of 302/1. It will, indeed, be suggested below that the impetus for the political “explanation” of the disruption of 302/1 came from a play, and that the historical events at the core of our problem may have been a personal clash between poet and politician, one no more substantial than that between Cleon and his poetic nemesis. The pertinent material comes in a fragment from an unnamed play by Menander’s contemporary Philippides. Thus Philippides fr.25 K.-A., where the targets of the lines are Poliorcetes and more particularly Stratocles, the main advocate of Poliorcetes’ affairs in Athens:<sup>26</sup>

ὁ τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν συντεμῶν εἰς μῆν ἕνα,  
ὁ τὴν ἀκρόπολιν πανδοκεῖον ὑπολαβὼν  
καὶ τὰς ἑταίρας εἰσαγαγὼν τῇ παρθένῳ  
δι’ ὃν ἀπέκαυσεν ἢ πάχνη τὰς ἀμπέλους  
δι’ ὃν ἀσεβοῦνθ’ ὁ πέπλος ἐρράγη μέσος  
τὰς τῶν θεῶν τιμὰς ποιοῦντ’ ἀνθρωπίνας·  
ταῦτα καταλύει δῆμον, οὐ κωμῳδία.<sup>27</sup>

who compressed the entire year into one month,  
who took the Parthenon for an inn,  
and introduced his courtesans to the goddess;  
on account of him the frost blasted the vines,

“naively elaborated” from the given lines of *Acharnians*.

<sup>26</sup> Plutarch preserves these lines in two separate portions: lines 1–3 at *Demetr.* 26.5, lines 4–7 at 12.7. Their union was posited first by Meineke: see Kassel and Austin ad loc.

<sup>27</sup> One codex of Plutarch (**K**) gives the reading κωμῳδία in the final line, but κωμῳδία (given by **P** and **Lr**) is perhaps to be preferred. For discussion of variant restorations of the passage see I. Gallo, “Note a Filippide comico,” *Sileno* 10 (1984) 225–236, at 227–228.

because of his impiety the *peplos* was torn in two,  
 for he gave the honours of the gods to men.  
 These things, not (a?) comedy, overthrow the *demos*.

Stratocles is here lambasted for his obsequious service to Poliorcetes. The compression of a year into a month alludes to Stratocles' notorious twofold renaming of the Attic month Mounychion so that Demetrius could be "legally" initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries at a single hit; the introduction of courtesans to the virgin goddess to his housing of Poliorcetes in the Parthenon and the ensuing use of that venue for allegedly wild parties; the rending of the peplos to the tearing of the Panathenaic robe, apparently as a sign of divine displeasure, after the figures of Demetrius and his father had been woven into the design. Poliorcetes' irregular initiation into the Mysteries had taken place in Mounychion 303/2, and the tearing of the Panathenaic robe most probably took place at the Panathenaia of Hekatombaion 302;<sup>28</sup> these references serve to locate Philippides' play after 302, but a more precise dating of the production has proved elusive.<sup>29</sup> A decree later passed in Philippides' honour reveals that he had quit Athens, and made contact with Lysimachus in Thrace, before the battle of Ipsus in mid-301, so if Philippides presented his play in person, it may have been performed in 302/1. A performance in the very year whose Dionysia *P.Oxy.* 1235.105–112 would have us cancel is thus a possibility, but one that does not disprove the testimony of *P.Oxy.* 1235: the play may have been offered at the Lenaea rather than the Dionysia.<sup>30</sup> A much later performance date, after Philippides' return to Athens following the final ouster of Poliorcetes, is another possibility, and it may be rele-

<sup>28</sup> For the Panathenaic date: Dittenberger, *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 374 n.6; T. L. Shear, *Kallias of Sphettos and the Revolt of Athens in 286 B.C.* (*Hesperia* Suppl. 17 [1978]) 36 n.89.

<sup>29</sup> Contrast the conclusions urged by W. S. Ferguson, *Hellenistic Athens* (London 1911) 123; Gallo, *Sileno* 10 (1984) 231–232; G. B. Philipp, "Philippides, ein politischer Komiker in hellenistischer Zeit," *Gymnasium* 80 (1973) 493–509, at 506; A. Mastrocinque, "Demetrius tragodoumenos," *Athenaeum* 67 (1979) 260–276, at 265.

<sup>30</sup> Philippides competed at both festivals: see Philipp. test. 7, 8, 9 K.-A.

vant that Philippides assumed the duties of festival organisation as *agonothetes* in 284/3 (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 657.38–50). The resonances between the abuses that Philippides credits to Stratocles and the gifts of grain and a new Panathenaic mast that the poet himself encouraged Lysimachus to bestow on Athens in 299/8 (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 657.9–16)—benefactions for which Philippides himself was honoured by Athens in 283/2—may have made Philippides’ recollection of Stratocles’ early impieties pertinent for his own interests, even at a later date. It may not even be necessary to confine the play’s performance to the times when Philippides himself was present in Athens.<sup>31</sup>

The uncertainties that beset the dating of Philippides’ play do not detract from the fact that the passage excerpted by Plutarch is concerned with the political improprieties of Stratocles in the closing years of the fourth century, and the last line of the fragment may have a bearing on the “historical information” that finds its way into *P.Oxy.* 1235. Having catalogued Stratocles’ most heinous crimes, Philippides’ speaker asserts that it is these actions, not a comedy, that destroy the people (*ταῦτα καταλύει δῆμον, οὐ κωμῳδία*). It is tempting to wonder whether the implication here that comedy might be deemed destructive of the democracy may have some bearing on the later tradition found in *P.Oxy.* 1235.109–111 that a tyrant caused the suspension of the Dionysiac comedy competition. The relationship of this line to the preceding litany of Stratocles’ abuses is not immediately obvious, but it seems unlikely that it ought be read merely as an allusion to some general notion that comedy, with its sometimes scurrilous attacks on politicians and institutions, could be a dangerous political de-

<sup>31</sup> The presence of the playwright was not, it seems, an absolute necessity. The deaths of Sophocles and of Euripides did not prevent posthumous performances of the *Oedipus Colonus* and the *Bacchae* respectively: see Radt, *TrGF* IV test. 41; Kannicht, *TrGF* V.1 test. 3.5. In the comic sphere, one might note too that Aristophanes’ plays were often produced by others (see the convenient list of plays and producers in K. Dover, *Aristophanes Frogs* [Oxford 1993] 1–2); the distinction indicates that an individual other than the writer could take charge of the staging of a play, and suggests that the absence of the playwright might not necessarily preclude production.

vice capable of overthrowing the *demos*.<sup>32</sup> Any such gesture would be disappointingly vague, and no match for the pointed critique of Stratocles' specific acts that fills the other lines of the fragment. Linguistic considerations too urge a more specific understanding, for the lack of a definite article with κωμῳδία would seem to suggest that a particular comedy, rather than the genre as a whole, is in question.<sup>33</sup> Read thus, in conjunction with the lines that accompany it, the final line seems to imply that Stratocles had charged a comedy with being a threat to democracy, thereby eliciting from Philippides the retort that it was, on the contrary, the acts of Stratocles (ταῦτα) that posed the real threat.

This fragment from Philippides might, on this basis, serve as

<sup>32</sup> Moreover the prevalence of a notion that comedy was a *threat* to democracy is itself hard to establish. Old comedy certainly ridiculed democratic institutions (notably lawcourts and assemblies) and democratic politicians (one need think only of the fun Aristophanes has with Cleon), but this does not make comedy itself a subversive mechanism; on the contrary, the comic ridicule itself is framed as advice to the city—see for example Cratinus fr.52 K.-A., Ar. *Ach.* 641–651. Indeed, comedy may be seen as integral to democratic praxis, as Henderson, in *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?* 271–313, argues, and the Old Oligarch (2.18) complains (albeit not entirely plausibly) that comedy is a tool of the democracy against the wellborn. Legislative limitation of comic freedom seems to have been rare, and associated with defamatory attacks on individuals rather than with attacks on democracy *per se*: see Halliwell, *JHS* 111 (1991) 48–70; Wallace, in *Cambridge Companion* 358–368. The closest parallel for the suggestion that comedy might harm the city comes from Cleon's attack on Aristophanes' *Babylonians*, on which see below.

<sup>33</sup> For ἡ κωμῳδία as the genre, see for example *Suda* s.v. "Epicharmus" (E 2766); similarly ἡ τραγῳδία for the "art of tragedy" at Ar. *Ach.* 464–465, to which S. D. Olson, *Aristophanes Acharnians* (Oxford 2002) 194, compares *Ran.* 95 and 798. Ar. *Vesp.* 66 seems to use κωμῳδία without the article for a single comedy rather than for the genre; cf. the usage of τραγῳδία without the article at *Ach.* 499 (surely here "a comedy" rather than "the genre comedy," and perhaps likewise at *Ach.* 500). Again, if restored correctly, Eupolis fr.96 γράφ[ειν] κωμῳδίαν (without the article) is surely to be understood as "a comedy"; while I. C. Storey, *Eupolis, Poet of Old Comedy* (Oxford/New York 2003) 65, interprets it as the genre, the context of the passage (on which see Storey 231–233) hints rather that the passage concerns Eupolis' writing of a particular comedy, his *Prospaltioi*.

evidence of a contretemps between Stratocles and a comic poet; the temporal context of the dramatic lines would suggest that the clash may have taken place in the late 300s. The poet involved in the clash may have been Philippides himself, who may even have brought Stratocles as a character onto his stage just as Aristophanes did with Cleon. This seems to be the implication of the brief Philippides fr.26:<sup>34</sup>

ἀποστρεφομένης τὴν κορυφὴν φιλεῖς μόλις

You barely get to kiss her head as she turns away.

Quoting this as an illustration of the man driven by lust to endure an unloving woman, Plutarch (*Mor.* 750E–F) claims that Philippides wrote this line about Stratocles. Certainly, Philippides felt sufficiently alienated from Stratocles’ regime to prefer exile in Thrace to life in Athens. Traces of antagonism between other unnamed comic poets and Stratocles’ political master, Demetrius Poliorcetes, suggest however that we need not confine our thinking to Philippides alone. In addition to the direct assault launched by Philippides on Stratocles himself,<sup>35</sup> one might recall that an unnamed comic poet called the hetaira Lamia the “true city-taker” (Ἐλέπολις ἀληθῶς) after her ruinous expenditure of Athenian money on a banquet for her regal lover (Plut. *Demetr.* 27.4). Apart from playing upon the name given to Poliorcetes’ infamous siege engines and matching that king’s own sobriquet,<sup>36</sup> the naming of Lamia as Ἐλέπολις is surely intended also to recall two earlier applications of this word to women in tragedy—Aeschylus’ description of Helen as ἐλένας, ἔλανδρος, ἐλέπολις (*Ag.* 689–690), and Euripides’ labelling of Iphigenia as Φρυγῶν ἐλέπολις (*IA* 1476, cf. 1511);

<sup>34</sup> Meineke (II 1122), cited also by Kassel and Austin, suggested φιλεῖ in place of φιλεῖς, but noted too the possibility that Stratocles was represented on stage; on the latter see also Philipp, *Gymnasium* 80 (1973) 505–506.

<sup>35</sup> S. Lape, *Reproducing Athens: Menander’s Comedy, Democratic Culture and the Hellenistic City* (Princeton 2004) 59, writes that the Philippidean line “may indicate that either Demetrius’ abuses or the fawning and sycophantic behavior of Athenian politicians toward him had been previous targets of comic abuse.”

<sup>36</sup> Siege engines: Diod. 20.48; Plut. *Demetr.* 21.1; Philo *Bel.* 95.39; Vitruv. 10.16.4. Alciphron *Ep.* 3.45.



our unknown poet's emphatic description of Lamia as the *true* (ἀληθῶς) city-taker may perhaps be intended to distinguish her from her mythical stage predecessors, thereby showing her to be a much more calamitous proposition for the hapless Athens which, so the comic poet implies, is to be a second Troy.

Plutarch further allows us to glimpse the resonance between jokes emanating from the comic stage and witticisms made by Poliorcetes' detractors in other public fora, for he follows the comic snippet thus:

Δημοχάρης δ' ὁ Σόλιος τὸν Δημήτριον αὐτὸν ἐκάλει Μῦθον· εἶναι γὰρ αὐτῷ καὶ Λάμιαν.

Demochares of Soli called Demetrius himself *Mythos*. For he too had a Lamia.

Like the comic poet's jibe, this witticism—which is perhaps to be attributed to Stratocles' most energetic of political opponents, Demochares (on whom see below)<sup>37</sup>—alludes to Lamia's extravagant banquet, and plays upon the nursery-tale image of the “all devouring” Lamia: as siege-machine or mythical monster, Lamia was a dire threat to Athens, according to poet and Demochares alike. Even Menander may have played with this idea, if the association of sieges with an *auletris* in *Perikeiromene* 482–484 is indeed intended to elicit thoughts of Lamia.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> There is obviously something wrong with the name as given by Plutarch, for no Demochares of Soli is otherwise known and it seems likely that Demochares of Leuconoe is meant. One may perhaps speculate that Demochares' *bon mot* was preserved by his contemporary, Clearchus of Soli; the latter's *Erotika*, with its anecdotes about statesmen and courtesans (frs.21–35 Wehrli), would furnish an ideal vehicle for the preservation of this witticism.

<sup>38</sup> M. D. Dixon, “Menander's *Perikeiromene* and Demetrius Poliorcetes,” *CB* 81 (2005) 131–143, at 133–134. While on Menander, it should be noted that the political complexion of Menander's *Imbrians*, the play whose performance was allegedly curtailed in 302/1, is impossible to assess. While the title might conceivably be suggestive of a political dimension (Dreyer, *Geschichte* 48 n.138)—all the more so if Athens' control of Imbros (granted by the Antigonids in 307/6; Diod. 20.46.4, cf. *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1492.133) had been threatened under the terms of the pact negotiated by Poliorcetes and Cassander in late 302—the few remaining lines of its synopsis in *P.Oxy.* 1235.14–21 do little to sustain any overtly political interpretation. Beyond this, it is worth noting that Menander is linked in the anecdotal tradition to Poliorcetes' adversary, Demetrius of Phalerum, although such personal as-

Beyond Athens, Poliorcetes' adversary Lysimachus evoked the stage-world when he said of this same Lamia that he had never before seen a prostitute coming forward to play a tragic part (Plut. *Demetr.* 25.9); given Lysimachus' close and long-standing association with the comic poet Philippides, it is tempting to wonder whether the witticism had its origins on the Attic stage.<sup>39</sup> Theatrical criticism of the Antigonids may have been widespread, although tantalising titles are often the only evidence.<sup>40</sup> It need not have been confined, as is sometimes claimed,<sup>41</sup> to gentle teasing during the earliest years of Poliorcetes' interaction with the city, thus to 307–304 B.C. when the relationship was a generally positive one; nor should we assume too readily that other treatments of Demetrius on the comic stage, such as the appearance in Alexis' *Crateia* of a character drinking the health of Antigonus and Demetrius (Alexis fr.116 K.-A.), were always necessarily complimentary toward the Macedonian king, for we lack the context or any appreciation of the character who offers the toast.<sup>42</sup> It seems

---

sociations need not, of course, be reflected in his plays, and the friendship does not seem to have prevented Menander from alluding on stage to some of Demetrius of Phalerum's innovations (thus Men. fr.208 K.-A., where however the attitude of the speaker to Demetrius' banquet law is unclear). Others of Menander's plays have attracted an anti-Antigonid reading: see in general Lape, *Reproducing Athens*.

<sup>39</sup> Plutarch in fact goes on to cite Philippides in the next chapter. For Philippides' relationship with Lysimachus, see principally *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 657 and Plut. *Demetr.* 12.8–9.

<sup>40</sup> A relevance to Demetrius Poliorcetes has been posited for Alexis' *Demetrius* or *Philetairos* (a title quite apt for a man renowned, as Poliorcetes was, for his liaisons with courtesans) and for Diphilus' *City-Wall Taker*: see Lape, *Reproducing Athens* 62, although the connection of *Demetrius* is doubted by W. G. Arnott, *Alexis. The Comic Fragments* (Oxford 1996) 157. Another instance may be added if G. W. Elderkin, "The Curculio of Plautus," *AJA* 38 (1934) 29–36, is right to see Plautus' *Curculio* as based on an Athenian anti-Antigonid model.

<sup>41</sup> Lape, *Reproducing Athens* 62: "When the honeymoon ended, when Demetrius started living in Athens in the winter of 304, it was obviously neither safe nor expedient for individual poets to censure him directly or explicitly."

<sup>42</sup> Alexis fr.99 does, however, appear to present a generally pro-Antigonid line, although again the lack of a context for the fragment means that we

that comic poets, whether writing directly for the stage or in other genres, were to exercise a telling (and often negative) influence on the later historical tradition surrounding Poliorcetes and his court;<sup>43</sup> their impact on his reception among contemporary Athenians may not have been less.

In this light, it is entirely plausible that Stratocles, taking umbrage at the treatment on stage of his own regime and of the Antigonids, may have made accusations (whether involving legal action or not) against an offending poet, and that Philippides may have retaliated with his on-stage tirade against Stratocles' misdeeds. This putative clash sits well within a broader context of political upheaval that dominated the closing years of the fourth century in Athens. While Athens remained under the aegis of Poliorcetes until Ipsus, and while Poliorcetes himself continued to espouse a commitment to Athenian liberty and democracy, the rhetoric of Athenian democracy at this time was becoming increasingly divorced from the reality. In *Demetrius* 14, Plutarch describes an outbreak

---

cannot rule out the possibility that the apparently favourable comment may have been subverted.

<sup>43</sup> See 74 below on Plut. *Demetr.* 11.2 and *Mor.* 799F. In addition to Plutarch's use of Philippides, there is the report in Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 4.54 of Demetrius' misbehaviour with Lamia on the Acropolis which may also derive in part from Philippides (so Mastrocinque, *Athenaeum* 67 [1979] 265), although Machon's *Cheiai* also has a plausible claim: thus L. O'Sullivan, "Marrying Athena: a Note on Clement *Protrepticus* 4.54," *CJ* 103 (2008) 295–300, at 296 n.7. The possibility may be entertained that Machon, who was himself a comic poet, gleaned some of his material from Philippides. He happens to preserve a story about Stratocles (see fr.16 Gow), and at fr.15 relates an exchange between the hetaira Mania (an associate of Poliorcetes) and a "very base man" (τῶν πονηρῶν τις πάνυ) in which the joke is rather reminiscent of Philippides fr.26 (quoted above), for Machon's Mania refuses to let the man take her from behind, lest he bite off her hair ornaments. Poliorcetes' court was of much interest also to Lynceus of Samos, a near-contemporary of Poliorcetes, and a man with first-hand experience of Athens under Antigonid sway; he too was a comic poet, as well as author of literary letters and collections of anecdotes: see A. Dalby, "Lynceus and the Anecdoteists," in D. Braund and J. Wilkins (eds.), *Athenaeus and His World* (Exeter 2000) 372–394. Unfortunately, his comedies are, with the exception of a single fragment, entirely lost.

of stasis in 303,<sup>44</sup> in which disputes over Poliorcetes' intervention in Athenian affairs culminated in the exile, and even execution, of some of those Athenians opposed to the king's interference. Championing the Antigonid cause, Stratocles evidently had a hand in these events; his policies brought him into direct conflict with men such as Demosthenes' nephew Demochares, who had been a staunch advocate of Athenian democracy and who proved unwilling to countenance its curtailment by royal fiat. Demochares went into exile in 303, as the honorary decree passed for him by his son Laches in 271/0 proudly proclaims.<sup>45</sup> Serious political upheaval is likely to have continued into 302 and indeed into 301. In his haste to join his father and face his coalition of enemies in Asia Minor, Poliorcetes concluded a hasty treaty with Cassander in 302, one which may well have left Athens vulnerable to attack when Poliorcetes himself quitted Greece with a massive mobilisation of troops (Marmor Parium *FGrHist* 239 B 27; the treaty required the ratification of Antigonus: Diod. 20.111.2).<sup>46</sup>

Philippides fr.25, through its pointed jibe in the final line, draws the world of theatrical competition into this political fray. It picks up the language of that conflict, in which *κατάλυσις τοῦ δήμου* was clearly a slogan. Thus, for example, the decree for Demochares asserts that he was driven out by those who had overthrown the *demos* (*ὑπὸ τῶν καταλυσάντων τὸν δήμον*),<sup>47</sup> while a decree for the Athenian Callias in 270/69 affirms that he too took no part in public affairs when the

<sup>44</sup> For the date, see L. C. Smith, "Demochares of Leuconoe and the Date of His Exile," *Historia* 11 (1962) 114–118.

<sup>45</sup> [Plut.] *Mor.* 851E.

<sup>46</sup> For potential epigraphic evidence of the continued disquiet, see *Agora* XVI 122 with the interpretation ventured by T. R. Martin, "Adeimantos of Lampsakos and Demetrius Poliorketes' Fraudulent Peace of 302 B.C.," in R. W. Wallace and E. M. Harris (eds.), *Transitions to Empire. Essays ... E. Badian* (Norman/London 1996) 179–190. A heightened concern for security may be behind the move, in 302/1, to confer belated honours on the Athenian taxiarchs of 305/4 for their maintenance of the city's defences: *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 500. There may be indications, too, of threatened disturbance at the Mysteries of 302/1: see *Agora* XVI 123 with Woodhead's commentary.

<sup>47</sup> [Plut.] *Mor.* 851E, cf. 851F.

democracy had been destroyed.<sup>48</sup> In a similar vein but more vague is the decree of 283/2 for Philippides himself, in which the poet is commended for doing nothing by word or deed in opposition to democracy.<sup>49</sup> Philippides fr.25 implies that Stratocles had aimed this rhetoric of his political opponents against a comic poet (for so he could against any who challenged the stability of his own regime that was still, in name at least, the very democracy that Poliorcetes had so spectacularly restored in 307/6) and that Philippides had turned the rhetoric back again on Stratocles himself.

Our comic fragment Philippides fr.25 falls well short of proving that such political clashes resulted in a suspension of the Dionysia in 302/1. With its suggestion of a contretemps between Stratocles and a comic poet, what that fragment may furnish instead is the substratum on which later scholars of the genre could embroider a story of political disruption of the Dionysia, just as the antagonism between Cleon and Aristophanes offered a basis for later traditions concerning decrees against comedy. It may be particularly significant in this context that similarities between Cleon and Stratocles were adduced in antiquity. Plutarch, borrowing from Thucydides' Cleon in his description of Stratocles, makes the comparison explicit at *Demetr.* 11.2:

<sup>48</sup> Shear, *Kallias* 4, lines 79–83.

<sup>49</sup> *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 657.48–50. None of these decrees offers detail about the timing or nature of the subversion of the democracy that they document, and in fact a number of changes of regime occurred in Athens while all three men stayed away. Lachares' tyranny came and went, and the city also experienced a second spell of Poliorcetes' hegemony that would subsequently be characterised as oligarchic; this oligarchy is explicitly mentioned in the decrees for Demochares and Callias. The narrative of Plutarch makes it clear that the "overthrow of the democracy" that caused Demochares' exile is to be associated with Stratocles, and the career of Philippides confirms this; he too had apparently quitted Athens while Stratocles still held sway there, for he applied to Lysimachus for help for Athens before the battle of Ipsus (lines 10–11), the battle that cost Demetrius and his father Antigonus their supremacy and the battle that heralded the fall of Stratocles' fortunes. Shear, *Kallias* 48, argues that the time referred to as the time at which "the *demos* was destroyed" in the decree for Callias should also refer to this phase of Stratocles' supremacy.

ἦν δὲ καὶ τάλλα παράτολμος ὁ Στρατοκλῆς, καὶ βεβιωκῶς ἀσελγῶς καὶ τὴν τοῦ παλαιοῦ Κλέωνος ἀπομμεῖσθαι δοκῶν βωμολοχίαν καὶ βδελυρίαν τὴν πρὸς τὸν δῆμον εὐχέρειαν.

In all other ways also Stratocles was an audacious fellow: he lived an abandoned life, and was thought to imitate the scurrility and buffoonery of the Cleon of old in his familiarities with the people.

Plutarch's echo of Thucydides' Pericles in his account of the fall of Stratocles' predecessor Demetrius of Phalerum (*Demetr.* 10.2: Athens under Phalerean rule is in name an oligarchy, in reality a monarchy, λόγῳ μὲν ὀλιγαρχικῆς, ἔργῳ δὲ μοναρχικῆς, cf. Thuc. 2.65) evokes the spectre of Cleon with more subtlety. The likening of Stratocles to Cleon is probably not a *topos* of Plutarch's own invention,<sup>50</sup> but seems rather to echo the use of Aristophanic lines by Stratocles' contemporary political enemies, most strikingly by Demochares and by Philippides himself. Demochares employed a rather Aristophanic motif in his attack on Athenian servility towards Poliorcetes, when he ascribed to Poliorcetes himself the complaint that no Athenian had shown himself "great and fine in soul";<sup>51</sup> a more direct Aristophanic allusion which prefaces a catalogue of Athenian servility (Plut. *Demetr.* 12.1, echoing Ar. *Eq.* 385 on Cleon) may similarly come from Demochares. Mastrocinque has suggested moreover that the anecdotes concerning Stratocles at Plut. *Demetr.* 11.2–3 and *Mor.* 799F come from Philippides; if so, then the evocations of Cleon (both explicit and implicit) with which Plutarch frames these stories may likewise be Philippidean in origin.<sup>52</sup> The poet Philemon, a contemporary of Philippides,

<sup>50</sup> The fact that an Athenian judicial case which prompted the *stasis* of 303 (above, 72) happened to concern a descendant of Cleon (Cleaenetus by name) may have encouraged comparison between Cleon and Stratocles already in the late fourth century.

<sup>51</sup> Mastrocinque, *Athenaeum* 67 (1979) 267 n.46, compares Ar. *Lys.* 524.

<sup>52</sup> Mastrocinque, *Athenaeum* 67 (1979) 267, who notes other reminiscences of Aristophanic language in the sources concerning Stratocles and Poliorcetes. He compares to Ar. *Thesm.* 153 and *Vesp.* 501 the usage, in an obscene sense, of κελητίζειν by Machon fr.12 Gow when describing the activities of Lamia and Poliorcetes. An audience well versed in Aristophanic comedy may have found a political thrust in such jokes, for in *Vesp.* 501 a

may have assimilated the pair, if his fr.178—addressed to a “Cleon” and replete with Aristophanic borrowings—is to be applied to Stratocles as has been suggested elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> Any such perceived similarity between Stratocles and Cleon could well have encouraged the Hellenistic scholars to attribute similar political acts to both, particularly if the assimilation was constructed by Philippides himself in his plays. Stratocles’ objection to comedy locates him in the same political mould as Cleon, who assailed Aristophanes not only for his *Babylonians* but possibly also for his *Knights*, and whose antipathy to Aristophanes may have been extensive.<sup>54</sup> It will have been an easy step for the Hellenistic scholars and their successors to extrapolate the attacks on comedy by both politicians—attacks presented in rather similar fashion by Aristophanes and by Philippides<sup>55</sup>—into political interference in the Dionysia itself.<sup>56</sup>

---

request that a prostitute “ride astride” is taken as indicative of tyrannical and antidemocratic tendencies. Given the possible use of Philippides by Machon (above n.43), it is tempting to wonder whether some of this material too originated in Philippides’ comedies.

<sup>53</sup> W. E. Major, “Menander in a Macedonian World,” *GRBS* 38 (1997) 41–73, at 48. For Philemon’s echoes of Aristophanes, see the notes of Kassel and Austin ad loc.

<sup>54</sup> See I. C. Storey, “*Wasps* 1284–91 and the Portrait of Kleon in *Wasps*,” *Scholía* 4 (1995) 3–23, at 7–11 where the possibility that *Nubes* rather than *Equites* provoked Cleon’s renewed attack is discussed; Olson, *Aristophanes Acharnians* xxix–xxx.

<sup>55</sup> Stratocles’ claim, as hinted at by Philippides, that a comedy threatened the very fabric of democracy employs the language of Athenian treason legislation. The scholiasts ascribed to Cleon an indictment of Aristophanes (see esp. schol. Ar. *Ach.* 378) for ridiculing the city in the presence of strangers (a detail based in large measure on the claims made by the character Dicaeopolis at *Ach.* 370–382, and echoed by the chorus in the parabasis at 628–632).

<sup>56</sup> The clustering of Aristophanic allusions around Stratocles and Poliorcetes raises a further interesting possibility. The ithyphallic hymn performed for Poliorcetes ca. 292 B.C. and cited by Duris *FGrHist* 76 F 13 contains the following celebration of the king (lines 9–12) with “all his friends about him and he himself in their midst, his friends like the stars just as he is the sun” (οἱ φίλοι πάντες κύκλω, ἐν μέσοισι δ’ αὐτός, ὅμοιον ὥσπερ οἱ φίλοι μὲν ἀστέρεις, ἥλιος δ’ ἐκείνος); this seems rather reminiscent of Aristophanes’

An obvious problem remains: *P.Oxy.* 1235 explicitly associates the disruption of the Dionysia in 302/1 with Lachares, not Stratocles. Now, it has been argued extensively above that the combination given in *P.Oxy.* 1235 of the date 302/1 with Lachares' involvement is unsustainable; the combination calls into question the historical acumen of the author of the tradition. It has further been suggested that, given the evidentiary basis of comic hypotheses, of the two elements it is the date that should be given greater credence, and that in consequence it is the presence of Lachares that is highly suspect. But could his name have intruded into a false "political" explanation for the lack of a Dionysia in 302/1 when the material on which (it is here suggested) that false history was concocted dealt in fact with some clash between *Stratocles* and the comedians?

To the extent that Stratocles was apparently long remembered, the proposed error of Lachares for Stratocles has its difficulties, but these are scarcely insurmountable. It is clear that, for the author of the text in *P.Oxy.* 1235, the political disturbance that "caused" the cancellation of the Dionysia was closely associated with a tyranny; if we were to accept Luppe's proposed restoration of lines 110–111 (Λαχάρον τὸν τυραννε[ύον]τα), we might even suppose that the writer linked the festival disruption with the very installation of a tyranny.<sup>57</sup> If this notion of tyranny were indeed important to the interpretation formed by the author of the *P.Oxy.* 1235 text, the insertion of Lachares becomes more understandable, for it is Lachares who bears that explicit label in the historical sources and who attracts to himself many of the *topoi* of the text-book tyrant.<sup>58</sup> (He is reputed to have stripped the goddess Athena of

---

description of Cleon at *Vesp.* 1033 ff., a reminiscence made more pointed by the fact that Aristophanes' monstrous Cleon has a head encircled by the tongues of flatterers (Athens' obsequious flattery being a recurrent motif among Poliorcetes' detractors) and the "unwashed balls of a Lamia" (Λαμίας ὄσχεις ἀπλύτους). Although the ithyphallic was ostensibly honorific, the echo of Aristophanes' Cleon adds a subversive undercurrent which, in the context of the king's recent and problematic relationship with Athens, could well have been intentional.

<sup>57</sup> Luppe, *ZPE* 96 (1993) 9.

<sup>58</sup> Plut. *Demetr.* 33.1; Paus. 1.29.10; Polyæn. 4.7.5.



her gold, for example, and to have engaged in a series of picaresque and generally improbable escapes when ousted from power.<sup>59</sup>) Stratocles, by contrast, is nowhere called a tyrant outright, and his name might not have suggested itself as readily to a later scholar seeking to identify a tyrant. The use of the *κατάλυσις τοῦ δήμου* tag by Philippides does, however, raise the *spectre* of tyranny, and this may have contributed to the confusion of the writer of the *Imbrians* hypothesis in *P.Oxy.* 1235. An association of tyranny with the “destruction of the *demos*” is there in Demophantus’ legislation against tyranny in 410/09 (*Andoc.* 1.96), and it may well reflect such an association in the earlier anti-tyranny legislation of Solon (perhaps even of Draco).<sup>60</sup> Indeed for Athenians of the fourth century the “overthrow of the *demos*” may have been linked most particularly with the spectre of Macedonian-backed tyranny. Eucrates’ law of 336 grants impunity for the slaying of anyone who sets up a tyranny or overthrows the *demos* (*GHI* 79.7–11), a measure which belongs to the aftermath of Chaeroneia when the threat of political interference by Philip II was keenly felt; speeches delivered at this time echo the sentiment by labelling the Macedonian kings themselves as tyrants.<sup>61</sup> In the rhetoric of his opponents, Stratocles had presided over the overthrow of the *demos*; the charge carries with it the suggestion that, with his Macedonian backing, he may have been forging for himself a position that might be tantamount to tyranny. For a later scholar mining material such as Philippides’ comic vitriol for historical “facts,” the “destruction of the *demos*” (the destruction from which Philippides exonerates “a comedy”) may have con-

<sup>59</sup> Anecdotes: Paus. 1.25.7; Plut. *Mor.* 379C; Ath. 9.405F; Polyæn. 3.7.1–3. The stripping of gold from the Parthenos (i.e. the use of the sacred treasures for minting emergency coinage) places Lachares in the standard mould of the tyrant: compare Dionysius I’s alleged “shearing of Apollo’s locks” and “disrobing of Zeus” at Ael. *VH* 1.20, Plut. *Mor.* 379D, Arist. *Oec.* 1353b20, Cic. *Nat.D.* 3.83–84, with similarly impious theft of temple dedications at Ath. 15.693E, Polyæn. 5.2.19.

<sup>60</sup> On anti-tyranny legislation, M. Ostwald, “The Athenian Legislation against Tyranny and Subversion,” *TAPA* 86 (1955) 103–128, remains fundamental.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. Hyp. *Phil.* 8, 10; [Dem.] 17.4, 12, 29.

jured up the activity of a “tyrant”; it may be from the ensuing identification of that tyrant as Lachares, an identification encouraged by Lachares’ established categorisation as such an autocrat, that the confused report in *P.Oxy.* 1235 emerges.

In this connection, the potential ambiguity of the surviving fr.25 of Philippides ought to be noted, for in none of the surviving lines is Stratocles actually named as the subject. With his particular interest in Poliorcetes’ interaction with Athens, Plutarch correctly identified Stratocles as Philippides’ target, but it is not clear that this identification will have been absolutely clear to every later reader of the play; in the absence of a title, and thus also of any other fragments to associate with fr.25, the extent to which Stratocles was a key concern of the play or was merely of passing interest remains open.<sup>62</sup> Again, while there are hints of an extensive engagement with Stratocles in comedy as traced above, we may note that Lachares too attracted the jibes of comic writers (see especially Demetrius II fr.1 K.-A.).<sup>63</sup> If the author of the tradition preserved in *P.Oxy.* 1235 had gleaned his historicising data from a source no more secure than contemporary comedies, his substitution of Lachares for Stratocles is not a wholly unthinkable error. It is a potential error made all the less odd by the striking lack of precision that mars even official Athenian documents of the third century, where the regimes of Stratocles, of Lachares, and the oligarchy later imposed by Poliorcetes are all collapsed into a largely undistinguished period of “overthrow of the *demos*” and oligarchy.<sup>64</sup>

An unscrupulous extrapolation from comedy has been urged here as the source of the “historical” causation claimed in the hypothesis of the *Imbrians* in *P.Oxy.* 1235. The isolation of false inference in the political interference in the Dionysia of 302/1, and the erroneous identification of Lachares as the source of that interference, allow a solution to the otherwise intractable

<sup>62</sup> See on this point Gallo, *Sileno* 10 (1984) 228–229.

<sup>63</sup> More interesting, but very speculative, is the possibility that Philippides fr.9 is pertinent to Lachares’ rule: see Philipp, *Gymnasium* 80 (1973) 499–504.

<sup>64</sup> See above, n.49, for detail of honorary decrees that refer imprecisely to these differing regimes.

problems posed by that hypothesis. But the conclusions here urged have a wider significance. Comedy emerges from all this as a vital forum, alongside the orator's platform of Demochares, for the expression of anti-Antigonid and anti-Stratocles dissent. Early Hellenistic Athens experienced, on the stage of Philippides, a brand of comic political vituperation to rival that witnessed by the audiences who flocked to see Aristophanes' scurrilous attacks on Cleon. It is this very similarity, however, that may have encouraged later scholars to accord to the comic stage an even greater political moment by claiming that the Dionysia of 302/1 were not held because of political interference. That the Dionysia did not happen because of a tyrant, be he Lachares or Stratocles, is a claim that must be regarded at best with suspicion—the same suspicion with which Cleon's own alleged legislation against Dionysiac freedom is now viewed.

*October, 2008*

Classics & Ancient History  
Univ. of Western Australia  
Crawley, Australia 6009  
losulliv@arts.uwa.edu.au