

Lamachus and Xerxes in the Exodos of *Acharnians*

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THE EXODOS OF ARISTOPHANES' *ACHARNIANS* (1174–1234) is obviously paratragic. A messenger announces that Lamachus, the general, has been wounded in a skirmish against the Boeotians. Then Lamachus appears, stripped of his glory after the disastrous battle. His shield is broken, his plume has tragically expired; he has collided with a vinepole, fallen into at least one ditch (though the text is uncertain¹), and knocked his head on a stone. He begins a tragic lament in iambs at line 1190, which the comic hero Dicaeopolis, entering drunk and with a naked woman on each arm, answers responsively. A scholium (*ad* 1190b) remarks: θρηνῶν παρατραγωδεῖ.²

It is well known that the dominant object of parody in *Acharnians* is Euripides' *Telephus*. In that tragedy, the Mysian king Telephus, wounded by Achilles, comes to Argos disguised as a beggar to obtain a cure for his wound. In the agon of *Acharnians* Dicaeopolis assumes the rôle of Telephus to defend himself against the attack of the Acharnian chorus, borrowing the rags of that hero from Euripides (430–34). But in the exodos, a line in the messenger speech that precedes Lamachus' entry also appears to be a tag from *Telephus* (Σ *ad* 1188b), indicating that Aristophanes has now identified Lamachus, not Dicaeopolis, with the wounded Telephus.

Nevertheless, Lamachus' final lyric lament seems not to have been derived from *Telephus*. In that play Telephus described in the prologue how he was wounded, and this information serves as background for the action in Greece, not as the subject for a

¹ See A. H. Sommerstein, "Notes on Aristophanes' *Acharnians*," *CQ* NS. 28 (1978) 390–95.

² For earlier discussion see P. Rau, *Paratragodia* (=Zetemata 45 [Munich 1967]) 142ff.

lyric lament.³ Therefore the model for the parody must come from elsewhere; Mazon and Rau compare the lament to passages in the *exodoi* of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Trachiniae*, and *Hippolytus*.⁴ In each of these plays a mutilated male character enters to exchange cries of anguish with the chorus or other characters: Oedipus after blinding himself, Heracles as he is being eaten away by the centaur's blood, and Hippolytus broken from the chariot wreck.

But these passages are not in fact very close in structure or dramatic situation to the *exodos* of *Acharnians*. None of the wounds in these plays were received on the battlefield, but are

³ E. W. Handley and J. Rea, "The *Telephus* of Euripides," *BICS* Suppl. 5 (1957) 28; T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 44f. Nor do the *Telephus* plays by Aeschylus and Sophocles appear to provide a context for a formal lament. Although little is known about Aeschylus' *Telephus*, it too probably depicted Telephus' cure in the Greek camp: *TGF* 76f; H. W. Smith and H. Lloyd-Jones in the Loeb Aeschylus (Cambridge [Mass.] 1971), II 461ff. The possibility that a scholiast (*ad Ar. Ach.* 332) may have confused the Aeschylean play with that of Euripides leads one to believe that they had similar plots.

Sophocles' *Aleadae* and *Mysians*, whether they were part of a *Telepheia* or not, dramatized the events of Telephus' birth and his ascendancy as king in Mysia, but did not involve the battle with the Greeks. Speculation places a third play (perhaps *Assembly of the Achaeans*) in the Greek camp after the battle: see M. Fromhold-Treu, "Die Telephos-Trilogie des Sophokles," *Hermes* 69 (1934) 324–38; A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, "Tragedy," in Powell and Barber, *New Chapters* SER. III (Oxford 1933) 76–82. Their information about *Assembly of the Achaeans* has been revised by Handley and Rea (*supra*: 22), who have shown that papyrus fragments previously ascribed to Sophocles belong to the Euripidean *Telephus*. T. J. Sienkewicz ("Sophokles' Telepheia," *ZPE* 20 [1976] 109–12) has suggested that the tetralogy entitled *Telepheia* was named only for its satyr play *Telephus* (*cf. TGF* 256f), and that none of the other plays in the group concerned that hero. This satyr play remains a possible source for the comic *threnos* in *Acharnians* (if it really existed: Fromhold-Treu 325), but A. C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles* II (Cambridge 1917) 220, suggested that events surrounding Telephus' birth in Arcadia were more suitable for a satyr drama than his wounding and cure by Achilles.

⁴ P. Mazon, *Essai sur la composition des comédies d'Aristophane* (Paris 1904) 31; B. Zimmermann, *Untersuchungen zur Form und dramatischen Technik der Aristophanischen Komödien* II (=Beitr.z.kl.Phil., Hft. 166 [Königstein/Ts. 1985]) 50, follows Rau (*supra* n.2).

the results of tensions within families.⁵ Nor are the metrics of these passages the same as those in the comedy. Oedipus sings an ode with the chorus in dochmiacs, while the chorus replies in iambic trimeter; the mutilation, furthermore, is self-inflicted (1307–66). The dying Heracles in *Trachiniae* does not sing responsively, and his laments are in anapests and dochmiacs (983–1043). Hippolytus' entry is introduced by a choral song, but the *threnos* he sings is an anapestic solo (1347–87).

Consequently, I suggest that when Aristophanes wrote this parody, he had in mind a model more effectively contrasting the ill effects of war, as represented by Lamachus, with the blessings of Dicaeopolis' peace. That passage is the entry of the defeated Xerxes in the *exodos* of Aeschylus' *Persians*. I shall examine first the evidence in *Acharnians* for possible direct influence from the Aeschylean play, and then demonstrate how such a reading helps provide closure for issues raised at the beginning of the comedy.

To begin with, the *threnoi* in *Acharnians* and *Persians* comprise the *exodoi* of their respective plays, and do not simply serve as the introduction to the final episode, as is the case with the laments in the plays listed by Mazon and Rau. Beyond that, the dramatic context and stage picture of the scene in *Acharnians* is more comparable to *Persians* than to the others. Most of *Persians* is concerned to explain how Xerxes lost the battle of Salamis because of his misguided cause, compounded with the efforts of an avenging deity and bad luck. The last 175 lines of the play consist of his entry and antiphonal lament with the chorus about his defeat. In a similar fashion, Lamachus in *Acharnians* has been shown throughout his play as the representative of wrongheaded militarism; he appears at the end in defeat and sings his antiphonal *threnos*. In both *Persians* and *Acharnians*, the defeated warrior is preceded by a messenger who details the disaster that has occurred, and makes clear the nature of the warrior's humiliation. In *Persians* this is the famous three-part narrative of the battle of Salamis, which takes place in the first half of the play (249–514); in *Acharnians*, the messenger speaks at 1174–84, just before Lamachus' entry. In

⁵ Aristophanes is more reminiscent of these passages in the paratragic lament at *Lys.* 954–79, where Kinesias exchanges agonized anapests with the chorus of old men after he has been denied intercourse by his wife. See Rau (*supra* n.2) 200; J. Henderson, *Aristophanes, Lysistrata* (Oxford 1987) 182f *ad* 954–79.

Persians the defeated Xerxes appears with his royal robes in tatters and his quiver symbolically empty of arrows (834ff, 1017–23, 1030).⁶ In *Acharnians* Lamachus' shield and plumes, symbols throughout the play of his militarism and braggadoccio (574–89, 1074, 1103–42), are battered and their ornaments gone (1181–85). The dramatic situation and stage picture in *Acharnians*, then, are far more reminiscent of *Persians* than of the other plays that have been suggested as analogues.

Further, the metrics, structure, and diction of Lamachus' dirge appear to be condensed from elements in the passage in *Persians*, and so support the possibility of deliberate parody. The *exodos* of *Persians*, after an introduction in anapests and mixed metra, ends in an extended passage of syncopated iambs (1002–77). The last is virtually a hallmark of Aeschylean lyric. In the process of condensing his model, Aristophanes eliminated the anapestic entry and wrote his entire passage in these characteristically Aeschylean syncopated iambs.⁷

As to the structure of the speeches, both Xerxes and Lamachus begin their *threnoi* with a brief passage bewailing their respective disasters. Xerxes had lamented (908–17 Page)

ὦ·
 δύστηνος ἐγὼ στυγερᾶς μοίρας
 τῆσδε κυρήσας ἀτεκμαρτοτάτης,
 ὡς ὠμοφρόνως δαίμων ἐνέβη
 Περσῶν γενεᾷ· τί πάθω τλήμων;
 λέλνται γὰρ ἐμοὶ γυίων ῥώμη
 τήνδε ἡλικίαν ἐσιδόντ' ἀστῶν·
 εἴθ' ὄφελε, Ζεῦ, κάμῃ μετ' ἀνδρῶν

⁶ J. Dingel, *Das Requisit in der griechischen Tragödie* (diss. Tübingen 1967) 112f, 177; H. D. Broadhead, *The Persae of Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1960) 239 ad 1017.

⁷ Broadhead (*supra* n.6) 296f; C. Prato, *I canti di Aristofane* (Rome 1962) 30–35; Zimmermann (*supra* n.4) II 50f, III 9f. On lyric syncopated iambs in Aeschylus see M. L. West, *Greek Metre* (Oxford 1982) 99; Zimmermann 51; cf. J. D. Denniston, "Lyric Iambics in Greek Drama," in C. Bailey *et al.*, edd., *Greek Poetry and Life: Essays Presented to Gilbert Murray* (Oxford 1936) 121: "The mention of lyric iambics suggests to the mind, before all else, the great choruses of Aeschylus." Aristophanes used them to parody tragedy, as here (West 104f; Denniston 126f).

τῶν οἰχομένων
θανάτου κατὰ μοῖρα καλύψαι.⁸

Lamachus cries (1190–97 Coulon),

ἀτταταῖ ἀτταταῖ,
στυγερὰ τάδε γε κρυερὰ πάθεα· τάλας ἐγώ.
διόλλυμαι δορὸς ὑπὸ πολεμίου τυπεῖς.
ἐκεῖνο δ' αἰακτὸν [οἰμωκτὸν] ἄν γένοιτό μοι,
Δικαιοπόλις εἴ μ' ἴδοι τετρωμένον
κᾶτ' ἐγγάνοι ταῖς ἐμαῖς τύχαισιν.⁹

In these passages both men begin with cries of anguish, bemoan their suffering, and express anxiety about facing those who will judge them. They are then answered in a passage of equal length: Xerxes by the chorus of elders, who begin with ὅτοτοῖ (918), and Lamachus by the drunken Dicaeopolis who responds with ἀτταταῖ ἀτταταῖ (1198). In both plays the dialogue is then reduced to single and even half lines, with Xerxes or Lamachus beginning a thought and the Persian chorus or Dicaeopolis answering (e.g. *Pers.* 1015–25; *Ach.* 1208–13). The two *threnoi* come to an end with orders from the defeated man to be taken into the house/palace (*Ach.* 1222f; *Pers.* 1069f).

Vocabulary is also shared in analogous places within the laments. In the opening lines Lamachus' sufferings and Xerxes' μοῖρα are both described as στυγερὰ (*Ach.* 1191, cf. 1207; *Pers.* 909). The single line responses in *Acharnians* pick up the remarkably extended cries of despair in *Persians*, e.g. ἰὼ ἰὼ (*Ach.* 1212; *Pers.* 908, 974) and παπαῖ (*Ach.* 1214; *Pers.* 1031). But two items are of particular importance. First, in both plays ἰὼ ἰὼ is placed in close conjunction with ἦ ἦ:

⁸ "Io! I am unfortunate, having met with this hateful doom, all unlooked-for. How savage a daimon has trod upon the race of the Persians! What shall I suffer, wretch that I am? The power of my knees is taken away as I look upon these aged citizens. Oh Zeus, I wish doom had hidden me in death, too, along with those who have gone."

⁹ "Attatai, attatai! Oh these hateful and chilling misfortunes: woe is me! I am utterly destroyed, stricken by an enemy spear. But *this* would be a lamentable thing for me, if Dicaeopolis should see me wounded and then mock at my misfortunes."

Pers. 1004f (Page)*Ach.* 1205f (Coulon)

Ξε. ἰὴ ἰὴ ἰὼ ἰὼ.

Λα. ἰὼ ἰὼ τραυμάτων ἐπωδύνων.

Χο. ἰὼ ἰὼ δαίμονες...

Δι. ἰὴ ἰή, χαῖρε, Λαμαχίππιον.

Pers. 1073ff (Broadhead)

Χο. ἰὼ ἰὼ, Περσὶς αἶα δύσβατος.

Ξε. ἰὴ ἰή, τρισκάλμοισιν,
ἰὴ ἰή, βάρισιν ὀλόμενοι.

1074f ἰὴ ἰή F., Tr. ηήηή M

ἰή is usually a cry of celebration. As an expression of despair it is peculiar to Aeschylus. Aristophanes had apparently noted this: at *Frogs* 1265–77 Euripides mocks Aeschylus five times with a ‘typical’ line from *Myrmidons*: ἰὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ’ ἄρωγάν; (= *TGF* 43, fr.132). But the doubled ἰὼ and ἰή occur together only in the *exodoi* of *Persians* and *Acharnians*.¹⁰

The second item is αἰακτός (‘lamentable’), which Lamachus uses to describe his situation. This rare adjective appears only three times in extant tragedy, once in Aeschylus’ *Seven* (846) and the other two here in the *exodos* of *Persians* (931, 1069), suggesting that it is not only a notably Aeschylean word but one associated with this play.¹¹

The passages thus present a similar stage picture of a defeated commander entering in an advanced state of disrepair from losing his ill-conceived battle. They also share a similar structure: a strophic song of lament followed by a stychomythic passage, then a retreat into the *skene* so the warrior can lick his wounds. Finally, both passages are in a meter typical of Aeschylean lyric and share vocabulary in parallel locations. Two items are not only Aeschylean in usage but peculiar to the *exodos* of *Persians*.

¹⁰ LSJ and G. Italie, *Index Aeschyleus* (Leiden 1955), both *s.v.* ἰή. Italie also lists *Pers.* 1074f as a second instance of ἰὼ ἰὼ, ἰὴ ἰή, although the reading of the line is not secure. Elsewhere in Aeschylus one finds only ἰὼ ἰή (*Ag.* 1485) and ἰὴ ἰή (*Supp.* 114). In Aristophanes ἰή, as Dicaeopolis’ cry here, is always a cry of joy: LSJ; O. J. Todd, *Index Aristophaneus* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1932) *s.v.*. Aristophanes appears to have taken the Aeschylean cry and split it up (as in *Pers.* 1074f) between Lamachus’ distress and Dicaeopolis’ mocking glee.

¹¹ *TLG*; LSJ *s.v.*; Italie (*supra* n.10) *s.v.* The word αἰακτός is rare enough that it generated the explanatory gloss οἰμωκτόν, which became part of line 1195 in the Mss. (*supra* 55).

Although reference to *Persians* seems likely, the parody is still somewhat oblique. It might be objected that the earlier *Telephus* parody in the play is, in contrast, obvious and explicit. Telephus' name is invoked, whole lines from that play are quoted directly, and Dicaeopolis deliberately dresses himself in the costume of Telephus. If the parody here has shifted to *Persians*, why does Aristophanes not make this equally explicit?

But there are other parodies in the play that are not explicitly acknowledged. In his speech to the Acharnians, Dicaeopolis suggests that the Peloponnesian War began because Athenians and Megarians stole whores from one another. Dicaeopolis' lines (523–29) do not share vocabulary with the beginning of Herodotus' *Histories*, yet the passage in *Acharnians* clearly refers to Herodotus' suggestion that the ultimate origin of the Persian Wars was a series of abductions.¹²

Elsewhere, when Dicaeopolis is first attacked by the Acharnians, he halts their onslaught by holding a sword to a coal scuttle. The visual reference is to the moment in the Telephus legend when Telephus protects himself from the hostile Greeks by holding the infant Orestes hostage. But Aristophanes has not yet made any explicit verbal mention of the *Telephus*; he simply expects the visual parody to be recognized. Therefore, we need not demand that every parodied passage in this play will be explicitly labelled as such if the audience could be expected to get the reference on its own.

Such audience familiarity with *Persians* did exist, as a passage from Aristophanes' *Frogs* demonstrates. The following exchange occurs between Aeschylus and Dionysus during the poetry contest (1026–29 Coulon):

- AI. εἶτα διδάξας Πέρσας μετὰ τοῦτ' ἐπιθυμῆν ἔξεδίδαξα
νικᾶν ἀεὶ τοὺς ἀντιπάλους, κοσμήσας ἔργον ἄριστον.
ΔI. ἐχάρην γοῦν, ἦνίκ' ἐκώκυσας περὶ Δαρείου τεθνεῶτος,
ὁ χορὸς δ' εὐθύς τῷ χεῖρ' ὡδὶ συγκρούσας εἶπεν·
“Ἴαοῖ.”¹³

¹² J. van Leeuwen, *Aristophanis Acharnenses* (Leiden 1901) 91f ad 524ff; W. Rennie, *The Acharnians of Aristophanes* (London 1909) 167 ad 528; K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley 1972) 80. W. J. M. Starkie (*The Acharnians of Aristophanes* [London 1909] 109f ad 524ff) is unnecessarily tentative in accepting a deliberate Herodotean reference.

¹³ AES. Then after this I produced the *Persians*, showing them how to lust always for victory over their adversaries, and celebrating an extraordinary deed.

Persians was apparently a familiar play to the audience at the end of the fifth century; on the other hand, memory of what happens in it may not have been exact but recalled only in a general way the celebration of Salamis, the raising of the ghost of Darius, and the elaborate noises of mourning made by the chorus. Ἰαυοῖ, for example, is not in *Persians* but is an Aristophanic *hapax* (LSJ, *TLG*). Further, although Aeschylus is trying to prove in these lines that his play inspired military courage in the Athenians, Dionysus' reply misses that point and suggests instead that the visual and aural impressions left by the play were more vivid in the popular mind than the dramatic point they were meant to make. Consequently, Lamachus need not reproduce Xerxes' lines or image exactly to produce a reference to that play, but only look and act enough like the disheveled king to call his entry to mind. As Handley (*supra* n.3: 24) observes, "Fidelity to the original, in fact, is not an essential virtue of portraiture in Old Comedy...."

Since stage picture, diction, meter, and audience familiarity combine to make deliberate parody of Aeschylus a strong possibility, the question remains of the dramatic point of a sudden shift in reference from *Telephus* to *Persians*. Aristophanes does not ordinarily feel a need to justify his jokes, but in this case such a shift does contribute to the dramatic point of the comedy, and so may be taken as further evidence for deliberate parody. Dicaeopolis had opened *Acharnians* with a recitation of things that pleased him and things that did not, and found that the pains far outnumbered the pleasures (1–22). The first scenes make it clear that among those things annoying Dicaeopolis are the city's dealings with Persia. Dicaeopolis is horrified in the Assembly when the Athenian ambassador to the Great King reports the excess of food and drink in which he wallowed for years at state expense (65–90). Dicaeopolis also mocks and abuses the King's Eye, Pseudartabas, whom he describes as ναύφρακτον (or ναύφρακτον: 95), a word that Rau (*supra* n.2: 186) notes is an Aeschylean formation found twice in the *threnos* in *Pers.* 951, 1029. The garbled pseudo-Persian spoken by Pseudartabas seems to mention one Pissuthnes, the

DIO. Oh, yes, that was great, when the chorus wailed over the dead Darius, and straight away clapped their hands like this and said, "Iauoi!"

new satrap of Sardis, whose interference in the war a year or so before the production of the play had made him a source of anxiety to Athens.¹⁴

Even Dicaeopolis' chief opponents and subsequent allies, the chorus of the play, are traditional Persian-haters—the old Acharnians, the *Μαραθωνομάχαι* (181), an epithet recalling memories of former glory against the Persian hordes and contrasted to modern-day, degenerate collusion with a Great King who goes to the Golden Hills to defecate (81f). And finally, Dicaeopolis' *reductio ad absurdum* of the beginning of the Peloponnesian War parodies Herodotus' account of the beginning of hostilities between Persia and Greece. Thus the entire first half of *Acharnians* betrays a revulsion for all things Persian, and contrasts an old Athens whose *Marathonomachai* heroically resisted the Persian onslaught with a contemporary Athens that begs for Persian money to support their bickering with other Greeks over stolen whores.

Lamachus, for his part, is the physical embodiment of Athenian militarism and so also of the evils and annoyances of the war as they are presented in the first half of the play. Consequently, as Dicaeopolis sets up rules for his newly established market of Peace, he says, just before the parabasis (623ff), "I proclaim to *all* the Peloponnesians and Megarians and Boeotians that they're to come to market and do business with me—but *not* Lamachus." Therefore Lamachus should appropriately not only be excluded from Dicaeopolis' new prosperity, but in the final scene be defeated on the terms set up in the first part of the play. If the war is, among other things, the cause of corrupt dealings with Persia, Lamachus the war-maker suitably appears in defeat in the same way the great Persian enemy Xerxes had done.

But just as the causes of war have been trivialized, in Aristophanes' view, as compared to the days of the *Marathonomachai*, so have the consequences for the defeated warrior. Xerxes destroyed the flower of Persian youth and had feared to appear before the elders of his court who, after their encounter with the ghost, must also embody Darius' disapproval. Xerxes' shame is complete before the living and the dead. Lamachus, on the other hand, is merely afraid of the mockery of his drunken

¹⁴ M. L. West, "Two Passages of Aristophanes," *CR* n.s. 18 (1968) 7, citing Thuc. 3.31, 34.

fellow-citizens, if his clumsiness and stupidity should be observed. Cosmic shame has been transformed into comic embarrassment.

Xerxes, then, is a much better model for Lamachus' comic humiliation than Telephus. His dramatic situation can be used for satirical comment on the politics of contemporary Athens, and—unlike Telephus, who is finally cured by Achilles—Xerxes' humiliation was final in the Athenian mind. The parody therefore effectively completes Dicaeopolis' victory over the Athens that so annoyed him at the opening of the play.

In Dicaeopolis' catalogue of complaints in the prologue, he had found that the vexations reached him even in the theatre, where the results were downright "tragic" (9ff):

ἀλλ' ὠδυνήθην ἕτερον αὖ τραγωδικόν,
 ὅτε δὴ 'κεχήνη προσδοκῶν τὸν Αἰσχύλον
 ὁ δ' ἀνεῖπεν· εἴσαγ', ὦ Θεόγνι, τὸν χορόν.¹⁵

In the *exodos* Dicaeopolis gets his Aeschylean play after all, made more satisfying by the special irony that he can take the place of the chorus and reply to "Xerxes'" laments with his own triumphant mockery.¹⁶

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¹⁵ "And I had *another* annoyance, a tragic one: when I was all agog waiting for a play by Aeschylus, the man announced: 'Theognis, bring out your chorus!'"

¹⁶ I would like to thank Professor Jeffrey Henderson and the anonymous reader for comments that have aided in completing this paper.