Greek Epic Parody And The Classical Life Of Heroic Epic Poetry

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Abstract
The extant corpus of Greek epic parody is small and difficult to circumscribe. Scholars have largely considered fragments of hexameter epic parody in isolation without contextualizing them alongside parodic epic allusion in comedy and iambus. Modern theoretical approaches to parody that emphasize the importance of strict formal categories have encouraged this approach. However, the semantic breadth of the Greek term paroidia, from which “parody” is derived, suggests that epic parody must also be approached as a trans-generic literary phenomenon. With this in mind, I examine how parodies of heroic epic in different genres from the sixth to fourth centuries BCE engage with the contemporary “life” of heroic epic: how it was consumed, how its poet was imagined, how it related to other genres and verse forms, and what knowledge or insight it was understood to contain. This guiding principle informs close comparative readings of fragments and passages that use the language or formal elements of heroic epic to comic or critical effect. Primary case studies include Hipponax fr. 126 Degani, Hegemon fr. 1, Aristophanes’ Peace 1270-1304, Strato Comicus fr. 1, and Matro of Pitane fr. 1; discussions of many other examples appear for context. I begin by offering foundational interpretations for a few important but understudied fragments, and showcasing the variety of ways in which imitation of epic language and form may invite the epic world into a contemporary comic setting (chapter 1). Each subsequent chapter focuses on a different aspect of the lived experience of epic poetry in the sixth to fourth centuries and examines how parodists invoke these contemporary practices and phenomena to make epic speak to current issues; topics include modes of epic performance (chapter 2); the close relationship of epic with other literary and subliterary verse forms (chapter 3); and the role of epic in educational and intellectual developments (chapter 4). By this approach, I offer richer interpretations of some difficult poetic fragments, fresh literary historical contexts for more canonical passages, and new insights into the life of epic poetry in antiquity.

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GREEK EPIC PARODY
AND THE CLASSICAL LIFE OF HEROIC EPIC POETRY

Adrienne Atkins

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in
Classical Studies

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania
in
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ABSTRACT

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Adrienne Atkins
Sheila Murnaghan

The extant corpus of Greek epic parody is small and difficult to circumscribe. Scholars have largely considered fragments of hexameter epic parody in isolation without contextualizing them alongside parodic epic allusion in comedy and iambus. Modern theoretical approaches to parody that emphasize the importance of strict formal categories have encouraged this approach. However, the semantic breadth of the Greek term paroidia, from which “parody” is derived, suggests that epic parody must also be approached as a trans-generic literary phenomenon. With this in mind, I examine how parodies of heroic epic in different genres from the sixth to fourth centuries BCE engage with the contemporary “life” of heroic epic: how it was consumed, how its poet was imagined, how it related to other genres and verse forms, and what knowledge or insight it was understood to contain. This guiding principle informs close comparative readings of fragments and passages that use the language or formal elements of heroic epic to comic or critical effect. Primary case studies include Hipponax fr. 126 Degani, Hegemon fr. 1, Aristophanes’ Peace 1270-1304, Strato Comicus fr. 1, and Matro of Pitane fr. 1; discussions of many other examples appear along the way. I begin by offering foundational interpretations for a few important but understudied fragments, and showcasing the variety of ways in which imitation of epic language and form may invite the epic world into a contemporary comic setting (chapter 1). Each subsequent chapter
focuses on a different aspect of the lived experience of epic poetry in the sixth to fourth centuries and examines how parodists invoke these contemporary practices and phenomena to make epic speak to current issues; topics include modes of epic performance (chapter 2); the close relationship of epic with other literary and subliterary verse forms (chapter 3); and the role of epic in educational and intellectual developments (chapter 4). By this approach, I offer richer interpretations of some difficult poetic fragments, fresh literary historical contexts for more canonical passages, and new insights into the life of epic poetry in antiquity.
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INTRODUCTION

In the longest surviving fragment of the fifth century BCE poet Hegemon, the narrator describes his return Thasos after a poetry competition in Athens. Athenaeus, who preserves the fragment, names Hegemon as an author of paroidia, the Greek word from which “parody” is derived. Indeed, in the fragment, Hegemon uses dactylic hexameter and epic formulae recognizable from the Iliad and Odyssey to give voice to his poet-narrator:\footnote{Text Olson 2006–2012. Translation my own.}

When I reached Thasos, they launched on me a volley of copious turds, and someone near me said:
“Oh greatest of all bums, who persuaded you to step upon the noble stage with feet like those?”
Among them all I spoke a little speech:
“One mina swayed me, though old and loath to go, and want, which drives many Thasians to a tradeboat, baldheaded bums, men slaying and slain, who now sing abroad – bad songs, badly done. These things swayed me, for I needed food mightily…”

The fragment continues in this vein for another 11 lines. Although scholars widely identify this fragment as an example of “epic parody,” it is not as easy to articulate the
object of imitation and the target of mockery as it might seem. Fifth century audiences would have primarily encountered both epic poetry and epic parody such as Hegemon’s in performance. With this in mind, we might ask whether Hegemon’s narrator – a rhapsode or parodist speaking in epic formulaic language and meter – is imitating epic poetry, epic performers, or both, and likewise, whether he is mocking epic poetry, performers, or both. Even if we imagine that the rhapsodes of Hegemon’s time were primarily reciting from fixed texts rather than improvising in performance, the difficulty remains. Because Hegemon’s audience experienced epic poetry primarily through social practices such as performance, it may be anachronistic to assume that they distinguished so firmly between mockery of epic poetry itself and mockery of its contemporary uses and modes of transmission.

Hegemon fr. 1 is not an outlier; most fragments and passages of Greek poetry typically identified as epic parody access epic through the various ways that audiences encountered it in their lived experience, including in performance, in related literary and subliterary verse forms, and in educational and intellectual pursuits. Such allusion to epic’s contemporary life complicates the clear dichotomies of past and present, high and low that epic parody seems to imply. At face, epic parody uses epic to represent a noble mythic past, and creates humor or mockery by juxtaposing epic with lower or more contemporary language, characters, etc. However, the fact that this genre focused on the past was also a feature of contemporary life is often what allows an epic parody to speak meaningfully to contemporary issues. Probing the meaning of “epic” in the category of Greek epic parody thus opens up fresh interpretive possibilities for individual fragments and passages, and offers a new guiding principle to compare epic parodic poetry of
different genres and states of preservation. This exercise also suggests a new literary historical context in which Greek epic parody may (or even must) be situated: the context of epic poetry in the sixth to fourth centuries BCE, in all the forms it took, and all the functions it performed. These interpretive activities and outcomes are the objectives of the present study.

Parody and Paroidia

Difficulties of terminology loom large in the study of Greek epic parody. Before discussing the meaning of “epic” in this label, it is first necessary to define “parody.” Colloquially, English speakers use “parody” to refer to a range of practices in which some material is imitated or transformed with a humorous or polemical twist. Some literary critics have attempted to resolve this terminological imprecision by proposing narrower definitions or functions of parody, while others have embraced its breadth. Gérard Genette’s Palimpsestes. Literature in the Second Degree best represents the former approach, situating parody within a tightly-defined taxonomy of allusive forms. In this system, “parody” refers strictly to playful (as opposed to satirical or serious) transformation (as opposed to imitation) of the hypotext (the object of allusion). Genette further distinguishes parody from burlesque travesty by suggesting that the former “modifies the subject without altering the style,” while the latter “modifies the style without modifying the subject.” Simon Dentith, on the opposite end of the spectrum, defines parody as a range of cultural practices that involve polemical imitation of another

3 Genette 1997, 22.
cultural production or practice; polemic may be directed against the imitated object or against an external target. Humor is not central to Dentith’s definition, although elsewhere he concedes that “sometimes… laughter is the only point, and the breakdown of discourse into nonsense is a sufficient reward in itself.” Other scholars have approached parody through its literary and/or social goals and effects. Margaret Rose, for instance, focuses on the inherently metaliterary quality of parody, and Mikhail Bakhtin identifies it as a technique by which the carnival and carnivalesque literature deconstruct a dominant cultural, literary, or linguistic system.

Theoretical studies of parody often take ancient Greece as their starting point; paroidia (παροίδια), from which “parody” is derived (along with the German Parodie, the Italian parodia, etc.) is an obvious place to begin excavating the word’s meaning. However, what little evidence exists for the term paroidia suggests that it enjoyed a wide semantic range that shifted throughout antiquity. On the one hand, it referred to a specific genre of hexameter poetry that combined epic style with comic content and that constituted its own category of solo-performance at some festivals. The existence of paroidia as a standalone genre is implied by Athenaeus (to whom I will turn shortly) and attested by a few inscriptions of festival prize lists, the earliest of which is from a festival for Artemis at Eretria in ~340 BCE. On the other hand, the term paroidia also referred to a more general practice of playful or critical imitative allusion to epic poetry, and,

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4 Dentith 2000, 1-38.
5 Dentith 2000, 38.
7 See, for example, discussions in Householder 1944; Lelièvre 1954; Glei 2006; and Bertolini, 2020, 18-32.
8 Bertolini 2020, 18-32.
9 Bertolini 2020, 43-47.
beginning in the Hellenistic period, to other literature.\textsuperscript{10} That the English “parody” is derived from \textit{paroidia} only poses a further challenge to scholars’ ability to maintain precision in their terms.\textsuperscript{11}

Another complicating factor is that almost all of the potential corpus of \textit{paroidia} (both the genre and the allusive practice) survives to us through Athenaeus. Fragments are scattered throughout the \textit{Deipnosophists}, but the work also includes two dedicated discussions of \textit{paroidia}, one sourced from the treatise \textit{On Old Comedy} by Chamaeleon of Pontus (fourth/third centuries BCE) and the other from the \textit{Response to Timaeus} by Polemon of Ilium (third/second centuries BCE).\textsuperscript{12} Polemon in particular relates some highlights from the history of \textit{paroidia}: Hipponax discovered or invented it (εὑρετήν μὲν οὖν τοῦ γένους Ἰππόνακτα φατέον τὸν ιαμβοποιόν), and Hegemon of Thasos was the first to enter competitions (τούτων δὲ πρῶτος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τοὺς ἀγῶνας τοὺς θυμελίκους).\textsuperscript{13} He also names some poets of \textit{paroidia}, including Boeotus, Eubulus, Hipponax, Epicharmus, Cratinus, Hegemon, Hermippus, and Euboeus.\textsuperscript{14} It is not clear whether all these poets wrote standalone \textit{paroidia}, or whether they simply included parodic passages within other works. Apart from Athenaeus, we also learn about \textit{paroidia} from Aristotle. In the \textit{Poetics}, he explains that within any art form one can find people depicted better, worse, or the same as they are in reality; for example, Homer depicted people better than they are, Cleophon the same, and Hegemon of Thasos, the first to

\textsuperscript{10} Bertolini 2020, 18–32.
\textsuperscript{11} Imprecision in the use of the terms parody and \textit{paroidia} occasionally results in serious misunderstanding. I untangle one such snarl in chapter 3 in my discussion of Hipponax fr. 126.
\textsuperscript{12} Chamaeleon: Ath. 9.406e. Polemon: Ath. 15.698a–699b.
\textsuperscript{13} These quotes all come from Polemon’s section (Ath. 15.698a–699b). Chamaeleon offers more details about Hegemon in particular.
\textsuperscript{14} Ath. 15.698a–699b. Hegemon is also identified as an author of Old Comedy.
compose parodies (ὁ τὰς παρῳδίας ποιήσας πρῶτος), worse. Likewise, tragedy depicts people better, and comedy worse. Aristotle’s alignment of these authors suggests that they fall within the same metrical category, evidencing the early association of *paroidia* with epic parody specifically.

The overlap between authors of comedy and *paroidia* in Polemon’s list (Epicharmus, Cratinus…) and the equivalence set up by Aristotle between *paroidia* and comedy suggest that epic parody and comedy ought to be contextualized alongside one another. Indeed, some scholars of comedy have studied allusion to epic in comedy, or “paraepic comedy” as it is often called. Revermann defines this term as “any instance in which a comic playwright is trying to cue his audience into connecting, for whatever length of time, what they experience right now in the theatre with epic poetry.” The term “epic parody,” by contrast, is reserved for engagements with the language, meter, and style of epic poetry, be it a specific text (e.g. through quotation of the *Odyssey*) or the genre broadly (e.g. through the use of formulaic language). The term “paraepic” has allowed scholars to consider different kinds of epic allusion in drama together, including the use of epic characters and settings in plays (often called “burlesque”) and the use of epic language, meter, and other formal features (often called “parody,” as described above). However, while scholars of standalone hexameter epic parody and paraepic comedy often nod to one another, surprisingly few investigate the poetic techniques,

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15 *Poetics* 1448a.
17 Revermann 2013, 104.
18 See, for example, Farmer’s justification for his use of the terms “epic parody” and “paraepic” in his discussion of Theopompus; Farmer 2020, 341.
motifs, and effects that these two genres share, or provide close readings of these strands of literature alongside one another.\textsuperscript{19}

Given the state of the evidence, it is unsurprising that the relatively little scholarship that has been produced on Greek epic parody has largely concerned itself with defining \textit{paroidia}, excavating a corpus of literature that might qualify as \textit{paroidia}, and tracing a history of the genre. The foundational scholarship in this tradition largely took the form of lexical analyses of the term \textit{paroidia} and texts and commentaries on passages and fragments that might qualify as such.\textsuperscript{20} However, approaching epic parody solely through definitions of \textit{paroidia} offers a limited literary historical context for Greek epic parody. Genre labels in the sixth to fourth centuries may be useful for telling us about performance context, but we know very little about how \textit{paroidia} was performed, including how common it was, when in the course of a festival performance it took place, and how dramatically the performer presented it.\textsuperscript{21} It is also not certain that all poetry

\textsuperscript{19} Exceptions are Magnelli 2004 and Bertolini 2020. On the opposite end of the spectrum is Acosta-Hughes et al. 2011, which includes one essay on the \textit{Margites} and one on the \textit{Batrachomyomachia}, but otherwise focuses on humorous receptions of Homeric epic in Greek literature in genres outside of comedy and \textit{paroidia}.

\textsuperscript{20} The earliest works on epic parody were texts and commentaries, such as Peltzer 1855, Paessens 1859, and Brandt 1888. Brandt’s collection became the standard scholarly edition in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Degani 1983 then provided new Italian translations and commentaries on the texts in Brandt’s collection. Lexical analyses include Householder 1944, Maas 1949, Lelièvre 1954, Koller 1956, Pohlmann 1972, and Degani 2004. Other lexical analyses can be found in the studies listed earlier in this note, and below in n. 23.

\textsuperscript{21} Athenaeus, citing Chamaeleon, states that Hegemon performed with theatrical flair: εἰδοκίμει δ’ ὁ ἀνήρ μᾶλιτα ἐν ταῖς παρῳδίαισι καὶ περιβότησι ἄν λέγων τὰ ἐπὶ πανούργιος καὶ ὑποκριτικός, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα σφόδρα παρὰ τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις εἰδοκίμει. (Ath. 9.407a) Later, via Polemon, we learn that Hegemon was the first to enter dramatic competitions with parodies: τούτων δὲ πρῶτος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τοὺς ἀρχαίους τοὺς θυμελικοὺς Ἡγήμων καὶ παρ’ Ἀθηναίοις ἐνίκησεν ἄλλας τις παρῳδίας καὶ τῇ Γιγαντομαχίᾳ. (Ath. 15.699a) The title “Gigantomachy” calls to mind an epic burlesque like a satyr play, but when Chamaeleon describes the work, he describes the audience as listening (rather than watching) Hegemon himself (rather than a cast), which suggests that this was a solo performance (Ath. 9.407a-b). However, Polemon also states that Hegemon authored an Old Comedy (15.699a). Hegemon’s testimonia thus hint at a close relationship between parody and comedy. However, they also must be approached with caution; some of the stories that Chamaeleon and Polemon relate about Hegemon are quite sensational.
labelled *paroidia* was performed publicly, or only performed publicly; drama requires a stage and actors, but poetry with a solo narrator may be recited anywhere.\(^2\) As such, knowing that Polemon or Chamaeleon calls a passage *paroidia* does not always help us know who the original audience was or how they experienced it.

In recent decades, scholars have expanded into more literary critical approaches to Greek epic parody, such as identifying common motifs and effects.\(^3\) Currently, this scholarship all focuses on a single author, or provides cursory discussions of many at once. The material is therefore ripe for closer comparative analysis, and in dire need of new criteria for such analysis beyond the genre or category of *paroidia*.

**Methodology:**

My study is born out of the observation that scholarship on epic parody has been dominated by discussions of parody and *paroidia*, with no attention given to what “epic” might mean in the context of this poetry. Furthermore, studies have largely focused on reconstructing the intention of the author of the parody rather than the experience of the audience. The general public would have encountered epic poetry in performance, in related literary and subliterary modes (through its influence on tragedy, its similarity to oracle, etc.), and in formal and informal education. I ask how audiences who accessed

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\(^2\) Some parodies may have been recited at symposia, for example; Olson and Sens 1999, 12.

\(^3\) Book-length studies include Degani and 1983; Olson and Sens 1999 and 2000; and Fonseca 2018. These works offer full introduction to the broader tradition of Greek epic parody followed by either close reading of a single text, or a collection of a number of texts. Two dissertations completed in 2020 are also notable: Sebastiano Bertolini offers a kind of companion to Greek epic parody, with chapters devoted to key issues such as “the humor of epic parody” and “the criticism of epic parody.” Niek Janssen examines the capacity for parody to act as a form of “appropriate transgression” in Greek and Latin literature. I am grateful to Dr. Janssen for sharing his work with me while it is still under university embargo. Article-length studies on individual authors have also emerged; these will be noted in the following chapters when those authors are introduced.
epic exclusively or primarily through these social practices experienced epic parody. To accomplish this, I adopt an inclusive definition of “parody” and then select a corpus of material that speaks most clearly to the issue at hand.

Dentith’s definition is a good starting point. To reiterate, he proposes that parody includes “any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice.” This polemic may be directed against the object of imitation or against an external target. I emend his definition by expanding “polemical” to “polemical and/or funny.” Humor is as important as polemic in the potential examples of Greek epic parody that Dentith’s definition yields. Furthermore, the fragmentary state of the potential examples in Greek literature often permits us to recognize humor more than polemic in an example, or vice versa, although the complete text may have yielded a different overall impression. To avoid ambiguity, I will avoid using “parody” as a verb (e.g. “poem A parodies poem B”) and instead specify whether it imitates, mocks, criticizes, etc.

Dentith stresses that “‘parody’ should be thought of, not as a single and tightly definable genre or practice, but as a range of cultural practices,” with considerable variation in such matters as “the extent and closeness of the imitation, the degree of hostility, and the play between ‘high’ and ‘low’ (of manner and matter) which the parody sets in motion.” The concept of parody as an open-ended spectrum is especially useful for a corpus of fragmentary material for which hostility, extent of imitation, etc. often cannot all be convincingly determined. It is also appropriate given that the term paroidia,

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in its broadest sense, seems to have been applied to a range of allusive practices. A strict taxonomy like Genette’s, furthermore, is not always applicable; Hegemon’s fragment, for instance, combines epic poetic form with a comic setting, but concludes with a surprise epiphany of Athena, situating an epic character in the comic world. Distinguishing “parody” from “burlesque travesty” is not always possible. Furthermore, while Dentith’s focus is literary parody, his basic definition of parody is not strictly text-based. This makes it much more suitable for the performance-based literary culture of the sixth to fourth centuries than an approach that assumes a highly literate parodist and a reading audience. Dentith’s approach results in an expansive potential corpus, which I discuss more thoroughly below. I do not treat this whole corpus, but a selection of case studies that engage clearly with epic as a feature of contemporary life.

It remains to clarify my use of the terms “Homeric” and “reception.” I only use the term “Homeric parody” when dealing with sources that name Homer explicitly, preferring “epic parody” or “heroic epic parody” for all other cases. There is a good case to be made that all parody of heroic epic in the sixth to fourth centuries would have been associated with Homer specifically by at least some of the audience. I avoid “Homeric” in order to circumvent the ambiguity that arises between the ancient and modern uses of the word, and to account for the fact that audiences of different times, and different members of a single audience, might understand Homer and his oeuvre differently. The term “reception” in the context of epic poetry is also fraught. As Barbara Graziosi articulates:

According to one definition, students of reception are essentially concerned with ‘the artistic or intellectual processes involved in selecting, imitating, or adapting ancient works’ (this view of reception studies is discussed by Hardwick 2003a: 5).
On this definition, the ‘ancient works’ in question seem to be a given. However... the shaping of the Homeric poems, with the attendant shift of focus from performance to texts, and the ongoing redefinition of Homer’s oeuvre, can itself be seen as a process of reception.26

Epic parody itself is firmly a form of “reception” by Hardwick’s definition, but its objects of imitation are not always so easily defined. When identifying the source of parodic imitation or target of mockery, it is not always easy to isolate a concept of epic poetry itself as distinct from the ways it was used and consumed; in Hegemon’s fragment, as we have seen, mockery of epic poetry itself and mockery of rhapsodic performance are deeply entangled. Thus, I use the term “reception” to refer not only to ways in which epic poetry was self-consciously used and acted on, but also general attitudes toward it and practices surrounding it. I acknowledge that these attitudes and practices defined and were defined by epic poetry itself. Nonetheless, to avoid confusion with narrow concepts of “reception” as a self-conscious literary or aesthetic exercise, I will often use phrases such as “epic’s contemporary life” that encompass both the poetry itself and its reception.

Outline:

The first chapter provides foundational interpretations for a few important fragments, and in doing so, illustrates the variety of ways in which the mythic past may be layered onto a contemporary comic scene. Each subsequent chapter focuses on a different aspect of the lived experience of epic poetry in the sixth to fourth centuries, and examines how parodists invoke these contemporary practices and phenomena to make epic speak to the current moment.

26 Graziosi 2011, 32.
1. **PAST AND PRESENT, FORM AND CONTENT:** Due to the formulaic nature of epic poetry, even a small piece of epic language in a parody can evoke a complex narrative structure. However, the past may feel distant or immediate, manifesting as a generic tone or a vivid scene, and these effects may vary within a single passage. Case studies include Hegemon fr. 1, Strato fr. 1, and Matro fr. 1. This discussion will also address interpretational issues and scholarly oversights in these fragments and prepare them for further analysis.

2. **EPIC IN PERFORMANCE:** Epic parody often alludes to contemporary modes of epic performance. This may occur through the imitation of some aspect of rhapsodic performance or by incorporating contemporary ideas about Homer or rhapsodes into the character of the mock-epic speaker. The parody may thereby speak to issues such as the place of the poet (singer, rhapsode, etc.) in society, the source of poetic knowledge, and the relationship between the poets of the past and those of the present. Case studies include Aristophanes’ *Peace* 1270-1304 and Hegemon fr. 1.

3. **EPIC IN OTHER VERSE FORMS:** Epic parody often alludes to sub-literary hexameter genres (e.g. riddles, oracles, incantations) or to literary genres that draw on epic language, plots, characters, etc. (e.g. tragedy, lyric). In fact, sometimes a single allusion can evoke epic and another genre at the same time. Scholars have noted that Aristophanes evokes epic mostly through other literary modes (especially tragedy), but this technique occurs in epic parody across genres and time periods. By accessing epic alongside or via related genres, the epic parodist may assimilate epic into his own style and meter, and explore the
relationships between genres. Case studies include Hipponax fr. 126 Degani and Strato fr. 1.

4. **EPIC IN EDUCATION:** Epic parody may access epic through its role in education and intellectual movements. The Classical period saw a proliferation of ways of learning and knowing, all of which engaged with epic in different ways, and many of which were more commodified and exclusive. Alluding to these aspects of epic's contemporary life is an effective way for a parodist to criticize people in power, particularly at the end of the fourth century. This is especially the case when epic is combined with gastronomic content, since food has a similar function as a comic motif. Case studies include Strato fr. 1 and Matro fr. 1.

**Case Studies:**

Applying Dentith’s approach to Greek epic parody invites a wide range of material into consideration. Fragments and passages from plays that situate Homer on stage (e.g. Cratinus’ *Archilochoi*), adapt epic characters and settings (e.g. Euripides’ *Cyclops*), and apply epic language (e.g. Hegemon fr. 1) could all be fair game. We might include works that quote epic directly (e.g. Trygaeus in *Peace* 1097-1098) or use generic epic language or other formal features (e.g. Hipponax fr. 126 Degani). The idea of parody as a spectrum could also allow the inclusion of more liminal material. Depending on the questions one wishes to ask about epic parody, Euripides’ *Helen* may be considered, or Archestratus’ *Life of Luxury*. Visual art may be brought to bear, such as epic burlesque pottery, as well as evidence that defies medium-based categories; cult activity at the Theban Kabeirion, for example, evidenced richly in vase painting, involved the
performance of mythological burlesque, but it is unclear whether this involved speaking actors, a solo narrator, or no words at all.  

Because many fragments of epic parody have been discussed by scholars in brief but rarely (if ever) subjected to extended close reading, let alone comparative close reading, I treat a relatively small number of case studies. As the chapter summary above illustrates, each chapter features 2-3 case studies that evidence how the relevant aspect of epic’s Classical life manifests in epic parody. These include:

- Hipponax fr. 126 Degani (Ath. 15.698c)
- Aristophanes’ Peace, 1270-1304
- Hegemon fr. 1 Brandt (Ath. 15.698d-f)
- Strato fr. 1 Kassel-Austin (P. Cair. 65445; Ath. 9.382b-383c)
- Matro fr. 1 Olson-Sens (Ath. 4.134d-137c)

The fragments and passages I discuss do not represent the only examples of the phenomena I am examining; they are simply illustrative, modelling an approach that may be applied more widely. They come from a variety of poetic genres, including some of uncertain genre, in order to demonstrate a pattern of parodic techniques across genres and offer a fresh literary historical context for canonical and little-studied material alike. I prioritize fragments and passages that engage with more than one aspect of their contemporary literary culture, and so may feature in more than one chapter, and be placed in dialogue with more than one other case study. This arrangement offers a better sense of how epic parody might be understood as a network, defined by particular points of contact, rather than a closed category. In addition to the case studies listed here, a range of other passages and fragments will crop up as further comparative material. These

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27 For discussion of the pottery of the Theban Kabirion, and mythological burlesque vase painting in general, see Mitchell 2009 and Walsh 2009.
include notable examples such as the *Margites*, further fragments of Hipponax, and Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* and *Frogs*.

The selected case studies share certain qualities that allow them to speak to one another and to the Classical life of epic poetry well. They all come from poetry that combines epic language with a contemporary setting and characters; epic stories were told through visual art as well as through words, but I am interested in epic as a poetic form specifically. In parodies that reproduce the linguistic or metrical elements of epic poetry (as opposed to solely its characters or plot), the literary features of epic stand out most saliently. Furthermore, all my case studies imitate heroic epic. Homer became the authoritative epic poet during the Classical period and was most associated with heroic epic, and much of what we know about epic reception pertains to Homer and heroic epic specifically. My focus on parodies of heroic epic offers consistency in epic motifs across case studies, as well as consistency in the aspects of epic’s Classical life that they treat. I realize that by imposing such limitations, I put my study at risk of same flaws inherent in more restrictive approaches to parody like Genette’s. However, I stress that the general approach to epic parody that I apply here – examining it through the role of epic in sixth to fourth century Greek life – may be reproduced with examples that do not share the qualities I have just identified. My relatively small selection of case studies simply reflects my need to illustrate my points clearly, to balance diversity and consistency in my examples, and to allow space for extended close-readings.

Finally, there is the matter of dating. To examine how epic parody engages with its contemporary literary culture, I have selected case studies from works or authors that are roughly dateable, or that at least have a *terminus ante quem*. They range from the
sixth century BCE (Hipponax) to the end of the fourth century (or first quarter of the third at the latest, in the case of Strato and Matro). Poetic performance, modes of poetic allusion, and literary education evolve dramatically throughout the sixth to fourth centuries, and it will be necessary to reckon with these changes as I compare fragments and passages from different times. However, by the end of the fourth century, these literary cultural practices change so dramatically that they become difficult to compare with their early Classical predecessors. Furthermore, in the fourth century, some parodic poetry begins to construct a distinct Classical past that mediates between epic past and contemporary moment. The fragments of Strato and Matro, discussed together in the final chapter, will illustrate these developments in progress. Because my case studies must speak to roughly analogous literary practices and issues, the end of the fourth century (roughly defined) seems to be the most appropriate chronological terminus, arbitrary as such bounds always are.

Editions and Translations:

Editions and translations of my central case studies are as follows:


I have included my translations of Hegemon and Strato’s fragments in an appendix. All comic fragments are from Kassel-Austin and translations are cited in footnotes as they
appear. Editions and translations of all other passages and fragments are also cited in footnotes.
Epic poetry offers potent source material for the parodist. Its language is artificial and idiosyncratic, so that many epic words and phrases are immediately identifiable as such. Because many epic words belong to formulaic phrases and repeated narrative structures, a single phrase can call to mind a complex epic scene. Epic poetry was widely performed during the sixth to fourth centuries, so poets could assume a high level of audience recognition when they engaged in epic allusion. Furthermore, epic represents a literary extreme as a particularly lofty and archaic form of Greek poetry, and thus creates an extreme disjunction when juxtaposed with lowbrow or contemporary material. By approaching epic poetry as a feature of contemporary Classical life, it is possible to see more clearly how this disjunction works and better appreciate its comic and critical effect. However, this disjunction is also often the most obvious source of humor or mockery, and it is therefore an appropriate place to begin.

Using the fragments of Hegemon, Strato, and Matro, this chapter surveys the myriad ways that a scene from mythic history can shape and color a contemporary comic scene in an epic parody. To say that these fragments all combine epic language with iambic or comic characters and settings conceals a great deal of diversity in how they work. Scholars tend to compare and contrast fragments of epic parody based on target of mockery (epic or something else?) or object of imitation (Homeric epic specifically? Epic poetry more broadly?). These are valuable approaches, and I will be considering them more fully in the following chapters. However, examining the disjunction between heroic
past and comic present specifically highlights other similarities and differences.

Hegemon, Strato, and Matro all conjure specific epic scenes that color the contemporary setting and characters, but these epic scenes may feel immediate or distant, driving the action in different ways and to different degrees. Sometimes we see epic and comic language assimilated smoothly and other times obtrusively. I progress through each of these passages from beginning to end, focusing on how parodic techniques and effects can vary within the same passage, building and releasing tension, and setting and upsetting expectations. I also highlight the moments that the fragments defy the formula of “epic form plus comic content” that they initially seem to employ. In this way, this chapter showcases the variety of ways that an epic parody may juxtapose past and present, high and low, so that future chapters may investigate how the lived experience of epic poetry mediates these disjunctions and makes them meaningful. This chapter also serves the more practical purpose of establishing foundational interpretations for the fragments of Hegemon, Strato, and Matro, which are unfamiliar to many readers and whose content is not always self-evident.

I. Hegemon Fr. 1

Hegemon’s biographical tradition, related in Athenaeus, dates him to the fifth century, and Aristotle mentions him in the Poetics, providing a terminus ante quem.28

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28 Testimonia: Arist. Poetics 1448a; Ath. 1.5b; 3.108c; 9.406e-407b; 15.698b-699a (citing Polemon of Ilium and Chamaeon of Pontus); Suda η 52-53 (citing Demosthenes); Eust. Il. 1239, 21-26 (on Il. 21.341). Athenaeus situates him as a contemporary of Cratinus and Epicharmus, and also claims that he was performing when the news of the Sicilian expedition reached Athens. These biographical details and
Athenaeus transmits only a few fragments, the longest of which is 21 hexameter lines (fr. 1), considered here. In it, a first-person narrator describes the hostile reception he received in Thasos upon returning from a performance in Athens. He swears that he will give away his prize money and never travel again for profit, but Athena appears and encourages him to compete again. Hegemon composes using dactylic hexameters and epic formulaic language, and these formal features drive home the epic quality of Athena’s epiphany. At the same time, Hegemon also dots this epic poetic fabric with comic language, creating a poem that is both epic and comic in both its content and its form. Nonetheless, it is challenging to articulate how its epic elements are operating because the fragment’s argument is difficult to follow, with multiple layers of indirect speech, a digressive style, and obscure references. Untangling the narrator and the poet poses a further challenge. Athenaeus’ sources, Chamaeleon and Polemon, both identify the narrator with Hegemon himself. However, this is a common impulse in the others in Athenaeus – as well as those related within fr. 1 – must be approached with caution (c.f. n. 31 below). However, given Aristotle’s reference to Hegemon, the fifth century seems plausible. Publications on Hegemon from the past century includes Pianko 1951; Glei 1992; Panomitros 2003; Ornaghi 2004; Bagordo 2014, 105-113; Magnani 2014; Fonseca 2018, 66-70. Tammaro has produced a series of textual critical articles (Tammaro 1982, 1997, 2000). I am grateful to Sebastiano Bertolini for sharing his text and commentary of Hegemon fr. 1 with me, which he produced for his tesi di laurea at the University of Bologna in 2013. Bertolini also discusses Hegemon in a separate article (Bertolini 2014) and in his doctoral thesis (Bertolini 2020, 25-27, 34-40, 55-61). I am also grateful to Niek Janssen for sharing the chapter on Hegemon he wrote for his recent doctoral thesis (Janssen 2020, 21-54).

The hexameter fragment is quoted in full at 15.698d-f, and the final four lines also appear at 9.406e-f. Two lines attributed to a Philinna appear at Ath. 3.108c (fr. 1 K-A). I am grateful to Sebastiano Bertolini for sharing his text and commentary of Hegemon fr. 1 with me, which he produced for his tesi di laurea at the University of Bologna in 2013. Bertolini also discusses Hegemon in a separate article (Bertolini 2014) and in his doctoral thesis (Bertolini 2020, 25-27, 34-40, 55-61). I am also grateful to Niek Janssen for sharing the chapter on Hegemon he wrote for his recent doctoral thesis (Janssen 2020, 21-54).

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The testimonia seem to interpret the narrator as Hegemon himself; Athenaeus presents the passage as evidence of Hegemon’s nickname “Lentil Soup.” However, too often scholars have interpreted this fragment as a literal account from Hegemon’s life. To avoid confusion, I refer to the narrator as such, and reserve the name “Hegemon” for when I am talking about the poet.
biographical tradition, and comic exaggeration and invention are common in genres related to parody, such as comedy and iambus.

To address these issues, I proceed through the fragment in order, surveying its epic formal features using examples from the first half, and then untangling its narrative and rhetorical problems, which peak in the second half. I demonstrate that these aspects of the poem in fact go hand in hand, and that the fragment’s dysfunction is not a flaw, but a feature of its epic poetics arising from its particular manner of blending epic and comic language and content. Throughout my discussion, I speak of Hegemon and the narrator separately to avoid confusion. I do not assume that the narrator must be a rhapsode (as line 9 might suggest) or must be a parodist (reflecting Hegemon himself); I refer to the narrator as a singer or performer, and Hegemon himself as a parodist.

Hegemon’s Epic Fabric

Most of the language in Hegemon’s fragment is comprised of epic formulaic building blocks. The opening lines of the fragment illustrate this effect (1-6):

ēς δὲ Θάσον μ’ ἐλθόντα μετεωρίζοντες ἔβαλλον πολλοῖς σπελέθοις, καὶ οὐδὲ τις εἶπε παραστάς·
“ὁ πάντων ἀνδρῶν βδελυρώτατε, τίς σ’ ἀνέπεισε καλὴν <ἐς> κρηπίδα ποσὶν τούτωσ’ ἀναβήναι;”
τοῦτος δ’ ἐγὼ πᾶσιν μικρὸν μετὰ τοῦτ’ ἐπος εἶπον·

Some scholars have attempted to reconstruct Hegemon’s career and the early history of paroidia as a genre based on fr. 1 and the biographical information related about Hegemon in Athenaeus (Glei 1992; Panomitos 2003; Ormagni 2004; Magnani 2014). However, we do not know whether the speaker of fr. 1 is indeed intended to be Hegemon, or if that reading emerged through interpretation of the already-excerpted fragment. Furthermore, if it is Hegemon, he may be inventing the story entirely for comic effect. In addition, the biographical tradition often assimilates or aligns poets with other poets in the same tradition, favors sensational stories, and takes as fact the content of a poet’s own work. Some details in Athenaeus are suspicious, such as the identification of Hegemon as a contemporary of Cratinus (Ath. 15.698c) and the story that he was performing when news of the Sicilian expedition reached Athens (Ath. 9.407a-b). Hegemon’s biographical tradition is insightful as evidence of the reception of his poetry and of parody in general, but ought not be taken as historical fact.

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“μνὴ μ’ ἀνέπεσε γέροντα καὶ οὐκ ἔθελοντ’ ἀναβῆναι…

When I reached Thasos, they launched on me a volley of copious turds, and someone near me said: “Oh greatest of all bums, who persuaded you to step upon the noble stage with feet like those?” Among them all I spoke a little speech:

“One mina swayed me, though old and loath to go…"

The formulaic nature of the fragment’s opening is apparent from its similarity to lines found in Homeric arrival scenes, such as Od. 5.97 (εἰρωτᾶς μ’ ἔλθοντα…) or Od. 9.30 (ἔλθον εἰς Ἰθάκην…). In line 2, πολλοῖς σπελθοῖσι finds a parallel in πολλοῖς βέλεσιν (Il. 13.555), and the end of the line uses a common Homeric speech introduction (e.g. Il. 6.75: …καὶ Ἕκτορι ἔπε παραστάς). These lines call to mind broad types of epic characters and scenes, but they are too common and generic to evoke a particular passage from a particular poem; in this sense, they are fairly representative of the kind of epic language Hegemon uses throughout the fragment. However, two potential examples of more focused allusion must be noted. The phrase ποσὶν τοioδ’ (line 4) recalls Odyssey 19 when Penelope asks Eurycleia to wash the feet of the disguised Odysseus and notes that Odysseus’ hands and feet must be weathered due to age and ill fortune. Hegemon uses the phrase in the same position in the line, and the contexts line up curiously well. The narrator calls himself old and poor, and so the phrase ποσὶν τοioδ’ calls to mind the same physical qualities as it does in the Odyssean context. Furthermore, the narrator, like Odysseus, has just returned from a sea journey

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32 Other Homeric parallels for the beginning of the line include Il. 11.140 and Od. 19.394, 19.466, 21.220 and 24.267. Parallels for this opening line can also be found outside the epic tradition, as the following chapter will discuss.

33 Od. 19.357-360: ἀλλ’ ἄγε νῦν ἀνστάσα, περιφρόνων Εὐρύκλεια, / νύσσον σοῖο ἀνακτὸς ὀμήλικα’ καὶ ποι Ὀδυσσέιος / ἥδη τοῦσοδ’ ἐστι πόδας τοιόσδε τε χείρας’ / ἄψιν γὰρ ἐν κακότητι βροτοί καταγράσκουσιν.

34 I discuss the metrical joke and generic implications of ποσὶν τοioδ’ later in this section, and again in the following chapter.
to a hostile reception at home; both characters have objects thrown at them.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, although the phrase is not exceptionally specific, the broader context leaves open the possibility of more focused allusion. Another example occurs in lines 13-15 when the narrator imagines the fate of his wife using language from passages of Homeric epic that imagine the fates of Andromache and Penelope; I will discuss this example more fully in the following section. Although these passages are worth flagging, the fragment is ultimately too short, and our knowledge of its literary and performance context too slim, to draw convincing conclusions about the extent and effect of its engagement with the \textit{Odyssey} specifically. In any case, setting aside these possible exceptions, the fragment’s epic language is generic. The most common source material for the fragment’s parodic imitation is not a particular text or episode, but the epic poetic tradition broadly, and the process of creative composition.

The lower-register language in Hegemon’s epic fabric often comes as a surprise.\textsuperscript{36} The enjambment of \(\pi\omega\lambda\lambda\omega\chi\iota\iota\sigma \sigma\pi\varepsilon\ell\varepsilon\theta\omega\iota\sigma\iota\) in the second line of the fragment, for instance, enhances its comic twist. However, not all of the non-epic language in the fragment is so conspicuous. The formulaic nature of epic poetry gives audiences strong and specific expectations for what it should sound like, such that even a fairly neutral word can subvert these expectations. In line 5, for example, Hegemon adds \(\mu\iota\kappa\rho\omicron\nu\) to an otherwise formulaic speech introduction to further emphasize the narrator’s over-the-top

\textsuperscript{35} Panomitros 2003, 155 and Bertolini 2013, 34-35 note the Odyssean qualities of Hegemon’s narrator. Odysseus has a stool thrown at him at \textit{Od.} 17.462, 18.393-396, and an ox hoof at 20.299-302.

\textsuperscript{36} The fragment breaks significantly from the epic style with \(\sigma\pi\varepsilon\ell\varepsilon\theta\omega\iota\sigma\iota\) (line 2), \(\beta\delta\ell\varepsilon\rho\omega\tau\alpha\tau\varepsilon\) (3), \(\alpha\nu\eta\pi\epsilon\iota\epsilon\iota\varepsilon\) (4), \(\mu\iota\kappa\rho\omicron\nu\) (in a usage unattested in epic; 5), \(\mu\nu\omicron\) (6), \(\alpha\nu\pi\epsilon\iota\epsilon\iota\varepsilon\omicron\) (6), \(\sigma\pi\alpha\nu\iota\varsigma\) (7), \(\alpha\lambda\kappa\alpha\delta\alpha\) (7), \(\epsilon\upsilon\kappa\omicron\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\upsilon\beta\delta\ell\varepsilon\rho\omicron\nu\) (8), \(\rho\alpha\psi\phi\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\upsilon\omicron\varsigma\iota\varsigma\upsilon\) (9), line 14 in its entirety, \(\sigma\iota\mu\iota\kappa\rho\omicron\nu\) \(\tau\upsilon\rho\omicron\omicron\upsilon\iota\nu\iota\) (15), \(\Lambda\theta\gamma\nu\iota\iota\omicron\iota\iota\) (16), all of line 17, \(\Phi\alpha\kappa\iota\beta\delta\ell\varepsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon\) (20). Bertolini 2013 provides a detailed discussion of these words.
self-deprecation (τοῖσι δ’ ἐγὼ πᾶσιν μικρὸν μετὰ τοῦτ’ ἔπος εἶπον; “among them all I spoke a little speech”), and although μικρός is genre-neutral, its usage in this context is decidedly un-epic. The addition of μικρός here may seem like a banal innovation, but the fact that it stands out at all is a testament to the power of epic as a parodic source material.

Hegemon also occasionally creates funny moments by using epic words in non-epic ways, although this kind of wordplay can be difficult to detect. Line 3, for instance, may contain a dig against the narrator’s poetic ability if ποσὶν τοιοῦσδ’ is understood as a reference to metrical feet. In line 11, we will see him use κέρδος in the more contemporary sense of financial profit, although in Homeric epic this word usually appears in the plural to mean “cunning” or even “mischief;” in the Iliad and Odyssey it only appears in the singular three times, and in these cases it refers to a more abstract benefit or advantage rather than a concrete financial profit. In line 14, Hegemon uses πέσσω (14) to mean “bake,” although in epic it only ever means “soften” or “ripen.” Matro sometimes uses a similar technique; in fact, later in this chapter we will see him use πέσσω similarly to Hegemon.

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37 This would be an early usage of πούς in a metrical context, but it is not impossible. In the Frogs (1323), Aristophanes takes advantage of the double meaning of the word to draw attention to Aeschylus’ physical feet as well as to a metrical abnormality (Dover 1997, 215-216). Plato’s Republic 400a-c constitutes another early attestation of πούς as a metrical term. If Hegemon has this meaning in mind, then line 4 may act as a general dig at the narrator’s poetic ability or a more specific reference to a particular metrical practice. I discuss this issue further in the conclusion of this section.

38 κέρδος appears in the singular at Il. 10.225, Od. 16.311, and Od. 23.140. The TLG records twelve appearances of the word in the plural.

39 Bertolini 2013, 90.
A related parodic technique in Hegemon’s fragment is the use of non-epic words that are phonetically similar to epic words. The following lines contain a potential example (6-10):

“μνῆ μ’ ἀνέπεισε γέροντα καὶ οὐκ ἔθελον’ ἀναβῆναι καὶ σπάνις, ἥ πολλοὺς Θασίων εἰς ὀλκάδα βάλλει εὐκοῦρων βδελυρῶν, ὀλλύτων τ’ ὀλλιμένων τε ἀνδρῶν, οἱ νῦν κεῖθι κακῶς κακὰ ραψῳδοῦσιν, οἶς καὶ ἐγὼ σιτοῖ μέγα χρηῖζον ἐπίθησα…”

“One mina swayed me, though old and loath to go, and want, which drives many Thasians to a tradeboat, baldheaded bums, men slaying and slain, who now sing abroad – bad songs, badly done. These things swayed me, for I needed food mightily…”

We might expect a singer-character to claim to be motivated by μνῆμα, memory, but instead he claims to be motivated by money, represented by a mina. μνῆμα is even contained within the first three words of the line, μνῆ μ’ ἀνέπεισε, and the manuscript tradition in fact preserves μνῆμ’ ἀνέπεισε; μνῆ μ’ ἀνέπεισε is Wilamowitz’ emendation, although the phonetic similarity between them seems to be precisely the point, since the passage is playing with the question of whether the narrator is actually divinely inspired or is simply performing for profit.40 Later, we will see him juxtapose ἄχαινόν, a type of bread associated with the Megalartia festival, with Ἀχαίαιδων (13-14). These types of phonetic effects are difficult to identify with certainty because they can easily generate scribal error, and if they survive intact, they may still be mistaken for textual corruption if the humor is not properly identified.41 Once again, wordplay involving homophones and

40 Kaibel 1890, 544; Wilamowitz 1905, 174.
41 For discussion of line 6, see Tammaro 1997, 124-125 and Bertolini 2013, 52-56. For lines 13-14, see notes 43-47 below.
near-homophones is more closely associated with Matro of Pitane, as we shall see, and it is true that Matro employs this technique with special ingenuity. Still, it is striking that Hegemon may well be employing comparable techniques a century earlier.

Hegemon and Matro employ these parodic techniques to different effect, however. Matro’s wordplay is denser and more complex, resulting in a seamless integration of the epic and comic worlds; often, his use of epic language is impressive and funny because of how well it works in the contemporary context. Hegemon, meanwhile, often shifts abruptly between the epic and the comic in a way that emphasizes their incongruity. This style manifests not only in abrupt about-faces, like the enjambment of σπελέθοισι in line 2 or the use of μνή in line 7, but also in the humorous misapplications of epic language. The formula ὀλλύατων τ’ ὀλλυμένων τε (8), for example, appears three times in the Iliad, all in the context of men killing and dying in battle, but Hegemon applies it to the “baldheaded bums” who leave Thasos to sing abroad.42 It would require such mental gymnastics to interpret Hegemon’s use of the phrase literally that it is best understood as intentionally irrelevant. The epic formula is funny because it generates a shift in tone from the beginning of the line, and because it creates a goofy existential absurdity; it is ludicrous to imagine these rhapsodes killing and dying like warriors.

Hegemon’s practice of abruptly deploying ill-suited epic formulae is a unique aspect of his style, and poses significant challenges to scholars, not least because it can

42 Ili. 11.83, for example: εἰσορόων Τρώων τε πόλιν καὶ νῆς Αχαιῶν / χαλκοῦ τε στεροπήν, ὀλλυμένων τε ὀλλυμένῳς τε. The formula also appears at Ili. 4.451 and 8.65. Even apart from this formula, different forms of ὀλλυμί often appear alongside one another in epic and tragedy, including active and middle passive forms, e.g. Od. 7.60: ὀλλ’ ὁ μὲν ὠλέσει λαόν ἀτάσθαλον, ὠλέτο δ’ αὐτός. Eur. Helen, 383: τὸ δ’ ἐμὸν δέμας ὠλέσει / ὠλέσει πέργαμα Δαρδάνιας / ὠλομένους τ’ Ἀχαιῶν.
raise suspicions of textual corruption. Moving forward, I will refer to this phenomenon in Hegemon’s fragment as “epic intrusion” and the parodic technique it represents as “intrusive poetics.” “Intrusive” is an apt term to describe Hegemon’s misapplications of epic formulae because they sometimes affect the action and structure of the narrative in significant ways, especially in the second half of the fragment. With this in mind, I now turn to the final lines of the fragment, where two cases of epic intrusion disrupt the argument significantly: the reference to the Achaean women (13-15) and the epiphany of Athena (18-21).

Lines 13-15: The Achaean Women

In the first ten lines of the fragment, the epic and comic language play well together to create a coherent story. The narrator describes how he was pelted with poop upon arriving in Thasos, then relates in direct speech a question posed by one of the Thasians: “Oh greatest of all bums, who persuaded you / to step upon the noble stage with feet like those?” (3-4) The narrator then relates his own response, again in direct speech. As previously mentioned, Hegemon uses the comically ill-suited epithet ὀλλοντον τ’ ὀλλωμένων τε to describe the Thasian rhapsodes, but this epicism does not interrupt the narrative as a whole. The narrative disjunction begins in earnest in the following sentence (11-17):

“…αὖθις δ’ οὐκ ἐπὶ κέρδος ἁπείσομαι, εἰς Θασίους δὲ μηδένα πημαίνων κλυτὸν ἄργυρον ἐγγυαλίζων, μὴ τίς μοι κατὰ οἶκον Ἀχαιῶν νεμείς ήσοντο αἰσθημένης ἀλόχου τὸν ἄχαινὸν ἄρτον ἄεικώς, καὶ ποτέ τις εἰς ἔπη σμικρὸν τυροῦντ’ ἐςιδοῦσα, ὡς φίλη, ὧνὴρ μὲν παρ’ Ἀθηναίοις ἄειτας πεντήκοντ’ ἔλαβε δραχμάς, σύ δὲ μικρὸν ἐπέψω.”
“…But I’ll stop travelling for gain, and so not to grieve the Thasians, I will hand over my eminent silver, lest in my home some woman of the Achaian shame me when the holiday loaf my wife bakes up is paltry; then someone might say, eyeing the tiny cheese bread: ‘My dear, your husband sang in Athens and won fifty drachmas, but you baked a tiny thing!’”

Line 13 takes a baffling turn. Are we to believe that this narrator – who has just explained how poor he is – has multiple Achaean women living in his household? Why are they Achaean specifically? And what does this have to do with his choice to give away his money? It is natural that the line feels out of place here, because Hegemon has lifted it almost word for word from the Odyssey, where it appears three times; on all three occasions, Penelope explains that she will weave a shroud for Laertes “so no Achaean woman in the land blames me” (μή τίς μοι κατὰ δήμον Αχαϊάδων νεμεσήσῃ).

Hegemon’s only innovation is to replace δήμον with οἶκον.43 With this line, Hegemon catches his audience off guard, leaving them to wonder where this speech could possibly be going.

In line 14, Hegemon begins the task of yoking this epic line into the context of the narrator’s speech. However, significant textual issues complicate the interpretation of the passage:

13-14 (MSS):
μή τίς μοι κατὰ οἶκον Αχαϊάδων νεμεσήσῃ
πεσσομένης ἀλόχου τὸν ἀχαικὸν ἄρτον ἐν οἴκοις

13-14 (Olson):
μή τίς μοι κατὰ οἶκον Αχαϊάδων νεμεσήσῃ

43 Hegemon 13: μή τίς μοι κατὰ οἶκον Αχαϊάδων νεμεσήσῃ. Od. 2.101, 19.146, and 24.136: μή τίς μοι κατὰ δήμον Αχαϊάδων νεμεσήσῃ. Hegemon’s replacement of δήμον with οἶκον also has a Homeric parallel. The phrase μοι κατὰ οἶκον occurs at Il. 19.18 (καλὰ, τά μοι κατὰ οἶκον ἄκηδα καπνὸς ἀμέρδει). But some scholars emend οἶκον to δήμον. For further discussion see notes 44-47 below.
Πεσσομένης ἀλόχου τὸν ἀχαίνων ἀρτον ἀεικός,

The similarity of οἶκον/οἶκος and Ἀχαιάδων/Ἀχαίκόν in the manuscript readings of lines 13-14 has prompted editors to suspect corruption and posit various emendations, two of which Olson has adopted in line 14. However, any corruptions that exist in these lines, as well as the fears of corruption on the part of scholars, must stem from intentional wordplay between the lines. Neither νεμεσήσῃ nor πεσσομένης is disputed, but they create an amusing tongue-twister. Furthermore, the echoes between the two lines occur in a chiastic structure: οἶκον Ἀχαιάδων νεμεσήσῃ / πεσσομένης… ἀχαίκον… οἶκος. This would be an oddly mapped contamination if the words did not already resemble one another. Finally, there is a thematic pattern to the wordplay, since line 14 imitates the epicisms in line 13 using culinary terms. Πεσσομένης recalls νεμεσήσῃ, but refers to baking, and ἀχαίκον resembles Ἀχαιάδων in the previous line, but also seems to refer to ἀχαίνη, a particular kind of bread associated with the cult of Demeter and Persephone.44

The repetition of οἶκον/οἶκος quite possibly constitutes a corruption based on another piece of phonetic wordplay, although there is no scholarly consensus on this issue.45 In

44 Matro fr. 1 also uses the word in a culinary context in lines 6 and 103. The word ἀχαίκον is a hapax legomenon. Casaubon 1621, 272 was first to suggest that it may be a corruption of ἀχαίνων, a type of bread; according to Athenaeus, the ἀχαίνη bread was baked for the Megalartia festival to Demeter and Kore (3.109f; on the evidence for the festival, see n.17, below). This is the prevailing interpretation of the word’s meaning among 20th and 21st century scholars, although Glei 1992 prints the ἀχαίκον, and Tammaro 2000, 661 argues that ἀχαίκον is correct and constitutes an amusing epicization of ἀχαίνων. Recent discussions include Neri 2003, 201; Bertolini 2013, 87-90; Magnani 2013, 48-49 and 2014, 379 n. 43. One of Demeter’s epithets was Achaia, so this likely explains the name of the bread (Nilsson 1906, 333). The ἀχαίνη bread is not attested outside Athenaeus, apart from a dubious reference in Hesychius (χαῖνας: στέαρς). The only other appearances of the word ἀχαίνη are in Aristotle’s History of Animals, where it refers to a kind of deer; this may be a homonym. With such limited evidence, the meaning of the word is opaque. However, because it is a baked good in Hegemon’s fragment, Athenaeus’ definition of the ἀχαίνη is our best evidence.

45 Olson’s reading of ἀεικός in line 14, following Wachsmuth 1885, squares with the woman’s direct speech in lines 16-17, and it is easy to see how a scribe might have mistaken it for ἐν οἶκος. It is still unclear why Hegemon would choose to adapt the Homeric ἔμοι in line 13 to οἶκον, however, and so some editors have identified ἐν οἶκος (14) as original and οἶκον (13) as the scribal error rather than vice versa.
any case, it is possible to conclude with some confidence that line 14 utilizes near homophones of the words in line 13 to produce a culinary recasting of an epic formulaic line, and thereby ties the epic line back to the context of the narrator’s speech.

Although line 14 yokes line 13 to the context of the narrator’s argument, the logic of the argument is difficult to untangle, and the narrator’s speech never regains the clarity it had at the beginning. For one, the sudden digression into baking leaves the occasion for the wife’s baking ambiguous. Some scholars have interpreted her bread as a treat celebrating the narrator’s return from abroad, although nothing in the fragment makes this explicit. Athenaeus offers a more promising lead in Book 2 of the *Deipnosophists* when he defines the ἀχαίνη bread as an oversized loaf dedicated at the Megalartia (“Big Bread Fest”), which was either a day of the Thesmophoria or a separate festival for Demeter and Persephone. Hegemon’s narrator imagines a female audience for the bread

As a result, these editors emend ὀἶκον back to δήμον, in keeping with the original Homeric line. This approach to the line also seems reasonable to me. For a summary of the various treatments of these lines, see Bertolini 2013, 85-87.

46 Wilamowitz interprets it as a congratulatory pastry that the narrator’s wife has prepared to celebrate his return, and suggests that she has baked paltry cake to punish him for abandoning her in poverty (Wilamowitz 1905, 174). Bertolini 2013, 86 follows this reading. This interpretation makes assumptions about the characters’ motivations that the fragment does not make explicit. Most scholars do not specify a context for the bread, although the German translation of Glei 1992 renders line 14 as “…wenn meine Frau im Hause Brot für die Thesmophorien bäckt…”

47 Athenaeus 3.109f: Ἀχαϊνας, τοῦτον τοῦ ἅρτου μνημονεύει Σήμος ἐν ὡκτή Δηλιάδος λέγον ταῖς Θεσμοφόροις γίνεσθαι. εἰς δὲ ἅρτοι μεγάλοι, καὶ ἱστηκει Μεγαλάρτια ἐπιλεγόντων τοῖς θερόντων ἁχαϊνὴν στέατος ἐμπλεον τράγον. Trans. Olson 2007b: “Αchaiaina. Semus mentions this bread in Book VIII of his History of Delos and says that it is produced for the Thesmophoroi. The loaves are large, and the festival is called the Megalartia (‘Large Loaf Festival’); and those who carry them recite: ‘an achaīna he-goat full of lard.’” Because Athenaeus refers to Demeter and Kore as Thesmophoroi, it is possible that the Megalartia is a day or an event of the Thesmophoria (Nilsson 1906, 333); however, it could be a standalone festival (Bruneau 1970, 289-290). Our evidence for the Megalartia is slim. In addition to this passage in Athenaeus, Eustathius mentions the Megalartia in Boeotia (II. 265.31), and an early fourth century BCE inscription attests to its celebration at Delphi (CID I, 9D). We also know that Halos and Phthiotic Thebes had a month called Megalartios, which may evidence the celebration of the festival there (Trümpy 1997, 237, 240). In any case, the Megalartia, was certainly celebrated in honor of Demeter, since “Megalartos” is a common epithet of hers, and it is reasonable to conclude that the event involved oversized loaves of bread. It should be noted that Olson’s translation “an achaīna he-goat full of lard” (ἀχαϊνην στέατος ἐμπλεον τράγον) is disputed; τράγον may be an imperative verb, resulting in a translation along the lines of
and anticipates scrutiny of its size, so it is plausible that he has the Megalartia in mind in these lines. This setting is also possible historically, since Thasos had a sanctuary to Demeter and Persephone during Hegemon’s time. Although this interpretation is tenuous, it is the best we can achieve given the limited state of the evidence. In any case, if we interpret the word “Achaean” literally, the women must be “Achaean” in the Homeric sense, referring to Greeks generally, although during Hegemon’s time Achaea was a region in the Peloponnese, and so did not include Thasos. In this way, line 14 begins to ground the epic formulaic line 13 in the context of the narrator’s speech, but the connections are a bit of a stretch, and tension arises between the fragment’s contemporary comic setting and its archaic epic language.

In line 15, the narrator’s musings on the hypothetical food critics continue, now with more epic language. The line (καὶ ποτὲ τις εἶπη σμικρὸν τυροῦντ’ ἐσιδοῦσα) recalls Iliad 6 when Hector imagines what people will say about Andromache when she is enslaved after his death (καὶ ποτὲ τις εἴπησιν ἰδὼν κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσαν, Il. 6.459). In the Iliadic context, εἴπησιν is a main verb functioning as equivalent to a future indicative, as is common in Homeric Greek: “and then someone will say, when they see her crying…” Hegemon, however, positions the line parallel to the negative purpose clause that begins in line 13:

αὐθίς δ´ οὐκ ἐπὶ κέρδος ἀπείσομαι, εἰς Θασίους δὲ μηδένα πημαίνων κλωτὸν δρυγοὺν ἐγγυαλίζων, μὴ τίς μοι κατὰ οἶκον Αχαιάδων νεμεσῆς
πεσομένης ἀλόχου τὸν ἀχαϊνὸν ἄρτον ἀεικός,
καὶ ποτὲ τις εἴπη σμικρὸν τυροῦντ’ ἐσιδοῦσα,

“munch the fatty bread.” Because this quote seems to be from a ritual song, this latter translation is in fact more likely (Genova 2019, 196-202).

48 For the Thasian Thesmophorion, see Rolley 1965 and Muller 1996.
49 The anticipatory use of the subjunctive; Smyth 1810.
But I’ll stop travelling for gain, and so not to grieve the Thasians, I will hand over my eminent silver, lest in my home some woman of the Achaians shame me when the holiday loaf my wife bakes up is paltry; then someone might say, eyeing the tiny cheese bread: ‘My dear, your husband sang in Athens and won fifty drachmas, but you baked a tiny thing!’”

The odd sentence structure obscures the narrator’s point. The implication seems to be that his wife will bake a paltry loaf whether they have money or not, so he might as well give the money away, because then at least her stinginess will be justified. The joke, then, is that the narrator’s wife is stingy by character rather than by circumstance.

Lines 13 and 15 are notable because the Homeric context of their epic allusions is remarkably relevant to the content of Hegemon’s poem. These lines revolve around the narrator’s wife, and their Homeric parallels occur in passages about famous epic wives, Penelope and Andromache. Line 13 is lifted directly from the *Odyssey*, where it occurs in the context of Penelope’s shroud. In Hegemon’s fragment, it is the narrator’s wife who serves as the potential target of the Achaean women’s blame, just as Penelope does in the *Odyssey*. Meanwhile, the epic allusion in line 15 (καὶ ποτὲ τις ἐπή…) is more generic linguistically, but the context of the Homeric parallel maps well onto the content of the fragment since both speakers – Hector and Hegemon’s narrator – are imagining the unfortunate fates of their wives. The humor emerges from the absurdity of comparing the fate of Hegemon’s wife – a poor woman who will likely go on living as she has been – to that of Andromache, who will transition from royalty to slave. Given the state of the evidence, it is difficult to say whether audiences would have understood these allusions
as direct references to Homeric epic specifically. To understand the effect of line 15, certainly, the audience only needs to recognize a reference to the captive women of epic poetry, not to Andromache specifically. However, the content of line 13 is unique to the story of Penelope. Furthermore, lines 13 and 15 both draw from well-known moments in Homeric epic, and at Hegemon’s time, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were likely already the best-known poems to contain the scenarios depicted in these lines.\(^{50}\) Thus, it does seem possible that lines 13 and 15 could have evoked Andromache and Penelope specifically for some members of Hegemon’s audience. This is the best candidate for direct allusion in Hegemon’s fragment.

Having carefully surveyed Hegemon’s use of epic language in lines 13-15, it is possible to assess its overall affect. Line 13 is a substantial epic borrowing that lands awkwardly in the narrator’s speech. The following lines assimilate it to the context of the narrator’s speech, but Hegemon also uses these lines to create phonetic callbacks to the preceding epic language and to develop the imagery of the epic wife. As a result, the lines feel digressive and convoluted; this impression remains true even if we imagine that Hegemon is making reference to characters and events from elsewhere in his poem now lost to us. From the perspective of the audience, the pleasure of the passage comes from hearing epic language deployed in surprising ways, and wondering how Hegemon will assimilate it to the context at hand. Rather than choosing epic borrowings that he can incorporate seamlessly, as we will see Matro do, Hegemon opts for an intrusive

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\(^{50}\) For the dating of Hegemon’s fragment, see n. 28.
application of epic language, allowing it to stick out and to derail the immediate argument.

**Lines 18-21: The Epiphany of Athena**

After the reported speech in lines 16-17, Hegemon’s fragment takes another abrupt turn (15-21):

“…καὶ ποτὲ τις εἶπη σμικρὸν τυροῦντ’ ἐσίδοῦσα, ἵνα φίλη, ἵνα μὲν παρ’ Ἀθηναίοις ἀείσας πεντήκοντ’ ἐλαβε δραχμάς, καὶ δὲ μικρὸν ἐπέψγα.”

ταῦτα μοι ὁρμαίνοντι παρίστατο Παλλάς Ἀθηνὴ χρυσὴν ῥάβδον ἔχοσα καὶ ἠλάσεις εἰπὲ τε φωνῆ: “δεινὰ παθοῦσα, Φακὴ βδελυρᾶ, χόρει ὣς τὸν ἀγώνα.”

καὶ τότε δὴ θάρσησα καὶ ήείδον πολὺ μᾶλλον.

then someone might say, eyeing the tiny cheese bread:

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‘My dear, your husband sang in Athens and won fifty drachmas, but you baked a tiny thing!’”

As I was weighing these matters, Pallas Athena appeared, holding in her hand a golden staff. She whacked me and said:

“You’ve suffered badly, Bean-Slop, you bum, but go compete!”

At that I took courage and sang all the more.

Line 18 features the verb ὄρμαίνω, to “ponder” or “deliberate.” In epic poetry, this word always refers to an internal debate and never to a spoken conversation, so it is odd that line 18 immediately follows a speech. Furthermore, in line 21, the narrator says that he began to sing more, or more loudly. What is the referent of the comparative? And are we to imagine him breaking into song right there on the street in Thasos, presumably covered in poop, or at another time? An analysis of the epic language in lines 18-21 will aid in understanding its content.

First, it is necessary to assess the placement of quotation marks in the text to ensure that there is no better way to situate them. Imagine them away, and one must
determine in what narrative frame the epiphany is located. Does Athena appear in Thasos and interrupt his speech, as Olson’s placement of quotation marks suggests? Or is the narrator describing Athena’s epiphany within his speech to the Thasians? Indeed, neither option is fully satisfactory. If Athena appears in Thasos, as my punctuation suggests, following Olson, it presents the problems I have already outlined above. However, if the narrator were describing the epiphany within in his speech to the Thasians, it would constitute a severe non sequitur following the hypothetical exchange with the Achaean woman, and the only way to resolve it would be to posit a lacuna between lines 17 and 18. Indeed, Panomitros suggests that one or more missing lines may situate the epiphany at the competition from which the narrator has returned. Although he never directly explains his reasoning for this interpretation, one can see its appeal. We learn in line 16 that the narrator performed in Athens, which would be a natural setting for an appearance by Athena. The narrator might have been pondering (ὁρμαίοντι, 18) whether to perform when Athena appeared, and after Athena’s exhortation, the narrator sang even more loudly (ἤειδον πολὺ μᾶλλον, 21) for the Athenians; the comparative might refer to the last time he performed. In many ways, a contest is an intuitive setting for the epiphany.

51 Narrative ambiguity is an issue with Hegemon’s fragment in part because a number of editors and translators of the fragment have omitted quotation marks in their texts and translations. Brandt 1888 situates his quotation marks in the same manner as the text I present, which is from Olson’s Loeb. Kaibel 1890 is missing a closed quotation mark, and Glei 1992 adopts Kaibel’s placement of quotation marks. Degani 1983 prints Brandt’s Greek, but his Italian translation is missing a closed quotation in the same manner as Kaibel’s text. Bertolini 2013 does the opposite; he is missing a closed quotation in the Greek, but includes it in his Italian translation. In Panomitros 2003, the placement of quotation marks in Greek text, English translation, and commentary all differ, and his translation suggests that an Achaean woman is interrupting the narrator’s speech on Thasos, which is surely an error. Meanwhile, in his commentary, he posits a lacuna before v. 18 and implies that the epiphany took place at the competition in Athens from which the narrator has just returned.

52 Panomitros 2003, 159.
Panomitros may be right, and there may be material missing from the fragment between lines 17 and 18. However, before assuming corruption, it is prudent to see if stylistic features can explain the narrative issues in the transmitted text. If we accept the text as-is, then Athena must be appearing to the narrator in Thasos. The first issue that arises is the use of ὀρμαίνοντι; the narrator has just been speaking aloud, not thinking to himself, so it is odd that Hegemon applies a cognitive word to this activity. However, it is possible to interpret Hegemon’s use of ὀρμαίνοντι as another epic intrusion. Line 18 (ταῦτα μοι ὀρμαίνοντι παρύστατο Πᾶλλας Αθήνη) presents a typical epic event – the appearance of a divinity to a hero while he is pondering something – using formulaic language, and ὀρμαίνον is common in these divine epiphanies. Thus, the most important aspect of ὀρμαίνοντι, and this line in general, seems to be that it is an epic formulaic way of introducing a divine epiphany. As with Hegemon’s application of a heroic formula to the “bald-headed bums,” and his reference to the Achaeans in line 13, ὀρμαίνοντι is a retained epicism that doesn’t quite fit the context at hand. Its incongruity makes it funny. Furthermore, the sudden loftiness of the epic formulaic language provides a humorous contrast to the self-depreciating picture that the narrator has just painted of himself.

The final line of the fragment (καὶ τότε δὴ θάρσησα καὶ ἤμιθον πολὺ μᾶλλον) is also composed using epic formulae. The phrase πολὺ μᾶλλον appears in epic, as, for example, in Iliad 23.429: ὡς ἐφατ’, Ἀντίλοχος δ’ ἔτι καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐλαυνε. (“So he

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53 E.g. II. 16.175: ταῦτα ἀρα οἱ φρονέοντι παρύστατο Φοίβος Απόλλων; II. 10.507-508: εἶνος δ’ ταῦτα ὀρμαινε κατὰ φρένα, τόφρα δ’ Ἀθήνη / ἐγρύθεν ἵσταμένη προσέφη Διομήδεα δίδων.

54 The beginning of the line most closely resembles II. 1.92, which introduces a speech by Chryses: καὶ τότε δὴ θάρσησε καὶ ἤμιθα μᾶντις ἄμιθῳν. However, θάρσεω is very common following exhortations.
spoke, and Antilochos drove even faster.”)

Hegemon’s use of this formula in line 21 is best understood as “I sang more,” as in, “I continued to sing in competitions” rather than “I sang more loudly.” This is not idiomatic, but it is the only logical interpretation in context. Once again, a locus of ambiguity in the fragment has its roots in an awkwardly applied epic phrase.

Overall, then, the events of lines 18-21 run as follows. The demonstrative ταῦτα in the phrase ταῦτα μοι ὄρμαίνοντι (18) refers to the narrator’s speech in lines 6-17. We can perhaps imagine Athena appearing to the narrator as she appears to Achilles in the first book of the Iliad, speaking to him alone although he is in a crowd of people. Athena’s encouragement then responds directly to the narrator’s claim that he will not go abroad again for gain, creating a humorous about-face, and forcing the audience to revise the narrative they had established. The narrator previously eschewed claims of divine inspiration to confess that his poverty motivated his poetry, and this is already funny. Then, however, the Athena epiphany subverts the narrator’s rejection of divine inspiration, and we learn that he is inspired, in a way. In these final lines, the narrator transforms from base to divinely-endorsed, a development which was apparently unexpected even by the narrator himself. In this way, Hegemon offers a funny reversal of an already funny claim.

55 See also Il. 9.700 and 23.386, and Theog. 428.
56 Bertolini 2013, 101.
57 Il. 1.197-98.
Conclusion:

Hegemon’s epic poetics transcend the dichotomy of form and content, affecting the narrative in various ways and to varying degrees.58 The expressions ὀλλύντων τ´ ὀλλυμένων τε (8) and ταυτά μοι ὀρμαίνοντι (18) work syntactically, but do not align with the fragment’s content. Ἀχαιάδων (13) and ἤειδον πολύ μᾶλλον (21) must be read contrary to contemporary idiom. Finally, the line μή τίς μοι κατὰ ὁδὸν Ἀχαιάδων νεμίσῃ (13) reads as a non sequitur that requires a number of lines to resolve. I have focused on the most disruptive examples of epic intrusion, but these exist on a spectrum with other epicisms whose meaning and humor are clearer. For instance, Athena’s description of the narrator as δεινὰ παθοῦσα (20) – a phrase that most closely resembles a line from Hecuba’s lament in Iliad 22 – functions similarly to ὀλλύντων τ´ ὀλλυμένων τε (8) in that both are ludicrously overdramatic; one is simply more easily reconcilable than the other.59 Hegemon’s epic intrusions, then, can be understood as pervasive and dynamic. They also must be situated in the context of Hegemon’s broader interest in surprising his audience. From the enjambment of σπελέθοισι in line 2 to the narrator’s about-face in line 21, Hegemon’s priority is the creation of absurd twists and turns, not the development of a coherent narrative.

It must have been clear to Hegemon’s audience that the fragment contained a motley assortment of disjointed epic language. The fragment’s humor does not require the identification of specific epic scenes and characters, but it does demand a recognition

58 Glei 1992, 45-46 points out that the parody of the fragment is more complex than the simple combination of epic form and comic content.
59 δεινὰ παθοῦσα recalls αἶνα παθοῦσα in Hecuba’s lament (II. 22.431).
of the broader contexts that different epic formulae represent; ὄλλυντων τὸ ὀλλυμένων τε evokes heroes in battle, and δεινὰ παθοῦσα (20) calls to mind the fate of women in war. The only possible exception occurs in line 13, where the formula is so long and specific to Penelope’s situation that some audiences may have understood it as a direct reference. However, even then, Hegemon is evoking Penelope generally, not a single scene from the Odyssey. In this way, the fragment’s humor emerges not only from the presence of comic language in an epic poetic fabric, but also from the epic fabric itself, which resembles a kind of chaotic rhapsodic stitching. The fragment does not permit us to know how the narrator’s epic style relates to his character. Perhaps he is inspired, such that the Muse grips him abruptly and possesses him to spit out epic phrases and lines, or perhaps he is simply not a very good rhapsode or parodist. Perhaps the joke is that, absurdly, both are true. A testimonium preserved in the Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum provides a tantalizing insight:

Ἐν παντὶ μύθῳ καὶ τὸ Πέρδικος σκέλος: ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ ἀπορίαν λόγου παρελκούσῃ χρωμένων τῇ προσθήκῃ. Πέρδιξ γὰρ ἦν τὶς Αθήνης χωλὸς κάπηλος, οὗ διαβεβημένων Ἡγήμων ὁ Θάσιος ὁ πότε παρωδῶν ἀπορήσει, προσετίθει, Καὶ τὸ Πέρδικος σκέλος.

In every speech, “and the leg of Perdix”: for those who need a “prosthetic” added on when they stumble in their speech. Because Perdix was a lame tavernkeeper in Athens, and when he had become well-known, Hegemon of Thasos starting added “and the leg of Perdix!” whenever he got stuck in his parodies. When Hegemon failed to come up with a line, presumably of hexameters, he made a joke out of his failure by deploying the iambic phrase καὶ τὸ Πέρδικος σκέλος, which alludes

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60 Leutsch and Schneidewin 1839, 406. My translation.
to a lame innkeeper while also containing “lame” metrical feet. Late testimonia ought to be treated with caution, but the fact that Hegemon’s hexameter fragment itself also includes a dig at the narrator’s use of meter (line 3) suggests that perhaps this one is credible. In combination, the testimonium and the fragment suggest that the narrator – possibly intended to represent Hegemon himself – presented as an incompetent rhapsode or hexameter parodist at least some of the time. His use of nonsensical rhapsodic stitching in fr. 1 may be understood in the context of this persona. His support from Athena, however, suggests that he may be both incompetent and divinely inspired. The following chapter will unpack this absurdity further.

II. Strato Fr. 1

The surviving fragment of Strato’s Phoenicides, a Middle or New Comedy dating to the end of the fourth century, consists of a monologue by an old man who reports a conversation he had with his chef, who is “stuffed full of Homeric vocabulary” (ἀναπεπλήσθαι τῶν Ὅμηρου ρημάτων, 37). The passage is in iambic trimeter. The old

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61 Glei 1992, 57; Bertolini 2020, 38, 165; Janssen 2020, 107. Other poets seemed to use the phrase τὸ Πέρδικος σκέλος as well for a similar purpose (c.f. Ath. 1.4d), but it is unclear if the tradition began with Hegemon or elsewhere.

62 The Suda calls Strato a poet of Middle Comedy, although his dating might suggest New Comedy (Page 1941, 262; Nesselrath 1990, 62-63). The fragment makes reference to Philitas of Cos, an Alexandrian poet and scholar who lived from ~340 to the 280s, so Strato’s fragment is usually dated to the turn of the century when Philitas was “in his heyday” (Spanoudakis 2002, 23). Scholarship on this fragment is mostly limited to brief discussions: Page 1941, 260-263; van der Valk 1964, 533-536; Livrea 1980; Kassel 1991, 310-316; Wilkins 2000, 406-408; Dobrov 2002, 179-181; Bing 2003, 343-346; Olson 2007, 164-168; Revermann 2013, 102-104.
man is planning a party, and as the chef inquires about the guest list, ingredients, and other preparations, he uses epic vocabulary that the old man humorously misinterprets. The chef’s words are mostly typical of epic sacrifices, and in this way, Strato maps an epic scene onto contemporary action.

Analysis of Strato’s fragment is complicated by the fact that two different versions survive, one in Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophists*, and the other in a papyrus manuscript of the third century BCE. Athenaeus’ version contains thirteen lines that are not present in the Hellenistic manuscript, and these affect the pacing of the speech, the accessibility of the humor, and the characterization of the cook. Based on both content and textual critical issues, the papyrus version is almost certainly earlier. However, it is unclear whether the version in the *Deipnosophists* resulted from literary expansion by a scribe, actor’s notes, rewriting associated with restaging, or plagiarism of the scene by

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63 The papyrus manuscript (P. Cair. 65445) is a collection of pedagogical materials, including vocabulary lists and passages of poetry; I discuss this manuscript further in Chapter 4. The papyrus probably cited an author for the passage, but this is missing. Athenaeus presents nearly the same passage at 9.382b-383c and cites Strato’s *Phoenicides* as his source. He also quotes lines 1-4 in Book 14 (659b), but attributes them to Philemon. However, because the longer fragment is attributed to Strato’s *Phoenicides*, and the *Suda* also calls Strato the author of a *Phoenix* (likely referring to the *Phoenicides*), the fragment is usually attributed to Strato rather than Philemon.

64 In addition to the 13 extra lines, Athenaeus’ version also contains divergent readings in his lines [14], [17], [18]; the line numbers differ in the papyrus version. In line [14], Athenaeus has ἀνελογιζόμην for ἐπεπορεύομην; in line [17], he has σφόδρ’ for ὁ δ’; and in line [18] he has εἰ μὴ for ὅτι οὐ and πάνυ for σφόδρα. Some of these divergent readings support the argument that the additional lines in Athenaeus’ version of the passage are later interpolations. For instance, Page 1941, 263 argues that when line [16] was added, the original reading of ὁ δ’ became difficult, and it was subsequently replaced by σφόδρ’ [17]; this emendation in turn required that σφόδρα in the following line be amended to πάνυ [18]. He also points out that some of Athenaeus’ divergent readings seem to be scribal errors based on the interpolated lines; for example, ἀνελογιζόμην [14] can likely be explained by its proximity to ἐλογιζόμην [12]. The focus on explication in Athenaeus’ extra lines also supports the interpretation that they were added later, as does the fact that the added lines contain no epicisms, whereas in the papyrus version, every one of the cook’s comments includes at least one epic word. As a result, most scholars consider the papyrus version the original, including Gueraud and Jouguet 1938, Page 1941, Kassel 1991, and Olson 2007. Only Van der Valk 1964, 533-536 suggests that Athenaeus’ version is older, arguing based on the content of the lines rather than textual critical grounds.
two different playwrights. Given this uncertainty, I will provide interpretations of both versions of the fragment, treating both as valid literary artifacts. The added lines in Athenaeus’ version change the meaning of the passage significantly, and working through the differences between the fragments now will ensure clarity of interpretation in future chapters. Furthermore, the differences between the passages speak to interesting issues, offering varying accounts of the motives underlying the cook’s epic speech. Like Hegemon, Strato thematizes the question of why a person uses epic language, and how much agency they possess in the way they speak.

Given the complex circumstances of the fragment’s transmission, I will first survey the passage’s structure and narrative framing before turning to its Homeric language. Text and translation of both versions can be found in the appendix. The line numbers differ between the two versions, so to preserve clarity, I cite Athenaeus’ numbering in brackets, and the papyrus’ numbering without brackets.

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65 Most scholars explain the interpolated lines in Athenaeus’ version as the result of literary expansion, but Page 1941, 263 argues that the added lines are actor interpolations. Complicating the matter is the fact that elsewhere in the Deipnosophists, Athenaeus attributes lines 1-4 to Philemon (14.659b). This may be a scribal error; this portion of the Deipnosophists mentions Menander, and Menander is often discussed alongside Philemon, so a scribe could have mistakenly written in Philemon’s name for Strato’s (Meineke 1823, 411). This explanation seems especially plausible given that the quote is introduced rather casually: καὶ Φιλήμων δὲ ποὺ φησιν’ (“And Philemon says somewhere…”). However, it is also possible that one of the playwrights borrowed the lines from the other; in this case, Meineke 1823, 411 suggests Philemon plagiarized from Strato, while Ribbeck 1882, 21 suggests the reverse. Webster 1953, 145 raises the possibility that the two divergent versions arose as a result of such plagiarism, with one poet (Webster suggests Strato) lifting the whole scene from the other and reworking it; as a result, in his estimation, the papyrus version is Philemon’s, and Athenaeus’ version Strato’s. Unfortunately, the beginning of the passage is cut off in the papyrus manuscript, so it does not relate a title or author.
Structure and Narrative

Strato’s fragment consists of a single speech by the old man, within which he relates his exchanges with the chef, sometimes in direct speech, sometimes by summarizing. The first lines of the fragment are likely the first lines of the speech (1-7):  

σφίγγ’ ἄρρεν’, οὐ μάγειρον, εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν εὐληφ’. ἀπλῶς γάρ οὐδὲ ἐν, μὰ τοὺς θεοὺς, ὃν ἄν λέγῃ συνήμι’ καινὰ ρήματα πεπορισμένοι πάρεστιν. ὡς εἰσῆλθε γάρ, εὐθύς μ’ ἐπηρώτησε προσβλέψας μέγα· ἔγω κέκληκα Μέροπας ἐπὶ δεῖπνον; ἤγε.”

“I’ve brought a male sphinx into my house, not a cook! For by the gods, I don’t get a single word he says. He’s here equipped with strange words. Right away when he came in he promptly quizzed me loudly, eyeing me:

“How many meropes did you ask to eat? Tell me.”

“I asked the Meropes to eat? You’re psycho…”

Here we learn that the old man has taken the cook into his house only very recently, possibly earlier the same day, since the cook immediately begins preparations for an upcoming dinner party. Towards the end of the fragment, the old man speculates that the

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66 The “speech within a speech” is common in New Comedy; Nünlist 2002.

67 I have printed the version of the fragment preserved in the papyrus MS, but I have also included the thirteen additional lines present in Athenaeus’ version for reference (lines 9-10, 12, 16, 22, 26-33); these lines will appear indented, and the line numbers for Athenaeus’ version appear in brackets. In the appendix I present the two versions separately for reference. There are a few lines that seem to have been present in the papyrus MS given the spacing, but that do not survive; where this occurs, Olson reconstructs the lines from Athenaeus and printed them normally, and I have identified these in footnotes where I first discuss them. These lines include 1-3 and 34-36, plus pieces of lines 4-8 and 37-41. Where the papyrus MS and Athenaeus present divergent readings, I print the reading in the papyrus MS and indicate Athenaeus’ reading in a footnote. Regarding lines 1-7 specifically: lines 1-3 were likely present in the papyrus MS, but do not survive to us. They are reconstructed from Athenaeus’ version. Lines 4-7 are fragmentary in the papyrus MS and gradually improve in quality; the papyrus only preserves three letters of line 4, and the rest of what Olson prints is supplied by Athenaeus, but by line 8, the line is nearly complete, and only two letters must be supplied. In lines 4-7, the papyrus MS does not diverge from Athenaeus.
cook was once “the slave of some sort of rhapsodizer,” but his actual status is unknown. We also don’t know anything about the speaker, other than that he is an old man (so the cook calls him, 25/38) who is apparently the head of his household. We can only speculate about the setting and internal audience of the speech; perhaps the old man has stepped out to complain on the street, or perhaps he is describing his day to his guests at the dinner party itself.

In line 7, the old man begins to describe his conversations with the cook. The first topic is the guest list (6-15/6-18): 69

“How many meropes did you ask to eat? Tell me.”
“I asked the Meropes to eat? You’re psycho.
You think I know these folks, the Meropes?”
“None of them will be there. By god, this is the final straw, asking the Meropes to eat.”
“So not a single daitumon will be there?”
“No, I don’t think so. Daitumon?” I counted.

68 ραψωδοτοιούτοι τινός δοῦλος, 35-36; Athenaeus cuts off the scene a few lines before the papyrus, so these lines only appear in the papyrus. In Middle Comedy, the mageiros is usually hired, but according to Athenaeus, enslaved mageiroi emerged under Macedonian rule (see n. 330). Strato’s mageiros seems to be hired, given that he has just entered the house the day of the dinner party, like a typical comic mageiros who is hired to cater a specific event. In Athenaeus’ version, this status is confirmed, since he remarks on his pay [32].

69 Pieces of lines 6-8 are supplied by Athenaeus: fourteen letters in line 6, ten letters in line 7, and two letters in line eight.
“Philinus, Moschion, and Niceratus will come, and him, and him…” I named them out. I didn’t have one Daitumon among them.

“None will be there,” I said. “What do you mean? Not one?”

He got annoyed, like I had done some wrong by not asking Daitumon. So strange.

These lines revolve around the old man’s failure to recognize the words μέροψ and δατυμών, “speaking human” and “guest,” respectively. The cook is asking how many people will be attending the dinner, but the old man thinks he is inquiring about specific people named Merops and Daitumon. The joke is not repetitive, however, because “Merops” is a real Greek name and “Daitumon” isn’t, so the absurdity of the misunderstanding grows as the lines go on. Four of the 13 additional lines in Athenaeus’ version of the text appear in this passage. These lines expand the old man’s confusion and clarify the joke. Imagine away these lines and the passage is still intelligible, but its humor builds more gradually, since the audience might not identify the locus of miscommunication until the old man starts reciting his guest list. This impulse for explication, present throughout Athenaeus’ version, is one of the factors suggesting that Athenaeus transmits a later reworking of the original scene preserved in the papyrus.

Now the old man launches into the next outrage, which concerns the cook’s query about the meat (15-19/[19-20]):

70μέροψ is also a species of bird (Arist. HA 615b25) and some scholars have suggested that this meaning may underlie the joke (van der Valk 1964, 535; Kassel 1991, 311). Di Marco 2010 suggests that Strato may be making reference to the people of the fantastical Meropic Land described in a fragment of the historian Theopompus, which is more plausible. Wilkins 2000, 407 n.136 interprets the word as a reference to the “town of Meropis in the Aegean,” and so by his estimation, the old man thinks that the cook is asking whether any Meropians are coming. However, it is unclear what town Wilkins has in mind. Perhaps Cos, which is occasionally referred to as “Meropic Cos” (eg. Thuc. 8.41; Herod. 2.95).

71 In addition to the inclusion of line 22, Athenaeus’ version also diverges from the papyrus in its readings of ἐρυσίχθον for ῥηξίχθον in line 19; the addition of δ’ after βοῦν in line 20; οὐ μνημόνων for οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ἔφην in line 23; and οὐδὲν for οὐδὲν in line 25. Line 19 is the only time in the fragment when a textual variant centers on one of the cook’s epicisms. The replacement of ῥηξίχθον with ἐρυσίχθον reflects the interest in
The old man seems to relate highlights from his conversation with the cook in quick succession, resulting in an abrupt change of topic from guest list to sacrifice. The bulk of this passage focuses on the cook’s use of the word μῆλα, which in Homer can refer to apples or fruit, but mainly refers to flocks of sheep, although outside of a poetic context, “apples” is its primary meaning. Once again, Athenaeus’ version transmits an additional line that unpacks the joke. The sacrifice conversation does, however, feature a new kind of humor that did not arise in the exchange about the guest list. The most absurd aspect of the cook’s sacrifice query is not its abruptness, or even its florid language (ῥηξίχθον, ἐφηξίχθον); it is the cook’s assumption that the old man will be slaughtering a bull, an animal that can produce hundreds of portions of meat, and so is usually reserved for
public sacrifice. These lines introduce the idea that the cook’s epic language is part of a broader fantasy in which he imagines the dinner party as a large-scale epic feast.

At this point, the papyrus version of the speech moves on to describe other preparations for the dinner. Athenaeus’ version, however, features eight consecutive additional lines in which the cook explains and defends his manner of speaking ([26-33]):

“Ὅμηρον οὐκ οἴσθας λέγοντα;” “καὶ μάλα ἔξην ὁ βούλοιτ’, ὁ μάγειρ’, αὐτῷ λέγειν. ἀλλὰ τί πρὸς ἡμᾶς τοῦτο, πρὸς τὴν Ἕστιας;”
“κατ’ ἐκεῖνον ἦδη πρόσεχε καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ μοι.” “Ὀμηρικῶς γὰρ διανοεῖ μ’ ἄπολλόνιας;”
“οὕτω λαλεῖν εἰώθα.” “μὴ τοίνυν λάλει οὕτω παρ’ ἐμοί, ὦν.” “ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰς τέτταρας δραχμὰς ἀποβάλω,” φησί, “τὴν προαίρεσιν;

“Don’t you know that Homer talks this way?” “Sure, cook, he could talk whatever way he wanted. But what’s that got to do with us, by Hestia?” “Do me a favor and keep him in mind in the future.” “Are you plotting death by Homer?” “I’m used to talking this way.” “Well don’t talk that way near me.” “So for four drachmas,” he said, “I should abandon my purpose?...”

Once again, we see the impulse for explication pervasive in Athenaeus’ version of the scene. Furthermore, the cook’s manner of speaking comes across as a deliberate decision, not only because of his use of προαίρεσιν, but also because, for eight whole lines, he does not use any epic words whatsoever; as we shall see shortly, this is uncharacteristic of his language in the rest of the fragment. Furthermore, here the cook’s aesthetic choice becomes a moral issue, as he characterizes epic speech as a fundamental right to which he is entitled, even against the wishes of his employer. Certainly throughout the fragment we are meant to consider the old man’s ignorance a failing; someone wealthy enough to host
a dinner party should be educated enough to know basic epic vocabulary. In Athenaeus’ version of the fragment, the cook makes this message explicit.

After this interlude, we resume with lines that are present in both versions of the scene. Here the old man relates more examples of the cook’s epicisms, this time surrounding barley, salt, and other preparations (21-29/[34-42]):

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tάς οὐλοχύτας φέρε δεύρο.” “τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ τί,”
“κρίθαι.” “τί οὖν, ἀπόπληκτε, περιπλοκὰς λέγεις;”
“πηγὸς πάρεστι;” “πηγὸς; οὐχὶ λαικάσθαι,
ἐρείς σαφέστερον θ’ ὄ βουλευ μοι λέγειν;”
“ἀτασθαλὸς γ’ έι, πρέσβυ,” φησ’.” “ἄλας φέρε;
τοῦτ’ ἔσθ’ ὃ πηγὸς, τοῦτο δεῖξον.” χέρνιβον
παρῆν ἑθνεν, ἐλεγεν ἄλλα ῥήματα
τοιαῦτ’ α’, μά τήν Γῆν, οὐδὲ εἰς ἦκουσεν ἄν,
μίστυλλα, μοῖρας, δίπτυχ’, ὀβελοῦς’…
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“Bring the oulochutes here!” “What’s that?”
“Barley.” “You dolt, why are you talking roundabout?”
“Is there pegos?” “Pegos? Suck my dick.
Will you say what you want to say more clearly?”
“You’re contumelious, old man.” he said. “Bring salt.
That’s what pegos is. Show it to me.” There was a basin. He did the sacrifice and said
other words that no one could have grasped, by Earth:
mistulla, moires, diptucha, obelo…

In Athenaeus’ version, these lines punctuate the cook’s expression of indignation: “So for four drachmas I should abandon my purpose? Bring the oulochutes here!” In addition, the old man seems be relating one continuous conversation. In the papyrus, however, these lines follow directly after the sacrifice discussion: “I’m a country man, so talk to me simply.” “Bring the oulochutes here!” In this latter reading, the change of subject once

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73 Lines 34-36 do not survive in the papyrus fragment, but spacing suggests that they were once present. Traces of line 37 and most of lines 38-41 survive, and the remainder of the passage contained in the papyrus manuscript survives in its entirety. Athenaeus has φησίν ἄλα for φησ’ ἄλας (38) and τοῦτ’ ἔστι πηγὸς ἄλλα δεῖξον χέρνιβα for τοῦτ’ ἔσθ’ ὃ πηγὸς τοῦτο δεῖξον χέρνιβον (39).
again lends the impression that the old man is relating highlights from his exchange with the cook in succession without concern for transitions. In both versions, however, the items he requests continue to develop the association between the meal preparation and a typical epic sacrifice. The words “μίστυλλα, μοίρας, δίπτυχ’, ὀβελοῦς” (29/[42]), in combination with other typical terms for barley and meat, evoke not just the sacrifice itself, but sacrifice as a literary type-scene or narrative motif. The cook’s language involves transformations not only of space and time, but also of character, since in epic poetry, the heroes typically perform sacrifices themselves. In this way, the cook plays both the poet and the hero, using his knowledge of epic poetics to construct a coherent heroic fantasy about himself. He invites the audience to imagine a common epic narrative set-piece playing out right in the old man’s kitchen.

In the final lines of the fragment, the old man resorts to pleading with the cook, still to no avail ([40-47]):

74 Revermann 2013, 103 likens the conflict between the cook and the old man to an epic battle.

75 Both Athenaeus and the papyrus preserve lines 40-47, and lines 48-50 appear in the papyrus alone. Lines 42-47 feature a number of textual variants: Athenaeus has ὡστε με for ὡστ’ ἐδει in line 42; τὸν… βιβλίων for τὰ… βιβλία in line 43; ἕκαστα for ἕκαστον in line 44; πλὴν for ἀλλ’ in line 45; μεταβαλεῖν for μεταβαλόν in line 45; τε for τί in line 46; ταχύ for ποτε in line 46; and μὰ τὴν Γῆν, οἶδ’ ὅτι for παραστάσι’ αὐτόθι.

He did the sacrifice and said

He did the sacrifice and said

49
other words that no one could have grasped, by Earth: 
*mistulla, moires, diptucha, obeloii,*
so you’d need to get the books of Philitas to look up what each of his words meant.

But then I tried a different way and I began to beg him to talk remotely humanlike. Persuasion herself couldn’t have persuaded him, even if she stood right there, and I suspect he was the slave of some sort of rhapsodizer, and from his childhood the menace got filled up full with Homer’s words.

When the old man breezes through the terms for diced meat, portions, double-folded fat, and roasting spits, he summarizes the sacrifice scene and implies its conclusion. He dismisses the cook’s language as the stuff of Philitas, a poet and scholar active in the second half of the fourth century who authored a *Miscellaneous Glosses.* Finally, the old man admits that he resorted to begging the cook to speak normally. Throughout the fragment, we have seen the power dynamic between the two characters inverted as the cook demands ingredients and flaunts his learning. When the old man gives up trying to reproach him, it is akin to an acceptance of this role reversal. The final three lines of the papyrus fragment do not occur in Athenaeus; Athenaeus concludes his quotation after line 34/[47]. The final few lines in the papyrus are particularly rich, however. Here the old man imagines that the cook was “the slave of some sort of rhapsodizer” and calls him “filled up full with Homer’s words;” ἀναπίμπλημι is often used in the context of disease, and the old man is likely invoking this negative connotation here, implying that the cook is “infected with Homer.” Of course, the gastronomic context also calls to mind a gorged stomach.

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76 On Philitas of Cos in the Strato fragment, see chapter 4.
From this close reading of Strato’s fragment some important narrative patterns have emerged. The cook’s epicisms come in pairs, and these divide the old man’s speech into discrete sections: δαιτµών and µέροψ have to do with the guest list; ῥηξίχθων and µήλα relate to the meat; and οὐλοχύται and πηγός are other accessories for the sacrifice. The old man relates his interactions with the cook following the natural progression of the party planning, from determining the quantity of food needed, to acquiring materials, to the preparations themselves. The cook seems to imagine himself executing an actual Homeric feast, and the combination of words he uses evokes a sacrifice type-scene specifically, which brings a piece of the epic world into the fragment’s comic setting. This impression arises from both versions of the fragment, but it is especially acute in the papyrus, where the cook stays in his epic mode for the entirety of the scene. However, in other ways, the characterization of the cook varies between the two versions. In the papyrus, his epic language comes across as involuntary, especially since the old man likens it to a habit taught from childhood and even to a physical condition (ἀναπεπλῆσθαι, 37). In the Deipnosophists, however, the additional lines at [26-33] characterize it as a habit to which the cook has consciously committed. Of course, because the cook’s speech and behavior are reported entirely through the old man, we cannot discount the possibility that the epic talk is an act rather than a sincere habit, and that the cook is using it maliciously to mock him. The old man himself seems to raise this possibility in the first line when he calls the cook a “sphinx.” Strato’s play may have answered this question, or it may have left it open; the ambiguity is funny in itself.

77 I will discuss the sphinx reference further in chapter 3, and contextualize the cook in the tradition of comic cooks in chapter 4.
The Cook’s Epic Style

Not all of the cook’s vocabulary is distinctly epic, but he does not use any colloquialisms or comic language like the old man does (e.g. when the old man exclaims ὀὐχὶ λαικάσει, “Suck my dick!”). He speaks mostly in genre-neutral words with distinctly epic terms tossed in, and even when he defines these terms for the old man, he does so using words that are also found in epic; for example, he glosses μῆλα as πρόβατα, a word that does appear in Homer, although it is not exclusively poetic like μῆλα. In the papyrus version of the fragment, every sentence the cook utters has at least one standout epic word in it, even when he insults the old man (ἀτάσθολός), and this lends the impression that his epic speech habit is quite pervasive. The thirteen additional lines present in the Deipnosophists, however, contain no epicisms whatsoever, creating the impression that the cook has temporarily suspended his usual epic mode to explain himself in plain language. The distribution of epic language, then, is another difference between the two versions.

A great source of humor in both versions of the fragment is the variety of epic language the cook uses, which ranges from the typical to the arcane to the invented. Some of his epic words are so common that it is ludicrous that the old man doesn’t recognize them, such as δαιτυμών, μῆλα, and μοῖρα. Many of the less common epic terms are still formulaic in the context of epic sacrifice (e.g. οὐλοχώται, δίπτυχος, and ὀβελός). He also describes the bull with a common epithet, ἑρυμέτωπον. A few words do not appear in our extant epic poetry at all, and seem to be only epic in flavor. Among these is μίστυλλα, which is a hapax legomenon based on the verb μιστύλλω. θυσιάζω, meanwhile, is a very rare synonym for θύω. This range of epic language characterizes the
cook as not just a reciter or quoter of epic, but as a creative speaker, if a misguided one. On other occasions, the cook uses common epic words in ways that recall their later uses in lyric or tragedy. μέροψ (“articulate”) is an epithet for humans in Homer, but it only appears substantively in later poetry.\(^\text{78}\) Also odd is his use of the adjective πηγός (“solid”) as a metonym for salt, since it is a rare word in general and only used to mean “salty” twice in Homeric epic. His usage has a riddling effect familiar from the language of other comic mageiroi.\(^\text{79}\) ῥηξίχθον is only attested in magical papyri and an orphic hymn, and creates a similar riddling effect.\(^\text{80}\) Strato’s choice of epic language speaks to his need for epicisms that fit into his iambic trimeter, and his interest in tracing epic’s literary legacy to his own time, an issue to which I will return in the final chapter.

Although the old man’s ignorance is sometimes absurd (e.g. in the case of δαιτυμών), it is at other times quite reasonable; most people would find it strange to be asked how many “articulates” were coming to dinner. Of course, the old man doesn’t even know enough to recognize that there is a range of words represented, and this begs the question of how he was able to remember a dozen terms that he had seemingly never heard before well enough to recite them in this monologue. This absurdity just magnifies the humor of the scene, and for the original audience, it must have been funny to hear these words spoken by a character who supposedly does not understand them at all. As for the cook himself, the creativity with which he manipulates epic language contributes to the impression that he imagines himself as an active participant in the epic world.

\(^{78}\) Aesch. Cho. 1018; Eur. IT 1263.  
\(^{79}\) Od. 5.388 and 23.235, both times in the phrase κύματι πηγῷ; Olson 2007, 166. I contextualize Strato’s cook in the tradition of the riddling comic mageiros in chapter 4.  
\(^{80}\) Orphic Hymn 52.9. The list of magical papyri can be found in the LSJ, s.v. ῥηξίχθον. The rarity of the word likely underlies its emendation to the more common ἐρυσίχθον in Athenaeus’ version of the fragment.
Strato’s Poetics: Conclusion

Like Hegemon, Strato presents an interaction between a mock-epic speaker and a character from the contemporary comic world, and in both cases, the epic language is the root of a conflict. Strato, however, voices the epic speaker through his critic, and as a result, we encounter his epic language only in excerpts. Thanks to the formulaic nature of epic sacrifices and the typical quality of the cook’s sacrificial terminology, his epicisms still manage to conjure a coherent epic scene, but this scene feels distant, and does not drive the action of the fragment in the way that we will see it do in Matro’s fragment. As a result, the association between the cook and the epic hero is only implied by the context of the epic sacrifice, not made explicit by terms used by the cook to describe himself. One gets the impression that if the cook had been the narrator in this scene, the epic world might have felt closer at hand, and the passage might have become an epic parody in the style of Hegemon or Matro. Instead, with the epic speaker absent, and his words voiced by someone who does not understand him, we stay firmly in the world of comedy.

The characterization of the mock-epic speaker is difficult to untangle in all the fragments I have considered here, but it is especially so in the case of Strato’s fragment as a result of its transmission. The cook suffers from delusions of grandeur in both versions of the passage; whether his epic speech is an aesthetic choice, or whether he is carried away by an epic fantasy, he clearly imagines himself as someone other than a cook. This is typical of the comic mageiros, as we shall see in the final chapter. Our cook appears to be creative with his epic language, but his innovations lack the ingenuity we will see in Matro’s fragment and they come across as try-hard obscurities. In Matro’s
fragment, we laugh at the jokes that the narrator’s epic style creates, while in the
fragments of Strato and Hegemon, we laugh at the epic speaker’s style itself. Thus, Strato
constructs three levels of epic knowledge: the old man, improbably, grasps not even the
simplest epicisms; the cook knows too much and becomes lost in the weeds; and the
audience recognizes the two extremes represented.

III. Matro Fr. 1

Athenaeus preserves 122 lines of Matro’s Αἰτικὸν Δείπνον (hereafter the
Deipnon), which is dated to the end of the fourth century.81 Like Hegemon, Matro
composes in dactylic hexameter, uses epic formulaic language, and speaks through a
first-person narrator. The extant lines of the Deipnon are purely narrative, however, with
no direct or indirect quoted speech.82 The structure is largely catalogic, following the
progression of the feast from appetizers to entrées to wine and entertainment, and
devoting only a few lines to each dish before moving on to the next. Furthermore,
Matro’s epic borrowings are more specific than Hegemon’s, and he incorporates them
with clarity and ingenuity; if Hegemon’s epicisms are humorously out-of-place, Matro’s
are for the most part humorously apt. Furthermore, like Strato, Matro uses a typical epic
scene to frame the action of his characters on a large scale: a battle scene, which
dramatizes the meal as a war between the food and the diners.

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81 Ath. 4.134d-137c. On the dating of the fragment, see Olson and Sens 1999, 3-5, 29-33 and chapter 4 of
this study.
82 The fragment ends at the commencement of after-dinner activities, but the original poem may have
continued on.
The Deipnon is unique among the case studies in this chapter in that it has already been the subject of a recent, long-form, high-quality publication. Nonetheless, the fragment remains difficult to interpret because it is so dense with allusion, so much longer than other comparable examples, and so varied in its parodic techniques and effects. I introduce the fragment in this chapter in order to streamline interpretation in later chapters, and also to stress that some of the variation in the fragment follows an arc. The fragment is commonly described as a battle between the diners and their seafood dinner, and this is indeed the centerpiece of the extant lines, but there is considerable variation in how this framing is applied. Matro builds the martial metaphor to a climax and tapers it off at the end of the fragment, and the narrator’s voice evolves along with this trajectory, as does the relationship between the food and the diners. Matro employs numerous strategies of epic quotation, and his mappings of epic characters and are not consistent, but he maintains coherence through a broader program of dramatizing carnal desires for food and sex.

Structure

The fragment’s opening establishes its epic style and its gastronomic subject matter with a proem.\textsuperscript{84}

\begin{verbatim}
Δεὴπνά μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροφα καὶ μάλα πολλά,
ἀ Ἐνοκλής ῥήτωρ ἐν Ἀθήναις δείπνισεν ἡμᾶς·
ἡλθον γὰρ κάκεισε, πολὺς δὲ μοι ἐσπετο λιμός.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{83} Olson and Sens 1999, which offers text, translation, commentary, and a full introduction. Other studies include Shero 1929; Degani 1991b and 1995; D’Andria 2002; Fonseca 2018, 76-84; Telò 2018; Bertolini 2020, 40-41, 53-67, 135-148, 184-186.

\textsuperscript{84} The first line imitates the invocation of the Muse at the opening of the Odyssey. The second line has no known specific model, but follows a typical pattern in which a relative clause elaborates on the subject introduced in the invocation of the Muse. Olson and Sens 1999, 75-76.
Dinners describe to me, Muse, much-nourishing and very numerous, which Xenocles the orator dined us on in Athens – for I went there as well, and a great hunger accompanied me – where indeed I saw very large and lovely loaves of bread, whiter than snow, with a taste that resembled wheat-paste cakes; the North Wind fell in love with them as they were baking. Xenocles himself went about, inspecting the ranks of men, and came and stood on the threshold. Close by him was the parasite Chaerephon, a man resembling a hungry sea-gull, starving, and well-acquainted with other people’s dinings. Meanwhile the cooks began to bring tables and load them up…

Here Matro introduces the host Xenocles and one of the two named guests at the banquet, Chaerephon. He uses epic language, but the only hint of martial framing is line 7. He will not further develop the martial metaphor for nearly twenty more lines. The food is also not fully personified yet; for now, the action is focused on the diners.

In line 22, we start to see the foods as actors: “The Phaleric small-fry, Triton’s companioness arrived, holding before her cheeks a dirty veil” (ἡ δὲ Φαληρικὴ ἦλθ᾽ ἄφη, Τρίτωνος ἐταίρη, / ἂντα παρειάων σχομένη ῥυπαρὰ κρήδεμνα). These lines mark the beginning of what scholars have called the “Catalogue of Fish,” which lasts roughly sixty lines. During the catalogue, the foods will be increasingly personified, and the use of the first-person will decrease. However, in line 22, the battle against the foods is still not in full swing. Matro’s use of ἐταίρη to describe the small-fry likens it not to any character.

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85 In the Catalogue of Fish, the narrator only uses the first person in lines 36, 57-58, 70-73, and 83-84.
within the epic fantasy, but to a guest arriving at the banquet, specifically a prostitute or other sexually available woman.

The following lines are unfortunately corrupt, but when the text picks back up in line 27, Matro has begun to ease us into the seafood battle (27-32):

…ψήττά τε χονδροφυής καὶ τρίγλη μιλτοπάρης. Τῇ δ’ ἐγὼ ἐν πρώτοις ἐπέχον κρατερώνυχα χεῖρα, οὐδ’ ἔφθην τρώσας μιν, ἄσσε <δὲ> Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων. ὥς <δὲ> Ἰδον Στρατοκλῆ, κρατερὸν μήστωρα φόβου, τρίγλης ἵπποδάμου κάρη μετὰ χερσίν ἔχοντα, ἄν δ’ ἐλόμην χάρμη, λαμμὸν δ’ ἀπλῆστον ἁμύζα.

… and the cartilaginous flat fish, and the carmine-cheeked red mullet.

I was among the first to put a strong-clawed hand to it, but I did not wound it before the others; for Phoebus Apollo led me wrong. But when I saw Stratocles, the powerful raiser of fear, holding the head of the horse-mastering red mullet in his hands, I snatched it back with martial ardor and scratched his insatiable gullet.

This passage is packed with formulae and direct quotation from Iliadic battle scenes, but only in line 29 does the first food “fall victim” to the diners. Previously, the battle mostly occurred between the diners as they contend for the best morsels. In line 46 the seafood begins to participate in the battle more actively (46-49):

πολλὰ δ’ ἄναντα κάταντα κατὰ στίχας ἥλθ’ ὁ μάγειρος, σειῶν ὑποφόρους πίνακας κατὰ δεξιόν ώμον. Τῷ δ’ ἄμα τεσσαράκοντα μέλαινα χύτραι έποντο, αὐτάρ ἀπ’ Εὔβοιης λοπάδες τόσαι ἐστιχώντο.

The cook went repeatedly up and down the ranks, brandishing serving-platters loaded with side-dishes over his right shoulder. Forty black cookpots followed along with him, while from Euboea an equal number of casseroles were drawn up in a line.

Now the Catalogue of Fish begins to list numbers and places of origin more systematically, imitating the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships: forty cookpots (48), twelve sargues (60), and casseroles from Euboea (49). Matro also includes the lineage of two
fish, “the head of the tuna, son of Fish-Lair” (53) and “Son of Serpent” (75). Line 69 (“Lord Sturgeon, famous for his spear, was their leader”) borrows a hemistich from the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships. The Catalogue of Fish tapers off between lines 75-85. Matro quits personifying the food gradually, timing his transition mostly – but not exactly – with the transition from seafood to other fare.

In the final 40 lines of the poem, the foods resume their role as objects acted on by the diners. We receive more information about the narrator’s experience, and learn more about the activities of the other guests. The narrator trembles and wails at a ham, and dreads his return to normal fare on the following day (89-92); he then declares that he is full, but broth and pigs’ feet persuade him to keep eating (93-95). Chaerephon continues his parasitic ways (98-101). The narrator refers to the diners as the “ranks of Athenians” (97), but otherwise the martial imagery is absent, although Matro still constructs his lines from Homeric parallels as he has always done. At line 104, the dining portion of the evening seems to conclude, and preparations for drinking and entertainment get underway (104-111), but the tables are cleared only for more tables to be brought out, and in line 111, Matro launches right into dessert. Finally, in the last two lines of the fragment, Stratocles brings in two pornai (121-122). This is where Athenaeus cuts off the quote, although it is possible that the poem continues in the same

86 Line 53 (οἵ θύννου κεφαλὴ θαλαμηίδαιο) resembles Od. 11.557 (Ἰσον Ἀχιλλής κεφαλῇ Πηληίδαιο); line 75 (εἰς λέχος ἴνα ἑβαίνε Δρακοντιάδη μεγαθύμῳ) doesn’t have a particular model, but Δρακοντιάδη is a made-up patronymic.
87 δουρὶ κλυτὸς ηγεμόνιες, II. 2.645, 650, 657.
88 Line 97: θήκε φέρων, ἤν’ Ἀθηναίων κατέκειντο φάλαγγες.
89 121-122: πόρναι δ’ εἰσήλθον, κοὐδρα δύο θαυματοποιοὶ, ἐὰς Στρατοκλῆς ἔλαυνε ποδώκεας δρνάθας ὀξ. Line 122 is identical to Iliad 2.764, just with a different name and a different verb tense.
vein as the first hundred lines with a focus on drinking and sexual activity, and perhaps other forms of entertainment, rather than eating.

Like Strato, Matro develops a relatively coherent epic scene that colors the action of the poem. Strato accomplishes this by connecting epic and contemporary objects, while Matro focuses on characters. However, his character-mapping is not systematic. The cooks, the host Xenocles, and certain fish are all cast as generals at different points, with the cooks sometimes marshalling the diners and other times marshalling the food. Matro also keeps his poem lively by varying the intensity of this mapping. The martial framing for which Matro’s fragment is famous in fact applies to less than half of the poem, emerging gradually in the first 30 lines before reaching its peak in the Catalogue of Fish and tapering off again afterwards. The narrator’s role evolves along with this development; at the beginning and end, we see more sustained use of the first-person, but especially during the Catalogue of Fish, the narrator more closely imitates the narration style of the epic poet. Thus, portions of the poem function like Archestratus’ *Life of Luxury*, which presents loose recipes and culinary advice in epic form (if not quotation, like Matro), but without calling to mind a particular epic scene; other portions of Matro’s poem – namely the Catalogue of Fish – conjure not just an epic tone, but also an epic scene. The length of Matro fr. 1 offers a rare glimpse at how a poet might modulate between these parodic effects on a larger scale.
Matro’s Homeric Quotations

In the introduction to their commentary, Olson and Sens survey Matro’s methods of adopting and manipulating epic language.\(^9\) I briefly summarize their observations here and compare Matro’s parodic style to that of Hegemon and Strato. I then add a few entries to Olson and Sens’ list of Matro’s compositional techniques and articulate the effect of Matro’s poetics in the fragment.

By far the most common epic borrowings in the fragment are lines and hemistichs sourced from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These occur in nearly every line, such that the fragment resembles a patchwork of mismatched Homeric quotation. Matro typically adapts his Homeric quotes to the banquet setting by replacing one or two words with metrically equivalent culinary terms; complete, unaltered epic lines are rare.\(^9\) He most often lifts epic lines whole, but he also regularly combines two epic hemistichs from two different contexts, or fills out an epic hemistich with his own half-line.\(^9\) Lines with an epic style, but no obvious specific model do appear in the fragment, although they are infrequent and mostly clustered in the Catalogue of Fish.\(^9\) In addition to his gastronomic interventions, Matro also makes structural changes to the epic material when necessary, including adjustments of morphology or syntax that facilitate his verbal substitutions and stitch together his various epic borrowings. In general, however, Matro prioritizes the

\(^9\) Wilamowitz 1923 interprets Matro’s epic quotations as arbitrary, contrary to previous scholars such as Peltzer 1855 and Paessens 1856. More recently, Degani 1995 argued once again for a generous approach to the fragment, showing that often epic lines and phrases bear some clever relation to the food they describe. In their commentary, Olson and Sens 1999 carefully explicate these references.
\(^9\) Olson and Sens 1999, 34.
\(^9\) Olson and Sens 1999, 36.
\(^9\) There are only seven lines like this in the first half of the fragment: 2, 17, 24, 27, 29, 42, and 51. Most are clustered in lines 65-87. It is possible that these lines, as well as some of Matro’s apparently original hemistichs, are in fact modelled on epic poems that are now lost to us. Olson and Sens 1999, 37.
integrity of the epic material, occasionally even to the detriment of the syntax or sense.\textsuperscript{94} His substitutions are often phonetically similar to the epic words they are replacing, and even include made-up words specifically designed to imitate their epic counterparts.

Finally, many of Matro’s allusions center around well-known epic characters and scenes, such as the Iliadic heroes, Penelope, the suitors, and Polyphemus, while avoiding \textit{hapax legomena} and other obscurities. This preference for recognizable material perhaps underlies his choice to favor the \textit{Iliad} and \textit{Odyssey} over other epic poems; Hesiodic callbacks do appear, but rarely.

The proem features most of the poetic techniques described above, and offers a useful illustration of how they function in practice (1-6):

\begin{quote}
Δείπνά μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροφα καὶ μάλα πολλά,
ἀ Ξενοκλῆς ῥήτωρ ἐν Αθήναις δείπνισεν ἡμᾶς:
ἡλθον γὰρ κἄκεισε, πολὺς δὲ μοι ἔσπετο λιμός.
οὐ δὴ καλλίστους ἄρτους ἔδω ἡ ἡμέρᾳ μεγίστους,
λευκοτέρους χιόνος, ἔσθεν δ’ ἀμύλωλισιν ὀμοίους
τάων καὶ Βορέης ἡράσσατο πεσσομενάων.
\end{quote}

Dinners describe to me, Muse, much-nourishing and very numerous, which Xenocles the orator dined us on in Athens – for I went there as well, and a great hunger accompanied me – where indeed I saw very large and lovely loaves of bread, whiter than snow, with a taste that resembled wheat-paste cakes; the North Wind fell in love with them as they were baking.

The first line imitates the opening of the \textit{Odyssey}, with \textit{δείπνα} replacing the \textit{Odyssey}’s \textit{ἀνδρα} and the made-up compound \textit{πολύτροφα} replacing \textit{πολύτροπον}.\textsuperscript{95} Matro models line 3 on \textit{Od.} 6.164, in which Odysseus describes to Nausicaa his visit to Delos;

\textsuperscript{94} See discussion at Degani 1995, 422; Degani 1991b, 169; Olson and Sens 1999, 34.
\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Od.} 1.1: \textit{ἀνδρα} μοι ἔννεπε, \textit{μοῦσα}, \textit{πολύτροπον}, δὲ \textit{μάλα πολλά}. 62
Matro replaces λαός with λιμός. Lines 4-5 imitate two contiguous lines in Dolon’s description of Rhesus’ horses in *Iliad* 10; Matro replaces ἵππους with ἄρτους, and θείειν δ’ ἀνέμοισιν ὀμοίοι with ἐσθείν δ’ ἀμύλοισιν ὀμοίους. In addition to making λευκότερους and ὀμοίους accusative where the original line has nominatives, Matro also uses οὗ where the original line has τοῦ; these changes allow Matro to integrate the Homeric lines into his poem without rendering them unrecognizable. Finally, Matro sources line 6 from another description of a Trojan hero’s horses; in *Iliad* 20.223, the North Wind fell in love with the mares of Erichthonius as they were grazing (βοσκομενάων), and in Matro’s fragment, the North Wind fell in love with the bread as it was baking (πεσσομενάων), a reference to the aroma of the bread in the air. Matro juxtaposes lines from two descriptions of the horses of Trojan heroes to characterize the loaves; this method of combining complementary epic passages to create one coherent image appears elsewhere in the fragment as well. Lines 4-6, and the proem as a whole, evidence the care and subtlety with which Matro selects and adapts his epic material.

Matro’s proem highlights a few points of contact between his style and Hegemon’s. We have already seen Hegemon take advantage of the double meaning of πέσσω, a word which occurs in epic poetry, but not with the sense of “bake;” Matro also uses πέσσω in his proem. Hegemon, furthermore, employs back-to-back allusions to Andromache and Penelope, like Matro employs back-to-back allusions to the horses of

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96 *Od.* 6.164: ἔλθον γὰρ καὶ καῖσε, πολύς δὲ μοι ἔσπετο λαός.
98 In the Homeric passage, the horses are specified as mares, and Matro retains the feminine endings, apparently taking advantage of the rare use of -άων as a masculine or neuter ending. Olson and Sens 1999, 79.
99 E.g. at 93-97 he draws from separate Homeric passages having to do with Ajax.
Rhesus and Erichthonius. Matro’s source material here is more niche than Hegemon’s, but the juxtaposition technique is comparable. Finally, the two poets’ use of near homophones is also notable. Hegemon, for instance, uses ἄχαικὸν to mirror Ἀχαιῶν, and Matro replaces λαός with λιμός. These similarities perhaps reflect the existence of certain typical compositional techniques in the tradition of hexameter epic parody.

Like Strato, meanwhile, Matro challenges his audience to become interpreters of epic language. The proem of the Odyssey would have been recognizable to his audience, but the horses of Rhesus and Erichthonius seem more obscure. Perhaps many readers or listeners understood the gist of the image – the bread loaves are being described as if they were horses – without recognizing the specific references. It seems likely that many of his epic borrowings operate on this level. Although Matro’s poem is learned, it is still easy to imagine an average person following it and enjoying it, even in an oral performance context. Nonetheless, it would have been especially funny to those with deep literary knowledge. Matro, then, encourages the same deep comprehension of epic language that Strato’s fragment thematizes in its presentation of the ignorant old man and the pedantic cook. Furthermore, in my final chapter, I will argue that while most of Strato’s epic language is straightforward, a few words would have operated like riddles, rewarding a deeper knowledge of epic, like Matro’s fragment does.

To the parodic techniques surveyed by Olson and Sens I add two of my own. First, Matro literalizes epic metaphorical language to generate new meanings from epic words. For instance, the narrator says that there is something sweeter than the monkfish

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100 The apostrophe of ἄνδρες in line 116 perhaps suggests an oral performance context for Matro’s poem. For further discussion of the performance context of Matro’s poem, see Ch. 4.
(58), borrowing a line from the *Odyssey* when Odysseus declares that there is nothing sweeter than Ithaca. Here Matro invokes the literal gustatory sense of sweet, although the word is figurative in the Homeric context. Similarly, he borrows a line from the *Iliad* in which Achilles accuses Agamemnon of being unable to look forward and backward at once to describe Chaerephon literally looking forward and backward across the spread of foods. Incidentally, in both of these examples – the monkfish’s entrance and Chaerephon’s rubbernecking – Matro facilitates his epic borrowing by transforming a negative phrase from Homeric epic into a positive one. Techniques like this allow Matro to create a coherent feasting scene using language from a wide variety of epic contexts, and to ensure that his epic borrowings don’t become tired over the course of the lengthy poem.

Second, Matro transforms the meanings of epic similes. In line 9, for instance, Matro compares Chaerephon to a gull (Χαιρεφόων, πεινόντι λάρῳ ὀρνιθὶ ἐοικός) using language from an extended Homeric simile in which Hermes swoops over the sea like a gull on the hunt. By divorcing the simile from this broader context, Matro makes the simile more about the bird’s hunger than its power and speed. Later, he compares Chaerephon to a lion (ησθε δ' ὀστε λέων, 100) using a simile from the *Odyssey*’s description of Polyphemus killing and eating Odysseus’ men. Matro drives home this

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103 *Od*. 5.51: σεῦατ' ἐπειτ' ἐπὶ κῦμα λάρῳ ὀρνιθὶ ἐοικός; *Deipnon*, 9: Χαιρεφόων, πεινόντι λάρῳ ὀρνιθὶ ἐοικός.
association between Chaerephon and Polyphemus by utilizing language from another *Odyssey* 9 verse immediately after the lion simile.\(^{105}\) In this way, Matro ensures that the aberrant appetite is the focus of the image, despite the fact that more noble lion similes also appear in Homeric battle scenes. In both cases, Matro appropriates a hunting simile, but does so in a way that subordinates the hunt itself to the hunger that motivates it. These examples also illustrate Matro’s tendency to eschew the many typical dining scenes in Homeric epic in favor of scenes of aberrant consumption.

**Matro’s Gastronomy**

The poem’s gastronomic content is in some ways more challenging to understand than its epic allusions. Much of the fragment’s humor comes from Matro’s ability to create clever connections between the epic and gastronomic worlds, especially in the Catalogue of Fish.\(^ {106}\) When he casts the cuttlefish as Thetis, for instance, he makes reference to the form the goddess assumed when Peleus finally caught her (33-34).\(^ {107}\) The eel’s white flesh probably explains its role as “white-armed Hera” (38-39), and the association between the “swift squid” and “Iris the wind-footed messenger” is obvious from their epithets (50).\(^ {108}\) The sturgeon, a fish with a pointy snout, is “famous for his spear” (69). Sometimes Matro accomplishes a similar effect by using epic words with dining-related double meanings. The lobster, for instance, is “eager to be armed” (ἄστακος αὖτε λαλαίετο θωρήσσεσθαι, 66), a reference its hard-shelled exterior, but this...
can also mean “eager to get drunk.” Some jokes of this type are likely lost on us due to our limited knowledge of Classical culinary terms, but enough survive to demonstrate that Matro’s humor is highly-wrought and multi-layered.

Most obvious in the fragment is Matro’s interest in the grotesque. As a result of his constant anthropomorphizing of the food, a shadow of cannibalism looms over the banquet. Occasionally, this becomes explicit: “Lord Sturgeon, famous for his spear, was their leader, and although I was full, I reached out forcefully for him with my hand, eager to have a taste” (69-70). Other times, it is more implicit, as in the characterization of Chaerephon using language originally applied to Polyphemus, described above. The act of consumption sometimes evokes sex as well, as when Matro described the Phaleric small-fry as a *hetaira*. Furthermore, sea creatures were a common source of sexual euphemisms for female genitalia; as a result, oral sex would not have been far from the audience’s mind throughout the poem, particularly given its personification of the foods. Seafood cravings are also commonly couched in sexual terms in Greek comedy, and fish lend their names to prostitutes with corresponding features. The Greek word for small-fry (*ἀφύη, 22*), for instance, is also attested as nickname for prostitutes who are thin, with large eyes and a light complexion, like the fish itself.

In this way, the act of eating becomes violent and sexual, a dramatization of carnal pleasures.

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109 Olson and Sens have translate ἀστακὸς αὐτῷ λαλαίτσο θωρήσεται (66) as “eager to take a valiant part.” θώραξ can refer to a breastplate or a crustacean’s thorax. Olson and Sens 1999, 112.

110 Nearly all of the feminine foods are sexualized. For example, Thetis is cast as a cuttlefish (33-35), the form that she had assumed when Peleus finally caught her (c.f. Olson and Sens 1999, 96). The eel is described as having “mingled in the arms of Zeus” (39), an allusion to the fact that eels were understood to reproduce through rainwater, which came from Zeus; eels are also sexualized elsewhere in comedy (Olson and Sens 1999, 99). The moray is depicted naked (with her belt removed; the allusion is not entirely clear), having gone to bed with the Son of Serpent (75); Olson and Sens 1999, 114-115. On the sexualization of the food, see Telò 2018 and Degani 1995.

111 So explains Athenaeus, 13.586b, citing passages from Apollodorus and Antiphanes.
Further contributing to the chaos of the scene is the fact that Matro’s epic mapping is not unidirectional. In calling the lobster “eager to get drunk” (66) or calling the small-fry *hetaira* (22), Matro characterizes the foods as guests at the banquet rather than actors in the imagined epic scene. When he claims that Hephaestus boiled the porridge for thirteen months (χόνδρος δ’ ἡδυπρόσωπος, ὢν Ὀφαίστου κάμεν ἐψων / Ἀττικῷ ἐν κεράμῳ πέσων τρισκαίδεκα μῆνας, 102-103), he alters the parodic framing entirely, bringing Hephaestus into the mortal world as a cook. The border between the epic and real worlds is very permeable in Matro’s fragment. The identities of Matro’s characters are also scrambled. Chaerephon is Polyphemus, and simultaneously a lion; the small-fry is a *hetaira*, but the actual *pornai* who enter at the end of the fragment are being “driven” like chariot horses, and are compared to birds (πόρναι δ’ εἰσήλθον, κοῦραι δύο θαυματοποιοῖ, ὃς Στρατοκλῆς ἠλαυνε ποδῶκεας ὀρνηθας, 121-122). This aspect of Matro’s poem – in combination with the very premise of personifying devoured items – lends it an element of the grotesque that is not present in the other fragments. This grotesque quality is essential to the fragment’s social and political criticism, which is the subject of chapter 4. The variety of epic figures that Matro invokes creates a chaotic scene, as we are invited to imagine heroes, monsters, goddesses, animals, and other beings from across the epic world together in one place sharing a meal or a battle.

**Conclusion:**

Matro utilizes all aspects of epic poetics, including generic words and formulae, and specific Homeric and Hesiodic hemistichs, lines, and contiguous lines. He draws from different epic contexts, including speeches, similes, action sequences, and
descriptive passages. He also represents the totality of the epic world, including its gods, mortals, and monsters, and its domestic spaces, battlefields, and foreign lands. Given this variety, it is remarkable that the poem remains coherent. Matro accomplishes this in part by creating a structural centerpiece, the Catalogue of Ships. He incorporates lines from Iliadic battle books at crucial moments so that the banquet’s seafood course builds into a full-on war, and then sheds this martial framing for the final courses; perhaps if more of the poem survived, we could see other large-scale variations in his parodic effect.

Furthermore, although Matro’s epic source material and methods of appropriation vary, he maintains a consistent project of transforming the grandeur of epic into excess, and the figurative and metaphysical aspects of epic into the literal and physical. Here, the carnal desires for food, sex, and violence become one and the same, and the enactment of these desires becomes a drama in itself.

**IV. Conclusion**

Taken together, the fragments of Hegemon, Strato, and Matro illustrate the variety of forms that Greek epic parody can take, even among fragments that ostensibly adhere to the formula of “epic form + comic content.” They incorporate different elements of epic poetry, including direct quotations, common formulae, obscurities, invented epicisms, and broader narrative structures. They also assimilate this language into the linguistic and narrative contexts of their poems differently, from Hegemon’s intrusive epicisms, to Matro’s ingenious adaptations, to Strato’s displacement of individual epic words into a comic monologue. We see epic language developing the characters and setting, driving
the action, and occasionally situating an unexpected character in the contemporary setting (Athena in Hegemon’s fragment, Hephaestus in Matro’s). We see it accomplishing these effects on a small scale by the use of specific references, and on a large scale by the development of epic scenes that frame a whole passage. These effects not only vary across the three case studies, but even within the same passage, as the poets adjust their parodic techniques to keep their audience hooked. Despite this variation, there are considerable points of contact between the three fragments. Although Strato’s fragment comes from a comedy and uses only single epic words, it maps a typical epic scene onto the action of an extended comic scene, as Matro does.

Having introduced these fragments and examined how they juxtapose heroic past and comic present, it is time to identify how the they treat epic as a contemporary phenomenon. We have already seen hints at how this might happen; in Hegemon’s fragment, for instance, the narrator’s epic language tells us something about what kind of singer he is. The following chapter will examine how contemporary ideas about Homer and the epic rhapsode underlie his character.
CHAPTER 2:
Epic in Performance

For the modern scholar, the process of identifying mock-epic language in Greek poetry is a text-based activity, involving the side-by-side comparison of epic poetry with its potential caricatures. This is the approach taken in the previous chapter, and it is a critical step in defining what a parody of epic poetry looks like in the first place. However, it is also anachronistic. Audiences of the fifth and fourth centuries would have recognized epic language, meter, and other elements instinctively, and for many audiences, sustained engagement with both epic poetry and epic parody occurred primarily through performance. The point of reference for parodic imitation of epic poetic elements was, therefore, not simply a body of texts, nor simply a genre of poetry, but also a set of performers who worked in particular styles and contexts. For this reason, it is not enough to ask what is being parodied; we must also ask whom. Of course, mock-epic language may juxtapose its speaker with characters from within epic poetry; we have seen that Hegemon’s narrator, for instance, imagines himself at one moment as a warrior under attack, and at another as Penelope justifying her shroud-plot. At the same time, in the moment of performance, the character speaking in mock-epic language must also evoke the epic singer. For the material in my purview, which draws on heroic epic specifically, this means Homer and the rhapsodes who channeled him.

Homer and the rhapsodes were closely entangled in the Greek imagination, not only with one another, but also with the characters from epic poetry whom they brought to life. Homer’s bios developed in part out of assimilation to the characters within his
poetry, such as Odysseus and Demodocus, and he was also imagined as an itinerant singer like the rhapsodes who were understood to have succeeded him. As a result, some of the same features that evoke an epic character may also evoke Homer or the rhapsode. Of course, the character using epic language in an epic parody also inhabits the world of the non-epic genre to which he properly belongs, such as iambus, comedy, or hexameter *paroidia*, and this world also contributes to his character. Yet these figures exist within the same network I have just described. Scholars have suggested heroic models for the personae of Archilochus and Hipponax, for instance, and there are is significant overlap between the *bios* traditions of the epic poets and the iambographers.\(^\text{112}\) When a mock-epic speaker casts himself as a character within an epic scene (as we have already seen Hegemon, Strato, and Matro do) while also imitating an epic singer (as his delivery or performance context might suggest), a particular feature of his character may have varying meanings in epic, iambic, or comic poetry, in the biographical tradition, and in actual Classical rhapsodic performance practices.

This chapter begins with an introduction to the rhapsode and rhapsodic performance, and a brief discussion of the role of humor and the “low” in the biographical tradition and in epic poetry itself. Two case studies follow that engage directly with epic performance and performers: Aristophanes’ *Peace* 1270-1304, in which Trygaeus engages in a mock-rhapsodic exchange with one of his potential wedding singers, and Hegemon fr. 1, introduced in the previous chapter. Both Aristophanes and

\(^{112}\) On mockery in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, see Rosen 2007, 67-171. For Odysseus as a model for Archilochus, see Russo 1974, Seidensticker 1978, and Pucci, 1987, and Hedreen 2015, 59-100. On Odysseus as a model for Hipponax’ persona, see n. 271. On the overlap between the *bioi* of poets in different traditions, see Compton 2006.
Hegemon present an epic performer who is somehow incompetent, and, in different ways, they invite their audiences to imagine these figures as rhapsodes. At the same time, both poets engage with traditional models of performance and performer. Aristophanes uses the literary motif of the *agon* between genres, familiar from the *Archilochoi* and *Frogs*, out of which the legendary contest between Homer and Hesiod developed. Hegemon’s fragment, meanwhile, is dense with biographical motifs recalling Homer and Hesiod as well as the iambic poets. In these case studies, allusions to epic performance and performers allow the parodist to create characters that are coherent as both epic and comic figures, and to cheekily reveal the presence of comic motifs within epic poetry. They also allow Aristophanes and Hegemon to treat issues such as the place of the poet (singer, rhapsode, etc.) in society, the source of poetic knowledge, and the relationship between the poets of the past and those of the present day. By way of conclusion, I briefly consider how contemporary attitudes toward epic performers and performance might manifest in an epic parody that does not feature a character who is explicitly a performer; Matro’s fragment will illustrate this point.

*I. Homer, the Rhapsode, and the Mock-Epic Speaker*

The surviving evidence of rhapsodic performance of heroic epic during the sixth to fourth centuries BCE raises far more questions than it offers answers, attesting to a literary phenomenon that was constantly changing and replete with frustratingly ambiguous categories and terms; what does Plato mean, for instance, when he says that
Homer “rhapsodized,” or when he states that rhapsodes “adorn” Homer?113 Fortunately, for my purposes, it is not necessary to reconstruct who rhapsodes really were and how they really operated; more relevant are the questions of what rhapsodes purported to do, and what audiences thought they were seeing and hearing when they performed. Taking this approach, this section will examine two issues in rhapsodic performance that complicate the interpretation of mock-epic language in an epic parody: the relationship between Homer and his rhapsodic (re)performers, and the presence of “low” elements within epic poetry and in Homer’s biographical tradition. This discussion will better equip us to interpret the relationship between the mock-epic speaker, the rhapsode, and Homer in the following case studies, and expand the possibilities for how we discuss “low” and “high” in epic parody.

Homer and the Rhapsode

The nature of rhapsodic performance is part and parcel of the Homeric question. The scholar who imagines an early fixation of the Iliad and Odyssey as a result of a writing oral poet or a dictation scenario will necessarily imagine the rhapsode’s craft differently than the scholar who sees a more gradual fixation that continued into the Classical period; champions of the former school include M. L. West and Richard Janko, and the latter, Gregory Nagy and José M. González.114 Supporters of an early fixation of the Iliad and Odyssey tend to see Classical rhapsodes as reciters of a text, while

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113 Republic 600d-e refers to Hesiod and Homer traveling around rhapsodizing (ῥαψῳδεῖν), and Laws 658b calls Homer’s performance ῥαψῳδία. For the rhapsode’s task of “adorning” or “embellishing” (κοσμεῖν) Homer, see Ion 530d, 536d, and 541e.

supporters of a more gradual, later fixation – the “evolutionary model” – see rhapsodes as more creative, relying on a combination of oral composition techniques and written materials in different ways and to different degrees at different times. Most important for my purposes, however, is the fact that rhapsodic performance of heroic epic purported to present static, unchanging material, whether it actually did so or not. González accounts for this conceit of rhapsodic performance by postulating a theory of “notional fixity” or “notional sameness.” In this scenario, every time an epic singer performs a given poem, the poem is exactly as it was in all previous performances, and exactly as it will be in all future performances. This is because the poem has a divine source, and so it cannot change from one telling to the next, even when different singers perform it.

The conduit for this divine knowledge was the ur-poet “Homer.” Our earliest references to Homer date to the sixth century BCE and already seem to understand him as the central authority behind epic poetry. There was also an early interest in developing a body of lore around the figure of the epic singer, as evidenced by the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, which refers to a blind bard from Chios; Thucydides interprets this singer as Homer himself. Already during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, a variety of stories about the figure of Homer were circulating, offering differing accounts of where he was from, what works he authored, and how he operated. These stories developed in part out of the assimilation of Homer to the heroes and singers within epic, and to the rhapsodes

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115 Written materials include transcripts of previous performances, which can be used as guides, and scripts, which the epic singer memorizes in advance, or which otherwise shape his future performance in some fundamental way. Nagy 1996, 112; González 2013, 293-296.
116 González 2013, 173-208 coins the term. However, the idea has its roots in the work of Nagy: 1990a, 27; 1990b, 55; 2002.
117 e.g. Xenophanes B 1.13-24 West, Heraclitus DK 22 B42, B56, and B105.
118 HH 3.72-73; Thucydides 3.104.
who performed epic. Graziosi has argued convincingly that the stories in Homer’s *bios* can be profitably interpreted as reflections of how audiences understood epic song.\(^{119}\) She also points out that the lore surrounding Homer likely evolved from rhapsodes themselves as they appealed to his authority during their performances; rhapsodes fashioned themselves in his image, and fashioned his image from themselves.\(^{120}\) Thus, the Homer of biographical lore shares certain qualities with his own characters and with his rhapsodic reperformers; his itinerancy, for example, recalls both Odysseus and the real rhapsodic lifestyle of travelling to perform.

Homer’s authority as archetypical epic singer stemmed from his access to the divine, and as a result, the performance of epic song during the Classical period entailed a chain of knowledge from Muse to Homer to rhapsode to audience. Our sources do not explain how rhapsodes were trained, and, as González points out, this is perhaps understandable given that this step was elided in the cultural imagination; in the chain of epic knowledge, rhapsodic performance becomes a divine effort rather than a human one.\(^{121}\) The best evidence we have of a rhapsodic “guild” is the Homeridai, who claimed to descend from Homer, and thereby cast themselves less as practitioners of a learned craft and more as passive recipients of an embodied knowledge. The connection between epic and the divine is also evidenced in other aspects of its reception, such as the practice of preceding its performance at religious festivals with a hymnic *proomium*; the use of

\(^{119}\) Graziosi 2002.
\(^{120}\) Graziosi 2002, 13-50.
\(^{121}\) González 2013, 277. Nagy 1996, 61 argues that “the rhapsode is re-enacting Homer by performing Homer… he is Homer so long as the mimesis stays in effect, so long as the performance lasts.”
epic language in oracles; and, later, the hero-cults of Homer. This is not to say that audiences understood every epic performance as equally inspired, or that they always agreed on the matter, as the longstanding debate about which poems were and weren’t “Homeric” makes quite clear. Still, the conceit of rhapsodic performance was that it represented a divine speech act, made possible by the legendary archetypical poet Homer, himself the subject of a complex storytelling tradition, and related to the rhapsode through blood or shared experience. In at least some cases, audiences seem to have believed this.

The “chain of inspiration” or “chain of authority” offers a useful model for thinking through the character of a mock-epic speaker in parody, insofar as it illuminates the primary figures the audience might have in mind when they encountered such characters, and offers hints as to when and how these characters transgress audience expectations. Just as in epic performance the rhapsode mediates between Homer and audience, so also in a parody the rhapsode mediates between Homer and the mock-epic speaker. By channeling Homer, the mock-epic speaker necessarily calls to mind the rhapsode, the official channeler-of-Homer. Thus, a Classical audience would not understand parodic imitations of epic language and form as allusions to a static text, or even solely a kind of performance, but to a whole system by which knowledge is generated and communicated. The object of imitation is not a text, and not even a single performer, but the rhapsode and Homer together. The character who speaks in epic

122 Thuc. 3.104.4–5 calls the Homeric Hymn to Apollo a prooimion. On hero cults, see Graziosi 2002, 152-155 and Shapiro 2020; our earliest certain evidence is from the third century BCE.
123 Herodotus, for instance, argues against the popular opinion that Homer produced the Cypria and the Epigonoi (Hdt. 2.117, 4.32).
language in an epic parody inserts themself into this system, and inherently bears some relationship to the rhapsode and to Homer, although this relationship may change from case to case. To identify traces of the rhapsode and Homer, we must imagine these figures as ancient audiences did, as figures who performed in certain ways and in certain contexts, and who participated in certain literary cultural developments. We must search not only for Homeric formulae and quotations, but biographical motifs. We must, finally, keep in mind the close relationship between the rhapsode, Homer, and the characters within epic poetry; the same character motifs may evoke different kinds of epic figures at once.

Finally, a remark about paroidia as a genre of solo hexameter parody.\textsuperscript{124} Our earliest evidence of paroidia, an inscription related to a festival for Artemis at Eretria in ~340 BCE, lists not only the prizes for certain performance categories, but also when they occurred; at this festival, at least, the poets of paroidia performed on the same day as the rhapsodes.\textsuperscript{125} It is worth considering what effect this context would have on the audience. The singer of paroidia quotes Homer just like a rhapsode does, but he disrupts the system by producing poetry that is his own; when Hegemon performs his paroidia, Hegemon is considered the author of the resulting poem, not Homer. Likewise, the narrator of Matro’s fragment uses Homer’s language in his invocation of the Muse, but this does not mean that the Muse once told the Deipnon to Homer; Matro is describing a contemporary event, not an event of the epic past. Rather, the conceit is that the Muse is speaking directly through the Deipnon’s narrator. Both rhapsodes and epic parodists take

\textsuperscript{124} For further discussion of the genre of paroidia, see introduction.
\textsuperscript{125} On the epigraphic evidence for paroidia, see Bertolini 2020, 43-47.
Homer as their source material, but in different ways, and this complicates the question of whom the epic speaker of parody is meant to evoke. From this perspective, *paroidia* has the interesting effect of presenting content that belongs very much to the human world in a form that implies a divine source. This effect not only playfully suggests that the content of epic parody has a high significance and truth-value, but also cheekily pulls back the curtain and exposes rhapsodic performance as a human construction. Of course, ancient sources already recognized this possibility; when Herodotus expresses doubts that Homer wrote the *Cypria* or the *Epigonoi*, he must think that someone else did, and Herodotus himself pulls back the curtain on Homer in his own way. Yet *paroidia* works fundamentally differently; it highlights and celebrates human creativity with epic poetry in a way that the epic tradition itself – along with historiography, for that matter – actively discourages.

**Homer and Humor**

Complicating the issues of inspiration and creativity in epic parody is the fact that poetry with humor and mockery could also be considered divinely inspired. Homeric epic itself contains comic and iambic motifs – consider characters such as Hephaestus, Thersites, and Irus – and Homer was believed to have authored a number of playful works, such as the *Margites*. Furthermore, the hero-cult to Archilochus on Paros shows

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126 Hdt 4.32 and 2.117. E.g. Herodotus contests Homer’s account of Helen (2.116) and his description of the ocean as a river (2.23).

127 A number of sources name Homer as the author of the *Margites*, including Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b; pseudo-Plato, *Alcibiades II*, 147c-d; and *Certamen* 2. Zeno also apparently considered it Homeric (Dio Chrystostom 53.4), as did Archilochus, Cratinus, and Callimachus (Eustathius, *Comm. in Arist. Graeca* xx.320.36). The Roman-era pseudo-Herodotean *Life of Homer* (24) also attributes to Homer a slew of παίγνια including the *Cercopes*, *Batrachomyomachia*, *Psaromachia*, *Heptapaktike*, and *Epikichlides*.
that poets outside the epic tradition could also enjoy a close relationship with the divine. Inscriptions from this site relate information about Archilochus’ life, evidencing an early interest in his biography, and among these stories is an account of his divine inspiration. The inscription dates to the third century BCE, but a fifth century BCE pyxis depicting the inspiration scene demonstrates that the story was in circulation earlier.\textsuperscript{128} According to a fragment of Heraclitus, Homer and Archilochus were performed in \textit{mousikoi agones}, suggesting that Archilochus was considered representative of his genre in a way comparable to Homer, and that the two types of poetry were performed in comparable contexts.

In fact, the same rhapsodes may have performed both epic and iambus. In Plato’s \textit{Ion}, Socrates asks Ion whether he is skilled in Homer alone, or Hesiod and Archilochus as well.\textsuperscript{129} Athenaeus, citing Chamaeleon, relates that the Homeristai also performed Hesiod and Archilochus, as well as Mimnermus and Phocylides. On the basis of these passages, Rotstein argues that Archilochus’ poetry was reperformed after his death by the same rhapsodes who sang epic. This conclusion is speculative and leaves open a number of questions: During what time periods does Rotstein imagine that rhapsodes performed both epic and iambus? How common was this in practice? Nonetheless, it is important to consider the possibility that epic and iambus shared elements of their reception, including at least some aspects of their performance context. Likewise, rhapsodes may have played a role in the production of \textit{paroidia}; Hegemon’s fragment, to which I will turn shortly, evidences a deep knowledge of the epic tradition that in the fifth century BCE may

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Kontoleon 1964. I will return to this story in the following section.
\item Plat. \textit{Ion} 531a.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
suggest some form of rhapsodic training. In Homer’s work, and quite possibly in the rhapsodes’ *oeuvre*, there was a place for non-serious poetry.

The non-serious aspects of epic are crucial context for how we trace the character motifs contained within the mock-epic speakers of parody and comedy. We cannot conceive of epic parody as simply a mixture of high with low, because the epic tradition – the “high” – also contains the low, and authors like Archilochus – whose work is ostensibly “lower” – are also exalted, just in different ways. Likewise, due to the considerable crossover between traditions, we cannot always easily identify characteristics of the epic speaker of parody or comedy that are purely epic or non-epic. The mock-epic speaker is not necessarily “epic” in his language and “non-epic” in his base or funny content, because Homer himself was understood to have composed such content, and epic rhapsodes may well have performed such content. Thus, rather than interpreting the epic speaker of parody or comedy as embodying a mixture of epic and non-epic character motifs, we may sometimes understand him as evoking different parts of the epic milieu at once, operating within a network of interconnected motifs rather than reaching outside it. This is not to say that ancient audiences did not see parody as involving a tension between distinct categories of “high” and “low;” I simply mean that epic parody and the character of the mock-epic speaker may also function by drawing attention to the high within low genres, and the low within high genres. Hegemon fr. 1

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130 Some scholars have speculated about Hegemon’s poetic training. For example, Panomitros, speculates that Hegemon was first a rhapsode, then a parodist, then finally turned to comedy (Panomitros 2004, 161). Magnani hypothesizes that Hegemon was from Ionia and exposed to rhapsodic performance there, although he may or may not have actually performed as a rhapsode himself (Magnani 2014, 368-369).
functions this way most clearly, but Aristophanes, too, creates the effect of uncovering something surprising within epic.

**II. Traditional and Real Poetic Agones in Aristophanes, Peace 1270-1304**

Toward the end of the *Peace*, as Trygaeus prepares for his wedding to Peace, he asks one of the wedding singers to preview his song. The boy sings from the epic *Epigonoi*, and Trygaeus scolds him for singing about war rather than peace. The boy continues on the same poem, however, and Trygaeus continues to interrupt him, until line 1279, when the boy asks what he should sing instead. Trygaeus begins to offer him hexameter verses with gastronomic content (1280-1289):\(^\text{131}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRYGAEUS</th>
<th>“Thus did they feast on the flesh of beeves,” and this sort of thing: “Their breakfast was laid out before them, and whatever was good to eat.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ΠΑΙΔΙΟΝ Α’</td>
<td>“Thus did they feast on the flesh of beeves,” and this sort of thing: “Their breakfast was laid out before them, and whatever was good to eat.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{131}\) All translations from the *Peace* are from Henderson 1998.
FIRST BOY：“And when they had finished, they started to pour—”
TRYGAEUS Happily, I wager!
FIRST BOY：“—forth from the battlements, and a clamor unquenchable rose up.”
TRYGAEUS Damn and blast you, little boy, and your battles too! You sing of nothing but wars.

Trygaeus then asks the boy who is father is, and we learn that he is the son of Lamachus, a general whose bellicosity Aristophanes previously mocked in the Acharnians; this humorously explains the boy’s fixation on war poetry. Trygaeus sends the boy away and calls for another singer. The rejection of martial song at festive occasions is a longstanding literary motif, as fragments of Anacreon, Xenophanes, and Bacchylides reveal. Aristophanes uses this motif to stage the conflict between war and peace that forms the basis of the play. The structure of their exchange, however, evokes a particular format of agonistic rhapsodic song, as well as the biographical tradition of poets engaging in such agones.

The Certamen and Rhapsodic Performance

Scholars have noted that Aristophanes’ treatment of this motif in the Peace recalls in particular the Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi, a second century CE account of the legendary poetic competition between Homer and Hesiod based on the fourth century BCE Mouseion of Alcidamas. The Certamen dramatizes Hesiod’s performance at the

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133 On the connection between this passage of the Peace and the contest of Homer and Hesiod, see Richardson 1981; Compton-Engle 1999; Hall 2006, 347-349; and Telò 2013. There are a number of reasons to believe that it drew on the Mouseion of Alcidamas. The Contest cites Alcidamas as a source for one version of Homer’s death in section 14. Two verses from section 7 appear in Stobaeus (4.52.22), who attributes them to Alcidamas. A third century BCE papyrus contains a nearly identical version of the contest, which confirms the antiquity of the story. Finally, a second-third c. CE papyrus relates the account of Homer’s death and attributes it to “Alcidamas, On Homer.” Richardson 1981 argues further that the
funeral games of Amphidamas, described in the *Works and Days* (*WD* 646-662), and identifies Homer as Hesiod’s competitor at the event. In the *Certamen*, the defining qualities of Homeric and Hesiodic poetry are their martial and peaceful content, respectively, and this distinction becomes the deciding factor in the competition; although Homer is the superior poet, his martial subject matter makes him a less fitting winner, and so Hesiod takes the prize.

The dialogue between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus not only recalls the *Certamen* in its representation of a contest between martial and peaceful poetry, but also in the specific format of this contest. The *Certamen* features a segment in which Homer and Hesiod complete one another’s couplets, and Trygaeus offers the boy a verse to expand upon in the *Peace*. So, for instance, in the *Certamen*, Hesiod offers, “then they dined on beef and the horses’ necks…” and Homer finishes “…they cleansed of sweat, having had their fill of fighting.” Likewise, in the *Peace*, Trygaeus suggests a line for the boy: “Their breakfast was laid out before them, and whatever was good to eat,” and the boy initially seems to respond obligingly, singing: “Thus did they feast on the flesh of beeves, and from the harness loosed the reeking necks of their steeds, since they were sated with warfare.” His line in fact recalls Homer’s line from *Certamen*, quoted above, and this solidifies the boy’s role as a Homeric avatar.\(^{134}\) Sure enough, as the boy continues, he falls back into his martial song, singing, “and when they had finished, they

\(^{134}\) It is unlikely that the *Certamen* is quoting the *Peace*. Rather both are making reference to the same traditional material. C.f. Graziosi 2001.
started to pour… forth from the battlements, and a clamor unquenchable rose up.”\textsuperscript{135} The boy plays the role of Homer, the quintessential poet of war; Trygaeus is victorious with his peaceful song, as Hesiod is in the \textit{Certamen}.

So how does this \textit{certamen} between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus resolve? Trygaeus does not “win” the exchange exactly, but rather calls in another contender, the son of Cleonymus, explaining, “I am at least certain he will not sing of battles, for his father is far too careful a man.” The son of Cleonymus does not sing about feasting, as Trygaeus initially hoped, but presents the archetypical subversion of war poetry: Archilochus’ account of abandoning his shield in battle. Trygaeus invites the boy inside, making the “winner” of the contest neither Homer nor Hesiod, but Archilochus. In this way, the “contest” in the \textit{Peace} ends with a surprise winner, like the \textit{Certamen}. Although the earliest evidence of the contest between Homer and Hesiod dates to the fourth century author Alcidamas, it is likely that it was somewhere in the process of crystallization at Aristophanes’ time; the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in the \textit{Frogs} seems to draw from the same tradition, and there, too, Aeschylus is presented as explicitly Homeric and martial.\textsuperscript{136} The \textit{agon} between iambus and epic in Cratinus’ \textit{Archilochoi} offers an even closer parallel to the \textit{agon} between these genres in the \textit{Peace}. From these examples, we can be reasonably certain that the audience of the \textit{Peace} would have recognized the contest between poetic genres or content as a longstanding motif, including contests in which particular poets represented their genres. We can also hypothesize – though less securely – that they were familiar with biographical lore in

\textsuperscript{135} These lines involve wordplay with \texttt{θωρήσω}. I discuss this point further later in this section.
\textsuperscript{136} Rosen 2004.
which Homer and Hesiod enacted this motif, an example of which survives to us in the
*Certamen* via Alcidamas.

At the same time, the *Peace* is, in Hall’s words, “obsessively interested in
festivals.”¹³⁷ The play was performed at the Dionysia shortly before the ratification of the
peace of Nicias, and the celebration of the wedding of Peace with which the play
concludes mirrors the festivities of the Dionysia itself; at one point, the chorus even
invites the audience to “come play with me in this festival” (μετ᾿ ἐμοὶ ξύμπαυξε τὴν
ἐορτήν, 815–18).¹³⁸ The play is rich in references to the other literary genres that
audiences would have encountered at the Dionysia, such as tragedy, satyr play, and
lyric.¹³⁹ In this context, the audience of the *Peace* would have recognized the exchange
between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus as an imitation of rhapsodic competition,
another event at the Dionysia.¹⁴⁰ Rhapsodic competition involved some sort of relay
structure, whether in rapid-fire verse exchange like we see in the *Certamen*, or in the
passing-off of longer passages.¹⁴¹ Thus, when the son of Lamachus picks up his song
from Trygaeus’ verses, their argument about song comes to resemble a form of agonistic
song performance, likely performed at the Dionysia itself. This is especially funny given
that the son of Lamachus is an unwitting participant in the rhapsodic exchange;
ironically, by advocating for peace, Trygaeus has turned the boy’s non-agonistic epic
song into a rhapsodic competition, further blurring the line between the wedding

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¹³⁷ Hall 2006, 337.
¹³⁸ Thucydides 5.18–19 attests to the date of the peace of Nicias.
¹³⁹ Hall 2006 surveys these.
¹⁴⁰ [Plat.], *Hipparch*. 228b–c; Diog. Laert. 1.57; Pind., *Nem.* 2.1-3 with scholia *ad loc*.
¹⁴¹ Some scholars argue that rhapsodic performance involved “capping” like we see in the *Certamen*, in
which singers complete one anothers’ couplets (e.g. Collins 2001, González 2013, 280-281).
festivities within the play and the Dionysia. The humor of the scene relies not only on the collision of past and present epic performance through allusion to the contest of Homer and Hesiod (or at least the broader tradition in which this contest participates), but also on the collision of distinct contemporary practices in epic performance.

**Locating the Parody**

Aristophanes reproduces the traditional motif of a contest between poetic genres or styles (perhaps that of Homer and Hesiod specifically) using characters who do not best represent the poetry they are made to champion. The poet of the *Epigonoi* – understood to be Homer by some at this time – is demoted to a little boy, while the contest itself is downgraded to a verbal dispute.\(^{142}\) In this sense, the scene offers a parody of a specific episode in the biographical tradition of poets, or of a traditional motif. The conclusion of the scene with the recitation of Archilochus acts as a moment of generic self-positioning, and the contest becomes a way for Aristophanes to establish a literary lineage through Archilochus, and in opposition to martial epic.\(^{143}\) Aristophanes asserts the supremacy of comedy not just in literary history, but at the current festival by encompassing all other genres, including epic, within his play.

At the same time, the scene imitates a form of rhapsodic performance, and the transformation of the boy’s solo performance into an agonistic exchange reflects the assimilation of different epic performance settings in the same scene: the wedding (of Trygaeus and Peace), and the festival (the Dionysia, at which the *Peace* was performed),

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\(^{142}\) Herodotus attests that the *Epigonoi* was attributed to Homer in the fifth century (Hdt. 4.32).

\(^{143}\) I discuss this effect further in the following chapter.
and perhaps the funeral (the setting of the contest of Homer and Hesiod). In particular, the move from solo to agonistic performance contributes to the assimilation of wedding festivities and actual festival enacted in the play’s conclusion. Thus, Aristophanes parodies rhapsodic performance not only by casting Trygaeus and the boy as rhapsodes, but also by alluding to disparate performance styles and contexts at once. We might ask whether the primary source of parodic imitation in the scene is the literary and biographical tradition from which the \textit{Certamen} was born, or the contemporary practice of rhapsodic performance. However, these are part and parcel of each other. Actual modes of rhapsodic performance informed the contests represented in the \textit{Frogs}, \textit{Peace}, and \textit{Certamen}, such that it is difficult to imagine how Aristophanes could stage a contest between hexameter poetic styles without calling to mind both the literary tradition and the lived experience of such contests.

Furthermore, the technique of drawing a new meaning out of a familiar epic line through decontextualization is common in epic parody. Although the boy is the primary epic speaker in the scene, Trygaeus assists with the decontextualization of his words (1283-1286):

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{ΠΑΙΔΙΟΝ Α’} & \textquoteleft\textquoteleft \text{\textomicron \textomicron \iota \iota \omicron \mu \epsilon \nu \delta \epsilon \iota \iota \nu \nu \tau \theta \nu \nu \iota \omicron \kappa \upsilon \chi \varepsilon \nu \varsigma \alpha \varsigma \iota \nu }\text{οι \mu \epsilon \nu \delta \alpha \iota \iota \nu \nu \theta \eta \nu \nu \tau \omicron \omicron \nu \nu \iota \omicron \iota \nu \iota \nu \omicron \omicron \nu \iota \iota \nu \omicron \iota \nu \nu \omicron \nu \iota \nu \omicron }\text{\textepsilon \kappa \lambda \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu \iota \omicron \iota \omicron \nu \nu \omicron \iota \iota \nu \omicron \iota }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \rho \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu }\text{\textepsilon \omicron \micr
Trygaeus summarizes the boy’s words as ὡς ἤσθιον κεκορημένοι, which could mean “once they were full, they kept eating.” Similarly, he draws out a double meaning from θωρήσοντ’ (1287-1289):

ΠΑΙΔΙΩΝ Α’ θωρήσοντ’ ἄρ’ ἐπείτα πεπαιμένοι—
ΤΡΥΓΑΙΟΣ ἄσμενοι, οἶμαι.
ΠΑΙΔΙΩΝ Α’ πύργων δ’ ἐξεχέοντο, βοὴ δ’ ἄσβεστος ὀρώρει.
FIRST BOY “And when they had finished, they started to pour—”
TRYGAEUS Happily. I wager!
FIRST BOY “—forth from the battlements, and a clamor unquenchable rose up.”

The joke hinges on the double meaning of θωρήσω, which Henderson conveys using “pour,” although the word properly means “to arm” and “to drink heavily.” We have already seen Matro pun on the same word: …ἀστακὸς αὖτε λιλαίετο θωρήσεσθαι / ἐν μακάρων δείπνοις. (“and a lobster too was eager to take a valiant part / in the banquets of the blessed,” 66).144 The lobster was eager to arm himself (for the battle in the epic framing) or to get drunk (like a guest at the dinner itself). Both poets call to mind one meaning of θωρήσω in one line (Aristophanes gastronomic and Matro martial), then evoke its other meaning in the following line (Aristophanes martial and Matro gastronomic). Trygaeus’ interjection helps the audience follow the joke, inviting us to anticipate the drinking-related meaning before the boy reverts to battle narrative. The son of Lamachus picks up from the prompt that Trygaeus offers him in the manner of a rhapsode, but what follows is a common technique of epic parody. Of course, Trygaeus

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144 The joke in Matro’s line revolves the identification of the lobster’s shell as “armor.” The word θώραξ can refer to both a breastplate and a lobster’s upper body, which is covered by a plate-like shell. Olson and Sens 1999, 112.
and the boy do not create this effect to be funny; the boy simply doesn’t know how to sing anything else. He is as unwitting a parodist as he is a rhapsodic competitor.

The wordplay shared by the Peace and the Deipnon serves as a reminder that parody of martial epic inherently involves a tension between the poetry of war and the poetry of peace, between heroic epic and iambus, comedy, cookbook, or some such thing. Food is an important motif in epic parody not only because it offers a way to juxtapose archaic and contemporary societies, but because commensality can be understood as the opposite of war; so fragments of Anacreon and Xenophanes, noted above, decry the practice of reciting war poetry while drinking with friends. Food and dining represent peace in both the Certamen (featuring often in Hesiod’s verses) and in epic parodies like Matro’s Deipnon; the humor of Matro’s dinner party comes as much from the description of a peaceful activity in martial terms as it does from the juxtaposition of heroic past and late fourth century present. Thus, the gastronomic element in the exchange between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus represents peace quite explicitly, and this is one element that reminds us of the Certamen, or the tradition from which it was born. However, at the same time, the juxtaposition of martial and gastronomic content using decontextualized epic lines also situates us in the tradition of epic parody. To stitch together martial and gastronomic content, Aristophanes capitalizes on the fact that even heroic epic contains peaceful scenes. Heroes feast as well as fight, and it is this moment of transition from fighting to feasting that Trygaeus offers to the son of Lamachus as a

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145 See n. 132 for citations.
prompt for his song. In this way, Aristophanes creates the effect common in epic parody of revealing something unexpected within epic poetry, in this case anti-war poetry.¹⁴⁶

This scene of the *Peace* differs from many epic parodies in its use of the mythic past as a negative example. As we have seen in the previous chapter, often a parody will idealize the heroic past, using it as standard to which the contemporary world fails to measure up. Aristophanes, however, depicts the epic past as bombastic and war-obsessed, qualities that the singer, the son of the general Lamachus, embodies.¹⁴⁷ The peaceful content of epic poetry is there, but must be excavated. Thus, the juxtaposition of past and present is just as important in this scene as in any example of epic parody, but here it participates in a broader thematic program that identifies war as the way of the past, and peace the way forward. The juxtaposition of past and present in this case manifests not as simply a tension, but a full-on antagonism, enacted in the rhapsodic *agon* that progresses between Trygaeus and the boy, and resolved through the transformation of epic lines into an epic parody.

**Conclusion**

My interpretation of the exchange between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus assumes that many features of the passage do double and triple duty. The scene simultaneously recalls actual rhapsodic performance at the Dionysia, the literary motif of the poetic *agon*, and perhaps a specific legendary contest in the biographical tradition.

¹⁴⁶ The effect is similar to a passage earlier in the *Peace* when Trygaeus recites lines of Homer, ostensibly the poet of war, to foretell peace. I discuss this passage further in the following chapter.

¹⁴⁷ In the following chapter we shall see him use epic in the same way in the *Acharnians*. 
The tension between peaceful/gastronomic and martial poetry recalls the literary and biographical traditions that thematize this tension, including epic parody. The complexity of the passage is a product not only of Aristophanes’ ingenuity, but also a natural result of the interconnectedness of epic poetry, epic performance, epic parody, and the biographical tradition. The biographical tradition is formed out of the lives and practices of real rhapsodes, and epic parody derives its humor from subverting real literary conventions, such as when it is appropriate to perform what kind of poetry. Epic parody, furthermore, is always engaging with the ways that audiences encountered and experienced epic poetry. The *Peace* does this quite explicitly through allusion to various forms and contexts of rhapsodic performance, which was a feature of the Dionysia itself, and to the developing literary and biographical tradition of such performances.

III. Homer and the Rhapsode in Hegemon Fr. 1

In the previous chapter, I observed that Hegemon’s fragment evokes the *Odyssey* in its depiction of the narrator’s nostos: like the disguised Odysseus, the narrator is derelict and mistreated upon his arrival, but there is more to him than meets the eye, and he receives a visit from Athena, Odysseus’ protector. However, the same character motifs of vagrancy, outcast-status, and divine inspiration that evoke the *Odyssey* are also common in the biographies of the epic and iambic poets. Hegemon’s appropriation and subversion of these tropes results in a humorous critique of contemporary rhapsodic performance, and of the image of the poet-figure in the cultural imagination.
The Poet Vagabond

In Hegemon’s fragment, poverty and itinerancy go hand in hand. The narrator explicitly articulates this association when he claims that a mina drove him abroad to compete, as well as his poverty (σπάνις, 7), “which drives many Thasians to a tradeboat, baldheaded bums, men slaying and slain, who now sing abroad – bad songs, badly done.” (7-9). I argue that his plight recalls not only the wanderings of Odysseus, but also the stories of epic and iambic poets uprooted due to poverty and travelling abroad to perform. The tension between the disparate meanings of this motif in the iambic and epic poetic and biographical traditions informs the humor of Hegemon’s fragment.

Itinerancy became a definitive feature of the epic singer early on, as evidenced from the depictions of travelling singers in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo and in the Margites, both of which were associated with Homer in the Classical period.148 According to Plato, Homer and Hesiod travelled around rhapsodizing, and this conception of them reflects the actual itinerancy of singers during the Archaic and Classical periods, including the rhapsodes who performed Homer and Hesiod and who played a role in establishing their biographical traditions.149 In Homer’s case, itinerancy is also one of the many Odyssean resonances his character possesses. Both Homer and Odysseus are depicted as poor wanderers dependent on the goodwill of others, repeatedly rejected and condemned to suffering, and possessing divine strengths that go

149 Republic 600d-e: Ὄμηρον δ' ἄρα οἱ ἔπ' ἐκεῖνον, εἰπερ οἶδ' τ' ὣν πρὸς ἀρετὴν ὄνι(νά)γαν ἄθρόποις, ἢ Ἡσiodον ῥαφοδέν ἀν περιοντάς εἰςον, καὶ οὐχι μᾶλλον ἂν αὐτῶν ἀντεξόντο ἢ τοῦ χρυσοῦ καὶ ἴνα γαξον παρὰ σφίνον οἱκοι εἰναι, ἢ εἰ μὴ ἔπειθον, αὐτοὶ ἂν ἐπαιδαγώγουν ὅπη ᾦσαν, ἔως ικανοῦ παιδείας μεταλάβουν; On the role of rhapsodes in the development of Homer’s bios, see Graziosi 2002, 13-50.
unrecognized.\textsuperscript{150} This characterization of Homer is particularly prominent in the pseudo-Herodotean \textit{Life of Homer}, a Hellenistic or Roman-era biography that presents a series of episodes from Homer’s life that take place at different stops on his wanderings.\textsuperscript{151} These associations between Odysseus and Homer allow the narrator of Hegemon’s fragment to evoke both figures simultaneously; the narrator’s hostile reception at home after a journey at sea and his encouragement from Athena recall Odysseus, but his profession as a singer recalls Homer, the archetypical travelling epic singer.

Itinerancy also plays a central role in the \textit{bios} and poetry of Hesiod, although with a slightly different meaning.\textsuperscript{152} In the \textit{Works and Days}, Hesiod describes a journey he made to Chalchis to perform at the funeral games of Amphidamas (\textit{WD} 646-662), and the \textit{Certamen} situates Homer at this event as well.\textsuperscript{153} Like Homer’s travels, this journey has a heroic resonance; Hesiod sails from Aulis, where, he notes, the Greek forces gathered to embark for Troy.\textsuperscript{154} With this comment, Hesiod juxtaposes himself with a Greek hero of the Trojan war.\textsuperscript{155} Hegemon’s fragment achieves a similar effect when it applies the formula \textit{ὀλλύντων ὀλλυμένων τε}, which typically describes warriors on the battlefield, to the Thasian rhapsodes travelling abroad to perform. Hegemon’s use of this formula

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item Lefkowitz 2012, 14-29; Graziosi 2002, 125-163.
\item The \textit{Vita Herodotea} attributes to Homer the \textit{Battle of Frogs and Mice}, which scholars generally agree is a Hellenistic work, and this serves as a general terminus post quem. In addition, Tatian states that Herodotus wrote about Homer (\textit{Oration to the Greeks} 31), and so it was likely that the \textit{Vita Herodotea} was already in circulation by Tatian’s time in the mid second-century CE. Kirkland 2018 surveys the various scholarly conjectures as to its date (see esp. 302 n.9 and 304 n.14).
\item See Martin 1992, which argues that Hesiod assumes the persona of the immigrant in the \textit{Works and Days}, a move that Martin identifies as traditional for wisdom literature. He cites parallels from the \textit{Iliad}, among other poems
\item On the \textit{Certamen}, see n. xx in this chapter.
\item \textit{WD} 650-657.
\item On this juxtaposition, see Nagy 1982, 66; Thalmann 1984, 152-153; Rosen 1990b; Graziosi 2002, 168-172.
\end{itemize}

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signposts the mediation between poet and hero that the fragment’s Odyssean-Homeric biographical motifs already imply.

In the biographical tradition of poets, as in Hegemon’s fragment, it is difficult to speak of itinerancy without also discussing poverty. According to the pseudo-Herodotean *bios*, Homer left both Smyrna and Neon Teichos due to ἀπορία, and this squares with how Classical audiences also imagined him. Pindar, for instance, apparently believed the story that Homer gave away the *Cypria* as a dowry for his daughter due to lack of means.156 Meanwhile, Hesiod reminds Perses that their father was driven to sailing because he lacked a decent livelihood (βίου κεχρημένος ἐσθλοῦ, *WD* 634) and left Cyme because of terrible poverty (κακὴν πενίην, *WD* 638). At the same time, the early Greek hexameter tradition reveals a deep suspicion of speech that is directly motivated by want.157 A comment by Eumaeus in *Odyssey* 14 encapsulates this belief concisely: “but on the contrary, men who wander in need of sustenance tell lies, and do not wish to speak the truth.”158 The belly becomes an ulterior motive that destroys the speaker’s credibility.

Hesiod’s meeting with the Muses also raises this issue when the Muses say (*Th.* 26-28):159

\[“ποιμένες ἑγραυλοὶ, κάκ’ ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶν, ἵδε μεν πεὐδὰ πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμόια, ἵδε μὲν δ’ εὐτ’ ἐθέλομεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.”\]

Field-dwelling shepherds, ignoble disgraces, mere bellies: we know how to say many false things similar to genuine ones, but we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things.

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156 *Vita Herodotea* 9 and 11; Aelian records the story about the *Cypria* in *Varia Historia* 9.15.
Hesiod evokes a distinction between the material world of humans and the divine world of poetry. González takes γαστέρες οἶνον to refer to the “singer who is willing to compromise the veracity of his song by changing it to suit the expectations of local patronage.” He suggests that Hesiod distances himself from this practice by means of Panhellenic symbols of authority, such as divine inspiration and the possession of a staff. Indeed, Graziosi argues that it is Homer’s association with the divine that shields him from accusations of pandering. Thus, although poverty-motivated travel has parallels in the bioi of epic poets, when Hegemon’s narrator names poverty as the motivation for his song, it raises suspicions about the quality of his song and his character.

While open declarations of poverty may undermine the credibility of an epic poet, they are quite at home in the iambic tradition, and this explains the function of the poverty motif in Hegemon’s fragment. Hipponax, for example, describes his poverty in fr. 32:

Ἑρμῆς, φιλό Ἑρμῆς, Μαίαδε, Κυλλήνε, ἐπεύχομαι τοι, κάρτα γὰρ κακῶς ῥιγῶ καὶ βαμβαλίζω . . . δῶς χλαίναν Ἄππωνακτι καὶ κυπασίσκον καὶ συμβαλίσκα κάσκερίσκα καὶ χρυσοῦ στατῆρας ἐξήκοντα τούτηρον τούχου.

Hermes, dear Hermes, son of Maia, Cyllenian, I pray to you, for I am shivering violently and terribly and my teeth are chattering… Give Hipponax a cloak, tunic, sandals, felt shoes and gold staters on the other side.

Similarly, Critias seems to have criticized Archilochus for his shameless exhibition of his immoral behavior and his poverty (ap. Aelian V.H. 10. 13):

αἰτιᾶται Κριτίας Αρχίλοχον ὅτι κάκιστα ἐαυτὸν εἶπεν. εἰ γὰρ μὴ, φησίν, ἐκείνος τοιαύτην δόξαν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ ἐς τούς "Ελλήνας ἐξήνευκεν, σῶκ ἄν ἐπιθύμεθα ἡμεῖς

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160 González 2015, 253.
Critias censures Archilochus because he spoke very ill of himself. For if, he says, Archilochus had not made public among the Greeks such an opinion of himself, we should not have learned that he was the son of Enipo, a slave-woman, that because of poverty and difficult straits he left Paros and went to Thasos, that upon his arrival he became an enemy of the inhabitants, and in addition that he spoke ill of friends and enemies alike.

From this passage, we learn that Archilochus, like Hegemon, left his home due to πενία and ἀπορία. Also like Hegemon’s narrator, he wound up incurring the wrath of the Thasians. From outside the iambic tradition looking in, the poverty motif is problematic, but from the perspective of the iambographer, it serves an important literary function. Rosen shows that self-professed abjection, like other kinds of self-mockery, allows a satirist to elicit both laughter and sympathy simultaneously, and it surely serves this function in Hegemon’s fragment as well.

The humor of Hegemon’s fragment relies on the tension between the functions of poverty in the epic and iambic traditions. The narrator’s language and meter call to mind the epic heroes and Homer himself, but he publicizes his poverty in the manner of the iambographers, and the fragment forces the narrator to deal with the embarrassing consequences of this poverty as they do. As a result, he winds up in a double bind. In order to maintain the persona of the epic poet and the iambic narrator, he must be poor, and this characterization remains intact when he decides to give away his prize money. However, his poverty is the very quality for which the townspeople mock him. In this way, the

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164 A number of fragments of Archilochus mention Thasos, often mocking the island and its people (fr. 20, 21, 93a, and 102 W). It is possible that Hegemon’s poem was responding directly to this tradition.

fragment develops the narrator’s vagabond status as a literary and biographical motif, but makes it funny by situating it in mundane reality.

The Poet Outcast

In both epic poetry and the biographical tradition, poverty and itinerancy are accompanied by social rejection and abuse. In Hegemon’s fragment, the narrator experiences mistreatment in the first lines of the fragment when he is pelted with poop, and again when the Thasian man addresses him. The abuse of the poet is another common motif across epic and iambus and their biographical traditions. Once again, Hegemon capitalizes on the overlap between these traditions to construct his parody.

In the opening lines of the fragment, the narrator describes the abuse he endured at the hands of the Thasians (1-2):

ἐς δὲ Θάσον μ’ ἐλθόντα μετεωρίζοντες ἔβαλλον
πολλοῖς σπελέθοισι, καὶ ὅδε τις εἶπε παραστάς·

When I reached Thasos, they launched on me a volley of copious turds, and someone near me said:

These lines conjure two distinct epic parallels. Hegemon’s language is evocative of the Iliadic battlefield; βάλλω is common in a military context, and the formulaic nature of πολλοῖς σπελέθοισι is apparent from its similarity to the phrase πολλοῖς βέλεσιν at Iliad 13.555. However, the Odyssey offers another parallel for the abuse of Hegemon’s narrator. When Odysseus returns to Ithaca disguised as a beggar, the suitors throw footstools and a cow’s hoof at him, and the Odyssean resonances of the narrator’s nostos

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166 Iliad. 13.554-555: πέρι γὰρ ὁ Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων / Νέστωρος ύιὸν ἔρυτο καὶ ἐν πολλοῖς βέλεσιν.
encourage the association between these scenes. Hegemon uses these Iliadic and Odyssean resonances to juxtapose three categories of violence: attacks in war, which pose real mortal danger; attacks that are violent but non-lethal, like those that Odysseus endures; and attacks that are purely embarrassing, and devoid of physical danger altogether. The humor works similarly to a passage in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* in which the chorus criticizes the *choregos* Antimachus for his stinginess and curses him (1162-73).\(^{168}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
tóúto \ μén \ αὐτῷ \ κακὸν \ ἐν, \ κἀθ’ \ ἔτερον \\
υκτερινὸν \ γένοιτο. \\
ἡπαλὸν \ γὰρ \ οἶκαδ’ \ ἐξ \\
ἵππασις \ βαδίζον, \\
eῖτα \ πατάξειέ \ τις \ αὐτοῦ \ μεθύον \\
tῆς \ κεφαλῆς \ Ορέστης \\
μανόμενος- \ ὁ \ δὲ \ λίθον \ λαβεῖν \\
βουλόμενος \ ἐν \ σκότῳ \ λάβωι \\
tῆ \ χειρὶ \ πέλεθον \ ἀρτίως \ κεχεσμένον- \\
ἐπαξείεν \ ὁ \ ἔχων \\
tὸν \ μάρμαρον, \ κἄπειθ’ \ ἀμαρ- \\
τῶν \ βάλοι \ Κρατίνον.
\end{align*}
\]
That’s one curse for him; and here’s another, to happen to him in the night.
As he walks home shivering after galloping his horse, I hope some drunkard—mad Orestes!—knocks him on the head; and when he wants to grab a stone I hope in the darkness he grabs in his hand a fresh-shat turd, and holding that glittering missile let him charge at his foe, then miss him and hit Cratinus!

Like Hegemon, Aristophanes conjures three layers of violence. The language and content are typical of epic battle narrative; heroes commonly lift rocks to launch at enemies, and μάρμαρος sometimes describes the rocks in these scenes.\textsuperscript{169} ἐπαίσσω is a common word in the \textit{Iliad}, and Aristophanes also uses the typical scene structure in which a hero misses his intended target and hits someone else.\textsuperscript{170} However, here the weapon is a πέλεθος, a turd, as in Hegemon’s fragment (πολλοῖς σπέλθοσι, 2). Also like Hegemon, Aristophanes capitalizes on the generic breadth of βάλλω, which is just at home in battle narrative as it is in comedy. It is already funny that the chorus describes an assault by a drunkard in epic terms, but the scatological turn pushes the absurdity a step further. The opening of Hegemon’s fragment, with the enjambment of πολλοῖς σπέλθοσι, seems to achieve a similar effect.

This passage of the \textit{Acharnians} resembles Hegemon’s fragment not only in its choice of projectiles, but also in the identities of its targets: like Hegemon, Aristophanes describes an attack against a figure involved in the production and staging of poetry. This feature of the two passages suggests another type of parallel, one outside of the epic tradition: scenes in which poets are stoned by disapproving audiences. Such an event in fact occurs in Hegemon’s own \textit{bios}. Athenaeus (citing Chamaeleon of Pontus) relates that Hegemon once arrived at a staging of one of his comedies with a bunch of stones and threw them into the orchestra, declaring: “Here are some stones, and anyone who likes can throw them. But Lentil Soup is a fine dish in winter and summer alike.”\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{169} E.g. \textit{Il.} 12.380, 16.735; Olson 2002, 352.
\textsuperscript{170} Olson 2002, 352. It is possible that Antimachus was the \textit{choregos} for one or more plays of Cratinus, which would inform the presence of Cratinus in the fragment, but this may also simply be an excuse for Aristophanes to include a dig at a poetic rival.
\textsuperscript{171} Athenaeus 9.406f-407a: λίθοι μὲν οἶδε βαλλέτω δ’ εἰς τις θέλειν ἄγαθόν δὲ κἀκεχωμάνι κἀν θέρει Φακῆ.
Anticipating that his audience will dislike his play, Hegemon provides rocks for the audience to throw at him. Other anecdotes in the *Deipnosophists* suggest that the stoning of poets was either a real practice or a common biographical motif. In one story, a citharode is eating lentil soup and bites down on a stone, prompting his companion to joke, “Poor guy—even the lentil soup’s stoning you!” Both this anecdote and the one featuring Hegemon himself describe the act of stoning using βάλλω, the same verb that appears in the first line of Hegemon’s fragment. These sources post-date Hegemon, but it is worth considering that Hegemon’s fragment may be making reference to a traditional expression of aesthetic criticism, either in reality or in *bios* myth.

Of course, stoning was also a symbol of social rejection more broadly, particularly due to its role in scapegoat rituals. Among the epic and iambic poets, we find only one allusion to the abuse of a poet by stoning, and it does not seem to be a spontaneous audience response, as it is in the examples above. A brief fragment of Hipponax states: ἐκέλευε βάλλειν καὶ λεύειν Ἰππώνακτα (“gave the command to pelt and stone Hipponax,” 46 Degani). Once again, βάλλω is the verb used to describe the act of pelting a target. Because someone is ordering Hipponax to be stoned, this fragment suggests a more general social rejection, perhaps even an official one. So also in

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172 Later, Athenaeus relates a story in which a citharode asks a friend for some stones to build a house; upon receiving them, he quips that he’ll get more stones than that at his next performance. Passages from Petronius and Macrobius offer further parallels; Gow 1965, 61.
173 Athenaeus 8.245d: “ὦ ταλαίπωρε,” ἐφη, “καὶ η φακῆ σε βάλλει.” Text and trans. Olson 2006-12. Brandt 1888, 40 n.2 suggests that one was more likely to find stones found in lentil soup than other kinds of soup due to the difficulty of sieving stones out after cropping. This joke may also underlie the anecdote about Hegemon, apparently nicknamed “Lentil Soup,” bringing stones to his own production. The narrator’s name also may simply reflect the conception of lentil soup as a lowly dish, particularly in comedy, hence my rendering “Bean Slop.” Wilkins 2000, 13-16.
Hegemon’s fragment, the mockery of the narrator as a singer is inextricable from the mockery of the narrator as a person.

In fact, in the Greek biographical tradition, the social marginalization of the poet is a widespread motif of which stoning is simply one manifestation. Important for the interpretation of Hegemon’s fragment, however, is the fact that the bios tradition usually presents this marginalization as misguided. The mistreatment of an iambic poet, for instance, is ill-advised because it can inspire him to exact revenge through his art. Hipponax’ biographical tradition centers around his criticism of the artists Bupalus and Athenis who mocked him by producing unflattering paintings of him. Testimonia report that they later committed suicide as a result of his retaliatory invective. A fable attributed to Archilochus by Lucian, meanwhile, thematizes the idea of iambus as a just penalty. In it, a man grips a cicada by the wing, and the cicada cries out even more loudly; Archilochus asks why one would provoke a poet who is looking for an excuse to compose iambics. In this way, Archilochus and Hipponax wield their art against the injustices they are dealt by society. A similar spin on this theme also appears in the stories preserved on the Mnesiepes inscription, which was found at the shrine to

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174 Compton 2006 treats this as a narrative structure in the bios motifs (see esp. 346-357). The reconciliation of the justice of the satirist’s anger and the negative qualities of his persona is also an overarching theme for Rosen 2007: “It is fair to say… that all Classical poets of satire—from Archilochus to the Roman satirists—who assumed a personalized comic voice, a poetic ego girded for verbal battle against a target, shared a common desire to portray themselves as morally self-righteous, indignant at the behavior of others, and eager to capture the allegiance of their audience through their poetry.” (Rosen 2007, 3)

175 Test. 4 and 11 Gerber. This outcome is not attested in any extant fragments of Hipponax and may have arisen as a result of the conflation of his tradition with that of Archilochus, whose targets, according to some fragments, did commit suicide (Test. 26-31 Gerber).

Archilochus on Paros and which dates to the third century BCE. In one anecdote, a town was cursed with impotence after failing to name Archilochus as the winner of a contest. The idea of a poet’s retribution occurring not only through his art, but by divine power, is common in the post-Classical biographical tradition of Homer.

During Hegemon’s time, Homer’s outcast status was already common knowledge. The post-Classical sources, particularly the pseudo-Herodotean bios, detail Homer’s response to his mistreatment. In one anecdote, Homer encounters a priestess in Samos who commands him to keep his distance from a sacrifice because she doesn’t like the look of him (πρὸς αὐτὸν δυσχεράνασα τῇ ὄψι, Vita Herodotea 30). In Erythrae, meanwhile, a friendly stranger arranges passage for Homer to Chios on a fishing boat, but the sailors leave him behind (Vita Herodotea 19-20). However, Homer emerges triumphant from these interactions. He curses the Samian priestess and the Erythraean sailors in verse. The sailors are blown back to shore, and must pick him up before they can successfully embark. Homer’s most substantial curse, which comes as a result of being denied public assistance in Cyme, ends as follows:

οἱ δ’ ἀπανηνάσθην ἱερὴν ὀπα, φήμιν ἁρωδής, ἀφράδης. τῶν μὲν τε παθῶν τις φράσσεται αὐτίς, ὃς σφιν ὅνειδη<ίη> σιν ἐμὸν διεμήσατο πότιμον.

But they foolishly rejected the holy voice, the word of song. One of them will realize this when he suffers,

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177 Archilocheion E1, col. II; SEG 15. 517. On the inscription and the Archilocheion in general, see Clay 2004.
178 Graziosi 2002, 156-158. For instance, in Plato’s Republic, Glaucon says that Homer was ignored during his life; Socrates responds that maybe if Homer had educated people instead of simply offering mimeses, he would have had many friends who honored and loved him, and then he would have been invited to stay somewhere instead of wandering, or at least had many followers to travel with him (Rep. 600d-e). This passage assumes a characterization of Homer as not honored or loved, and as itinerant as a result of social rejection.
the one who insulted me when he decided my fate.

Homer’s threat of retaliation recalls the words of the cicada in Archilochus’ fable.

Although the *Vita Herodotea* is a post-Classical text, such stories about Homer were likely already in circulation during the Classical period, given that they reconcile some of his earliest and most fundamental features, such as his status as a social outcast, his itinerancy, and the divine nature of his art. Thus, in Homer’s *bioi*, too, we find the narrative motif of the poet who uses his art to avenge his unjust mistreatment, with a divine retaliatory power similar to that attributed to Archilochus on the Mnesiepes inscription.

The abuse and social rejection of Hegemon’s narrator seem to function quite differently. Hegemon emphasizes the narrator’s poverty and his old age, but also leaves his skill as a poet ambiguous. The Thasians think little of him, but he did win prize money at the competition in Athens. In line 17, we learn that the first prize was one *mina* (100 drachmas), so he evidently didn’t win first place, but the fifty drachmas he left with (line 17) is no small sum to a poor man. Furthermore, despite the narrator’s self-

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180 Graziosi 2002, 156-158.
181 Thucydides states that a hoplite earns one drachma per day, so fifty would have been almost two months’ wages, (3.17.4). Too little epigraphic evidence of contest prizes survives to determine the narrator’s placement in the competition. The narrator competed in Athens (line 16), and an inscription survives that lists the prizes at the Panathenaea (*IG II² 2311*), but the section that related the rhapsodic prizes is missing. This inscription also dates to ~380BC, likely postdates Hegemon. Furthermore, it is impossible to say for sure whether the narrator performed at the Panathenaea or some other event, and the size of prizes varies considerably from one festival to the next. On the Panathenaea inscription described above, the first place prize for a citharode is 500 drachmas plus a crown of olive oil worth 1000 drachmas, while an inscription from the festival of Artemis at Eretria (~340BC) names the prize for the same category as 110 drachmas. On this latter inscription, fifty drachmas is the second place prize for a rhapsode and the first place prize for a parodist. Hence, there is too little evidence to say how the narrator placed in his competition. The narrator suggests that he didn’t win the first prize, but he could have placed second or lower. In any case, fifty drachmas is a substantial bounty for a professedly poor man. On the epigraphic evidence of literary contest prizes, see Rotstein 2012.
deprecation, he does, it turns out, have the endorsement of Athena. The ambiguous characterization of the narrator’s poetic talent thematizes the disjunction between appearance and reality that we find throughout the Homeric *bioi*. Just when we think that the narrator is just another “bald-headed bum,” we find out that he is something more. Hegemon offers a twist on this *bios* motif, however, by subverting its typical outcome. Odysseus, Homer, Archilochus, and Hipponax do not bend to their abusers, but avenge themselves by means of a hidden strength. Hegemon’s narrator, on the contrary, so desires to win the approval of the Thasians that he offers up his prize money. In this way, Hegemon situates the narrator’s victimization in the tradition of *bios* lore, but reduces it to absurdity by having the narrator respond to his circumstances realistically, as one who is actually motivated by his own survival in the world. Furthermore, Hegemon reveals a catch-22 in the biographical motifs. When the narrator gives away his money, he maintains his role as an impoverished poet, but this same act also prevents him from fulfilling the narrative motif of the social outcast. Thus, Hegemon reveals the absurdity of the way that poverty in the *bioi* of poets acts as a marker of literary and divine privilege.

**The Poet Inspired**

The Thasians are not the only sources of the narrator’s abuse. In line 20, Athena calls the narrator βδελυρά, the same comic term that the Thasian man applies to him in line 3. The scene of a poet’s divine encounter has many parallels across Greek poetry and the biographies of the poets, but the addition of verbal abuse situates the fragment in a more specific tradition of mocking epiphanies, such as those experienced by Hesiod, Archilochus, and potentially Hipponax. In these cases, the Muses’ mockery emphasizes
the transition from mere mortal to inspired poet. Hegemon, however, adapts the motif by inserting comic language and by affirming the narrator’s baseness rather than marking a departure from it.

Hegemon’s epic form invites us to consider the tradition of the abusive divine epiphany in the epic tradition. Hesiod’s *Theogony* offers a parallel. As we have seen, the Muses call Hesiod and his companions ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ’ ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον (“Field-dwelling shepherds, ignoble disgraces, mere bellies,” *Th.* 26).¹⁸² Svenbro argues that in epic poetry, the belly represents isolation and social marginalization, the antithesis of organized human life.¹⁸³ Thalmann builds on this analysis by pointing out that in epic, both hunger and poetry serve to distract characters from emotional distress, but in different ways; hunger eclipses pain with greater, more urgent pain, and poetry eclipses pain with joy.¹⁸⁴ Poetry elevates humans toward the divine by providing respite from the urges of the belly and access to privileged knowledge about the world. When the Muses refer to Hesiod as a γαστήρ, they mark their encounter as the catalyst for Hesiod’s transformation from shepherd to poet, from nature to civilization, from mere mortal belly to vehicle of a divine voice (αὐδὴν θέσπιν *Th.* 31-32). They also signify this transformation by giving him a laurel staff (*Th.* 30). In Hegemon’s fragment, Athena, too, refers to the narrator in a manner that recalls the human drives of the belly by calling him “Bean Slop, you bum” (Φακῆ βδελυρά, 20). Athena constructs a hierarchy between herself and the narrator using terms

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¹⁸³ Svenbro 1976, 50-59.
¹⁸⁴ Thalmann 1984, 143-147.
that reduce the narrator to a set of bodily urges, as the Muses do with Hesiod. She does so, however, using the language of comedy. 185

Another mocking epiphany occurs in the *bios* of Archilochus. It is preserved on the Mnesiepes inscription, although evidence from vase painting suggests that the episode was known during the Classical period. 186 The inscription relates that Archilochus traveled out to the country before dawn to sell a cow, where he encountered a group of women: 187

Believing that they were on their way from their work to the town, he approached and bantered with them. They received him with jesting and laughter and asked if he was bringing the cow to sell it. When he said he was, they replied that they would themselves give him a fitting price. After these words were spoken, neither they nor the cow were any longer visible, but before his feet he saw a lyre. He was astounded and when he recovered his senses after a while he assumed that it was the Muses who had appeared to him and that they had given him the lyre.

The jesting of the Muses models and legitimizes the project of the iambographer. 188 This function of the mocking epiphany is also operative in an episode in the biographical

185 Polumon and Chamaeleon understand Lentil Soup as a nickname for Hegemon, and he seems to refer to himself by this name (9.406f-407a). Lentils are routinely depicted in comedy as a lowly food; c.f. Wilkins 2000, 13-16. Βδελυρός (Βδελυρία, etc.) appears in Eupolis and many times in Aristophanes.

186 Kontoleon 1964.
188 Müller 1985, 107; Tucker 1987, 80-81.
tradition of Hipponax. Choeroboscus reports a story about an encounter between Hipponax and a woman named Iambe, whom Hipponax comes upon as she is washing clothing. When he touches her trough, she scolds him with the phrase ἄνθρωπ’, ἀπελθε, τὴν σκάφην ἄνατρέπεις (“Go away, man! You’re knocking over the trough!”), which inspired his meter. The origins of this story are uncertain, although it may well have developed from a scene of poetic inspiration within Hipponax’ own poetry.\textsuperscript{189} Thus, Hegemon’s mocking epiphany has both epic and iambic models, although the motif serves different purposes in each tradition: in epic, it emphasizes the transformation of the poet from base human to divine vessel, and in iambus, the element of mockery is also programmatic of the genre.

The epiphany in Hegemon’s fragment functions differently from those of Hesiod, Archilochus, and Hipponax because the narrator has already been performing for profit. The event marks a transition not in the narrator’s identity, as in a true scene of poetic inspiration, but only in his confidence, and accordingly he receives from Athena only a whack with her rhabdos (19) rather than a staff, a lyre, or a new meter. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Hegemon describes this action using epic formulaic language from scenes in which a god appears to a hero to offer encouragement. These episodes routinely involve some sort of transformation of the hero; Athena often alters Odysseus’ appearance, for example, and she grants Diomedes divine sight during his aristeia in \textit{Iliad} 5.\textsuperscript{190} However, in epic, these changes are only temporary, and they do not mark an initiation the way that Muse epiphanies do. By casting the narrator’s divine poetic

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\textsuperscript{189} Test. 21 Degani. On the possibility that this testimonium stems from an inspiration scene within Hipponax’ own poetry, see Brown and Braun, 1988; Rosen 1988a.
\textsuperscript{190} \textit{Il.} 5.127-128: ἄχλων δ’ αὐ τοὶ ἀπ’ ὀφθαλμῶι ἔλον ἡ πρίν ἐπήεν, / δὲρ’ εὖ γινώσκῃς ἡμέν θεόν ἣδε καὶ ἄνδρα.
\end{flushright}
intervention in this formulaic language, Hegemon strips it of the meaning that it typically conveys. As a result, Athena’s mockery of the narrator becomes absurd. There is also no sense that she is initiating the narrator into invective, as the Muses and Iambe do for Archilochus and Hipponax (although without the complete poem, this is impossible to know). Furthermore, the narrator was already a derelict (βδελυρώτατε, 3) singer before she appeared, and so when she calls him βδελυρά, it simply confirms this identity rather than marking a divorce from it. The result is an absurdity: what the Thasians believe about the narrator is true, and Athena supports him anyway. The fragment presents contradictory evidence of the narrator’s skill: his fellow citizens revile him and, as discussed in the previous chapter, throughout the fragment he deploys epic phraseology in ridiculous ways. Still, he won a prize and – the greatest twist of all – his art is divinely sanctioned. The absurdity of the epiphany, combined with the use of the comic insult βδελυρά, suggests that Hegemon is showing us what an epiphany for a comic poet might look like; the use of epic formulaic language to structure the epiphany makes it fitting for epic parody.

Conclusion: Hegemon’s Narrator in Context

Hegemon’s fragment contains a number of biographical tropes that situate its singer-narrator within the broader mythology of poetic lives. His poverty, itinerancy, and outcast-status conjure a tradition in which these are noble features for a poet to possess, features that mark the separation of the poet from the human world and that result from an extraordinary, divinely-granted poetic gift. Hegemon subverts this poet character-type in several ways. First, he leaves the actual quality of the narrator’s poetic ability ambiguous and depicts him with a low self-worth; as a result, the biographical motifs that
define him are identifiable, but meaningless. Furthermore, Hegemon mixes epic and iambic bios motifs in ways that call to mind the similarities between them, but that render their meanings absurd. Lastly, Hegemon evokes an archetypical poet of yore whose divinely-gifted art forces him to the fringes of human society, but he situates this figure in a veristic contemporary comic world where bellies must be filled, wives pleased, and neighbors placated. Hegemon, like Aristophanes, draws from the biographical tradition to characterize a mock-epic speaker. More than Aristophanes, however, Hegemon seems to be mocking that tradition, playfully questioning the viability of the inspired poet of the Greek imagination.

The primary target of Hegemon’s mockery, however, is the figure of the contemporary epic singer. By constructing a contemporary rhapsode or parodist (likely his own persona) using biographical motifs from the poets’ lives, he unfavorably compares the contemporary singer to his forebears. We do not know the performance context for this fragment, but if it was sung at a festival, it would be quite subversive, playfully mocking not only the other singers who traveled to perform, but also the very idea of a poetic competition that offers financial incentives for the performance of divine song. The wordplay surrounding μνήμα and κέρδος, discussed in the previous chapter, enhances this mockery.191 It is the narrator who is ostensibly the target of mockery, but his language and his characterization suggest that he acts an avatar for a broader literary practice. Hegemon thus constructs a more biting criticism than Aristophanes of festival

191 The word μνήμα is contained within the first words of line 6, μνήμα ἄνέπαισε; Hegemon prompts his audience to think that memory may be motivating the narrator’s song when it is in fact money. He uses κέρδος (line 11) in the more contemporary sense of financial profit, although in Homeric epic this word usually appears in the plural to mean “cunning” or even “mischief.” Further discussion can be found in the previous chapter.
competition. It might be argued that the exchange between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus reveals the irony of celebrating peace through competition, but if this message is there, it is certainly subtler than the direct takedown of rhapsodic performance in Hegemon fr. 1.

Like Aristophanes, however, Hegemon does not construct his parody by introducing completely foreign comic and iambic elements into an epic framework, but by utilizing ones that already have a home within epic poetry and its reception. He accomplishes this by developing his narrator using character motifs that occur in both the epic and iambic *bioi*, while simultaneously evoking Odysseus, who served as a model for the iambographers’ self-fashioning and for the audience’s conception of the epic and iambic poets. It is impossible to say whether or not Hegemon himself was purposefully thinking through any of these connections; I simply mean that the literary tradition offered the parodist ample material for creating a character that felt distinctly epic while also being funny or subversive, that was shocking or silly while also being quite coherent. Although the humor of Hegemon’s fragment is based on the juxtapositions of mythic past and comic present, lofty and base, epic and non-epic, the deeply-rooted connections between these times and traditions are what make this incongruity meaningful.

A final point of contact between Aristophanes’ *Peace* and Hegemon fr. 1 is the ambiguous characterization of epic knowledge. Both fragments present singers who do not appear fully in control of their songs. The son of Lamachus is apparently limited in his poetic knowledge, but because his martial fixation reflects his father’s bellicosity, the narrowness of his repertoire feels meaningful. Perhaps Lamachus only had his son educated in martial epic poetry, or perhaps the boy simply takes after his father, and is
bellicose by nature. Meanwhile, we saw in the previous chapter that Hegemon’s narrator tends to deploy epic formulae that barely make sense in context. Hegemon leaves the source of the narrator’s knowledge ambiguous as well, suggesting that he performed just for money, then giving him a divine epiphany. Hegemon collapses the “chain of inspiration” between the rhapsode and Homer, rendering the epistemological system underlying epic poetry absurd. For the modern scholar, it is difficult to consider the question of the rhapsode’s knowledge without thinking first of the depictions of greedy rhapsodes in later sources such as Plato’s *Ion* or Xenophon’s *Symposium*. Hegemon’s fragment in particular seems to riff on the same central question as the *Ion*: is epic knowledge divinely inspired or learned as a craft? It is unwise to assume that the *Ion* reflects a mainstream attitude towards rhapsodes, but the dialogue does suggest that Hegemon’s fragment is engaging with a broad, longstanding discourse surrounding the how and why of rhapsodic performance, and the ethical-aesthetic consequences of these questions. The derelict narrator in Hegemon’s fragment stands in stark contrast to Plato’s well-dressed Ion, but the two texts are responding to similar issues.

*IV. Conclusion*

The mock-epic speaker in an epic parody channels not only the heroes and other epic characters whose words he speaks, but also the singers who gave voice to these characters, especially Homer and the rhapsodes. His presentation, furthermore, might mirror real forms of rhapsodic performance, as well as specific examples of these performances in the literary and biographical traditions. It is now useful to briefly turn to
Matro’s fragment, introduced in the previous chapter, to illustrate how contemporary forms of epic performance might manifest when the mock-epic speaker is not explicitly identified as a performer.

Like Hegemon’s fragment, Matro fr. 1 features a hungry narrator who has undertaken a journey – this time to Athens rather than from. Here he attends a dinner party of the city’s elite, embodying the comic parasite while also recalling the singers of Homeric epic, who are parasitic in their own way. Phemius and Demodocus, too, sit at feasts among men above their class, and are rewarded for their songs with food; after Demodocus moves Odysseus to tears with his song, Odysseus offers him a cut of meat (8.474-483). It is only their ability as singers that grants them this privilege. This characterization of the singers in the Odyssey informed Homer’s own biographical tradition; in the pseudo-Herodotean bios in particular, we see Homer depending on the goodwill of others as he travels, and winning over men in power along the way. Matro does not explicitly call his narrator an epic performer, but he does leverage the tradition of singers – both epic and iambic – who are authoritative because of their voice, and in spite of their social status, to criticize real contemporary men in power. He also mocks this tradition itself by taking it to an extreme. I discuss these issues further in the final chapter.

If the Deipnon was performed at a dinner party, its content would mirror its performance context while also calling to mind scenes of consumption in Homeric epic, both respectable and aberrant. If the fragment were performed at a festival – which seems more likely, as I discuss in chapter 4 – the narrator becomes a kind of rogue rhapsode, singing what is unmistakably Homeric epic, but with the pieces decontextualized and
reconfigured such that a new story emerges. With his quotation-based mode of allusion, Matro creates the effect that all the grotesque desires enacted at the *Deipnon* already existed within the epic tradition. One wonders, furthermore, if Matro or other parodists performing for the general public (either staging a parodic scene within a comedy or a standalone *paroidia*) might be attempting to one-up the rhapsodes. Even scholars who argue that Classical rhapsodes engaged in creative improvisation agree that by the end of the fourth century, rhapsodes were mostly working with scripts and reciting from memory. Matro’s use of epic quotation not only comments on the growth of text-based literary engagement (as I argue in the final chapter), but also the use of texts among epic performers. Unlike a rhapsode, however, Matro is wildly creative with the script. Matro, like Hegemon, uses a hungry narrator to send up the belly-driven singers of the day. Perhaps he is also arguing that he has all the skills of a rhapsode, and more.

Epic performance and performers provide points of contact between the characters and activities in epic poetry, in the biographical tradition, and in the real world; they also provide points of contact between the epic and iambic-comic traditions, and highlight those that already exist. These points of contact mediate between the disjunctive elements of an epic parody and allow exaggerated characters and scenes to speak to real literary practices. An epic parodist may tap into this network explicitly, as Aristophanes and Hegemon do, or it exploit it indirectly, as Matro does.

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192 E.g. González 2013, 311.
CHAPTER 3:
EPIC IN OTHER VERSE FORMS

In Aristophanes’ *Peace*, the protagonist Trygaeus finds himself beset by the soothsayer Hierocles while attempting to prepare a sacrifice to Peace. Trygaeus is irritated because Hierocles is trying to nab a helping of sacrificial meat, although he pronounces oracles in favor of war. To counter Hierocles, Trygaeus begins to offer pronouncements of his own in hexameter, the traditional meter for oracles. Hierocles asks what oracle authorized Trygaeus’ sacrifice, and Trygaeus responds using a patchwork of phrases familiar from Homeric epic (1089-1094):193

\[
\text{ὅνπερ κάλλιστον δήπου πεποίηκεν Ὅμηρος·}
\]
\[
\text{“ὅς οἱ μὲν νέφος ἐχθρὸν ἀπωσάμενοι πολέμοι}
\]
\[
\text{Εἰρήνην εἵλοντο καὶ ἱδρύσανθʼ ἱερείῳ.}
\]
\[
\text{αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρ’ ἐκάη καὶ σπλάγχν’ ἐπάσαντο,}
\]
\[
\text{ἔσπενδον δεπάεσσιν, ἐγὼ δ’ οὐδείς ἐδίδου κώθωνα φαεινόν·}
\]

The very fine one that Homer composed, of course:

‘Thus casting away the detestable vapor of warfare, they opted for Peace and with a victim established her. And when the thighs were burnt and the innards devoured, they poured libation from cups, and I led the way’ but to the oracle monger no one passed a gleaming goblet!...

Soon, Trygaeus offers another oracle from Homer (1096-1098):

\[
\text{αλλ’ ὁ σοφός τοι νή Δί’ Ὅμηρος δεξίον εἰπεν·}
\]
\[
\text{“ἄφρήτωρ, ἀθέμιστος, ἀνέστιος ἐστιν ἐκεῖνος,}
\]
\[
\text{δ’ πολέμου ἔραται ἐπιδημίου ὀκρυόστηνος.”}
\]

…But here’s something the sage Homer said that, by god, is well put: ‘Clanless, lawless, hearthless is that man who lusts for the horror of warfare among his own people.’

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193 All translations from the *Peace* are from Henderson 1998.

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Trygeus’ use of lines from Homer, ostensibly the poet of war, to advocate for peace has a parodic feel to it, but how do we identify the object of imitation? In the Roman period, we might confidently identify the use of Homeric lines as oracles as a form of Homeric reception, but this practice is otherwise unattested at Aristophanes’ time. Epic and oracle do, however, share inherent similarities as divinely inspired hexameter verse forms. As a result, it is unclear whether Trygaeus alludes to a specific practice of epic reception (the use of Homeric lines as oracles), or whether he simply exploits the formal and conceptual overlap between epic and oracle, and the authority of Homer, to beat Hierocles at his own game. Should we identify the object of parodic imitation as epic, oracle, both simultaneously, or some contemporary practice pertaining to both? Two challenges stand in the way of resolving this question: first, we do not know when the practice of using Homeric quotation as oracle began; second, epic is deeply entwined with other poetic forms, both through the influence of epic on other verse forms (what we might more readily call “reception”) and through its shared roots with other verse forms (such as oracle, riddle, and magical incantation).

Revermann dubs the layering of parodic allusion in this passage of the *Peace* an example of the “additive strategy of generic interaction,” in which Aristophanes couples epic allusion with allusion to another genre or verse form. He identifies other examples from Aristophanic comedy that use a similar method, including the exchange between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus, discussed in the previous chapter, which juxtaposes epic and iambus. He also speculates that the phenomenon must have been common in

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194 Revermann 2013, 124.
Old Comedy in general. Indeed, two examples beyond Aristophanic comedy stand out for their combination of epic parody with parody of another genre: Hipponax fr. 126 Dg (= 128 W) mingles epic with expulsive incantation, and Strato fr. 1 engages with epic, riddle, and lyric. These fragments suggest that the additive strategy is not unique to Aristophanes, or even to Old Comedy, but is a standard strategy of epic parody across genres and time periods. Rather, the phenomenon of “additive epic parody” (my phrase based on Revermann’s formulation) may be contextualized as part of the broader practice in epic parody of accessing epic through the various channels in which sixth to fourth century audiences themselves encountered it, including in performance (as we have already seen) and elsewhere.

I begin by introducing additive parody in Aristophanes, in whose poetry Revermann first identified the phenomenon. Aristophanes will act as comparative material for the case studies that follow, Hipponax fr. 126 and Strato fr. 1. Together, these case studies will illustrate how a poet may use the additive strategy to assimilate epic parody into their own styles or genres (e.g. invective or comedy), construct literary genealogies, and situate themselves in a broader literary history.

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195 Revermann 2013, 121. Platter 2007, 28 also remarks on the tendency of Aristophanes to invoke multiple genres at once.
I. Defining Additive Parody: The Aristophanes Examples

Aristophanes does not seem to have placed Homeric characters or Homer himself on stage as other poets of Old Comedy did, directing his attention instead to the less well-trodden territory of tragedy.\textsuperscript{196} Epic parody does occur in Aristophanic comedy, however, on the “micro- and meso-level,” as Revermann puts it; in addition to the passages from the Peace noted above, examples include Philocleon’s attempt to escape under a donkey in the Wasps (169-189), Lamachus’ arming scene in the Acharnians (572-625), and the chorus’ comparison of Aeschylus and Achilles in the Frogs (992).\textsuperscript{197} In these scenes, epic is evoked through direct reference (as to Achilles in the Frogs) or through the creation of an “epic modality,” which Revermann defines as:

…a somewhat looser and more vague form of generic interaction which utilizes as cues to the audience any combination of metre (i.e. in this case the dactylic hexameter as a signature cue), Homeric Kunstsprache (another signature cue), dramatic character, plot or situation in order to invoke for the recipient an epic atmosphere or tinge which suggests grandeur or mock-grandeur.\textsuperscript{198}

Aristophanes uses the same methods to parody other genres such as tragedy and satyr play, although with other genres he also goes further, for example by making Aeschylus and Euripides characters in the Frogs. Epic resonances of all types often appear in conjunction with allusion to another non-comic genre or mode of speech, and this is often tragedy; so Lamachus’ arming scene in the Acharnians borrows language from Euripides’ Hippolytus, and in the Frogs it is Aeschylus who is compared to Achilles. The

\textsuperscript{196} The usual explanation for Aristophanes’ avoidance of epic is that he considered it overdone (e.g. Platter 2007, 109; Revermann 2013, 119). Aristophanes’ preference for tragedy is not necessarily representative of his time (Revermann 2006, 104–6; Farmer 2020).

\textsuperscript{197} Revermann 2013, 118.

\textsuperscript{198} Revermann 2013, 105.
purpose of this “additive strategy,” according to Revermann, is to “reinforce cumulatively the desired comic effect.” In other words, both sources of parodic imitation are crucial to the overall effect, even when epic is “heavily mediated by way of tragedy,” as it usually is in Aristophanes. Some plays, such as the *Acharnians*, the *Frogs*, and the *Peace*, contain a number of epic resonances throughout, creating a broader program of epic engagement, and Revermann focuses his attention on these. To allow these examples to function as comparanda for Hipponax and Strato, it is necessary to articulate their mechanics.

*Acharnians*

The *Acharnians* engages extensively with Euripides’ *Telephus* by adapting its characters, plot structures, and even individual lines, as well as presenting Euripides as a character. In the myth, Telephus is a son of Heracles who becomes ruler of Mysia. The Achaeans attack on their way to Troy and Telephus gets wounded by Achilles after tripping on a vine. An oracle tells him he must be cured by Achilles, so he journeys to Agamemnon (in this version the king of Argos) to make his appeal. Euripides’ play seems to begin here. In disguise as a beggar, he attempts to defend the Mysians by arguing that they are not hostile to the Greeks, but simply protected their city during an attack as the Greeks themselves would have done if the roles were reversed. Presumably he is identified as a Mysian spy, because he ends up taking the baby Orestes hostage to

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199 Revermann 2013, 121.
200 Revermann 2013, 124.
201 Olson 2002, liv-lxi surveys the allusions to the *Telephus*. 
gain a chance to explain himself further. His identity as a Greek is revealed, and the Greeks take him on as their guide to Troy. In the *Acharnians*, Aristophanes characterizes Dicaeopolis, as a Telephus-figure: he takes a bag of Acharnian coal hostage and retrieves the Telephus costume from Euripides’ house to disguise himself as a beggar, all to aid him in arguing against the war with Sparta. His rhetorical strategies recall those used by Telephus in defense of Mysia, and verbal echoes of the *Telephus* abound.\(^202\) In an exchange with the general Lamachus, Dicaeopolis succeeds in winning over the chorus, and then the parabasis begins.

Although Euripides’ *Telephus* is surely the most salient object of literary allusion in the *Acharnians*, it is not the only one. Telephus was also the subject of plays by Aeschylus and Sophocles, and his character must have featured in the epic cycle, probably the *Cypria*.\(^203\) His story was also the subject of a lengthy elegaic poem by Archilochus, partly preserved in P.Oxy.LXIX.4708.\(^204\) Aristophanes exposes the story’s epic roots with the arrival of Lamachus, whose bombast and bellicosity recall the Homeric heroes. He flexes his authority like an epic hero, too, reducing Dicaeopolis to a Thersites-like figure who is physically punished for advocating for the end of war.\(^205\) Hunter explains the effect of this epic resonance:\(^206\)

In the *Iliad*, only real ‘heroes’ are given rights of speech, however ‘fair’ what others have to say might be (thus Thersites’ words echo the charges of Achilles against Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1); in democratic Athens all male citizens were supposed to enjoy ‘freedom of speech’, παρρησία (cf. *Ach*. 45), but ‘big shot’

\(^{202}\) Olson 2002, lix.  
\(^{203}\) Gantz 1993, 579; Platter 2007, 147.  
\(^{204}\) On this papyrus see Obbink 2006; West 2006; Barker and Christensen 2006; and Bowie 2016/2018. For further discussion of this fragment see below in this chapter.  
politicians like Lamachus seek to limit such rights to their own kind (cf. Ach. 578, 593).

Dicaeopolis sarcastically adopts a fulsome, grandiose tone with Lamachus, emphasizing the epic air that Lamachus brings to the stage; twice he uses the address ὃ Λάμαχος ἤρως (575, 578), and later he rattles off an epic-style catalogue of Athenian hoplites (599-606).207 He also mockingly expresses his fear of Lamachus’ plumed helmet and asks him to remove it, recalling the reaction of Astyanax to Hector’s helmet in the Iliad.208 While Dicaceopolis is playing the role of a tragic hero, he derisively treats Lamachus as an epic one.

Twice before the parabasis, Dicaceopolis hints at a connection between himself and Aristophanes. Aristophanes’ previous play, the Babylonians, apparently prompted accusations of treason by Cleon, and Dicaceopolis alludes to conflicts with Cleon (377-82, 502-3), establishing himself as an avatar for the poet.209 In this way, Aristophanes casts himself, like Dicaceopolis, as a Telephus-figure, having unjustly suffered consequences (slander and a lawsuit) for attacking his countrymen (in a play).210 Following these hints, the parabasis lays out an argument that mirrors Telephus’ defense of Mysia and Dicaceopolis’ defense of peace with Sparta. In it, Aristophanes claims that because he says what is right without flattery, he is an asset to the Athenians (633-645), to the (absurd) extent that the enemies of Athens actually want to get rid of him (646-54). Two markedly

207 Revermann 2013, 120.
209 The scholia to the Acharnians fill in these biographical details (lines 378, 642). It is unclear whether Cleon actually indicted Aristophanes for treason or whether this is a comic exaggeration that subsequently entered the biographical tradition (Olson 2002, xxx).
210 Much has been written about the relationship between Dicaceopolis and Aristophanes. See recent discussions and bibliography in Olson 2002, xxix–xxx; Sommerstein 2004; Rosen 2012, 7-18.
epic words appear in the parabasis, and these are crucial to Aristophanes’ self-positioning. First, Aristophanes refers to his fame as κλέος (646), the guiding principle in the Homeric economy of honor. Later, the strophe begins with an invocation of the Muse who bears “the might of fire” (πυρὸς ἔχουσα μένος, 666). Muse invocations are typical in Aristophanic parabases, but μένος gives the invocation an epic resonance. However, although her strength is epic, this is not the epic Muse. Her fiery nature and the references to “Thasian sauce” and “kneading dough” later in the stanza (671-2) reveal that we are dealing with the iambic Muse. Unlike most pieces of high poetic language in the Acharnians, κλέος and μένος are found overwhelmingly in epic, not tragedy, and they are significant words in the heroic value system. Aristophanes underscores this epic resonance by declaring himself the key to Athenian success in war (646-55), a statement that runs counter to his pro-peace stance, but that plays into his heroic fantasy. Thus, through tragic allusion, Aristophanes casts himself as Telephus, wounded by Achilles; through epic allusion, he aligns himself with the slighted hero (Achilles, even?), the key to success in war, with a fiery μένος, who has unjustly received a slight to his κλέος. This

211 οὗτος δ’ οὕτω περὶ τῆς τόλμης ἡδή πόρρω κλέος ἢκει… (646) Olson 2002, 240 states that κλέος is “poetic and especially epic vocabulary… designed to suggest the heroic character of the poet’s accomplishments.”

212 Olson 2002, 243-44. Olson calls μένος “poetic and especially epic vocabulary.”

213 668-75: οἷον ἐξ ἀνθράκων πριν τίνος φέρων φέραλος ἀνήλατ’ ἐρευνήσαμενς οὐρία ματσά, ἡνίκ’ ἄν ἐπαινορακίδες ὡσι παρακείμεναι, οἱ δὲ θεόντων ἀνακκόσαλοι λαμπράμπυκα, οἱ δὲ μᾶττωσι, οὔσι σοβαρόν ἐλθεί μέλος εὐτνον, ἀγροκότερον, ὡς ἐμε λαμβῶσέ τον ὀμότεν. “Even as a spark that from oaken embers leaps aloft, excited by a fan’s fair wind, when the herring are lying there ready, and some are mixing the Thasian sauce with its gleaming fillet, and others are kneading the dough: so come, bringing with you a tempestuous, a well-tuned, a countrified song, to me, your fellow demesman.” Trans. Henderson 1998a. The island of Thasos is associated with Archilochus and “Thasian sauce” recalls a line from Cratinus’ Archilochoi (fr. 6 K-A). Rosen and Marks 1999, 906: “this link, in turn, suggests the metaphorical reading of the word for “kneading dough” (μάττωσιν), which in other comic contexts is used to describe verbal abuse.”
μένος, he specifies, is that of his iambic predecessors. Both versions of Aristophanes, tragic victim and epic hero, are, of course, completely ridiculous.

The epic resonances in the *Acharnians* continue after the parabasis when Lamachus is called to war and Dicaeopolis to dinner. Aristophanes presents the preparations of the two men for their respective duties in stichomythia, with Lamachus calling to his slaves to bring him various weapons and supplies, and Dicaeopolis calling for corresponding dinner items; so Lamachus demands his plume, and Dicaeopolis demands roasted birds (1103-1104), Lamachus his gorgon-blazoned shield and Dicaeopolis his cheese-blazoned flatbread (1125-1126). In this showdown between peace and war, Aristophanes adapts a scene characteristic of martial epic: the arming of the hero.214 The scene recalls the exchange between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus at the end of the *Peace* when Trygaeus counters the boy’s verses from the *Epigoni* with gastronomic lines. Here, too, Aristophanes stages the conflict between peace and war through the juxtaposition of martial epic with gastronomy.

After the men leave, the chorus passes the time by imagining the stingy choregos Antimachus pelted with dung while walking home drunk at night; I discussed this passage briefly in the previous chapter in the context of the poop-pelting in Hegemon fr. 1. In the passage, Aristophanes uses the typical epic narrative motifs that see a hero lift a rock to launch at his enemies, miss his intended target (with a rock or some other missile), and hit someone else. ἐπαίσσω (1171) and μάρμαρος (1172) appear in epic scenes of these types. This mock-epic interlude combines the experiences of the

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214 The epic quality of Lamachus’ arming is noted by Hariott 1979, 95 and Revermann 2013, 120.
Dicaeopolis and Lamachus by highlighting the “battles” that occur on the streets of Athens during a night of drinking. Soon, the two men return incapacitated, Lamachus wounded in battle, supported by his soldiers, and Dicaeopolis drunk, accompanied by women (1174ff). This diptych illustrating the benefits of peace and the consequences of war serves as the play’s finale, proving the credibility of the arguments Dicaeopolis has been making all along. Furthermore, we learn that Lamachus was injured after tripping in battle, as Telephus was, and a messenger reports the news of this injury in elevated poetic language, a parody of a typical Euripidean messenger speech.\(^{215}\) The comic use of the Telephus figure is also notable in light of Archilochus’ treatment of the myth in P.Oxy.LXIX.4708.\(^{216}\) Archilochus frames the story with a cheeky twist, explaining that retreat is alright sometimes – *just look at Telephus!* Aristophanes is not the first, then, to joke about Telephus’ injury. In this way, the *Acharnians* ends with the demotion of Lamachus from epic hero to tragic hero and iambic fool.

Some patterns emerge from these epic resonances in the *Acharnians*. Aristophanes evokes epic characters and narrative structures and makes limited use of epic language. Epic allusion appears alongside tragic and, briefly, iambic allusion. In many cases, Aristophanes capitalizes on the overlap between tragedy and epic to evoke both at once such that tragic allusion mediates epic allusion. Telephus is an epic hero as well as a tragic one, and it is because he occupies the epic world that Aristophanes can meaningfully juxtapose epic and contemporary society, revealing the ways that democratic Athens still empowers the military elite as in the mythic past. To achieve this,

\(^{215}\) Olson 2002, 352.  
\(^{216}\) See n. 204 for select bibliography.
Aristophanes draws a direct line from epic through tragedy to the contemporary dramatic world and the contemporary real world, making the story of Telephus structure the stories of Dicaeopolis and of Aristophanes himself. Epic in the *Acharnians*, then, represents the glorification of war and an absurd, outdated model of authority. It provides a negative model, characterized as old and lofty, but not in a good way. Aristophanes bolsters the connection between tragic and epic through his use of high poetic language, which appears in tragedy but often has epic roots. The words κλέος and μένος, which are more epic than tragic and are meaningful in the epic heroic value system, highlight these epic roots. Aristophanes uses these words in the parabasis to flesh out his own persona, exaggerating further his already-ridiculous claim to be the key to Athenian victory. However, epic authority is just as absurd in the parabasis as it is in the scenes with Lamachus, and Aristophanes’ epic power is as much a joke as his tragic victimhood. His real authority lies in his iambic roots, as the invocation of the Muse suggests.

*Frogs*

While the epic resonances in *Acharnians* are best treated in the order in which they appear in the play, those in the *Frogs* are more usefully approached in categories. These include the *katabasis* motif, the connections between Aeschylus, Achilles, and Homer, and the use of hexameter.

The mythological tradition contains a wealth of *katabases*, including the journeys of Heracles to retrieve Cerberus, Theseus and Perithous to retrieve Persephone, Dionysus
to retrieve Semele, and Odysseus to consult Tiresias.\footnote{\textsuperscript{217} Heracles’ descent mentioned in Homeric epic (\textit{Il.} 8.366-369, \textit{Od.} 11.623-626) and also must have featured in the epic cycle. According to the \textit{Suda} (s. v. Πεισανάρος) Pisander wrote a \textit{Heraclea}. Panyassis also treated Heracles’ descent (Paus. 10.29.9). Theseus and Perithous subject of play by Euripides or Kritias (\textit{TrGF} I, 43 F 1-14. Dionysus descent was known to Pindar (\textit{Pithian} 3.99) and is attested an Iophon fragment (\textit{TrGF} 22 F3 ap. \textit{Σv Ra.} 330). Whitman 1964, 233; Dover 1993, 40, 53-55; Santamaría Álvarez 2015.} In the \textit{Frogs}, Dionysus goes to Hades to seek the wisdom of a shade, as Odysseus does, but he also goes on a retrieval mission, as the others do. A fragment of Iophon confirms that Dionysus’ \textit{katabasis} was known at Aristophanes’ time, and Aristophanes seems to adapt this tradition in making Dionysus his protagonist.\footnote{\textsuperscript{218} On the story of Dionysus’ \textit{katabasis}, Dover 1993, 40 writes “any reference to that [myth] would spoil much of central importance to the comedy, especially the god’s disguise as Heracles and his complete ignorance of the underworld.” However, the choice to make Dionysus the protagonist is itself a form of engagement with the tradition of Dionysus’ \textit{katabasis}. See Whitman 1964, 233.} The \textit{Odyssey}, too, is not evoked in any specific way; plenty of elements in Aristophanes’ underworld are familiar from Odysseus’ \textit{nekuia}, but these simply reflect their participation in a shared tradition. Instead, Heracles acts as Dionysus’ primary model in his journey, with Dionysus visiting Heracles before his descent and disguising himself as the hero. Eleusinian details throughout the \textit{Frogs} suggest that Aristophanes had in mind a version of the story in which Heracles was initiated before his descent, a detail that is first directly evidenced in literary and material sources in the fourth century BCE, but that is almost certainly older.\footnote{\textsuperscript{219} In literature, Heracles appears as an Eleusinian in the pseudo-Platonic \textit{Axiochus} 371E, Diodorus 4.25ff, Plutarch’s \textit{Life of Theseus} 30, and Apollodorus 5.12. The \textit{Bibliotheca} is our only complete account to survive. For the pottery see Lloyd-Jones 1990, 172-173. The earliest source for Heracles’ initiation is unknown, but it is likely an orphic or epic poem; see Lloyd-Jones 1990 and Robertson 1980.} Heracles aside, we should also not discount the possibility that Aristophanes is engaging with other works now lost to us. The \textit{katabasis} motif appeared in the \textit{Epic Cycle} as well as in a number of plays, including a \textit{Perithous} by Euripides or Kritias, Eupolis’ \textit{Demoi}, Pherecrates’ \textit{Metalleis} and
Krapataloi, and Aristophanes Gerytades. Furthermore, the concept of the katabasis would have been familiar to theater-goers from their own experiences with initiation rituals, including the Eleusinia. The katabasis motif thus connects contemporary literature and lived experience with literature of the past.

An epic resonance in the Frogs occurs in the character of Aeschylus, whom Aristophanes connects to Achilles. Aeschylus remains silent when he first enters (830-839), and when Dionysus asks him why he isn’t speaking (832), Euripides responds, “he’ll be haughtily aloof at first, just the way he tried to mystify us in his tragedies.”

Euripides alludes to the fact that Aeschylus is known for his use of silent characters, particularly at the beginnings of plays, as he clarifies later (911-913):

πρώτηστα μὲν γὰρ ἔνα τιν’ ἄν καθήσεν ἐγκαλύψας, Ἀχιλλέα τιν’ ἢ Νιόβην, τὸ πρόσωπον οὐχὶ δεικνύς, πρόσχημα τῆς τραγῳδίας, γρύζοντας οὐδὲ τοιτί.

He’d always start by having some solitary character sit there muffled up, say Achilles or Niobe, not letting us see their face (a poor excuse for tragic drama!) or hear even this much of a peep.

The silence of Aeschylus at the beginning of the agon in the Frogs parallels that of Niobe and Achilles at the beginnings of Aeschylus’ own plays. The chorus cements the association between Aeschylus and Achilles specifically when they address Aeschylus with a line from his Myrmidons: τάδε μὲν λεύσσεις, φαίδμι Ἀχιλλέω! (“You behold all

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220 Pausanias 10.28.7 mentions three epic poems with katabases: the Odyssey, the Nostoi, and the Minyas. On the tragic and comic predecessors of the Frogs, see Wright 2012, 92-97.
221 On the influence of real initiation rituals on the Frogs, see Lada-Richards 1999.
this, glorious Achilles!”). By using Aeschylus’ own line against him, and addressing him as his character, the chorus locks into place the connection between Aeschylus and Achilles that has already been implied more obliquely. This assimilation of Aeschylus to his own characters, including Achilles, occurs again at the end of the play. The contest between Aeschylus and Euripides is ultimately decided by a weighing of words, recalling Aeschylus’ *Psychostasis* (on the weighing of the fates of Achilles and Memnon) and his *Phrygians* (in which Priam’s ransom is weighed against Hector’s body). These passages in turn engage directly with the *Iliad*: “Aristophanes’ use of on-stage scales – to weigh out spoken verses and to decide the fate of humans already in the underworld – provides a multi-layered comic version of an (epic-influenced) Aeschylean tragic theme.”

Aeschylus’ treatment of Homeric characters and plots is one of many elements establishing him as a successor of Homer. Aeschylus describes his own plays as “full of Ares” (1021) and boasts that his *Persians* “taught [the Athenians] to strive for victory” (τοῦτ´ ἐπιθυμεῖν ἐξεδίδαξα νικᾶν ἀεὶ τοὺς ἀντιπάλους 1026-7), just as Homer “taught about strategies, virtues, and weapons” (ἐδίδαξεν τάξεις, ἀρετάς, ὀπλίσεις (1035-6). Aristophanes’ Aeschylus defines his plays as martial and edifying, like Homeric epic. He is also Homerizing in his language, as is apparent throughout his speeches in the *Frogs*, and especially in Euripides’ mock-Aeschylean lyrics at 1265-77. Euripides offers the line

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227 Hunter 2004, 243-244; Rehm 2016, 132; Revermann 2013, 120-122.
228 Rehm 2016, 132. At Il. 22.209-14 Zeus weighs the fates of Achilles and Memnon; at Il. 22.346-54 Achilles declares that he would not accept Priam’s ransom even if he received Hector’s bodyweight in gold.
229 On Aeschylus as a Homer-figure in the *Frogs*, see Rosen 2004.
κόσιςτ’ Ἀχαϊῶν, Ἀτρέως πολυκοίραν (1269), for example, recalling the formulaic address of Agamemnon throughout the Iliad and Odyssey (Ἀτρέδη κόσιςτε ἄναξ ἄνδρὸν Ἀγάμεμνον).230 Euripides’ parody of Aeschylus also features a heavily dactylic meter, establishing another through-line between Aeschylus and Homer.231 The chorus sings in hexameters twice in the Frogs as well, and both passages have a strong Aeschylean style. The prelude to the agon (814-29) uses dactylic hexameter verses and lofty poetic compounds to describe the contest as a battle, with phrases like “helmet-glinting struggles of tall-crested words” and “a thought-building hero’s galloping utterances.”232 Here again the characters of the Frogs are situated in Aeschylus’ epic world. Lastly, the final six lines of the play (1528-33) parody a tragic exodos with dactylic hexameter, high poetic language, and a request that the gods bless the city. Once again, Aristophanes has Aeschylus specifically in mind; the Eumenides similarly ends with dactylic lines, and Aristophanes models at least two lines (1528, 1530) on Aeschylean lines.233 However, it is notable that as far as we know, Aeschylus does not end a play with dactylic hexameter lines specifically. Aristophanes’ repeated use of dactylic hexameter in his Aeschylean parodies may be an exaggeration intended to emphasize the distance between Aeschylus and Euripides, and the proximity of Aeschylus to Homer.

230 The source of the line κόσιςτ’ Ἀχαϊῶν, Ἀτρέως πολυκοίραν in Aeschylean tragedy is unknown. πολυκοίραν recalls πολυκοιράνη at Il. 2.204. The line as a whole recalls Ἀτρέδη κόσιςτε ἄναξ ἄνδρὸν Ἀγάμεμνον, which occurs 16 times in the Iliad alone. κόσιςτε only appears once in Homeric epic outside of this formula, in an address to Zeus at 24.608, and apart from Homeric epic, κόσιςτε only appears before Aeschylus in the Homeric Hymns (according to the TLG).

231 On the meter of 1264-77, see Dover 1993, 345-6.


Aristophanes also juxtaposes Aeschylus and Homer through their parallel roles in poetic *agon*, and this connection brings the epic background of Aeschylean tragedy to the fore in the *Frogs*. The *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, introduced in the previous chapter, contains a strikingly similar structure and outcome to the contest of Aeschylus and Euripides in the *Frogs*.234 In both *agon*, one poet is the people’s choice (Homer/Euripides), but the judge (Panedes/Dionysus) decides in favor of the other poet (Hesiod/Aeschylus) on the basis that his poetry is more edifying.235 However, Aristophanes’ audience may not have sincerely agreed with Dionysus’ decision. Just as Panedes goes against the wishes of the crowd, so Dionysus’ choice to decide the contest based on factors other than pure poetic artistry may have been considered comically backward by Aristophanes’ audience.236 It is unclear if the audience would have understood this passage as a direct allusion to a specific story in the biographical tradition of Hesiod and Homer, but as the previous chapter discussed, the staging of a poetic *agon* between different poetic genres or content likely would have been a familiar motif; it underlies the exchange between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus in the *Peace*, and appeared previously in Cratinus’ *Archilochoi*. This passage thus constitutes either a parody of a specific, established episode in the *bioi* of Homer and Hesiod, or a parody of a biographical motif that was still in development, actively evolving as a representation of the opposition between war poetry and peace poetry mentioned in fragments of Anacreon, Xenophanes, and Bacchylides.237 It is also possible that different audiences

234 On the *Certamen* and its dating see n. 133. It is possible that the contest in Cratinus’ *Archilochoi* acted as another model (Bakola 2010, 70-75).
237 See n. 132 for citations.
might have had different literary and biographical points of reference for Aristophanes’
absurd take on the contest motif.

As in the *Acharnians*, Aristophanes evokes epic in the *Frogs* through tragedy,
particularly through the character of Aeschylus. First, Aeschylus explicitly compares his
ccontent and social function to Homer’s; furthermore, Aristophanes’ depiction of
Aeschylean poetry (through Aeschylus’ own speeches and the parodies by Euripides and
the chorus) exaggerates its epic elements; finally, Aristophanes adopts a plot structure
from the Homeric biographical tradition, the *agon* of Homer and Hesiod, and situates
Aeschylus in the role of Homer. Here, the antiquity of epic poetry, specifically its role as
a literary predecessor of tragedy, is its most relevant feature; the epic elements of the
*Frogs* pull Aeschylus backward in literary history, exaggerating the distance between him
and Euripides. They also help develop a central question in the poem about the function
of literature in society. Homeric epic in the *Frogs* represents war, as it does in the
*Acharnians*, but it also represents poetry that is socially edifying. To accomplish this
Aristophanes not only layers epic and tragic content and form, but also the characters of
the poets themselves, drawing a line back to epic through tragedy, and to the poet through
his characters.

**Conclusion**

Taken together, the *Acharnians* and the *Frogs* illustrate how Aristophanes evokes
epic via tragedy by tapping into the tragic legacy of epic characters, plot structures,
language, and meter. In order to make the epic quality of tragedy stand out, Aristophanes
must draw attention to it in some way, and the addition of a more direct epic parody is
one way to accomplish this; so when Aristophanes describes himself in words like κλέος and μένος, it further encourages his audience to see Lamachus as a mock-epic hero. The epic element of tragedy may also be highlighted through non-parodic epic allusion or through the exaggeration of tragedy’s epic affiliations, for example when Aeschylus explicitly aligns himself with Homer and speaks in an exaggeratedly Homeric style. Aristophanes highlights the epic heritage of tragedy in these ways to support a broader program of comparing past and present. In the *Acharnians*, the epic parody, which comes mediated by tragedy, associates bellicosity with the pre-democratic world. In the *Frogs*, it exaggerates Aeschylus’ antiquity.

With this in mind, we may revisit the passages of epic parody in the *Peace*. In Trygaeus’ encounters with Hierocles and the singing boys, epic poetry is quoted directly, for multiple lines, and in meter, resulting in epic parody that is more salient and less mediated than what we find in the *Acharnians* and the *Frogs*. In both passages, Aristophanes frames epic quotations within an exchange of hexameter lines that recalls rhapsodic exchange, so we may more confidently call these passages “epic parody,” insofar as they playfully reproduce not only epic language, but also a mode of epic performance. The *Peace* also stands out for its use of additive epic parody that does not feature tragedy. Yet in the *Peace*, Aristophanes still employs a fundamentally similar strategy of epic allusion to what we find in the *Acharnians* and the *Frogs*, evoking epic not in isolation, but in conjunction with another verse form or genre (oracle and iambus). Across all these examples, Aristophanes exploits a point of contact between epic and another literary or subliterary mode, accessing epic through contexts outside of epic performance proper in which his audience would have encountered epic language,
characters, plots, and ideologies. These passages can therefore be situated on a set of spectrums, some more “epic” or more “parodic” than others, but all still productively considered in dialogue with one another. The fragments of Hipponax and Strato will act as further points on these spectrums.

II. Epic and Expulsive Incantation in Hipponax Fr. 126

Athenaeus introduces Hipponax fr. 126 in a discussion of paroidia, citing the Hellenistic scholar Polemon, who wrote a treatise on the subject. He names Hipponax as the inventor (εὑρετήν), citing these lines:

Μοῦσα μοι Εὐρυμεδοντιάδεω τὴν ποντοχάρβων, τὴν ἐγγαστριμάχαιραν, ὡς ἐσθίει οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, ἔννεφ’, ὅπως ψηφιδί <κάκῃ> κακὸν οἴτον ἠλητεί βουλῇ δημοσίῃ παρὰ θῖν’ ἥλας ἀτρυγέτοιο.

Sing for me, Muse, of Eurymedon’s stock, the Sea-Charybdis, the Knife-in-the-Gut, who eats beyond limits, so he’ll meet his evil end by evil stoning on the shore of the barren sea by the people’s will.

The word ψηφιδί in line 3 could indicate a death by stoning or by public vote in which a stone is used as a counter. The ambiguity is likely purposeful, and in any case, the fragment evokes a scapegoat ritual. We do not know whether the poem to which this fragment belonged was hexameter in its entirety, or whether it contained these verses

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238 Hipponax 126 Degani (= 128 West). Ath. 15.698b.
240 The scapegoat element is widely acknowledged among scholars, even those who interpret ψηφιδί as a voting pebble. Masson 1949, 312-15; Degani 1973/74, 161-64; Rosen 1988b, 22 n.49; Compton 2010, 117-18; Credo 2020, 10-11.
within an iambic framing. This is the only certain dactylic hexameter fragment of Hipponax, although we find epic resonances in other fragments.\textsuperscript{241} Other features of fr. 126 are typical of Hipponax, however, including the invective tone, the topic of gluttony, the scapegoat motif, and first-person narrative voice.

The elements that led Polemon to call this fragment \textit{paroidia} are fairly obvious.\textsuperscript{242} Hipponax borrows the structure of a typical epic proem and other elements of epic language, such as lengthy poetic compounds and the patronymic in the first line. The disconnect between the fragment’s lofty form and its abrasive content is shocking and funny. With the invocation of the Muse, Hipponax ascribes to his mockery a high truth value. Furthermore, the epic tradition is full of figures who eat οὐ κατὰ κόσμον (2) such as Polyphemus and Thyestes, and the fragment’s epic framing sets the offspring of Eurymedon on the same level as these legendary aberrant eaters. However, the fragment is full of interpretational issues, due in no small part to textual corruption.\textsuperscript{243} Among these is the ὅπως clause in line 3. The narrator asks “Muse, tell me how he is to die,” or even “tell me in order that he may die.” Hipponax seems to hope that his song, which he will sing with the help of the Muse, will inspire his audience to expel the offspring of Eurymedon. Cobet, and later West, emended ὄληται to ὀλεῖται, making it “Muse, tell me how he will die;” here, the Muse stays firmly in her role as a source of knowledge rather than a cause of action, but she becomes more of an oracle than a source of memory.

\textsuperscript{241} Other epic resonances in Hipponax will be discussed later in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{243} Chief among these are Εὐρυμεδοντᾶδε, which Wilamowitz emends to Εὐρυμεδοντᾶδεω; an omission in line 3, to which Mursurus supplied κακῆ, Cobet κακός, and Kalinka κακός; and the mood and voice of ὄληται in line 4, which Cobet emends to ὀλεῖται.
This textual issue, in combination with the fragment’s pharmakos motif, has led Christopher Faraone to argue that the fragment represents an expulsive incantation used in scapegoat rituals. He demonstrates that the language of scapegoat ritual often uses hexameter and other epic formal elements, such as patronymics and lengthy poetic compounds, as well as metaphors of hunger to depict the target as greedy, particularly when the target is a person in power. Faraone also offers parallels for the stoning of the victim at the seashore. The most distinctively epic feature of the fragment, the invocation of the Muse, has no parallel in extant expulsive incantation. Rather, Faraone compares it to Homeric and Hesiodic invocations that request a name accompanied by a qualitative assessment (e.g. “Muse, name the person who was the best in…”). Faraone accepts that Hipponax is capitalizing on the capacity for hexameter poetry to convey either praise or blame, but he ultimately concludes that it is “inappropriate to call Hipponax’s exploitation of this metrical ambivalence ‘parody.’” He explains:

Hipponax is not inventing, as Polemon suggested, a new use of hexameters to parody epic, but rather he is deploying a traditional genre of hexametrical incantation or scapegoat chant to destroy his enemy, while at the same time exploiting a preexisting similarity between this ritual genre and epic narrative, which are both used to single individuals out for special treatment.

Faraone’s identification of the language of scapegoat ritual in this fragment is compelling. However, his conclusion that the presence of this ritual language prevents the fragment from constituting an epic parody requires further consideration; after all, the Aristophanes passages presented above suggest that the “exploitation of a metrical

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244 Faraone 2004.
246 Faraone 2004, 235-237. These are collected in Minton 1962.
ambivalence” may in fact be a strategy for the parodist. An examination of the relationship between epic poetry and magical incantation during the Archaic period will determine whether Hipponax may be evoking expulsive incantation in this way. This discussion will also allow us to examine what may be the earliest piece of epic parody: the Nestor Cup.

Expulsive Incantation

Hipponax 126 is the earliest piece of epic parody to survive to us through the manuscript tradition, and other textual evidence from his time is scant. However, fortuitously, one inscription survives that evidences the existence of a hexameter magical tradition in the Archaic period: the eighth century BCE Nestor Cup, which features an erotic charm. Scholars have occasionally regarded this piece as serious, but most have considered it playful. The clay pot was found in a grave in Pithekoussai on the Bay of Naples and the second and third lines are in hexameters:

249 Text based on Hansen 1983. Trans. Faraone 1996. There is considerable debate about the text, particularly the restoration of the verb in the first line. However, εἰμι has been the most popular choice in recent decades (for a list of scholars, see Gaunt 2017, 96 n. 15).

The cup is typically imagined in a sympotic context, with its inscription playfully alluding to the erotic powers of wine and riffing on the contrast between the humble clay
vessel and the gold cup of Nestor described at *Iliad* 11.632-37. However, scholars have also recognized that the inscription has parallels in the Greek Magical Papyri and on inscribed objects such as curse tablets, leading to a debate as to whether this magical element was part of the joke, or whether the cup is instead an artifact of an earnest rite.

Some of the earliest examples of inscribed magical tablets offer *comparanda* for the Nestor Cup. For instance, a fourth century BCE inscription on gold leaf from a grave in Petelia reads:

Μνημοσύνης τόδε (?)θριόν· ἐπεὶ ἂν μέλλησι θανεῖσθαι [ἐν πίνακι χρυσέῳ] τόδε γρα[ψάτω ἡδὲ φορεῖτω].

This is the (?)tablet of Memory. Whenever he (i.e. the initiate) is about to die, let him write this [on a golden tablet and carry it].

This tablet is one of the “Orphic Gold Tablets,” a series of around 35 tablets found throughout Magna Graecia that date to the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods and that transmit versions and portions of a ritual text. The text, reconstructed from across the tablets, offers instructions for safe passage in death to an initiate of a mystery cult.

Another example with a similar structure appears in the Getty Hexameters, which transmit a protective charm dating to the late fifth century BCE:

ὅστις των[δ]’ ἱεροῖν ἐπεων ἀρίσημα καλ[ύ]ψει γράμματα κασσιτέριοι κεκολαμμένα λάδος ἐν οίκωι,

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250 Rather than taking the cup as a direct allusion to the *Iliad*, it is more sensible to assume that the cup of Nestor already featured in the epic cycle before the *Iliad* and that both were drawing from this preexisting tradition. E.g. M. L. West 1974, 14-15; Hansen 1983, 43; Danek 1995; Gaunt 2017, 97 plus n.19. Nestor’s cup was the topic of much discussion from the Classical period onward; for the reception of the Nestor cup tradition in antiquity, see Gaunt 2017.

251 The prevailing opinion is that the scholars that read the inscription as an earnest charm include Dihle 1969, S. West 1994, and Faraone 1996.

252 Text and translation from Janko 1984, except for supplements in second line, which are from M. L. West 1975.

253 For the text and transmission, see Janko 1984. The tablets are often described as Orphic, but this identification is debated.

Whoever hides in a house of stone the notable letters of these sacred verses inscribed on tin, as many things as broad Earth nourishes shall not harm him nor as many things as much-groaning Amphitrite nourishes in the sea....

These examples all feature an object (a cup or tablet), relate an instruction (drink or write), and explain the effect on the user. All contain a conditional element (“whoever” or “whenever”) and all are in hexameters or are roughly hexametrical, demonstrating that the meter was used in a variety of magical practices.255

Wording and structural elements from these magical inscriptions also appear in some notable passages from epic poetry. So the *Odyssey* describes Helen’s use of a *pharmakon* (4.220-226):256

> ἔνθ᾿ αὖτ᾿ ἄλλ᾿ ἐνόησ᾿ Ἑλένη Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα· αὐτίκ᾿ ἄρ᾿ ἐς οἶνον βάλε φάρμακον, ἔνθεν ἔπινον, νηπενθές τ᾿ ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἀπάντων. ὃς τὸ καταβρόξειεν, ἐπεὶ κρητῆρι μιγείη, οὔ κεν ἐφημέριός γε βάλοι κατὰ δάκρυ παρειῶν, οὔδ᾿ εἰ οἱ κατατεθναίη μήτηρ τε πατήρ τε, οὔδ᾿ εἰ οἱ προπάροιθεν ἀδελφεὸν ἢ φίλον υἱὸν χαλκῷ δηϊόῳεν, ὁ δ᾿ ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὁρῷτο.

---Then the child of Zeus, Helen, decided she would mix the wine with drugs to take all pain and rage away, to bring forgetfulness of every evil. Whoever drinks this mixture from the bowl will shed no tears that day, not even if her mother or her father die, nor even if soldiers kill her brother or her darling

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255 Magical verses tend not adhere strictly to metrical rules, likely because they are so prone to corruption as users adapt them (if “corruption” is even an appropriate term in the context of this material). Of the golden tablets, for instance the three long tablets that transmit the death rite are in hexameters while the shorter ones exhibit greater metrical variety; based on their text, Janko 1984 finds the hexameter versions to be earlier, and concludes that the archetype must have been hexameter.

son with bronze spears before her very eyes.

The wine, the act of drinking, the explanation of the effect on the user, and the conditional structure are all familiar from the passages above. The repetition of negations at the beginnings of lines 223-225 also resembles lines 3-4 in the Getty Hexameters. Another notable example occurs in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter when the disguised goddess addresses Metaneira:257

“θρέψω, κοῦ μιν, ἔολπα, κακοφραδίηισι τιθήνης
οὔτ’ ἄρ’ ἐπηλυσίη δηλήσεται οὐθ’ ύποτάμνοιν
οἶδα γάρ ἀντίτομον μέγα φέρτερον ύλοτόμου,
οἶδα δ’ ἐπηλυσίης πολυπήμονος ἐσθλὸν ἔρυσιμόν.”

“…As for your boy, I will gladly take him over, as you request. I will rear him, and I do not anticipate that any supernatural visitation or cutter of roots will harm him through any negligence by his nurse. For I know a powerful counter-cut to beat the herb-cutter, and I know a good inhibitor of baneful visitation.”

The uses of οἶδα, ἐπηλυσίη, and δηλήσεται all have parallels in the magical papyri and inscribed amulets and tablets.258 Also, the repeated negations at the line beginnings and the “neither X nor Y” structure both appear in the Getty Hexameters and in the Odyssey passage. Finally, Faraone identifies the compounds πολυπήμονος and ύλοτόμοι as demon names, much like ποντοχάρυβδιν and ἐγγαστριμάχαιραν in Hipponax fr. 126.

Based on the presence of typical words, phrases, and structural elements in hexameter incantations, and on the persistence of these elements across texts and objects from different places and times, scholars have concluded that magical incantations belong to

258 Allen first identified magical language in the passage and suggested that ύποτάμνοιν and ύλοτόμοι refer to worms thought to cause teething in babies (Allen 1895, 13; Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 1936, 155–6). Faraone identifies them as names of demons thought to cause teething (Faraone 2001, 2011). West’s translation follows Richardson 1974, who argues that these names refer to people who cut herbs, i.e. people who might attempt to poison a child.
an oral hexameter tradition already active at the emergence of written literature.\textsuperscript{259} The similarities between these examples and the inscription on the Nestor Cup are compelling, suggesting that the cup represents either an early foray into committing this oral tradition to writing during a rite (in Faraone’s view), or an early example of parodic play; either way, it is an important precedent for Hipponax fr. 126.\textsuperscript{260} Furthermore, the presence of magical language in passages of epic poetry raises the possibility that Hipponax could be riffing on a scene of expulsion found within the epic tradition; this is unprovable one way or another, but it is worth marshalling among the potential interpretations.

In addition to sharing a place in the oral hexameter tradition, epic poetry and magical incantation overlap in their language, poetics, and possibly even performance context. The language of early magical inscriptions is largely epic, with the addition of rare technical and compound words. “Epic” need not mean “Homeric;” the archetype of the Getty Hexameters, for instance, “was in a post-Homeric form of the epic dialect, but with occasional Doricisms that were typical of epic poets of the fifth century such as Panyassis,” and its formulae find closer parallels in Hesiodic poetry and the \textit{Homeric Hymns}.\textsuperscript{261} Furthermore, hexameter poetry was performed not only in public religious festivals, but almost certainly in the rites of mystery cults, complicating the identification of performance context as a distinguishing factor between epic and “magical” verse. It

\textsuperscript{259} This is the thesis of Faraone 2011, but others have argued for oral transmission in particular examples, e.g. Janko 1984 and 2013 and Ferrari 2011 on the gold tablets.
\textsuperscript{260} Faraone 1996.
\textsuperscript{261} Janko 2013, 55. The passage of the Getty Hexameters quoted above illustrates its use of formulae, as the “things of neither land nor sea” structure in lines 3-4 (οὐ νημ πημανέωνι ὅσα τρέφει εὐρεία χθόνι / οὐδ’ ὅσα πόντωι βόσκει ἀγάπτωνος Ἀμφιτρίτη) has parallels in Hesiod, \textit{Th.} 582, \textit{HH to Apollo} 21, \textit{HH to Aphrodite} 4-5, \textit{HH} 30.3, and \textit{Cypria} fr. 7.12.
has been widely assumed that Orphic mysteries involved the performance of hexameter poetry attributed to Orpheus, a theory supported by the Derveni papyrus. Similarly, the Getty Hexameters explain that the poem to be written on the tablet was first spoken by Paean. The Getty Hexameters possess a number of features that are also found in hymns, particularly the Orphic hymns, such as the inclusion of divine names and epithets, ritual cries, semi-narrative myth, magical utterances (*ephesia grammata*), etiologies/rationalizations of rites, requests for aid or epiphany, instructions for rites, and the use of hexameter. It is possible, then, that some verses that appear “magical” in nature due to their content, structure, and mode of preservation were performed communally in a cultic or funeral context, like epic poetry was. This gray area between epic poetry and magical incantation complicates the task of identifying one or the other as an object of parodic imitation. To apply the concept of “additive parody” to Hipponax Fr. 126, we must search for disjunctive elements that indicate a clear sense of the separation of hexameter traditions. Furthermore, we must ask whether the overlap in performance contexts between epic poetry and incantation is relevant to our interpretation.

Before returning to Hipponax, it is fitting to briefly revisit the Nestor Cup, potentially the earliest example of epic parody. The question of whether its inscription represents primarily an incantation (be it earnest or playful) or primarily parody mirrors the central issue in Hipponax Fr. 126. These corresponding controversies highlight the uncomfortable proximity of humor to magical practice. Incantations are prone to

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262 Graf 2014.
263 Lines 6-7, Faraone and Obbink 2013. On the role of Paean, see Rutherford’s article in the same volume.
264 Obbink 2013.
265 Ferrari 2011; Obbink 2013.
hyperbolic elaboration; Helen’s *pharmakon* prevents the consumer from crying *even if he should see his parents lying dead, or his brother and son killed before his eyes.*

Incantations also often juxtapose disparate elements, as in the combination of *ephesia grammata* and hexameter mythological narrative in the Getty Hexameters, or, perhaps the allusion to Nestor’s cup on a humble clay vessel. Hyperbole and disjunction are also important elements of humor, and this confluence suggests that context is crucial for understanding how we define “funny” and “serious” in incantations, or whether a clear binary between these terms even exists. Without further information about how the Nestor Cup was used and when in its use-life the inscription appeared, the debate about its meaning will continue.266 However, in the case of Hipponax Fr. 126, we have fragments and testimonia for Hipponax and the other iambographers to help us predict the fragment’s intended tone and gauge its potential for epic parody.

**Additive Parody in Hipponax Fr. 126**

In the hexameter fragment of Hipponax, we clearly have a disjunctive element, which is the combination of invocation of the Muse with expulsive incantation; Faraone acknowledges as much.267 To understand whether this disjunction is funny, shocking, both, or neither, it is necessary to imagine the experience of the audience at the moment

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266 New discoveries are still being made about the Nestor Cup’s archaeological context. Previous excavations identified the tomb as a child burial, for example, but recent excavations have revealed adult occupants, expanding the possibilities of what its assemblage might mean; see Gigante et al. 2021.

267 Faraone 2004, 235-36: “…the general consensus seems to be that in his parody Hipponax starts with a ‘high’ literary flourish, before he begins his ‘low’ attack. I suspect, however, that his use of the verb *ennepein* here is much more calculated and quite brilliant, because it brings two hexametrical genres—epic narrative and scapegoat chant or incantation—into immediate and delicious contrast.” It is unclear what Faraone means by calling this contrast “delicious.” He interprets the fragment as a whole as an attack on a person in power using the language of scapegoat ritual, but does not explain whether he considers the contrast generated by *ennepein* specifically funny, shocking, both, or something else.
of performance and consider what is typical of Hipponactean poetry. When the audience heard the words Μοῦσα μοι Εὐρυμεδοντιάδεα, they did not know that they would be hearing about a *pharmakos* ritual three lines later. Even if invocations of the Muse were used for a wider variety of purposes than to initiate a heroic epic poem, it is difficult to believe that the audience did not consider heroic epic among the possible references, particularly since epic allusion appears elsewhere in Hipponax as well; I will return to this point below. The effect of the fragment can be articulated, then, as one of shifting and narrowing frames of reference. The first three words raise the potential for allusion to epic poetry, and in this context, the epic valence of ποντοχάρυβδον and ἐγγαστριμάχαραν in lines 1-2 is crucial; even if these are demon names, as Faraone suggests, they also relate to the sea, Charybdis, and war, and therefore keep the heroic epic tradition at the fore of the audience’s mind. In lines 3-4, however, Hipponax moves more fully into the language of expulsive ritual, a transition that is marked by the verb ὀληται or ὀλείται at line 3, which in either case distorts the role of the Muse. The modern impulse to fix the “problem” of ὀληται is misguided, because surprise and confusion are part of the effect. This journey from potential epic praise poetry to expulsive incantation, and the sheer weight that ὀληται/ὀλείται carries in this transformation, suggests that it would have been shocking and funny to the audience. By combining the language of epic and expulsive incantation, Hipponax can achieve a double effect, simultaneously offering a personal attack against the target’s eating habits using absurd poetic compounds, and a more scathing attack on a person in power using the language of scapegoat ritual, characterizing him as a scourge on society and calling for his death. If Hipponax wanted to present a pure expulsive incantation, and wanted it to be clearly identified as such, he
would not begin with language that is most characteristic of epic poetry. The epic element is as important to the overall effect as the scapegoat incantation element.

With this context in mind, what might Polemon mean by identifying Hipponax fr. 126 as *paroidia*? As discussed in the introduction, *paroidia* was a nebulous term in antiquity, varying by time and context; before the first century BCE, it could refer not only to a particular genre of autonomous hexameter poem, but also to a set of broader forms of epic allusion across genres, one being “a hexameter comic practice related to rhapsody” the other being “generic comic reuse of epic.” Polemon’s use of *paroidia* is not entirely clear, but he may be referring to the allusive mode rather than the genre when he calls Hipponax its inventor; the fact that he also identifies *paroidia* in comic poets such as Epicharmus and Cratinus may support this interpretation. Regarding the application of the modern term “parody,” the fragment satisfies the definition I have adopted for this study by imitating elements of epic with a humorous and critical twist. A passage or poem need not target epic poetry itself to be considered parody. The fragment also exhibits others features common in epic parody, such as the use of

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268 *Paroidia* could describe the use of epic models in a number of genres, such as comedy. Around the fifth century BCE, it also begins to refer to a category of festival performance, and thus to “a literary genre with distinctive features,” but this more specific usage remains less common. Around the first century BCE, *paroidia* expands to describe imitative allusion to genres and subjects beyond epic. See Householder 1944 and Bertolini 2020, 18-48.


270 Faraone protests that the identification the fragment as parody “goes against the general notion that parody mocks, sometimes even gently and lovingly, a literary genre, an author or a single work of art, but not necessarily the subject of a literary work.” (Faraone 2004, 212). This “general notion” is not widely held as Faraone believes. The question of the target of mockery or criticism in parody is a significant topic of discussion among both modern theorists of literary parody and scholars of Greek parody and *paroidia*. The fragments that we can most confidently identify as *paroidia* (e.g. those of Hegemon and Matro) take on a variety of targets, often more than one at a time, and vary in the level polemicism they direct back at epic itself (and indeed how they even define “epic,” as this dissertation demonstrates). See Bertolini 2020, 172-192 for analysis of the critical function of *paroidia*.
metaphors of food and hunger to facilitate social and political criticism; in particular, the image of a person in power greedily eating up the city recalls Matro’s *Deipnon*, written roughly three centuries later in a patchwork of Homeric quotation.

**Manipulating Meter in Epic Parody**

Just as the concept of additive parody opens up the interpretation of Hipponax Fr. 126, so also does the fragment enrich our understanding of additive parody as a literary phenomenon. The fragment belongs to a rich tradition of mingling epic and iambic elements to comic effect, and the manipulation of meter to facilitate this allusive engagement is common in this tradition. Scholars have considered the possibility that Hipponax modeled his persona on Odysseus, and that one or more poems focused on Odysseus.\(^{271}\) Furthermore, although Fr. 126 preserves the only complete dactylic hexameter lines, other less complete fragments appear to combine epic language and meter. Fr. 127, for instance, seems to make a sexual joke about Calypso by truncating her name to Cypso (from κύπτω, “to bend forward”): πῶς παρὰ Κυψόν ἦλθε (“How he came to Cypso”).\(^{272}\) On rare occasions, dactyls appear in otherwise iambic lines, as in fr. 10: ἐρέω γὰρ οὕτω· “Κυλλήνιε Μαιάδος Ἑρμῆ” (“For I will speak the following: “Cyllenian Hermes, son of Maia”).\(^{273}\) Here the meter turns dactylic for the invocation.

Similarly, parallels have been identified between Odysseus and Archilochus, and

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\(^{271}\) E.g. Rosen 1990a; Hawkins 2016; Prodi 2017. See also Adrian Kelly’s forthcoming article “Homer and Hipponax.” Swift 2019, 18-22 surveys the scholarship.

\(^{272}\) Degani 2007, 133; Bertolini 2020, 152. Fr. 128 also seems to be hexametric with epic language.

\(^{273}\) Another example is the Strasbourg epodes (fr. 194-6), on which see Bertolini 2020 167-8.
Archilochus occasionally adopts epic content, narrative structures, and meter. An example is the elegiac poem about Telephus preserved in P.Oxy.LXIX.4708, noted above.

Bertolini situates epic resonances like these in a broader tradition of iambic engagement with epic, particularly through meter. As further evidence, he offers a fragment of Xenophanes, who is known as a critic of epic and an author of parodies:

\[\text{ἀλλ’ οἱ βρωτοὶ δοκέουσι γεννᾶσθαι θεοὺς, τὴν σφετέρην δ’ ἐσθήτα ἐξεῖν φωνῆν τε δέμας τε.}\]

But mortals suppose that gods are born,
Wear their own clothes and have a voice and a body.

Here a line of dactylic hexameter follows a line of iambic trimeter. Also of prime importance in this tradition is the Margites, which mixes iambic and hexameter verses. A testimonium of Hegemon, discussed in the first chapter, suggests that when Hegemon failed to come up with a line, presumably of hexameters, he made a joke out of his failure by dropping in the iambic phrase καὶ τὸ Πέρδικος σκέλος; in combination with the metrical joke in line 3 of his fragment, it seems plausible that Hegemon mixed iambs into his hexameter verses. The inscription on the Nestor Cup may offer a final example. The second and third lines are hexameter, but the meter of the first line is debated; Bertolini

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274 Archilochus Fr. 117, for instance, offers another invocation: τὸν κεροπλάστην ἅειδε Γλαύκον (“sing of Glaukos, with horns in his hair”). These words are the entire fragment. Bertolini 2020, 69–75 offers further examples of mock-epic language in the iambic tradition. On hexameter in the fragments of Archilochus, see Tarditi 1968, 208–16.
275 See n. 204 for bibliography.
276 Bertolini 2020, 150-170.
suggests that this line may begin dactylic before transitioning to iambic trimeter.\textsuperscript{278} Taken together, these fragments suggest that the presence of hexameter verses among the fragments of Hipponax is not so surprising, and that the poem to which fr. 126 belongs need not have been hexameter in its entirety.

**Conclusion**

Due to the brevity of the fragment, it is unclear whether the poem to which fr. 126 belongs primarily imitated epic, expulsive chant, or both equally, or whether it transitioned into something entirely new after line four. What is apparent is that Hipponax reproduces at least one firmly epic formal element (the invocation of the Muses) with a playful or polemical twist (the addition of the language of scapegoat ritual). As Aristophanes does in the *Peace*, Hipponax constructs an additive parody by capitalizing on the conceptual overlap between epic and a subliterary genre within the hexameter milieu. Given the state of the fragment, it is difficult to say whether parody of expulsive chant mediates epic parody in fr. 126 or the other way around. However, we can say with reasonable confidence that Hipponax is tapping into a related usage of epic language to generate an abrupt shift in tone that shocks his audience and that creates an attack that is both funny and scathing. Furthermore, fr. 126 participates in a rich tradition of engagement between iambus and epic that expands our understanding of the additive strategy, and of epic parody more broadly. In particular, the early interest in creating

\textsuperscript{278} The line is Νέστορός ε[μ]ι ο[πι]τορ[ου] ποτέρων. Bertolini 2020, 170 suggests that the line may be a mixed meter: “a dactylic beginning (– u u – u ) followed by a catalectic trochaic dimeter or by the second part of a iambic trimeter after a pentemimere ( – u – u – u – ).”
parody through epic-iambic metrical hybrids opens up a wide range of possibilities for the reconstruction of Hipponax fr. 126, and also provides literary historical context for Aristophanes’ use of quasi-epic lines in the Frogs. We can therefore situate Hipponax fr. 126 in a broader tradition of employing additive parody to make epic speak to characters and circumstances in the comic or iambic world.

III. Epic, Riddle, and Lyric Bravado in Strato Fr. 1

Having offered an example from among Aristophanes’ predecessors, it is time to turn to his successors. As we have seen in the previous chapters, Strato fr. 1 presents a monologue by an old man who complains about the baffling language of his new cook. As the old man relates the details of their exchange, we learn that the cook’s language is Homeric; he uses the vocabulary of epic sacrifice to describe his preparations for an upcoming dinner party, leading the old man to comment that “you’d need to get the books of Philitas to look up what each of his words meant” (30-31), referring to the scholar Philitas of Cos, whose Ἀτακτοὶ γλῶσσαι focused mainly on epic vocabulary.279 In the final lines of the fragment, the epic quality of the cook’s language becomes even more explicit, as the old man comments that he must have been the “slave of some sort of

279 Lines 30-31: τά τοῦ Φιλίτα λαμβάνοντα βιβλία / τῶν; βιβλίων σκοπεῖν ἕκαστον τί δύναται τῶν ῥημάτων. Testimonia associate the Ἀτακτοὶ γλῶσσαι with epic vocabulary specifically. Twenty-five glosses survive to us, preserved mostly by Athenaeus, and these are indeed mainly epic. Additionally, the Suda names him as the teacher of Zenodotus (Philitas test. 15 Spanoudakis), and Aristarchus reportedly wrote a treatise Against Philitas (test. 10 Spanoudakis). On the relationship between Homer and Philitas see Spanoudakis 2002, 387-388, 392-395.
rhapsodizer” who got “stuffed full of Homeric words since he was a boy.” However, a few elements of the fragment complicate the task of determining exactly what the old man thinks he is hearing, and what the audience thinks they are hearing, when the cook speaks. The points where Athenaeus’ version of the text differs from the papyrus’ version highlight these interpretational issues. In the papyrus, the cook uses ῥηξίζθον, a word that does not appear in epic; Athenaeus’ version emends this to Homeric ἐρυσίζθον, drawing attention to the potential problem it poses as an unepic word in the otherwise epic scene. Another small interpretational issue is that that the old man must recognize the cook’s language as epic to allude to Philitas, rhapsodes, and Homeric words, yet elsewhere he calls the cook a “male Sphinx” (σφίγγ’ ἄρρεν’, 1) who speaks in “strange words” (καινὰ ρήματα, 3) and “intricacies” (περιπλοκὰς, 22/[35]), implying that he does not recognize the source of the cook’s language. Although this is a very minor nit, it may explain the longest section of interpolated lines in Athenaeus’ version, which address the difficulty by allowing the cook to explain himself ([26-30]):


“Don’t you know that Homer talks this way?” “Sure, cook, he could talk whatever way he wanted. But what’s that got to do with us, by Hestia?” “Do me a favor and keep him in mind in the future.” “Are you plotting death by Homer?” [30]

280 Lines 35-37: καὶ μοι δοκεῖ ῥαψῳδοτοιοῦτον τινὸς / δοῦλος γεγονὼς ἐκ παιδὸς ἁλτήριος / ἐτ’ ἀναπεπλήσθαι τοῦ Ὄμηρου ρημάτων. These lines only appear in the papyrus, not Athenaeus’ version.
281 For the differences between the versions of the fragment preserved in the papyrus and Athenaeus, see Ch. 1.
282 In the following chapter, I also argue that the tradition of comic cooks who boast about their sources of knowledge may also underlie the interpolator’s impulse to give Strato’s cook a moment of exposition.
Underlying these interpolations, I argue, is a misunderstanding of the function of the Sphinx reference in the first line. Strato uses the Sphinx to foreshadow a common type of Middle Comic exchange between a riddling cook or slave and his employer or master that usually engages not epic, but lyric. However, he upsets audience expectations by presenting a cook who is Sphinx-like not in the obscurity of his language, but in his use of the inspired language of hexameter poetry, including epic and riddle.

Poetry and Riddle in the Comic Mageiros

The “learned cook” character of Middle and New Comedy could act an avatar for any number of intellectual figures. In Nichomachus fr. 1, the speech of the mageiros characterizes him as a doctor: “There are foods that produce wind, that are hard to digest, and some of which wreak revenge rather than provide nourishment. Everyone who dines on conflicting foods becomes irritable and loses self-control…”283 In Syntrophoi fr. 2, Damoxenus presents a philosopher-mageiros who declaims on Epicurus and Democritus. Among the more literary mageiroi, scholars have mainly noted the influence of riddle and dithyramb, and made much of the overlap between them.284 On one end of the spectrum is the slave or cook who speaks in true riddles, like the title character of Eubulus’ Sphinxkarion. A fragment from the play illustrates what his speech looks like:285

283 Nichomachus Eileithuia, fr. 1, 30-38. Trans Wilkins.
285 Fr. 106, Ath. 10.449e-f. Trans. Olson 2006-12. The title of the play suggests that it centers around a riddler named Karion, which is a typical name for a slave and for a cook, either enslaved or free. Cooks named Karion appear in Menander’s Epitrepontes, Euphron fr. 10, and Plautus’ Miles Gloriosus; in the former two, the cooks seem to be free, while Plautus’ Karion is enslaved.
(A.) It is something that lacks a tongue but speaks; the female shares a name with the male; it safeguards many winds; is hairy but at other times hairless; says things that make no sense to the sensible; and extracts one law from another. It is one and many; and if someone wounds it, it remains unwounded. What is it? Why are you puzzled?

(B.) It’s Callistratus!

(A.) No— it’s an arsehole. You’re always talking nonsense. An arsehole’s both tongueless and capable of speech; there’s one name for the many of them; when wounded, it’s unwounded; it’s hairy and hairless. What more do you want? It’s a guardian of many winds.

This speech is clearly identifiable as a riddle, to the point that the first lines of the fragment could be removed from their context and stand alone as such. However, a riddling style can also be woven into an exchange more organically, as a fragment of Antiphanes’ Aphrodisios illustrates (fr. 55):286

(A.) πότερ’ ὅταν μέλλω λέγειν σοι τὴν χύτραν, <χύτραν> λέγω ἢ τροχοῦ ρύμαισθαι τεκτὸν κοιλοσώματον κύτως, πλαστὸν ἐκ γαίης, ἐν ἄλλῃ μηρὸς ὁπτὴθην στέγην, νεογενοῦς ποιμήν δ’ ἐν αὐτῇ πνικτὰ γαλατοθρέμμανα, τακερόχρωτ’ εἴδη κύουσαν;

(B.) Ἡράκλεις, ἀποκτενεῖς ἄρα μ’, εἰ μὴ γνωρίμως μοι πάνυ φράσεις κρεδὼν χύτραν.

(A.) εὔ λέγεις, ξουθῆς μελίσσης νάμισσιν δὲ συμμίγῃς μηκάδων αἰγῶν ἀπόρρουν θρόμβον, ἔγκαθειμένον εἰς πλατὺ στεγαστρὸν ἄγνης παρθένου Δηοὺς κόρης, λεπτοσύνθετοις τρυφώντα μυρίοις καλύμμασιν, ἢ σαφῶς πλακοῦντα φράζω σοι;

(B.) πλακοῦντα βούλομαι.

(A.) Βρομιάδος δ’ ἱδρύτα πηγῆς;

(B.) οἶνον εἰπὲ συντεμών.

(A.) λιβάδα νυμφαῖαν δροσάδων;

(B.) παραλιπόν ὠδωρ φάθι.

(A.) κασιότουν δ’ αὐραν δι’ αἴθρας;

When I’m about to mention the cookpot to you—should I say “a cookpot” or “a hollow-bodied concavity, forged under the impulse of a wheel, moulded of earth, baked in a separate chamber sprung from its mother, and pregnant within with casserole, milk-nourished portions of a new-born flock, tender-fleshed forms”?

Heracles! You’ll be the death of me, if you don’t refer in a perfectly intelligible way to a “cookpot full of meat”.

Very good. Should I refer to “a curdled mass that flows from bleeting she-goats, mingled with streams spawned by a tawny honeybee, nestled in a broad wrapper belonging to Deo’s sacred virgin daughter, and luxuriant with countless fine-textured veilings”; or should I describe it clearly to you as “a cake”?

I prefer “a cake”.

“The sweat of Bromius’ spring”?

Keep it short—say “wine”!

“A dewy nymphaic font”?

Drop that and use the word “water”!

“A cassia-breathing trans-ethereal waft”?

Say “incense”; don’t stretch it out, and don’t say anything else like that—or the opposite, either; because this looks like a lot of work, to talk like some people do, not actually naming anything, but putting together a mass of other words that allude to it.

Given that all these circumlocutions revolve around food and dishware, it is likely that the characters in Antiphanes’ scene are a cook and his master or employer. The cook begins by offering answers to his riddles before challenging his interlocutor to interpret them himself. These are likely the sorts of exchanges that Strato’s audience would have anticipated when they heard the old man call the cook called a “male sphinx.”

However, the use of lengthy compounds and kennings in Antiphanes fr. 55 is also reminiscent of dithyrambic poetry. Nesselrath identifies traces of dithyrambic language in

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288 A list of passages in Middle Comedy with riddle elements can be found in RE s.v. rätsel. See also Hunter 1983, 199-201; Nesselrath 1990, 241-280; Dobrov 2002.
no less than 43 fragments of Middle Comedy, a number of which have also been described as containing riddling language. Poetic diction and periphrasis are by far the most common modes of lyric allusion, as opposed to meter, direct quotation, or the naming of poets. This strategy, which Dobrov calls “lexicalization,” means that the riddle-like quality of dithyrambic poetry is often readily apparent. The proximity of riddle and lyric in the language of the mageiros highlights the interpretational challenges and pleasures of lyric poetry, not only for the comic cook’s interlocutor, but for the audience of the play. The audience is invited to enter a sort of competition with the interlocutor to see if they can come up with an interpretation before the riddler or interlocutor. LeVen explains:

What is important is the kind of social dynamics, both on stage and between stage and audience, which allows the audience to assimilate itself with the clever – or powerful – character. When the master gets the answer, the audience can identify with him, or even compete, if they come up with a better, or different, answer.

In this way, the poet-mageiros does more for the audience than simply eliciting laughter from his social insubordination and linguistic incongruity, as all the boasting, pedantic Middle Comic cooks do: he also invites the audience to participate in the sort of riddle-challenge popular at symposia. The audience gets to laugh at the high lyric style while also indirectly enjoying it.

However, although scholars have focused on the overlap between dithyramb and riddle, the presence of dithyrambic qualities in the language of the mageiros does not

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290 Only a few Middle Comic fragments that have a specific dithyrambic model. Nesselrath 1990, 248 identifies Anaxander fr. 6 Kock and Antiphanes fr. 112 Kock. LeVen 2013, 56-57 suggests that Antiphanes fr. 180 (Ath. 4.169e–f) recalls Philoxenus’ Dinner Party.
292 LeVen 2013, 59; see also Nesselrath 1990, 258.
always mean that a given passage contains direct allusion to the genre. The strategy of
allusion through lexicalization makes it difficult to distinguish parody of dithyramb from
parody of tragic lyric, for example, which was heavily influenced by dithyramb.

Antiphanes fr. 207 thematizes the similarity: 293

(A) . . . παραδίδου δ’ ἔξης ἐμοί
<τὸν> ἄρκεσιγιον ὡς ἐφασκ’ Εὐριπίδης.
(B) Εὐριπίδης γὰρ τοῦτ’ ἐφασκεν; (A) ἄλλα τίς;
(B) Φιλόξενος δήπουθεν. (A) σοῦθέν διαφέρει,
ὅ ταῦτ’ ἑλέγχεις μ’ ἕνεκα συλλαβῆς μιᾶς.

(A) . . . And after that, hand me the limb-strengtheners, as Euripides put it.
(B) Euripides actually said that?
(A) Who else?
(B) Philoxenus, I imagine.
(A) It doesn’t make any difference, buddy; you’re criticizing me because of a
single syllable.

Furthermore, on the rare occasion that tragedy is evoked explicitly in Middle Comedy,
the joke always revolves around the qualities it shares with dithyramb. Axionicus’

Phileuripides, for instance, presents a cook who sings about his craft in the style of a
Euripidean monody. Another example appears in Antiphanes fr. 1: 294

(A.) καὶ πρώτα μὲν
ἀίρω ποθεινὴν μᾶζαν, ἣν φερέσβιος
Δημὸς βροτοῖς χάρμα δωρεῖς μῖλον.
ἐπεί τα πικτὰ τακερὰ μηκάδων μέλη,
χλόην καταμπέχοντα σάρκα νεογενῆ.
(B.) τί λέγεις; (A.) τραγῳδιὰν περαίνω Σοφοκλέους

(A.) And first of all I’m fetching a luscious barley-cake, which Deo, the giver of
life, grants mortals as a welcome source of joy. Then tender smothered goat-
haunches, new-born flesh clad in greens.
(B.) What are you talking about?
(A.) I’m reciting a tragedy by Sophocles.

Dobrov interprets the first lines of this passage as an allusion to dithyramb: “Like cartoon characters that attribute a tatter of popular lyric to Shakespeare, so here we have dithyramb sold as Sophocles!” However, one can just as easily imagine Antiphanes juxtaposing fifth century tragedy with contemporary fourth century tragedy, and the joke may well rest on this very ambiguity. The fact that tragedy is mainly mocked for its dithyrambic qualities does not mean that dithyramb is the primary target of mockery, however. Rather, the target is not a particular genre at all, but a set of poetic practices and aesthetic values that transcend genre.

Strato’s fragment certainly exemplifies the poetic cook of Middle Comedy whose language mocks the riddling turn in lyric poetry. However, at Strato’s time at the end of the fourth century, the cook’s language might also represent a new literary trend: the epigram. It is perhaps significant that two poetic fragments of Philitas contain riddles: one about an aulos, the second ostensibly about κλήθρη, alder-wood, but in fact referring specifically to the alder-wood logs that Odysseus uses for his raft upon his departure from Calypso. The latter poem Stobaeus lists under the heading paignia. Although the label

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296 Hunter 1983, 166-167. Dobrov 2002 argues that dithyramb is the primary genre underlying the mageiros. “Middle Comic poets made their cooks speak the dithyramb in an effort to impart to their character certain qualities which were not relevant to a tragic chorus, but rather associated in the fourth century with the dithyramb as avant-garde art. The qualities include (1) the technical prowess of a celebrity virtuoso and soloist, (2) the pursuit of aesthetic effect at the expense of traditional elements (social matrix and cult song of the old dithyramb), (3) the triumph of form over content.” However, these qualities are absolutely relevant to fourth century tragedy, which was strongly influenced by dithyrambic formal aesthetics. On the use of the high poetic style in Middle Comedy, Arnott, rightly observes that “often... it is difficult to pinpoint a definite source [of pastiche], since already in the late fifth century the lyrics of tragedy were themselves beginning to absorb dithyrambic types of ornamentation.”). He identifies the riddling style in Alexis fr. 242, for instance, as primarily paratragic (Arnott 1996, 630).  
297 Frs. 20 (on the aulos), 25 (on a log from Odysseus’ raft). Fr. 25, a first-person riddle, the speaker defines itself as κλήθρη explicitly. This is a rare word, and close verbal echoes suggest that Philitas has the Odyssey passage in mind. Stobaeus presents fr. 23 Spanoudakis, a funerary epigram, split in two, with the first half under the heading paignia and the second half under the heading epigrammata. Given the content
paignia may mean many things, in the context of these riddling fragments, Kwapisz speculates that perhaps Philitas authored a collection of riddles. In any case, it seems that Philitas enjoyed obscuring rare Homeric words in his verse riddles as well as explicating them in his prose treatises. It is unclear whether Strato’s audience would have had these poetic works of Philitas in mind specifically when they heard his name, but his riddles do serve as a reminder that the role of obscurity in poetry changed throughout the fourth century. Strato is certainly operating in the tradition of the riddling-lyric mageiros that emerged as a response to the new dithyrambic style, but by his time at the end of the century, the sphinx-cook would likely also evoke more current trends, not only in scholarship, but also in poetry.

This context allows us to see more clearly what Strato’s fragment accomplishes. The sphinx reference in the first line is programmatic, prompting the audience to expect a confrontation between a riddling or lyric cook and his interpreter-interlocutor. However, Strato upsets audience expectations by presenting epic. He adopts the strategy of lexicalization that other poets of Middle Comedy apply in their parodies of the new lyric style, but he takes it to the extreme, substituting epic words for everyday words mostly one-to-one, without the periphrasis that is central to riddles and lyric poetry. Furthermore, the cook’s poetic words are, for the most part, not newfangled poetic bravado, but the standard language of epic sacrifice, one of the most traditional scenes in

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298 Kwapisz 2012, 154-160.
299 This is probably the beginning of a scene, or at least the beginning of a comic bit.
epic poetry; the exceptions are few but notable, and I will turn to these soon. In general, however, he comparison of the cook to the sphinx is an exaggeration prompted by the old man’s lack of even the most fundamental literary knowledge. Part of the humor of the scene, then, is the non-fulfillment of the expectation that the Sphinx reference establishes.

This effect explains the fact that only a few of the cook’s poetic words are defined for the audience. As we have seen, in Middle Comic riddle-telling, the answer typically must be supplied for the audience to enjoy the scene. However, Strato leaves most of the cook’s epicisms undefined, including the first two (6-14/[6-18]).

“How many meropes did you ask to eat? Tell me.”
“I asked the Meropes to eat? You’re psycho.
You think I know these folks, the Meropes?”
“None of them will be there. By god, this is the final straw, asking the Meropes to eat.”
“So not a single daitumon will be there?”
“No, I don’t think so. Daitumon?” I counted.

300 The cook’s epicisms range from common epic words (e.g. δαιτυμών, μῆλα, μοίρα), to words typical for epic sacrifice scenes (e.g. οὐλοχύται, δίπτυχος, ὀβελός), to epic-sounding words of his own invention (θυσίαζεις, μιστουλα). See the discussion of Strato in Ch. 1 for further discussion.

301 As in previous chapters, I present the text of the papyrus with lines present only in Athenaeus’ version inserted and indented for reference. The line number in brackets represents the line number in Athenaeus’ version. Text and translation of the two versions of the fragment can be found in the Appendix.
“Philinus, Moschion, and Niceratus will come, and him, and him…” I named them out. I didn’t have one Daitumon among them. “None will be there,” I said. “What do you mean? Not one?” He got annoyed, like I had done some wrong by not asking Daitumon. So strange.

Strato offers no explanation of μέροψ and δαιτυμών, words that appear multiple times in Homeric epic as well as in Classical poetry. As the scene progresses, however, the old man relates explanations that cook offered for some of his words, including ῥηξίχθον (15/[19]), μῆλα (17/[21]), οὐλοχύται (21/[34]), and πηγός (23/[36]). The audience probably would have known that μῆλα means “sheep,” although the old man confuses it for “apples.” However, οὐλοχύται, ῥηξίχθον, and πηγός are perhaps the trickiest words in the fragment, so it is significant that Strato has the cook define them. ῥηξίχθον (“earth-breaker”) is not found in Homeric epic, but in two Orphic hymns and fifteen times in the magical papyri, according to the TLG; the cook helpfully defines the word as βοῦν εὐρυμέτωπον, which is sensible to the audience while still in keeping with his epic style. The Orphic Hymns and magical papyri do not seem to use the word to refer to bulls, so it is possible that Strato intends ῥηξίχθον as an epic-sounding innovation. οὐλοχύται (“barley”) appears throughout Homeric epic, but nowhere else in extant literature before Strato. Finally, πηγός means solid (after πήγνυμι) and it appears twice in the Odyssey to describe the sea, apparently with the sense of “salty;” Strato’s cook uses it

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302 The TLG records 11 instances of μέροψ in Homeric epic, 3 in the Homeric Hymns, 6 in Hesiodic poetry, 2 in Aeschylean tragedy, and 3 in Euripidean tragedy. Δαιτυμών is more common, appearing in prose as well as poetry.

303 Livrea 1980 argues that ῥηξίχθον in fact refers to a pig, and that when the cook says “a bull with a wide forehead” he is not glossing ῥηξίχθον, but suggesting another animal. However, this is not in keeping with the Strato’s practice of defining obscure words that are more riddling, and that the audience might want explained.

304 Olson 2007, 166.
metonymically to refer to “salt.” ρηξίχθον and πηγός represent the fragment’s only true applications of riddle-like, metaphorical language to everyday objects. In the context of the surrounding sacrificial terminology, Strato’s audience might be able to deduce their meanings, but the words are certainly non-obvious.

In sum, the allusion to the Sphinx primes the audience for a typical Middle comic exchange of riddling or poetic language, and the scene that follows adopts this structure to an extent by challenging the audience with the occasional poetic riddle. However, by and large, Strato diverges from the model by having the cook use words that stop short of being properly riddling. Because the audience does not need these terms defined, Strato can leave them undefined for the old man as well, with the result that the audience gets to enjoy the interpretive game of the poet-mageiros while the old man’s aporia remains humorously unresolved. The passage asserts that there is a difference between epic and modern poetry; the old man should not be treating the language of epic sacrifice as newfangled mumbo-jumbo. However, the cook’s use of words like ρηξίχθον and πηγός, as well as the framing of the scene as a riddle-exchange, nonetheless establishes a genealogical connection between epic and later lyric. Strato’s use of words like μέρος and δαῖτυμόν that also appear in tragedy strengthens this effect. In fact, μέρος only appears substantively in later poetry; in Strato’s fragment, the epic words around it remind us of its epic origins, but his substantive usage recalls its later life. The reference to Philitas of Cos extends this genealogical line forward to current trends in scholarship, and perhaps poetry as well.

305 Olson 2007, 166.
Epic and Riddle, Rhapsode and Sphinx

So far, we have demonstrated a tendency in Middle Comedy to connect riddle and lyric, and a strategy in Strato’s fragment to connect epic and lyric. However, Classical audiences also made much of the relationship between epic and riddle, particularly the riddle of the Sphinx. To fill out the interpretation, this connection must be explored.

Greek riddles appear in a variety of meters, but the riddle of the Sphinx is strongly associated with hexameter. Presumably the riddle appeared in hexameters in the Theban Cycle, and hexameter versions of the riddle indeed survive in a variety of places, including in the scholia to a number of texts, in the Palatine Anthology, and in the Deipnosophists, where it is attributed to the fourth century BCE historian Asclepiades. The antiquity of the hexameter versions of the riddle is debated, but González argues that they are “formulaic multiforms of one another that bear the hallmarks of their oral composition and transmission.” Indeed, oral performance is an important shared feature of epic and riddle, and the Sphinx herself is, in her own way, a public singer. Sophocles describes the Sphinx as ἡ ῥαψῳδὸς… κύων, and both Sophocles and Euripides call her an ἀοιδός. In Euripides’ Phoenissae, her pronouncements are couched in musical terms such as μοῦσα, ὀδή, and μέλος. Furthermore, like the epic singer, the Sphinx is divinely inspired; in Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannus she is an “oracle-chanting

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306 See González 2013, 401 for citations.
307 González 2013, 401.
308 Jebb 1893, 29; Tiffany 2008, 152.
309 She is an ἀοιδός at Oedipus Tyrannus 36 and Phoenissae 1507, and a ῥαψῳδὸς… κύων at Oedipus Tyrannus 391.
310 In Euripides Phoenissae her words are μοῦσαι (50), ἀμουσοτάταις ὀδάς (807), ξυνετὸν μέλος (1506).
maiden” and in Euripides’ Phoinissae she is a “lyreless Muse,” while Apollodorus states that she “learned her riddle from the Muses.”

Her riddle can be contextualized in the broader milieu of divinely-inspired hexameter verse forms.

A number of the qualities that the Sphinx shares with the epic singer also apply to the cook in Strato’s fragment. The old man characterizes the cook’s language as inhuman, describing it as “words that no one could have grasped, by Earth,” (27-28) and reporting that he “began to beg him to talk remotely humanlike” (32-33); here we are reminded of the Sphinx, whose alien form reflects her unnatural use of human language. Furthermore, the old man becomes increasingly desperate in his attempts to redirect the cook, even resorting to pleading with him; with these operatics, he behaves not like a participant in comic or sympotic riddle exchange, but like the Thebans, for whom the riddle-game was genuinely dangerous. Finally, Strato calls the cook “the slave of some sort of rhapsodizer” (ῥαψωιδοτοιούτου τινός / δοῦλος, 35-6), combining the rhapsode-label with an insult, just as Sophocles does when he describes the Sphinx as ἡ ῥαψωδός… κύων. On this line of the Oedipus Graziosi writes:

On the one hand, κύων ‘bitch’ emphasizes the alien, animal, even monstrous nature of the sphinx. On the other, the term rhapsodos reminds us that the Sphinx is a cultivated monster who speaks in hexameters, and has to be defeated not by force, but by sheer intelligence. Thus the term rhapsode seems to stand here for culture and civilization, and perhaps intelligence.

Similarly, in Strato’s fragment, δοῦλος… ἀλτήριος represents the cook’s fundamental inferiority, and ῥαψωιδοτοιούτου represents culture and civilization, albeit with a

311 ἄλυρον ἀμφί μοῦσαν, Phoenissae 1028. Bibliotheca 3.5.8.52
312 27-28: ἐλεγεν ἄλλα ρήματα / τουαθ’ ἄ, μὰ τὴν Γῆν, οὐδὲ εἰς ἥκουσεν ἄν… 32-33: ἄλλ’ ἰκέτευον αὐτὸν ἡδὸν μεταβαλὼν / ἀνθρωπίνος λαλέσω τί. This latter sentence is slightly different in Athenaeus’ version; see text and translation in the Appendix.
disparaging tone. Strato invites us to use the Sphinx as a model not only for the cook’s language, but also for his character: the fearsomeness of the Sphinx lies in the disjunction between her monstrosity and her knowledge or intellect, and likewise, absurdly, the humor of Strato’s cook lies in the disjunction between his social inferiority and his superior knowledge.

Once again, we have found ourselves enmeshed in the network of character motifs that unites the various practitioners of hexameter verse. Strato’s cook not only evokes the rhapsode (a connection that Strato makes explicit), but also the Homer-figure of biographical lore, who was imagined as a poor man singing in the cities and homes of wealthy strangers. This association allows Strato to explore contemporary issues in rhapsodic performance, such as the source of the rhapsode’s knowledge (divine inspiration or study) and, accordingly, the agency he possesses over his song. The fragment therefore thematizes the ambiguity surrounding the cook’s motives – an ambiguity that the interpolated lines in Athenaeus’ text eliminate. Meanwhile, the juxtaposition of the cook with the Sphinx allows Strato to develop another provocative ambiguity, prompting us to consider whether the cook’s epic language is well-meaning or malicious, a genuine verbal habit or a nefarious plot to embarrass the old man. The old man’s consistent allusions to epic throughout the passage suggest that he does know that the cook’s words are epic, at least at the time of his monologue.\(^{313}\) The characterization of the cook as a Sphinx speaking not \(\alpha\nu\theta\rho\omicron\omicron\nu\omicron\omega\zeta\), in words no one could understand,

\(^{313}\) τά τοῦ Φιλίτα…βυβλία (30); ραφωδοτοιωτοῦ (35); τῶν Ὄμηρου ῶῥημάτων (37).
reflects a strategy to associate the cook’s words with a more devious relative of epic song.

Conclusion

In Strato’s fragment, epic is the primary object of parodic imitation. However, riddle facilitates the assimilation of epic into Middle Comedy by providing a familiar comic framework for the exchange between the old man and the cook, and a model for the cook’s character as an epic singer. Strato capitalizes on the comic tradition of connecting riddle with contemporary lyric, and the deeply-rooted connections between epic and the riddle of the Sphinx, to present a scene that cheekily situates epic at the origins of the florid modern poetic aesthetic, tracing a literary genealogy as Aristophanes does in the Frogs. The fragment is therefore a rich example of epic parody, juxtaposing not only the cook’s dinner preparations with an epic sacrifice scene (as discussed in the first chapter), but also his epic language with lyric and riddle. It shows how in additive epic parody, epic may mediate other genres, rather than the other way around; the allusion to the Sphinx and the use of ῥηξίχθον and πηγός call epic’s riddling-lyric successors to mind, but the cook’s language is mainly epic. Nonetheless, insofar as Strato fr. 1 taps into of the legacy of epic language in lyric poetry, we may situate it on a spectrum with Aristophanes’ Acharnians and Frogs, which evoke epic in part through its linguistic legacy in tragedy. Furthermore, although Strato uses the additive strategy in a different way than Hipponax, he accomplishes a similar effect, using it to establish a particular generic framework before abruptly switching tacks, and to juxtapose epic with a darker, more devious kind of epic song. In this way, Strato fr. 1 fills out our
understanding of how poets use the additive strategy to adapt epic parody to newer genres and to comment on contemporary literary practices and developments.

IV. Conclusion

Revermann suspects that the additive strategy appears throughout Old Comedy beyond Aristophanes. In fact, it is a phenomenon of epic parody beyond Old Comedy, extending both before and after Aristophanes. Across genres and centuries, poets of epic parody tap into the literary forms beyond epic poetry proper in which audiences would have encountered epic poetic elements, including in subliterary verse forms and in non-epic literature. By exploiting points of contact between epic and related genres, poets assimilate epic parody into their own genre, meter, and style. In the case of hexameter forms such as incantations, oracles, and riddles, these points of contact with epic poetry are deeply-rooted. We see Aristophanes (in the exchange between Trygaeus and Hierocles) and Hipponax, for example, invoke these roots to appeal to different kinds of authority simultaneously. Aristophanes’s *Frogs* and Strato fr. 1., meanwhile, illustrate how a parodist might access epic through its influence on contemporary verse forms such as tragedy and lyric to construct literary genealogies and define their own place in literary history. Strato, at the end of the fourth century, adds a further layer. His sphinx-like cook reminds us of the shared tradition underlying epic and riddle, the influence of epic on the riddling new lyric of the previous century, and the latest developments in the riddling aesthetic: the glosses and riddles of Philitas.
In the previous chapter, we saw that Strato fr. 1 approaches epic through its formal and conceptual connection to riddle and its afterlife in tragedy and lyric. However, Strato also engages with epic as a subject and source of knowledge. The humor of the fragment hinges on the reversal of the characters’ expected knowledge of epic language, as the old man, who should have received some sort of formal education, does not know basic epic words, while the cook, who would not necessarily have studied literature, explains them to him. Strato’s reference to Philitas of Cos also calls to mind the rising scholarly practice of lexical analysis. Thus, the fragment plays with the question of who can be expected to know what when it comes to epic poetry. It may be tempting to read this thematization of epic knowledge in and of itself as a reflection of Strato’s literary historical context at the end of the fourth century BCE, with the rising interest in learning and learnedness. However, there is more to it. We have already seen parodists engage with the issue of epic knowledge in other ways. Hegemon fr. 1, for instance, presents a singer who seems to be motivated by financial gain but later receives a divine epiphany, implying that his craft may be inspired after all. In Aristophanes’ Peace, Trygaeus encounters a boy who can recite only the Egigoni, his literary knowledge reflecting the character of his bellicose father. These passages suggest that the ongoing role of epic in literary, intellectual, and educational developments offered the parodist another point of access to epic poetry through the contemporary world.
From our earliest literary sources, it is clear that epic poetry, though set in the past, was understood to contain knowledge of contemporary significance, including moral lessons, military strategy, and more. In order to examine what a parodist stands to gain by engaging with these uses of epic, it will first be necessary to survey what kinds of knowledge epic was believed to contain, and which contemporary figures impart this knowledge. This survey will trace the development of technical approaches to epic during the sixth to fourth centuries BCE, a process that occurred simultaneously in other fields as well, most notably, for our purposes, in food preparation. Food and epic often appear in extant epic parody together, and considering their roles in intellectual and pedagogical developments in tandem reveals how they function together in epic parody. The fragments of Strato and Matro, finally, illustrate how these evolutions in food and epic have developed by the end of the fourth century, and how they manifest in epic parody. In particular, Strato and Matro treat food and epic together as modern technical fields as well as representatives of a more traditional, more universal Greek experience. Both, furthermore, leverage the tensions between communal and exclusive modes of culinary and literary consumption to mock those in power.

I. Epic Knowledge and Culinary Knowledge

The central role of food in our extant epic parody is partly an accident of transmission, since Athenaeus favors passages that revolve around cooking and dining. Nonetheless, considering the frequency of dining scenes in Homeric epic and the ideological weight that dining carries in the Iliad and Odyssey, it is natural that epic
parodists should gravitate toward gastronomic content. Furthermore, food and epic possess inherent similarities that allow them to serve complementary functions as literary motifs. In our earliest literary sources, both are presented as channels of communication between humans and gods, food through its role in sacrifice, and epic poetry through its divine inspiration. Both were also sources of pleasure, at times enjoyed together within the same event. In addition, both were treated as practical necessities, food as fuel for the body, and epic as a repository of knowledge about the world and its past. Finally, knowledge of both epic and food are increasingly treated as technical crafts during the sixth to fourth centuries, and both fields acquired new ideological baggage as new, socially exclusive literary and culinary practices took hold. In the fourth century in particular, we see poets allude to tension among the religious, practical, and pleasurable functions of these fields; at their core, food and epic represent universal mortal experiences, yet our literary sources increasingly use them as symbols of social stratification. Thus, before moving onto the case studies of Strato and Matro, it is worth considering food and epic together as subjects of knowledge, allowing one to illuminate the other, to establish how they might work in tandem in epic parody.

**Culinary Knowledge**

In the fourth century, the cook appears in Middle Comedy as an artisan for hire, equipped with an encyclopedic knowledge of all things edible and the power to transform even the most unassuming ingredients into a near-divine dining experience. This is a significant change from the Archaic and early Classical periods, when we have little evidence for any sort of specialized profession in food preparation, in comedy or
anywhere else. This lack of early evidence could mean that specialized chefs were less common, or that they were valued differently, or that they performed different social or literary functions; in any case, a significant transformation occurred. In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the preparation of meat is highly ritualized, but this is presented as neither a trade nor a specialized job. Heroes, other nobles, *kerukes*, *therapontes*, and the odd cyclops are all depicted slaughtering, cooking, carving, and/or distributing meat. In Ithaca we hear of a *daitros* who carves meat, but this title seems to refer to a particular function rather than to a specialist who performs only that function. Brief allusions to other forms of food preparation also exist, and while these tasks reflect the social positions of the characters involved, they do not appear strictly specialized. Nor is there evidence in Homeric epic of a dedicated culinary space akin to a “kitchen.” Likewise, although a specialized culinary professional may have existed in the Greek world before the fifth century, there is no certain epigraphic or archaeological evidence of one. Cooking typically occurred outside or in central, multipurpose spaces of the Greek home, which is where the hearth was usually situated (if the home contained an identifiable indoor hearth at all). The early literary and archaeological evidence thus

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314 On cooking meat in Homer, see Berthiaume 1982, 3-16.
315 Berthiaume 1982, 7-8.
316 E.g. Polyphemus making cheese (*Od*. 9.246-249) is part of his characterization as a shepherd.
317 Although dedicated “cooks” may have existed, we cannot convincingly identify them. Archaic and early Classical vase painting depicts cooking, but it is impossible to tell whether we are seeing a cook, or someone who happens to be cooking at the moment. Likewise, it is difficult to distinguish commercial from private cooking since industry often was closely integrated into domestic life. For instance, two terracotta figurines from Argos from the mid- and late-sixth century depict a group of people engaged in communal baking, but it is impossible to say whether these figurines depict a commercial or a private endeavor; Sparkes 1962, 133 offers a short list of these “bakehouse” figurines.
318 On Greek kitchens see Sparkes 1962 and 1965; Lang 2005, 30; Foxhall 2007; Ault 2015. Impermanent cooking equipment such as moveable braziers and ovens were used in courtyards or just outside the house. Not all Greek houses had an indoor hearth, and those that did usually located it in a central space where it could light and heat the home efficiently. On Greek hearths, see Tsakirgis 2007.
point to the importance of cooking as a communal activity. Whom one cooked with and for, and on what occasions, must have both reflected and reinforced ties within the family and the broader community. The scene in which Patroclus cooks for Achilles and the embassy in *Iliad* 9 certainly suggests as much.\(^{319}\)

The fifth century offers the first solid evidence of specialized roles in Greek food preparation. Here we encounter the *mageiros* who butchered animals, sold meat in the *agora*, and assisted with sacrifice. Some *mageiroi* were also attached to sanctuaries, but the *mageiros* was not a religious official and his presence at a sacrifice seems to have been for convenience, not mandated by sacred law.\(^{320}\) We hear of *mageiroi* who are enslaved (particularly in Sparta and in the case of sanctuary *mageiroi*), but Herodotus lists the *mageiros* among the *technai* that are passed down in families, and epigraphic evidence overwhelmingly suggests that *mageiroi* at this time were hired.\(^ {321}\) Comic and tragic poets of the fifth century refer to the *mageiros* only in passing, and we have only shaky evidence of a *mageiros* character on stage, although in Euripides’ *Cyclops* Polyphemus is called a *mageiros* ironically.\(^ {322}\) Instead, the protagonist performs the sacrifice in drama, just as the hero often does in epic, and the play may or may not allude to the *mageiros* and other slaves or hired workers as assistants.\(^ {323}\) However, the *mageiros* is still the food-related professional named most often in our fifth century literary and epigraphic sources, and this reflects the central role of sacrifice in Greek religious life.\(^ {324}\)

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\(^{319}\) *Il.* 9.207-216.

\(^{320}\) Berthiaume 1982, 17-36.

\(^{321}\) Hdt. 6.60. Berthiaume 1982, 23-34.


\(^{323}\) Wilkins 2000, 371-382.

\(^{324}\) Berthiaume 1982, 17-69.
Consumption of sacrificial meat was an important symbol of membership in the *polis*, or in whatever community held the sacrifice. However, participating in the performance of sacrifice itself was also an important symbol of belonging, and increasingly so in the fifth century, since the Cleisthenic reforms of 508 BCE specified that the sacrifices accompanying the activities of the *boule* and *ekklesia* must be performed by non-priest citizens. The emergence of the *mageiros* is not an indication that sacrifice was becoming more exclusive, but rather more widespread.

The fifth century also sees the advent of the *opsopoios*. At the time, *opsos* seems to have been a relish, topping, or side, the tasty counterpart to staple foods like bread; it often refers to fish specifically. The *opsopoios*, accordingly, is presented as a symbol of luxury. Herodotus, for example, relates that after the Battle of Plataea, the Spartan general Pausanias visited the tent of the Persian general Mardonius, which was previously occupied by Xerxes. Pausanias orders the Persian bakers and cooks there (τοὺς τε ἄρτοκόπους καὶ τοὺς ὁψοποιοὺς) to prepare a meal, then his own Spartan attendants (διηκόνους) to do the same; this is the first appearance of both *opsopoios* and *artokopos* in Greek literature, and the only fifth century appearance of *opsopoios*. The Spartan meal turns out much less appealing, prompting Pausanias to joke that the Persians are foolish for trying to conquer Sparta, since the Spartan way of life is so pitiful

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325 Different occasions and communities had different rules governing who was and was not allowed to consume sacrificial meat, and recent scholarship has challenged the longstanding view that consumption of this meat was reserved only for citizen men. For example, women partook during many cultic occasions (Osborne 1993; Dillon 2002, 236-245; Connelly 2007, 179-190), as did metics (Wijma 2014).
326 Bundrick 2014, 665, who also identifies a shift in the depiction of sacrifice in vase painting at this time. It should be noted that there is evidence of women performing sacrifices on some occasions; Dillon 2002, 245-246.
327 On *opson* see Davidson 1997, 3-35.
328 Hdt. 9.82.
(δίαιταν…ὁ ἤζυρήν). In addition to offering an early usage of *opsopoios*, this passage also illustrates how food practices increasingly became a literary touchstone for distinguishing Greek from non-Greek and rich from poor, in Herodotus’ *Histories* and beyond.

Likewise, in the fifth century, Old Comedy begins to highlight a wider array of foods than the same old grains and meats. Food was an appealing comic motif not only due to its participation in inherently funny bodily processes, but also due to its ever-changing social and ideological baggage.

The fourth century sees the *mageiros* emerge in Greek comedy as a culinary expert. Sometime during the period between 370-350 BCE, the preparation of food in comedy ceases to be the task of the comic protagonist and falls to the *mageiros*, who emerges as a stock character in his own right with a particular set of defining characteristics: he talks a lot and quickly, uses florid language, boasts, overcomplicates, and bores his interlocutors with technical discussions of food. Athenaeus argues that the comic *mageiros* retains his position as a hired craftsman operating out of the *mageireion* in the agora, although on rare occasions he is depicted as enslaved. The *mageiros* also retains his religious function in the fourth century. Although in comedy we usually see him catering private parties, he is also involved in public sacrifices.

Wilkins has argued that the civic and religious functions of the *mageiros*, although

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329 Wilkins 2000, 156-201.
331 Ath. 14.658f and 14.661e. Athenaeus cites Poseidippus frs. 2 and 25 as exceptions (14.658f, 14.659c), with the explanation that enslaved cooks emerged under Macedonian rule. Epigraphic evidence supports the fact that Classical *mageiroi* were mostly hired craftsmen. See Dohm 1964, 67-68; Arnott 1996, 392-393; Wilkins 2000, 408-409.
332 Wilkins 2000, 395.
highlighted less often in our fragments, contribute to his appeal for poets of Middle and New Comedy because he could represent both modern luxury and traditional values, acting as an agent of both conflict and harmony.\textsuperscript{333} Wilkins’ central case studies are Menander’s \textit{Dyskolos} and a fragment of Athenion’s \textit{Samothracians}. In the \textit{Dyskolos}, the titular character Cnemon decries modern gluttony and elaborate sacrifices. However, the play’s \textit{mageiros}, Sikon, is depicted sacrificing quite piously, despite also being boastful and capable of producing an extravagant meal. It is ultimately Sikon, in fact, who convinces Cnemon to join the wedding festivities at the end of the play, thereby bringing him back into the community fold. In this way, the play mocks modern culinary luxury while still affirming the ritual significance of food and its power to build and reinforce community.

We can better understand the dual roles of the \textit{mageiros} in fourth century comedy by investigating the sources of his culinary knowledge. Although our comic \textit{mageiros} may claim to possess rare ingredients, he also boasts that he can make astonishing meals with simple fare, drawing new flavors out of familiar ingredients.\textsuperscript{334} It is not the raw materials themselves that make the meal, but the cook’s knowledge and skill, which could stem from a variety of sources.\textsuperscript{335} A speech by a \textit{mageiros} in Euphron’s \textit{Brothers} suggests that the he may learn from other \textit{mageiroi} (fr. 1, 1-4):\textsuperscript{336}

\begin{quote}
πολλῶν μαθητῶν γενομένων ἐμοί, Λύκε,
διὰ τὸ νοεῖν ἄεὶ τι καὶ ψυχήν ἔχειν
ἀπεὶ γεγονὸς μάγειρος ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας
ἐν οὐχ ὅλους δέκα μησι, πολὺ νεώτατος.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{333} Wilkins 2000, 410-414.
\textsuperscript{334} E.g. Philemon, \textit{The Soldier} fr. 82.
\textsuperscript{335} Wilkins 2000, 396-403 surveys the skills of the \textit{mageiros}.
\textsuperscript{336} Ath. 9.379d, text and trans. Olson 2006-2012. Similarly, in Alexis \textit{Crateia} fr. 115 a cook offers to teach those willing to learn.
Although I’ve had lots of pupils, Lycus, the fact that you’re always thinking and are brave means you’re leaving my house having become a cook in less than ten months, far and away the youngest of them…

Some comic mageiroi also study cookbooks. Dionysius’ Lawgiver alludes to Archestratus, the author of the gastronomic-didactic-epic Life of Luxury, but downplays his value (fr. 2):

Ἀρχέστρατος γέγραφε τε καὶ δοξάζεται παρά τισιν οὕτως ὡς λέγων τι χρήσιμον. τὰ πολλὰ δ` ἡγνόηκε κοῦδὲ ἐν λέγει.

Archestratus has done some writing, and there are people who think he’s got something useful to say. But he’s mostly ignorant, and he talks nonsense.

Indeed, cookbooks seem to have proliferated in the fourth century. Plato mentions a Sicilian cookbook by Mithaecus, and Plato Comicus presents a character reading from a cookbook by some Philoxenus. Herakles pulls a cookbook off the shelf in Alexis’ Linus. As Dionysius illustrates, behind these culinary texts and teachers lie whole schools and philosophies of cooking, and the mageiros character may advocate for and against certain approaches.

Comedy responded to the development of the real mageiros into a skilled craftsman by exaggerating his training in ludicrous directions. In Sosipater’s Perjurer, for instance, the mageiros explains that his training involved studying astronomy,
architecture, nature, and military strategy. Another mageiros, in Daxomenus’ Syntrophoi, claims to be a student of Epicurus and orchestrates his meals like a musical composer. There is also the poet-mageiros, introduced in the previous chapter. In these fragments and others, we learn that the mageiros is not simply responsible for cooking the food, but also for selecting ingredients and planning the menu, taking into account the season, the guests, and other factors. He also must time his dishes properly as he prepares them. In one fragment, a mageiros explains that the difference between the mageiros and the mere opsopoios is that the former designs a full culinary experience, and the latter simply chops and boils. Even in fragments that do not discuss the training of the mageiros explicitly, overeducation is implied through his language or pedantry.

A number of fragments of Middle and New Comedy characterize the skill of the mageiros less as a technical craft and more of an innate talent or divine gift. In Anaxandrides’ Nereus, it is unclear whether the titular character is a cook who has taken on the powers of the god, or the god himself; in any case, cooking is presented as a divine skill. Some fragments suggest that natural talent or disposition is also involved. In the fragment of Euphron’s Brothers quoted above, the mageiros cites his student’s “constant mental powers and spirit” as the reason he has finished his training so quickly. When the mageiros of Dionysius’ Lawgiver (fr. 2, quoted above) rejects the cookbooks of Archestratus, he goes on to suggest, “don’t listen to everything or try to learn everything”

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341 Sosipater, Perjurer fr. 1.
342 Daxomenus, Syntrophoi fr. 2. Another example occurs in Nicomachus’ Eileithuia, fr. 1, which includes painting, astronomy, measurement of the earth, and medicine among a mageiros’ studies.
343 Dionysius Lawgiver, fr. 2. In Daxomenus’ Syntrophoi fr. 2 the mageiros alludes to a similar role.
344 Wilkins 2000, 387-391.
and “our craft’s its own master.” Here, the knowledge of the mageiros does not come from learning, but it is also not explicitly divine or innate; it is ineffable, as though the mageiros can’t describe his knowledge to someone uninitiated in it.

Before turning from food to epic, it is necessary to step back and consider how the knowledge of the mageiros intersects with the knowledge of the audience. The very wealthiest citizens may not have cooked much for themselves, but it is reasonable to assume that many members of a general theater audience cooked in some capacity on a daily basis. From the fragments listed above, we can deduce that the average Athenian was also aware of new trends in culinary knowledge; one must have heard of Archestratus to understand the humor of Dionysius fr. 2, for example. The audience would also know a good deal about expensive food, even if they couldn’t afford it. The fish monger operated out of the agora and his wares, prices, and even his customer base might be widely known; passages of Aristophanes and Aeschines riff on the idea that being spotted at the fish market outs a person as wealthy or indulgent. Such passages illustrate how the ideological associations of various foods came to constitute their own complex body of knowledge. The average person could learn almost everything there was to know about the latest expensive fare – except, of course, how it looked and smelled sitting prepared on a plate, and how it actually tasted. The learned mageiros character was an effective way for a comic poet to tackle contemporary intellectual and

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346 Trans. Olson 2006-2012. Athenaeus 9.405c: μὴ πάντι ἄκουε μηδὲ πάντα μάνθανε… αὐτὴ δ’ ἐαυτῆς ἔστι δεσπότης, ἀν δὲ εὖ μὲν σὺ χρήσῃ τῇ τέχνῃ, τὸν τῆς τέχνης καιρὸν δ’ ἀπολέσσῃ, παραπόλωλεν ἢ τέχνη. The text is unfortunately corrupt between these lines.

347 Frogs 1065-1068. Aeschines calls on the jury to recall seeing Timarchus and Hegesander at the opson (1.42, 65). For further examples see Davidson 1993, 57. We ought not take these jokes too seriously, however. Not all seafood was prohibitively expensive; later in this chapter, we will see Matro make reference to a couple of the more widely accessible fish options.
pedagogical developments because cooking is not actually an arcane skill at all. This
effect is essential for the use of food in social criticism, as we see in cases like Strato’s
fragment in which the learned mageiros verbally challenges his employer.

Technical approaches to cooking and their treatment in comedy will have much to
bear upon the discussion of epic as techne, to which I turn presently. The comic poet or
hexameter parodist may access epic, like food, through its role in contemporary
intellectual developments, and use epic to represent both common and exclusive forms of
literary consumption. Even in fragments and passages that treat epic as a subject of
technical knowledge, the status of epic as a source of communal knowledge, known
deeply by any general audience, underlies the humor. The fragments of Matro and Strato
will illustrate how epic parody may generate social criticism by these means.

Epic Knowledge

Just as food offered social unity by reflecting a shared mortal and Greek
experience, so too did epic by constructing a shared Greek past and reinforcing shared
values. Both also brought communities together in moments of shared pleasure. Epic
poetry differs from cooking in that our earliest sources already present specialized epic
practitioners; we may not find dedicated foods specialists in the Iliad and Odyssey, but
we do see singers. Nonetheless, the role of these practitioners changed throughout the
Classical period as epic, like food, became subject to new developments in the production
and transmission of knowledge, and enough parallels exist between them to productively
situate them in dialogue.
The earliest surviving discussions of epic poetry take for granted that audiences considered it educational, insofar as it offered insight into times, places, and realms beyond the audience’s own experience, as well as negative and positive ethical models. The very fact that authors such as Heraclitus, Xenophanes, and Herodotus felt the need to dispute Homer’s presentation of the past and of the divine suggests that sixth and fifth century audiences treated Homeric epic as a historical and religious sourcebook. The allegorical interpretations of Theagenes of Rhegium evidence an early impulse to mine it for ethical and philosophical insight, as does Anaxagoras’ assertion that Homer treats the subjects of virtue and justice. Rhapsodic performance provided the conditions necessary for epic to assume such pedagogical power. The rhapsode’s connection to the Muse, either directly or through Homer, lent authority to the information presented in epic song, and this encouraged the treatment of epic poetry as a repository of knowledge. Just as the earliest known professional cooks emerged through the religious functions of food – mageiroi began as sacrificial specialists – so also was the function of the epic practitioner fundamentally religious: epic singers performed at religious festivals and translated divine knowledge for mortal audiences.

Rhapsodic performance was expressly didactic, featuring explication and interpretation of epic song, and it may therefore be considered an educational phenomenon. Unfortunately, our evidence of the hermeneutic aspect of rhapsodic performance is largely limited to sources of the late fifth and fourth centuries that are

348 I use the term “Homer” because these authors use his name themselves, e.g. Xenophanes B 11-12 DK; Heraclitus 42 and 56 DK; Hdt. 2.116-117.
349 On Theagenes of Rhegium, see González 2013, 156-167 and Ford 2002, 68-72. Theagenes also supposedly wrote on Homer’s birth and bios. On Anaxagoras, see Diog. Laert. 2.3.11.
critical of rhapsodes, a reflection of the competition that developed among the various intellectual authorities of the time. Still, it is significant that in Plato’s *Ion*, Socrates takes for granted that a rhapsode does not simply relate poetry, but also offers interpretations (ἐρμηνεύει, 530c). However, we do not know whether rhapsodic interpretation occurred in verse or prose, or whether it was incorporated into the performance of the poetry seamlessly, or assigned a separate segment in the rhapsodic event. We do not know, furthermore, what information it offered audiences; plot clarification, glossing of poetic language, mythological background, allegorical interpretation, and ethical analysis are all possibilities. Also opaque is the relationship between rhapsodes and the writers described in the previous paragraph; did Xenophanes or Theagenes ever perform as epic rhapsodes? How a scholar approaches these questions depends upon whether she sees rhapsodes as creative oral poets or as reciters of a fixed text, and the content and method of rhapsodic interpretation almost certainly changed over time. However, most scholars are comfortable assuming that rhapsodes explicated epic in some capacity before Ion’s time. Learning about epic and from epic was part of the communal experience of hearing and enjoying it. The knowledge contained within it that the rhapsode uncovered was inherently communal knowledge.

350 Xenophanes uses hexameter, and Diogenes Laertius claims that he rhapsodized his own poetry (αὐτὸς ἐρμηνεύει τὰ ἕξαμετρά, 9.18), although the meaning of this is debatable; see González 2013, 354 and Ford 2002, 50. On whether Theagenes of Rhegium ever performed as a rhapsode, see González 2013, 156-158 and Ford 2002, 70-73.

351 Part of the difficulty in reconstructing the hermeneutic aspect of rhapsodic performance is that we often can’t tell if an interpreter was also a rhapsode, or if a rhapsode was also an interpreter. For instance, Ion claims to have studied the interpretations of Stesimbrotes of Thasos, Metrodoros, and Glaukon, all of whom date to the fifth century, but it is unclear whether or not these figures performed as rhapsodes or if they studied epic in some other capacity and simply wrote out their interpretations. See also n. 350, above.
In the late fifth and early fourth centuries, we begin to see the scope of epic knowledge expand to encompass ethics, rhetoric, military strategy, and beyond. Aristophanes’ *Frogs* provides some of the earliest evidence of this use of epic when Aeschylus asks, “where did the godlike Homer get respect and renown if not by giving good instruction in the tactics, virtues, and weaponry of men?” Similarly, in the *Clouds*, Worse Argument declares, “then you scorn time spent in the agora, while I encourage it. If it were something bad, Homer would never have called Nestor, and every other sagacious person, ‘man of the agora.’” The joke hinges on a misunderstanding of *agora*, which in Homeric epic means “assembly” rather than “marketplace,” but it also riffs on the idea that if Homer says something, it must be right. Even in the *Peace* when Trygaeus recites a passage of Homeric epic as an oracle to Hierocles, the implication is that Homer provides the last word in every matter. Later, the son of Lamachus can sing only *Epigonoi*, possibly illustrating the ridiculous consequences of a Homer-centric education. Plato and Xenophon also take up the issue of the role of epic in education. In the *Republic*, Socrates alludes to the practice of using Homer as the ultimate source for every craft, and in Xenophon’s *Symposium*, Niceratus claims that his father had him learn the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in their entirety in order to make him a good man. He claims to have acquired Homer by listening to rhapsodes every day, and later elaborates that Homer teaches the skills of leading a household, a city, or an army. However, these

passages hint at a paradox inherent in the Homer-centric approach to knowledge. On the one hand, we have seen that learning from epic was a communal activity. On the other hand, most Greeks would not have enjoyed so extensive an education as Niceratus or the son of Lamachus received. Some epic knowledge, then, was available only to those capable of finding it – or willing to pay for it. Just as fifth and fourth century literary sources present a wider variety of foods and culinary techniques becoming available to those who could afford them, so they also present more exclusive forms of epic knowledge.

At the same time, epic knowledge came to represent a kind of traditionalism, at least in comedy. In the Frogs, Aeschylus’ use of Homer reflects his old-fashioned approach to poetry. A fragment of the Banqueters makes this association even more explicit. The play presents an old man with two sons, one who receives a modern sophistic education in law and rhetoric, and another who receives a traditional education in poetry. In the fragment, the father asks the sophistic son to define some epicisms, but the son turns the tables and demands that his brother define legalese:

(A.) πρὸς ταύτας δ’ αὖ λέξεν Ὄμηρου ἐμοὶ γλώττας· τί καλοῦσι κόρυμβα;  
(B.) ὁ μὲν οὖν σός, ἐμὸς δ’ οὔτος ἀδελφὸς φρασάτω· τί καλοῦσιν ἵδους;

(A) Tell me about these Homeric terms: What do they refer to as korumba? … What do they refer to as ‘strengthless heads’? (B) No – let your son and my brother tell us: What do they refer to as iduoί? … What does opuein mean?

Through the traditionally-educated brother in the Banqueters and through Aeschylus in the Frogs, Aristophanes uses epic to evoke not only the mythic past, but also old-
fashioned intellectual and literary practices. However, we should not take Aristophanes’
strict binary of “traditional” and “modern” education too seriously. The sophists, too,
mined Homeric epic for material for oratorical exercises and examples of rhetorical
figures, in addition to offering interpretations of it.\footnote{356} Despite the hostility that our
sophistic sources direct towards rhapsodes, the sophistic movement likely developed in
part out of rhapsodic culture, and there is enough of an overlap between the rhapsode and
the sophist that they can be difficult to tell apart.

One final educational development must be considered, and that is the increasing
importance of literacy education. Early in the sixth and fifth centuries in particular,
literary education did not necessarily involve literacy training; students learned poetry
orally and sang along with the lyre.\footnote{357} In fifth century vase painting, we begin to
encounter scenes with students and scrolls, and in the early fourth century, literary
sources begin to refer to grammata as its own field, which was taught by the
grammatistes and which encompassed both basic literacy education and more advanced
literary studies.\footnote{358} In the Frogs, Aristophanes repeatedly associates Euripides with biblia,
characterizing literacy as part of a new-fangled approach to literature, while Aeschylus
and Homer represent a more traditional approach.\footnote{359} However, this is ironic given the
central role that Homeric epic played in literacy training. According to Plato’s
Protagoras, literary education involved learning to read and memorize the works of good
poets; Homer must have been foremost among these poets, if the experience of Niceratus

\footnote{356} On the relationship between the rhapsode and the sophist, see O’Sullivan 1992, 66-67 and González
2013, 293-329.
\footnote{357} Robb 1994, 183-207.
\footnote{358} On scrolls in vase painting, see Robb 1994, 186-188. On grammata, see Morgan 1999, 48.
\footnote{359} Anderson and Dix 2014, 82-85.
means anything. Indeed, our earliest surviving pedagogical materials, papyri from third
century Egypt, reveal that Homeric epic dominated the literary curriculum from the first
copying of letters to the most sophisticated exegetical activities. The papyri prioritize
passages that were ethically edifying and culturally significant, such as “purple”
passages, proverbial moralizing tidbits, and the early books of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.
Although this evidence is late, it aligns with the philosophy toward literacy described in
the *Protagoras*. Once again, we should not let Aristophanes deceive us; epic was as
central to newer educational approaches as it was to traditional ones. It was simply used
in different ways, by different kinds of teachers.

In the previous section, we saw the *mageiros* evolve from sacrificial assistant, to
commercial butcher and sacrificial specialist, to cook-for-hire; meanwhile, the *opsopoios*
emerged as a new kind of cooking specialist. So, too, did the rhapsode’s pedagogical
function evolve, and new teachers emerged who used Homer in new ways. These new
practices and practitioners made both food and epic more commodified. Nonetheless, the
religious significance of both persisted. Just as Niceratus learned epic by listening to a
rhapsode and studying exegetical treatises, so also do we hear of *mageiroi* learning from
cookbooks and teachers; yet the rhapsode himself could still claim divine access through
Homer, and some *mageiroi* similarly claimed a divine source for their knowledge and
skill. Sacrifice and epic performance, furthermore, remained central to religious festivals.

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360 Plato, *Protagoras* 325e: οἱ δὲ διδάσκαλοι τούτων τε ἐπιμελοῦνται, καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἄλ γράμματα μάθωσιν
καὶ μέλλοσιν συνήσειν τὰ γεγραμμένα ὀσπέρ τότε τὴν φωνήν, παρατιθέασιν αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τὸν βάθρον
ἀναγνώσκειν ποιητῶν ἀγαθῶν ποιήματα καὶ ἐκμαθάνειν. This passage illustrates that *grammata* does not
necessarily refer to only basic, mechanical literacy. The line between literacy education and literary studies
is blurry; on this see Morgan 1999, 51 n16, who also cites Plato, *Protagoras* 325d-326a and *Charmides*
159c, as well as Isocrates, *Antidosis* 267 and *Against the Sophists* 10.
As with gastronomic humor, the audience’s knowledge of epic is essential to the comic effect of epic parody. Even into the fourth century, many would have learned epic and learned from epic primarily through public rhapsodic performance and through day-to-day interactions with friends, family, and acquaintances; we must imagine, for instance, gnomic quotations from epic inserted into casual conversation, discussions of rhapsodic performance among friends, and the use of epic episodes by parents to illustrate lessons to their children. Education – literary and otherwise – often occurred orally through sunousia, not with paid teachers, but with older mentors. Some of the educational phenomena mocked in comedy were probably widespread; the practice of using Homeric epic as a source for anything could have transcended educational bounds, from elite formal education to more informal ways of learning. Other jokes, however, would have called upon quite specific knowledge; it seems likely, for instance, that many of those in the audience for Aristophanes’ Banqueters would not have known the epic terms in fr. 233. To get the joke, they need only know the ideological associations of this particular approach to epic poetry. In fact, Aristophanes may be inviting those who do not know the terms to bask in the satisfaction that they have not devoted their time and energy to such a useless skill as defining obscure epic vocabulary divorced from its poetic context. The widespread knowledge of epic and the role of epic as a source of shared knowledge is essential context for more learned epic allusion in comedy – just as the universality of cooking and eating underlie the humor of the comic mageiros. A more

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362 On the continuing orality of education into the fourth century and ongoing importance of poetry in performance, see Robb 1994, 159-207 and Morgan 1999, 56 n. 38.
363 On sunousia in particular, see Robb 1994, 197-207.
significant difference between the comic functions of food and epic is that food is a more powerful source of envy. The audience’s desire to try the expensive, elaborate foods prepared by the mageiros likely outweighed their desire to know the terms spoken by the traditionally-educated brother in the Banqueters. In some gastronomic humor – such as Matro’s Deipnon – this audience envy is a crucial effect.

Conclusion

Already throughout this dissertation, we have seen food and epic complement one another as symbols of social unity. In Hegemon fr. 1, for instance, the narrator’s countrymen criticize him for taking the stage in Athens “with feet like those,” insulting both his derelict appearance and his poetry through clever allusion to his physical and metrical feet. At the same time, his poverty is represented through his hunger, and when he gives away his prize money, he claims his wife will be forced to bake a small loaf for the Megalartia festival. In this way, the narrator’s outcast status is reflected in both his literary and his gastronomic endeavors. The encounter between Trygaeus and the son of Lamachus at the end of the Peace also thematicizes the idea that epic and food should serve complementary social functions. The boy sings martial epic, which is not appropriate for the wedding between Trygaeus and Peace, and Trygaeus attempts to intervene to bring the subject of his epic song into accordance with the occasion. The complementary social functions of food and epic in the fifth century allow them to serve complementary literary functions in hexameter parody and comedy.

The fragments of Strato and Matro will illustrate how this dynamic manifests at the end of the fourth century. At face, these authors approach their gastronomic parodies
quite differently: Strato focuses on food preparation, and Matro on consumption; Strato recreates an epic sacrifice scene, and Matro an epic battle. Yet both use food as a class marker while also retaining its more traditional function as a symbol of a shared experience, recalling in different ways the role of food that Wilkins has identified in Menander’s _Dyscolus_. Likewise, both fragments use epic to represent both communal and exclusive knowledge, to simultaneously connect with their audience and isolate a person in power for mockery.

II. Knowledge and Cooking in Strato Fr. 1

The previous chapter examined how Strato adapts the typical Middle comic treatments of high lyric poetry and riddle to create an epic-speaking _mageiros_. In doing so, he draws a direct line between archaic and modern poetic traditions. However, there is more to be said about how Strato juxtaposes old-fashioned and modern intellectual and culinary practices, and how this contributes to the humor of the inverted social roles of the cook and the old man. The afterlife of the fragment in pedagogical papyri provides further insight into how audiences interpreted the cook not only as a hero performing sacrifice, as he imagines himself in his epic fantasy, but also as a teacher.

What Does the Cook Know?

We have seen that the knowledge and skill of the comic _mageiros_ may stem from a variety of sources, including teachers, books, the divine, and innate talent. These
sources are discussed explicitly as *mageiroi* boast about their own background and abilities and put down others. With this context in mind, Strato’s cook stands out for his unwillingness to explain the reason for his epic language. This effect is most pronounced in the papyrus version, but even in Athenaeus’ version, the cook only offers the explanation that this is how he normally talks (οὐ τω λαλεῖν εἴωθα, [31]). Strato inverts the usual trope of the cook who waxes poetic about his learning to an interlocutor who doesn’t care. Because the source of his knowledge remains open-ended, at least for the duration of the extant scene, it is unclear whether the cook absorbed his epic knowledge passively through contact with a rhapsode (as the old man suggests, 35-37), acquired it through access to the divine (as some *mageiroi* and rhapsodes claim), or learned it through study (as educated Greeks would have). But if it is learned, what style of learning or pedagogical practice does the cook represent? Strato leaves open a variety of possibilities. Like many other comic *mageiroi*, Strato’s cook mocks the idea that one must have a broad general education to be competent at a specialized skill. He also pokes fun at the rising Alexandrian school of literary scholarship with its interest in lexicography; the reference to Philitas of Cos supports this interpretation. At the same time, the epic quality of the cook’s language allows Strato to call to mind culinary texts such as Archestratus’ *Life of Luxury* that use hexameter and other epic poetic elements. Furthermore, just as Aristophanes uses obscure epicisms to represent traditional literary education in *Banqueters* fr. 233, Strato may be doing the same to mock old-fashioned

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364 The interpolated lines in Athenaeus’ version of the fragment may be partly explained by the unusual reticence of the cook to address his epic language. Often *mageiroi* are openly self-righteous about their learning, and the added lines give Strato’s *mageiros* this moment. On the textual transmission of the fragment see footnotes 63-64.

365 Perrone 2020, 347.
approaches to education. In general, however, Strato targets the practice of treating Homer as the most important source of all types of knowledge, a practice that occurred across both elite and non-elite approaches to education. Strato demonstrates the absurdity of this idea by taking it to the extreme, presenting a cook who has seemingly only studied Homer, and consequently only knows how to prepare an epic-style sacrifice. Thus, Strato’s cook uses epic allusion to evoke a range of educational models, both old and new.

Furthermore, the reference to Philitas of Cos may do more than simply call to mind the Alexandrian interest in lexicography. When the old man declares that “you’d need to get the books of Philitas to look up what each of his words meant” he likely refers to the Ἀτακτοι γλῶσσαι of Philitas of Cos, a poet and scholar of the late fourth century.366 However, the exact content and structure of this work is uncertain. Ἀτακτοι could indicate that the content is miscellaneous or presented out of order, or that the work focused on divergent uses of words. This latter possibility is especially tantalizing given the content of the extant glosses. Twenty-five glosses survive to us, preserved mostly by Athenaeus, and these are mainly epic, although not exclusively.367 Five are Homeric hapax legomena, suggesting an interest in obscure terms.368 Almost all relate to food and dining, although our sample is likely skewed by Athenaeus’ gastronomic program. The extant glosses demonstrate an interest in regional or otherwise idiosyncratic usages, and

366 Lines 30-31: τὰ τοῦ Φιλίτα λαμβάνοντα βιβλία / τῶν; βιβλίων σκοπεῖν ἐκαστὸν τὶ δύναται τῶν ῥημάτων.
367 In addition to the Homeric origins of many of the surviving glosses, a considerable number of testimonia associate Philitas with Homer. Spanoudakis 2002, 387-388, 392-395.
368 Spanoudakis 2002, 387.
in defining old words in terms of modern knowledge. For instance, κρεῖον is a hapax in Homer, where it refers to a butcher block or cutting board, but Philitas defines it as “a flat cake or loaf which the Argives bring from the bride to the groom. It is baked on charcoal, and the friends are invited to partake of it, served with honey.” None of the words in Strato’s fragment appear among the few extant glosses, but Philitas may not have treated these words at all; the audience only need have known Philitas in passing to understand the reference. In any case, the extant glosses of the Ἀτακτοὶ γλῶσσαι indicate that there may be some irony in the old man’s comment. Strato’s cook uses unconventional forms of epic words (e.g. δαιτυμῶν, which only appears in epic in the plural, 9; μίστυλλα an unattested noun based on the epic μιστύλλω, 29/[42]); however, their meanings are straightforwardly Homeric, and even his occasional riddling usage is based on the Homeric meaning of the word, not a contemporary meaning. If Philitas explicates modern usages of old-fashioned words, then his glossary wouldn’t have been much help to the old man anyway, and the old man appears all the more foolish for suggesting it. In this way, the reference to Philitas may contribute to the humorous juxtaposition of old and new knowledge that Strato develops in the fragment.

369 Spanoudakis 2002, 387-392; Bing 2003. Philtas’ glosses seem to have been quite detailed, and the fragments of the Ἀτακτοὶ γλῶσσαι that survive to us seem to be excerpts of longer glosses; Spanoudakis 2002, 388. The surviving glosses do not focus on the Homeric meanings of words, and it is unclear if Philitas included these at all.
371 On whether Strato’s audience would have known the Ἀτακτοὶ γλῶσσαι, see Bing 2003, 346.
Strato in the Papyrus

Given Strato’s tongue-in-cheek take on the role of epic in education, it is ironic that the passage ended up in a pedagogical manual. *P.Cairns* 65445, the manuscript in which the fragment survives, is one of the best preserved Hellenistic school texts. It dates to the second half (likely final quarter) of the third century BCE and contains a variety of literary exercises that a teacher might set to students.\(^{372}\) These gradually progress in difficulty, from lists of syllables, to numbers, to monosyllabic words, to polysyllabic words, to passages of poetry. The words and passages are carefully chosen to serve multiple pedagogical purposes. The word lists not only offer practice material for handwriting and syllable division, but also systematically present culturally significant content organized into categories, from names of gods, to mythological figures, to rivers. The eight extant poetry excerpts seem to be organized by genre, suggesting a similar interest in systematically covering important genres and meters.\(^{373}\) The excerpts are also morally, mythologically, and/or lexically rich.\(^{374}\) Only one of the eight passages comes from epic (*Od.* 5.116-124, likely chosen for its dense mythological allusion), but names of epic characters also appear in the word lists, and Strato’s passage, too, obviously deals with epic vocabulary.\(^{375}\) Epic is represented at every stage of the student’s education, and

\(^{372}\) First published in Guéraud and Jouguet 1938.

\(^{373}\) The heading ἔπη appears above the *Odyssey* passage, suggesting that some the genres may have also been labelled. However, the first of the comic fragments has no heading. Guéraud and Jouguet 1938, xxii.

\(^{374}\) On the pedagogical method of the manual, see Guéraud and Jouguet 1938, xvii–xxiv.

\(^{375}\) In *Od.* 5.116-124, Calypso laments that goddesses do not have the same rights to seduce mortal men as gods do with mortal women and introduces Dawn and Orion as an example. In the papyrus, the passage seems to continue onto the next page, and so would have included the rest of Calypso’s catalogue of myths; Guéraud and Jouguet 1938, xx–xxi.
used to teach a variety of lessons. The content of the papyrus exemplifies the very pedagogical approach that Strato’s *mageiros* mocks.

Strato’s fragment was almost certainly included in the papyrus not only to represent comedy, but to act as an entertaining vocabulary lesson. The two other comic fragments in the papyrus (perhaps belonging to the same passage) also feature a *mageiros*, but unfortunately, these are much less well-preserved, and their pedagogical contributions are unclear. Some of the non-comic passages are moralizing or gnomic, however, and this context would have encouraged students to interpret Strato’s passage the same way, with the old man illustrating the embarrassing consequences of neglecting one’s education, and the cook the perils of reading too narrowly or of not applying one’s knowledge appropriately. Strato’s fragment – like the other comic fragment(s) in the papyrus, no doubt – made literary and moral education a little more fun. The inclusion of the fragment also reflects an interest in the papyrus in incorporating literature from a broad chronological range, from Homer, to Euripides, to more contemporary comedy and epigram. Strato’s method of evoking a range of new and old pedagogical approaches is also reflected in the papyrus manuscript. Furthermore, his method of doing so by engaging with contemporary Homeric receptions also appears in the papyrus through the very inclusion of Strato’s fragment itself.

The preservation of Strato’s fragment in a pedagogical papyrus highlights the didactic role of the cook within the scene, and clarifies how Strato recasts the power dynamic between the cook and the old man. The disruption of social roles is always

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376 The two comedy passages that precede Strato fr. 1 may be from the same scene as one another, but this is unclear; Guéraud and Jouguet 1938, 31.
crucial to the humor of the comic *mageiros*, as his knowledge, whatever its nature, grants him an authority that is disproportionate to his actual status. His speech may recast him into a variety of roles. The speech of Strato’s cook, for instance, casts him as a Homeric hero, an effect discussed in the first chapter of this study. In scenes that involve a riddling *mageiros*, the cook may assume the role of a participant in a sympotic riddle exchange. When the *mageiros* describes himself as a follower or teacher of a particular intellectual school, he raises himself to the level of an intellectual with a greater cultural capital, such as a doctor, lawyer, poet, or philosopher. In this way, the roles of the *mageiros* and his master or employer are often not simply reversed or equalized, but transformed to evoke an entirely different relationship. In Strato’s fragment specifically, this dynamic is that of a teacher and student. The old man’s ignorance creates a teaching moment, and when Strato’s cook explains the meanings of his epic terms, he imparts knowledge that the old man should have learned as a part of his formal education. Strato highlights this relationship through his references to rhapsodes and Philitas; we have seen that rhapsodes were teachers as well as performers, and Philitas reportedly taught Ptolemy II, Zenodotus, and Theocritus.377 Indeed, the inclusion of the fragment in the Hellenistic school text shows that someone within a century of Strato’s time interpreted the scene as a pedagogical moment. Through the act of curation and excerpting, Strato’s cook became not only a teacher to the old man, but to real Hellenistic students.

Conclusion

Wilkins has shown that food in Middle and New Comedy represents both tradition and innovation, and Strato plays with this dual role by presenting a cook who ludicrously prepares the food of an epic sacrifice for a modern dinner. At the same time, Strato illustrates how epic may serve a complementary purpose as a comic motif. By approaching epic through its ongoing role in Classical, and now Hellenistic, ways of learning and knowing, he evokes educational and intellectual practices of past and present, calling to mind both their differences and similarities. Furthermore, in Strato’s fragment, food and epic complement one another as agents of both social unity and social division. Strato presents sacrifice of cows and sheep – typically public sacrifices feeding hundreds of people – as the ultimate contrast to the modern dinner typically catered by the comic mageiros, in which a private party consumes rare, expensive, and foreign fare. Just as sacrifice itself should be communal and unifying, the basic language of epic sacrifice should be common knowledge, familiar to all Greeks through the public performance of epic poetry. The old man’s ignorance is therefore laughable. However, Strato also invites his audience to laugh at the ridiculous ways that epic is used in formal education, including the ways that poetry so fundamental to Greek identity is appropriated by elite intellectual movements.

III. Knowledge and Consumption in Matro Fr. 1

In many ways, fr. 1 of Matro’s Deipnon presents the reverse of the scene in Strato fr. 1. Matro focuses on food consumption rather than preparation, and depicts the sort of
dinner party that Strato’s old man likely would have preferred instead of an epic-style sacrifice. Matro does not incorporate a speaking *mageiros* character, but nonetheless presents food as an object of knowledge in other, subtler ways. Furthermore, like Strato, Matro treats epic as both assumed and technical knowledge, uses epic to simultaneously connect with and challenge his audience, and present a scene in which a character’s knowledge of epic upsets what should be a clearly defined power dynamic. An introduction to Matro’s historical context and his ideologically charged use of food will lay the foundation for an analysis of his use of epic.

**Fishy Politicians**

The narrator of the *Deipnon* does not describe the dinner comprehensively, but focuses on his own actions and experiences, and as a result, the other guests at the banquet function more as set-pieces than developed characters. During lines 33-97, which roughly correspond to the Catalogue of Fish, we encounter no characters other than nameless slaves and cooks and the personified food. However, the named characters are crucial to the poem, despite being mentioned only in passing, particularly the host Xenocles (lines 1 and 7) and one of the guests, Stratocles (30 and 122). These names correspond to two prominent Athenian statesmen active during the turbulent years of the late fourth century, both richly attested in the epigraphic record, and associated with one another especially through their support of Demetrius Poliorcetes during the final decade.

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378 The only named character other than Xenocles and Stratocles is Chaerephon (lines 9 and 98), who is a stock parasite character in late fourth century. Athenaeus preserves a number of fragments in which he features (Ath. 6.242f-246a). See Arnott 1996, 610 with bibliography.
of the century. Further evidence of Stratocles’ activities during this time appears in a comic fragment preserved by Plutarch. Given the wealth and prestige of these figures, their shared political affiliation, and the appearance of one of them elsewhere in comedy, it is difficult to see how Matro’s audience could have identified the Xenocles and Stratocles of the *Deipnon* as anyone else. This historical context is crucial for understanding the comic and critical function of food in the poem, and so it is where we will begin.

During the second half of the fourth century BCE, Xenocles of Sphettos, son of Xeunis, sponsored a number of civic operations in and around Athens. The record of his activities is rich enough to allow us to map his career onto the political turmoil of the period. His earliest recorded roles, as a gymnasiarch and a triarch, occur in the 340s and 330s, making him a contemporary of Lycurgus. He is named as the manager of Athens’ finances during the period of 334-330 or 330-326, although he likely served as a proxy for Lycurgus, who used Xenocles’ name to dodge term limits. In the 320s, Xenocles covered expenses incurred by other trierarchs, served as ἐπιμελητής of the

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380 Xenocles served as gymnasiarch of Acamantis (the phyle of Sphettus) in 346/5 (*IG II* 2 301) and triarch of Athens in 335/4 (*IG II* 2 1623, 1628, and 1629).
381 The *Lives of the Ten Orators* ([Plut.] *Mor.* 841b) seems to say that Lycurgus managed Athens’ finances for three terms of four years, but performed his duties under names of friends for two of these terms to circumvent term limits. *SEG* 19.119, 8 and *IG II* 2 1191, 23-24 fall within the period Lycurgus was thought to have acted in this role, suggesting that Xenocles may have been one of his proxies; Meritt 1960, 1-3. The text is difficult to interpret, however. Markianos 1969 suggests that no term limits existed, but Lycurgus used friends as proxies in case his enemies should impose term limits and retroactively penalize him. Bayliss 2011, 235 interprets the passage as saying that Xenocles held the position between Lycurgus’ two terms.
Mysteries, and sponsored building projects at Eleusis. He is absent from the epigraphic record from 320 to 307 BCE, the duration of the time that Cassander instated an oligarchic rule in the city under Demetrius Phalereus (317-307 BCE). In 307, the Antigonid Demetrius I (later known as Demetrius Poliorcetes) assumed control and restored the democracy, and this same year, Xenocles reemerges to be named ἄγωνοθέτης of the Lenaea. An inscription from 306/5 suggests that Xenocles’ inactivity during Cassander’s rule was no coincidence, relating that Xenocles conveyed money from Antigonous to the Athenians to resist Cassander. From this evidence, we can safely assume that Xenocles supported Lycurgus, and later, Demetrius Poliorcetes. Xenocles would be around seventy years old at this point, and this is his last appearance in the epigraphic record.

Stratocles is roughly 20 years Xenocles’ junior, and is more richly attested than Xenocles in both the literary and epigraphic records. Dinarchus identifies him as one of the prosecutors of Demosthenes in the Harpalus affair, but his greatest period of activity was in the final decade of the century, when he spearheaded support for Demetrius I and Antigonous. During this time, Stratocles originated over two dozen decrees, many of which bestowed upon Demetrius and his circle various honors and allowances.

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382 IG II² 1628 and 1629 (covering expenses by other trierarchs); IG II² 1191, 2840, 2841 (ἐπιμελητής of the Mysteries); IG II² 1191 (construction of a bridge at Eleusis). The bridge is also the subject of an epigram by Antagoras (Anth. Pal. 9.147).
383 IG II² 1492.
384 Recent treatments of Stratocles’ career include Paschidis 2008, 78-106; Bayliss 2011, 152-186; and Luraghi 2014. Ancient sources that name him include Din. 1.1, 1.20-21; Diod. 20.46.2; Plut. Demetr. 10-12, 24, 26; Ath. 13.596f.
385 Din. 1.1, 1.20-21.
386 Most of the inscriptions mentioning Stratocles are listed in Dinsmoor 1931, 13-14. Updates to his list can be found in Habicht 1977, 39 n. 15; Tracy 2000, 228 n. 15; and Luraghi 2014, 194 n. 9. The contents of the decrees (including those known only through Diodorus and Plutarch) are surveyed by Luraghi 2014, 193-199.
Whatever his actual motivations may have been, Stratocles’ legacy is that of a flagrant sycophant. Excerpts by the late fourth century comic poet Philippides, preserved by Plutarch, highlight some of the more sensational decrees he put forth, including one allowing Demetrius to take up residence in the Parthenon, one ordering that the images of Demetrius and Antigonus be woven into the peplos of Athena, and one rearranging the calendar to allow Demetrius to pass through all the stages of the Eleusinian mysteries in one go. Together, these excerpts form Philippides fr. 25: 387

ο τὸν ἐνιαύτὸν συντεμὼν εἰς μὴν ἕνα,
ο τὴν άκρόπολιν πανδοκείον ὑπολαβὼν
καὶ τὰς ἐπίφανες εἰσοχαγὴν τῇ παρθένῳ,
δι’ ὅν ἀπέκαυσεν ἡ πάχνη τὰς ὁμμέλους,
δι’ ὅν ἀσεβοῦν’ ὁ πέπλος ἐρράγη μέσος,
τὰς τὸν θεὸν τιμᾶς ποιοῦντ’ ἄνθρωπινας’
ταῦτα καταλύει δῆμον, οὐ κωμῳδία

The man who trimmed the year down to a single month,
who took over the acropolis for an inn
and brought his whores in to live with the virgin goddess,
on whose account the hoar-frost froze our grape-vines,
because of whose impiety the peplos was torn down the middle
when he converted the gods’ honors into human ones;
these are the things that ruin a people, not comedy.

Some of these honors are corroborated by epigraphic and/or other literary evidence. 388

The lines are about Demetrius proper, but Plutarch introduces them as evidence of Stratocles’ excessive flattery. Stratocles disappears from the epigraphic record in 301,

387 Lines 1-3, Plut. Demetr. 26.3; lines 4-7, Demetr. 12.4. Trans. Olson and Sens 1999, 31. The final line suggests that Stratocles or Demetrius may have accused Philippides’ comedies of having a detrimental effect on the people.

388 The abridgement of the calendar seems to be supported by a calendrical anomaly in the epigraphic record, and is also discussed in Diod. 20.110.1; Luraghi 2014, 196-197 and T. Rose 2018, 274 provide discussion and bibliography. On the subject of divine honors, see Mikalson 1998: 79-85. The use of the title σωτῆρες for Demetrius and Antigonous is richly attested in inscriptions, although they are never called θεοί.
shortly after Demetrius was defeated at the Battle of Ipsus, and is named in one
inscription in 293/2, when Demetrius regained power in Athens.\textsuperscript{389} This is the last we
see of him. Given this evidence, Olson and Sens situate Matro’s \textit{Deipnon} during the final
decade of the fourth century, when Xenocles and Stratocles both supported Demetrius
Poliorcetes, and when Stratocles gained a reputation as a sycophant.\textsuperscript{390} Matro’s fragment
may be understood as a comic criticism of Demetrius’ circle, in the same tradition as
Philippides fr. 25 and other sources of Plutarch that are now lost to us.

Matro’s use of food is crucial to his political criticism and humor. Demetrius had
a reputation for indulgence, as Philippides’ fragment shows, and the setting of Matro’s
poem at an extravagant dinner party implicates Xenocles and Stratocles in Demetrius’
debauchery. Matro also participates in a rich literary tradition of using dining conduct to
represent a man’s moral character, and in particular his political aptitude. A fragment of
Solon articulates this reasoning (4.7-10 \textit{IEG}):

\begin{quote}
δήμου θ’ ἡ γεμόνων ἄδικος νόος, οἴσιν ἐτοίμον
ἄβριος ἢ μεγάλης ἄλγεαι πολλὰ παθεῖν.
Οὐ γάρ ἔπιστανται κατέχειν κόρον οὐδὲ παρούσας
εὐφροσύνας κοσμεῖν δαιτός ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.
\end{quote}

And unjust is the mind of the people’s rulers, and for their great hubris
much suffering is in store.
For they do not understand how to keep down excess, nor how to order
the delights that are present before them in a peaceable feast.

If a man can’t maintain order at a dinner, then he certainly can’t do so in the state, and
leadership of this sort has a deleterious effect on the people. Hipponax fr. 126, discussed
in the previous chapter, also engages with this tradition. We have seen that in his call for

\textsuperscript{389} In 301, Stratocles is named in \textit{IG} II 640 and in 293/2 he is named in \textit{IG} II 2 649.
\textsuperscript{390} Olson and Sens 1999, 29-33.
the formal exile of a voracious man in power, Hipponax uses hunger to represent greed, and aberrant consumption to suggest the destructive effect of his target on the people. Hipponax taps into the comic and critical functions of food simultaneously to create a poem that is both funny and scathing. Like Hipponax, Matro constructs a double-layered mockery, inviting his audience to laugh as his characters share a heroic aristeia at the dinner table, while also implying the more serious criticisms of poor leadership and harm to the city.

Matro builds on this criticism through his emphasis on seafood, which does not feature in Homeric feasts, but is a powerful symbol of luxury and intemperance in comedy and oratory. Indeed, he alludes to the ideological associations of various foods quite directly. The narrator refers to the bread and cheese he typically eats, outside the dinner party, as “servile” (τυρῳ καὶ μάζῃ ὀτρηρῇ, 92) and calls the saddled bream δημοτικός (51). He notes that craftsmen are fond of monkfish (ρίνη δ’, ἥν φιλέουσι περισσῶς τέκτονες ἄνδρες, 56), alluding to the use of its rough skin as sandpaper and perhaps also to its being a more affordable seafood. He also rejects a tray of food on the basis that it “seemed to be women’s food” (ἐμοὶ δὲ γε θηλυτερὰν εἶναι βρώματ’ ἐδοξέαν 83-84). Davidson argues that luxury seafood, as a result of being attainable by only an elite few, came to represent undemocratic tendencies and even political corruption. A passage of Demosthenes, for example, specifies that Philocrates spent the bribe he earned from the Macedonians on fish and prostitutes. Likewise, Matro

391 Davidson 1993, 54-57.
392 Olson and Sens 1999, 108.
393 Davidson 1993.
394 Dem. 19.229.
uses seafood to highlight the excessive wealth within Demetrius’ circle, and to thereby imply that their political affiliation may be motivated by personal gain rather than the good of the city. The undemocratic nature of their exclusive, excessive dinner is a damning critique of Demetrius’ ostensible restoration of democracy.

Culinary Knowledge in Matro Fr. 1

The authority of Matro’s narrator comes in part from his treatment of food as both an object of technical knowledge and a universal experience. The meter and catalogic structure of the poem recall cookbooks of the fourth century. Archestratus, active sometime in the middle of the century, uses dactylic hexameter and constructs his *Hedypatheia* by inserting gastronomic words and phrases into recognizable epic formulaic structures, a compositional technique we find also in Matro’s *Deipnon*, as well as other examples of epic parody. The *Hedypatheia* might be considered parodic, insofar as it imitates didactic epic with a gastronomic twist; Athenaeus likens Archestratus to Hesiod. However, although it is often cleverly amusing, Archestratus’ poem is not outrageously funny in the manner of the *Deipnon*. Whether it was used as a resource by *mageiroi*, or (more likely) whether it adapts the genre of the technical culinary treatise into a poem that may be read for pleasure, it does profess to present real culinary knowledge. Likewise, the *Phaon* of Plato Comicus, dateable to 391 BCE, presents hexameter quotations of a cookbook by some Philoxenus, whose identity is

395 Olson and Sens 1999, 32.
396 Olson and Sens 2000, xxxv.
397 Ath. 3.101f and 7.310a.
unknown. In the scene, a character (possibly the titular Phaon, a mortal desired by Aphrodite) reads through some recipes in Philoxenus’ book that claim to assist with sexual performance. It is unclear whether Plato is quoting a genuine cookbook, quoting a parody of a cookbook, or inventing his own. In any case, these sources show that epic parody and culinary treatises occupied the same literary sphere. The epic form was used to convey genuine culinary knowledge, and to mock it.

Matro’s Deipnon engages deeply with this tradition. His catalogic structure, which focuses on the foods’ places of origin, mirrors Archestratus’ Hedypatheia. The two poets also seem to be drawing from a shared culinary tradition. Archestratus recommends that one stew the conger eel (fr. 19), and in the Deipnon, we find the conger stewing in pots (line 37). Archestratus claims that eels from Copais are well-regarded (fr. 10), and Matro’s catalogue includes eels from Copais (line 40). Archestratus praises the Phaleric small-fry (fr. 11), and Matro’s small-fry are also from Phalerum (line 22). Archestratus claims that only fools go for vegetables (fr. 24.18), and Matro’s narrator relates that while the other diners reached for vegetables, he opted for other things (line 14-18). Although Matro’s narrator claims to be an outsider who does not eat such food every day (line 91-92), Matro’s descriptions of foods betray his knowledge of food and of the conventions of gastronomic poetry. In some lines, one wonders whether he might even be drawing from other poets directly. Archestratus and Matro reject different types of salt-fish in strikingly similar language:

Archestr. 39.3: σαπέρδη δ’ ἐνέπω κλαίειν μακρά, Ποντικῷ ὑψω
Matro 1.17: ὀμοτάρτης ἐδὼ χαῖρειν, Φοινίκιον ὑψω

398 On this fragment see n. 339 in this chapter.
399 Fragments of Archestratus are numbered according to Olson and Sens 2000.
Furthermore, Matro adapts an epic line that Hermippus previously used in his hexameter catalogue of goods imported into Athens. The closest parallel for the line is in a fragment of Hesiod, although its pieces are also familiar from the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hesiod fr. 204.52:} & \quad \alpha \upsilon \tau \alpha \rho \alpha \prime \varepsilon \upsilon \beta o i \zeta \varepsilon \lambda e \lambda e ^{\prime} n o r \delta \rho \chi a m o s \ \acute{\alpha} \nu d r o n \\
\text{Hermippus 63.17:} & \quad \alpha \upsilon \tau \alpha \rho \alpha \prime \varepsilon \upsilon \beta o i \zeta \acute{\alpha} \rho i o u s k a i \ \acute{i} \acute{f} i a \ \mu \eta \lambda a \\
\text{Matro 1.48:} & \quad \alpha \upsilon \tau \alpha \rho \alpha \prime \varepsilon \upsilon \beta o i \zeta \lambda o \acute{p} \acute{a} d e s \ \acute{t} o s a i \ \acute{e} s t i x \acute{o} \acute{w} n t o
\end{align*}
\]

It is impossible to say whether Matro is drawing on these poets directly, or whether they are working within a broader set of allusive conventions in hexameter gastronomic poetry. In any case, it is clear that although the narrator professes naivety, and although the *Deipnon* is focused on food consumption rather than preparation, Matro is deeply engaged with the tradition of culinary treatises, and the tradition of parodying them.

At the same time, Matro’s choice of food also taps into a shared Athenian culinary experience. Given his engagement with the literary gastronomic tradition, one might expect Matro to include foods from around the Greek world, as Archestratus and other gastronomic writers do.\(^{400}\) Foreign foods might even enhance his political criticism by highlighting the foreign allegiances of Xenocrates and Strato. That Matro refers to the diners as “ranks of Athenians” (Ἀθηναίων… φάλαγγες, 97) even prompts us to expect such a dichotomy of Athenian and foreigner. However, the foods at the banquet with explicitly identified provenances all come from very near Athens. The small-fry is from the bay of Phalerum just southwest of the city (22), the eel from Copais in Boeotia (40), the casseroles from Euboea (49), and the ducks from Salamis (95). Matro also makes a

\(^{400}\) Also notable is Hermippus Porters fr. 63, mentioned above, a catalogue of foreign imports presented in a hexameter parody. It features foods from much further afield than the places named in Matro’s *Deipnon* (with the exception of the Phoenician salt-fish), including the Hellespont, Thessaly, Syracuse, Rhodes, Paphlagonia, and Sidon.
point to include foods for which Athens was famous, such as its small-fry (22) and its bread, which he gives pride of place in the proem (4-6).\footnote{On Athenian small-fry, see Olson and Sens 1999, 89. For Athenian bread, see Olson and Sens 1999, 78.} He even specifies that one of the cookpots is Attic in origin (103). In fact, only two items in the whole poem come from further afield: the salted fish is Phoenician (17), and the wine Lesbian (109). Lesbos was famous for its wine, but the source of the salted fish is more perplexing.\footnote{Olson and Sens 1999, 137.} No other sources associate the dish with Phoenicia, leading Olson and Sens to conclude that Matro is referring to the Phoenician colonies in the Western Mediterranean, where salted fish was popular.\footnote{Olson and Sens 1999, 87.} However, the descriptor “Phoenician” may simply be a pun based on the reddish color of the fish’s flesh.\footnote{Paessens 1856, 13.} Matro sometimes personifies the foods in ways that cleverly riff on their appearance; the shape and color of the eel, for instance, likely inform his application of the epithet “white armed.”\footnote{Brandt 1888, 79.} With this in mind, the wordplay of φοινίκιος/φοινίκεος may be more important than the fish’s Phoenician origins. In any case, given the prime importance of exotic food in fourth century cookbooks and comedy, it is notable that Matro mostly highlights food from Athens and the vicinity.

We know little about the performance context of the Deipnon, but based on its political humor, we probably ought to imagine an Athenian audience.\footnote{Olson and Sens 1999, 28-29.} Philippides fr. 25 shows that political humor in the same vein was being performed for the general public, and its final lines even imply that Philippides’ play was not the first to attack Demetrius or Stratocles. At Matro’s time, paroidia constituted its own category in some festival
competitions, so public performance is plausible.\textsuperscript{407} Indeed, Matro’s narrator seems well-designed to appeal to a general audience. He declares that he does not typically have access to such lavish foods, and speaks of the local and less expensive options at the banquet with appreciation. In the proem he hails the loaves he saw in Athens as “lovely and large… whiter than snow, with a taste that resembled wheat-paste cakes” and states that “Boreas fell in love with them as they baked” (as Boreas fell in love with the grazing mares of Erichthonius at \textit{Il}. 3.196). The small-fry is local, inexpensive, and widely available, but earns a place in the Catalogue of Fish (22).\textsuperscript{408} The narrator calls the saddled bream \textit{δημοτικός}, but still praises it as a fish that “although mortal, follows immortal fish” (as Achilles’ horse Pedasus, though mortal, follows immortal horses \textit{Il}. 16.154). He rejects the monkfish, beloved by craftsmen, as rough, saying “I myself can envision other things more pleasant than its flesh,” but he still assures us that it is “good for nourishing young men” (56-58). Not all his rejections are so tactful; it is perhaps telling that he is outright dismissive of the Phoenician saltfish, the only explicitly foreign dish (\textit{ὠμοτάρτυχον ἐδὸν χαίρειν, Φοινικίων ὐψον, “…having nothing to do with the shoulder cuts of saltfish,”} 17).\textsuperscript{409} Finally, although the narrator does not state where the flatcakes at the feast come from, Archestratus claims that these originated in Athens (fr. 60.13-16), and Matro’s narrator devotes five lines to praising them (115-120). Although the banquet mostly features elaborate, expensive fare, Matro’s narrator pays his compliments to dishes that would have been more widely accessible and that represent the best of Athens.

\textsuperscript{407} Olson and Sens 1999, 12.
\textsuperscript{408} On the price and accessibility of the small-fry, see Olson and Sens 1999, 89-90.
\textsuperscript{409} Olson and Sens 1999, 88 provide parallels for this the colloquial, dismissive use of χαίρε.
The narrator’s nod to the humbler foods at the banquet is part of a broader strategy of characterizing him as an outsider at the dinner party, and therefore relatable to the audience. The narrator invites his audience to disparage the lifestyle enjoyed by the Athenian elite while also allowing them to experience it vicariously through him. He conducts himself no better than the other diners, however, freely describing his own desperate grasping and greedy scheming for the best morsels. His shamelessness acts as a cheeky challenge to those who might take the poem as earnestly moralizing: if you attended such a feast, he contends, you would behave the same way. The narrator is not exempt from mockery, then, and his authority comes in part from this authenticity and his relatability to his audience. Thus, the narrator’s culinary authority is twofold. He demonstrates familiarity with the tradition of didactic gastronomic literature, but also with the food of the average Athenian, revealing his literary mastery as well as his authenticity. In doing so, he unites his audience against the shameful consumption of Xenocles, Stratocles, and their ilk, as well as in appreciation of shared local cuisine. Finally, he invites his audience to laugh both with and at the narrator. Just as the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships would have given listeners the pleasure of hearing their own hometowns named in the poem, Matro lets his audience hear familiar dishes named at the dinner. We shall now see how Matro uses epic, too, to bridge past and present, and to represent both unity and division.

**Epic Knowledge in Matro Fr. 1**

The narrator’s authority comes not only from his knowledge (and inexperience) of food and gastronomic poetry, but also through his knowledge of epic. He associates
himself with an epic singer through his meter and Homeric quotation – in other words, through his actual recitation of epic – and through the poem’s narrative framing. In the proem, he describes his arrival in Athens:

δείπνά μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολυτρόφα καὶ μάλα
πολλά, ὁ Ξενοκλῆς ῥήτωρ ἐν Ἀθήναις δείπνισεν ἡμῖν·
ἠλθον γὰρ κάκεσε, πολὺς δὲ μοι ἔσπετο λιμός.
οὐ δὴ καλλίστους ἄρτους ἰδον ἤδὲ μεγίστους,
λευκότερους χιόνος, ἔσθεν δ᾿ ἀμύλοισιν ὁμοίοις·
tῶν καὶ Ἥρας ἡράσσατο πεσσομενάων.

Dinners describe to me, Muse, much-nourishing and very numerous, which Xenocles the orator dined us on in Athens— for I went there as well, and a great hunger accompanied me— where indeed I saw very large and lovely loaves of bread, whiter than snow, with a taste that resembled wheat-paste cakes; the North Wind fell in love with them as they were baking.

The narrator presents himself as a non-Athenian speaking to a non-Athenian audience.

Given the poem’s political context and the *comparandum* of Philippides fr. 25, it is likely that the foreign audience, at least, is a literary conceit. Matro adapts a proem structure describing the arrival of the epic singer, familiar from the *Homerica Hymn to Apollo* as well as the *Margites* and Hegemon fr. 1. In this way, he styles the narrator as a Homer-figure, relatable to the audience through his poverty, but also set apart by his epic voice. He also reveals his knowledge of both epic itself and the tradition of epic parody.

However, a tension between divine inspiration and autopsy arises when the narrator asks the Muse to describe the dinners hosted by Xenocles, and then immediately

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410 Olson and Sens 1999, 32.
411 See Ch. 2 for discussion of this motif in Hegmon’s fragment.
412 On poverty in the biographical tradition of Homer, and the appropriation of this *bios* motif by parodists, see Ch. 2.
declares that he himself attended them.\footnote{Olson and Sens 1999, 77.} The plural δεῖπνα contributes to this tension, as he goes on to describe what he saw at presumably one dinner. As a result of the combination of epic narrative frame and first-person narrator, the poem must constantly switch between third and first person. When the narrator relates the actions of other diners, he retains the voice of the epic singer and separates himself from those around him; when he wishes to implicate himself, he switches to the first-person. At one point toward the end of the fragment, he presents a formulaic epic line in the third person, unadapted from the original, although he probably ought to include himself: αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ δόρποιο μελίφρονος ἔρον ἔντο… (“But when they had put away desire for a delightful dinner…” 104).\footnote{αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ δόρποιο μελίφρονος ἔρον ἔντο, 104; Olson and Sens 1999, 134.} Narrative absurdity of this sort is common in epic parody and serves a variety of purposes. We have seen that in Hipponax fr. 126, the abrupt transition from Muse invocation to expulsive incantation entails a jarring shift from historical narrative to performative utterance. The humor of Hegemon fr. 1, meanwhile, results from the use of epic formulaic language that bizarrely obfuscates the logic of the narrator’s speech. In Matro’s fragment, the invocation of the Muse has the effect of locating the source of the narrator’s knowledge of the banquet simultaneously in both divine inspiration and autopsy, absurdly granting him two mutually exclusive forms of authority.

The source of the narrator’s poetic ability is similarly ambiguous. Although he maintains the conceit of divine inspiration traditional in epic poetry, he also appropriates epic in a way that is unmistakably literate and scholarly, quoting lines of Homeric epic directly and selecting them with sensitivity to their original context. In the proem, for
instance, Matro describes the loaves using two separate descriptions of the horses of Trojan heroes.\textsuperscript{415} Sometimes, the epic context adds another layer to his mockery of the characters. For instance, Matro compares Chaerephon to a lion, borrowing a simile that occurs in the \textit{Odyssey} to describe Polyphemus’ consumption of Odysseus’ men (\textit{ἡς δ’ ὀστὲ λέων}, 100; \textit{Od.} 9.292). Matro further emphasizes the similarity between Chaerephon and Polyphemus by utilizing another verse from \textit{Odyssey} 9 in the following line.\textsuperscript{416} The original context of these lines characterizes Chaerephon’s consumption as especially aberrant, and the narrator’s knowledge of epic poetry appears both divinely inspired and learned, like his knowledge of the banquet itself. This use of epic quotation also allows for a spectrum of audience engagement. One does not need a formal, literate education in epic poetry to understand that Matro is casting the dinner as an epic battle scene, and thereby contrasting contemporary Athenian leaders with the heroes of the past. The poem’s epic framing makes its humor and mockery widely accessible. At the same time, more educated members of the audience would have enjoyed the challenge of identifying individual lines, in the same way that an audience watching a comic scene with a riddling \textit{mageiros} would have enjoyed the challenge of solving the riddles themselves.

\textsuperscript{415} For discussion of the proem see Ch. 1.

\textsuperscript{416} \textit{Od.} 9.234: \textit{ὕλης ἄζαλέης, ἢνα οἱ ποτιδόρπιοι εἴη}; \textit{Deipnon} 101: ὃφρα οἱ οὐκαδ’ ἱόντι πάλιν ποτιδόρπιον εἴη.
Conclusion

As Aristophanes does in the *Acharnians* (discussed in the previous chapter), Matro evokes the leaders of the epic past to highlight the greed of contemporary leadership. Aristophanes accomplishes this through comparison, likening Lamachus to pre-democratic heroes who made unilateral decisions and profited from war. Matro, meanwhile, situates Athenian statesmen of the late fourth century in contrast with the heroes of epic by implying that the only battles they fight are at the dinner table. Athenian democracy is an important touchstone for both authors, but for Aristophanes, it is a contemporary reality, while Matro presents it as bygone time, like the heroic age. He accomplishes this through his participation in a long tradition of using food to represent a man’s democratic character. The particular foods that Matro includes, from the rare and expensive eel to the δημοτικός saddled bream, simultaneously distance the banqueters from the audience and nod to a common Athenian culinary experience. Epic, too, acts as an agent of both division and unity as Matro begins with an invocation of the muse, but proceeds to use a more modern form of literate and scholarly allusion. His knowledge of epic implies his equality to the other diners, thereby legitimizing his criticism, yet it also allows him to remain relatable to a more general audience; both effects further his authority as a social and political critic.
IV. Conclusion

At the end of the fourth century, epic poetry continued to be performed widely and to represent a shared Greek past and Greek identity, a role that took on increasing weight as political developments further complicated an already-fraught concept of “Greekness.” At the same time, new intellectual movements introduced new ways of engaging with epic that were more commodified and exclusive. Strato and Matro illustrate how a poet might capitalize on epic’s dual nature as both cultural touchstone and exclusive commodity to mock those with wealth and power; their treatments of food, which serves a similar social and literary function, further highlights this dual role of epic. In this way, these fragments reveal the ability of epic parody to both reinforce and subvert authority. In Dentith’s words:

[Parody] can subvert the accents of authority and police the boundaries of the sayable; it can place all writing under erasure and draw a circle around initiated readers to exclude ignorant ones; it can discredit the authority of what has always been said and ridicule the new and the formally innovative.

In the fragments of Matro and Strato, we see both potential functions of parody happening simultaneously within the same fragment.

These fragments also illustrate how epic parody changes after the fourth century BCE. Throughout this dissertation there have been many opportunities to compare their parodic techniques and effects with fragments and passages from previous centuries. However, both poets also treat the Classical period, with its democratic governance and traditional literary education, as a bygone time, like the characters and events of epic poetry itself. They extend a literary line through this period to the present moment, which
is understood to be something new; Strato, for instance, recalls epic through the cook’s words, new lyric through the Middle Comic *mageiros* trope, and contemporary intellectual and poetic developments through allusion to Philitas. Matro maps the epic hero and the well-ordered democrat onto the wastrels of post-democratic Athens.
In fr. 7, Matro stitches together lines from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in his characteristic way to present a catalogue of shades in the underworld:417

{oí mèn γὰρ δῆ πάντες, ὅσοι πάρος ἦσαν ἀριστοι,}
Εὐβοιῶς τε καὶ Ἐρμογένης διὸ τε Φίλιπποι,  
{oí mèn δῆ τεθνάσι καὶ εἴν ΄Αἴδαο δόμοισιν—}
ἐστὶ δὲ τὶς Ἐκλόνικος, ὁν ἀθάνατον λάχε γῆρυν,  
ὁτε ποιητάων ἀδαμῖμον οὔτε θεάτρων,  
φ καὶ τεθνειώτι λαλεῖν πόρε Φερσεφόνεια.

All the most outstanding people bygone,  
Euboeus, Hermogenes, godlike Philips,  
all now lie dead in palace of Hades.  
But one Cleonicus has speech eternal,  
a man who’s unknown to no poets, no stages;  
even in death, Persephone lets him yammer.

We do not know who Hermogenes, Philips, and Cleonicus are, but we do know a  
Euboeus: Euboeus of Paros, whom Athenaeus (via Polemon) names as a parodist.418

From here it seems likely that these men are poets of generations past, maybe even  
parodists specifically. Cleonicus plays the role of Teiresias, whom Persephone granted a  
noos even in death (*Od*. 10.494-495); Cleonicus, by contrast, isn’t necessarily wise or  
knowledgeable, but he still yammers on. The first line of the fragment is lifted word-for-word from *Il*. 11.825 and 16.23, where it refers to the best warriors in the Greek army  
who lie wounded. Matro’s association of epic heroes with parodic poets is certainly  
ironic, but for the modern reader, there is the additional irony that we do not even know  

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417 Text Olson and Sens 1999, translation my own.  
418 Ath. 15.698a. This section calls Euboeus the most famous parodist and specifies that he was a contemporary of Philip, likely Philip II of Macedon, which would situate him in the mid-fourth century BCE.
who these poets are. Cleonicus has fallen silent, and Matro leaves us with a catalogue of nobodies.

The poetic genres and styles that engaged in epic parody the most – mythological comedies and satyr plays, hexameter *paroidia* – have not survived the vicissitudes of history well. However, the same qualities of Greek epic parody that have condemned it to near-oblivion also offer the most fruitful points of entry to the small-but-mighty surviving corpus. Epic parody does not correspond one-to-one to a clearly-circumscribed genre and it may be understood as “parasitic” or “derivative;” these qualities no doubt contributed to its poor state of preservation. However, these are also the precise qualities that allow epic parody to expand our understanding of the relationships between ancient Greek poetic genres, and of the role of epic in sixth to fourth century Greek life. Epic was not an archaic literary monolith, but a lived phenomenon, performed at special occasions, extending its reaches into other verse forms, and playing an essential role in intellectual life.

Close comparative analysis of fragments and passages of epic parody reveal a common set of parodic techniques and effects, even across examples that span genres and centuries. Hegemon and Matro, for instance, share more allusive strategies than one might think given that Matro’s poetics are usually identified as decidedly Hellenistic. Common techniques also emerge for the incorporation of epic allusion into non-hexameter genres. We have seen both Hipponax and Aristophanes, for example, mediate epic allusion through allusion to other hexameter verse forms (expulsive incantation and oracle, respectively). Strato and Aristophanes, meanwhile, both incorporate epic into comedy by picking out distinctly epic words that can be assimilated into a comic meter.
Paraepic comedy differs from paratragic comedy in that epic’s meter prevents certain kinds of allusive engagement. Still, many of the same fundamental categories of allusion apply to both; comic poets may spoof the narrative motifs, language, form, and performance of both genres. Significantly, imitating elements of epic and tragedy simultaneously is another parodic strategy in itself.

Formally- and chronologically-disparate epic parodies can also generate comparable poetic effects. Even parodies that combine epic language with a contemporary comic setting often construct an epic scene that frames the comic action, and humor arises from the disjunction between the heroic past and the comic present. However, by alluding to aspects of epic’s contemporary life, the parodist may connect the mythic past to the contemporary moment at the same time as he is contrasting them; so we have seen poets like Hipponax, Aristophanes, and Matro use epic parody to criticize men in power, sometimes characterizing the epic hero as a positive model to which a leader is contrasted, and other times characterizing the epic hero as a negative model to which he is compared. Similarly, poets use epic parody not only to contrast the literary practices of past and present, but also to trace literary genealogical through-lines between them, including from Homer to his rhapsodic reperformers, from epic to lyric and tragedy, and from traditional literary education to new-fangled literate and scholarly approaches. In this way, by approaching epic parody through epic reception, it is possible offer fresh interpretations for some difficult fragments, contextualize canonical material in new ways, and expand our understanding of the Classical life of epic poetry.
Hegemon Fr. 1\textsuperscript{419}

ἐς δὲ Θάσον μ’ ἐλθόντα μετεωρίζοντες ἐβαλλόν πολλοίσι σπελέθουσι, καὶ ὅδε τις εἰπε παραστάς·
“ὥς πάντων ἀνόρον βδελυρώτατε, τίς σ’ ἀνέπεισε καλὴν <ἐς> κρητικὰς ποσὶν τοῦίσδ’ ἀναβήναι;”
τοίς δ’ ἐγὼ πάσιν μικρὸν μετὰ τούτ· ἐπος εἶπον·
“μνή μ’ ἀνέπεισε γέροντα καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλοντ’ ἀναβήναι καὶ σπάνις, ἢ πολλοὺς Θασίων εἰς ὀλκάδα βάλλει εὐκούρων βδελυρών, ὀλλύτων τ´ ὀλλυμένων τε ἀνδρῶν, οἱ νῦν κείθε κακῶς κακά ῥαψωδοῦσιν·
οίς καὶ ἐγὼ σιτο μέγα χρηιζῶν ἐπίθησα.
αὐθής δ’ οὐκ ἐπί κέρδος ἀπείσθη, εἰς Θασίους δὲ μηδένα πημαίνων κλυτόν ἀργυρόν ἐγγυάζων,
μὴ τίς μοι κατὰ οἶκον Ἀχαϊάδων νεμεσῆ πεσομένης ἀλόχου τὸν ἀρχαῖον ἄρτον ἀεικῶς,
καὶ ποὺς τὶς εἰπέ σιμιρὸν τυροῦν· ἐσίδοδος,
ταῦτα μοι ὀρμαίνοντι παρίστατο Παλλάς Ἀθηνή χρυσήν ῥάβδον ἔχουσα καὶ ἡλάσει ἐπεὶ τε φωνή·
“δεινὰ παθοῦσα, Φακὴ βδελυρά, χώρει τ΄ τὸν ἀγώνα.”
καὶ τότε ἓθαρσε καὶ ἡείδον πολύ μᾶλλον.

When I reached Thasos, they launched on me a volley of copious turds, and someone near me said:
“Oh greatest of all bums, who persuaded you to step upon the noble stage with feet like those?”
Among them all I spoke a little speech:
“One mina swayed me, though old and loath to go,
and want, which drives many Thasians to a tradeboat,
baldheaded bums, men slaying and slain,
who now sing abroad – bad songs, badly done.
These things swayed me, for I needed food mightily.
But I’ll stop travelling for gain, and so not to grieve the Thasians, I will hand over my eminent silver,
lest in my home some woman of the Achaians shame me

\textsuperscript{419} Text Olson dates, translation my own.
when the holiday loaf my wife bakes up is paltry;
then someone might say, eyeing the tiny cheese bread:

‘My dear, your husband sang in Athens
and won fifty drachmas, but you baked a tiny thing!’’

As I was weighing these matters, Pallas Athena appeared,
holding in her hand a golden staff. She whacked me and said:

“You’ve suffered badly, Bean-Slop, you bum, but go compete!”

At that I took courage and sang all the more.

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Strato Fr. 1 (P. Cair. 65445)\(^{420}\)

[σφίγγ’ ἄρρεν’, οὐ μάγειρον, εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν]
[ἐβληρ’ ἀπλῶς υάρο οὐδέ ἐν, μᾶ τοὺς θεοῦς,]
[ὅν ἂν λέγῃ συνίμῃ: καὶνά ῥήματα]
[πεπορισμένος] πά[ρ]ε[στιν. ὡς εἰσῆλθε γά],
[ἐπάθος μ’ ἑπιρώτησε [προσβλέψαι] μέγα’
[“χόσος κ]έκληκας μέροπα[ς ἐπὶ δεῖ]πνον; λέγε.”
“ἐγ[ὼ κέκ]ληκα Μέροπας ἐπ[ί δεῖπνον]; χολαῖς.
τὸς δὲ Μέροπας τοῦτος με γ[η][ν]όσκειν δοκεῖς;
“οὐδ’ ἀρα παρέσται δαιτυμὸν οὐδεὶς ὅλως;”
“ἡξει Φιλίνος, Μοσχίνο, Νικήτας,
ὁ δεῖν’, ὁ δεῖνα.” κατ’ ὅνοι’ ἐπεπορεύμην
οὐκ ἴν ἐν αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ εἰς μοι Δαιτυμόν.
ὁ δ’ ἡγανάκτησ’ ὄσπερ ἡδυκημένος
ὅτι οὐ κέκληκα Δαιτυμόνα. καὶνὸν σφόδρα.
“οὐδ’ ἀρα θύεις ῥηξί[χθον’];” “οὐκ, ἔρην, ἔγώ.”
“βοῦν εὐρυμέτωπον;” “οὐθ’ βοῦν, ἄθλε.”
“μῆλα θυσιάζεις ἀρα;” “μὰ Δί’, ἐγώ μεν οὖ,
“τὰ μῆλα πρόβατα;” “μῆλα πρόβατ’, οὐκ οἶδ’,” ἔφην,
“μάγειρε, τοῦτον οὐδέν, οὐδὲ βουλομαι.
ἄγροικότερος εἰμ’, ὅς θ’ ἀπλῶς μοι διαλέγου.”
[τὰς οὐλοχίτας φέρε δεύρο.” “τοῦτο δ’ ἐστί τί,”]
[“κρηθαί.” “τι οὖν, ἀπόπληκτη, περιπλοκάς λέγεις;”]
[“πηγὸς πάρεστι;” “πηγός; οὐχι λακάσει,]
[ἐρεῖς σαφέστερ[ε]ν[έν ὑ θ’ ὅ βούλει μοι λέγε]ν;”
[“ἀτρίσθη]λός γ’ έι, πρέσβυ,” φησίν. “ἄλ]α φέρε·
[τοῦτ’ ἐ]σθ’ ὁ πηγός, τοῦτο δεῖξον.” χέρνιβον
[παρῆ]ν· ἔθους, ἔλεγεν ἄλλα ῥήματα
τ[ο]ι[α]δο]’ ἀ, μᾶ τὴν Γ[ῆ]ν, οὐδὲ εἰς ἣκουσεν ἃν,
μίστουλα, μοίρας, δίπτυχ’, ὀβελοῦς’ ὀστ’ ἔδει
tα τοῦ Φιλίτα λαμβάνοντα βυβλία

\(^{420}\) Text Olson 2007. Translation my own.
σκοπεῖν ἐκαστὸν τι δύναται τῶν ῥημάτων.

I’ve brought a male sphinx into my house,
not a cook! For by the gods, I don’t get
a single word he says. He’s here equipped
with strange words. Right away when he came in
he promptly quizzed me loudly, eyeing me:
“How many meropes did you ask to eat? Tell me.”
“I asked the Meropes to eat? You’re psycho.
You think I know these folks, the Meropes?”
“So not a single daitumon will be there?”
“Philinus, Moschion, and Niceratus
will come, and him, and him…” I named them out.
I didn’t have one Daitumon among them.
He got annoyed, like I had done some wrong
by not asking Daitumon. So strange.
“You aren’t sacrificing an Earthbreaker?” “No,” I said.
“A broad-faced bull?” “I’m not sacrificing a bull,
you jerk.” “You aren’t sacrificing mela?” “God no,” I said.
“Mela are sheep.” “Apples are sheep? I don’t
know these things, cook, and I don’t want to.
I’m a country man, so talk to me simply.”
“Bring the oulochutes here!” “What’s that?”
“Barley.” “You dolt, why are you talking roundabout?”
“Is there pegos?” “Pegos? Suck my dick.
Will you say what you want to say more clearly?”
“You’re contumelious, old man.” he said. “Bring salt.
That’s what pegos is. Show it to me.” There was
a basin. He did the sacrifice and said
other words that no one could have grasped, by Earth:
mistulla, moires, diptucha, obeloi,
so you’d need to get the books of Philitas
to look up what each of his words meant.
But then I tried a different way and I began to beg him
to talk remotely humanlike. Persuasion herself
couldn’t have persuaded him, even if she stood right there,
and I suspect he was the slave of some
sort of rhapsodizer, and from his childhood
the menace got filled up full with Homer’s words.

Strato Fr. 1 (Ath. 9.382b-383c)\textsuperscript{421}

σφίγγ’ ἄρρεν’, οὐ μάγειρον, εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν εἶληφ’, ἀπλῶς γὰρ οὐδὲ ἐν, μα τοὺς θεοὺς, ἢν ἄν λέγῃ συνήμη: κανὴ ῥήματα πεπορισμένοις πάρεστιν. ὡς εἰσῆλθε γὰρ, εὐθὺς μ’ ἐπηρώτησε προσβλέπων μέγα·

“πόσους κέκληκας μέροπας ἐπὶ δεῖπνον; λέγε,”

“ἔγω κέκληκα Μέροπας ἐπὶ δεῖπνον; χολὰς τοὺς δὲ Μέροπας τοῦτοις με γινώσκειν δοκεῖς; οὐδὲς παρέσται τοῦτο γάρ, νῦ τὸν Δία, ἔστι κατάλοιπον, Μέροπας ἐπὶ δεῖπνον καλεῖν.”

“οὐδ’ ἁρα παρέσται δαιτυμόν οὐδεὶς ὅλως;”

“οὐκ οἰομαί γε. Δαιτυμόν;” ἐλογιζόμην·

“ἥξεις Φιλίνος, Μοσχίου, Νικήρατος, ὁ δεῖν’, ὁ δεῖν.” κατ’ ὅνομ’ ἀνελογιζόμην’

οὐκ ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ εἰς μοι Δαιτυμόν.

“οὐδεὶς παρέσται,” σημ. “τὶ λέγεις; οὐδὲ εἰς;

σφόδρ’ ἣγανάκτησ’ ὅσπερ ἥδικημένος εἰ μὴ κέκληκα Δαιτυμόνα. κατανόν πάνυ.

“οὐδ’ ἁρα θύεις ἐρυσίχθων’; “οὐκ,” ἔσην, “ἐγὼ.”

“βοῦν δ’ εὐρυμέτωπον;” “οὐ θῶο βοῦν, ἀθλε.”

“μῆλα θυσίαζεις ἁρα;” “μὰ Δί’, ἐγὼ μὲν οὐ, οὐδέτερον αὐτῶν, προβάτιον δ’. ” “οὐκοῦν,” ἔφη, “τὰ μῆλα πρόβατα;” “<μήλα πρόβατ;> οὐ μανθάνω,

<μάγειρε,> τοῦτον οὐδέν, οὐδὲ βοῦλομαι. ἁγροκύτερος εἰς’, ἀσθ’ ἀπλῶς μοι διαλέγου.”


άλλα τί πρὸς ἡμᾶς τοῦτο, πρὸς τῆς Ἑστίας;”

“κατ’ ἐκεῖνον ἡδ’ πρόσεχε καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ μοι.”

“Ομηρικός γὰρ διανοεῖ μ’ ἀπολλύνω;”


“τὶ οὕν, ἀπόπληκτε, περιπλοκάς λέγεις;”

“πηγὸς πάρεστι;” “πηγός; οὐχι λαικάσει, ἐρείς σαφέστερον θ’ ὃ βούλει μοι λέγειν;”

\textsuperscript{421} Text Olson 2006-12. Translation my own.
“ἀτάσθαλός γ’ εἶ, πρέσβυ,” φησ’.“アルバム φέρε:
tοῦτ’ ἔστι πηγός. ἀλλὰ δεῖξον χέρνιβα.”

παρῆν ἔθνεν, ἔλεγεν ἄλλα ρήματα
τοιαθ’ ἃ, μᾶ τὴν Γῆν, οὐδὲ εἰς ἤκουσεν ἃν,
μιστύλλα, μοίρας, δίπτυχ’, ὀβελοῦς’ ὅστε με
tὸν τοῦ Φιλίτα λαμβάνοντα βυβλίων
σκοπεῖν ἐκαστάδ’ τί δύναται τῶν ρημάτων.

πλὴν ἰκέτευον αὐτὸν ἡ ἦμεταβάλειν
ἀνθρωπίνως λαλεῖν τε. τὸν δ’ οὐκ ἄν ταχὺ
ἐπεισὲν ἡ Πειθώ, μᾶ τὴν Γῆν, οἴδ’ ὁτι.

I’ve brought a male sphinx into my house,
not a cook! For by the gods, I don’t get
a single word he says. He’s here equipped
with strange words. Right away when he came in
he promptly quizzed me loudly, eyeing me:
“How many meropes did you ask to eat? Tell me.”
“I asked the Meropes to eat? You’re psycho.
You think I know these folks, the Meropes?”
“None of them will be there. By god, this is
the final straw, asking the Meropes to eat.”
“So not a single daitumon will be there?”
“No, I don’t think so. Daitumon?” I counted.
“Philinus, Moschion, and Niceratus
will come, and him, and him…” I counted them up.
I didn’t have one Daitumon among them.
“No Daitumon will be there,” I said. “What do you mean? Not one?”
He got quite annoyed, like I had done some wrong
by not asking Daitumon. So strange.
“You aren’t sacrificing an Earthbreaker?” “No,” I said.
“A broad-faced bull?” “I’m not sacrificing a bull,
you jerk.” “You aren’t sacrificing mela?”
“God no, none of those things. A sheep.” “Surely,”
he said, “mela are sheep.” “Apples are sheep?
I don’t understand these things, cook, and I don’t want to.
I’m a country man, so talk to me simply.”
“Don’t you know that Homer talks this way?” “Sure,
cook, he could talk whatever way he wanted.
But what’s that got to do with us, by Hestia?”
“Do me a favor and keep him in mind in the future.”
“Are you plotting death by Homer?”
“I’m used to talking this way.” “Well don’t talk
that way near me.” “So for four drachmas,”
he said, “I should abandon my purpose?
Bring the *oulochutes* here.” “What’s that?”
“Barley.” “You dolt, why are you talking roundabout?”
“Is there * Pegos*?” “Pegos? Suck my dick.
Will you say what you want to say more clearly?”
“You’re contumelious, old man.” he said. “Bring salt.
That’s what * Pegos* is. But show me the basin.”
There was one there. He did the sacrifice and said
other words that no one could have grasped, by Earth:
*mistulla, moires, diptucha, obeloi,*
so you’d need to get the books of Philitas
to look up what each of his words meant.
But then I began begging him to switch
to talking humanlike. Persuasion herself
couldn’t have persuaded him, of that I’m certain.


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