the mission on both occasions puts her at odds with male figures who accordingly challenge her. Peisetaerus, moreover, is at this point no longer fully human, but rather an amalgamated man-bird creature, and his hybrid appearance could have provided Aristophanes with an additional incentive to have him assimilate an act originally attributed to satyrs, who are themselves hybrid creatures combining human and animal characteristics.[8]

Aristophanes' male characters frequently ogle and fondle females in their midst, and Peisetaerus' notion of using rape in order to punish a female figure for what he considers a transgression finds precedents in the *Acharnians* and *Wasps*.[9] But the satyrs depicted on vases are perpetual would-be rapists, persistently pursuing unwilling nymphs.[10] Moreover, what we know from paintings on vases and satyr plays confirms that they are extremely quick to see sexual violence as an appropriate punishment for females who have in their eyes erred. Iris is one such potential victim, and so apparently was Helen in Sophocles' satyric *Marriage of Helen*.[11] Helen is also the object of the ire and threats of satyrs in Euripides' *Cyclops*, in which the chorus envisions gang-rape by the victorious Greeks as just deserts for the faithless wife. The parallelism in language and tone of *Cyclops* 179-82 and *Birds* 1253-6 adds probability to the view that Peisetaerus' tough talk to Iris may borrow literally as well as figuratively from the 'vocabulary' of satyrs.[12] If so, his threat constitutes an outrageous 'punch-line' that caps off with irreverent travesty an encounter heretofore brimming with tragic resonance.

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[8] One red-figure vase (Florence, Mus. Naz. 4218 (*LIMC* v.2, 499 [Iris I 167]), attributed to the Kleophrades Painter and dated to *c.* 480 BC), which depicts centaurs pestering Iris, may show what is in fact a variant of the satyr myth. If so, this variant may have set a precedent for Aristophanes in replacing satyrs with another type of hybrid creature.

It is unlikely that Peisetaerus was ithyphallic; so L. Stone, *Costume in Aristophanic comedy* (Salem, NH 1984) 85 and 116 n. 45. In this regard Peisetaerus would have differed from his satyric counterparts with, I imagine, humorous obviousness.

[9] I thank the editor and referee for calling my attention to *Ach.* 271-5 and *V.* 768-9.

[10] For the hyper-sexuality of satyrs, see G.M. Hedreen, *Silens in Attic black-figure vase-painting* (Ann Arbor 1992) 158-9, and 'Silens, nymphs, and maenads', *JHS* cxiv (1994) 47-69. For the recurrent theme of sexual assault in satyr-plays, see Sutton (n. 2) 148 *et passim*. Also F. Lissarrague, 'Why satyrs are good to represent', in *Nothing to do with Dionysus?*, ed. J.J. Winkler and F.I. Zeitlin (Princeton 1990) 235-6.

[11] R.A.S. Seaford, ed., *Euripides, Cyclops* (Oxford 1988) n. on 177-87; Hedreen (n. 10) 65-6.

[12] *Cyclops* 179-82:

> οὔκουν, ἐπειδὴ τὴν νεᾶνιν εἵλετε,
> ἅπαντες αὐτὴν διεκροτήσατ' ἐν μέρει
> ἐπεί γε πολλοῖς ἥδεται γαμουμένη,
> τὴν προδότιν ....

['Then, when you caught the young woman, did you all bang her in turn, since she likes to get married to many men, the faithless bitch ...' (translation mine).]

The verbs διαμηρίζω (*Av.* 1254) and διακροτέω (*Cyc.* 180) in particular lend to the casually callous tone of both passages; see J.J. Henderson, *The maculate muse*[2] (Oxford 1991) 171-3.

Attic Comedy and the 'Comic Angels' Krater in New York

The centerpiece of Oliver Taplin's recent monograph on Greek drama and South Italian vase-painting is an Apulian bell-krater of the early fourth century in a New York private collection (PLATE IV).[1] The vase belongs to the genre conventionally known as phlyax vases, though Taplin would reject that label, since it is the thesis of his book that many, if not most, of these vases reflect Athenian Old Comedy and not an indigenous Italic entertainment, the phlyax play.[2]

The purpose of this note is not to challenge the brilliant and forcefully argued thesis of Taplin's book, but only to suggest an alternative reading of its eponymous vase. The krater was first published only in 1991, in two brief notices by A.D. Trendall,[3] and will surely become the subject of much scholarly discussion. Taplin himself provides most of the evidence for the interpretation I shall propose, but eventually arrives at a quite different and, I believe, overly subtle one. Since, however, he does not present what seems to me the more straightforward and 'obvious' reading, if only to reject it, it may be worthwhile to formulate that interpretation briefly here and to offer it for future comment and, perhaps, refutation.

The scene presents four figures on a stage supported by columns and reached by a flight of steps, all identified by inscriptions: from left to right, Aigisthos, wearing elaborately patterned long garment and pilos and carrying two spears; a white-haired Choregos, leaning on a stick and addressing Aigisthos; Pyrrhia[s], a balding man standing on an upturned kalathos and pointing with outstretched right hand; and a second Choregos, dark-haired, observing the others with a skeptical expression. All but Aigisthos are costumed as comic actors, or 'phlyakes,' with wrinkled hose, mask, and padded phallus.[4] A half-open door is at the left of the scene.

In his initial publications of the vase, Trendall described the scene as without parallel and did not

[1] O. Taplin, *Comic angels* (Oxford 1993); henceforth referred to by the author's name alone. The vase is New York, Fleischman Collection F93; Taplin pl. 9.1. The vase's home in New York is not on the 17th floor (as Taplin p. 1), but the 34th.

[2] Most fully stated at Taplin 41-47 and in ch. 9, 'The transplantation of Athenian comedy,' 89-99. The standard work on phlyax vases is A.D. Trendall, *Phlyax Vases*, 2nd ed., *BICS* Supp. xix (1967). For a recent discussion of the vases and of phlyax plays see K. Neiiendam, *The art of acting in antiquity* (Copenhagen 1992) 15-62.

[3] A.D. Trendall and A. Cambitoglou, *The red-figured vases of Apulia* [hereafter *RVAP*], Supp. ii, *BICS* Supp. lx (1991) 7-8, pl. 1, 3-4; A.D. Trendall, 'Farce and tragedy in South Italian vase-painting,' in T. Rasmussen and N. Spivey, eds., *Looking at Greek vases* (Cambridge 1991) 164, fig. 67; *idem*, 'A new early Apulian phlyax vase,' *BullClevelandMusArt* 79.1 (1992) 1-15, figs. 7, 8, 11.

[4] As Trendall (n. 3) pointed out, the vase is unique in combining a character in tragic costume and without mask (on South Italian vases inspired by Attic tragedy, the figures never wear masks) with comic actors. I cannot explain this either, but would only observe that on the famous Paestan fragment that parodies the Rape of Kassandra (Taplin p. 81 and pl. 17.17), the figure of Kassandra does not seem to wear a grotesque mask like Ajax and the priestess.

attempt to explain it, beyond a few individual observations. He noted, for example, that the two figures labelled Choregos are 'presumably the two leaders of the semi-chorus', that Aigisthos looks as if he had entered through the door and has a puzzled expression, and that Pyrrhias would be a suitable name for a Thracian slave ('Red').[5]

Taplin's interpretation starts from the idea of taking *choregos* in its specific Athenian sense of the theatrical producer (or, in Broadway slang, angel).[6] With a chorus composed of choregoi, the hypothetical Old Comedy source would have had as its subject the theatre itself, specifically, the rivalry between tragedy and comedy. The two genres are embodied in the figures of Aigisthos and Pyrrhias, respectively.[7]

As Taplin rightly observes, 'Aigisthos is undoubtedly the puzzle of puzzles on this vase and the key to any full solution.'[8] Yet the final verdict that 'he is somehow *representative of tragedy*' (emphasis Taplin's) is not very compelling.[9] Before resorting to such an intricate, quasi-allegorical reading, it is surely worthwhile seeing what happens if we take Aigisthos as himself and look for further clues in the very distinctive iconography of his costume, gesture, and facial expression.

The richly patterned, belted garment with sleeved undergarment, straps crossing the chest, mantle flowing down the back, and high-laced boots are all part of the theatrical costume of royal figures in South Italian vase-painting.[10] Aigisthos himself regularly wears some version of this costume in the one scene in which he is often represented, his murder at the hands of Orestes.[11] What is so striking here is the addition of the pilos and double spears, which in both Attic and South Italian red-figure are the standard attributes of the traveller.[12] The clear implication is that Aigisthos has just arrived from some distance away. Both the gesture of the hand raised to the head and the intent expression suggest, as Trendall rightly saw, perplexity or bewilderment.

To anticipate my conclusion, I believe we have a parody of the scene, staged somewhat differently in both Aischylos' *Choephoroi* and Sophokles' *Elektra,* in which Aigisthos arrives at the palace, drawn by a report that Orestes is dead. In the Aischylean version, Aigisthos is Orestes' first victim, then Klytaimestra, while in Sophokles the order of murders is reversed. It is hard to say for certain which version the comic playwright had in mind, or if he combined elements from both in constructing his parody.

In the *Elektra*, Aigisthos' absence from Mycenae is referred to twice. Early on, Elektra tells her companions that he is ἀγροῖσι (313) i.e. out of the town, and much later, when he is first spotted in the distance, he is said to come ἐκ προαστίου (1432). Hence the traveller's accoutrements on our vase. In the *Choephoroi*, his whereabouts are not mentioned, but the nurse must be sent to fetch him (734-35). In both tragedies, Aigisthos falls victim to a ruse. The chorus in the *Choephoroi* persuade the nurse to tell him to come alone, without his bodyguard (770-73).[13] Thus he will be less suspicious of Orestes' plot and more vulnerable to it. On Aigisthos' arrival, full of uncertainty and questions, the chorus gently urge him into the palace, to his death.[14] In Sophokles' play, Elektra lures Aigisthos into the palace, on the pretext of showing him the corpse of Orestes, where the real Orestes waits to kill him (1448-66). The premise common to both plays, that the blustering tyrant turns out to be so gullible and easily duped, could have invited comic elaboration of the confused and slow-witted king.

We cannot, of course, reconstruct the plot of a lost comedy on the basis of a single scene, but the action depicted here might run somewhat as follows. Aigisthos has arrived at the entrance to the palace to learn more of the death of Orestes, who is in fact already inside. Before he can go in, he is accosted by the two leaders of the semi-choruses. One tries to persuade him with tales of horror not to go in, while the other tells a very different story. The scene is staged as if in the courtroom or the Assembly, with Pyrrhias the slave acting as a kind of time-keeper and umpire. The mouth of his mask appears to be closed, and, since there are already three speaking actors in this scene, his part could well have been a silent one. With his outstretched right hand he indicates that it is the older Choregos's turn to speak. The younger Choregos impatiently waits his turn. Pyrrhias's elevated position and frontal face suggest that he communicates directly (if silently) with the audience. The puzzled Aigisthos doesn't know which to believe.

How the plot turns out we cannot say. There may, however, be a hint in a passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* that Taplin himself quotes in a different connection. It is characteristic of a comic plot, Aristotle writes, that 'those who are bitter enemies in the story, like Orestes and Aigisthos for example, become the best of friends before the final exit, and nobody dies at anybody's hands.'[15] If our vase does derive from such a play, we

[5] Trendall, *RVAP* 8.

[6] Trendall (n. 3) had earlier dismissed this possibility, but Taplin argues that *choregos* in the sense of leader of the chorus would not have been a natural usage in Old Comedy. The word occurs only rarely with the meaning chorus-leader, and then in its Doric form (e.g. *Lysistrata* 1315). *Cf.*, however, the title of a play by the poet of Middle Comedy Nikochares, Ἡρακλῆς χορηγός : H.G. Nesselrath, *Die attische Mittlere Kömodie* (Berlin 1990) 203, n. 69. It is not clear if this refers to Herakles in the role of a theatrical producer or chorus-leader.

[7] Taplin 62-63.

[8] Taplin 59.

[9] The argument that 'With his incestuous and murderous life-story he may represent tragedy as well as anyone' (Taplin 62) seems to me weak. One can think of many better 'representatives' of tragedy, especially since Aigisthos plays a supporting role at best in all the tragedies known to us.

[10] See A.D. Trendall, *Red figure vases of South Italy and Sicily* (London 1989) 262.

[11] See A. Kossatz-Deissmann, *Dramen des Aischylos auf westgriechischen Vasen* (Mainz 1978) 98-102, pll. 16-18.

[12] Some examples on South Italian vases: one of the Dioskouroi, on an Apulian bell-krater; *RVAP* pl. 32,3 (he has removed the pilos and holds it); Kadmos, on a Paestan lekanis; Trendall (n. 10) fig. 359. The pilos is the favorite headgear of that great traveller Odysseus, e.g. *RVAP* Supp. ii, pl. 35; Trendall (n. 10) figs. 9, 360, 376. The double spears are a frequent attribute of such travelling young heroes as Jason and Theseus.

[13] The bodyguard are referred to as 'spear-bearers' (769), perhaps alluded to in the spears Aigisthos carries on our vase.

[14] On the staging of this scene see O. Taplin, *The stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 346-48.

[15] 1453ª36-9; cited and translated by Taplin p. 82.

might imagine, for example, that Aigisthos finally enters the palace, with much trepidation, only to emerge, in a comic *paraprosdokian,* with Orestes, arm in arm, perhaps sharing a drink of wine.

In a later chapter of his book, entitled 'Paratragedy and paraiconography', Taplin usefully surveys and defines the various possible relationships of comic scenes in vase-painting to their theatrical prototypes. As he shows, some scenes reflect comic performance while others depend for their humour more on a knowledge of the earlier iconographical tradition of epic and tragic material.[16] When a painted scene is making fun of a serious heroic theme, it may be derived from a comedy in which this was the case (a 'paratragedy' in Taplin's terms),[17] but it may in addition travesty a well-known visual formula, such as Neoptolemos slaying Priam on the altar at Troy.[18]

If our interpretation of the New York krater is correct, then it will most likely have been inspired not by Aristophanes or another poet of Old Comedy, but rather by a Middle Comedy of the following generation. As H.-G. Nesselrath has recently demonstrated in detail, this was the heyday of parodies of traditional myths, including those earlier dramatized in tragedy, and especially the first two decades of Middle Comedy, ca. 400-380, the same years to which our vase belongs.[19] Though, as noted above, no play parodying the *Choephoroi* is specifically attested, other preserved titles suggesting an interest in related material include a *Thyestes* by Diokles and a *Eumenides* by the Old Comic poet Kratinos, who seems to be the main precursor of the Middle Comedy taste for travesties of myth.[20] The two principal characteristics of such parodies are the rationalization of supernatural elements in the myth and the presentation of mythological situations in terms of institutions drawn from contemporary Athenian life.[21] The latter could apply to the agon on our vase, construed as a political or legal debate.

Aischylos' *Oresteia* was well known to audiences in Magna Graecia, to judge from the many scenes drawn from it in South Italian vase-painting (more than in Attic).[22] There is also some evidence that Sophokles' *Elektra* was known, since on a Lucanian krater, Orestes and Pylades are shown bringing Elektra the urn supposedly containing the ashes of Orestes (*Elektra* 1113-25).[23] The scene at the tomb of Agamemnon was popular enough to be parodied on an Apulian vase (now only a fragment) with an ugly Elektra at the tomb.[24] If any comedy, then, were a good choice for revival in Magna Graecia, it would be one that burlesqued the well-known and much-loved Oresteia myth. The closest we may come to a suitable candidate in our souces is the *Orestes* of Alexis, but his career began only in the 350's, a generation too late to be associated with our vase.[25]

If the scene on the New York vase is indeed based on a Middle Comedy of the kind known to Aristotle, then it lends as much support to Taplin's thesis of the 'Athenianness' of phlyax vases as his own, rather more convoluted interpretation. It also gives us valuable new evidence for what was obviously a favourite device of Middle Comedy, viz. 'paratragedy', but one which is all too seldom represented in the surviving fragments.[26]

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[16] Taplin 79-83.

[17] This is best illustrated in his (and E. Csapo's) interpretation of an Apulian bell-krater in Würzburg showing the scene in the *Thesmophoriazousai* that parodies the *Telephos* of Euripides. See Taplin pl. 11.4 and pp. 36-40, with references to early discussions of the vase.

[18] Apulian bell-krater, Berlin F 3045; Taplin 82, pl. 18.19.

[19] Nesselrath (n. 6) 188-241. On parody of tragedy as a feature of early fourth century comedy see also T.B.L. Webster, *Studies in later Greek comedy* (Manchester 1953) 17-19.

[20] *Ibid* 203 with n. 68; 204 with n. 83.

[21] *Ibid* 236.

[22] See Kossatz-Deissmann (n. 11) 89-117.

[23] *Ibid.* 97, n. 546; A.D. Trendall, *The Red-figured vases of Lucania, Campania, and Sicily* (Oxford 1967) 650, pl. 63, 1.

[24] Basel, Collection of Herbert Cahn 223; Taplin pl. 20.21.

[25] For the suggestion of Meineke that the *Orestes* of Alexis did have a happy ending like the one referred to by Aristotle see G.F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: the argument* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957) 405, n. 145. On the chronology of Alexis see W.G. Arnott, 'The Suda on Alexis', in *Studi di filologia classica in honore di Giusto Monaco* I (Palermo, n.d.) 327-38.

[26] I wish to thank A.L. Boegehold for discussing my interpretation of this vase and making several valuable suggestions; the Editor and referees of the Journal, who do not accept all my arguments, for their advice; and Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman for the photograph reproduced here. After this paper was completed, further discussions of the New York krater appeared in the exhibition catalogue of the Fleischman Collection: *A passion for antiquities: ancient art from the collection of Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman* (Malibu 1994). Trendall, in his entry on the vase (p. 128), briefly anticipates the interpretation offered here, while Taplin (pp. 23-25) reiterates his earlier view. I am grateful to K. Hamma for sending me the relevant portions of the catalogue. I have not been able to consult the recent discussion of the vase by M. Schmidt, in *Vitae mimus* (Incontri del Dipartimento di Scienze dell' Antichità dell' Università di Pavia vi [1993] 37-38).

Eyeless in Argos; a reading of *Agamemnon* 416-19

πόθωι δ' ὑπερποντίας
φάσμα δόξει δόμων ἀνάσσειν·
εὐμόρφων δὲ κολοσσῶν
ἔχθεται χάρις ἀνδρί,
ὀμμάτων δ' ἐν ἀχηνίαις
ἔρρει πᾶσ' Ἀφροδίτα.

In the first stasimon of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the estranged Helen and Menelaus share the second strophe. Beginning with an account of Helen's departure from Argos and her arrival in Troy, the chorus shifts its focus, moving back to the city deserted by the Queen, and to Menelaus grieving in the palace. With Helen no longer there, and Menelaus prey to the *pothos* that her absence inspires, 'a *phasma* shall seem to rule the house. And the charm of beautiful *kolossoi* is hateful to the husband, and in the absence of eyes, gone is all Aphrodite' (415-19). The difficulties of the stanza are legion. Lines 412-13 pose textual problems that have never been resolved, while the conclusion of the strophe presents three fresh riddles: what is the nature of the *kolossoi,* what is their relevance to Menelaus and his bride, and how should the

New York, Fleischman Collection: Apulian bell-krater. Photograph courtesy of B. and L. Fleischman