

## NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

### THE COMIC ENCOMIUM AND ARISTOPHANES *CLOUDS* 1201-1211

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A RECURRENT FEATURE of Aristophanic comedy is what may be labelled the encomium.<sup>1</sup> In the latter part of the play the hero regularly achieves some kind of success or happiness; and this is saluted, often in a separate ode by the chorus. Such congratulations may be, as well as a natural outgrowth of the plot, a designed contrast to the chorus' mockery of individuals which is also typical of the latter part of an Aristophanic comedy.<sup>2</sup> The encomium is marked by words denoting the happiness or success of the protagonist; *εὐδαιμονεῖ* (*Ach.* 836), *εὐδαιμονικῶς . . . πράττει* (*Pax* 856-858), *ζηλῶ σε* (*Ach.* 1008), *ζηλῶ σε* (*Eq.* 837), *ζηλῶ γε . . . τὸν πρέσβυν* (*Vesp.* 1450-1451), *τὸν μάκαρα* (*Av.* 1722), *μακάριος* (*Ran.* 1482; cf. *Eccl.* 1112); and he may be hailed as a public benefactor (*Eq.* 836; *Pax* 910-921; *Av.* 1725; *Ran.* 1487). A fragment from the *Tagenistai* (491 Kock) seems to refer to this feature of Old Comedy:

A. τί οὖν ποιῶμεν; B. χλανίδ' ἐχρῆν λευκὴν λαβεῖν,  
εἴτ' Ἴσθμιακὰ λαβόντες ὥσπερ οἱ χοροὶ  
ᾄδωμεν εἰς τὸν δεσπότην ἐγκώμιον.<sup>3</sup>

In view of *ὥσπερ οἱ χοροὶ*, it can scarcely be spoken by the chorus; far more likely is it that this is an exchange between two slaves (cf. *εἰς τὸν δεσπότην*). In mentioning what *χοροὶ* do, the second speaker has in mind in the first instance songs in praise of athletic victors. But no doubt he is also alluding like Strepsiades in *Nub.* 1205 (quoted below), to the encomium characteristic of comedy: such self-referential remarks are a part of the genre<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I take this from *Nub.* 1205, discussed below: in general on the meaning of *ἐγκώμιον*, see A. E. Harvey, "The Classification of Greek Lyric Poetry," *CQ* 5 (1955) 163-164. On *μακαρισμοί*, see L. E. Rossi, "Il Ciclope di Euripide come *κῶμος* mancato," *Maia* 23 (1971) 19-21.

<sup>2</sup>Sometimes it makes the substance of the second parabasis: see *Ach.* 1150-1173, *Eq.* 1264-1315 (which begins as if it were an encomium), *Vesp.* 1265-1291; otherwise, see *Ach.* 839-859, *Av.* 1470-1493, 1553-1564, *Ran.* 1491-1514. The chorus' refusal to speak ill of anyone in *Lys.* 1043-1047 and *Thes.* 962-964 is more pointed when seen against this background.

<sup>3</sup>On this fragment, see S. Srebný, "Quaestiunculae comicae," *Eos* 43 (1948) 54; K. J. Dover, "Aristophanes 1938-1955," *Lustrum* 2 (1957) 106.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. F. Muecke, "Playing with the play: Theatrical self-consciousness in Aristophanes," *Antichthon* 11 (1977) 52-67.

(cf., e.g., *Ach.* 627; *Vesp.* 1536–1537; *Thes.* 1076–1077). And it commonly happens in Aristophanes that elements typical of comedy are compared or fused with elements of other festivities. Thus the comic mockery of *Ran.* 420–434 is, in its dramatic context, the γεφυρισμός of the Eleusinian mysteries; the comic revelry at the end of *Ach.* is the celebration of the Xóes; or the hymns which are part of the women's celebration of the Thesmophoria in *Thes.* 947–1000, 1136–1159 embody the invocation of the gods and the prayers for victory (973) which occur in comic parabasis-songs (*Eq.* 551–564, 581–593; *Nub.* 563–574, 595–606).<sup>5</sup>

The celebration of the hero may express something other than exuberant participation in his good fortune. In *Ach.* the chorus, while they congratulate Dicaeopolis, comment on his selfishness (1017 αὐτῷ διακονεῖται; 1037–1039 ἀνὴρ ἐνηύρηκεν<sup>6</sup> τι ταῖς / σπονδαῖσιν ἡδὺ κοῦκ (ἔοι—/κεν) οὐδενὶ μεταδώσειν). Sometimes, rather than overt misgivings, there may be implicit irony. Thus in *Eq.*, where both Demos and the Sausage-seller are congratulated (1319–1338; cf. 836–840; 457–460), we can hardly fail to have noticed that Demos has been restored and rejuvenated by someone who is merely the old Paphlagonian writ large. In *Vesp.* 1450–1472 the chorus congratulate Philocleon, but he has clearly not become fit for smart society and Bdelycleon, who was re-educating his father, has gone off in disgust at his antics. As in Aristophanic comedy as a whole, the festive note can go with a sharper and drier form of humour; and this may be part of what Aristophanes has in mind when he speaks of his work as appealing to the intelligent (e.g., *Nub.* 518–562; *Vesp.* 1010–1014; *Eccl.* 1155).

The most unusual handling of the encomium is *Nub.* 1201–1211:

Στ. εὖ γ' ὦ κακοδαίμονες, τί κάθησθ' ἀσβέλτεροι,  
 ἡμέτερα κέρδη τῶν σοφῶν ὄντες, λίθοι,  
 ἀριθμός, πρόβατ' ἄλλως, ἀμφορῆς νενησμένοι;  
 ὥστ' εἰς ἑμαυτὸν καὶ τὸν υἱὸν τουτονὶ  
 ἐπ' εὐτυχίαισιν ἄστέον μούγκῳμιον.  
     'μακαρ ὦ Στρεψιάδες  
     αὐτὸς τ' ἔφυς ὡς σοφός  
     χοῖον τὸν υἱὸν τρέφεις,  
     φήσουσι δὴ μ' οἱ φίλοι  
     χοὶ δημόται  
 ζηλοῦντες ἡνίκ' ἂν σὺ νικᾷς λέγων τὰς δίκας.

What stands out here is that Strepsiades, as he himself points out, sings his own encomium. Lines 1201–1203 are a kind of diversion which prepares for this unusual step: he pretends that the audience should salute him,<sup>7</sup> and when they do not, does so himself. The result is that the chorus

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Ed. Fraenkel, *Beobachtungen zu Aristophanes* (Rome 1962) 191–215.

<sup>6</sup>So Doboree; ἀνηύρηκεν codd.

<sup>7</sup>The joke here is reminiscent of the pseudo-invitations to the audience in *Lys.* 1058–

does not assume its usual role as encomiast, and Strepsiades has to invent a pseudo-chorus of friends and demesmen into whose mouth he puts the encomium; contrast *Ach.* 1227–1234, where Dicaeopolis starts the song in celebration of his own victory (as *ἐπερ καλεῖς γ'* in 1228 brings out), but the chorus then join in.<sup>8</sup> This is a part of the dramatic preparation for the *Clouds*' revealing themselves at 1452–1461, where it becomes clear that so far from being the patrons of sophistry, they are affiliated to the traditional gods and execute justice as they do:<sup>9</sup> this was already suggested in the parodos, where they rejoice in the Athenians' piety (299–313), and in the parabasis, where they call on the Olympians (as well as on *Αἰθήρ*) and treat the Sun and Moon as their fellows, sharing their displeasure at the Athenians' misdeeds.<sup>10</sup> It is also apt that Strepsiades should boast just before a change of fortune, when the son whom he praises together with himself turns his new found skills against his father: thus the dramatic irony, also present in the encomia in *Eq.* and *Vesp.*, is very sharp in *Nub.* The encomium, like other features of this play, shows Aristophanes' humour in a particularly ingenious and particularly cutting form. In *Nub.* we actually see the triumphant hero discomfited; and that makes his boasting stand out the more vividly as the pride which comes before a fall. The whole conclusion of the play, and this part of it, show too with what commitment Aristophanes attacks in *Nub.* the evils caused by sophistic education, as he himself proclaims in his description of the *Clouds* in *Vesp.* 1037–1044.<sup>11</sup>

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1071, 1189–1215, *Eccl.* 1140–1184 or the pseudo-request to them in *Ach.* 206–207, on which see Fraenkel, *op. cit.* 21; D. Bain, "Audience address in Greek tragedy," *CQ* 25 (1975) 24. On comic insults of the spectators, see K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality* (Oxford 1974) 24.

<sup>8</sup>For self-praise following praise from the chorus, see *Eq.* 1387, *Pax* 865–867, 918–921. Pherecrates fr. 5 seems to follow a self-makarismos, as Bentley (quoted by Kock) saw.

<sup>9</sup>For the conception of divine justice in lines 1458–1461, see Dover's commentary, page 272, and Hom. *Iliad* 9.510–512; Hdt. 2.120.5; Antiphon 3 γ 8, δ 10; Lys. 6.19; Aeschines 3.117; Lycurg. *In Leocr.* 92. Further, K. Latte, "Schuld und Sühne in der griechischen Religion," *ARW* 20 (1920/21) 278 = *Kleine Schriften* (Munich 1968) 20. It has been well discussed on a large scale by H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley and London 1971); see esp. 60–63, 88–89.

<sup>10</sup>On the treatment of the chorus in *Nub.*, cf. C. Segal, "Aristophanes' Cloud-Chorus," *Arethusa* 2 (1969) 143–161 = *Wege der Forschung* 265 (1975) 174–197.

<sup>11</sup>The exegesis of these lines by Wilamowitz, *SBBerlin* 1911, 468–470 = *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Berlin 1935) 294–296 is excellent. (MacDowell's note on line 1038 is unhelpful.)