

LOOKING FOR THE “OTHER” GNESIPPUS:  
SOME NOTES ON EUPOLIS FRAGMENT 148 K-A

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NINETY YEARS AFTER MAAS' authoritative reassessment of Gnesippus' literary identity as floating between a shocking heterodox tragedian displaying a chorus of depilatory slave girls (Cratinus frags. 17 and 276) and a vicious composer of erotic songs (Chionides frag. 4, Cratinus frag. 104, and Teleclides frag. 36),<sup>1</sup> Eupolis' fragment 148 (from *The Helots*)<sup>2</sup> seems to have raised increasing interest among scholars. Recently Gnesippus' νυκτερινὰ ἀείσματα have been variously credited with being one of the earliest pieces of evidence for the new fashion of reciting tragic speeches at symposia,<sup>3</sup> the earliest surviving example of *paraklausithyron*,<sup>4</sup> and our first literary evidence of the erotic dramatic mime as an already well-codified and recognizable genre.<sup>5</sup> The text of the fragment we are presently concerned with (Eupolis frag. 148 = Ath. 14.638e) is the following:

τὰ Στσηχόρου τε καὶ Ἀλκμᾶνος Σιμωνίδου τε  
ἀρχαῖον ἀεῖδεν, ὁ δὲ Γνήσιππος ἔστ' ἀκούειν.  
κεῖνος νυκτερίν' ἦρε μοιχοῖς ἀείσματ' ἐκκαλεῖσθαι  
γυναῖκας ἔχοντας ἱαμβύκην τε καὶ τρίγωνον

To sing the songs of Stesichorus, Alcman, and Simonides is old-fashioned; rather Gnesippus is the one to hear. He invented nocturnal songs for adulterers with iambyke and trigonon in their hands<sup>6</sup> to call out women.<sup>7</sup>

Comic fragments, when not otherwise specified, are quoted according to Kassel and Austin's edition.

1. See Maas 1912. Maas' main contribution is his skepticism about Bergk's attempt to fit these data into a straightforward, but forced, frame (Bergk 1838, 33); Maas argues for the necessity of a broader approach to the topic than Bergk's *Quellenforschung*.

2. The authorship of *Helots* seems to have been a matter of debate since antiquity, see Storey (1990, 7, 30; 1991, 4–7; and 2003, 174–75), who ultimately argues for dating the *Helots* to the earliest stage of Eupolis' career, i.e., to 429 or 428–27 B.C.E., on the basis both of Σ ad Ar. *Eq.* 1225a (μιμῆται δὲ τοὺς Εὐλωτας ὅταν στεφανώσι τὸν Ποσειδῶνα, as understood by Sommerstein 1980, 51–53) and of Cratinus frag. 283, referring to Hyperbolus' early political activity. Criticism of new fashions of singing at symposia is a frequent topic of Eupolidean comedies (frags. 326, 395, 398).

3. Cameron (1995, p. 72 n. 6), who seems to believe that the Gnesippus of Eupolis frag. 148 is the “tragic” one.

4. Cummings 2001.

5. Davidson 2000, followed by Wilkins 2000, p. 242 with n. 178. Skepticism about this view has been expressed by Hordern (2003), who, however, does not pay detailed attention to our fragment. For the distinction between nonliterary dramatic mimes and Sophron's literary ones, see Mastromarco 1991, pp. 170–71 with n. 7.

6. Van Herwerden's normalizing ἔχουσιν at line 4 (1855, 24) is unnecessary: the transmitted reading ἔχοντας and the consequent shift from dative (line 3, μοιχοῖς) to accusative (line 4) have been reasonably advocated by Wilamowitz (1921, p. 385, n. 1).

7. I agree with Conti Bizzarro (2000, p. 69, n. 35) and Cummings (2001, 39) in interpreting γυναῖκας as the direct object of ἐκκαλεῖσθαι: for the middle form ἐκκαλεῖσθαι meaning “[to] call forth, elicit” (LSJ,

Most likely what we are told by an unidentified character<sup>8</sup> is that nowadays trendy sympotic conduct does not any more require one to sing to the lyre excerpts from archaic choral lyric (Stesichorus, Alcman, and Simonides as icons of the obsolete taste of the traditionalist)—a conservative practice that the snobbish Pheidippides will expose to ridicule some years later in *Nubes* 1357–58.<sup>9</sup> What is popular instead is to perform Gnesippus' debauched songs to the accompaniment of the iambyke and trigonon, stringed instruments akin to the harp but traditionally perceived as more sensual and voluptuous.<sup>10</sup>

In a sense, the opposition drawn is therefore clear enough: in what seems likely to be a sympotic context, past and present types of entertainment are compared, Gnesippus representing the new-fashioned and increasingly dominant alternative,<sup>11</sup> enticing the *jeunesse dorée* of the wealthy Athenian upper-class.<sup>12</sup> But what kind of compositions did Gnesippus actually perform? Is there any chance of pinpointing the nature of these songs? And to what audience were Gnesippus' νυκτερινὰ ἀείσματα addressed? For what formal occasion, private or public, were they conceived? Are we really dealing with our earliest (and we should add, only) literary evidence for the Classical age of an otherwise widespread, though politically marginalized, phenomenon—that is, the literary subgenre of the dramatic erotic mime, as argued by Davidson?<sup>13</sup>

Before trying to suggest some positive answers to the questions raised above, let us start with Davidson's engaging hypothesis, which, if true, would involve a thorough revision of the accepted chronology of the mime as a well-defined and self-consciously structured literary genre.

### 1.1 GNESIPPUS' "MERRY" MUSE AND THE EROTIC MIME:

#### A *LIAISON DANGEREUSE*

Mime, music, sex, and low social strata are the appealing features singled out by Davidson in his very informative (and idiosyncratic) overview of the

s.v. ἐκκαλέω II.2) in a parodied context of love serenade, see also Ar. *Vesp.* 218–21, where Philocleon's old colleagues try to persuade him to come out singing Phrynichus' sweet arias (μυνορίζοντες μέλη / ἀρχαῖα μελισιδονοφρυγχήματα, / οἷς ἐκκαλοῦνται τοῦτον).

8. For an attempt at a broader contextualization of the fragment, see section 3 of this paper.

9. ὁ δ' εὐθέως ἀρχαῖον εἶν' ἔφασκε τὸ καθαρίζειν / ἄιδειν τε πίνονθ', ὥσπερὶ κάχρως γυναικ' ἀλοῦσαν.

10. Cf. West 1992, pp. 75–76 with n. 127. The erotic overtone attached to the iambyke and trigonon is a well-exploited feature in comedy; see Ar. frag. 255; Plato frag. 71.13 (a sympotic context); Philemo frag. 45.5.

11. Davidson (2000, 41) argues that the use of the past tense (ἦντο) at line 3 of our fragment could imply that Gnesippus had died by the time of *Helots*. This inference seems to me unnecessary for two reasons. First, we have to take into account the possibility that the aorist of a verb conveying the notion of "discovery, invention" may point out the specific, definite act of the discovery itself. Secondly, if we date the *Helots* to the 420s B.C.E. (see n. 2 above) and if we put Gnesippus' heyday in the 430s (Davidson 2000, 41), there is no need to draw such an inference.

12. The possibility that the recipient of Gnesippus' new songs may be from lower levels of Athenian society cannot be entirely ruled out, yet the parallels provided by similar sympotic scenes in Aristophanes' *Banqueters*, *Wasps*, and *Clouds* seem to point towards a quite comfortable sociological background: see Fisher 2000, 356–57 (esp. n. 5).

13. Davidson 2000, 42 and 52–55.

literary pedigree of the dramatic mime. It must be said from the outset that most of the evidence quoted by Davidson is sound and refers to the Hellenistic and Roman era when mime and pantomime seem to play a popular role in sophisticated entertainments.<sup>14</sup> All this contributes to a welcome, detailed, and often insightful survey of the standard evidence for the history of the mime.

What is debatable is Davidson's attempt to trace back to the fifth century B.C.E. the existence of the dramatic mime as an already "recognisable literary and social phenomenon,"<sup>15</sup> that is, as a self-consciously codified literary genre. Davidson argues that the well-attested meaning of "mime" conveyed from the late Hellenistic period onward by the Greek word *παίγνιον*<sup>16</sup> can already be detected in and transferred to some Classical antecedents.<sup>17</sup> What is at stake here is not the existence *tout court* of some kind of private dramatic entertainment already in Classical Athens. As pointed out by Csapo and Slater,<sup>18</sup> as early as the 420s B.C.E. we find some hybrid forms of dramatized performances that oscillate between dance and acting, a well-known example being the bridal between Dionysos and Ariadne performed by slave-dancers and kithara players at a party at Callias' house (Xen. *Symp.* 9.2–7). Yet even this case cannot be ultimately regarded as proper evidence for pantomime or mime in the fifth century,<sup>19</sup> as Xenophon's picture presents a blurred array of elements that reveal a later origin.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, granted that already from the earliest times a great variety of private entertainments existed, regarding Gnesippus' *αἰίσματα* as the institutionalized missing link between the Hellenistic evidence about the performance of mime and the Classical vacuum on that issue goes a step too far. For the same reasons, Davidson's nominalistic argumentation (focusing on the genre-codified meaning of *παίγνιον* also in fifth-century Athens), turns out to be equally suspicious. But now let us look directly at the evidence alleged by Davidson in support of his hypothesis.

Davidson's starting point is Athenaeus' description of Gnesippus as a *παίγνιαγράφος* τῆς ἱλαρᾶς μούσης (14.638d). While scholars have usually understood *παίγνιαγράφος* (a *hapax*) as a generic expression meaning something like "writer of playful poetry,"<sup>21</sup> Davidson suggests that "in fact

14. See Csapo and Slater 1994, 369–73.

15. Davidson 2000, 42.

16. Occurrences quoted by Davidson (2000, 44) include esp. Suet. *Aug.* 99 = frag. adesp. 925 K-A; and Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 712e–f (within the umbrella-term *μῦμοι*, Plutarch distinguishes between *ὑποθέσεις*, longer and more complicated in the matter of stage-business, and *παίγνια*, whose hallmarks are buffoonery and scandal). Add to these the epigraphic evidence first published by Yilmaz and Şahin (1993) and re-edited by Voutiras (1995) and Merkelbach and Stauber (2002, 37–38). At lines 8–9 of the *βιολόγος* Eucharistos' epitaph, dated to the second/third century C.E., we find the term *παίγνιον* referring to the compositions of Philition, the famous *μυμογράφος* whose floruit falls within the Augustan period (cf. Voutiras 1995, p. 67, n. 38).

17. Davidson 2000, 52 and 54.

18. Csapo and Slater 1994, 370.

19. Suffice it to note that this representation, although largely pantomimic, does not seem to involve the use of masks; cf. Csapo and Slater 1994, 370.

20. Cf. esp. Huss 1999, 53; while the dramatic date of the *Symposium* is 422/21 B.C.E., Xenophon probably wrote it in the early 360s.

21. LSJ, s.v. *παίγνιαγράφος*; in the same direction, Gulick's translation reads "playful writer of the lascivious muse" (Gulick 1950, 447), cf. Citelli 2001, 1650 "compositore di poesie leggere del genere allegro."

Gnesippus is a writer of *paignia*,” *παιγνιαγράφος* being in this case the technical term referring to an author of dramatic mimes.<sup>22</sup> Several aspects of Davidson’s interpretation lend themselves to detailed criticism. First, the inference that *παιγνιαγράφος*, which is not otherwise attested, is a technical term, that is, the word commonly used to designate a writer of dramatic mimes and recognizable as such by Athenaeus,<sup>23</sup> is puzzling. Athenaeus himself, when he wants to refer to mime performances and their writers (including dramatic as well as literary mime), usually resorts to other better attested formulae.<sup>24</sup>

Secondly, if *παιγνιαγράφος* were the technical term for a codified literary genre—that is, a self-explanatory, all-inclusive label—we would not expect the following words *τῆς ἰλαρᾶς μούσης*. On the contrary, just this further specification suggests that *παιγνιαγράφος* must be intended as a generic term referring to the playful, frivolous features of Gnesippus’ poetry. The link between “merriness,” the Muse, and love is well exploited in ancient Greek literature, especially in sympotic and epigrammatic poetry,<sup>25</sup> and perfectly fits what we know about Gnesippus’ Muse from the other fragments quoted by Athenaeus (Chionides frag. 4 and Cratinus frag. 104).

Thirdly, Davidson’s peculiar interpretation of *παιγνιαγράφος* (Gnesippus as a writer of dramatic mimes) seems ultimately to dismiss as irrelevant Athenaeus’ broader context. If we look at the whole section (from 14.637f onward), we see that Athenaeus’ discourse, in spite of its erudite showing off of an endless number of *minutiae*, shows an underlying inner consistency. Here at a glance is a brief sketch of the section.

According to a rationalist and positivist view of human progress, Athenaeus’ attention is first devoted to kithara playing, that is, to instrumental performances without song (*ἡ ψιλὴ κιθάρισις*): from 637f to 638a6 we are told about Aristonicus of Argos, Lysander of Sicyon, and the Chian Dion. Then, from 638a7 onward the focus shifts from *κιθαριστική* to *κιθαρωιδία* proper. After naming Stesander of Samos, Ametor of Eleutherna, and the kitharodos Oenonias, Athenaeus turns his attention to poets of *μοχθηρὰ ᾠσματα* (i.e., still kitharodoi, as clarified by the following comparison with Terpander and Phrynis at 638c), quoting apropos, via the historian Phaenias of Eresus (late fourth century B.C.E.), an otherwise unknown Telenicus of Byzantium and the fourth-century poet Argas, ironically alluded to by Alexis fragment 19 and Anaxandrides fragment 16.

22. Davidson 2000, 42.

23. Davidson 2000, 52–53: “even if we cannot assume that *Paignia* was the title of his [Gnesippus]’ works, we can at least infer that poets of the mid-fifth century were composing lyrical mimes which were recognisable as *paignia* to Athenaeus and probably to his source.”

24. See, e.g., Ath. 7.286d, 7.306d (respectively, Σώφρων δ’ ἐν μίμοις ἀνδρείοις and Σώφρων δ’ ἐν γυναικείοις μίμοις), 10.452f (the herald Isomachus, a zealous fan of the mimaulos Cleon, . . . ὑπεκρίνετο μίμους), 11.504b (ὁ τοῦς μίμους πεποικώς, referring again to the literary mimes of Sophron). The standard words, endorsed by both epigraphic and literary evidence, referring to “mime writer,” seem to have been *μιμογράφος* or *μιμολόγος*, together with other periphrastic expressions (*ἔγραψε μίμους* and so on). For *μιμογράφος* cf., e.g., Gal. 2.631.16 Kühn; Diog. Laert. 3.18.1 (Sophron); Phot. *Lexicon*, s.v. Πρηνίους (Sophron); *μινογράφου* cod.: *μιμογράφου* Naber; for *μιμολόγος* cf., e.g., Joseph *Vit.* 16.2; and *Anth. Pal.* 7.556.2.

25. Cf. *Anth. Pal.* 5.135.3, 7.419.3–4, 10.19.5–6.

It is at this point, that is, within the digression on the *μοχθηρὰ ἄσματα*, which is a minor subsection of the broader heading “kitharodia,” that we find Athenaeus’ first mention of Gnesippus (14.638d, quoted above). His *ἴλαρὰ μοῦσα* is therefore introduced as a further example belonging to the same kind of debauched lyrics performed by Telenicus or Argas. In this sense it is worth noting that in the first of Athenaeus’ six quotations concerning Gnesippus (Chionides frag. 4 cited above), our poet is closely associated with Cleomenes, another lyric poet known as an author of erotic songs and mentioned together with the more famous Cinesias and Philoxenus as a significant representative of the New Dithyramb.<sup>26</sup> As we have already seen, this picture of Gnesippus as a somehow frivolous, fashionable poet of erotic songs is endorsed also by Cratinus fragment 104, and even in Cratinus’ two other more problematic fragments (frags. 17 and 276)<sup>27</sup> the common guideline underlying Athenaeus’ quotations is the contemptibility and indecency of Gnesippus’ poetry. It is not by chance that the last words of Cratinus fragment 276 read *μέλη πονηρά*, and that in an excursus whose main topic is poets of *μοχθηρὰ ἄσματα*.

Therefore both the generally macroscopic (Athenaeus’ broader narrative frame) and the minutely philological (the interpretation of *παιγνιαγράφου* τῆς ἴλαρᾶς μούσης) seem to lead to a different conclusion from Davidson. At least as to Athenaeus 638d, we are not dealing with the hitherto unacknowledged “inventor” of the dramatic mime as a literary genre but with a “perverted” son of a broader lyric tradition (the kitharodia).

Let us turn to the other pieces of evidence alleged by Davidson as referring to dramatic mime in the Classical period.

## 1.2 GNESIPPUS AND THE “ARISTOPHANIC MIME”

The first passage to be discussed is Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 700–703, where the women’s chorus leader, complaining about the deprivations imposed by war legislation, refers to a *παιγνία* organized for Hecate, a festive occasion for which she has unsuccessfully tried to call for a beloved friend of hers (an eel) from the neighbors (the Boeotians):

ὥστε καὶ θῆκάτην ποιοῦσα παιγνίαν ἐγὼ  
ταῖσι παισὶ τὴν ἑταίραν ἐκάλεσ’ ἐκ τῶν γειτόνων,  
παῖδα χρηστὴν καὶ γαπητὴν ἐκ Βοιωτῶν ἔγγελυν,  
οἱ δὲ πέμψειν οὐκ ἔφασκον διὰ τὰ σά ψηφίσματα.

The keystone of Davidson’s interpretation is the expression *θῆκάτην ποιοῦσα παιγνίαν* (700) and the subsequent mention of the eel as *τὴν ἑταίραν* (701). While scholars have usually accepted for *παιγνία* the meaning “feast, party” as glossed by Σ RΓ, and for *τὴν ἑταίραν* that of “friend,”<sup>28</sup> Davidson argues (1) that *παιγνία* refers here to a specific ritual mime in

26. Cf. respectively Epicrates frag. 4 (Cleomenes listed together with Sappho, Meletus, and Lamynthius) and Σ ad Ar. *Nub.* 333a.

27. See § 2 below.

28. Cf. Henderson 1987, 162, quoting Ar. *Eccl.* 528 (γονὴ . . . τις . . . ἑταῖρα καὶ φίλη).

honor of Hecate and (2) that ἑταῖρα must be understood as “courtesan” on the assumption that hetaerae were present at many women’s festivals.<sup>29</sup> As to (1), nobody will deny the loosely religious character of such a festive occasion, but identifying *tout court* this παιγνία with “some ritual mime” is exceedingly speculative. What is prominent here is not the ritual overtone involving sacrifice, but the worldly concern of a gourmand, a party-loving woman. Secondly, *pace* Davidson, *Lysistrata* 700 is not the only evidence for παιγνία meaning “feast,” “ludicrous activity.” The LSJ revised Supplement records also Herodas 3.54–55: . . . κοῦδ’ ὕπνος νιν αἰρεῖται / νοῦνθ’ ὅτ’ ἦμος παιγνίην ἀγινῆτε (when there is a day-off, the school-teacher Cottalos is not able to sleep at the thought of his pupils being on holiday [παιγνίην ἀγινεῖν]). As to (2), Davidson’s remark that “the description of the ‘hetaera’ as παῖδα χρηστήν κἀγαπητήν suggests at first a courtesan rather than an old woman’s old friend”<sup>30</sup> seems misleading. Once granted that the two meanings usually conveyed by the word ἑταῖρα (“female prostitute” and “friend”) are both well attested in Aristophanes’ plays,<sup>31</sup> in *Lysistrata* 701–2 the context is the conclusive element supporting one sense or another. The apposition παῖδα χρηστήν κἀγαπητήν at 701 could hardly qualify the female guest of 700 as a prostitute. A few lines above (697) analogous epithets have been used by the women’s chorus leader of her friend Ismenia (ἥ τε Θηβαία φίλη παῖς εὐγενῆς Ἰσμηνία), who certainly is not supposed to be a hetaera.<sup>32</sup>

All in all, it seems safer to go on regarding Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 700–703 as a successful witticism on female gluttony rather than an isolated piece of evidence for a ritual dramatic mime performed in Classical Athens.

The second piece of evidence alleged by Davidson to support his thesis is Aristophanes fragment 719, an unplaced fragment that “seems to refer unequivocally to ‘putting on *paignia*’ in the classical period”:<sup>33</sup>

ῥήματά τε κομψὰ καὶ παίγνι’ ἐπιδεικνύναι  
πάντ’ ἀπ’ ἀκροφυσίων κἀπὸ καναβευμάτων

According to Davidson, in this fragment Aristophanes was talking of “putting on fancy verses and *paignia* all new, straight from the bellows, straight from the moulds,” an inference supported by the linguistic remark that “the use of the active rather than a middle form of ἐπιδείκνυμι seems to preclude the sense of ‘showing off.’ It is the usual verb for putting on shows of this kind, and it is used by Plutarch for putting on *paignia* (*Mor.* 712e; cf. *Xen. Symp.* 2.2, 2.13).”<sup>34</sup> Yet, if we pay detailed attention to the fragment, it can be argued that the most likely interpretation of these two lines is a different one.

29. Davidson 2000, p. 48 and p. 59, n. 13.

30. Davidson 2000, 48.

31. For ἑταῖρα as “friend, companion,” see *Eq.* 589 and *Eccl.* 528; for the meaning of “courtesan” see *Pax* 440 (with Olson 1998, ad loc.), *Thesm.* 346, *Eccl.* 23, 1161, *Plut.* 149, and frag. 148.

32. Cf. also ταῖσι παῖσι at 701 referring to the other female guests of the party: already Rogers (1911, 88) pointed out that the Copic eel “is here described as if it were a virtuous and well-loved maiden, a worthy companion of ‘the boys’” (Rogers accepted at 701 the erroneous reading τοῖσι [παῖσι] transmitted by RS).

33. Davidson 2000, 52.

34. Davidson 2000, p. 50 and p. 60, n. 19.

First, Davidson's interpretation seems at least to dismiss, if not to contradict, the broader context in which our fragment is embedded—that is, the very reason for which it has been cited by the *Suda*. The *Suda*'s entry (ἀπ' ἀκροφυσίων λόγους ἐνδεικνύναι, α 2874) is glossed as οἶονεὶ καινοὺς καὶ νεοποιήτους (referring, of course, to λόγους), thus making clear from the outset that what is at stake is a linguistic issue (namely, the creation of semantic as well as lexical innovations). It is at this point that we run into the Aristophanic quotation, immediately explained in the following terms: λέγει γὰρ διὰ μὲν τοῦ ἀπ' ἀκροφυσίων, καινῶς εἰργασμένα καὶ οἷον ἐκ πυρός, διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀπὸ κινναβευμάτων, οἷον καινῶς πεπλασμένα καὶ διάθεσιν ἔχοντα κτλ. It is therefore clear that *Suda*'s compiler (and most likely his source, that is, Phrynichus' *Synagoge*) quotes Aristophanes' lines as a further example of the idiomatic phrase glossed above. We are thus allowed to believe that Aristophanes' words too are referring to the same topic. In other words, in fragment 719 Aristophanes is more likely mocking the bombastic style, abounding with new, witty words (ῥήματά τε κομψά)<sup>35</sup> and affected jokes (παίγνια), of some trendy rival<sup>36</sup> than alluding to some dramatic mime put onstage.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, as to the active form of ἐπιδείκνυμι, the objection raised by Davidson (a more widespread use of the middle form to convey the meaning of “showing off, displaying, exhibiting”) represents a trend and not an absolute rule. The use of ἐπιδείκνυμι followed by a direct object like “speech, discourse, declamation or some kind of poetic composition (rhapsody, tragedy, and so on)” is not unparalleled: see, for example, the instance of Plato *Laws* 658b7–c1.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, on the basis of the data collected here, it seems better grounded to regard Aristophanes fragment 719 as a further piece of

35. That Aristophanes' words in fragment 719 must be understood as mocking and derogatory seems to be suggested also by the use of the qualifier κομψός, usually employed by Aristophanes in parodic or ironic contexts: cf. *Eq.* 18, *Vesp.* 1317, *Ran.* 967, *Nub.* 649, *Thesm.* 93, 460, *Ach.* 1016, *Av.* 195.

36. Taillardat (1962, p. 443 with n. 3) suggested that the character ridiculed by Aristophanes in frag. 719 could be the tragedian Agathon, criticized as an unskilled poet; Radermacher (1951, 57) believed that Aristophanes was alluding to sophistic display pieces.

37. Davidson's translation “putting on fancy verses and *paignia* all new” is misleading: ῥήματα does not mean “verses” here but just “words.” Besides, if we accept Davidson's interpretation of παίγνια as a term denoting a specific literary genre and of δεικνύναι as referring to the proper *mise-en-scène*, it seems hard to explain the syntax of the first line, as ῥήματά τε κομψά καὶ παίγνια is clearly a hendiadys for “witticism.” On the other hand, the only other occurrence of *paignion* in Aristophanes' plays (*Eccl.* 922) does not mean “dramatic mime” at all; see below.

38. LSI's entry s.v. ἐπιδείκνυμι I.1 records also *Ar. Eq.* 349 ἐπιδεικνύς, suggesting that the direct object τὸν λόγον is to be understood here. Yet this parallel is unfortunately only an alleged one. At *Eq.* 347–50, Paphlagon is ridiculing the forensic and oratorical skill shown off by the sausage seller, who is able to spend the whole night thinking and rethinking his own contrived discourse, vexing his domestic audience by means of an exhausting rehearsal: εἰ που δικίδιον εἶπας εὐ κατὰ ξένου μετοίκου, / τὴν νύκτα θρυλῶν καὶ λαλῶν ἐν ταῖς δόσις σεαυτοῖ, / ὅθωρ τε πίνων κάπιδεικνύς τοὺς φίλους τ' ἀνίων, / ὧιου δυνατὸς εἶναι λέγειν. The syntax of the whole sentence is clear enough: κάπιδεικνύς, as well as θρυλῶν and λαλῶν, should be understood as intransitive, cf. Henderson 1998, 275 (“and rehearsing with your friends till you got on their nerves”) and Sommerstein 1981, 45 (“rehearsing to an audience and exasperating your friends”). On the other hand, the misunderstanding attested by the Σ VEG<sup>3</sup>M *Eq.* 349c (κάπιδεικνύς: τουτέστι καταδήλους τοὺς λαθάνοντας ξένους ποιῶν) testifies to the absolute use here of ἐπιδείκνυμι: the scholiast did not understand that the verb was used intransitively and, as pointed out already by Dübner (app. ad loc. lines 13–14), “videtur ἐνδεῖν in animo habuisse.”

evidence for a broader cultural and literary debate whose outlines Aristophanes' plays permit us to sketch.<sup>39</sup>

The third Aristophanic passage quoted by Davidson in support of his literary "archaeology" of mime is perhaps the most engaging and debatable. Davidson argues that *Ecclesiazusae* 877–1111 does in fact represent "Aristophanes' version of one of these *paignia*." The luxurious old woman, the licentious girl, and the boy passing by would be the actual performers of an erotic mime consciously (and recognizably) embedded in the comedy as a part of the entertainment for the dinner announced at lines 834–52.<sup>40</sup> Yet his reading rests on weak ground. Once again, we are faced with Davidson's too restrictive interpretation of *παίγνιον* and related words. According to Davidson, *παίζουσα* delivered by the hag at 881 means "performing a *paignion*," and her complaint at 921–22 about the girl's disturbing presence refers to her own regret at being forced to interrupt the mime.<sup>41</sup> As already pointed out by Ussher, *παίζουσα* at 881 must be understood as closely related to the following *περιλάβοιμι* as part of the same metaphorical domain (that of the amorous "hunt").<sup>42</sup> As for 921–22, even apart from the much debated issue of the attribution of the lines to the hag or to the young girl,<sup>43</sup> the most likely meaning of *τὰμὰ παίγνια* seems to be that of "playmates" with a clearly erotic overtone.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, as to line 888, I cannot agree with Davidson's remark that "the audience referred to . . . is not a metatheatrical allusion to the Athenians in the Theatre of Dionysus, but denotes the banqueters of the play, by now on to the second table and the drinking, as the servant indicates at 1112."<sup>45</sup> The dinner announced at 834–52 is out of focus at this point in the dramatic development. We have to wait until 1112 before the dinner is explicitly mentioned a second time, and 887–89 work as an inner stage direction, announcing the following lyric duet to the audience.<sup>46</sup> Thus the most convincing interpretation, in terms of genre and literary codes, of *Ecclesiazusae* 877–1111 seems still to be that proposed by Olson.<sup>47</sup> Provided that we have to look for a "label" encompassing the literary background of this passage, the most suitable one seems to be that of a sophisticated parody of a well-known and recognizable poetic topos, the *paraklausithyron*. So much for the alleged "Aristophanic mime."

39. For Aristophanes' polemic against the *ὀνόματα κατὰ* coined by politicians and orators, see especially Ar. frag. 205.

40. Davidson 2000, 50–51.

41. *Ibid.*, 51.

42. Ussher 1973, 196; for *παίζω* associated with hunting, see Jebb 1907 ad Soph. *El.* 566–67.

43. See Davidson 2000, p. 60, n. 21; and Sommerstein 1998, 217 ad 918–27.

44. See Sommerstein's translation "playmates" (1998, 218), on the basis of Anaxandrides frag. 9.3; and Plut. *Ant.* 59.8, where "Greek *paignia*, lit. 'playthings,' [is] used of sexual partners," referring respectively to a hetaera and to Sarmientos, one of Octavian's darlings. To these passages we can add *Anth. Pal.* 5.166 (Meleager), where the new person beloved is called *νέα παίγνια*; cf. Gow and Page, 1965, 2:636, ad 4266.

45. Davidson 2000, 51.

46. For *οἱ θεώμενοι* as a standard term that Aristophanes uses to refer to the audience, see Ussher 1973, 197 ad loc.

47. Olson 1988.



Let us turn again to our starting point, Gnesippus' merry muse and his nighttime indecent songs. If, as argued, the picture of Gnesippus as a representative of dramatic mime is to be dismissed, sweet music, licentious songs, social impropriety, and merry lightness still remain the idiosyncratic hallmark of Gnesippus' αἰίσματα. The next step is thus to try to gain from Eupolis fragment 148 some insight into the pleasurable life and leisure activities in sympotic contexts of the Athenian elite in the second half of the fifth century B.C.E.

## 2. GNESIPPUS AND THE "TRAGIC" SYMPOSIUM: SOME OBSERVATIONS ON CRATINUS FRAGMENTS 17 AND 276

Once we have dismissed the hypothesis of Gnesippus as the pioneer of the erotic dramatic mime, the problem still remains of ascertaining to what extent the image of Gnesippus as a tragedian is a reliable one.<sup>48</sup> We have already seen that Eupolis fragment 148 has been regarded as one of the earliest pieces of evidence for the new fashion of reciting tragic speech at symposia,<sup>49</sup> but what is the evidence that this interpretation relies on? And even granted that a Gnesippus τραγωιδιογράφος really existed, is this interpretation consistent with what we can get out of this fragment? And, above all, and quite apart from its historical reliability, what kind of social imagery does the "tragic" allure convey, which the fiction of the comic world seems to ascribe to Gnesippus? Or, to put it into a broader perspective, what does the strong "chorocentric" interest pointed out by Cratinus fragments 17 and 276 mean in terms of social practice? Finally, can these reflections help us to cast new light on Eupolis fragment 148?

Let us start again with Athenaeus. Putting aside for the moment Eupolis fragment 148, we have previously argued that Athenaeus' first two quotations concerning Gnesippus (Chionides frag. 4 and Cratinus frag. 104) are consistent with a debauched κιθαρῳιδός of πονηρὰ αἰίσματα. According to the order followed by Athenaeus, the next quotation to be discussed is thus Cratinus fragment 17:

ὅς οὐκ ἔδωκ' αἰτοῦντι Σοφοκλέει χορόν,  
τῷ Κλεομάχου δ', ὃν οὐκ ἂν ἤξιουν ἐγὼ  
ἐμοὶ διδάσκειν οὐδ' ἂν εἰς Ἀδώνια

who did not give Sophocles a chorus when he asked, but did to the son of Cleomachus, whom I would not regard worthy of producing for me, not even on the occasion of the Adonia.

At least at first sight, in Cratinus fragment 17 Gnesippus seems indeed to be portrayed as a direct rival to Sophocles, the expression "asking for a

48. Neither of Cratinus frags. 17 and 276 refers to Gnesippus by name, but each does mention a "son of Cleomachus"; as already pointed out by Hordern (2003, 612), even if it is not possible to rule out a priori the possibility that Hellenistic and later scholars have here conflated different identities, "there is sufficient similarity between the Cratinus fragments and those from Eupolis and Chionides [i.e., Chionides frag. 4] to indicate that all three are referring to the same person."

49. See (apparently) Cameron 1995, p. 72, n. 6. Cameron's perspective is largely influenced by the parallel (commonly accepted in recent scholarship) drawn between Ar. *Nub.* 1361–72 and our fragment, but this similarity is only partial.

chorus" (αἰτεῖν χορόν) being usually applied only to tragedy or comedy.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, from Bergk onward,<sup>51</sup> this fragment has been regarded as positive evidence for Gnesippus' tragic activity, splitting scholarship into supporters of a Gnesippus τραγωδιογράφος who is at the same time κιθαρωιδός,<sup>52</sup> and those who rejected this "double" literary identity.<sup>53</sup> As we have seen, the main concern of previous scholars has focused on drawing a clear distinction between "historical truth" and fictional reality about Gnesippus' ambiguous career, often without asking what kind of social dynamics and tensions lie behind this double literary activity, even if only a fictional one. One attempt, for example, at denying Gnesippus any "tragic" reliability (at both an historical and fictional level) has been that of Meineke, who pointed out that the comparison between Sophocles and Gnesippus is not necessarily intended as actual rivalry between writers of the same poetic genre (that is, tragedy).<sup>54</sup> In more recent times, Meineke's suggestion has been taken up by Hordern, according to whom the "biographic" unlikelihood of such a contest for a tragic chorus between Sophocles and Gnesippus is supported by the fact that the term of that comparison (the private Adonia) is itself a striking paradox (and must have been perceived as such by the Athenian audience).<sup>55</sup> Yet, even if the request of a χοροδιδάσκαλος for the Adonia is just witty nonsense, this does not mean that Gnesippus, either on-stage or in historical reality, did not ask for a chorus and consequently obtain one in preference to Sophocles. On the contrary, the very fact that, at least according to the speaker of Cratinus fragment 17, Gnesippus does not deserve staging, even at some minor noncompetitive festival like the Adonia, makes the choice of the archon all the more ridiculous.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, Meineke's perplexity regarding the introductory formula that precedes Cratinus' words (σκόπτει δ' αὐτὸν εἰς τὰ ποιήματα καὶ ἐν Βουκόλοις κτλ., Ath. 14.638d), that is, the seeming oddity of referring the word ποιήματα to tragedies,<sup>57</sup> is unjustified. Athenaeus provides us with at least three certain examples of ποιήματα referring to dramatic plays (tragedies and comedies as well).<sup>58</sup>

Finally, Meineke's interpretation does not explain which kind of chorus has been granted to Gnesippus, even in the fictional reality of Cratinus' play.

50. See Wilson 2000, 6 and 61–71.

51. Bergk 1838, 33–34.

52. See Wilamowitz 1870, 27–28; and Conti Bizzarro 1999, 85–86. A well-known antecedent for this "double" poetic activity of tragedian and citharode as well is provided by Sophocles: see *TrGF* 4:TA 1.5.

53. See Luppe 1969, 217. Maas (1912) and Davidson (2000, 48–49) do not pronounce ultimately against (or in favor of) such a "double" identity.

54. Meineke, *FCG* 2<sup>1</sup>:29.

55. Cf. Wilson 2000, p. 334, n. 57; and Hordern 2003, 612. The Adonia was not an official festival financed by the state but just a private feast celebrated by women (citizens and noncitizens) in private homes: see Winkler 1990, 188–209, and Simms 1998, esp. 125–26. The only evidence for a state-supported Adonia goes back to third-century Alexandria, that is, the Adonia celebrated at the palace of Ptolemy II in honor of Arsinoe as described by Theoc. *Id.* 15. Even in this case there is not any mention of a singing chorus.

56. I am deeply grateful to *CP*'s anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this important point.

57. Cf. Meineke, *FCG* 2<sup>1</sup>:29: "denique ne illud quidem negligendum est, Athenaeum dicere, σκόπτει δ' αὐτὸν εἰς τὰ ποιήματα non εἰς τὰς τραγωιδίας."

58. See Ath. 1.22a (referring to Thespis, Pratinas, and Phrynichus), 6.268d (comedies of Cratetes and Teleclides), 10.429a (Aristophanes' plays).

Thus, a “tragic” Gnesippus seems still to be the most economical interpretation, and the most striking feature of this fragment, as Wilson has noticed, lies in “the way in which it depicts the inferiority of Gnesippos in relation to Sophokles—in terms of their suitability to be granted *khoroí* at festivals of polarised prestige and publicity.”

The following quotation (= Cratinus frag. 276), introduced by Athenaeus in order to exemplify Gnesippus’ indecent Muse, is even more problematic and focuses again on Gnesippus’ being granted a chorus:

ἴτω δὲ καὶ τραγωιδίας  
ὁ Κλεομάχου διδάσκαλος  
ἴμετ’ ὅντων παρατιλτριῶν  
ἔχων χορὸν Λυδιστὶ τίλ-  
λουσῶν μέλη πονηρά

Let Cleomachus’ son, the producer of tragedy, go away with (?) his chorus of depilatory slave girls plucking disgusting songs to the Lydian tune.

The *vexata quaestio* of the textual crux at line 3 aside,<sup>59</sup> in this fragment Gnesippus is depicted as a producer of tragedy provided with a chorus of female slaves “who pluck their disgusting tunes/limbs . . . in Lydian fashion.”<sup>60</sup> The portrait of Gnesippus’ chorus as composed of depilatory female slaves plucking their limbs/songs to a Lydian tune could easily be intended as a parody of the lax melodies exploited by Gnesippus (the Lydian tune being proverbial for its moral looseness).<sup>61</sup> But even apart from this parody, Gnesippus is still explicitly mentioned as having a chorus (ἔχων χορὸν):<sup>62</sup> as for Cratinus fragment 276, Gnesippus’ “tragic” identity, either merely fictional or historical, seems to be a matter of fact.<sup>63</sup>

Summing up, on the basis of the evidence collected here about a “tragic” Gnesippus, what seems telling is that in Cratinus fragments 17 and 276, problematic though they are, the very object of the indignation scornfully expressed by the speaking characters is the chorus as icon of the collective domain. In other words, what engenders the bitter reproach of Cratinus fragments 17 and 276 is Gnesippus’ literary appropriation of the civic social body represented by the chorus itself, transferring his indecent Muse from the private sphere of symposia (*kitharodia*) to the institutionalized one of public space (tragedy). If this is the case, we might see in Gnesippus one of the

59. See Conti Bizzarro 1999, 87–88.

60. As to the pun on the word μέλη, see Meineke, *FCG* 2<sup>1</sup>:163; and Davidson 2000, p. 42 and p. 58, n. 2.

61. Cf. West 1992, p. 179, and p. 349, n. 96. Davidson’s remark (2000) that “his [i.e., Gnesippus’] chorus, after all, . . . is composed of ‘depilatory slave-girls plucking their disgusting limbs (*mele*) in Lydian fashion,’ which seems a far cry from the city Dionysia, even with allowance for comic acerbity” does not take into account this possibility. Yet the use of the noun παρατιλτρια in Cratinus frag. 276.3 does not seem to be a truthful description of an actual tragic chorus but rather a linguistic pun motivated by the following *iunctura* μέλη τίλλειν (cf. already Maas 1912, col. 1480). For τίλλω as referring here to stringed instruments by exploiting the double sense of μέλη and meaning therefore “to pluck,” see LSJ, s.v. τίλλω.

62. Meineke’s suggestion that the whole picture is a malicious joke having nothing to do with historical truth is too dismissive (*FCG* 2<sup>1</sup>:29; see also Hordern 2003, 613).

63. Athenaeus’ last quotation concerning Gnesippus, that is, Teleclides frag. 36 (where our poet is said καὶ περὶ μοιχείας ἀνοστρέφειν) does not cast any new light on Gnesippus’ literary pedigree, μοιχείας being an appropriate subject both for tragedy or comedy and πονηρὰ ἄισματα.

first examples of a social trend that is well attested in the fourth century B.C.E.: Amphis fragment 14 (from a play significantly entitled *Dithyrambos*) does testify to the “clearly elitist attitude which sees dithyrambic poets bringing tit-bits from the cultural riches of the upper-class private world of pleasure into the public world of the mob.”<sup>64</sup>

The “tragic” allure assigned to Gnesippus by Cratinus fragments 17 and 276 is, in a sense, the other side of the same criticism reported by Athenaeus quoting Eupolis fragment 148, where Eupolis focuses on Gnesippus predominantly as a contemptible example of a rather licentious lyric poet to be sung at private, elitist symposia, where more relaxed behavior could be accepted. Therefore, the hypothesis that Gnesippus’ *νυκτερινὰ ἀείσματα* in Eupolis fragment 148 may be interpreted as arias excerpted from some tragedies can be confidently ruled out. Gnesippus’ songs represent another kind of fashionable alternative to Pheidippides’ delivery of shocking Euripidean *rheseis* (Ar. *Nub.* 1371–72). If Pheidippides’ example attests to the snobbish disgust displayed by the intelligentsia at the old-fashioned practice of singing to the kithara at symposia, Eupolis fragment 148 allows us to recover a further piece of evidence for another less intellectual but perhaps more enjoyable kind of sympotic entertainment, which we might suppose to be increasingly widespread among the Athenian leisured class. Despite the sophistic stricture on singing to the lyre at symposia, part of the trendy youth of the Athenian upper class clearly went on enjoying singing at drinking parties. What the glamorous allure of this fashionable style of life requires is not in this case a blind refusal of *κιθαρίζειν tout court* but just a change of subject: making Eupolis’ ironic words speak for themselves, “Gnesippus is now the one to hear.”

### 3. CHORAL IDENTITY AND DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY IN EUPOLIS FRAGMENT 148

The interpretation sketched here of Eupolis fragment 148 is in keeping with Eupolis’ disparaging attitude displayed elsewhere towards the New Music (a widespread trend in Old Comedy: suffice it to mention Pherecrates frag. 155).<sup>65</sup> The next step is a tentative search to look for a possible context for the fragment within the metrical frame of fifth-century Athenian comedy. By making this search, we shall also be able to suggest a more precise identity for the speaker of Eupolis fragment 148.

Storey has recently reassessed the unquestionably Archilochian nature of the first and last lines of Eupolis fragment 148 and has convincingly claimed that, since in the extant comic fragments the Archilochian meter does seem to be almost always the property of the chorus, the speaking character of

64. Wilson 2000, 70. Also, in Amphis the focus is on bringing before the mob (εις τὸν ὄχλον, 6), in the institutionalized space of the theatre (θεάτρῳ, 3), an entertainment previously reserved for the private symposia of the leisured class (Ἀθήνησιν δὲ κατακεχρημένον / ἐν συμποσίοις ἦδη ᾽στί, 4–5). Differences between both situations are not to be dismissed (dithyrambist vs. kitharodos), and the comic tone may be slightly different, but the cultural practice they depict is a similar one.

65. As for Eupolis, to fragment 398 we can add fragment 326 (an iambic dialogue between two unidentified characters comparing the new and old-fashioned τρόπος ᾠδῆς: cf. Conti Bizzarro 2000, 72–75).

Eupolis fragment 148 must be the chorus of Helots.<sup>66</sup> How are we then to interpret the Helots' bitter remark on the degeneration of the contemporary musical taste within some strands of Athenian society? As far as we know, Helots are not supposed to have had any privileged link with music, and especially with a sophisticated kind. Storey has thus suggested that "we are dealing with a passage from the parabasis, where the chorus dropped its identity and spoke for the poet on the subject of tastes in mousike."<sup>67</sup> But are we necessarily to posit here that the chorus is dropping its mask and that the speaking voice is that of Eupolis himself? Or, to put it another way, can we make better sense of the strongly marked ethnic identity of the chorus?

Closer attention to the social dynamics animating the Athenian public debate during the Archidamian war can perhaps provide us some interesting clues in this latter direction.<sup>68</sup> If we accept that the chorus here represents a precise choral and ethnic identity (the Helots) and not just a poet's mask, we would actually have a chorus consisting of the aristocratic Spartans' slaves deploring the debauched ethical and musical attitudes of the Athenian elite at private symposia. The potential political relevance of such a dramatic representation (Helots taking part in the Athenian debate on the proper conduct to be followed at symposia, mocking the rising new star of Athenian upper-class private entertainments) can hardly be dismissed, especially if we keep in mind that during the Peloponnesian war the Athenians repeatedly made several efforts to take advantage of Helot disaffection towards their masters.<sup>69</sup> What is even more interesting, Eupolis fragment 148 would be portraying before the eyes of the Athenian audience the Helots as ironically rejecting their own ethnic identity (to sing the song of the Dorian lyric tradition, that is, Alcman, Stesichorus) by bitterly appropriating the degenerate musical taste of the Athenian aristocratic hegemonic class.<sup>70</sup> This could well be a perfectly suitable vehicle indeed for democratic propaganda against

66. Storey 2003, 179. The metrical difficulty raised by the second and third lines of the fragment, lines that, apart from the meter, do not seem to be corrupt, could be solved if we renounced the long-standing bias of necessarily regarding lines 2–3 a priori as stichic Archilochians. Since Archilochians can also be combined with other lyric meters in lyric stanzas (see Cratinus frag. 62: a system consisting of tell enfithl tell enfithl), it may be worth the trouble of looking for a lyric scheme that enables us to save the transmitted text of the fragment. In this case, we could scan the four lines of our fragment as a system consisting of enfithll<sub>h</sub> ia cr ia bal hipp ithl enfithl if we accepted the synizesis of αει- in ἀειδεῖν (line 2) and ἀείματα (line 3)—which seems to me the most economical solution—or, without synizesis, a scheme consisting of enfithll<sub>h</sub> xcho cr 2 ia^l hipp 2 ia^l enfithl. That is, we could be dealing with a lyric κομμάτιον ridiculing the new musical taste of the new generations, lyric κομμάτια being found also in Ar. *Nub.* 510–17 (iambic-choriambic meters) and Av. 676–84 (mostly aeolo-choriambic). Finally, if we accept the lyric nature of Eupolis frag. 148, it would be very enticing to believe that, while referring ironically to Gnesippus' fashionable songs, Eupolis' music itself somehow parodied the licentious tunes of this debauched kitharodos—but this is of course speculation.

67. Storey 2003, 179; in this direction, see already Wilamowitz 1921, 385, who loosely speaks of "(ein) Stück aus der Parabasis."

68. For the perceived changes in the social conduct of symposia at this time, cf. Fisher 2000, 369.

69. See Thuc. 4.41.3 (the Pylos episode: summer 425 B.C.E.), and Thuc. 4.55.1 (just after Sphacteria: summer 424 B.C.E.); cf. Cartledge 2003, pp. 21–22 with n. 26; and Powell 2001, 167–74.

70. This is even more significant if we think that according to the report of Plut. *Lyc.* 28.10, the Theban Epaminondas during his first invasion of Spartan territory (370/69 B.C.E.) found Laconian Helots so faithful to the orders of their masters that they refused to sing verses of Terpander, Alcman, and Spondon since these had been declared taboo by the Spartiates.

the aristocratic-like gestures of the ruling class, which is often criticized on the comic stage of this period for its self-indulgence in sympotic excesses.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, according to this perspective, the otherwise problematic fact that in Eupolis fragment 148 the chorus does not speak Doric<sup>72</sup> would be explained as part of this broader strategy of rejecting its own ethnic and cultural identity.

Thus, Gnesippus' lascivious muse helps us to recover one more piece of evidence testifying to the political struggle animating fifth-century Athens.<sup>73</sup>

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71. See Fisher 2000, 369–71.

72. The other two extant fragments from *The Helots*, i.e., frags. 147 and 149, exhibit a Doric veneer.

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