

## THE INDIVIDUALIZED CHORUS IN OLD COMEDY

The *Birds* of Aristophanes is unique among his extant plays in that it employs a chorus in which each member has an individual identity, that is, in which each chorus-member represents a different kind of bird. The consequent variety of costume must have been a great visual embellishment to the play, and one is led to wonder how commonly the device employed in *Birds* featured in Old Comedy in general. Two parallels are frequently cited in the choruses of Eupolis' Πόλεις and Ameipsias' Κόννος, both of which will be considered below, but, although those plays do indeed provide our best evidence outside *Birds*, I wish to argue here that we may reasonably suspect that some other old comedies known to us had choruses of the type in question, which I designate 'individualized' or 'multiform' choruses. It seems very likely that any play with a generic animal title had a multiform chorus, for otherwise the chorus would not represent more than one species and would be inadequately described by the generic term. For instance, one would find it unsatisfactory if a chorus of 'beasts' turned out to contain only sheep, or if a chorus of 'birds' had none but eagles for its members. Thus it seems legitimate to suppose that the generic titles of Magnes' Ὀρνίθες, Crates' Θηρία, and Archippus' Ἰχθύες point to choruses in which individual species were recognizable. To these may be added Crates' Ὀρνίθες, if indeed distinct from Magnes' play of the same title.<sup>1</sup>

By analogy with Eupolis' Πόλεις (which incidentally shows that the multiform chorus was not restricted to animal species or human individuals), it would seem that the generic titles of some, at least, of the following must be an indication of a multiform chorus. I indicate where there is any definite evidence of choral composition, but it is likely from normal Greek practice that in most cases a plural title denotes the chorus.

Hermippus: Θεοί.

Eupolis: Δῆμοι; possibly Ταξίαρχοι, if some individual officers were distinguishable.

Chionides: possibly Ἡρώες.

Crates: possibly Ἡρώες.

Aristophanes: possibly Ἡρώες (cf. fr. 304).

Aristophanes or Archippus: Νῆσοι (Ar. fr. 395 probably describes a chorus-member).<sup>2</sup>

Plato: possibly, but very conjecturally, Ἑλλάς ἢ Νῆσοι, if the islands formed the chorus.

Philyllius: possibly Πόλεις.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Meineke, *Fragmenta Comicorum Graecorum* (Berlin, 1839–57), i. 64, where Meineke supposes that Crates' *Birds* was a revised version of Magnes' play of the same title. The view is hazardous when so little is known about either play (or version) and the title Ὀρνίθες recurs in Comedy. Meineke seems to me rather over-concerned to make the number of a comedian's titles known to us square with the ancient statements of his output. Such statements are of

dubious value and liable to be corrupt in some cases.

<sup>2</sup> The text is

ὥς ἐς τὴν γῆν κύψασα κάτω καὶ  
ξυννεοφυῖα βαδίζει

and Th. Kock (*Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta* (Leipzig, 1880–8), vol. i) remarks ad loc., 'Una ex insulis significatur, quae male tractata ab Atheniensibus maesto vultu incedit.'

Eunicus: possibly Πόλεις, if distinct from Philyllius' play.

Pherecrates: perhaps Αὐτόμολοι, if the chorus was of individually represented gods (cf. fr. 23).<sup>1</sup>

One fragment of Heniochus (fr. 5) promises an explicit statement of the names of twenty cities (a round number?), which are probably the chorus of the play. If so, there may well have been an attempt to make the chorus-members individually identifiable, or at any rate to give them significant personal costumes, as in Eupolis' Πόλεις. It is likely that the chorus of Cratinus' Ἀρχιλοχοί were recognizable individuals, as fr. 2 (οἶον σοφιστῶν σμήνος ἀνεδιφῆσατε) probably refers to the (or a) chorus,<sup>2</sup> and Clement of Alexandria's remark in introducing the quotation (ποιητὰς καταλέξας ἔφη) could well indicate that the poets in the chorus had just been individually identified for the audience in the manner of Ameipsias' presentation of his chorus-members in his Κόννος (cf. below). Diogenes Laertius, *Prooem.* 12, remarks, of the same context, as it seems, καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ [ἐκαλοῦντο] σοφισταί, καθὰ καὶ Κρατῖνος ἐν Ἀρχιλόχοις τὸν περὶ Ὅμηρον καὶ Ἡσίοδον ἐπαινῶν οὕτως καλεῖ. This could indicate a short eulogy of each of the poets as they arrive. Whether Telecleides in his Ἡσίοδοι created the opportunity to use a similar technique in introducing the chorus is not apparent from our knowledge of that play, while in plays like Plato's Λάκωνες ἢ Ποιηταὶ or Σοφισταί<sup>3</sup> or Phrynichus' Τραγωδοὶ ἢ Ἀπελεύθεροι it is possible to have doubts about the composition of the chorus. In the first case, for instance, were its members Laconians, poets, or neither?

Hermippus fr. 58 (from Στρατιῶται) and Eupolis fr. 276 (from Χρυσῶν Γένος) are perhaps relevant here. In the former passage an army from over the sea is greeted, and at the end of the fragment the manuscripts give

ἦσθον τὸν Ἀβυδὸν ὥς  
ἀνὴρ γεγένηται;

which would literally mean, 'Did you perceive how Abydos has become a man?' One might speculate that we have here a chorus of personified cities, but I hesitate to take that view. The Στρατιῶται of Hermippus seems to me to have

<sup>1</sup> The fragment is a complaint by the gods of the way they are treated in sacrifices. Clement of Alexandria in citing the passage says, ὅ γε κωμικὸς ἐκείνος Φερεκράτης ἐν Αὐτομόλοις χαριέντως αὐτοὺς πεποίηκε τοὺς θεοὺς καταμεμφομένους τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τῶν ἱερῶν.

<sup>2</sup> Th. Bergk, in his *Commentationum de Reliquiis Comoediae Atticae Antiquae Libri Duo* (Leipzig, 1838), thought (p. 6) that the fragment referred to the (sole) chorus of 'censores acerbi' (ibid., p. 5) when they first appeared. Others have seen two semi-choruses in Ἀρχιλοχοί: cf. W. W. Baker in *HSCP* 15 (1904), 139 f. ('... concludere fortasse nobis licet unam tantum chori partem, de qua fabula tota nomen accepit, Archilochi fautores fuisse, alteram poetarum aliorum, Homeri et Hesiodi, comites.') M. Whittaker in *CQ* 29 (1935), 185, remarks on the agon of Ἀρχιλοχοί, 'the altercation would take place between

Homer and Archilochus, each supported by his half chorus, with Hesiod as a *tertius gaudens*.'

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Edmonds's suggestion (*The Fragments of Attic Comedy* (Leiden, 1957-61), ad loc.) that Plato's *Eoprai* had a chorus of beasts (cf. frs. 35 and 28) rests on inadequate evidence. Fr. 28 could be figurative: cf. Metagenes fr. 19A Edmonds for comparable imagery. Bergk (op. cit., p. 132) supposes that the chorus of *Eoprai* were personified festivals (from the plural title). If his inference is correct, it is likely that there was a multiform chorus, individual festivals being represented (cf. Philyllius fr. 8 Kock for a festival day as a character), but I am not sufficiently confident of the composition of the chorus to include the play in the present list. Could the chorus perhaps have been composed of celebrants? Nevertheless, a multiform chorus in *Eoprai* is a possibility.

had much in common with the Ταξίαρχοι of Eupolis, for I suspect that frs. 53 and 54 of Hermippus show some effeminate soldier being instructed in the military life, just as Dionysus is in Eupolis' Ταξίαρχοι.<sup>1</sup> The remark in fr. 54 about a prospective rower's having a pustulated posterior puts one in mind of that very deity, whose tender hindquarters suffer from the effects of rowing in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.<sup>2</sup> Kock is perhaps right to understanding the last line of fr. 54 as an excuse to avoid having to row, or it may be that the speaker is complaining of the distress already caused by some previous attempt, in which case one might adapt Blomfield's supplement προσκεφαλαίου into something like

ἀλλ' οὐ δέομαι πανικτὸν ἔχων τὸν πρωκτὸν <προσκεφαλαίου  
ἐνός ἀλλὰ δυοῦν.>

I strongly suspect that it is Dionysus who is involved, and I would draw attention to Aristomenes' title Διόνυσος Ἀσκητής (Διόνυσος ἢ Ἀσκηταί *coni.* Bergk) in this connection, which could be a further indication that Dionysus' failings as a soldier, rower, or athlete were a familiar theme in Old Comedy.<sup>3</sup> At any rate, the chorus in fr. 58 seems to be chosen to suit the effeminacy of the character who finds the rigours of military life disagreeable (= Dionysus?). Athenaeus cites the fragment to show that men of Abydos were enervated and debauched, and Meineke was probably right to suggest that 'Abydos' in fr. 58 is put figuratively for its people (or even for Greeks from Asia Minor in general?—cf. for their reputation as effeminate soldiers Eupolis fr. 256).<sup>4</sup> It is doubtful therefore whether Abydos is one of twenty-four individually recognizable cities, and I suspect that the chorus was composed of Ionian soldiery.

In Eupolis fr. 276 (from Χρυσοῦν Γένος) someone is pointing out individuals

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my article 'A Eupolidean Precedent for the Rowing Scene in Aristophanes' "Frogs"?' in *CQ* 24 (1974), 250–2. I ought to have added there that there is the probability of a boat as a stage property in Hermippus' *Στρατιῶται*, assuming, that is, that the rowing to which reference is made actually took place in the action of the play.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. especially Ar. *Frogs* 236 f.

<sup>3</sup> Meineke, *op. cit.* i. 212, comments, 'In Διονύσω ἀσκητῇ Eupolidis, ut videtur, in Taxiarchis exemplum sequutus, mollem et effeminatum deum duris athletarum et luctatorum laboribus exposuit . . .' I wholeheartedly agree with Meineke's theory of the plot. Bergk (*Comm.*, p.431) doubts the title, which is so recorded only in Pollux 3.150 (see fr. 13 Edmonds), whereas Athenaeus twice gives the title merely as Διόνυσος (650 d and 658 a: see frs. 11 and 12 in Edmonds). Bergk suggests Διόνυσος ἢ Ἀσκηταί, which Meineke is prepared to accept (ii. 733) or else postulate two editions of the play. In L. Moretti, *I. G. Urb. Rom.* (Rome, 1968), 216.10, the first letters of the title Διονύ[ε]ωι are (it seems) given, and the play is dated to 394 B.C., ἐ[π]ὶ Διοφάντου, but this does not resolve the problem, and in Metagenes' Ὀμηρος ἢ

Ἀσκηταί and Aristophanes' or Archippus' Διόνυσος Ναυαγός we have parallels for the form of both suggested titles. A final decision is impossible without better evidence, but perhaps Bergk is right to argue that Athenaeus is unlikely to have dropped (or his copyists lost) the second word of the title in two places if the title comprised two words and not alternatives. Therefore the correct form of the title is more likely to be Διόνυσος ἢ Ἀσκηταί. For the implications of Metagenes' title Ὀμηρος ἢ Ἀσκηταί cf. Ar. *Frogs* 1034 ff. (Homer's value as an instructor in military virtue being in point).

<sup>4</sup> See Meineke, *op. cit.* ii. 402 f. Bergk (*Comm.*, p.324) followed Dindorf (in his edition of Athenaeus) in adopting the emendation τὸν Ἀβυδόθ' ὡς and further argued that there was an allusion to Alcibiades, who is said by Antiphon (in Athen. 12 p.525b) to have visited Abydos in early manhood to school himself in debauchery παρὰ τῶν ἐν Ἀβύδῳ γυναικῶν. In view of the fact that Athenaeus in citing Hermippus fr. 58 talks only of the 'people of Abydos', and not Alcibiades, it seems to me that Bergk has been too ingenious in seeking an allusion to Alcibiades.

and counting them. The fragment covers the enumeration from the twelfth to the eighteenth. It is possible that these men are chorus-members being described and counted upon their arrival, although some<sup>1</sup> have supposed that members of the audience are meant, which seems to me a less attractive idea. Only one man is named (Archestratus in line 4), the others being referred to by unflattering descriptions of their physical appearance or dress. The difficulty in taking them to be members of the chorus is that the scholiast to Plato, *Lys.* 206 d, in introducing fr. 288 of Eupolis, also from *Χρυσούν Γένος*, speaks of the metaphorical use of *ὠμίλλα* of *τὴν εἰς Κυκλώπων κατάκλισην*. If the text is correct, these Cyclopes would be the (or a) chorus, but Meineke's conjecture<sup>2</sup> *τὴν ἐν κύκλῳ κατάκλισην* would remove them from the text. The conjecture is very plausible, the circle of guests being seen as the circle of the game *εἰς ὠμίλλαν* into which knucklebones were cast (the speaker of the fragment identifying himself with the knucklebones which enter the circle when he says

ἔπειτ' εὔσεμι' ἐνθάδε μείνας  
εἰς ὠμίλλαν, κἄν μὴ μετήγῃ.)

If the men in fr. 276 are chorus-members, the title of the play (*Golden Race*) may refer ironically to them. Another play that may (wrongly?) be thought to have had individually identifiable elements in its chorus is Aristophanes' *Βαβυλώνιοι*, in which some have supposed from fr. 64 of Aristophanes that the allies of Athens were represented as slaves in a treadmill. The motion is in fact very ill founded, for all we know is that someone in the play exclaimed

Σαμίων ὁ δῆμός ἐστιν· ὥς πολυγράμματος

when he saw those whom Hesychius describes as *τοὺς ἐκ τοῦ μύλωνος Βαβυλωνίους*. Norwood<sup>3</sup> is well justified in his argument that the chorus of 'Babylonians' need not have included anyone who actually represented a Samian, for the mere fact that the 'Babylonians' were branded (like some Samian prisoners taken during the revolt of 440/39 B.C.) would be enough to occasion the humorous identification with the branded Samians. Plutarch indeed (*Pericles* 26) speaks of Aristophanes' line as a riddle (*πρὸς ταῦτα τὰ στίγματα λέγουσι καὶ τὸ 'Αριστοφάνειον ἡνίχθαι*), which makes it all the more unlikely that real Samians were represented.

We have seen, then, that there is some probability that the individualized chorus figured in at least a few plays beyond the two outside the works of Aristophanes where its presence is unmistakably detectable—Eupolis' *Πόλεις* and Ameipsias' *Κόννος*—and Aristophanes' own *Birds*. The plays in question extend in time from the early period of Old Comedy (Magnes' *Ὀρνίθες* is a probable example) to the end of the fifth century (Archippus' *Ἰχθύες* dates about 400 B.C.). It seems that the technique, like the use of animal choruses, was not foreign to Old Comedy of any period of the fifth century. Let us look now at the two best examples of its use outside Aristophanes.

In Eupolis' *Πόλεις* three fragments make it clear that there was a scene where the chorus-members, representing the cities of the Athenian Empire, were indi-

<sup>1</sup> So Edmonds ad loc. and V. Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes* (Oxford, 1943), p.21.

<sup>2</sup> *F.C.G.* ii. 540. Contrast Bergk, *Comm.*,

p.363.

<sup>3</sup> G. Norwood, *Greek Comedy* (London, 1931), pp.284 f.

vidually introduced. These are frs. 231, 232, and 233. Each city is given a line or two of comment as she appears, and it is evident that one character is identifying the figures for another (in fr. 233 we discern two speakers). This is, of course, the situation in Aristophanes' *Birds* when the chorus enter: the Hoopoe identifies the arrivals for Pisthetaerus and Euelpides. It is not certain how the cities were visually represented, but it seems likely that the brief descriptions point out the relevance of the costume and that Eupolis is explaining for the audience why a chorus-member so dressed or equipped should represent a particular city. Thus Tenos, described as having 'many sycophant-scorpions and vipers' (taking *συκοφάντας ἀπὸ κοινοῦ*), may well have had a costume embellished with representations of such creatures (fr. 231), while Cyzicus, described as 'full of staters', may well have had a costume decorated with stage-coins or medallions (fr. 233).<sup>1</sup> Chios, 'the fair city', was perhaps just made up to look beautiful (with an appropriate mask and costume). Some of the costumes would be very bizarre, but, granted an individualized chorus introduced in this way, it seems inevitable that some effort would be made to portray visually the essential associations of the cities. As in fr. 233 Cyzicus is described as *ἡ ὑστάτη*, it seems that all the cities in the chorus were identified in the text, but they may have been given different degrees of prominence, as the birds are in Aristophanes' play of that name. Aristophanes introduces the first four birds most fully (probably these birds are not true chorus-members and appear on the roof of the stage building)<sup>2</sup> and only allows brief jokes on two of the others till the list is complete. Eupolis, it will be observed, reserves an obscene comment for the end of his list to round off the passage in one of Old Comedy's most effective ways. I give the text of frs. 231, 232, and 233 from Kock's edition:

- fr. 231: Τῆνος αὐτή,  
πολλοὺς ἔχουσα σκορπίους ἔχεις τε συκοφάντας.
- fr. 232: αὕτη Χίος, καλὴ πόλις . . .  
πέμπει γὰρ ὑμῖν ναῦς μακρὰς ἀνδρας θ' ὅταν δεήσῃ,  
καὶ τᾶλλα πειθαρχεῖ καλῶς, ἄπληκτος ὥσπερ ἵππος.
- fr. 233: ἡ δ' ὑστάτη ποῦ 'σθ'; B. ἦδε Κύζικος πλέα στατήρων.  
A. ἐν τῇδε τοίνυν τῇ πόλει φρουρῶν † ποτ' αὐτὸς †  
γυναικ' ἐκίνουν κολλύβου καὶ παῖδα καὶ γέροντα,  
κάξην ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν τὸν κύσθον ἐκκορίζειν.

In Ameipsias' *Κόννος* the chorus was of *φροντισταί* (so Athenaeus at 5.218 c, where he remarks that Ameipsias did not number—οὐ καταριθμεῖ—Protagoras ἐν τῷ τῶν φροντιστῶν χορῷ) and one of the chorus was Socrates. Diogenes Laertius records that Ameipsias brought Socrates on in a threadbare cloak and quotes Ameipsias fr. 9 from the context. I give Kock's text:

Σώκρατες ἀνδρῶν βέλτιστ' ὀλίγων, πολλῶν δὲ ματαιόταθ', ἥκεις  
καὶ σὺ πρὸς ἡμᾶς; καρτερικός γ' εἶ. πόθεν ἂν σοι χλαῖνα γένοιτο;  
B. τοῦτ' ὁ κακὸν τῶν σκυτοτόμων κατ' ἐπήρειαν γεγέννηται.  
οὗτος μέντοι πειρῶν οὕτως οὐπώποτ' ἔτλη κολακεύσαι.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Whittaker in *CQ* 29 (1935), 183: 'Similarly in Eupolis' *Πόλεις* frags. 231, 232, 233 are descriptions of three different members of the chorus of cities, Tenos, Chios and Cyzicus, who probably entered singly,

carrying symbols for identification which would have been unintelligible without explanation.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (London, 1972), p.145.

The question πόθεν ἂν σοι χλαῖνα γένοιτο implies Socrates' need of a better cloak, while the remark τουτί τὸ κακὸν τῶν σκυτοτόμων κατ' ἐπήρειαν γεγένηται points to his lack of footwear. In spite of the difficulty of naming twenty-four sufficiently well-known φροντισταί for the audience to be familiar with them, it is evident from Athenaeus' remark that Protagoras was not included in the chorus that at least a substantial number of the chorus must have been explicitly identified. Perhaps the others were imaginary persons and only a few of the chorus were given close attention, just as not all the birds in Aristophanes' *Birds* are introduced at the same length. The words ἦκεις καὶ σὺ *may* mean that Socrates was not the first of the chorus to be encountered ('you *too* have come . . .'), but it is possible that καὶ σὺ is simply emphatic ('you've come . . .').

The evidence for the multiform chorus is in detail sparse, but then it is for animal choruses also.<sup>1</sup> Outside Aristophanes, there are fourteen old comedies<sup>2</sup> that seem to have had an animal chorus (excluding choruses of satyrs or centaurs), but in most cases the inference that a play had an animal chorus is based solely upon the title. Outside Aristophanes, there are as many as twenty plays (or even one or two more) that may have had a multiform chorus, but in many cases it is again the title that is the evidence. In some instances the title may be misleading, but I think that it would be fair to infer that the multiform chorus, like the animal chorus, was a phenomenon that an Athenian audience might encounter every few years, though not *very* frequently.<sup>3</sup>

Gateshead

ALLAN M. WILSON

<sup>1</sup> For animal choruses see G. M. Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses* (London, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> I refer to Magnes' Ὀρνιθες (title and Ar. *Knights* 522), Ψῆνες (title and Ar. *Knights* 523), and Βάτραχοι (title and Ar. *Knights* 523), Crates' Θηρία (title and fr. 17) and Ὀρνιθες (title), Callias' Βάτραχοι (title), Pherecrates' Μυρμηκάνθρωποι (title and fr. 121: ants?), Eupolis' Αἶγες (title and fr. 14), Cantharus' Ἀηδόνες (title) and

Μύρμηκες (title), Plato's Γρῦπες (title) and Μύρμηκες (title), Archippus' Ἰχθύες (title, frs. 28, 29, etc.) and Diocles' Μέλισσαι (title).

<sup>3</sup> The present article is based upon sections of my thesis, 'The Technique of Humour of Cratinus, Eupolis, Pherecrates and Plato and of the Minor Poets of the Athenian Old Comedy' (diss. St. Andrews 1974).