

up the audience, and making them think about their reactions to what they are seeing, whilst providing no easy answers. This is something which is common to all Euripidean tragedy.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Rutherford, in Davie (n. 2), 48.

## ONCE AGAIN THE OPENING OF PLATO'S *GORGIAS*

James Doyle has performed a considerable service by calling attention to the way in which the opening of Plato's *Gorgias* prefigures 'the opposition between philosophy and its deadly rival rhetoric, and the ruthless contention by which this opposition is dramatized' throughout the dialogue.<sup>1</sup> The words *πολέμου καὶ μάχης*, the first words of the dialogue, anticipate the ensuing conflict between Socrates, the champion of philosophy, and Gorgias, Polus and Callicles, who bear the standard of the 'art' of rhetoric; Socrates' claim that his late arrival is to be blamed on Chaerephon, who 'forced us to dally in the agora', reminds the reader that it was Chaerephon's question put to the Delphic oracle, as reported in the *Apology*, that inspired in Socrates his lifelong dedication to dialectic, practised largely in the agora.<sup>2</sup> Inevitably, Doyle has not said the last word on the subject.

The proverb or proverbs (*τὸ λεγόμενον*, 447A3) to which the opening of the dialogue alludes relates to the differing judgements accorded to the person who arrives too late for combat and the one who arrives too late for a festival (*κατόπιν ἑορτῆς*, 447A3). Since at least the time of Edward Meredith Cope, commentators have quoted in this connection Falstaff's 'Well, to the latter end of a fray and the beginning of a feast fits a dull fighter and a keen guest'.<sup>3</sup> Now, while a feast represents a major component of a festival (*ἑορτή*), the two are not necessarily to be identified. Still, commentators have seemingly shared Sir John's priorities and have (I think rightly) seen that what is at issue here is a concern about arriving after the food has been consumed. For the 'festival' that Socrates and Chaerephon have missed, as Callicles explains to them, was 'quite an elegant one, since Gorgias has just treated us to a fine, extended display of rhetorical skill' (*καὶ μάλα γε ἀσπείας ἑορτῆς· πολλὰ γὰρ καὶ καλὰ Γοργίας ἡμῖν ὀλίγον πρότερον ἐπεδείξατο*, 447A5–6). As Joachim Dalfen notes, it is not unusual for Plato to speak of the enjoyment of the spoken word in

<sup>1</sup> J. Doyle, 'On the first eight lines of Plato's *Gorgias*', *CQ* 56 (2006), 599–602, extending and amplifying an observation of Myles Burnyeat, 'First words: a valedictory lecture', *PCPhS* 43 (1997), 1–20, at 11–12. I should like to thank my colleague Kirk Sanders and *CQ*'s reader for helpful comments and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Doyle does not note that the three antagonists whom Socrates faces in the *Gorgias* parallel the three accusers against whom he must defend himself in the *Apology* (23E).

<sup>3</sup> E.M. Cope (tr.), *Plato's Gorgias* (Cambridge, 1864), 1, quoting the last lines of *1 Henry IV*, act 4, scene 2.

alimentary terms.<sup>4</sup> Dalfen cites *Timaeus* 27B7–8 (τὴν τῶν λόγων ἐστίασιν), *Lysis* 211C11 (ἐστίασθον), *Phaedrus* 227B6–7 (τῶν λόγων ὑμᾶς Λυσίας εἰστία), *Republic* 352B4–7 (εὐωχοῦ τοῦ λόγου ... τῆς ἐστιάσεως ἀποπλήρωσον) and 354A13 (εἰστίαμαι).<sup>5</sup> Anxiety over missing a festival arises not from religious scruple but from a desire to avoid missing out on the meal that the sacrificial victim supplies. This is uppermost even in the minds of the gods, if we are to believe the vaporous chorus of Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Because of the disrepair into which the Athenian calendar has fallen, the gods direct violent threats at the Moon 'whenever they are cheated out of a meal and go back home having missed out on their festival' (ἡνίκ' ἂν ψευθῶσι δείπνου κἀπίωσιν οἴκαδε | τῆς ἐορτῆς μὴ τυχόντες, 618–19). This last passage, in combination with Plato's fondness for the metaphor of the 'feast of words', seems to confirm that Callicles is here comparing Gorgias' display with the edible, rather than with some other, component of the festival.<sup>6</sup>

But Callicles is surely not attributing to Socrates the vice of gluttony, which is such a memorable feature of Falstaff's character and which Aristophanes cheerfully ascribes to the gods. Rather, by describing as 'elegant' the meal of which Socrates has been deprived, Callicles calls attention to the culinary skill with which the metaphorical feast has been prepared. For, while ἀστεῖος is often applied to urbane and sophisticated speech,<sup>7</sup> and is thus appropriate as a description of Gorgias' dazzling *epideixis*, it is also used, particularly by the comic poets, to refer to dishes designed to appeal to an especially refined and cultivated palate. A character in Alexis' *Ponera* praises as 'very nice a three-obol morsel of roast pork' (τριωβόλου κρεῖσσκον ἀστεῖον πᾶν | ὕειον ὀπτόν, fr. 194 K–A). In similar terms someone in Antiphanes' *Agroecus* enthuses over Brussels sprouts (κραμβίδιον ἐφθὸν χαρίεν, ἀστεῖον πᾶν, fr. 6 K–A). And two characters in the same poet's *Parasite* are enraptured discussing a lunch of 'dry-roasted pork hams' on top of which 'a lot of cheese was sizzling'.<sup>8</sup> In a fragment of Diphilus' *Apoleipousa* a description of the preparation and presentation of a sheatfish (σίλουρος) is interrupted by the exclamation, ἀστεῖον ὁ σιλουρισμός! (fr. 17.11 K–A). Sotades' boastful chef also uses this adjective to describe his *calmar farci* (ἀστεῖον ἐφθὴ τευθὺς ὠνθυλευμένη, fr. 1.15 K–A). But, for our purposes, the most interesting occurrence of this word is in Aristophanes' *Knights*, where the chorus remind the audience of the comic poet Crates, 'who used to send you home with a good lunch provided at small expense, preparing the most exquisite idea-cakes from his so-refined lips' (ἀπὸ κραμβοτάτου στόματος μάττων ἀστειοτάτας ἐπινοίας, 539).<sup>9</sup> Here we have the adjective ἀστεῖος

<sup>4</sup> J. Dalfen (tr. and comm.), *Platon: Gorgias* (Göttingen, 2004), 163.

<sup>5</sup> James Adam, in his note on this last passage, adds references to 458A1–2 (ἔασόν με ἐορτάσαι, ὥσπερ οἱ ἀργοὶ τὴν διάνοιαν εἰώθασιν ἐστίασθαι ὑφ' ἑαυτῶν) and 571D9 (ἐστιάσας λόγων καλῶν). Cf. also *Phdr.* 236E8 (θοῶνς).

<sup>6</sup> For the 'theoric' aspect of Greek festivals, see A.W. Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in its Cultural Context* (Cambridge, 2004), 44–60.

<sup>7</sup> e.g. *Ar. Nub.* 204, *Vesp.* 1258, *Ran.* 5, 901, 906, *Pl. Phdr.* 227D1, 242E5. R. Tursiewicz, 'Zakres znaczeniowy ἀστεῖος w komedii Arystofanejskiej', *Eos* 74 (1986), 205–16, sees Aristophanes' use of the word as evidence that it was a technical term of literary criticism already in the fifth century.

<sup>8</sup> Antiph. fr. 183 K–A: χοιρίων | σκέλη καπύρ'. (B.) ἀστεῖόν γε, νῆ τὴν 'Εστίαν, | ἄριστον. (A.) ἐφθὸς τυρὸς ἐπεδόνει πολὺς. The translations follow S.D. Olson (ed. and tr.), *Athenaeus: The Learned Banqueters*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2006), 523.

<sup>9</sup> Translation by A.H. Sommerstein, *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, vol. 2: *Knights* (Warminster, 1981). For additional instances of the metaphor of 'le poète-cuisinier', see J. Taillardat, *Les images d'Aristophane: études de langue et de style* (Paris, 1965), 439–41.

used in a context in which words are spoken of as providing a feast for their hearers, just as we have at *Gorgias* 447A5, where Callicles extols the elegant verbal feast that the sophist has just served up.

The reason, I suggest, for Plato's use of the metaphor here at the start of the dialogue is to anticipate the analogy that Socrates will later draw between the 'art' of rhetoric and the 'art' of the chef.<sup>10</sup> In fact, neither is, in Socrates' view, an 'art' (τέχνη) at all. Rather, what the orator and the chef possess is a sort of empirical, practical facility (ἐμπειρία) that aims at the gratification of others (462C–463B). The chef merely pretends to possess the art that the physician has in fact mastered (464D, 465B) and his facility bears the same relationship to the art of the physician that rhetoric bears to the objective pursuit of justice (ὁ ὁσοποικὴ πρὸς ἰατρικὴν, τοῦτο ῥητορικὴ πρὸς δικαιοσύνην, 465C2–3).<sup>11</sup> The analogy between rhetoric and the skill of the chef is recalled later in the dialogue during Socrates' conversation with Callicles, when Socrates reminds his interlocutor that he had got Polus to agree that the chef possesses merely a facility for appealing (κολακεία) to his customers (500B) rather than the true art that the physician alone has acquired (500E). The physician is not concerned with the momentary gratification of the patient but with the health of the patient's body. Similarly, the person who, like Socrates, pursues the true art of philosophy is concerned with the healthy state of the soul. But the philosopher, like the physician, lacks the practical skill of flattery, a skill which the chef and the sophist possess in abundance. And so, as Socrates notes 'prophetically' near the end of the dialogue, if he were to be brought up on charges before a court of law he would suffer the same fate as a physician charged by a chef before a jury of boys (521E, recalling 464D).

Like many of Socrates' analogies, the image of the sophist as chef is, on first appearance, far-fetched. Indeed, he initially apologizes for the comparison as 'a bit crude' (ἀγροικότερον, 462E6), using a word that is the antonym of Callicles' term to describe Gorgias' eloquence (ἀστεῖος). But the subtlety of Plato's art lies in the ease with which he has allowed us only dimly to recall that the first appearance of the image of the sophist as chef was in fact in the mouth of Socrates' most vigorous adversary when, at the very opening of the dialogue, Callicles implicitly referred to the sophist Gorgias as having been responsible for preparing a splendid specimen of verbal *cuisine à la mode*.

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<sup>10</sup> It is not clear whether this is what Robert Wardy (*The Birth of Rhetoric: Gorgias, Plato and their Successors* [London and New York, 1996], 57) is referring to when he says, 'Socrates responds to Callicles with a metaphor which will not lie dormant, by asking whether he and his companion Chaerephon have missed the rhetorical "feast" (447A3)'.

<sup>11</sup> For the dialogue's comparison between the chef and the physician, see most recently J. Moss, 'The doctor and the pastry chef: pleasure and persuasion in Plato's *Gorgias*', *Ancient Philosophy* 27 (2007), 229–49.