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## THEOPOMPUS' HOMER: PARAEPIC IN OLD AND MIDDLE COMEDY

MATTHEW C. FARMER

IT IS A STRIKING FACT that, out of the twenty titles preserved for the late fifth- and early fourth-century comic poet Theopompus, three directly reference Homer's *Odyssey*: *Odysseus*, *Penelope*, and *Sirens*. In one fragment (F 34) preserved without title but probably belonging to one of these plays, Odysseus himself is the speaking character; he quotes the text of the *Odyssey*, approvingly.<sup>1</sup> Another fragment (F 31), evidently drawn from a comedy with a more contemporary focus, mocks a politician in a run of Homeric hexameters. Theopompus was, it seems, a comic poet with a strong interest in paraepic comedy, that is, in comedy that generates its humor by parodying, quoting, or referring to Homeric epic poetry.

In composing paraepic comedy, Theopompus was operating within a long tradition. Among the earliest known Homeric parodies, Hipponax provides our first certain example, a fragment in which the poet invokes the muse and deploys Homeric language to mock a glutton (F 128). The *Margites*, a poem composed in a mixture of hexameters and trimeters recounting the story of a certain fool in marked Homeric language, may have been composed as early as the seventh century BCE, but was certainly known in Athens by the fifth or fourth.<sup>2</sup> In the late sixth and early fifth centuries, the Sicilian Epicharmus may have become the first comic dramatist to engage with Homer.<sup>3</sup> Back in Athens in the third quarter of the fifth century, Cratinus made Homer the focus of entire plays: his *Odysseuses* tells the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops (as, perhaps, did Callias' *Cyclopes*); his *Archilochuses* features Homer himself as one of the main characters.<sup>4</sup> Sometime before the end of the fifth century, poets like Hegemon of Thasos began composing in a genre specifically termed *paroidia*; our limited evidence suggests that this poetry focused on Homeric parody, and at some point in this period it acquired its own category in festival competitions.<sup>5</sup>

1. Texts of the comic fragments (F) and testimonia (T) are drawn from the edition of Kassel and Austin 1983– (hereafter KA). All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own; all references to “Theopompus” are to the comic poet, not the historian.

2. See the testimonia at West 1992, 69–71.

3. See below.

4. On Cratinus' *Odysseuses* (F 143–57) and *Archilochoi* (F 1–16; see esp. F 6 for Homer as a character), see Favazza 1903, 5–77; Phillips 1959, 63–65; Nesselrath 1990, 237–39; Kerkhof 2001, 156–59; Casolari 2003, 209–10; Bakola 2010, 70–79, 236–45; Revermann 2013, 111–13, 117–18. For Callias' *Cyclopes*, see Imperio 1998, 204–17.

5. See Householder 1944; Olson and Sens 1999, 5–12; Panomitros 2003; Magnani 2014; Comentale 2017, 36–38.

Aristophanes, however, largely eschews engagement with Homer.<sup>6</sup> There are isolated passages of epic parody, like Philocleon's attempt to escape beneath the donkey in *Wasps*, or the Cyclops and Circe song that forms the parodos of *Wealth*. There is the occasional discussion of Homer, like the argument between Trygaeus and the sons of Lamachus and Cleonymus near the end of *Peace*. There is, however, no paraepic on a scale to parallel the sustained paratragedy of plays such as *Women at the Thesmophoria* or *Frogs* in Aristophanes' extant plays or in his fragments, and the substantial majority of Aristophanes' hexameters have nothing at all to do with Homer.<sup>7</sup> Eupolis, by far the best preserved fragmentary comic poet of Aristophanes' generation, avoids Homer almost entirely.<sup>8</sup>

Fragments from the works of other late fifth-century comic poets, however, suggest that despite Aristophanes' and Eupolis' relative lack of interest in epic, paraepic was still an important mode of comic discourse in this period. Among the fragments of Hermippus, for example, are two sustained hexameter catalogs in Homeric language, one a list of luxury imported goods (F 63), the other a discussion of varieties of wine spoken by Dionysus himself (F 77).<sup>9</sup> Hermippus is labeled by later sources a "parodist," that is, an author, like Hegemon, of poetry in the genre *paroidia*: F 63 is ascribed to a specific comedy, *Phormophoroi*, and thus seems certain to represent at least a moment of paraepic comedy; F 77 could belong to comedy or *paroidia*.<sup>10</sup> This pair of fragments thus confirms for us that late fifth-century Athenian audiences were interested in Homeric parody; if Hermippus were the only practitioner of such comedy, however, one might easily ascribe his interest in paraepic to his status as an author of *paroidia*. Certain comic titles by other fragmentary authors suggest Homeric themes, such as Phyllyllius' *Nausicaa, or, Washerwomen*, or Strattis' *Myrmidons*; many of these plays may, however, have been based on identically named tragedies, in this case by Sophocles and Aeschylus, respectively, and few such titles are associated with substantial fragments.<sup>11</sup>

Theopompus' fragments offer, therefore, an important corrective to the notion suggested by the remains of Aristophanes and Eupolis, that comic poets had lost interest in epic in the late fifth and early fourth centuries; his career spans, moreover, a crucial period in the history of Greek drama, the still somewhat mysterious transition from Old to Middle Comedy.<sup>12</sup> Despite the relatively

6. For the complex issue of what the name "Homer" would even mean to the Athenian comic audience, see Revermann 2013, 115.

7. On paraepic in Aristophanes, see Whitman 1964 (Odysseus as a fundamental model for the comic hero); Macía Aparicio 1998; 2000; 2011 (systematic categorization of paraepic in Aristophanes); Platter 2007, 108–42 (who demonstrates the tendency of Aristophanic hexameters to refer to oracles and riddles, rather than epic); Revermann 2013, 118–25 (see below); Telò 2013 (epic's role in Aristophanes' self-presentation).

8. For the tentative suggestion of one possible exception in the resemblance of the chorus of Eupolis' *Kolakes* to the suitors of the *Odyssey*, see Carey 2000, 424; Storey 2003, 184.

9. For commentary on these fragments, see Comentale 2017, 249–75 (F 63), 307–21 (F 77); other important discussions include Gilula 2000 and Ceschi 2015.

10. Although Gilula (2000, 82) and Storey (2014, 106) argue that Hermippus F 63 and 77 are equally likely to belong to comedy or *paroidia*, Comentale (2017, 254) (correctly in my view) defends F 63 as belonging to the comedy *Phormophoroi* but admits there can be no certainty regarding F 77 (p. 315).

11. On these two plays, see Farmer 2017a, 93–94. Nicophon's *Sirens* may be an exception to this rule; see below.

12. For the transition from Old to Middle Comedy, see Arnott 1972; Nesselrath 1990; 2015; Rosen 1995; Csapo 2000; Sidwell 2000; Sommerstein 2009, 272–88; Wright 2013; Zimmermann 2015.

meager state of these fragments, Theopompus' engagement with Homer is thus worthy of sustained investigation, and that is what I propose to do here. In examining the fragments of Theopompus in which Homeric characters, plots, and language appear, I hope both to expand our sense of the possibilities of late fifth- and early fourth-century comedy beyond what we know from Aristophanes, and to shed what light I can onto the career of a poet who exemplifies certain striking developments in Greek comedy during this period.<sup>13</sup>

First, however, I wish to clarify my use of the terms "paraepic" and "parody of epic." In my recent work on comic engagements with tragedy, I have found it productive to define "parody of tragedy" narrowly as comic imitation of tragedy: this might be humorous quotation or misquotation, recreation of tragic scenes and staging, or simply imitation of tragic language, style, and conventions. "Paratragedy" I have used as a broader term to encompass the whole range of comedy's approaches to tragedy: parody is one such approach, but others might include the use of tragedians as characters, the depiction of ordinary Athenians discussing tragedy, or the identification of comic characters as fans or partisans of specific tragic poets. This definition of paratragedy, in other words, allows us to see parody as one part of a spectrum of comic forms of engagement with tragedy. Martin Revermann, in an important recent piece investigating the broad dimensions of paraepic comedy, follows a similar practice in his use of the term "paraepic" to indicate "any instance in which a comic playwright is trying to cue his audience into connecting, for whatever length of time, what they experience right now in the theatre with epic poetry";<sup>14</sup> "epic parody," analogously to "tragic parody," can thus be used more narrowly to indicate places where a comic poet imitates epic poetry itself, by quoting Homer, deploying Homeric formulae and hexameters, or otherwise bringing the language of epic into his comedy.<sup>15</sup>

### 1. CALLISTRATUS CHARMS THE SONS OF THE ACHAEANS

Before turning to Theopompus' properly Homeric comedies, it will be useful to have a sense of how he deploys Homer in comedies that, so far as we can tell, are not otherwise paraepic in nature. The most striking instance of this ad-hoc use of Homer comes in Theopompus' *Mῆδος*, *The Mede*, probably produced toward the end of his career in the 370s BCE.<sup>16</sup> Using hexameters and Homeric formulae, Theopompus compares some unknown activity to the behavior of the politician Callistratus (F 31):

13. Earlier criticism on Theopompus' Homeric comedies includes Favazza 1903, 79–94 (a largely speculative reading of the fragments, going so far as to include scene-by-scene outlines of the comedies); Phillips 1959, 65 (brief summary of the fragments, considerably more judicious than Favazza but still with some degree of speculation); Sanchis Llopis 2002 (summaries of Theopompus' mythological comedies, insightful on certain points but too accepting of Favazza's and others' earlier reconstructions).

14. Revermann 2013, 104.

15. For further discussion of these terminological distinctions, see Farmer 2017a, 13–14, 69–71; 2017b, 4 n. 7, with bibliography.

16. Geissler 1969, 77–78, arguing from the identification of Callistratus and the alliance in question, discussed below.

ὥς ποτ' ἐκήλησεν Καλλίστρατος υἱᾶς Ἀχαιῶν,  
 κέρμα φίλον διαδούς, ὅτε συμμαχίαν ἐρέεινεν-  
 οῖον δ' οὐ κήλησε δέμας λεπτὸν Ραδάμανθυν  
 Λύσανδρον κώθωνι, πρὶν αὐτῷ δῶκε λεπαστήν

as once Callistratus charmed the sons of the Achaeans, giving away dear money, when he  
 was asking for an alliance: one alone he did not charm, a Rhadamanthys of slender form,  
 Lysander, with a *kothon*, until he gave him a *lepaste*

The Callistratus in question, Callistratus of Aphidna (*PAA* 561575), was one of the most prominent politicians at Athens in the 370s and 360s BCE, from his organization of the Second Athenian Confederacy in 378 (probably the alliance referred to here) to his exile in 362; prompted by the Delphic Oracle, he sought to return to Athens in 355, but was put to death.<sup>17</sup> The identity of the Lysander he nearly failed to win over is unknown: it cannot have been the famous Spartan leader, who died in 395 BCE; the name is otherwise very common,<sup>18</sup> but none of the attested individuals is in any particular way connected to Callistratus or the Second Athenian Confederacy.

In comedy, hexameters can be used for a variety of purposes:<sup>19</sup> sometimes they are intended to evoke Homer or Hesiod (Cratin. F 149, 150, 183, 222–23, 349; Hermipp. F 63 and perhaps 77; Pherecr. F 162; Plato Com. F 173), but more often (particularly in Aristophanes), they are for prayers, riddles, and especially oracles (Cratin. F 94; Ar. *Eq.* 197–201, 1015–95; *Pax* 1063–1114; *Av.* 967–88; *Lys.* 770–76; Plato Com. F 3); a few plays also deploy them for the exodus of the chorus without any particular intertextual relationship (Cratin. F 255 and perhaps F 253; Ar. *Ran.* 1528–33). Here the intention to parody Homer becomes clear by the end of the first line: the formula υἱᾶς Ἀχαιῶν, “sons of the Achaeans,” is very common in Homer (twenty-one times in *Il.*, three in *Od.*); beside this fragment, every other instance of it in extant Greek is a quotation of Homer. In Homer it always occurs, moreover, as a line ending after bucolic diaeresis, as it does here. The word “Achaean” alone would have suggested Homer to any members of the audience who somehow missed the formula itself: elsewhere in comedy it occurs only in Epicharmus F 97.15, in the mouth of Odysseus (more on this fragment below); Cratinus *Dionysalexandros* T 1.24, 1.37, the hypothesis to a play thoroughly embroiled in the epic world; twice in Euripides’ mockery of Aeschylus’ Homerizing language in *Frogs* (1269, 1284); and in Eubulus F 118, a joke about Homeric language in which Homer is explicitly named.

Even the least educated members of the audience seem likely, then, to have understood that Homeric parody was underway by the end of a hexameter line that concludes with a Homeric line-end formula and uses a word that in comedy occurs exclusively in paraepic contexts. Other bits of Homeric flavor are sprinkled throughout the passage as well. The verb ἐρέεινεν, “ask,” in line 2 occurs only in Homeric poetry (e.g., *Il.* 3.191; *Od.* 1.220; *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 392) and

17. For this identification, see also Olson 2006–2012, 5: 358 n. 268; Storey 2011, 3.333.

18. Cf. *PAA* 612305–612575, over fifty entries.

19. Parker 1997, 53; Platter 2007, 108–42.

later poetry that uses Homeric language (*Batr.* 172; *Ap. Rhod.* 1.209; *Theoc.* 25.3); in Homer, it occurs only in the imperfect (as here) or the present second person singular; the imperfect third person singular is often, as here, used as a line ending (though without the movable nu; see, e.g., *Od.* 7.31, 19.42). The adjective οἶος, “alone,” and the noun δέμας, “body,” are also markedly Homeric terms, and the unaugmented aorist δῶκε is restricted to Homeric poetry (some fifty-six times in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), archaizing lyric (e.g., *Theoc.* 2.1319; *Pind. Pyth.* 4.222), and this fragment. Much of the rest of the vocabulary of this fragment is compatible with elevated verse generally, if not always specifically attested in Homeric verse (e.g., ἐκίλησεν / κήλησε; διαδούς; συμμαχίαν; λεπτόν).<sup>20</sup> The figure of Rhadamanthys, too, is mentioned in Homer; we cannot know precisely what it means to call this unidentified Lysander a “Rhadamanthys of slender form,” but all three of the words in the phrase δέμας λεπτόν Ραδάμανθον do thus have their Homeric precedents.<sup>21</sup>

This fragment is not, however, simply a cento of Homeric phrases and quotations. Three key terms in this account of Callistratus’ attempts at bribery belong exclusively to comic verse and prose: κέρμα, literally “fragment” but usually “coin” or “small change”; and the two drinking vessels, κώθων and λεπαστή. All three of these words represent physical objects familiar from the everyday life of the audience; in Theopompus’ parody here, the audience’s material reality thus thrusts itself into the literary fantasy of the Homeric world. His description of κέρμα as φίλον encapsulates the merger of these two realms, since the audience is probably most accustomed to understanding this word to mean “dear” or “beloved,” but in Homeric Greek it very frequently means “one’s own”; the overlapping lenses of colloquial and Homeric Greek thus allow this phrase to mean simultaneously “precious cash” and “Callistratus’ own money.” The point of the reference to these two drinking cups is probably that a *lepaste* is larger than a *kothon*.<sup>22</sup> There may, however, also be some humor in the associations these two vessels bear, since the *kothon* is often mentioned as a cup used in military camps (*Archil.* F 4; *Ar. Eq.* 600; *Pax* 1094; *Theopomp.* F 55), whereas the *lepaste* is more strictly a sympotic vessel (*Ar.* F 174; *Hermipp.* F 45; *Telecl.* F 27; *Pherecr.* F 101; *Apolloph.* F 7; *Philyll.* F 5; *Theopomp.* F 41, 42; *Antiph.* F 47; *Anaxandr.* F 42); Callistratus thus fails to win Lysander’s support with a meager soldier’s cup, but wins him over with a more capacious peacetime flagon. Sandwiched between these two colloquial words is the Homeric δῶκε; the aorist of δίδωμι lacks its augment nowhere else in extant comedy.

20. ἐκίλησεν / κήλησε: *Pind.* F 70b.22; *Eur.* F 223.87; *Alc.* 359. διαδούς: *Eur. Tro.* 117; *Phoen.* 1371; *Or.* 1267. συμμαχίαν: *Pind. Ol.* 10.72; *Aesch. Ag.* 213. λεπτόν: *Il.* 9.661; *Od.* 295 (never modifying δέμας, but cf. *Il.* 5.801, Τυδεύς τοι μικρός μὲν ἔην δέμας, “Tydeus who was small in form”).

21. Rhadamanthys in Homer is the son of Zeus and Europa (*Il.* 14.322) and an inhabitant of Elysium (*Od.* 4.563–65); in Hesiod (*F* 141.13), Pindar (*Ol.* 2.74–75; *Pyth.* 2.73–75), and Theognis (1.701) he is noted for wisdom and justice, but it is not until Plato that we are explicitly told of his position as a judge in the underworld (*Grg.* 523e–526c). Elsewhere in comedy he is mentioned only at *Anaxandr.* F 10, where he (along with Palamedes) is credited with inventing the rule that a person who does not contribute to dinner (an ἀσύμβολος) must tell jokes during the meal. The Lysander Theopompus compares to Rhadamanthys may thus have been famous for his knowledge of the law, general wisdom, moral probity, or some other such quality.

22. So Kaibel at *KA* 7.722; for these two vessels and their appearance in comedy, see Starkey 1957, 128–29; Olson 1998, 244, 278; Bagordo 2013, 151.

This fragment of Theopompus' *The Mede* is evidently one half of a simile. The phrase ὡς ποτ', though attested in Homer, is not one Homer himself uses to introduce similes;<sup>23</sup> nevertheless, this expression, followed by the relatively long description of Callistratus, puts us squarely in the realm of the extended comparisons familiar from Homeric epic. The position of ἐκήλησεν suggests that this is the crux of the comparison (a notion supported by the verb's repetition two lines below)—that is, that someone is “charming,” in the sense of persuading, someone else, just as Callistratus once did. Who the speaker of these lines might be, however, and who is being compared to Callistratus, remain utterly mysterious. We know, in truth, very little about this play: the title seems likely to suggest a prominent Persian character, but it could instead refer to someone Theopompus wishes to slander by calling him an easterner, as Aristophanes does with Cleon in *Knights* and Eupolis with Hyperbolus in *Marikas*;<sup>24</sup> Medos is also attested as a personal name (*PAA* 648160). The only other substantial fragment (F 30) shows us a personification of Mt. Lycabettus complaining about young men having sex on her slopes; this seems most likely to have been the play's prologue, and to indicate a setting in contemporary Athens, but we know nothing else about the plot of this comedy.<sup>25</sup> Theopompus will, however, show an interest in Homeric similes elsewhere in his fragments as well; despite our inability to evaluate the terms of his comparison, then, the fact that he deploys a simile in this markedly Homeric passage remains significant.

We see thus in this fragment that Theopompus takes a remarkably sophisticated approach to even a brief moment of Homeric parody in a play that seems unlikely to have focused on Homer particularly, or to have been set in the epic past of the Homeric poems. Three titles, and one compelling fragment, do, however, suggest comedies set in the epic past, and it is to these comedies that we must now turn.

## 2. HOMER'S EXCELLENT SIMILE

It is a typical example of the frustrations of working with fragmentary literature that the one fragment of Theopompus attributed to a specific Homeric character is cited without the title of the play to which it belongs.<sup>26</sup> Eustathius quotes Theopompus F 34 in a discussion of different words for “onion skin,” as part of his analysis of the onion-skin simile at *Odyssey* 19.233 (Eust. *in Od.* 1863.50):

Ἰστέον δὲ, ὅτι τε τὸ ῥήθην λέπτρον καὶ λεπύχανόν φασιν εὐρησθαι παρὰ Θεοπόμπῳ τῷ κομικῷ, εἰπόντι ὡς ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ Ὀδυσσεῶς τό· . . .

23. As here, the phrase is usually at the beginning of the line (the one exception being *Od.* 8.564); it is mostly used, however, in expressions like “thus he once spoke” (*Il.* 14.45, 18.9) or “thus someone will say someday” (*Il.* 4.182=6.462=7.91, 8.150). Homer does, however, often use the very similar ὡς ὅτε to introduce similes, e.g., *Il.* 2.209; *Od.* 9.384.

24. On Eup. *Marikas*, see Sommerstein 2000; Storey 2003, 197–214; Bakola 2010, 34–35.

25. For F 30, see Dover 1989, 87 n. 48; Halperin 1990, 91; Hubbard 2003, 114.

26. There is an increasing body of criticism concerned with the difficulties of working with ancient fragments, and with the development of more robust theoretical approaches to meet those difficulties: see, among many others, Most 1997; Dover 2000; Arnott 2000; Stephens 2002; Elias 2004; Olson 2007; 2015; and the essays in Derda, Hilder, and Kwapisz 2017.

One should know that they say the words *lepuron* (rind) and *lepuchanon* (skin) are also to be found in Theopompus the comic poet, speaking in the character of Odysseus the following: . . .

The phrase ὡς ἐκ προσώπου is often used in later scholarly Greek to indicate that the author is composing direct speech delivered by a character whose name or description follows in the genitive:

Σ Hom. *Od.* 12.184

ἐν τούτοις ὁ ποιητὴς προσωποποιεῖται λέγων τὸ ἄγε, ὡς ἐκ προσώπου τῶν Σειρήνων καλουμένων τὸν Ὀδυσσεά πρὸς ἑαυτὰς.

In these words the poet speaks in character, in the character of the Sirens calling Odysseus to themselves so that he will then enjoy their song.

Σ Theoc. 6.20–24a

ὁ Δαμοίτας ἄδει ὡς ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ Πολυφήμου τὴν ἀπόκρισιν τοῦ λόγου ποιούμενος.

Damoitas sings making his response in the character of Polyphemus.

Σ. Luc. *JTr.* 41

ἄλλ' οὐδὲ τοῦτο ὡς ἐκ προσώπου Εὐριπίδου, μάταιε . . . ποῦ τὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ πρόσωπον ἢ δραματουργία πώποτε ἐνεφάνισεν;

But this is not spoken in the character of Euripides, you fool . . . Where has drama ever portrayed the character of the poet himself?

In the first example above, the expression indicates that the author, Homer, is composing direct speech delivered by the Sirens; in the second, an internal author, Damoitas, again composes direct speech, this time as the character Polyphemus within Damoitas' song; and finally, in the third example, the scholiast rejects an interpretation of a passage of Lucian by using the same expression to indicate that, when a poet composes direct speech, the words belong to the character, not to the poet. Eustathius himself uses the same phrase elsewhere as well (*in Il.* 261.38):

Ἰστέον δὲ ὅτι παρὰ τὸ δέκα μὲν στόματα καὶ ἐξῆς πέπαικται τινι παλαιῷ ὡς ἐκ προσώπου λίχνου τὸ 'ἄλλ' ἀδύνατα βούλομαι . . .'

One should note that there was a parody of 'had I ten mouths etc.' in some ancient author in the character of a glutton: 'but I desire impossible things . . .'

Although we know less about the context Eustathius is discussing here (where he quotes Lync. F 1.12ff), the first-person βούλομαι indicates that he is once more using the phrase ὡς ἐκ προσώπου to denote direct speech by the character whose name or description follows in the genitive case.

Kassel and Austin are thus correct to understand the speaker of Theopompus F 34 as Odysseus;<sup>27</sup> they are somewhat misleading, however, when they attribute the fragment to Theopompus' comedy *Odysseus*, mentioning that it could also belong to *Penelope*, when in fact there is no real basis for deciding which of these plays it belongs to, or indeed for assuming that it could not belong

27. See also Phillips 1959, 65; Storey 2011, 3.337; Rusten 2011, 372.

instead to *Sirens*. Despite this vexing mystery, the fragment is richly suggestive for Theopompus' treatment of the Homeric epics, given Eustathius' indication that the speaker is Odysseus (F 34 = Eust. *in Od.* 1863.50):

Ἰστέον δὲ, ὅτι τε τὸ ῥηθὲν λέπυρον καὶ λεπύχανόν φασιν εὐρησθαι παρὰ Θεοπόμπῳ τῷ  
 κωμικῷ, εἰπόντι ὡς ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ Ὀδυσσεύως τό·

χιτῶνά μοι  
 φέρων δέδωκας δαιδάλεον, ὃν ἤκασεν  
 ἄρισθ' Ὀμηρος κρομμύου λεπυχάνῳ

One should know that they say the words *lepuron* (rind) and *lepuchanon* (skin) are also to be found in Theopompus the comic poet, speaking in the character of Odysseus the following:

an elaborate *chiton* you have brought and given to me, which Homer excellently compared to the skin of an onion

The immediate humor of this fragment is born of anachronism: the notion that Odysseus himself has read the *Odyssey* and can cite Homer by name is an inherently funny disruption of the mythological world. We see similar types of jokes in later mythological comedy as well: in Alexis' *Linus*, for example, Heracles and his tutor Linus peruse the latter's library, and find volumes of Homer there, in defiance of a setting that is not only prior to Homer himself but prior even to the content of the Homeric epics;<sup>28</sup> in Plautus' *Amphitruo*, characters frequently utter the oath *hercle*, despite the fact that the plot of the play concerns the conception of Hercules.<sup>29</sup> To have Odysseus participate in this game of anachronism is, however, a striking choice on Theopompus' part: Homeric characters in general often refer to a culture of songs concerning heroes like themselves, but only Odysseus in extant epic is seen reacting to, evaluating, and even performing songs about himself. This element of metafictional awareness of himself as a character in a poem is already inherent in the Homeric Odysseus: Theopompus then extends this awareness to the absurd, illusion-shattering extent of having Odysseus know the name of his poem's author.

One of the more striking elements of Theopompus' depiction of Odysseus here is that he not only quotes Homer by name, he praises the quality of Homer's poetry. This too is behavior familiar from Homer's own Odysseus: during the series of banquets he participates in with the Phaeacians, we repeatedly see Odysseus not only reacting emotionally to Demodocus' songs (8.367–68, 8.521–34), but even praising Demodocus as a poet (8.477–91, 9.1–11). The metafictional quality of these interactions has long been recognized—even ancient audiences, who attributed Demodocus' blindness to Homer himself, evidently saw Demodocus as in some sense a stand-in for Homer—but Theopompus neatly renders explicit here what is only implicit in Homer, namely that Odysseus' praise of Demodocus amounts to praise of Homer himself, since he is the actual poet composing Demodocus' verses.

Homer's Odysseus tends to praise the qualifications of the bard and the experience his performance creates: he has a godlike voice; he brings joy to the

28. See Alexis F 140, with Arnott 1996, 406–15; Wright 2013, 209–11.

29. Christenson 2000, ad 299.

banqueters; he has a divine connection to the muse. The epic Odysseus does not, however, dwell on the poet's language, or use anything resembling technical or proto-literary-critical terminology in his praise. Not so Theopompus' Odysseus, who singles out Homer's use of a simile to describe the beautiful thinness of a fine garment. Similes were to become an early focus of Homeric criticism: already Aristotle discusses the value of Homeric similes as rhetorical models (e.g., Arist. *Rh.* 3.4.1406b), and they are a frequent subject of discussion in the Alexandrian and later criticism that comes down to us through the scholia.<sup>30</sup> In these later works, a distinction is sometimes drawn between the extended, "epic" simile (παραβολή), and short comparisons without further development (εἰκῶν or εἰκασία);<sup>31</sup> Theopompus thus, perhaps coincidentally, uses the term (εἰκάζειν) that later critics would recognize as correct for the type of brief simile he refers to here. Theopompus' collocation of Homer and similes in both F 31 and F 34 suggests that he, too, recognized similes as a distinctive feature of Homeric poetry. Whether Theopompus himself would have considered εἰκάζειν technical vocabulary or not, his Odysseus' praise of Homer's simile here further develops the humorous anachronism of this speech: just as he extends Homer's depiction of Odysseus' awareness of himself as a character in a poem by having his comic Odysseus refer to Homer by name, so he takes the Homeric Odysseus' tendency to praise Homeric poetry and makes it resemble contemporary fourth-century criticism of Homer by shifting the emphasis of Odysseus' praise from the bard's divine voice and inspiration to the technical qualities of the poetic language.

Although Odysseus here cites Homer by name, he does not directly quote the lines he is referring to. The origin of this comparison is in *Odyssey* 19; Odysseus has just claimed (while still in disguise) to have seen Odysseus soon after he left Ithaca for Troy, and when Penelope asks him to describe what this Odysseus was wearing, he responds (19.232–35):

τὸν δὲ χιτῶν' ἐνόησα περὶ χροῖ σιγαλόεντα,  
οἶόν τε κρομύσιοι λοπὸν κἀτα ἰσχαλέοιο·  
τὼς μὲν ἔην μαλακός, λαμπρὸς δ' ἦν ἡέλιος ὤς.  
ἧ μὲν πολλαί γ' αὐτὸν ἐθήησαντο γυναικες.

I noted his *chiton* shining around his body, like the skin on a dried onion: that's how soft it was, and it was shining like the sun. And indeed many women admired it.

Unlike in the hexameters of F 31, where we see distinctly Homeric forms and formulae, in Odysseus' speech in F 34 it is only the explicit citation of Homer that directs us to the *Odyssey* model. Theopompus recalls these verses vaguely by repeating the words χιτῶν and κρόμμυον; both are in the same cases as in the Homeric passage (accusative and genitive, respectively), but Theopompus even modernizes the Homeric orthography and archaic genitive ending of κρομύσιο into the Attic κρομμύου.<sup>32</sup> He also changes the key term of the

30. For the treatment of Homeric similes in ancient literary criticism, see Clausen 1913; McCall 1969; Snipes 1988; Richardson 2006, 197–200; Nünlist 2009, 282–98.

31. See esp. Ps.-Demetrius *On Style* 89–90.

32. Although the MSS of Eustathius give the spelling as κρομύου, this would not scan correctly, and so Meineke (1840, 806) restored the undoubtedly correct Attic spelling κρομμύου.

comparison, Homer's *λοπός*, into the synonymous *λεπύχανον*. The only distinctly non-colloquial word in this passage is the adjective *δαιδάλεος*, "elaborate" or "variegated"; although the word is Homeric (e.g., *Il.* 4.135; *Od.* 1.131), it does not occur in the original onion-skin simile, and is common in other forms of elevated poetry as well (e.g., *Bacch.* 5.140; *Pind. Pyth.* 4.296; *Eur. Hec.* 470). In Theopompus' trimeters here, his Odysseus thus speaks primarily in contemporary language; the word *δαιδάλεος* lends an elevated quality to his words, but even it is not exclusively Homeric, and—in sharp distinction to his practice in the hexameters of F 31—Theopompus does not make room here for any distinctly Homeric coloring.

Finally, although we know very little about the context in which Theopompus' Odysseus utters these lines, we can see that Theopompus has made one crucial contextual alteration from his Homeric model. In Homer, Odysseus addresses the onion-skin simile to Penelope, and it was Penelope who gave Odysseus the cloak in question. Here, the masculine participle *φέρων* must modify the subject of *δέδωκας*—not only, then, are these lines addressed to a man, but it must be a man who gave Odysseus the onion-skin cloak, not Penelope. We have no indication as to who this character might have been, or even whether he belongs to the original Homeric context, but we can say that Theopompus creates an interesting tension here by explicitly citing his Homeric model while altering prominent details of the Homeric story.

Thus far we have seen one fragment in which Theopompus used paraepic language to engage with a contemporary politician (F 31), and another in which he put a bit of epic parody into the mouth of Odysseus himself, in an unknown play (F 34). I would like to turn now to the fragments belonging to the set of three comedies by Theopompus whose titles clearly signal a relationship to the *Odyssey*: *Odysseus*, *Penelope*, and *Sirens*. Before I consider the fragments themselves, however, a word is necessary about the meaning of these titles. Because we possess no intact mythological comedy in Greek, we are always at a disadvantage in trying to interpret such plays. Nevertheless, our evidence, I believe, makes it clear that mythological titles indicate plays set in the mythological past: Alcaeus' *Ganymede* and *Endymion*, Aristophanes' *Daedalus*, *Danaids*, *Lemnian Women*, *Polyidus*, and *Phoenician Women*, Cratinus' *Dionysalexander*, *Nemesis*, *Odysseuses*, and *Men of Seriphus*, Hermippus' *Birth of Athena*, Nicochares' *Anytone*, or, *Pelops*, Pherecrates' *Ant-Men*, Strattis' *Medea*, *Troilus*, and *Phoenician Women* all preserve fragments that secure their mythological setting;<sup>33</sup> this is in addition to a number of plays whose titles, such as the various "birth of a god" plays, seem certain to indicate mythological settings on their own.<sup>34</sup> There is an exception to this rule in the titles of plays whose names are gods, since gods are naturally able to appear (as Hermes does in *Peace*, Dionysus in *Frogs*, etc.) in contemporary settings: plays such as *Philyllius*'

33. See the following fragments for indications of the mythological setting of each play: Alc. Com. *Ganymede* (F 3), *Endymion* (F 10); Ar. *Daedalus* (F 198), *Danaids* (F 272), *Lemnian Women* (F 373, 374), *Polyidus* (F 469), *Phoenician Women* (F 570); Cratin. *Dionysalexander* (T 1 = Hyp.), *Nemesis* (T1, F 115), *Odysseuses* (T 1, F 145–47, 151), *Men of Seriphus* (F 231); Hermipp. *Birth of Athena* (F 2); Nicochar. *Anytone*, or, *Pelops* (F 2); Pherecrates' *Ant-Men* (F 125); Stratt. *Medea* (F 35), *Troilus* (F 42), *Phoenician Women* (F 46, 47).

34. See Nesselrath 1995.

*Heracles*, which takes place at the Athenian Apatouria festival, are able to feature divine characters in modern Athens because these are immortal beings.<sup>35</sup>

There is no evidence, however, for plays whose titles refer to mortal mythological characters such as Odysseus or Penelope but whose setting is the present day. Indeed, we have some evidence against this idea, since authors who wanted to depict contemporary characters caught up in mythological stories seem to have used compound titles: in a fragment of Timocles (F 27), for example, the contemporary Autocleides finds himself surrounded by prostitutes like Orestes surrounded by the Furies in the opening scene of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*; the title of this play is *Orestautocleides*.<sup>36</sup> Plays in a mythological setting can of course still include contemporary references: we are told in the hypothesis to Cratinus' thoroughly mythological *Dionysalexander* that it was a veiled attack on Pericles, for example, and his *Nemesis*, too, seems to have been political, and mentions a contemporary diviner Lampon (F 125). Given, then, that there are a number of plays with mythological titles whose fragments indicate a mythological setting, no plays with mythological titles (except the names of gods) whose fragments securely indicate a contemporary setting, and several certainly mythological plays that nevertheless contain contemporary references, I will proceed in my analysis of these plays by Theopompus on the assumption that their titles indicate a setting in the mythological world to which their title characters belong.

Although we cannot securely assign F 34 to Theopompus' *Odysseus*, three fragments are preserved with explicit attribution to this play. The exact form of the comedy's title is itself somewhat uncertain: Athenaeus and the scholia to Aristophanes call the play *Odysseus* (Ὀδυσσεύς), but Pollux cites it as *Odysseuses* (Ὀδυσσῆς). The plural form may possibly have been the title of the play (meaning something like "Odysseus and Company"), but it seems more likely, as Alan Sommerstein suggests, that Cratinus' well-known comedy of this name (which Pollux cites by name elsewhere: 10.32 = Cratin. F 148) has ousted the plainer title of Theopompus' comedy.<sup>37</sup> Either form of the title strongly suggests a comedy in which Odysseus was the main character; the title puts the *Odyssey* in the forefront of the audience's minds, and indicates a comedy that was in some form paraepic in its approach.

Athenaeus provides one fragment of the play that contains another explicitly cited quotation (Ath. 4.165b = F 35):

Ἐυριπίδου τᾶριστον, οὐ κακῶς ἔχον,  
τᾶλλότρια δειπνεῖν τὸν καλῶς εὐδαίμονα

Euripides' best line, not at all bad, that the truly happy man dines on others' food.

35. On these plays and their titles, see Bowie 2000; Casolari 2003; Henderson 2012; Farmer 2017a, 92–95; on dramatic titles generally, see Sommerstein 2010, 11–29.

36. We know a number of other such titles, including Strattis' *Anthroporestes*, Pherecrates' *Anthropheracles* and *Pseuderacles*, and Aristophanes' *Aeolicon*, but the meaning of most of these titles remains ambiguous. For *Orestautocleides*, see Olson 2007, 175–76; Farmer 2017a, 109–10; and on this type of compound titles, Farmer 2017a, 33 n. 65.

37. Sommerstein 2009, 284–85.

There is some doubt whether this supposed quotation from Euripides is genuine or not. August Nauck believed it was (see *TrGF* 5.906 on Eur. F 894), but suggested the verb *δειπνεῖν* has been parodically inserted for some more elevated verb like *φεύγειν* (“the truly happy man avoids others’ troubles”); Theodor Bergk, followed by August Meineke, believed the verse was genuine Euripides, but from a satyr-play.<sup>38</sup> The possibility also exists that the whole quotation is fabricated: Diphilus does something quite similar in his *Synoris*, when he has a speaker insert a purely invented line in between two quotations from Euripides, once more in defense of parasitism.<sup>39</sup> As I have recently argued, Theopompus accomplishes a neat metapoetic trick here, whether this character (mis)quotes a genuine line of Euripides or simply invents this little *gnome* and foists it off on the tragedian: in having his character claim to use another poet’s words to praise the life of the parasite, Theopompus figures himself as yet another parasite; in other words, just as the truly happy man dines on others’ food, the truly happy poet borrows others’ words.<sup>40</sup>

What I would like to add to my earlier argument is the importance of this fragment’s context in a play entitled *Odysseus*. Revermann has observed that comic poets often combine paraepic with paratragedy or with other forms of generic engagement; he calls this mode the “additive strategy.”<sup>41</sup> In both *Acharnians* and *Frogs*, he argues, Aristophanes does not merely (as in *Women at the Thesmophoria*) engage with tragedy, but instead he blends his tragic parody and references to tragic poets with various similar forms of engagement with epic. “Such additive strategies of generic interaction were probably quite common,” he writes, suggesting that Cratinus’ *Dionysalexander* combined paraepic with parasatyr, and that his *Archilochuses* combined paraepic with “paramelic or para-iambic.”<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, he concludes that this additive strategy, this hybridization of paraepic with (especially) paratragedy, was probably a specialty of Aristophanes, rather than a widespread phenomenon in late fifth-century comedy.

Revermann may well be right about Aristophanes’ central place in the use of this additive strategy of generic engagement; our evidence, as he admits, does not allow us to draw any firm conclusion. I would like to suggest, however, that F 35 of Theopompus’ *Odysseus* provides a likely example of this same poetic practice. Although we do not know the extent of either epic or tragic engagement in this comedy, Theopompus’ deployment of a quotation (or “quotation”) from Euripides here suggests a very similar blending of paratragedy and paraepic. The title of the comedy itself constitutes an act of paraepic comedy: the centrality of the *Odyssey* in the Greek literary tradition is such that, even if Theopompus’ comedy happened to contain no direct allusion to Homer, no hexameters or Homeric language, Homer must inevitably have lurked behind any portrayal of Odysseus. Even if Theopompus’ comedy were directed primarily at a tragic Odysseus rather than an epic one, this would still parallel Aristophanes’ strategy in

38. Bergk 1838, 412–13; Meineke 1840, 806.

39. See Diphilus F 74, with Olson 2007, 179–81. This connection is also made by Sanchis Llopis (2002, 116).

40. Farmer 2017a, 112–13.

41. Revermann 2013.

42. Revermann 2013, 124.

*Frogs* of approaching epic through its reception in the tragic poetry of Aeschylus and Euripides. By bringing Euripides into his *Odysseus*, Theopompus, however fleetingly, thus participates in the additive strategy that Revermann identifies as typical of Aristophanes' own brand of paraepic comedy.

Whether F 34 (Odysseus' praise of the onion-skin simile) and F 35 (an unknown character's quotation of Euripides' praise of the parasite) belong to the same comedy or not, the structure of these two jokes is strikingly similar. In both, the character quotes a poet by name, describes (truly or falsely) what he said, and praises the author with the same adjective, ἄριστος, "best," "excellent." Even in the rather scrappy remains of Theopompus it is possible to see that his characters have something of a habit of quoting other authors by name: in addition to these two fragments, we have F 4 of *Althaea*, in which a character claims that the dithyrambic poet Telestes used the word *akatos* to mean *phiale*; and F 16, in which a character misquotes a bit of the *Phaedo* and then ascribes the quotation to Plato.<sup>43</sup> This comedy of quotation becomes a common practice in the fourth century, very often involving the combination of praise for the quoted author alongside misquotation or misapplication of the quotation (where it is not wholly fabricated).<sup>44</sup> Theopompus thus bridges the gap here between fifth- and fourth-century comedy: our evidence does not permit us to claim that he is anything like a pioneer or important influence in and of himself, but we can certainly say that in F 35 he exemplifies at once the additive strategy typical of fifth-century paraepic, and the comedy of quotation that will rise to prominence in the fourth century.

The other two fragments we possess of this comedy shed a little further light on Theopompus' approach to his topic. In F 36, we have a textually problematic reference to oral sex:

ἵνα μὴ τὸ παλαιὸν τοῦτο καὶ θρυλούμενον  
 δι' ἡμετέρων στομάτων < >  
 εἶπω σόφισμι', ὃ φασι παῖδας Λεσβίων  
 εὐρεῖν

so that I may not speak of that much talked-about old trick we do with our mouths which they say the daughters of the Lesbians discovered.

Our restoration of the text depends on our identification of the meter: if it is iambic trimeter, there is a gap at the end of the second line; if, however, it is dactylo-epitrite, there is no need to posit such a gap. Metrically, either is possible; on the one hand, trimeters are so ubiquitous and dactylo-epitrites in comedy so (comparatively) rare that trimeter seems the more probable identification; on the other, dactylo-epitrites are not impossible even in an early fourth-century comedy (e.g., *Ar. Eccl.* 571–80), and the sense and grammar of the fragment do not seem to require any addition to the end of line 2. In Aristophanes, dactylo-epitrites tend to belong to the chorus, and to create a somewhat elevated feel, often engaging with Stesichorus, tragedy, or epinician, and we might imagine

43. For the latter, see Farmer 2017b, 19–22.

44. See Farmer 2017a, 59–62, and esp. Wright 2016; one eagerly awaits Wright's monograph on quotation, of which the latter article presents a stimulating preview.

such a context here; but if the fragment is to be read as in trimeters, it could belong anywhere in the comedy.<sup>45</sup>

The language of this fragment is largely colloquial, and the topic of course is quite particular to comic discourse. The ambiguity of the phrase δι' ἡμετέρων στομάτων, “with our mouths,” facilitates an effective double entendre. At first this phrase appears to go with θρυλούμενον, “much talked about,” but the reference to the people of Lesbos, often associated in comedy with oral sex, reveals that it can also be combined with σόφισμα, “trick”: the mouths in question serve both to talk about this trick, and to perform it.<sup>46</sup> The phrase παῖδας Λεσβίων may (as Fredericus Blaydes first suggested) be intended to evoke the Homeric *ἡλιάς Ἀχαιῶν*,<sup>47</sup> which we saw Theopompus make use of earlier in F 31; it too is effectively ambiguous, since it sounds at first quite like such elevated expressions for the people of a certain location, but, once the implication of oral sex is understood, it takes on the more specific meaning “young women” or even “slave girls,” since oral sex always seems to have this base and even servile connotation in Greek comedy.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, the phrase also creates the anachronism typical of paraepic comedy, since it uses an epic (or at least, an elevated) structure while at the same time bringing in a contemporary association (Lesbos and oral sex) that is alien to the world of epic. Pherecrates makes much the same joke in his *Cheiron* (F 159):

A. δώσει δέ σοι γυναῖκας ἑπτὰ Λεσβίδας.

B. καλὸν γε δῶρον, ἔπτ' ἔχειν λαικαστρίας

A. He will give you seven women of Lesbos.

B. A beautiful gift, to have seven whores.

Pherecrates creates a distinct parody here of Odysseus' offer of gifts from Agamemnon to Achilles in *Iliad* 9 (270–72):

δώσει δ' ἑπτὰ γυναῖκας ἀμόμωνα ἔργα ἰδίας  
Λεσβίδας, ἃς ὄτε Λέσβον εὐκτιμένην ἔλεξ αὐτὸς  
ἔξέλεθ', αἱ τότε κάλλει ἐνίκων φύλα γυναικῶν.

He will give seven women who know blameless actions, women of Lesbos, whom you yourself captured when you took Lesbos, good to dwell in, women who at that time defeated all the tribes of women in beauty.

The first speaker's words essentially just translate the Homeric line into iambic trimeters; the reply, however, picks up on the word κάλλος in the epic passage, but takes the implicit sexuality of the gift of beautiful slave-women in

45. For dactylo-epitrites in comedy, see Dale 1968, 178–94; Parker 1997, 85–90; metrically these verses resemble most closely Ar. *Av*: 451–59.

46. Henderson's (1991, 183–84) translation neatly captures this ambiguity: “that old technique, much repeated by mouth.”

47. Blaydes 1896, 91.

48. For the association of Lesbos with oral sex, see Ar. *Vesp*: 1346; Pherecr. F 159; Strattis F 41, 42, with Dover 1989, 182–84; Henderson 1991, 183; Gilhuly 2015; Biles and Olson 2016, 473.

Homer and makes it obscenely overt with the offensive slang term *λαϊκάστρια*, “whore.”<sup>49</sup> Whether one of these comic poets is responding to and seeking to cap the other,<sup>50</sup> or both simply arrived at the same joke independently, we cannot say; but the essence of the humor, to take the Homeric Lesbos and update it with its contemporary sexual associations, is the same in each.<sup>51</sup>

The third fragment of Theopompus' *Odysseus* is rather less informative (F 37):

λάσιον ἐπιβεβλημένος

having put on a rough garment

This use of *ἐπιβάλλω* for putting on clothes is common in Homer, relatively rare in comedy; *λάσιος*, an adjective meaning “rough” or “shaggy,” is Homeric, though not applied to clothes. The fragment is thus more or less compatible with a Homeric context, but the only other thing that can be said about it is that Pollux tells us it describes a servant (*ἐπὶ διακόνου*, 7.74).

The approach of earlier critics such as Salvatore Favazza to this play, an effort to reconstruct specific episodes from the *Odyssey* parodied by Theopompus, must therefore be rejected: we cannot by any means safely use F 34 to interpret the comedy, and our attested fragments tell us essentially nothing about the plot of the play. Nevertheless, F 34 together with the fragments ascribed to *Odysseus* can tell us a number of important things about Theopompus' method of paraepic comedy: he likes the effect of anachronism, with Odysseus mentioning Homer, an unknown character discussing Euripides, and a reference to the contemporary sexual associations of the island of Lesbos; as in other places, he makes effective and subtle use in F 34 and 35 of the complex humor of quotation; he participates in the additive strategy of combining paraepic with para-tragedy identified as typical of Aristophanes' and Cratinus' paraepic practice by Revermann; and he is not afraid to inject a dose of explicit sexuality into the world of Odysseus, even if he does so (in our evidence at least) without obscene language.

If *Odysseus* were the only Homeric title in Theopompus' oeuvre, such might be the limit of our analysis of his use of paraepic. Two other titles, however, direct us toward Homer, and indeed toward the *Odyssey*: *Penelope* and *Sirens*. Two fragments of the former suggest the story of Odysseus' revenge on the suitors, though neither can be taken as definitive. In F 48, we have a reference to the worship of Apollo at the new moon:

καί σε τῇ νουμηνία  
ἀγαλματίοις ἀγαλοῦμεν ἀεὶ καὶ δάφνη

and at the new moon we will always offer you little offerings and laurel

49. On the valence of this term, see Henderson 1991, 153.

50. Most likely Theopompus responding to Pherecrates, since the latter seems to have ceased his activity sometime during the 410s, and may (if Olson is correct to identify him with the Pherecrates attested on an epitaph from that decade) have died before Theopompus seems to have begun his career; see Olson 2010.

51. For this fragment, and Pherecrates' *Cheiron* play generally, see Dobrov and Urios-Aparisi 1995; Csapo 1999–2000; Henderson 2000, 142–43; Hall 2000, 414–15; Olson 2007, 182–86, 318–20; Storey 2014, 109–10. Doubts about the play's authentic ascription to Pherecrates, or about which poet's *Cheiron* F 155 belongs to, prevent me from commenting further on the possibilities of a paraepic context here.

The reference to the new moon is overt; the reference to Apollo is strongly indicated by the worship of this unnamed god with laurel.<sup>52</sup> It seems to me a striking coincidence that Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors, perhaps the most obvious content for a play entitled *Penelope*, also occurs in the *Odyssey* during a festival for Apollo on the day of the new moon. At *Odyssey* 19.306–7, Odysseus (still in disguise) proclaims that his return will happen at the new moon:

τοῦδ' αὐτοῦ λυκάβαντος ἐλεύσεται ἐνθάδ' Ὀδυσσεύς,  
τοῦ μὲν φθίνοντος μηνός, τοῦ δ' ἵσταμένοιο.

Odysseus will come here this very year,<sup>53</sup> as the one month is fading, the other rising.

As Norman Austin has argued, several less explicit references to the new moon also occur in related passages, including the image of the moonless night (14.457) and Theoclymenus' vision of a solar eclipse, which can only happen during a new moon (20.351–57);<sup>54</sup> ancient critics, too, recognized the new moon as the time of Odysseus' murder of the suitors.<sup>55</sup> That this day is also a sacred festival of Apollo is mentioned repeatedly leading up to the archery contest and the confrontation that follows.<sup>56</sup>

F 49 of the same play also calls to mind the circumstances of Odysseus' return to Ithaca:

καὶ τὴν ἱεράν σφάττουσιν ἡμῶν δέλφακα  
and they are slaughtering our sacred pig

The clash between the third-person verb σφάττουσιν and the first-person pronoun ἡμῶν gives this line the look of a complaint: someone *else* is eating *our* pigs. In the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus reaches the hut of Eumaeus, the swineherd offers him some pork, and complains at length about the suitors consuming the best of his master's pigs themselves (14.80–108):

ἔσθιε νῦν, ᾧ ζεῖνε, τά τε δμῶεσσι πάρεστι,  
χοῖρε· ἀτὰρ σιάλους γε σύας μνηστήρες ἔδουσιν,  
οὐκ ὄπιδα φρονέοντες ἐνὶ φρεσὶν οὐδ' ἐλεητῶν . . .  
ὄσσαι γὰρ νύκτες τε καὶ ἡμέραι ἐκ Διός εἰσιν,  
οὐ ποθ' ἐν ἱεύουσ' ἱερήϊον οὐδὲ δῦ' οἶα·  
οἶνον δὲ φθινύθουσιν ὑπέρβιον ἐξαφύοντες . . .  
δώδεκ' ἐν ἡπειρῷ ἀγέλαι· τόσα πάεα οἶων,  
τόσσα συῶν συβόσια, τόσ' αἰπόλια πλατέ' αἰγῶν  
βόσκουσι ζεῖνοί τε καὶ αὐτοῦ βῶτορες ἄνδρες·  
ἐνθάδε τ' αἰπόλια πλατέ' αἰγῶν ἔνδεκα πάντα  
ἔσχατιῇ βόσκοντ', ἐπὶ δ' ἄνδρες ἐσθλοὶ ὄρονται.

52. The association of laurel with Apollo is firmly established from an early date. The laurel tree is described as sacred to Apollo from the Archaic period onward (*Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 395–96; *Eur. Ion* 420–23; *Ar. Plut.* 213). Worshippers of Apollo wore laurel garlands or carried laurel branches (*Eur. Ion* 420; *Hec.* 458; *Ar. Pax* 1044; *Plut. Arist.* 20.4; *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 436.8 [one of numerous examples of laurel crowns in inscriptions at Delphi]), and tripods sacred to Apollo were decorated with laurel (the *στέμματα* mentioned at *Eur. Ion* 522, 1310; *Ar. Plut.* 39).

53. The meaning of λυκάβας has long puzzled interpreters: it may here mean year, month, season, or even day. See Austin 1975, 244, with n. 6; Russo et al. 1992, 91–92; West 2013.

54. Austin 1975, 239–53; cf. Russo et al. 1992, ad locc.

55. See Heraclit. *All.* 75; Eust. *in Od.* 2.67.

56. See 20.156, 20.276–78, 21.258–68, with Russo et al. 1992, ad locc.

τῶν αἰεὶ σφιν ἕκαστος ἐπ' ἤματι μῆλον ἀγινεῖ,  
 ζατρεφέων αἰγῶν ὅς τις φαίνεται ἄριστος.  
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ σὺς τάσδε φυλάσσω τε ρύομαί τε  
 καὶ σφι συῶν τὸν ἄριστον ἐὺ κρίνας ἀποπέμπω.

Eat now, stranger, the pork that we servants have; but the suitors eat the fatted pigs, sparing no thought for vengeance or for mercy . . . For every night and day that comes from Zeus, they sacrifice not just one sacred animal, nor even just a pair of sheep; and they waste wine drawing it up extravagantly . . . There are twelve herds of cattle pastured on the mainland, and as many of fat sheep, and as many herds of swine, and as many broad herds of goats which both foreigners and our own herdsman tend. And here eleven broad herds of goats graze on the headlands, with trusty men watching over them. Every single day each of them drives up a flock for them [i.e., the suitors], whichever of the fatted goats seems the best. But I guard the pigs and keep them, and I select the best of the pigs and send it off to them.

Eumaeus' account of the suitors' despoliation of his master's wealth requires him to catalogue all the various herds that should belong to Odysseus, but, quite naturally for a swineherd, he wraps his account with ring-compositional references to the pigs these suitors eat. Although Theopompus' own language does not use Homeric forms here, his *ἱερὰν σφάπτουσιν* . . . *δέλφακα* ("they are slaughtering a sacred pig") may recall Eumaeus' *ἐν ἱερέουσ' ἱερήϊον* ("they are sacrificing a single sacred animal"). The centrality of the swineherd Eumaeus' role in the latter half of the *Odyssey* guarantees that later audiences would associate the suitors' rapacity with the eating of pigs.<sup>57</sup> Neither of these fragments definitively indicates that Theopompus' *Penelope* told the story of Odysseus' return to Ithaca; nevertheless, I believe both suggest that Theopompus may have incorporated references to this story, in his mention of a festival for Apollo at the new moon and of the slaughtering of someone else's pigs, into his comedy about Penelope.

Finally, we come to *Sirens*. The fragments themselves do not give us much indication as to the content of this comedy, but the title does seem most likely to describe a mythological comedy featuring a chorus of the singing temptresses from the *Odyssey*.<sup>58</sup> Photius preserves the most important fragment (F 51 = Phot. ε 1797):

αὐλεῖ γὰρ σαπρὰ  
 αὕτη γε κρούμαθ' οἷα τὰπι Χαριξένης

since that woman's piping rotten tunes like those from the time of Charixena

The expression "from the time of Charixena" seems to have become a proverbial one to describe things that are old-fashioned or out of date. Cratinus

57. Sanchis Llopis (2002, 118) argues that F 49 must have described the suitors' consumption of Odysseus' pigs; we should conclude, rather, that in a play called *Penelope*, a reference to the eating of someone else's pigs must have alluded to this episode, but not necessarily that the comedy therefore told the story of Odysseus' encounter with the suitors.

58. Although the Sirens in myth are typically depicted as two in number, there is no real objection to a comic chorus of twenty-four: Plato, for example, changes the number to eight when he wishes to use the Sirens to describe the music of the spheres (*Resp.* 10.617); and a number of other comedies featured choruses, presumably always the standard twenty-four in number, of mythological beings or personifications who would ordinarily be found in fewer numbers (e.g., Phrynichus' *Muses*, Hermippus' *Fates*, Cratinus' *Seasons*, etc.).

uses the same expression to criticize a woman who does not know that the times have changed (F 153):

οὐκ εἰδύια τὰδ' οὐκετ' ὄνθ'  
οἷα τὰπι Χαριξένης

not knowing that these things are no longer like those from the time of Charixena

Aristophanes, too, employs the expression, in a scene from *Assemblywomen* in which a young gentleman called Epigenes desires to avoid the new law requiring a man to sleep with an old woman before he can sleep with a young one (938–45):

ΕΠΙΓΕΝΗΣ: εἶθ' ἐξῆν παρὰ τῇ νέᾳ καθεύδειν,  
καὶ μὴ ᾽δει πρότερον διασποδῆσαι  
ἀνάσιμον ἢ πρεσβυτέραν·  
οὐ γὰρ ἀνασχετὸν τοῦτό γ' ἔλευθέρω.  
ΓΡΑΥΣ Α': οἰμῶζων ἄρα νῆ Δία σποδήσεις,  
οὐ γὰρ τὰπι Χαριξένης τὰδ' ἐστίν.  
κατὰ τὸν νόμον ταῦτα ποιεῖν  
ἔστι δίκαιον, εἰ δημοκρατούμεθα.

Epigenes: If only it were possible to sleep with a young woman without first having to bang a snub-nosed or an old one: that's just intolerable for a free man.

First Old Woman: You'll regret your banging, by Zeus, since these things are no longer how they were in the time of Charixena! It's just to do things this way, according to the law, at least if we're still in a democracy.

The various ancient commentators who refer to this expression and attempt to identify the woman Charixena (Σ Ar. *Eccl.* 943; Hesych. ε 5413; Phot. ε 1797; *Suda* χ 116) manifestly glean their information from these three comic references: Theopompus mentions her in the context of aulos-playing, so she is an *auletris* or a composer of music; Cratinus uses the expression in referring to some foolish woman, so Charixena is a woman famous for her stupidity; Aristophanes names her in this scene about the sexual desires of old women, so she was a desperate hetaera who tried to stay in the profession even into old age. Whoever this Charixena really was, the force of the expression “things from the time of Charixena” remains stable and straightforward across these three uses of it: she represents a previous age, and those who have failed to keep up with changing times can be described as living “in the time of Charixena.” We cannot necessarily trust the information the lexis and scholia provide about Charixena, but it is nevertheless clear that they interpret these passages in the obvious way: this Charixena is not a mythological figure, but simply a well-known person of an earlier generation. The people who are accused of thinking that things are still how they were in the time of Charixena are simply out of fashion; the expression does not, like the similar τὰ ἐπὶ Κρόνου mentioned by Robert Ussher in his commentary on the *Assemblywomen* passage, indicate a fantastical or utopian prior age, but simply a previous time in Athens itself.<sup>59</sup>

59. See Ussher 1973, 207 and cf. Crusius 1899; West 1996, 42; Sommerstein 2009, 279 n. 32.

In Theopompus' *Sirens*, then, the description of a woman playing outdated aulos songs like those from the days of Charixena constitutes another act of anachronism, parallel to anachronistic jokes in his other Homeric comedies and in the plays of other later poets like Alexis and Plautus (see above). There is a second layer to the anachronistic humor of this fragment, however: the play in which Cratinus deploys the expression "things from the time of Charixena" was his own, famous Homeric comedy, *Odysseuses*. Cratinus' *Odysseuses* is usually dated to the 430s BCE (KA 4.192); even without a secure date for either *Odysseuses* or Theopompus' *Sirens*, we can feel secure in dating *Odysseuses* as the older play, since the careers of these two poets did not overlap. Both plays enact the same anachronistic joke, by having someone in the mythological past label something outdated using as a reference point a figure from the contemporary world of the audience; Theopompus doubles the joke, by enacting the same humorous reference to Charixena in another comedy drawn from the *Odyssey*. He makes, in other words, a joke about something being out of date that was itself out of date.<sup>60</sup>

And yet there is a further layer to Theopompus' joke here as well, since the thing that is out of date is music played on an aulos. References to the aulos are a frequent comic method of calling attention to the metatheatrical elements of a comedy: when Philocleon in *Wasps*, for example, describes a famous aulos player piping an exodus tune for a jury, he establishes a metatheatrical link between the courtroom and the theater, since the comedy in which he is a character features a chorus of jurymen who dance to the music of the aulos; in *Women at the Thesmophoria*, Euripides summons an aulos player to set up his final play-within-the-play, the deception of the Scythian archer.<sup>61</sup> Oliver Taplin has noted, moreover, how frequently vase paintings depicting the theater use the presence of an aulos player to establish their theatrical context.<sup>62</sup> Although it is difficult to say how Theopompus might have developed the metatheatricality of this aulos reference, we can say that the explicit mention of aulos music in a comedy featuring a chorus of Sirens adds a further note of anachronistic humor: although the Sirens of the *Odyssey* are famous singers, later vase paintings often depict them playing musical instruments, including the aulos, and Euripides describes them as aulos-players as well (*Hel.* 167–68).<sup>63</sup> Whether or not the woman accused of playing outdated aulos music was a Siren, the combined presence of Sirens and the aulos suggests the post-Homeric world of these later Siren depictions. Even in this brief reference, then, we see how elaborately Theopompus approaches the Homeric model: he makes a joke about things being out of date with an anachronistic reference to a post-Homeric figure, Charixena; the joke is itself out of date, since it had already been used in another *Odyssey* comedy perhaps an entire generation earlier; the thing being described as out of date, aulos music, is itself anachronistic in the Homeric context,

60. For this process of comic poets competing to outdo or "cap" one another's jokes, see Heath 1990; Ruffell 2002; Collins 2004; Hesk 2007; Biles 2011, *passim*, esp. 137–38; Farmer 2017a, 36–40.

61. On these two passages, see Farmer 2017a, 128, 189–90, with further bibliography.

62. Taplin 1993, 67–78, 105–9.

63. See Weicker 1884, 612; Buitron and Cohen 1992, 116 fig. 38, 127–28; Gantz 1993, 708–9.

drawing on post-Homeric depictions of the Sirens as musicians rather than simply singers.

The other fragments of Theopompus' *Sirens* shed little further light on the play: two concern food (F 52: "white paunches of Sicilian tuna"; F 54: "roasting pan, mortar, flask"), and a third, shoes (F 53: "take these shoes and put them on").<sup>64</sup> The outsize role played by Athenaeus (who provides F 52, though 54 is preserved by Pollux) in the preservation of the comic fragments tends to create the impression that all comedies were primarily about food, an impression that we must, of course, question and even at times resist. It is perhaps not purely coincidental, however, that comedies drawing on the *Odyssey* would prominently feature food, since the *Odyssey* itself makes eating a central theme: as Mario Telò puts it, discussing associations between food and the *Odyssey* in *Peace*, "in the *Odyssey*, feasting is the single most frequent activity and is charged with a broad network of symbolic associations pertaining to the concepts of social orderliness, civic harmony, and political stability";<sup>65</sup> Odysseus, as William Stanford points out, is the only Homeric hero ever to mention his own belly, and is frequently depicted as interested in—perhaps too interested in—food and feasting.<sup>66</sup>

The reference to Sicilian tuna in F 52 may indicate that Theopompus drew on the later tradition, evidenced as early as Thucydides and Euripides, that Odysseus' wanderings took place in and around Sicily;<sup>67</sup> but in a play that, as we have seen, made distinct use of anachronism, the joke in F 52 could just as easily be that the contemporary audience associated tuna with Sicily,<sup>68</sup> and that "Sicilian tuna" thus disrupts a mythological setting. As Plato famously points out, proper Homeric heroes do not eat fish; fish-eating is thus a particularly marked intrusion on the epic world.<sup>69</sup> None of these three fragments can be pushed very far in an interpretation of this comedy: earlier reconstructions that imagined the Sirens hosting a feast or even running a sort of delicatessen are delightful, but completely beyond the limits of our evidence.<sup>70</sup>

64. One further piece of evidence may relate to Theopompus' play, but it is too uncertain to provide much help. An Apulian skyphos decorated in the Gnathia style (on which see Green 1968; 1971; 1989; 2001; Green and Handley 2000), attributed to the Painter of Lecce 1075 and dated ca. 330 BCE, shows a Siren sitting on a rock and playing a kithara (for illustration and description, see *Hesperia Arts* 1990, 141, no. 140); the vase was sold at auction in 1990, presumably into a private collection. The Siren wears a distinct costume, with feathered shorts, strapped-on claws, and wings on a harness, all of which combine to suggest a theatrical setting. The figure lacks the most obvious indications of a comic costume, such as the wrinkles of the *somation*, the body padding, or the visible mask. Nevertheless, several critics have suggested that she may be a member of a comic chorus of Sirens: in our evidence, this would be either Theopompus' or Nicophon's. See Hofstetter 1997, 1096–97 = *LIMC* 8.1, *Seirenes* no. 36; Casolari 2003, 216 (though note, *pace* Casolari, the vase depicts only a single figure, not a choral group).

65. Telò 2013, 145; see n. 56 for bibliography on the issue, and cf. Platter (2007, 129–35), who makes the same association between the *Odyssey* and feasting while commenting on the same passage of *Peace*.

66. Stanford 1963, 67–71.

67. Thuc. 6.2.1 (cf. 3.88.1); Eur. *Cyc.* 95, 106, 114, 703; Strabo (1.2.12–13) specifically places the Sirens in Sicily.

68. Archestratus twice mentions Sicilian tuna as a particular delicacy: see F 35.6–7 and 39.1–2, with Olson and Sens 2000, ad locc.

69. *Resp.* 3.404b; cf. Eub. F 118, quoted and discussed by Ath. at 1.25c–d. I thank the journal's anonymous reviewer for pointing out this connection to me.

70. E.g., Sanchis Llopis 2002, 118–20; Casolari 2003, 214–17.

## 3. THEOPOMPUS' HOMER

L. P. E. Parker, Charles Platter, and Martin Revermann have all observed that by the final quarter of the fifth century, comic poets like Aristophanes had come to regard paraepic comedy as in some sense out of fashion. "It may be," Parker writes, noting the absence of Homeric parody and the relative lack of hexameters in Aristophanes and Eupolis, "that Aristophanes and Eupolis were at one in regarding epic parody as in danger of being overworked."<sup>71</sup> "Much of the work of epic deflation," Platter concludes, "had already been done by the time of Aristophanes," a fact he argues contributed to "the relative lack of interest in epic that we see in Aristophanes."<sup>72</sup> Revermann, citing the language of praise Aristophanes uses to describe Homer, suggests that such "positive nomenclature . . . would seem to confer on Homer the status of an 'untouchable,' who is spared comedy's aggression, a privilege very rarely granted by comedy to any mortal or immortal."<sup>73</sup> All three of these critics go on to note important examples of paraepic in Aristophanes (though not in Eupolis), but all are forced to conclude that engagement with epic was simply not one of Aristophanes' priorities.

Paraepic comedy does, however, seem to have been a priority of Theopompus. In displaying these sustained engagements with Homer, Theopompus' fragments reveal the connections between early paraepic comedy and the proliferation of paraepic we see in the later fourth century. Theopompus seems likely to have been fully aware of the tradition in which he was operating: we have seen, for example, how he repeats a joke from Cratinus' *Odysseuses*, positioning himself in a lineage of comic poets who used anachronism to parody the *Odyssey*. An even earlier source of inspiration may have been Epicharmus. Critics have struggled to find conclusive evidence for an awareness of Epicharmus' comedies in fifth-century Athens;<sup>74</sup> Theopompus' focus on the *Odyssey*, however, does mirror Epicharmus' approach to paraepic, as suggested by the titles *Cyclops*, *Odysseus the Runaway*, *Odysseus Shipwrecked*, and *Sirens*.<sup>75</sup> Epicharmus' *Odysseus the Runaway* even featured the same playful contrast between contemporary and Homeric speech: Odysseus there speaks like an ordinary Sicilian Greek, except when quoting the orders he received from the sons of Atreus, where he switches into Homeric formulae, including the same use of the term "Achaean" we saw in Theopompus' Homeric description of Callistratus in F 31.<sup>76</sup> Epicharmus thus anticipates Theopompus by the better part of a century, in presenting an Odysseus drawn from the world of the audience who nevertheless knows his Homer and can speak Homeric Greek when required to do so.<sup>77</sup>

71. Parker 1997, 53.

72. Platter 2007, 109.

73. Revermann 2013, 119.

74. See Wüst 1932; François 1978, 52–58; Cassio 1985; 2002; Kerkhof 2001, 133–43; Willi 2012; 2015.

75. Odysseus may have featured in Epicharmus' *Philoctetes* as well. F 106–7, which are cited with the title *Odysseus*, almost certainly belong to one or the other of the two known *Odysseus* titles, rather than a third play simply called *Odysseus*; see KA 1.69–70.

76. Willi 2008, 188–90; 2012, 71.

77. For Epicharmus F 97 and his practice of paraepic generally, see Phillips 1959, 58–63; Cassio 1985; 2002; Olson 2007, 47–51; Willi 2008; 2012; 2015; Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012; Revermann 2013, 106–10; Novokhatko 2015.

In the generation before Aristophanes, such paraepic plays were still being written, as with Cratinus' *Odysseuses* and Callias' *Cyclopes*. As we move into the fourth century, Homeric comedies reappear in our evidence: Anaxandrides' *Odysseus*, Anaxilas' *Circe*, Eubulus' *Dolon*, *Nausicaa*, and *Odysseus*, Alexis' *Odysseus Bathing* and *Odysseus Weaving* all used their titles to suggest engagement with Homer, though their fragments tell us relatively little about the content of these plays;<sup>78</sup> and plays such as Alexis' *Linus* and Strato's *Phoenicides* achieve high paraepic humor by showing the infiltration of Homer into everyday fourth-century life through his prominence in education.<sup>79</sup> The remains of other late fifth-century poets suggest that, Aristophanes' own priorities notwithstanding, there was in fact no interruption in comedy's practice of paraepic in this period: Theopompus' exact contemporary Nicophon, for example, also wrote a *Sirens*,<sup>80</sup> and Hermippus, as we have seen, bridged the gap between the new genre of Homeric *parodia* and the use of paraepic in stage comedy. Of Nicophon's *Sirens*, however, we know almost nothing except the title; Hermippus' pair of paraepic fragments show an interest in Homeric catalogues that we might easily dismiss as the eccentricity of this genre-hopping author, if it were not for the broader context provided by the fragments of Theopompus. Theopompus' paraepic titles and fragments thus enable us to correct the impression made by our best-preserved late fifth-century poets, Aristophanes and Eupolis, and to reaffirm that paraepic was an important mode of comic practice throughout both Old and Middle Comedy.<sup>81</sup>

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78. On these plays, see Hunter 1983, 122–23, 158–61; Arnott 1996, 461–71; Casolari 2003, 217–24.

79. For Strato F 1, see Wilkins 2000, 406–8; Revermann 2013, 102–5; on *Linus*, see above.

80. Nicophon appears just before Theopompus in the list of victors at the City Dionysia, and just after him in the list of victors at the Lenaia; see T 3–4.

81. I would like to thank the journal's anonymous readers for many helpful suggestions, as well as audiences at the Bryn Mawr College Classics Colloquium and the SCS for wonderfully lively discussions of this material.

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