

## Old Comedy Pherecrates' Way

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The view of Old Comedy has generally been limited to the interpretation of the remaining plays of Aristophanes and to the opinions given by Ancient scholars and Scholiasts. Only now, the growing interest in this genre has been furthered by the appearance of books, studies and editions. However, the fragmentary situation of the works of most comic poets, except for Aristophanes, generally hinders any definitive conclusion about these plays and the real intent of their poets. In this paper, I will give a general overview of what we know of Pherecrates' plays and their plots to judge from a close study of the fragments. From the analysis of some fragments one can observe that Pherecrates probably tried to give a character a role and a style of speaking apparently consistent throughout the whole play (see for instance in fr. 28, 75, 76, 155, and others). I will argue also that, if Pherecrates followed a single plotline and coherent characterization, he is creating style that would be prominent in later stages of this genre. This feature could be called «continuity» and it would be in sharp opposition to the «discontinuity» that according to M. Silk is typical of Aristophanic comedy<sup>1</sup>.

It is generally stated that the evolution of Old Comedy into Middle Comedy conveys several progressive changes in the traditional structure of a comedy. The main features may have been in the parabasis, also in the contents<sup>2</sup>, and the characterization and language<sup>3</sup>. In general, this evolution is

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1. Cf. M. SILK in C. PELLING (ed.) *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*, Oxford 1990, p. 159.
2. For instance the introduction of the Gods' Births according to NESSELRATH «Myth, Parody and Comic Plots» pp. 1 ff. in G. DOBROV (ed.) *Beyond Aristophanes: Transition and Diversity in Greek Comedy*, Atlanta 1995.
3. See G. DOBROV «The Poet's Voice in the Evolution of Dramatic Dialogism» in Dobrov (ed.) *Beyond Aristophanes* cit., pp. 47ff.

viewed as a change from a highly dynamic and creative style to the hieratic and stereotyped form of New Comedy<sup>4</sup>. Middle Comedy, in its strict sense, begins approximately in 380 B.C. according to H.-G. Nesselrath's analysis of the poets of the end of the 4th century<sup>5</sup>, but R. Rosen suggests that some features of Middle comedy were already found in the plays of Plato comicus<sup>6</sup>.

5th century comedy has been normally divided according to two trends: the political satire of Cratinus and Hermippus from the 450s to the first years of the Peloponnesian War. According to Sommerstein it is a «free and often vicious political invective of assembly and law-courts<sup>7</sup>». The other trend, initiated by Crates and followed by Pherecrates, would imitate tragedy and improve plot construction. This conception echoes Norwood's chapter «the school of Crates»<sup>8</sup>. Pherecrates, Phrynichus and Plato comicus are also included in this group as the poets who do not follow the trend of political comedy. On the one hand, I regard this division to be too clearcut to ring true, and throughout this paper I will try to show connection points between Pherecrates and Aristophanes. Otherwise, if one accepts this division, I wonder whether it reflects not only a style of comedy, but also two audiences or attitudes to the comic performance. Especially if we take into account that the Dionysian and Lenaian festivals were also a contest, and the taste of the audience must have had a role in the decision of the winner<sup>9</sup>. One would expect that the presence of peasants and farmers from Attika taking refuge within Athens' walls from 431-404 could have influenced the kind of comedy preferred in the festivals. This suggestion is, no-

4. This view has prevailed until now in our appreciation of Middle Comedy as a transitory moment between two great peaks: Aristophanes and Menander. This opinion has been largely dismissed now above all after Nesselrath's detailed discussion in *Die attische Mittlere Komödie*, Berlin - New York 1990. About stereotyping in New Comedy see R. L. HUNTER *Eubulus: The Fragments*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 59 ff.

5. NESSELRATH, *op. cit.* p. 28. The article of W.G. ARNOTT «From Aristophanes to Menander» *G&R* 19, 1972, pp. 65-80 can be consulted for a concise and clear study of the evolution from Old Comedy from the beginning until the end of the IV century. The most comprehensive and seminal work about this period is H.-G. Nesselrath *op. cit.* I follow his conclusions on the evolution of the genre, although some of his points have been disputed, as for instance, P.G. Mc. BROWN «Menander, Fragments 745 and 746 K.-T., Menander's Kolax and Parasites and flaterers in Greek Comedy» *ZPE* 92, 1992, pp. 91-107, esp. 98-107 about the difference between *παρωϊτος* and *κόλαξ* in Middle Comedy.

6. R. ROSEN *Old Comedy and the Iambographic Tradition*, Atlanta 1988, pp. 1 ff.

7. Cf. SOMMERSTEIN in *Aristophanes' Acharnians* (Warmister - New York 1986), p. 19. M. HEATH *CQ* 39, 1989, p. 351 reaches a similar conclusion about the network of influences of Crates and Cratinus. M. Heath on interpreting Arist. *Poet.* 5 p. 1449b 5 suggests that the stress in plot-construction led Crates to the poetry of non-iambic style, and ultimately the model of Crates would have influenced Cratinus (see also M. HEATH *G&R* 37, 1990, p. 144).

8. G. NORWOOD *Greek Comedy*, London 1931, p. 145.

9. About the audience's expectations see D.M. MACDOWELL *Aristophanes and Athens*, Oxford 1994, pp. 16 ff.

netheless, very difficult to prove, and it seems clear that the ultimate source of this division is Arist. *Poet.* 5 p. 1449<sup>b</sup> 5:

τὸ δὲ μύθους ποιεῖν (Ἐπίχαρμος καὶ Φόρμις) τὸ μὲν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκ Σικελίας ἦλθε, τῶν δὲ Ἀθήνησιν Κράτης πρῶτος ἤρξεν ἀφέμενος τῆς ἰαμβικῆς ιδέας καθόλου ποιεῖν λόγους καὶ μύθους.

Aristotle is clearly looking for connexions between the Athenian and Doric comedy, where he believed comedy originated<sup>10</sup>. According to him, Crates would be the first to stress the importance of plots and dialogues, avoiding the «iambic form». Although it is a difficult expression to define precisely, Aristotle likely intends by ἰαμβικὴ ἰδέα to connect both iambic poetry and comedy, presumably by their focus on negative characters, use of fantastic arguments and, particularly, invective and obscene language<sup>11</sup>. Aristotle is, certainly, simplifying in order to make a taxonomic classification of the genres based on formal and moral elements<sup>12</sup>.

Aristotle's distinction between invective and non-invective poetry seems to have influenced the thought of other ancient scholars as Anon. *De com.* (Proleg. de Com. III) 26 p. 8 Kost. (cf. Crat. test. 2a and Pherecr. test. 2a). The text runs as follows:

Κράτης Ἀθηναῖος, τοῦτον ὑποκριτὴν φασιν γεγονέναι τὸ πῶτον, ὃς ἐπιβέβληκε Κρατίνῳ, πάνυ γελοῖος καὶ ἰλαρὸς γενόμενος, καὶ πρῶτος μεθύνοντας ἐν κωμῳδίᾳ προήγαγεν. τούτου δράματα ἐστὶν ἑπτὰ. Φερεκράτης Ἀθηναῖος, νικᾷ ἐπὶ Θεοδώρου· γενόμενος δὲ {ὁ} ὑποκριτῆς ἐήλωσε Κράτητα, καὶ αὖ τοῦ μὲν λοιδορεῖν ἀπέστε, πράγματα δὲ εἰσηγούμενος καινὰ ἠὲδοκίμει γενόμενος εὐρετικὸς μύθων.

10. Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1448a5.

11. Cf. the distinction between μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας for tragedy (*Poet.* 1449b24) and μίμησις φανλοτέρων for comedy (*Poet.* 1449a32); the way of composing a comedy with that of a iambic poem in *ibid.* 1451b13. ROSEN *O. C. and the Iamb. Trad.* cit., p. 1 ff. seems to stress the last point in particular, but I think that Aristotle draws further connexions between both genres. Nonetheless, the main distinction must have been between invective and non-invective comedy as we can see in Aristotle *EN* 1128a6 where he rejects the humour of comic poets of the past who εἶδοι δ' ἄν τις καὶ ἐκ τῶν κωμῳδιῶν τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ τῶν καινῶν· τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἦν γελοῖον ἢ αἰσχρολογία, τοῖς δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ ὑπόνοια· διαφέρει δ' οὐ μικρὸν ταῦτα πρὸς εὐσημοσύνην («found their fun in obscenity, the moderns prefer innuendo, which marks a great advance in decorum») [Translation by H. RACKMAN in Loeb, Cambridge Mass. 1934<sup>2</sup>]. See also *EN* 1128a9).

12. About the common features of iambic poetry and Attic comedy, see WEST *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus*, Berlin - New York 1974, p. 37, J. HENDERSON *The Maculate Muse*, Oxford 1990<sup>2</sup>, pp. 17, 19 and R.M. ROSEN *O.C. and the Iamb. Trad.* cit., pp. 9-35. This classification may have led Aristotle to dismiss Cratinus' plots and thus give most of the credit to Crates.

This text, one of the most reliable and useful ancient sources on comedy<sup>13</sup>, also provides information about the life and works of Pherecrates. Pherecrates, just as his master Crates, was an actor before becoming a playwright. In 438-7 he won his first victory and probably lived until the end of the V century<sup>14</sup>. He composed between 17 and 19 plays<sup>15</sup>. Poets contemporary to him were Callias, Teleclides, Phrynichus and Hermippus<sup>16</sup>. It also coincides in the appreciation of two types of comedies in the 5th century and the differences are based in similar features: Pherecrates' avoidance of abusive personal attacks and his invention of new plots.

It is, naturally, difficult to assess to what extent this statement is truth or exaggeration, but to judge by the title of his plays, Pherecrates shows a great degree of originality, unparalleled among his contemporary poets. Concerning the structure of the plays, he seems to have used the chorus, the agon and other dramatic parts in a manner comparable to Aristophanes.

The plays could be tentatively distributed according to the following subjects which I will briefly discuss afterwards. Comedies of manners: *Ἄγαθοί* (?), *Δουλοδιδάσκαλος*, *Λῆροι* (?), *Μετοικοί* (?). Within this group I would include «hetaira-comedies»: *Ἐπιλήσιμων ἢ Θάλαττα*, *Ὑπνός ἢ Παννυχίς*, *Κοριαννώ*, *Πετάλη* and perhaps two political fantasies: *Γραῖες*, *Τυραννίς*. Fantastic and mythological plays: *Αὐτομόλοι* (?), *Ψευδηρακλῆς* and *Ἀνθρωφρακλῆς* (?), *Μυρμεκάνθρωποι*, *Χείρων*. The Idler's Paradise: *Ἄγριοι*, *Κραπάταλοι*, *Μεταλλῆς*, *Πέρσαι*.

#### a) «Comedies of manners»

*Αὐτομόλοι* (*Deserters*). It is difficult to judge with any accuracy the content of this play. The title may refer to slaves deserting their masters<sup>17</sup>, soldiers

13. NORWOOD *Gr. Comedy* cit., p. 3 and H.-G. NESSELRATH *Mittlere Komödie* cit., pp. 45ff.

14. The only other fixed dates are: the performance of *Savages* (*Ἄγριοι*) in 420 and in 411 when Aristophanes mentions him in *Ἐγξ.* 157-9. The length of his life depends on the interpretation of fr. 155.26ff. where Philoxenus perhaps is mentioned. It is uncertain. P. GEISSLER *Chronologie der altattische Komödie*, Berlin 1925, p. 42; WILAMOWITZ, *Timotheos' "Die Perser"*; DÜRING, *Eranos* 43, 1945, p. 17; and NESSELRATH *Mittlere Komödie* cit., p. 250 n. 22 suggest that the reference to Philoxenus cannot belong to Pherecrates because he could not live until such a late date. Nonetheless, I agree with KOERTE in *RE* XIX. 2, 1989 that it is perfectly feasible that Pherecrates lived thirty years after his first victory in 438 just as Aristophanes lived forty years after his first victory in 424. *Chetron* may have been performed after 410, perhaps posthumously.

15. About the authorship of his plays, see Kassel-Austin.

16. Callias' first victory was in 446, about his dates see further STOREY, *Hermes* 116, 1988, pp. 379-383. Teleclides won for the first time in 441. Phrynichus won in 436 for the first time and *Mousai* was performed in 405. Hermippus won in 435 and *Artopolides* was performed in 420-19.

17. Cf. *Ar. Eq.* 21-6.

deserting an army<sup>18</sup>, or perhaps gods may have been the deserters<sup>19</sup>. This last possibility is based on fr. 28 where a priest complains on behalf of the gods about the way men do their sacrifices<sup>20</sup>.

*Δουλοδιδάσκαλος* (*Slave-trainer*) concerns the activities of a slave-trainer who teaches slaves by «eating» (cf. test. i)<sup>21</sup>. The physical performance of the slave activities was probably one of the comic elements of this play (cf. fr. 44 and 45).

The subject of *Κοριαννώ* (*Korianno*) is possibly the life and activities of a hetaira, Korianno<sup>22</sup>. At some point in the action a fight takes place between an old and a young man, perhaps his son, for the love of a woman<sup>23</sup>. *Ἐπιλήσιμων ἢ Θάλαττα*, (*The forgetful or Sea*) *Ῥπνός ἢ Παννυχίς* (*The Kitchen or Nightfestival*) and *Πετάλη* (*Petal*) may have also concerned the popular figure of the hetaira, and at least the second titles match the names attributed to hetairai<sup>24</sup>.

One of the subjects of *Τυραννίς* (*Tyranny*) is women attaining the power and establishing a free-drinking society (fr. 152). It could have represented a political fantasy, perhaps similar to that of Aristophanes' *The Assembly Women*. Something similar occurs in *Γρᾶες* (*Old Wives*) where the old women of the chorus suffer a rejuvenation that leads them to the recovery of their «sexual instinct», maybe like Demos in Ar. *Equ.* 1390. Among the fragments only fr. 39 suggests a reference to a political issue.

#### b) Mythical subjects

*Μυρμεκάνθρωποι* (*Ant-men*) is one of his most remarkable mythical plays. Pherecrates may have combined the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha in their trip to avoid the flood with their meeting with a chorus of human ants. The figures of the two heroes may have been represented with the features of elderly persons<sup>25</sup>.

18. See the common reference to Argos in fr. 22. MEINEKE, *Fragmenta Comico-rum Graecorum*, Berlin 1839-1857, I p. 28 and GEISLER, 1925, p. 31 have seen it as a reference to the role of the Argives in the Peloponnesian war.

19. NORWOOD *Gr. Comedy* cit., p. 16.

20. This is another standard joke in Greek comedy, also found in Ar. *Av.* 190ff. in *Pl.* 1180, Eub. fr. 94 and 127, fr. adesp. 1205 K, Men. *Sam.* 399-402, fr. 264 Kō.-T. and *Dysc.* 451ff.

21. This is an explicit evidence of how eating was used as comic method in Old Comedy. The figure of the glutton is not developed yet, but it can be identified with different characters as Heracles (cf. Pherecr. fr. 1 in *Agatboi*, and Aristophanes' *Birds* or *Frogs*).

22. Cf. Athen. XIII 567c who cites the title among other plays named after a hetaira. See *infra* on fr. 75 in p. 83.

23. Cf. fr. 77-9.

24. Cf. NESSELRATH *Mittlere Komödie* cit., p. 319 n. 97. About this system of second titles see HUNTER *Eubulus* cit., pp. 146-8.

25. Cf. fr. 119, 122, 125.

A similar realism in the portrayal of heroic and mythical characters could have been a feature of *Χείρων* (*Cheiron*). It probably started with a dialogue between two allegorical personifications: Justice and Music. The former one complains about the treatment she has had to endure from her lovers, real musicians. The tone is para-tragic and Music is portrayed as a very pompous character by means of rhetorical repetitions. Pherecrates plays with *double entendres* to designate all the kinds of sexual abuse she suffered<sup>26</sup>. In fr. 159 we have an example of parody of epic. The figure of Cheiron (probably as an old man) and his wisdom seems to have been related to the image of good taste in Music (fr. 155), the concept of the sensitivity of old age (fr. 156), and traditional hospitality (fr. 162)<sup>27</sup>.

### c) *The Idler's Paradise*

*Κραπάταλοι* and *Μεταλλῆς* (*Miners*) are very likely set in Hades. The former one represents it as a place where everything can be bought with a «worthless coin», the *krapatalos*. Life in Hades is envisaged as very cheap and easy. It is possible that an old man was the main character who journeyed to the Underworld, perhaps accompanied by his slave (cf. fr. 87), and that Aeschylus appeared defending his own poetry (cf. fr. 100). The dramatic motivation may have been the search for the «good old days» of Athens, similar to Aristophanes' *Frogs* and perhaps Cratinus' *Μαλθακοί* (*Softies*)<sup>28</sup>.

*Miners*, may have told of the trip to the Underworld through the mines (of Laureion?). A woman in fr. 113 explains the wonderful Land of Cockaigne she found there. This is one of the longest passages of Pherecrates and it is an interesting treatment of the *αὐτομάτος βίος*. The fragment describes a plentiful banquet in which many dishes cook themselves in the most delicate manner. Pherecrates hardly changes the tone, the imagery or even the vocabulary of the one found in Crat. fr. 16 or Telecl. fr. 1<sup>29</sup>. This suggests that he is following the traditional topic, and is innovating in the context or

26. The use of euphemisms to designate sexual experiences reminds of Herond. 7 or Theocr. 15. It may have been a traditional dramatic device, perhaps comparable to the dialogue full of *double entendres* in Ar. *Lys.* 1ff. The use of allegorical figures seems to be mainly a feature of Old Comedy (cf. NESSELRATH, *MK* cit., p. 335 n. 4).

27. In fr. 162.4 there is a change of tone, and I suggest that another character spoke them, maybe a parasite who complains about being rejected from a banquet. About fr. 155, see further DOBROV/URIOS-APARISI «Maculate Music: Gender, Genre and the *Cheiron* of Pherecrates» in DOBROV (ed.) *Beyond Aristophanes* cit., pp. 139ff.

28. The play appears to have developed a sophisticated monetary system invented by Pherecrates to parallel Athenian coinage.

29. See *supra* p. 76f. on Crates and Cratinus. This topic is also found in fr. 137 and in the following poets: Telecl. fr. 1 (a poet roughly contemporary with Pherecrates), Nicoph. fr. 21 and Metag. fr. 6 (poets younger than Pherecrates)

in some details<sup>30</sup>. A similar approach may be found in *Πέρσαι* (*Persians*), a fantastic representation of a world of wealth and easy life, set perhaps in Persia<sup>31</sup>.

*d) The Savages and the reversal of the Idler's Paradise*

*Ἄγριοι* (*Savages*), performed in 420 B.C., may be an interesting reversal of the myth of the good savage. The date and place of performance of this comedy are unique pieces of evidence within the testimonia remaining about Pherecrates and it is mainly due to the testimony of Athenaeus V 218d (test. i) who yields the exact date and especially Plato *Prot.* 327c (test. ii). This reference is highly remarkable for two reasons: on the one hand, Plato probably wrote this dialogue after 399 (twenty years after the performance), and he seems to have set its dramatic date in 433; and, on the other, Protagoras uses Old Comedy as an example for his philosophical argumentation. Protagoras interprets the play within the field of his own perspective about education. He is stressing the radical difference between people brought up in a certain social organization and *ἀνθρώπους οἷς μήτε παιδεία μήτε δικαστήρια μήτε νόμοι μήτε ἀνάγκη μηδεμία διὰ ἀναγκάζουσα ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι*, and, as example of this, he puts forward the *ἄγριοι* in the play of Pherecrates performed last year in the Lenaea. Protagoras compares the situation taking place in the play with that of an Athenian among the worst Athenian crooks. Instead of staging the common idealized image of the innocent and harmless savage, Pherecrates reversed it by depicting people with realistic and primitive features and, as Plato suggests, they are worse than the worst criminals in Athens.

The two Athenian men start their trip because of their misanthropy. According to fr. 5, one of them is portrayed as a boastful character. Pherecrates' misanthropic men can be compared with the dramatic motivation of Aristophanes' *Birds*; the two Athenian men decide to leave Athens, but their reason is that they are «jurorophobiacs»<sup>32</sup>. After the parodos of the chorus<sup>33</sup>, the play develops into an agon where the two life styles are compared. The life-style of the savages appears in fr. 13 and 14. In the first one the speaker seems to describe the way the savages go shopping: they buy wild fruits from the trees or from their own peculiar agora. This topic of living on wild fruits is also alluded in fr. 14, probably a passage from a pignos.

30. Perhaps he is innovating in the details of the description in vv. 17 and 27. The tone of this fragment recalls the long messenger speech of tragedy: the language is elevated and the number of participles used is remarkable. Another interesting passage of this play is fr. 114. It seems from its content, metre and language a parody of lyric poetry (cf. fr. 13.1, *Theog.* 1193f. and *Pl. Rep.* 615e-616a).

31. The title could have intended to recall Aeschylus' tragedy, but at the end of the V century, Timotheus wrote his «famous» dithyrambic poem with the same title.

32. Sommerstein's translation of *ἀπηλιαστιά* in *Ar. Av.* 109.

33. Fr. 5 could refer to the meeting between the savages and the two main characters.

Vegetarianism among the chorus of animals is also a *topos* in Crates' *Beasts*, and a passing joke in Aristophanes' *Birds* 159-160, for instance, but in Pherecrates this is not related to animals, the vegetarians are humans. This contradicts to what was considered as the normal world of paradise in comedy, one full of all kinds of meat as in Pherecr. fr. 113. In this connexion, Pherecrates can be linked to the appearance of a topic that will be very popular in later comedy: the vegetarian philosopher.

This play has been regarded as an important milestone in the development of Greek thought, since it has been regarded as alluding to the sophistic theories on the power of man and civilization at the height of the Athenian empire<sup>34</sup>. But it is possible that the play was simply a parody of the comedies dealing with the subject of the Idler's Paradise<sup>35</sup>.

According to this overview, Pherecrates' plots either were taken from a repertoire of subjects of Old Comedy, or he innovated in areas that afterwards were taken up by other comic poets. It is difficult to assess to what extent he was different in this matter to other poets in his time. Aristophanes' comedies, and expectedly other comic poets, were full of comic business, dancing, singing and music. Any of these elements could have played a particularly relevant role in the staging and success of a comedy. Otherwise, tragedy, as well as other genres such as dithyramb and epic poetry, were performed in different Athenian festivals, and they influenced each other. The trend towards a more story-line plot in comedy seems to be the exception in V century comedy. As I suggested, discontinuity and saturation are main comic features which do not help for a lineal and temporal linearity of argument that to Aristotle would characterize Sophocles' *Oedipus rex* as a model of tragedy. Comedies in the V century were a show of music, comic business, word and action, and any of these elements may have had a particularly relevant role in the staging of a comedy.

#### e) Pherecrates' Old Comedy

In general one can observe how some of the topics mentioned, such as the Idler's Paradise in *Savages* or mythological subjects such as *Cheiron*, are comically redirected to a situation in Athenian daily life where the identity of the characters and of the contexts of the actions are linked to well-known daily situations. Even the topic of the trip to the Underworld seems to have been done through the verosimile way of some mines according to fr. 113. The close knit connection between a character and its situation is clearly drawn together in some of Pherecrates' passages. For instance in fr.

34. Cf. E.R. DODDS *The Ancient Concept of Progress*, Oxford 1973, p. 10 n. 2. See also T. LONG, *ClW* 71, 1978, pp. 381-2 and F. TURATO, *La crisi della città e l'ideologia del selvaggio nella Atene del V secolo a.C.*, Roma 1979, p. 97.

35. Cf. F. CONTI BIZZARRO in U. CRISCUOLO (ed.) '*Ταλαρίσιος*'. *Studia Graeca Antonio Garzya discipulis oblata*, Naples 1987, pp. 26-32.

15 young effeminate men are mentioned in connection with a party. The following stereotypical characters appear in his fragments: the glutton<sup>36</sup>; the parasite (in fr. 7 and fr. 37); the boastful character (fr. 5); the priest (fr. 28); maybe a dream-interpreter (fr. 43); the toothless old man (fr. 87); the cook (mentioned in fr. 70.4 but we do not know whether any cook or a character in a similar role appeared on stage); tradesmen (fr. 70); maybe a doctor (fr. 85 and 169); young effeminate men (fr. 15 and 138); and young men in the situation of the old/young man fight probably for the love a hetaira (fr. 77-8).

A comparison that can shed some light on the way Pherecrates and Aristophanes handled traditional jokes and maybe a tiny clue on how the comedies of both authors differ in regard to the political invective is the topic of women drinking from a big cup<sup>37</sup>. This topic is clearly connected with the usual criticism of women's proverbial bibulousness. In Pherecrates' fr. 75 one of the characters has just come from the Public Baths, her throat parched with heat. Immediately the other character offers her something to drink in a small glass. She rejects it, alleging that it makes her ill because it reminds her of a medicine, and she brings out her own, a much bigger one. In contrast, in Aristophanes in *Eccl.* 145-6 the topic of women's drinking habits is introduced when one woman is thirsty because she has to wear a beard in order to overthrow men's power and improve life in the city. The joke is then mentioned in passing with the subsequent appearance of the big cup, but it is now set within a plot that clearly points towards turning around the established order of power. In contrast Pherecrates' focus in outlandish characters such as prostitutes or old men do not seem to bear the same intention to parody social and political institutions, but to comment on social mores and maybe to satisfy certain patterns of behaviour supported by some members of Athenian society.

In similar grounds Pherecrates' fragments contain some names of real Athenian people. We do not know whether they appeared on stage or whether they are only mentioned in a dialogue or in a speech, and also we do not know whether there was more than the ones preserved by the textual tradition. In any case, only two politicians are mentioned and, even then, they are criticized not because of their political activities but from other points of view: Lycurgus (fr. 11) because of his commercial activities with the Egyptians, Alcibiades (fr. 164) because of his effeminacy and success among women. The rest include an important number of musicians connected with bad taste and decadence in music (fr. 6 and fr. 155), Cleisthenes (fr. 143) who becomes the stock-character for the effeminate

36. Heracles maybe in fr. 1; perhaps fr. 99 and fr. 167 describe activities particularly related to one of them.

37. Other passages with the topic of big cups and women drinking are Pherecr. fr. 152, Ar. *Lys.* 200, fr. 364, and in later comedy, Eub. fr. 42, Epig. fr. 4.

man, Pulytion (fr.37), the corrupted tradesman, and Smicythion (fr. 37), the parasite. The extant examples show that Pherecrates used real characters as representatives of stereotypical figures belonging to popular tradition. Nonetheless, language and characterization seems to have linked in giving a certain personality to stereotypical characters.

Following the common practice in Old Comedy, Pherecrates is self-conscious about his style of poetry and he refers to it in several passages: fr. 84, 102 and also 106. In fr. 84 of *Korianno*, he makes a common address to the audience announcing a novelty in his own poetry: the «Pherecratean» metre<sup>38</sup>, and in fr. 106 Pherecrates addresses the judges to defend his play<sup>39</sup>:

τοῖς δὲ κριταῖς / τοῖς νυνὶ κρίνουσι λέγω. / μὴ ᾽πιορκεῖν μηδ' ἀδίκως /  
κρίνειν, ἢ νῆ τὸν φίλιον / μῦθον εἰς ὑμᾶς ἕτερον / Φερεκράτης λέξει  
πολὺ τού- / του κακηγορίστερον.

In the third person singular he says to the judges of the contest that Pherecrates could make a story *κακηγορίστερον*. *Κακηγορία* is a term used mainly in legal terminology to refer to abusive and aggressive vocabulary and style. Does he mean that his poetry is not aggressive and that it could be righteously vindictive? Defense of his own novelties in comedy and criticism of the novelties of other poets go hand in hand in these passages. It is especially outstanding the criticism of musicians who introduced distorting novelties in the very rigid traditional modes of Greek music. This conservative position is related to moral decadence and lack of rigidity among the Athenian youth. It is found in fr. 31<sup>40</sup>, perhaps in fr. 47<sup>41</sup> and especially

38. Fr. 84: ἄνδρες, προσέχετε τὸν νοῦν / ἔξευρήματι καινῷ, / συμπύκτοις ἀναπαίστοις (-audience, pay attention to a new discovery, folded anapaests.) About the subject to address the audience announcing the novelties, see Ar. *Nub.* 575, and Ar. *Eccl.* 577 and *Nub.* 577.

39. The sentence construction is also found in Ar. *Nub.* 1115 and *Av.* 1101, uttered by the chorus in its dramatic character. It is a kind of comic threat whose point is the superlative invented at the end. In the manuscripts line 6 has the name Philocrates, but it has been changed into Pherecrates by Grotius. It is a pity that in such an important passage the text is corrupted, because it would not be necessary to change it if we understand Philocrates as a character of the play, or a nickname of the Philocleon-type.

40. Fr. 31 and also 155 use expressions also found in Aristophanes; about this commonplace, cf. J. TAILLARDAT, *Les images d'Aristofane*, Paris 1965<sup>2</sup>, §784.

41. In this passage someone orders to throw away trigones (instrument adopted from Oriental music) and lyres (a traditional instrument). The only reference to tragedy is found in fr. 100 where Aeschylus probably in the Underworld speaks about his own poetry. This passage has very striking similarity to Ar. *Pax* 748 ff. (Aristophanes speaking about his own poetry) and *Ran.* 1004 (Aeschylus speaking about his own tragedies). It seems then likely that Pherecrates is using here a *topos* on poetry (cf. TAILLARDAT, *Les images* cit., p. 27). In other passages he borrows poetic terms from the field of dithyrambic and lyric poetry probably with the view towards parody (cf. fr. 113, 114, 138)

in fr. 5 and 155. It is not, otherwise, clear when the comic point of the criticism ends and the serious attacks begin, mainly because the context is lacking. Aristophanes takes the same conservative position for instance towards the new school of dithyrambic poets, but instead he concentrates particularly on tragedy and, when in *Birds* he criticizes the dithyrambic genre, he takes Cinesias on stage or creates a parody of this style of poetry. As we have seen, one of the differences between Pherecrates and Aristophanes regarding obscene and abusive references are not obviously a question of quantity, but of quality: the personal names that appear in Pherecrates' fragments seem to be chosen as a representation of stereotypical characters. The question remains to what extent this is different to what Aristophanes does for instance in *Clouds*, is Socrates the historical character or just a well-known figure that with his name embodies the set of intellectuals that were often accused of teaching and practicing a lax moral style of living?

#### f) Conclusions

I would conclude that Pherecrates was a poet outside the main debate of poets of his time. While Aristophanes enters into close and personal rivalry with other poets as Cratinus and Eupolis<sup>42</sup>, Pherecrates, as far as we can tell, does not engage himself in these attacks against other poets. He may have tried, on the one hand, to innovate through the invention of new situations and plots, while the characters may have tended to develop the jokes and commonplaces to which they are traditionally related<sup>43</sup>. On the other, by mentioning real Athenian figures, Pherecrates does borrow the technique that we could denominate «iambic», the mention of real figures, and this kind of joke was probably one of the most successful elements in Old Comedy; however, from the examples we have, could we definitively conclude that Pherecrates' references do not bear the same slandering and personal tone of Aristophanes? Ancient scholars did not think so, at least the anonymous writer *on Comedy* cited in p. 3. Pherecrates' style of invective raises the much debated question whether personal abuse in the poets of Old Comedy was serious and had an effect in the political and daily life in Athens, or whether it was part of a convention and regarded as harmless jokes by the audience at the theatre<sup>44</sup>.

Pherecrates' style can very likely be considered as a forerunner of the style of later comedy, not only in its use of the «personal invective», but also at

42. Cratinus criticizes Aristophanes in fr. 213, while Aristophanes Cratinus in *Acb.* 849, 1173. Eupolis attacks Aristophanes in fr. 89, and Aristophanes Eupolis in *Nub.* 553.

43. About the beginning of the stock-characters of Middle and New Comedy in Old Comedy, see WEBSTER, *Studies in Later Greek Comedy*, Manchester 1970<sup>2</sup>, p. 66.

44. Cf. R. M. ROSEN *O.C. and Iambi. trad. cit.*, p. 5 and n. 21 about these two positions regarding abusive elements in Old Comedy.

the level of dramatic characterization. His proximity to Middle Comedy was perceived already by the ancient scholars and it led them to doubt about the authorship of some of his plays<sup>45</sup>. As G. Dobrov has observed, the withdrawal of the figure of the poet effects a change from the «polyphony, improvisation, and discourse irony of linguistic characterization in Aristophanes» to the «fictional types» of Middle Comedy<sup>46</sup>. Pherecrates' plays probably had some of the features in Old Comedy, such as his reference to himself and his own poetry, the vivid vocabulary of his characters or the reference to living figures at Athens. Notwithstanding, I suggest that the jokes and the topics developed in Pherecrates' plots are easily related to *topoi* and commonplaces in Old Comedy, and I would speculate that he may have subordinated the characters to a status of quasi stock-characters, and construed according to the standard jokes and topics; consequently his characters also have the status of fictional types that Dobrov attributed to Middle Comedy<sup>47</sup>. Regarding the subject of invective, we can assume that in the last quarter of the V century we do not have Old comedy with two different styles: a iambic and a non-iambic poetry as Aristotle suggested for the origins of this genre<sup>48</sup>. Comedy by this time has become a complex and more sophisticated genre that borrows ideas and techniques from tragedy. Aristophanes' attacks go beyond the simple personal abuse and his role as poet/adviser to the city can be understood as an attempt to fill them with a «political» and «social» content. Pherecrates' approach is not totally different from that of Aristophanes, who sometimes conveys similar ideas and concerns<sup>49</sup>. Pherecrates is less political and more moralistic in a way that resembles more what we would call «comedy of manners». Both poets are representative of the maturity of Old Comedy that only from the 430s had acquired a particular dramatic personality, and their comedies probably prefigure the evolution of the genre in the following century.

45. *Noblemen* was confused with a homonymous play by Strattis and *Miners*, *Persians* and *Cheiron* were attributed to Nicomachus, a rather unknown later poet, by Eratosthenes. Otherwise, according to Poll. II 33 (fr.35) *Deserters* was represented again in a later *διασκευή*, that can mean «revision» or «adaptation». Several theories appeared trying to explain this unusual piece of information, but I agree with KÖRTE *RE* XIX. 2 1989. 13 that this proposal is due to the hypercriticism based on very weak linguistic arguments. In Antiquity doubts must have appeared about the authorship of plays by Pherecrates because it did not fit what was regarded as the main feature of the comedies of the 5th century.

46. See G. DOBROV in DOBROV (ed.) *Beyond Ar.* cit., p. 8.

47. About the appearance of stock-characters in Old Comedy see also T. B. L. WEBSTER in *St. in Later Gr. Com.* cit., p. 66, and FR. WEHRLI, *Motivstudien zur Griechische Komödie*, Zürich/Leipzig 1936.

48. See *supra*, pp. 76-8.

49. An extreme interpretation of Aristophanes from the point of view of domestic elements in his plays can be found in E. SEGAL, *HSCP* 77, 1973, pp. 132-3.