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Herakles and Animals in the Origins of Comedy and Satyr-Drama

Herakles is a visual splendor. This figure appears on virtually every medium of Greco-Roman graphic expression and in a stunning array of iconographic settings and poses. However, though this one-as-many hero is difficult for us to grasp as a unity, the legacy of his roles in combat with animals, especially as depicted in the late Archaic and Classical visual arts, constitutes a relatively stable persona and was appropriately the subject of this impressive conference.

This contribution takes up the issue of Herakles' animal associations in Greek satyr drama and comedy and constructs an argument with three claims. (1) While Herakles possess a plethora of narrative attributes, a driving dynamic for his overall popularity and relevance lies in his capacities to be visually represented. The phenomenon of "Herakles as image" sometimes drives the phenomenon of "Herakles as narrative agent." (2) The persona of Herakles in comedy relates to the original, populist thrust of the Greek comic tradition, the one we do not generally find in Aristophanes. (3) When Herakles enters comic discourse during the late sixth and early fifth centuries his dramatic roles are marked and influenced by his portrayals in graphic arts, portrayals rich in illustrations of him engaged with the animal world. Vase-painting possessed this influence upon Herakles' dramatic characterization because of the role that the "perspectivalism" of late sixth-century vase-painting had in shaping the early organization of theatrical drama.

Image into Text

The history of Herakles' legacy of interactions with animals suggests a kind of principle of "magnetic attraction" between the two that possesses antecedents many millennia before Greek Classicism in tribal roles of an "Animal Tamer," as Walter Burkert has famously discussed.¹ Historical record preserves that early Near Eastern cylinder seals display male figures engaged in activities with animal-monsters that are distinctly similar to those encountered by Greek

Note: the hand-written edits in this copy are post-publication, and offer a few grammatical and stylistic corrections to aid the reader. The published essay remains the official version. M.F.

¹ W. BURKERT, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, Berkeley, 1977, p. 76f.

Herakles.² Though the historical transactions of this borrowing are shrouded in mist,³ we do not know whether the entry of these images into Greek art was part of broader Near Eastern infusions, such as the passing of the cults and narrative myths of the featured figures on the seals. Perhaps Greek artists lifted the icons for their own use from their localized contexts: thus the images themselves would have been more powerful to the artists seeking provocative ways to illustrate Greek heroism on vases than were the cultural and religious meanings of these images. If so, artists may have been prompted to fashion stories of Herakles so as to accommodate in their work the striking images; in this fashion, Herakles' mythical biography of constituting a string of largely independent exploits would constitute an evolutionary product. Another antecedent for Herakles' associations with animals may lie in the Egyptian tradition of portraying individuals bringing animals to the Pharaoh.⁴ Finally, Mycenaean civilization may have contributed a generic strongman figure to serve as the mythological scaffolding onto which the pre-Greek and local Greek elements of the hero were joined together by artists and poets, a process that probably took hold near the late Geometric period.⁵

Irrespective of the origins of these associations, the Herakles of Archaic Greece is located in narrative and iconographic roles in which involvements with animals are highlighted, involvements which grow in complexity and nature, reaching their pinnacle in the second half of the sixth-century. The animal encounters could develop in the structure of the tale (e.g., when the hunt for the Erymanthian boar becomes attached to the *parergon* in the abode of Phobos) and they could function as early models for related myths (e.g., the episode of Nessus attacking Deianeira establishing the theme of guarding wives from aggressive male sexuality prefiguring the Centauromachy⁶). Also, though early Archaic interest in Herakles in the role of the hoplite soldier rivals the

² G. Rachel Levy, *The Oriental Origin of Herakles*, in *JHS*, 54 (1934), p. 40-53, and Burkert, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 80-83.

³ Cf. W. Burkert, *Oriental and Greek Mythology: The Meeting of Parallels*, in J. Bremser (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology*, Toronto, N.J. 1986, p. 14-19.

⁴ Cf. Emily T. Vermeule, *Herakles Brings a Tribute*, in U. Höckmann, A. Krug (eds.), *Festschrift für Frank Brommer*, Mainz, p. 295-321.

⁵ M.P. Nilsson, *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology*, with a new introduction and bibliography by Emily Vermeule, Berkeley, 1972 (1st publ. 1952), p. 187-220. See also P. Lévêque, *Héraclès héros ou dieu?*, in C. Bonnet, C. Jourdain-Annequin (éds.), *Héraclès d'une rive à l'autre de la Méditerranée. Bilan et Perspectives*, Rome-Bruxelles, 1992, p. 44-50. J. Carter, *The Beginning of Narrative Art in the Greek Geometric Period*, in *ABSA*, 67 (1972), p. 25-36, with plates 5-12, argues that graphic artists in the Middle to Late Geometric periods radically developed the idea of expressing mythical narrative in visual terms, doing so in the context of the success of epic poetry and by appropriating stock images from the Near East. Thus the creations of such heroic stories as Herakles' battles with the Nemean lion and the Sisyphallion birds followed the success of Greek graphic artists to transmute in the medium of vase-painting generic, 'meaningless' images of such encounters (images found in earlier Mesopotamian cylinder seals, for example). See further, M. Padilla, *The Myths of Herakles in Ancient Greece: Survey and Profile*, Lanham, MD, forthcoming, p. 2-6.

⁶ See Susan Woodcock, *More Light on Old Walls: The Themes of the Centauromachy in the Thebeson*, in *JHS*, 44 (1974), p. 158-165.

emerging portrayals of him as the adventuring wearer of the lionskin, by the mid sixth century it is the latter role that emerges as predominant. Herakles becomes a figure who most appropriately resides outside Greek city walls, whether as a culture hero (*sôtêr*, *alexikakos*), outlaw, traveling warrior, cultural engager of non-Greek peoples, Olympian god, and even traveling philosopher. In sum, and to set aside the issue of his cultic roles in the polis, Herakles supports Greek civilization but does not himself typically enjoy its habitats.

Herakles' roles in Archaic poetry, with a few exceptions, must be gleaned from fragments and assorted sources that discuss early poets. Perhaps the poems dedicated to him composed by Creophytus, Peisander, and Panyassis constitute a rival tradition to those associated with Homer,⁷ though our evidence for this tradition is murky. In any case, the Hesiodic school of poetry also has numerous occasions to feature him, especially in roles related to gods, as we can see, for example, in the *Shield* of Ps.-Hesiod, in which Herakles aids the god Apollo in guarding the northern entry for pilgrims to his Delphic sanctuary, as Fontenrose has discussed.⁸ In the sixth century, Stesichorus develops his western adventures from folk tale material,⁹ and we are well aware of Pindar and Bacchylides' interest in him in the late sixth and fifth centuries. Furthermore, the myths of his *katabasis* become a popular subject in the late sixth and fifth centuries.¹⁰

Given this scanty evidence, one may speculate that Herakles' more successful role in poetry is not as a protagonist but rather, as we see him in Homer's epics, as a figure of reference and heroic modeling for the assessment of other heroes.¹¹ Perhaps this tendency relates to his gaining of godhood in the early sixth century,¹² or it may relate more simply to issues of literary unity: for example, Aristotle complains about epics featuring Herakles (and Theseus for that matter), in that they are organized inappropriately around a single hero.¹³

⁷ Cf. W. Burkert, *Die Leistung eines Kreophytos: Kreophytos: Homerden und die archaische Heraklesepik*, in *MH*, 29 (1974), p. 74-85.

⁸ J. Fontenrose, *Pythian: A Study of Delphic Myth and its Origins*, Berkeley, 1959, p. 28-34. This poetic work perhaps initiated a run of vase-paintings, though its dating the question of which form influenced which has been debated.

⁹ Cf. M. Davies, *Stesichorus' Geryones and his Folk-Tale Origins*, in *CO*, 38 (1988), p. 277-290.

¹⁰ See H. Lloyd-Jones, *Herakles at Eleusis: P. Oxy. 2622 and P.S.I. 1391*, in *Matia*, n.s. 19 (1967), p. 206-220.

¹¹ Homer refers to the hero at *Il.* II, 653-670 and 676-680; *V.*, 392-397 and 638-642; *VIII*, 361-369; *XI*, 690-693; *XV*, 18-30; *XVIII*, 117-119; *XIX*, 95-134; *XX*, 144-148; and *Od.*, *XI*, 266-270 and 601-626; *XXI*, 2-33.

¹² See M.J. West (ed.), *Hesiod: Theogony*, Oxford, 1986, p. 130; T.C. W. Stanton, *The Ancestry of Herakles from the Pyre*, in Lyn Rowley (ed.), *Papers Given at a Colloquium on Greek Drama in Honour of R.P. Winnington-Ingram*, London, 1987, p. 1-16; and Annie Vernant-Pickard, P. Lévêque, *Héraclès héros ou dieu? Recherche d'une méthode*, in *Héraclès d'une rive à l'autre de la Méditerranée*, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 51-65.

¹³ In Aristotle's mind a *Herakleïda* or *Théséïda* lacks narrative coherence because it is composed around the actions of a single hero: *Anisth.*, 1451a-b *Poet.*, VIII, 1-3. For a list of poems called *Herakleïda* in the Archaic period, see M. Davies (ed.), *Epitome of Graecorum Fragmenta*, Göttingen,

The attempt to overcome this problem of viewing the hero as a sequence or string of miscellaneous activities was perhaps a motivating force in the development of the canon of labors. As we see him in the *Argonautica*, Herakles functions well in smaller roles, a tendency that seems, moreover, to have carried over into many of his tragic roles, at least until the production of the *Herakles* and *Trachiniae* in the late fifth century.

If the dactylic and lyric traditions struggled to develop effective frames in which to feature in an integrative fashion his many stories, the iconographic contexts, by contrast, offered an ideal fit for his representations and in fact provided the most significant cultural vehicles for them. His involvements in far-flung labors outside of the polis, his attachments to the symposium and feast, his emergence as an Olympian deity, his relationships, and his roles as violent *sôtêr* function well in graphic presentations, and these presentations perhaps take the lead in many occasions in defining his heroism for authors. Though the following examples may be biased, one can compare the rather "wooden" list of his exploits related in the choral ode of Euripides' *Herakles Metamorphoses* with the magnificent metopes featuring his labors at Olympia. Finally, his encounters with animals exemplify this principle; it is their representation in the graphic arts, and not in poetic art, that have promoted some of them to the level of virtual archetypes of European artistic expression.

The Herakles of Populist Comic Discourse

To make a transition to comedy, we find, in the evidence of titles, fragments, and material culture, a figure who appears to have a consistency of narrative function and characterization, a consistency that I perceive to be connected with these animal associations so well visualized on vase-paintings. Table I (presented below) lists titles and authors of plays that may have featured the figure of Herakles, lists that also organize the plays in a tentative chronology. List 1 presents Sicilian *dramata*, and the material in Lists 2 and 3 features titles of plays that likely included Herakles in the genres respectively of satyr drama and comedy. On the one hand, Classical scholars have ~~more~~ typically ~~both~~ viewed the comic tradition as being organized into discrete genres and considered satyr drama, which was produced by tragedians, as a poetic tradition to some extent independent of comedy; each of these forms, moreover, possesses important social and political dimensions, and possibly a specific connection to Archaic patterns of ritualism. On the other hand, the representation of Herakles in satyr drama, in Sicilian *dramata*, in Athenian Old and Middle Comedy, and even in *phlyax* may ~~also~~ constitute a point of ~~generic~~ convergence and overlap, especially given some of the evidence and perspectives that have emerged out of

some recent material-culture studies of drama, such as that of J.R. Green.¹⁴ Figures and masks indicate a tradition of Herakles' comic persona that is perhaps uniquely consistent over many hundreds of years. This tradition, therefore, suggests that -- at least in this context -- one can employ the phrase "comic discourse" to describe an inclusive view of these theatrical forms. Herakles belongs to a theatrical tradition of comic discourse that spans different genres, is broad in geographical distribution, and is recycled throughout the history of Greco-Roman drama.

List 1: "Sicilian" *Dramata* Featuring Herakles¹⁵

Date	Author	Title	Frag. or ref. ¹⁶
	Epicharmus	<i>Aigyoneus</i>	Kaibel
late	Epicharmus	<i>Marriage of Hèbè</i>	Kaibel
sixth	Epicharmus	<i>Bousiris</i>	Kaibel
and/or	Epicharmus	<i>Herakles' Journey for the</i>	Kaibel
early fifth centuries		<i>Giraffe [of Hippolyta]</i>	
	Epicharmus	<i>Herakles' Visit to Pholus</i>	Kaibel
	Epicharmus	<i>Dexameneus</i>	Bl 14 Austin
	Dinolochus (Epich. son/disciple)	<i>Amazons</i>	fr. 2 Kaibel
	Dinolochus	<i>Pholus</i>	78 Austin fr. 1.14

¹⁴ J.R. GREEN, *Herakles' Apotheosis in Lost Greek Literature and Art*, in *AC*, 61 (1992), p. 38-59; and W. McLEOD, *Studies on Panyassis--An Heroic Poet of the Fifth Century*, in *Phoenix*, 20 (1966), p. 95-110.

¹⁵ J.R. GREEN, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society*, London--New York, 1994. See also O. TARLIN, *Comic Artgets, and Other Approaches to Greek Drama through Vase-Paintings*, Oxford--New York, 1993.

¹⁶ Dates are often tentative and based upon Edmonds; list is based partly on R. VOLKMER, *Herakles in the Art of Classical Greece*, Oxford, 1988.

¹⁷ Editions or studies referred to in the lists: G. KAISEL (ed.), *Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus collecta*, Berlin, 1878; C. AUSTIN (ed.), *Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta: In Papyri Regensia*, Berlin--New York, 1973; B. SNELL, S. RAJEN (eds.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 4 vols., Göttingen, 1983-1991; ENIKA SIMON, *Satyr Plays on Vases in the Time of Aeschylus*, in DOMA KURTZ, B. SPARKES (eds.), *The Eye of Greece: Studies in the Art of Athens*, Cambridge, 1982; A. NAESCK (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, Suppl. B. SNELL, 2nd edition, Hildesheim, 1964; R. KAISEL, C. AUSTIN (eds.), *Poetae Comici Graeci*, vols. III-V, VII, Berlin--New York, 1983-1991; J.M. EDMONDS (ed.), *The Fragments of Attic Comedy after Mencké, Bergk, and Koch*, 4 vols., Leiden, 1957.

List 2: Satyr Plays Featuring Herakles

Date	Author	Title	Frag. or ref.
630-600	Pratinas	<i>[Fris]</i>	Simon 1982, 123ff.
500-490	Aischylos	<i>Kerykes</i>	106-113 TrGF III
470	Aristias	<i>Antaios</i>	1 TrGF I
460	Aischylos	<i>Leôn</i>	123 TrGF 3
before 456	Aischylos	<i>Spectators or Isthmian Games Fans</i> (<i>Theoroi é Isthmiasai</i>)	Sutton 1980, 31-33
460-440	Aristias	<i>Kéres</i>	4 TrGF I
451-421	Ion	<i>Omphalé</i>	17a-33 TrGF I
date?	Sophocles	<i>Baby Herakles (Herakleisikos)</i>	223a-b TrGF IV
date?	Sophocles	<i>Herakles at Tainaros</i>	225-227 TrGF IV
date?	Sophocles	<i>Hybris</i>	670-671 TrGF IV
date?	Sophocles	<i>Kerberus</i>	327a TrGF IV
447-405	Achaios	<i>Erginos</i>	16a TrGF I
447-405	Achaios	<i>Kybenus</i>	24-25 TrGF I
447-405	Achaios	<i>Linus</i>	26 TrGF I
447-405	Achaios	<i>Omphalé</i>	32-35 TrGF I
after 454	Euripides	<i>Syleus</i>	687-694 Nauck
after 454	Euripides	<i>Eurysebeus</i>	371-380, 863 Nauck
415	Euripides	<i>Sisyphus</i>	673-674 Nauck
408	Euripides	<i>Bousiris</i>	313-315 Nauck
400	Demetrius	<i>Hesione</i>	Did B 4, TrGF I and Pronomos satyr vase
?	Iophon	<i>Dexamenus</i>	<i>Suda</i>
?	Timotheus	<i>Herakles</i>	<i>Suda</i>
?	Asydamas the Younger	<i>Herakles</i>	4 TrGF I

(meter of fr. is comic, but still may be satyric)

List 3: "Athenian" Comedies Featuring Herakles

Date	Author	Title	Frag. or ref.
450	Cratinus	<i>Bousiris</i>	23 K-A, 21 E
427	Plato	<i>Zeus Kaboumenos</i>	46-55 K-A, 46-54b E
425	Aristophanes	<i>Dramata é Kentiauros</i>	278-298 K-A, 267-285 E

417	Hermippus	<i>Kerkôpes</i>	36-41 K-A, 35-40 E
414	Aristophanes	<i>Birds (Ornithes)</i>	
414	Phrynichus	<i>The Solitary (Monotropos)</i>	19-31 K-A, 23 E
412	Plato	<i>The Wool-Carriers or the Kerkôpes (Xantridae é boi Kerkôpes)</i>	95-97 K-A, 518-519 E
440-400	Pherecrates	<i>Herakles as Man (Antirôphêraklês)</i>	18 a-b E
440-400	Pherecrates	<i>Sham Herakles (Pseudêraklês)</i>	154 E
425-400	Archippus	<i>Herakles Gamôn</i>	8-13 K-A, 8-13 E
405	Philyllus	<i>Herakles</i>	7 K-A, 8 E
404	Aristophanes	<i>Frogs (Bairakhoi)</i>	
?	Nicochares	<i>Herakles as Bride (Hêraklês Gamoumenos)</i>	7 K-A, 4 E
404	Nicochares	<i>Herakles as Producer of Plays (Hêraklês Khoregos)</i>	8-9 K-A, 154 E
400	Philyllus	<i>Augê</i>	3-5 K-A, 3-6 E
410-390	Srattis	<i>Kallipides</i>	11-13 K-A, 11 E
386	Aristophanes	<i>Atolossion</i>	1-16 K-A, 1-17 E
376	Anaxandrides	<i>Herakles</i>	16 K-A, 15 E
376	Eubolus	<i>Amaltheia</i>	6-7 K-A, 7-8 E
376-375	Demonicus	<i>Akbelous</i>	1K-A, 1 E
369	Eubolus	<i>Augê</i>	14 K-A, 15 E
425-400	Cratinus the Younger	<i>Omphalé</i>	4-5 K-A, 4-5 E
368-364	Menippus	<i>Kerkôpes</i>	1 E
366-64	Eubolus	<i>Kerkôpes</i>	52-53 K-A, 52-53 E
362	Antiphanes	<i>Alcêstis</i>	30 K-A, 29 E
360	Antiphanes	<i>Antaios</i>	35 K-A, 33 E
349	Alexis	<i>Hesione</i>	88-90 K-A, 85-8 E
351-341	Ephippus	<i>Bousiris</i>	2 K-A, 2 E
?	Ephippus	<i>Cerphôn</i>	3-5 K-A, 3-4 E
346	Antiphanes	<i>Omphalé</i>	174-176 E, 176-178 E
344	Timodes	<i>The Centaur or Dexamenos</i>	19 E
330-326	Dionysius	<i>The Hungry Man?</i>	p. 543 E
328-327	Alexis	<i>Linus</i>	135 E
?	Antiphanes	<i>Bousiris</i>	66-68 K-A, 65-66 E

?	Mnesimachus	<i>Bousiris</i>	2 E
308 or 303	Menander	<i>The Sham Herakles</i> (<i>Pseudheraklēs</i>)	517-525 E
308	Diphilus	<i>Herakles</i>	45 K-A, 46 E

In other plays of Aristophanes, Herakles is referred to in the *Clouds* (423 BC; v. 1048-1052), *Wasps* (422 BC; v. 60), *Peace* (421 BC; vv. 741-743, 752-769), and *Lysistrata* (411 BC; v. 928).

To return to Table I, Herakles' presence in comic discourse is a steady one. Interest in him begins in our historical record with the Syracusan *dramata* of Epicharmus and his circle, with surviving titles indicating that at least eight plays featured Herakles. Athenian satyr drama shares this interest in the hero, and he seems to have been established as a favorite in the earliest stages of the genre's formation. By contrast, the evidence does not suggest that Athenian Old Comedy fully utilizes the comic potential of Herakles until the second half of the fifth century, and the poetic and material record clearly reveals that he becomes a favorite in Athenian Middle Comedy.¹⁷

In an analysis of this pattern, the absence of Herakles in early Old Comedy may be a result of the weaker evidence we have in general for this period. I believe that dramatic comedy first developed in Attica and then was brought to Syracuse in the same currents of intellectual and artistic exchange that brought such illuminaries as Aeschylus to Sicily in the early fifth century. Comedy seems to have taken an immediate hold in Syracuse, however, and likely developed its own character. Satyr drama also emerges in sixth-century Athens and questions of its roots remain the subject of debate. Perhaps satyr drama represents a rival tradition of dramatic humor with which tragic poets experimented. While the questions of the origins of comedy and satyr drama cannot be adequately addressed here, satyr drama was integrated into the theatrical program of the Greater Dionysia earlier than was Old Comedy – with Old Comedy emerging on the program as late as 489 BC. Therefore, satyr drama, in a generic rivalry with comedy, appropriates Herakles for itself and maintained a sense of generic hold on the hero until its decline, a decline that seems to have begun as early as the mid fifth century, as based upon the material evidence surveyed by Green.¹⁸ (This phenomenon, I would add, speaks to the peculiar nature of the *Alkestis*: Euripides' prosatyr drama was perhaps an attempt to infuse new life into the form and, in doing so, the author appropriately calls upon the services of Herakles.) Possibly, the enervation of satyr drama fueled the rise of Middle Comedy by opening up to Athenian comedy a fuller array of mythological themes. In this process, the roles of the Syracusan Herakles enter more fully into the Athenian school of comedy than it had before. The themes of Bousiris,

centaurs, and Hebe are featured by Sicilian comedy and treatments of these same themes reappear in the satyr and comic works of Athenian dramatists. The fact that Herakles is featured in many plays of the late fifth century and not only the fourth century speaks to the notion that Middle Comedy emerges in Athens earlier than is typically viewed for it to have done so. However, scholars are beginning to suspect that Middle Comedy emerges in Athens in the second half of the fifth century, and that, consequently, the Old Comedies of Aristophanes are a late holdover of the Old Comic form.¹⁹

To develop this last idea by focusing on how the evolution of comic discourse is shaped by and helped to shape in turn the political climate of Athens, I refer to an article by Anthony Edwards. Edwards' central focus is to consider how the form of Old Comedy, as embodied in the plays of Aristophanes, relates to the paradigm of comic discourse described by the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and His World*, a paradigm epitomized by the term "grotesque." Rabelais discusses a tradition of comic humor that is carnivalesc in nature, in that it features a number of themes and ideas that invert society's established hierarchies and power structures: this is accomplished through the presentation of profanity, of humor typically associated with the lower body, and of the humiliation of authority figures. As Bakhtin himself points out, however, the plays of Aristophanes seem to conform to this model only awkwardly: they contain low humor and invert hierarchies, but they generally support politically conservative ideas and agendas. Edwards argues, however, that there are reasons to believe that Aristophanes followed the lead of Cratinus in appropriating the genuinely grotesque nature of original Old Comedy. Early Attic and Sicilian comedians developed dramatic comedy out of a mix of iambic verse, various cultic forms, and the expressions of home-grown traditions of saturnalian revelry, i.e., the *kōmoi* to which Aristotle makes reference in the *Poetics*, and that had become popular in the countryside. Green has argued that satyr drama emerged from similar sensibilities.²⁰ Both forms possess the *phallogōgia* in common as ritual sources.²¹ This tradition is bawdy and contains within it the view of authority turned upside-down. When this countryside comedy became attached to the urban Dionysiac Festival in Athens, it provided the newly politicized *dēmos* an institutional forum to "carnavaize" the aristocracy which continued to have positions of leadership in the young democracy. As we are well aware, however, the political atmosphere in Athens then became substantially more antagonistic and confrontational after the reforms of Ephialtes and the emergence of such populist leaders as Pericles and Cleon. By consequence, a small group of Old Comic poets emerged, a class which includes Cratinus and Aristophanes, that utilized the populist tradition of comedy to attack what had become, for them, an emergent regime of the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36-39.

²¹ See E. CASPO, W. SLATER, *The Context of Ancient Drama*, Ann Arbor, 1993, p. 89-101.

¹⁷ See GREEN, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 70-76.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

démos holding sway over the aristocracy. This conservative appropriation of the populist vehicle for criticism took the form of open attacks not upon generic figures of authority as before, but upon particular individuals, so as to attempt to sway the audiences on matters of specific policy.²² It is thus the radical demerits, and not the conservatives, who occupy the role of authority subject to ridicule.

In this context, one may locate the figure of Herakles as belonging to the non-Aristophanic tradition of comedy, a notion that speaks to Aristophanes' own repeated claims in the venues of the parabasis to have avoided use of the hero. An exception to this notion is the presence of Herakles in the *Birds* and *Frogs*. However, in the case of the *Frogs*, a comedy that is a hybrid of Old and Middle forms, we can see how Herakles belongs to the original stratum of populist comedy, where his roles as a glutton, drinker, fighter, and lover can be fully exploited.²³ As the illustrious son of Zeus and yet also a heroic son of a mortal mother whose status includes that of servant and bastard, Herakles proves ready and able to serve popular comedy's interest in interfering with the stability of symbolic hierarchies and in thematizing the desires, consumptions, and activities of the male body. If we consider the titles and fragments that survive from Epicharmus and his circle, we find in Bakhtinian terms a pattern of the hero employed to "carnavalize notions of the Greek other." Plays are typically set in exotic locations, or in familiar locations rendered exotic, and which are inhabited by colorful and dangerous individuals, for example, giants (in the *Alcyoneus*), Egyptians (in the *Bousiris*), warrior women (in the *Herakles' Journey for the Girdle* and the *Amazons*), centaurs (in the *Herakles' Visit to Pholus* and the *Pholus*), and gods (in the *Marriage of Hébé*). In these contexts, the imagistic content of Greek myth was employed to distort and invert societal norms: pious Egyptians are guilty of human sacrifice and hedonistic luxury; females physically threaten men; centaurs play the role of gracious host; and the decorous realm of Olympus is transformed into a pleasure palace — a theme that the comic writer Plato Comicus scandalously stretched further, in the *Zeus Kakekymenos*. Epicharmus seems particularly interested in the enjoyment of gourmet foods: the forty-plus lines surviving of his *Marriage of Hébé* have only this one topic, as do some smaller fragments of his other plays.

²² A. T. EDWARDS, *Historicizing the Popular Graecaeque: Bakhtin's Rabelais and Attic Old Comedy*, in Ruth Scodel (ed.), *Tragedy and Society in the Classical World*, Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1993. "In the wake of its politicization by Cratinus and his successors, comedy presents the paradox of a popular art form turned against the popular regime it was meant to support, and of aristocratic poets exploiting the images and values of a popular form to express anti-popular views. Comedy in this context attacks through counter-utopian what was itself already a sort of utopia, but also the status quo, namely, the hegemony of the *démos*" (p. 104). The area of scholarly contributions to the application of Bakhtin's study on Rabelais to Greek Old Comedy is an expanding one; see Ch. PLATTER, *Aristophanes in Bakhtin's History of Laughter*, in *Aethusa*, 26 (1992), p. 201-216.

²³ See M. PADILLA, *The Herculian Dionysus: Theatrical and Political Renewal in Aristophanes' Frogs*, in *Aethusa*, 25 (1992), p. 359-384.

Image into Drama

To integrate the topic of Herakles' associations with animals in this analysis, though there are many sources one might look to consider the origins of the hero's comic roles,²⁴ one that I highlight here is the corpus of vases in the second half of the sixth century that feature him in the presence of animals. To prepare a context for this idea, we know from the work of Brelich that Herakles possesses an especially large number of hero cult associations.²⁵ In addition to this cultic superfluity, Herakles is as an unusually capable warrior, a sort of super hero or hero to the second degree. He does not seem to share, say, the mortality of Achilles and even Odysseus and he sometimes becomes a god upon his death on Mt. Oeta. His exploits with animals and monsters relate to this legacy: just as the hero can single-handedly defeat armies and sack cities, so he is able to defeat many types of sentient beings of great power. Other heroes are also able to defeat powerful monsters: Perseus kills Medusa and Bellerophon defeats the Chimera. But, once again, Herakles is an animal killer like them to the second degree. This quality of indestructibility, while lending itself to epic treatment, possess an inherent comic potential, given comedy's deep-seated tendencies to affirm the power of the human spirit to persevere. There is something easily cartoon-like about his heroic identity in this context, akin to Crocodile Dundee in cinema or Hagar the Hombler in the American newspaper funnies. Herakles, like Crocodile Dundee in his hunter clothing and Hagar in his Viking garb, wears his lion skin in a fashion that reminds audiences of his career of engaging dangerous beings and that also assures his audience that he possesses a guaranteed immunity from mortal defeat. The narrative roles, in short, emerge from the iconographic emblem. The gateway to his comic roles is the lion skin.

Comic discourse thus highlights the comic potential of heroic themes from vase-painting, themes chosen because of their potential for theatrical color and humor. The subject of Amazons, for example, with whom Herakles battles on many Archaic vases, can provide material for serious reflection upon the nature of gender relations and of barbarian versus Greek culture — reflection that takes form in depictions of Amazons on temple art, in which masculine Hellenism proves triumphant over feminine "Easternism"; however, the subject of the Amazons may also provide the material with which comedy can promote its own agenda of employing the topics of gender and cultural relationships to disrupt the same symbolic structures that temple art affirms. In Epicharmus' *Herakles's Journey for the Girdle*, the play seems to have been set in Sicily and to feature not only Amazons but an encounter with "pigmy beetles," a parody of the hero's reputed battle with a tribe of African pygmies. In this comic context, Herakles is triumphant but also lampooned. The aristocratic virtue of *sôphro-*

²⁴ Including the large component of folk tale motifs in his myths, his connections with the feast, and, as noted, his associations with the servant class. The metopes on Sicilian temples that feature Herakles sometimes promote this connection, especially in the use of the Geryonides story.

²⁵ A. BREILICH, *Gli eroi greci: un problema storico-religioso*, Roma, 1958.

synê was the object of teasing and irony. The inclusion of references to or actual depictions of animals or animal-monsters serves the ridiculous, to *gelation*, rather than the serious, to *spoudaiôn*.

The nature of the relationship between heroic vase-painting and comic treatment is a complex one and not subject to one particular pattern. I leave aside here the issue of satyr pots in that their comic elements are relatively straightforward. Moreover, the question of the satyr vases leads us into the scholarly quicksand of wondering whether the pots refer to satyr plays or not. For example, in response to the Nemean lion labor, a comic playwright might enhance the grotesqueness of the encounter by making the terror of Nemea not a lion, but an ogre or robber of some sort: thus the inherent nobility of Nemea not encounter could be evacuated. By contrast, vase-painters themselves appear to have developed the comic possibilities of the Erymanthian boar labor, in the well-known depictions of the hero holding up the living boar above a terrified Eurystheus who tries to hide himself in a pot; this type of motif informed parts of the *Eurystheus* plays. The Erymanthian boar labor involves other myths also available to comic treatment, the most important one being Herakles' visit to Pholus. As Annie Verbanck-Piérard has suggested, comic treatments of this encounter perhaps spoofed the recent direction this tale had taken in graphic art, a treatment that had begun to model the interview on a Chiron and a young hero in need of education.³⁶ The handling of the Kerkopes story by graphic artists – as seen even on Sicilian temple art in the sixth century – constitutes the most well known and obvious examples of the creeping inclusion of a comic perspective of his heroism. Herakles' relationships with women in the context of animal-master exploits provide still another source of humor and inversion in comedies: as was featured in the various *Hestonê* and *Omphalê* plays, his courageous *sôtêria* could allow him to exhibit later a greater interest in food banquets celebrating his victories than in his rights to prove his sexual prowess with the royal women he aids – perhaps to their expressed disappointment. Engagements with centaurs in the plays featuring the word *kentauros*, enable the hero to play a *sôtêr* so as to be as disrupting, or more so, to civilized settings than are the centaurs themselves.

The comic exploitation of Herakles' associations with animals as represented on vase-painting possesses a still deeper level of meaning. When Herakles enters the comic tradition he seems to do so with a uniquely well-formed comic identity, one that becomes further stabilized with the development of a stock mask for his dramatic portrayals on the comic stage and the use of the lion skin as part of the actor's costuming. This comic identity is rooted, I argue, in his relationships with animals and is featured either explicitly or implicitly in his comic roles. Herakles' presence on the stage is not of a generic hero

able to take on whatever personality the dramatist might wish to inscribe upon him. Herakles enters the staged "marked" with his distinction as the conqueror and consorter of animals. An explanation of this phenomenon, I argue, relates to the decisive role that the new "perspectivalism" of late sixth-century vase-painting had upon the formation of drama itself.

Sixth century Greece produced a large number of vases featuring Herakles. However, the output of this time span is not a homogenous one. In a discussion as to why Herakles and other heroes appear to become suddenly the object of so many vases and in so many roles that had not been early featured on vases in Attica, H.A. Shapiro³⁷ argues that, in the mid sixth century, specifically near the year 560, black-figure painters in Attica production centers began to shift their styles of representation. One consequence of this shift is the development of a new "stock of myths" depicted on the vessels. If "old scenes" typically feature groupings of figures presented in a frieze-like style of depiction, "new scenes" feature themes more focused upon individual heroism in metope-like depictions. Representations of this new type of black-figure style is more commonly featured on the amphora than had been before. The amphora vessel has a bulging middle region and offers painters a prime medium for the emerging vogue in heroic portrayal with a "psychological" or "emotional" emphasis.

Given the accuracy of Shapiro's evolutionary model, Herakles's numerous one-on-one labors with colorful enemies fit well into the new style. Many scenes not typically depicted in the earlier half of the sixth century expand the hero's iconographic repertoire, including scenes featuring exploits that became canonical. An example of an "old scene" is Herakles' release of Prometheus, a context that fits well into the frieze-like style featuring a broad canvas of material to depict. The dominant exploits that enter his new repertoire include his encounters featuring the Nemean lion, the Erymanthian boar, the Cerynian hind, the Amazons, the Hesperides, Geryon, Kerberos, Cyrenus, Achelôus, Bousiris, the struggle with Apollo over the tripod, the capture of the Kerkopes, and his introduction to Olympus. Scenes which overlap the "old" and "new" styles include Herakles' encounters with Nessus and Nereus or Triton. This is a set of themes rich in animal encounters.

I hypothesize that ~~the~~ ^{THIS} newer, amphora-based approach to the depiction of Greek myth relates to the development of Greek drama and accounts for the establishment of Herakles' well-defined comic identity. Unlike the more frieze-like perspective of epic poetry, which features a broad canvas of heroic events involving many people and themes in a long span of time, dramatic presentations typically feature a few figures and in plots that unfold over a short duration of time. Moreover, the scenes of a drama function as "metopian" depictions, with interspersed choral odes, presenting to audiences intense but brief encounters between protagonists in a way that is not untypically emotional and

³⁶ ANNIE VERBANCK-PIÉRARD, *La rencontre d'Heraklès et de Pholos: variations iconographiques de la peinture d'Antiquité*, in Lydie HADERMAN-MISERUSCH, G. RAESBAET (eds.) *Revoir le grec: Hommages à Chéries Debayle*, Bruxelles, 1982, p. 143-169.

³⁷ H.A. SHAPIRO, *Old and New Heroes. Narrative Composition and Subject in Attic Black-Figure*, in *ClAnt*, 9 (1990), p. 114-148.

psychological in nature, even in comedy. I do not have to address this issue in any detail for the point to be clear. My argument is that the roots of dramatic production relate to the vase-painting revolution that has been described. The connections are not tangible, but they may be arrived at by deduction and inference. If so, the figure of Herakles, being as he was at the time of the birth of drama so closely connected with the animal world in roles that the new vase-painting style preferred to feature, entered into comedy marked with these animal-tamer roles. The roles echo his long-standing associations with animals, the nature of which I earlier touched upon. However, they receive emphasis in comedy because vase-painting heavily features them at the same time that comic genres were emerging. Indeed, the list of newer scenes represented by painters that I just reviewed include many of the Heraklean themes taken up by comic and satyric dramatists.

It is no wonder then, to begin a conclusion, that Herakles develops such a stable comic persona for a 1,000 years of Greco-Roman comic discourse. His emergence as a comic protagonist relates to his roles in cult, the folkloric nature of his myths, his associations with the divine and notions of the Greek other – and, as I hope to have suggested here, to the vital way that late sixth-century vase painting imagined the nature of heroism. Without this development, I suspect, drama itself might not have emerged as spectacularly as it did. Perhaps the relationship of the two media was also synergistic in nature: the artists of each form of mythological representation found creative energies in each other's work and, through this reciprocal self-consciousness, raised to a more refined level their own techniques of perspectivalism. Herakles is a visual splendor and the excitement of his iconographic roles lay ironically at the heart of the splendor of the Greek *theatron*, a word that means more appropriately than ever “a place to see,” a place to see *mythos*, *mythos* rendered tragically *and* comically.

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