Theater Outside Athens

Drama in Greek Sicily and South Italy

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3 | Challenging authority
Epicharmus between epic and rhetoric

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Introduction

For the literary historian, archaic and classical Sicily largely remains a *terra incognita*. The fragments of Stesichorus of Himera's lyric compositions, the snippets from the eccentric Empedocles of Acragas' works on the nature of the universe and man's place in it, the two extant showpiece speeches by Gorgias of Leontinoi, or the rare lines and words surviving from the mimes of Sophron are just enough to prove how much of value has disappeared.[1] The greatest loss, however, may be that of the dramatic works of a writer who, in the eyes of later generations, embodied Sicilian literature more than anyone else: Epicharmus.[2] Born probably in the 540s or 530s BC, Epicharmus was active during the reigns of Gelon and Hieron, first perhaps in Megara Hyblaia, later certainly in Syracuse.[3] When he died in the middle of the fifth century, at the age of at least 90, he left not less than forty or fifty plays which, in the edition prepared by Apollodorus of Athens in the second century BC, filled ten entire books.[4] Of this output, not more

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1 After the brief remarks by Rostagni (1957), a first attempt to analyse and contextualise the remains of these authors in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the literature, culture, and history of ideas of Greek Sicily has been made in Willi (2008); the present contribution on Epicharmus by and large follows some of the themes and arguments in that study (especially, though not exclusively, chapter 6).

2 This will at least partly explain the number and diversity of Pseudo-Epicharmian writings that circulated in antiquity; cf. Epich. test. 9 (= Diog. Laert. 8.78: φυσιολογεῖ, γνωμολογεῖ, ἰατρολογεῖ 'he talks about nature, general principles, and medical topics') and the tradition of Epicharmus as a 'wise man' (Epich. test. 10 and 16 = Diog. Laert. 1.42 and Ael. *VH* 2.34). The inauthenticity of many of these texts was already established in antiquity (cf. esp. Athen. 14.648d, after Aristoxenus fr. 45 Wehrli, Philochorus *FGrH* 328F79, and Apollodorus *FGrH* 244F226), but disputes continue about the authorship of the so-called fragments *ex Alcimo* ([Epich.] fr. 275–9): these are regarded as genuine for instance by Gigante (1953) 166–72, Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 247–55, Berk (1964) 88–93, Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (1996), and Alvarez Salas (2007), as false by Covotti (1930) and Kerkhof (2001) 65–78; cf. Willi (2008) 121–4, with further literature.

3 Cf. especially Epich. test. 1 (= Suda ε 2766, s.v. Ἐπίχαρμος), 4 (= Arist. *Poet.* 1448a30–4), and 6 (= Anon. *De com.* III 15–16, p. 8 Koster), and the discussion in Willi (2008) 119–21.

4 Cf. Epich. test. 9 (= Diog. Laert. 8.78 and [Lucian.] *Macr.* 25) on Epicharmus' age, Epich. test. 34 (= Apollodorus *FGrH* 244T18) on Apollodorus' edition.

than some 240 fragments, most of them very short, have come down to us.[5]

To study these fragments is interesting for various reasons. One of them has little to do with literature and culture, at least at first sight. In the almost complete absence of epigraphic material from archaic and classical Syracuse, the Epicharmian fragments constitute our most precious source for the reconstruction of the local Doric dialect of the city. It goes without saying that one has to be very careful in using them for this purpose as they might include 'literary' or parodic elements which have nothing to do with 'real-life' fifth-century Syracusan.[6] However, the fragments display a large enough number of linguistic features which are in line with our expectations for a Corinthian colony located in Sicily and which do not appear to be particularly literary to warrant the conclusion that the basic layer of Epicharmus' comic language was indeed common or everyday Syracusan.[7] To cite but a few examples which will help in reading some of the fragments quoted below, relevant items are for instance verbal forms such as a first person plural καλέωμες (~ Att. καλοῦμεν 'we call'), the aorist participle ἐνθών (~ Att. ἐλθών 'coming'), or athematic infinitives in -μεν (e.g. εἶμεν 'to be' ~ Att. εἶναι), pronominal forms such as genitive ἐμεῦς/ἐμοῦς and dative ἐμίν (~ Att. ἐμοῦ and ἐμοί), and local and temporal adverbs in -ει, such as τεῖδε 'here' (~ Att. ἐμοῦ and ἐμοί). Moreover, while all of these have parallels elsewhere in Doric-speaking parts of the Greek world, there are also certain elements which are, as far as we can tell, typically Sicilian:[8] these include on the one hand occasional peculiarities of phonology, morphology and word formation – such as the metathesis in the pronoun ψε for σφε, perfect forms with present endings like δέδοικα for δέδοικα 'I am afraid', or the abundant use of verbs in -άζω (e.g. ἀκροάζομαι for ἀκροάομαι 'to listen') – and on the

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5 The standard edition, used throughout this article, is now Kassel and Austin (2001); this includes the Pseudo-Epicharmian fragments as well as excellent brief annotations and thus supersedes Kaibel (1899) and Olivieri (1946).

6 On Epicharmus' response to the literary culture of his time see most recently Willi (2008) esp. 163–8 and 176–7, as well as Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (this volume).

7 For a comprehensive description and analysis of Epicharmus' dialect see Willi (2008) 125–46, where full lists of attestations and references are given for each feature and where the question of coexisting variant forms (e.g. infinitives in -μεν and -μεν) is discussed. In the standard dialect handbooks, Syracusan – like other 'colonial' dialects – is normally treated together with the dialect of its metropolis (see esp. Thumb and Kieckers (1932) 128–34, with a separate section on Epicharmus and Sophron on pp. 210–17; but cf. also Sicca (1924)).

8 Cf. Willi (2008) 139–46; on Sicilian ψε = σφε see especially Apoll. Dysc. *Pron.* p. 101.2 Schneider, on δέδοικα Hdn. περὶ διχρόνων ῥημάτων, p. 30.1 Hilgard (= Epich. fr. 188), on productive -άζω Heraclides *apud* Eust. *in Od.* 10.190, on νόμος Pollux 9.79 (with Laroche (1949) 234–8), on κύβιτον Ruf. Eph. *Part. Corp.* 79, p. 143.10–11 Daremberg-Ruelle (with Cassio (2002) 68–9, Willi (2008) 30).

other lexical items such as the noun νόμος used for a piece of money (Epich. fr. 134) or the verb κυβιτίζω which is glossed as πτείειν τῷ ἀγκῶνι 'to push with the elbow' (Epich. fr. 220), hence derived from κύβιτον 'elbow' (κύβιτον probably being a Sicilian Greek loan from the local Italic language Sicel spoken in eastern Sicily). So, the linguistic evidence alone already encourages us to try and situate Epicharmus' work in its distinctive 'colonial' or 'Western' Greek context, without yielding to the temptation of looking at it merely from the more familiar metropolitan perspective.

Meanwhile, to regard the Epicharmian fragments as nothing more than a dialectologist's quarry would of course be highly inadequate. It is true that a large number of them have been preserved by ancient grammarians and lexicographers precisely because of their linguistic interest, and disappointingly little can be made of another substantial group of fragments whose survival is due to Athenaeus, which name various kinds of fishes and other food, often in the form of extensive and not very exciting lists. Thus, the modern reader and critic has to perform a certain amount of philological hard work in order to understand how Epicharmus could become known and admired well beyond Sicily by the fourth century at the latest,[9] as references in both Plato and Aristotle suggest. In Plato's *Theaetetus* (152e = Epich. test. 3) Epicharmus is called the ἄκρος κωμῳδίας, the 'originator of comedy', a counterpart to Homer as the ἄκρος τραγῳδίας, and Aristotle famously names Epicharmus (alongside the more obscure Phormis) when he specifies in the *Poetics* (1449b5–7 = Epich. test. 5) that Sicilian comedy initiated the tradition of staging coherent plots, μῦθοι. To rediscover and reconstruct these plots, to trace the echoes, allusions, and lines of influence, is no doubt the principal task of the modern scholar who wants to appreciate Epicharmus' place in the history of literature. How difficult a task it can be, and how much we are tapping in the dark, will become abundantly clear from the two case studies presented on the following pages.

Epicharmus on the 'augmenting discourse'

In his treatise *On those whom the Divinity punishes with delay* (περὶ τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ θείου βραδέως τιμωρουμένων) Plutarch vaguely alludes to an

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[9] Epicharmian influence already on Athenian Old Comedy has been detected by von Salis (1905) and more recently Cassio (1985) 39–43, and Kerkhof (2001) 133–43, but denied by Zielinski (1885) 243, Wüst (1950), and François (1978) 52–8.

Epicharmian play whose title is not given and cannot be guessed (Plut. *Mor.* 559b = Epich. fr. 136):

τοῦτό γε τοῖς Ἐπιχαρμείοις ἔοικεν, ἐξ ὧν ὁ αὐξόμενος ἀνέφυ τοῖς σοφισταῖς λόγος, ὁ γὰρ λαβὼν πάλαι τὸ χρέος νῦν οὐκ ὀφείλει, γεγονὼς ἕτερος, ὁ τε κληθεὶς ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἐχθὲς ἄκλητος ἥκει τήμερον· ἄλλος γάρ ἐστι.

This resembles the scene in Epicharmus whence the sophists have drawn the so-called 'Augmenting Discourse' (αὐξόμενος λόγος). The one who had long been indebted is now no longer the debtor because he has become another person, and the one who was invited for dinner yesterday comes uninvited today; for he is another person.

Without further help it would be impossible to gain much insight into Epicharmus' work from this remark. Fortunately, however, an anonymous papyrus commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus* clarifies things considerably, despite its own lacunose text in which not every detail can be established with certainty (Anon. *in Pl. Tht.* col. 71.12–40 = Epich. fr. 136). The following version is the one printed in the edition by G. Bastiniani and D. N. Sedley,[10] with a translation added:

Ἐπίχαρμος, ὁ[μιλή]σας τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις] ἄλλα τ[ε] τινα εὖ [ἐδίδασ]κεν δ[ρά]ματ[α, καὶ τὸ περὶ τ]οῦ αὐξομ[ένου, ὃ] λ[όγωι] ἐφοδ[ικῶι καὶ πιθ]τ[ῶι ἐ]πέρα[ινε. οὐ μὴν] ἀλλ' ὡς ἔ[φοδο] γίνου]ται πρόσθε[σοί τε ἀναρ]γ[ές, εἰ οὐχ [ἑστώς τις] γί[νε]ται με[ίζ]ων ἢ ἐλ[ά]ττ[ων· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο,] οὐσίαι ἀλλ[οτε ἄλλαι] γίνουν[ται [διὰ τὴν συν]εχῆ ῥύσιν. καὶ] ἐκ[λο]μῴδησεν αὐτ]ὸ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀπαιτουμένου συμβολὰς καὶ [ἀ]ρνουμένου τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἶ διὰ τὸ τὰ μὲν προσγεγενῆσθαι, τὰ δὲ ἀπεληλυθέναι, ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ ἀπαιτῶν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐνεκάλειτο, πάλιν κ[ἀ]κεῖνο[ν [φά]σκοντος [ἄλλο] μέ[ν] ε[ῖ]ναι τὸν τ[ετυ]πηκότα, ἕτερο[ν δὲ] τὸν ἐγκαλούμ[ε]νον.

Epicharmus, who had frequented the Pythagoreans, successfully staged many other plays and also the one about the 'Augmenting Discourse' (αὐξόμενος λόγος) which he concluded with a methodical and convincing point. However, it is manifest that there are subtractions and additions if one who stands fast does not become bigger or smaller. But if this is the case, the substances are ever-changing because of the uninterrupted flux. He made a comic scene out of this with someone who claims back a loan and another who says that the money no longer belongs to the same person because something has been added and something else taken away; then, when the creditor has beaten him and has been taken into court because of that, he too replies in such a way and says that the one who has beaten is one thing and the one who has been taken to court another.

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[10] Bastianini and Sedley (1995) 458 and 460, followed in Kassel and Austin (2001) 101.

With these hints we are able to reconstruct an outline of Epicharmus' play:

1 A lends money to B.

2 When the repayment is due, A claims his money back.

3 Debtor B denies that A has the right of claiming the money back because things keep changing: therefore the present A is no longer the same person as the past A who lent the money.[11]

4 Understandably A gets angry and beats B.

5 B takes A to court for violence.

6 In court, A defeats B with B's own weapons: he argues that the past A, who beat B, is not identical with the present A, the defendant.

Scholars have long identified this as a comic distortion of the philosopher Heraclitus' idea that all things are in flux and keep changing. However, the relationship between Epicharmus and Heraclitus may be more complex than has been recognised so far. In Epicharmus the doctrine of continuous change is applied to rhetorical practice, but this does not follow directly from Heraclitus' thought. At best it could be Epicharmus' invention.[12] Yet, Epicharmus' point would be far wittier if it were not just based on a transfer which he came up with ad hoc; for if Epicharmus had been the first to look at the rhetorical potential of Heraclitus' doctrine of change, the scene would not comically unmask a false premise. In contrast, if someone *before* Epicharmus had already thought of exploring the practical implications of Heraclitus' theory, Epicharmus' contribution would be a comic *reductio ad absurdum*. At least to judge from the mechanisms of Attic comedy, this second possibility is more plausible: in *Clouds*, for example, Socrates perverts the grammatical theories of Protagoras, but Aristophanes does not invent them *ex nihilo*.

Now, the *Theaetetus* commentary informs us, apparently without any reason, that Epicharmus had frequented the Pythagoreans (ὁμιλήσας τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις).[13] It is possible that this 'superfluous' remark contains the key to the entire scene. We know that Heraclitus despised Pythagoras, even though the two thinkers shared some ideas, such as those concerning the

11 Although Anon. in *Pl. Tht.* col. 71.29–33, in contrast with Plut. *Mor.* 559b, at first seems to imply that the money, not the person, changes, the subsequent development shows that the latter change is crucial here too; on this cf. also the fragment ex Alcimo [Epich.] fr. 276.11–12 and Kerkhof (2001) 69–70.

12 Thus Bernays (1853) 287, and, implicitly, Nestle (1942) 123, and Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (this volume); only Reinhardt (1916) 119–21, doubts any connection with Heraclitus.

13 Epicharmus is repeatedly referred to as a Pythagorean in later tradition: cf. Epich. test. 9 (= Diog. Laert. 8.78), 11 (= Plut. *Num.* 8.9), 12 (= Iambl. *VP* 266), Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 233–5, and Kerkhof (2001) 62.

existence of an invisible 'universal harmony', ἁρμονίη, or the reversibility of death.[14] Heraclitus criticised Pythagoras for πολυμαθίη, empty learning without critical intelligence (Heraclit. fr. 22B129), and, more importantly in our context, he attacked him as the κοπίδων ἀρχηγός. A scholion on Euripides explains this insult (Schol. Eur. *Hec.* 131, with Timaeus *FGrH* 566F132 on Heraclit. fr. 22B81):[15]

κοπίδας τὰς λόγων τέχνας ἔλεγον ἄλλοι τε καὶ ὁ Τίμαιος οὕτως γράφων· "ὥστε καὶ φαίνεσθαι μὴ τὸν Πυθαγόραν εὑρετὴν ὄντα τῶν ἀληθινῶν κοπίδων μηδὲ τὸν ὑφ᾽Ἡρακλείτου κατηγορούμενον, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸν τὸν Ἡράκλειτον εἶναι τὸν ἀλαζονευόμενον."

The rhetorical handbooks (λόγων τέχναι) were called κοπίδες, 'knives,' by others and also by Timaeus who writes: 'Thus, clearly not Pythagoras is the inventor of κοπίδες properly speaking – even though he was insulted as such by Heraclitus –, but Heraclitus himself is the one who makes false pretensions.'

It is unlikely that Heraclitus really spoke of rhetorical τέχναι when he called Pythagoras 'head of the κοπίδες.' Presumably he rather qualified him as the inventor of 'professional bla-bla.' In fact, later sources tell us that Pythagoras was a gifted rhetorician, with a particular proficiency in adapting the form and content of his speeches to the specific audience he was addressing: when he was speaking to women, for instance, he would not do it in the same way as when he was addressing children or young adults.[16] Thus, the ideal Pythagorean speaker had to be able to take on different roles or *personae* depending on the occasion – and this, in turn, is most similar to the premise underlying Epicharmus' scene. There too the humour results from the – abusively instrumentalised – notion that the speaker's *persona* is subject to a change which modifies the communicative relationship with the addressee. Essentially, this is just an extreme (and perverted) form of the doctrine of the καιρός or 'right moment,' which originated in early Pythagoreanism: Pythagoras had asserted that there cannot be a δίκαιον, a 'just thing,' unless an action is adapted to the person whom it affects.[17] Later

14 See Riedweg (2002) 150–1, on Heraclit. fr. 22B36, 22B54, 22B62, and 22B88; cf. also Kahn (1979) 126–30, and Hussey (1999) 101–5, on Heraclitus' doctrine of the soul.

15 On the reference of this fragment to Pythagoras see Reinhardt (1928) 107–9, and Kahn (1979) 114.

16 Nicomachus *FGrH* 1063F1 (= Porph. *VP* 20), Dicaearch. fr. 33 Wehrli (= Porph. *VP* 18), Iambl. *VP* 30 and 166, Schol. Iambl. *VP* p. 150.10–11 Deubner; cf. Rostagni (1922), de Vogel (1966) 218–31, Riedweg (2002) 26–32.

17 See de Vogel (1966) 119, on Iambl. *VP* 179–82, and cf. Rostagni (1922) 160–8, and Detienne (1962) 20–3, as well as Arist. *Metaph.* 985b23–32, according to whom the Pythagoreans tried to express the καιρός arithmetically. In other early thinkers the term καιρός also appears (cf.

this same 'situationism' was going to be taken up by the earliest teachers of professional rhetoric, the Sicilians Korax and Teisias,[18] and thence to make its way into the rhetorical teachings of Gorgias and his fellow sophists.[19] However, among the sophists — and fuelled by Protagoras' *homo mensura* principle (Prot. fr. 80B1) — it was eventually going to degenerate into a kind of moral and/or ethical relativism and individualism, which is of course reminiscent of the Epicharmian scene but which was no longer designed for comic effect by its proponents. This is why Plutarch, in the passage quoted above, refers to Epicharmus — or more precisely: the Epicharmian scene of the αὐξόμενος λόγος — as a precursor of the sophistic movement. What had started off as a comic distortion of Pythagorean situationism turned seriously real a few decades later.

Admittedly, some elements in the reconstruction just presented remain hypothetical. On a general level, though, it is a priori more likely that Epicharmus was influenced by, and made fun of, early Pythagorean rhetoric than that he mused on Heraclitean philosophy. As K. Reinhardt once put it in a different context: How should the Sicilian comedians, let alone their audience, have known or read the Ephesian hermit?[20] But even if it were true that Epicharmus targeted Heraclitus, not the Pythagoreans, with his αὐξόμενος λόγος, and even if we therefore dismissed as irrelevant the remark ὁμιλήσας τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις in the Platonic commentary, one fundamental fact would remain: that Epicharmus' comedy critically reflected on the potentials and pitfalls of a sophistic rhetoric *avant la lettre*, ultimately siding against the proto-sophist. Although the witty debtor initially wins our sympathy, the balance of justice is soon redressed when the tables are turned. Once again the comparison with Aristophanes' *Clouds* is telling. By exploring the consequences of an inappropriate use of fashionable rhetorical techniques, Epicharmus' Syracusan comedy controls and, if necessary,

18   Pittacus fr. 10.5.1 DK, Bias fr. 106.11 and 106.17 DK, Hes. *Op.* 694; Trédé (1992) 57–8 and 81–138), but for them it rather means the 'right measure' (cf. Solon fr. 10.2.1 DK; Wilson (1980) 178–80) and no connection with interactive situations is established (cf. Tortora (1985) 538–9).

19   On these figures, neither of whose historicity must be questioned (*pace* Cole (1991) 23–7, and Schiappa (2001) 34–47), see esp. Arist. fr. 137 Rose (from Cic. *Brut.* 46), Arist. *Rh.* 1402a17–20, Arist. *Soph. el.* 183b31, Cic. *De or.* 1.91, Quint. 3.1.8, Schol. Isoc. 13.19, and cf. Willi (2008) 290–3.

20   On the importance of the καιρός in Gorgias cf. Gorg. test. 82A1a (= Philostr. VS 1 praef.), Gorg. fr. 82B13 (= Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 12.6), and see further Willi (2008) 284–8. Reinhardt (1916) 121 ('Wie sollten die sizilischen Komödiendichter oder erst gar ihr Publikum den ephesischen Einsiedler gekannt oder gelesen haben?'), on [Epich.] fr. 276 where the doctrine of human change is significantly connected with Pythagoreanising reflections on odd and even numbers (cf. Rostagni (1924) 65–8, and Falus (1968) 143–4, and on Pythagorean number theory Burkert (1962) 404–14, and Riedweg (2002) 113–16).

restricts intellectual elites in the same way in which Aristophanes' Athenian comedy will do it half a century later.

Odysseus the deserter

While the social functions of Epicharmian and Aristophanic comedy thus appear to be similar, there is another dimension which separates the two poets: the 'colonial' one. In order to show in what sense Epicharmus' drama can also be read as a 'colonial' genre, our second case study will now explore more fully another play: the Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτόμολος, 'Odysseus the Deserter'.

The Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτόμολος is exceptional in that we here possess one relatively substantial fragment of text (Epich. fr. 97). Its main part, lines 7–17, is preserved on a second-century papyrus from Vienna (*PVindob.* 2321), which was edited by T. Gomperz in 1889. In addition, since 1959 much of the preceding six lines has also been known, for in that year E. Lobel published a fragmentary papyrus commentary on the same play from Oxyrhynchus (*P. Oxy.* 2429 = Epich. fr. 98). In *PCG* 1, R. Kassel and C. Austin have now made accessible the following compound version of the two pieces, including the more obvious supplements:[21]

(Od.)]κ[.....]   πλ[άνου]   τουτόιν

η[......]ευουθορος οἴουπερ ἔπι... συντυχόν   1

⏑⏑ ⏑– ῥάιστά κα τοῦτ᾽ ἐργασαίμαν

ἀλλ᾽ ὁράω (τί, φεῦγε, ἀνήις), τοῖδε τῷ χαιοῖ πέλας

ὡς ἔξω πονηρ(ότητος). (Β.) (ἀλλ᾽) ἐλαίδιος πονηρός (εἶ).   5

(Od.) οὐ γὰρ ἔμπα[λίν] χ᾽ ἀνύσαις᾽ οὕτως ἀλοιῆσθαι κακόν

⏑ ε]νθὼν τεῖδε θαοκηρῶ τε καὶ λεξοῦ[...]ιος
ῥάιδιυ᾽ ε_μειν ταῦτα καὶ τοῖς δεξιωτέροις_ ἐμεῖ[ς.

⏑⏑]ε_μιν δοκεῖτε πάγχυ καὶ κατὰ τρόπηον
καὶ ἔοικ_ότος ἐπευξασθ᾽ αἴ τις ἐνθυμεῖν γ[α λῆι.   10

(Od.) ⏑⏑]γ᾽ ὄφελον ἔνθεν ὕσπερ ἐκέλήσ[⏑⏑

⏑⏑]τςων ἀγοσθκῶν κακὰ προτιμάσαι θ[⏑⏑
⏑ κίν]δυνον τελέσσαι καὶ κλέος θεῖον λ[αβεῖν
⏑⏑]ν μολὼν ἐς ἄστυ, πάντα δ᾽ εὖ σαφ[εῖος
πυθόμε]νος δίοις τ᾽ Ἀχαιοῖς πασί τ᾽ Ἀτρέος υἱ[οῖς   15
ἆψ ἀπαγ]γείλαι τὰ τηνεῖ καῦτος δοκήθης . [

    ]....ιψ[
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21   Kassel and Austin (2001) 60, after the first editions by Gomperz (1889) and Lobel (1959) respectively.

(Od.) '...this roaming...just as...encountering...I could very easily do this or any other thing, but I see – why are you hurting me, you idiot? – the Achaeans are close so that I am most unfortunate.' (B.) 'Yes, indeed you are a villain!' (Od.) 'For I would/should I not return quickly, to be thrashed like this is bad. I will go here and sit down and say that these things are easy even for those who are more able than I am.' (B.) 'It seems to me that you have prayed very much in character and as is typical of you, come to think of it!' (Od.) 'Would that I had gone where they told me to go...[not] preferred the bad to the good...run the risk and obtained divine glory...going into the city and, discovering everything clearly, reported the things there back to the sublime Achaeans and the dear son of Atreus and, being unharmed myself...'

In view of the state of the text and the difficulties of interpretation involved, the translation just given is only preliminary. In order to understand the composition, we must familiarise ourselves one by one with its elements.

In line 1, mention is made of a πλάνος, a 'roaming.' Although the Oxyrhynchus commentary preserves only the first two letters of the word itself, the supplement is fairly certain since the lemma is subsequently glossed by the commentator with the synonym πλάνη and with φλυαρία 'nonsense' (Epich. fr. 98.28); so πλάνος must have been used metaphorically.

In line 2, someone talks about an encounter (συντυχών), but it is only from line 3 onwards that things become clearer. The speaker says, using the optative, 'I could very easily do this or any other thing (ἢ ὅτι),' but then he interrupts himself adding 'but I see: the Achaeans are close so that I am most unfortunate (πονηρότατος)!' In between there is an exclamation τί, ὠ ζεῦ, ἀντῆς 'why are you hurting me, you idiot?', a parenthetical remark according to the Oxyrhynchus commentator (Epich. fr. 98.32: διὰ μέσου[22]).

Moreover, the commentary notes that line 5 is a brief rejoinder by a second speaker B whose ironic 'Yes, indeed you are πονηρός?' echoes the word πονηρότατος used by A but this time employs it in its pejorative sense 'you are really a villain!' Then speaker A resumes again and talks about 'returning quickly' (ἐμπαλιν χ' ἀνύσαιμι) and about 'being thrashed' (ἀλοιῆσθαι).

At this point we have reached the Vienna piece. Thanks to the last line of a marginal scholion preserved on the Vienna papyrus we are able to understand lines 7–8. The words ἐνθοῦν τεῖδε θωκησῶ 'I will go here and sit down' are paraphrased by the scholiast with πόρρω κσθεδοῦμαι 'I will sit down a little apart', and what follows is explained with προσποιήσομαι

22 On this technical sense of διὰ μέσου cf. [Hdn.] fig. 31 (p. 120 Hajdú). If διὰ μέσου referred to a brief remark by speaker B rather than a real parenthesis (thus Lobel (1959) 41, Gentili (1961) 335), the meaning of this remark would be utterly obscure.

πάντα διεσπετράχθαι 'I will pretend[23] to have executed everything.' In the original text we can therefore read λεξοῦμ ὁπτῶς[24] ῥᾴδιν' εἶμεν ταῦτα καὶ τοῖς δεξιωτέροις ἐμεῦς 'I will say that these things are easy even for those who are more able than I am.' According to the scholion, the last phrase is to be understood as a little joke παρά προσδοκίαν, replacing something like 'for those who are less able than I am' (τοῖς ἐμοῦ ἥττοσ(ιν)).

In line 9, actor B is speaking again, ὁ ἕτερος τῶν ὑποκριτῶν as the Oxyrhynchus papyrus puts it. He addresses someone in the plural (δοκεῖτε): 'it seems to me that you have prayed[25] very much in character and as is typical of you, come to think of it!' Finally, from line 11 onward, the scene ends with a hypothetical wish introduced by ὠφελον, 'would that I had,' followed by a series of infinitives: (1) ἐνθεν ὅσπερ ἐκελήσ-, probably ἐκελήσαντο, '(would that I had) gone where they told me to go,' (2) ἀγαθῶν κακά προτιμάσαι '(would that I had) preferred the κακά to the ἀγαθκά,' for which we presumably have to insert a negation at the start of the line and read '(would that I had) not preferred...,' (3) κινδύνου τελέσαι καὶ κλέος θεῖον λαβεῖν '(would that I had) run the risk and obtained divine glory' going into the city (μολών εἰς ἄστυ), and (4) πάντα δ' εὖ σαφανέως πυθόμενος δίοις τ' Ἀχαιοῖς παιδί τ' Ἀτρέος φίλοι ἂν ἀπαγγεῖλαι '(would that I had) discovered everything clearly and reported it back to the sublime Achaeans and the dear son of Atreus.'

What is to be done with all this? After Gomperz, who had already identified the play – correctly, as we now know thanks to the papyrus commentary (cf. below on Epich. fr. 99) – but who had wrongly 'interpreted the text as information supplied by Odysseus to the inhabitants of the Troad, and reconstructed it as a semi-philosophical monologue' with the help of 'supplements [that] were highly improbable, and were easily demolished by Blass,'[26] G. Kaibel was the first to try and reconstruct a coherent plot. Since Kaibel could not yet know the Oxyrhynchus commentary, he set off from the scholiast's explanation προσποιήσομαι πάντα διεσπετράχθαι

23 Pace Stanford (1950) 168–9, and Phillips (1959) 60, προσποιήσομαι can hardly mean 'I will imagine.'
24 Cf. Cassio (2002) 76, citing Kühner and Gerth (1898–1904) 2.357–8, for the construction of ὅπως + accusative with infinitive; but note that the interpretation suggested below could also stand with λεξοῦ]ντι τί]ιος (thus V. Schmidt apud Kassel and Austin (2001) 61; cf. also Webster (1962) 85, Luppe (1975) 195) since Odysseus might envisage the Achaeans' bored reaction to his story.
25 Or 'thanked with prayers': for this special use of ἐπεύχομαι cf. Soph. OC 1024.
26 Cassio (2002) 74, who is referring to Gomperz (1889) 4, and Blass (1889) respectively; the following brief sketch of the interpretive history of the piece is based on the fuller account by Cassio (2002) 74–6.

on the Vienna papyrus. As Gomperz' attribution of the text to Epichar-mus' Ὀδυσσεύς αὐτόμολος was easily acceptable, given the mention of the Achaeans and the son of Atreus, Kaibel too suggested that the speaker was Odysseus, but the thought of an Odysseus sent to Troy as a spy in order to πάντα πυθέσθαι καὶ ἂν ἀπαγγεῖλαι; out of fear of the enemy, however, Odysseus would have decided to disobey and would now be preparing a fictitious report.[27]

With the publication of the Oxyrhynchus find, Kaibel's theory was over-turned. The existence of a second actor made the monologue idea impos-sible. Also, the commentary seems to indicate, at least at first sight, that Odysseus, despite being close to the Achaeans, refuses to return because he dislikes being beaten: οὐ γὰρ ἔμπεδίν χ ἀνύσαι' οὖτος ἀλοιῆσθαι κακόν. Quoting E. W. Handley, A. C. Cassio has recently remarked on this: 'Clearly, Odysseus is no longer the self-confident liar imagined by Kaibel, but ... "seems to be preparing some kind of cover story for an operation that has gone by no means according to plan"; in his speech there can be no room for triumphant tones.'[28]

Even so, some points remain puzzling. Cassio admits that lines 9–10 are obscure: 'apparently a different actor (Diomedes?) addressed the (absent) Achaeans as if they were present, probably rehearsing his own part of the cover story they both intended to tell.' At the same time Cassio detects some bitter irony in lines 9–10.[29] With this one may agree, but would such irony not be out of place if Odysseus and his companion were preparing a 'cover story'? And if Odysseus has only just had the idea of preparing a 'cover story' in lines 7–8, how can his companion already rehearse his own role in lines 9–10, without any transition? Moreover, how could the following hypothetical wish of Odysseus (lines 11–16) be part of a 'cover story' when it openly acknowledges that the mission has *not* been carried out? In contrast, if we were to abandon the idea of a fictitious report, what should we do about the scholiast's paraphrase: προσποιήρομαι πάντα διασ-πετρῷχῃσθαι? And finally, if lines 11–16 simply express Odysseus' despair, which for some reason is connected with the closeness of the Achaeans in lines 4–5, we have to postulate a major break in the argument: if Odysseus

27 Kaibel (1899) 109; reconstructions along similar lines were subsequently favoured by Körte (1914) 12, Olivieri (1946) 37, Casolari (2003) 49–52, and Olson (2007) 48.
28 Cassio (2002) 76, with a quotation from Handley (1985) 369.
29 Cassio (2002) 77; the identification of the second speaker as Diomedes has precedents in Lobel (1959) 41–2, Gentili (1961) 336, Webster (1962) 87, and Albini (1986) 16–17, but Webster cannot be right when he wants to refer τοῖδε τόγχοισί only to this 'Diomedes'. To understand lines 9–10 as an address to the audience (Olson (2007) 50) does not clarify things.

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had found a solution to his problems in lines 7–8, namely the prepara-tion of a 'cover story', he should certainly be more confident by now, in line 11.[30]

Given these difficulties, we have to reconsider the entire issue from scratch. In particular we have to pay attention to six textual details that have been overlooked so far:

1 Since τί, ὦιζυρέ, ἀνιῇς 'why are you hurting me, you idiot?' in line 4 is parenthetical, Odysseus' interlocutor[31] must be hurting him at this very moment; hence, the two can hardly be companions.

2 The same antagonism is indicated by speaker B's ἀλλ' ἀλείσος πονηρὸς εἶ in line 5. A companion[32] (such as Diomedes) would not call Odysseus πονηρός, but an adversary could well do it. This is in line with what R. Kerkhof observes on lines 9–10:[33] there a simple way of understanding the plural δοκεῖτε (implying 'you and the likes of you'—whoever they are: perhaps the other Greeks) is to identify speaker B as a Trojan.

3 οὖτος ἀλοιῆσθαι κακόν 'to be beaten like this is bad' in line 6 is explained by the Oxyrhynchus commentary with κατ' ἀλήθειαν καὶ μὴ προσποιήτως, 'for real and not just for show' (Epich. fr. 98.41). Accord-ing to Kerkhof, Odysseus would be thinking of a *future* beating that *might* happen if the Greeks discovered that he did not go to Troy.[34] However, οὖτος 'in this way' more naturally refers to a present beating.[35] As we have just seen, speaker B is in fact hurting Odysseus at the moment; note the present ἀνιῇς in line 4. We shall see later why Odysseus compares this present beating with a 'beating for show' (προσποιήτως).

4 Still in line 6 some punctuation is needed, either before or after οὖτος. The editors of *PCG* I suggest a colon.[36] But the particle combination οὐ

30 Gentili (1961) 336–7, and similarly Salomone (1981) 68, suggest that Odysseus might be afraid of returning because he was chased away by the Trojans before being able to bring his mission to an end; but in that case he would not have actively preferred the κακά over the ἀγαθικά (Epich. fr. 97.12).
31 The idea 'dass der Sprecher dies zu sich selbst sagt' (Kerkhof (2001) 125) is implausible. Both in Epich. fr. 97.4 and in Epich. fr. 98.32–3 the papyri have ἀνιῇς, but a form of ἀνίημι 'to let off' (rather than ἀνιάω 'to hurt') is metrically impossible.
32 That B is a companion is also assumed by Berk (1964) 149, and Casolari (2003) 49 n. 6; only Luppe (1975) 197, asks in passing whether the speaker is 'vielleicht sogar ein Troer'.
33 Kerkhof (2001) 127.
34 Kerkhof (2001) 126; cf. Cassio (2002) 76: 'Odysseus does not want to go back because he is afraid of being beaten.'
35 It is true that the commentator (Epich. fr. 98.36–42) considers the possibility of taking οὖτος together with ἀνύσαι(') rather than ἀλοιῆσθαι; but note that, if ἀλοιῆσθαι κακόν referred unambiguously to a future beating, this would be a necessity, not just a possibility.
36 Kassel and Austin (2001) 61; cf. already Lobel (1959) 41, and Austin (1973) 59.

γάρ can also introduce a question.[37] Instead of saying 'I would certainly not go back', Odysseus would rather say 'Should I not rather go back? To be beaten like this is bad!'

5 Jumping to line 15, what is said there and in the surrounding lines cannot be part of a fictitious report to the Achaeans: for in that case we should find a second person ὑμεῖς instead of a third person Ἀχαιοί. The only possible addressees are either Odysseus himself (in a monologue) or one or several non-Greeks, for instance Trojans.

6 Finally, τηνεῖ in line 16 confirms that we are not dealing with the rehearsal of a 'cover story'. As H. L. Ahrens has observed, the Doric pronoun τῆνος does not exactly correspond to Attic ἐκεῖνος but is used for the near-deixis;[38] it is rather the equivalent of Attic ὧδε 'here, there, before one's eyes'. So when Odysseus speaks of reporting the things τηνεῖ to the Greeks, he is positioning himself on Trojan ground.

Let us now recapitulate what we know so far. At present Odysseus is being beaten by his interlocutor, who is perhaps a Trojan. The Achaeans are not far away, but this does not reassure him: on the contrary, it makes him most wretched (πονηρότατος). Because of the beating Odysseus wonders whether it would not be better to return as quickly as possible. In lines 7–8 he figures out a solution to his dilemma: he will pretend to have done everything (πάντα διαπεπρᾶχθαι). In the following lines, however, his tormentor makes fun of certain prayers made by Odysseus and some other people who *could* be Odysseus' compatriots. Finally, the superiority of his anonymous interlocutor makes Odysseus formulate a hypothetical wish.[39] 'would that I had never preferred bad actions (κακά) to the actions of a gentleman (ἀγαθικά)![40] would that I had done a heroic deed and obtained divine glory!' Obviously, the heroic deed would have been to go to Troy as a spy, to return to the Greek camp, and to report back to Agamemnon and the Achaeans.

37 See Denniston (1954) 81–5, on 'progressive γάρ in questions'; and cf. Denniston (1954) 85–6, on elliptical οὐ γάρ.
38 Ahrens (1843) 267, with full discussion; note the Doric equivalent of Att. ἐκεῖνος, i.e. κῆνος, in Epich. fr. 88.2 and [Epich.] fr. 276.6.
39 For the interpretation it is irrelevant whether a gap of four lines is to be posited between lines 10 and 11, as suggested by the marginal scholion on Epich. fr. 97 (cf. Blass (1889) 260, Barigazzi (1955) 125–6).
40 On the precise meaning of ἀγαθικά see now Cassio (2002) 81–2, after Gomperz (1889) 8 ('virtuous conduct', not 'comfort'; cf. Phot. s.v. ἀγαθικά = AB 1.324.7 = Suda α 113: ἀγαθικά· τὰ σπουδαῖα). Blass (1889) 261, supplements in lines 11–12 αἴθ' ἐγώγα[γ' ὤφελον ἐνθὲν ὕστερ ἐκελήσ[αιτό με, εἶτα μή τι] τῶν ἀγαθικῶν κακά προτιμάσαι κτλ.

Initially, all of this seems to contradict a well-established *communis opinio*: that Epicharmus based his plot on the episode of the spying mission with which Odysseus is entrusted according to *Iliad* 10[41] and, with some divergences, according to *Odyssey* 4 (lines 242–58) and the *Little Iliad* of the epic cycle. Proclus' summary of the cyclical version informs us that Odysseus beat himself up in order to make his own appearance less heroic and look like a more plausible deserter.[42] Ever since the nineteenth century[43] interpreters have taken it for granted that the Epicharmian title Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτόμολος must point to a similar story-line: Odysseus as a spy and *fictitious* deserter. However, there is not the slightest support for such a theory. Any unprejudiced reader should rather conclude from the title as it stands that Odysseus *really* deserted.[44] Once we accept this, everything suddenly falls into place.

As in *Iliad* 10 the decision of Agamemnon and the Greek commanders to send Odysseus to Troy as a spy must have been the starting point of the plot. Odysseus refers to this decision when he says, in line 11, ὄφελον ἐνθὲν ὥσπερ ἐκελήσατό με 'would that I had gone where they told me to go'. Instead of acting accordingly, however, he preferred the action of a coward (ἀγαθικῶν κακά προτιμάσαι) and became a deserter: a true αὐτόμολος, not a fictitious one. Presumably Agamemnon had told him to beat himself up in order to execute the mission more convincingly; 'having disfigured himself (αἰκισάμενος ἑαυτόν) as Proclus has it in his summary of the *Little Iliad*. Understandably, Odysseus had disliked this idea just as much as the dangerous plan in its entirety; but now that he is being beaten *not* just 'for the sake of appearance', but for real, the Oxyrhynchus commentator appropriately contrasts the word οὗτος in line 6 with an imaginary προσποιήτος ἀλοιῆσθαι.

41 Cassio (2002) 79, highlights several verbal parallels between Epich. fr. 97.13–16 and *Il.* 10.204–13 (e.g. πάντα πυθόιτο, ἂν ἀπαγγείλαι ~ ἂμ ἔλθοι, ἀσκηθὴς ~ ἀσκηθὴς etc.).
42 Procl. *Chrest.* 206 Severyns (= *Argumentum Iliadis parvae* 1 PEG, lines 15–17): Ὀδυσσεύς τε αἰκισάμενος ἑαυτὸν κατάσκοπος εἰς Ἴλιον παραγίνεται, καὶ ἀναγνωρισθεὶς ὑφ' Ἑλένης περὶ τῆς ἁλώσεως τῆς πόλεως συντίθεται κτείνας τέ τινας τῶν Τρώων ἐπὶ τὰς ναῦς ἀφικνεῖται. 'Odysseus, after having disfigured himself, comes to Troy as a spy; is recognised by Helen, makes arrangements about the seizure of the city, kills some Trojans, and returns to the ships'. Note that the disguise motive does not feature in the Iliadic version (where Odysseus and Diomedes put on their full armour: *Il.* 10.254–71); cf. Kerkhof (2001) 123–4.
43 See Grysar (1828) 288, and Lorenz (1864) 135, and cf. also Schmidt (1888) 379–80.
44 Cf. already Berk (1964) 146, without further explanation, and Barigazzi (1955) 121–9, who suggested that Odysseus had become a swineherd in Troy (cf. below on Epich. fr. 99), but who could not come up with a convincing overall interpretation because, before the publication of Epich. fr. 98, the monologue reading of Epich. fr. 97.7–16 remained unchallenged.

So, at the point of our scene Odysseus has already left the Greeks and deserted to Troy. Unfortunately, though, he has somehow managed to rouse the anger of a certain Trojan who is now beating him. The place of the action must be the plain just in front of Troy (cf. line 16 τὰ τηνεῖ), from where Odysseus can still see how close the Greek camp is (cf. line 4 τοῖδε τὼ χαταὶ πέλας). He realises that he has made the wrong choice – and he hits upon the idea of returning: 'Should I not rather go back? To be beaten like this is bad!' (line 6). To be sure, the Greeks would be upset if he just came back as a repentant deserter. Hence he decides to pretend that during his absence he had done precisely what he had been told to do (Schol. PVindob. 2321, line 7: προσποιήσομαι πάντα διαπεπρᾶχθαι). But for the time being, all this is just a dream, whereas the mockery and the stick of his tormentor are painfully real.

Up until now, one crucial point remains open in this new reconstruction. What is to be done about the prayers of Odysseus + X to which the Trojan alludes in lines 9–10? And why is Odysseus being beaten by the Trojan? Fortunately, we may be able to find an answer in another fragment, which is transmitted by Athenaeus (Epich. fr. 99, from Athen. 9.374d–e):

δέλφακά τε τῶν γειτόνων
τοῖς Ἐλευσινίοις φυλάσσουν δαιμονίως ἀπώλεσα,
οὐχ ἑκὼν καὶ ταῦτα δή με συμβολαστεύειν μ᾽ ἔφα
τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖσιν προδιδόμεν τ᾽ ὤμνυέ με τὸν δέλφακα

... tending one of the neighbour's pigs for the Eleusinia I lost it by bad luck, against my will; and so he now said I was making a deal with the Achaeans and he claimed I was selling the pig ...

We know that Epich. fr. 99 followed shortly after the end of Epich. fr. 97 because it too is covered by the Oxyrhynchus commentary (Epich. fr. 98).[45] This lucky coincidence is all the more important since Athenaeus names the title and thus confirms the ascription of Epich. fr. 97 to the Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτόμολος. The speaker in the Athenaeus fragment may still be Odysseus who, upon deserting to Troy, appears to have been given the despicable job of a swineherd. After innocently losing one animal Odysseus fails to appease his Trojan employer who develops a conspiracy theory and suspects a deal between his new servant and the latter's Greek compatriots – hence the beating.[46] Thus, in the prayer mentioned by the Trojan in Epich.

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45 Cf. Lobel (1959) 36, Willi (2008) 187 n. 78.
46 Possibly one further, though anonymous, fragment of Doric comedy (Anon. Dor. 16) also refers to this scene as it mentions a 'Phrygian', i.e. Trojan, who 'will beat you on the neck with

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fr. 97.9–10, Odysseus could have been asking the gods to be spared after the disappearance of the pig; but the Trojan must have thought it was a prayer to conclude the transaction with the Achaean enemy.[47]

By way of conclusion, we may now return to the more general question concerning the character and nature of Epicharmus' comedy. A few observations on the language of the fragments discussed in this section may prove useful here. As elsewhere in Epicharmus (cf. the introduction to this chapter), the basic language is common Syracusan, despite the fact that the words are placed in the mouth of an epic hero. The verb ἀλοιῆσθαι 'to be beaten up/thrashed', for example, is colloquial, and the same is probably true for the emphatic pronominal form τουτόνη in Epich. fr. 97.1 or the adverb δαιμονίως in Epich. fr. 99.2.[48] Next to these unremarkable features, however, there are also a few epic ones: not only the long dative Ἀχαιοῖσιν instead of Ἀχαιοῖς in Epich. fr. 99.4 or the conjectural ἄψ 'back' in Epich. fr. 97.16, but also and above all the expressions δῖος Ἀχαιοῖς, ποτιδὲ Ἀτρέος φίλος, and κλέος θεῖον in Epich. fr. 97.15 and 97.13 respectively. As far as we can tell, there is no such epicism before line 13. Moreover all the epic echoes seem forced, laden with irony, as if Odysseus were quoting the 'official' wording of the original mission: 'Would that I had run the risk and obtained "divine glory", reporting back to the "sublime Achaeans" and to the "dear son of Atreus" ...!' By introducing this type of code-switching, Epicharmus distances the normal discourse of his comedy from the high-flown discourse of epic, and his play becomes doubly subversive: firstly because Odysseus feels, thinks, and acts like an ordinary person, an anti-hero[49] with whom an average Syracusan will identify more easily than an aristocrat dreaming of a heroic past; and secondly because heroic language is deflated, denounced as empty, pretentious, but ultimately ridiculous. Thus, the tenor of the comedy is not very different from the tenor at the end of Aristophanes' Peace where Trygaeus ridicules the epic quotations of Lamachus' son by means of totally unheroic hexameters. For the Athenian Aristophanes this is exceptional, his target usually being tragedy, not epic. But the large number of para-epic titles which are attested for Epicharmus – titles such as Μήδεια, Ὀδυσσεὺς ναυαγός ('Odysseus Shipwrecked'), Πύρρα καὶ Προμαθεύς, Σειρῆνες, or

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his wooden stick' (ἡ πεῖσει ⟨τυ⟩ βάκτρον καλίνοι κὰτ τὰ σκύτεα Φρὺξ ἀνήρ) cf. Kaibel (1899) vii.
47 That the Trojan may have surprised Odysseus during a prayer is also suggested by Epich. fr. 98.53]ην εἰσόδοαι εὐξαμένου τινά 'initially praying for something'.
48 Cf. Willi (2008) 188–9, where further non-epic elements are indicated.
49 The aprioristic denial of an unheroic Odysseus by Stanford (1950) is rightly rejected already by Barigazzi (1955); cf. now also Casolari (2003) 52–4 and 205–7.

Τρῷες – suggests that a comedy like the Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτόμολος was anything but unusual in Syracuse sixty years before the time of Aristophanes.[50]

Seen in isolation, this *might* be a fact without further significance, due exclusively to the 'historical contingencies' which should always be factored into our reconstructions of the past, as argued by J. M. Hall in the first chapter of this volume. In context, however, I would much rather see here what has above been called the 'colonial'[51] dimension of Epicharmus. Both the early prominence of a literary iconoclasm directed against Homer as the cultural authority κατ'ἐξοχήν[52] and the emergence of comedy as *the* dominant communal genre in early fifth-century Syracuse – i.e. not just as the little sister of tragedy as in Athens – fit exactly the concept of 'canonical counter-discourse' which has been developed in modern (post-)colonial literary theory to describe the 'erosion of transcendent authority' and the 'concern with ... all things parodied, piebald, dual, mimicked, always-already borrowed, and ironically secondhand' that characterise contemporary (post-)colonial literature.[53] And if we notice, moreover, that Epicharmus is not the only 'Westerner' who sets out to correct or overwrite Homer, but merely takes up, in yet another generic mode, the subversive theme of Stesichorus' challenge to Homer and Hesiod in the *Palinode*, of Theagenes of Rhegion's proto-scientific allegoresis of Homer, or of Xenophanes' mockery of Homeric theology,[54] then it becomes difficult to deny in the work of all these men the presence of a conscious 'active agency' which is responding to a wish found specifically among colonists of all times and ages: to lay claim to the heritage of the mother-country, but at the same time to free

50 On mythical parody in Epicharmus see e.g. Lorenz (1864) 126–43, Pianko (1948), Reinhardt (1996), Kerkhof (2001) 116–29, Casolari (2003) 55–9, and Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (this volume).
51 Despite Hall's observations, the label 'colonial' remains useful: if there were a better one, it could be replaced, but as it is 'colonization' may refer quite generally to any process of collective settling in an ethnically (and linguistically!) foreign environment, without necessarily implying an 'organized, state-sponsored venture'.
52 Note especially Xenophanes fr. 21B10 ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθ'Ὅμηρον μεμαθήκασι πάντες 'from the start all have been pupils of Homer', as well as the institution of official Homeric recitations in Syracuse already in the late sixth century (Hippostratus FGrH 568F5): cf. Cantarella (1967) 52–3, Loicq-Berger (1967) 73–86.
53 See Boehmer (2005) 237–8, and for the concept of 'canonical counter-discourse' Tiffin (1987) 22; cf. further Willi (2008) 326–7.
54 On Stesichorus' 'epica alternativa' (Rossi (1983) 11) and his *Palinode* see now the discussion in Willi (2008) 51–118, on Theagenes e.g. Cantarella (1967) 54–62, and Ford (2002) 68–72, and on Xenophanes' revolutionary monotheism e.g. Lesher (1992) 78–119 (and cf. Willi (2008) 163–6, on the reception of Xenophanes in Epicharmus). Cantarella (1967) 51, pertinently speaks of an 'atteggiamento di rottura ... caratteristico della cultura italiota verso Omero' and further compares the equally Western 'concezione simbolica degli dei omerici nei Pitagorici'.

themselves from the weight of that heritage and to oppose it with something new and something of their own.[55]

A Sicilian epilogue

In theory, such a conclusion should be easy to accept: after all, it is firmly anchored both in the close analysis of the textual remains we have *and* in a series of typological observations made in the study of other '(post-)colonial' literatures. In practice, however, the temptation may persist to read Epicharmus from a metropolitan, not a 'colonial', viewpoint. Mainly this is because we know so much more about metropolitan, and in particular Athenian, culture and literature. This is not to say that comparisons with what happens in the mother country should be avoided at all costs or can never be illuminating. In fact, we have seen in both of the above case studies that a familiarity with Aristophanes' comic techniques sometimes helps in guessing how Epicharmus' comedy may have worked. Yet, we must never forget that Sicily and the Greek West were not only geographically, but also culturally a world of their own. So, just as Aeschylus or Sophocles were primary reference points for any Athenian author of the late fifth or early fourth century, Epicharmus must have become such a reference point for later Sicilian authors. To rediscover this local reception of Epicharmus is of course nearly impossible when both the 'recipient' and the potential 'recipients' remain in the shadow. Nonetheless, we may end this Epicharmian taster with one small sample of the autonomous vitality of this literary world in the west – a sample which allows us at the same time to redress the balance between Epicharmus and rhetoric and to perceive how tightly interwoven are all the themes we have touched upon in this study.

Ironically, the only text in which we may find a direct echo of Epicharmus' Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτόμολος is precisely a rhetorical one, written by his fellow-Sicilian Gorgias of Leontinoi, 'the father of those sophists'[56] whose argumentative tricks were foreshadowed in Epicharmus' version of the αὐξόμενος λόγος. Admittedly it is just a vague echo, but light-hearted vagueness is also exactly what we should expect from a writer like Gorgias. In the

55 In fact, the relatively swift canonisation of Homer may owe much to the 'colonial' movement beginning more or less exactly at the time when the Homeric epics came into being; see further Willi (2008) 6–8, also on the 'in-between-ness' of colonial settlers (cf. Young (2001) 19), their double identitarian positioning against the 'native' *and* the 'metropolitan', and their converging the peripheral 'there' into a central 'here' (cf. Boehmer (2005) 203–12).
56 Cf. Philostr. VS 1.9.1 (= Gorg. test. 82A1); Willi (2008) 264–305.

Apology of Palamedes (ὑπέρ Παλαμήδους ἀπολογία), Gorgias' Palamedes has to defend himself against Odysseus, who has accused him of high treason. Addressing the Achaean judges, Palamedes first stresses that he would never have betrayed the Greeks in order to avoid a risk (Gorg. fr. 82B11a.19 κίνδυνον φεύγων), even though, he adds, many others would to it. This remark, however unexpected it may be, might not on its own be sufficient to remind us of Epicharmus' Odysseus who has indeed betrayed his people in order to avoid such a risk (cf. Epich. fr. 97.11–13 ὠφείλον [...] κίνδυνον τελέσαι). But Palamedes continues (Gorg. fr. 82B11a.20–1):

σκέψασθε δὲ καὶ τόδε. πῶς οὐκ ἂν ἄθλιστός ἦν ὁ βίος μοι πράξαντι ταῦτα; ποῖ γὰρ τραπέσθαι με χρῆν; πότερον εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα; δίκην δώσοντα τοῖς ἠδικημένοις; τίς δ᾿ ἂν ἀπείχετό μου τῶν κακῶς πεπονθότων; ἀλλὰ μένειν ἐν τοῖς βαρβάροις; παραμελήσαντα πάντων τῶν μεγίστων, ἐστερημένον τῆς καλλίστης τιμῆς, ἐν αἰσχίστῃ δυσκλείᾳ διάγοντα, τοὺς ἐν τῶι παροιχομένωι βίωι πόνους ἐπ᾿ ἀρετῆι πεπονημένους ἀπορρίψαντα καὶ ταῦτα δι᾿ ἐμαυτόν, ὅπερ αἴσχιστον βίοις ἀνδρί, δυστυχεῖν δι᾿ αὐτόν. οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ παρὰ τοῖς βαρβάροις πιστῶς ἂν διεκείμην· πῶς γάρ, οἵτινες ἀπιστότατον ἔργον συνηπιστατό μοι πεποιηκότι, τοὺς φίλους τοῖς ἐχθροῖς παραδεδωκότι;

Take into account also the following: If I had done these things, how would my life not have been intolerable? Where could I have gone? To Greece? In order to be punished by those whom I had wronged? Who of those who had suffered from it would have spared me? Or should I have remained among the barbarians? Without caring for the highest goods, completely dishonoured, having a despicable reputation, sacrificing all these efforts to be noble which I had made throughout my life until now? And all of this by my own fault, which is the most shameful thing for a man: to be unfortunate out of one's own fault! I would not even have enjoyed the trust of the barbarians as they would have known well that I had done the most perfidious thing: betrayed my friends to the enemy.

Palamedes' reflections exactly mirror those of Epicharmus' Odysseus: only that the latter really faces the difficulty of not being able to return after a betrayal, he has really lost his honour, he is really unfortunate out of his own fault, and he is really treated without respect by the barbarians. Later on, Palamedes even adds, as if taking up Epicharmus' ὠφείλον [μὴ] ἀγαθοικῶν κακά προτιμάσαι (Epich. fr. 97.11–12): οὐ δήπου προσήκει τούς γε φρονοῦντας ἐξαμαρτάνειν τὰς μεγίστας ἁμαρτίας καὶ μάλλον αἱρεῖσθαι κακά πρὸ παρόντων ἀγαθῶν 'surely, intelligent people must not make the biggest mistakes and prefer bad things over good ones that are present' (Gorg. fr. 82B11a.26). And finally, the whole speech is crowned with a veiled counter-accusation (Gorg. fr. 82B11a.27):

ἀντικατηγορῆσαι δέ σου πολλὰ καὶ μεγάλα καὶ πολλὰ καὶ νέα πράσσοντος δυνάμενος οὐ βούλομαι (βούλομαι γάρ) οὐ τοῖς σοῖς κακοῖς ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἀποφεύγειν τὴν αἰτίαν ταύτην.

I do not want to make accusations against you in turn, even though I could do it as you have committed grave misdeeds both some time ago and recently... ; for I want to be acquitted here not because of your wrongdoings, but because of my own good actions.

Gorgias, or Palamedes, does not spell out what Odysseus' 'recent misdeeds' before Troy have been. Thanks to Epicharmus a Sicilian audience at least would have known, as we now do. And thanks to Epicharmus they would also have been able to fully appreciate Palamedes' skill in making the weaker position stronger, τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν – for Epicharmus had introduced them to the tricks of 'sophistic' rhetoric before Aristophanes or Plato were even born.