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INTRODUCTION: CLIO AND THALIA

Emily Baragwanath and Edith Foster

The sisters Clio and Thalia at first sight possess not family likeness, but starkly dissimilar features: the one serious-minded and noble, a worshipper at the altar of truth;[1] the other, a lewd mistress of distortions and falsification who peddles base laughter. Yet to the observer who lingers to take a closer look, their features disclose affinities that shed light on both genres. The papers collected in this supplementary volume of *Histos* move beyond our well-established practice of using Attic comedy and historiography to clarify each other, and set them side by side to reflect upon how they responded and related to each other in ancient times.[2]

Attic comedy and fifth-century historiography shared important themes and aims.[3] Perhaps most conspicuously, comedy taught about historical individuals and contemporary issues—famous political leaders, such as Pericles or Cleon, the sophists, the new education, generation clash, the foibles of the democracy, the courts, of policy toward the war—that connected with Thucydides' account of, and

[1] Cf. Lucian's characterisation of the ideal historian.

[2] Strasburger (1961) reviews the presence of comic elements in Greek historiography from the Classical to Hellenistic periods, and remarks (16) on how little historiography owes to comedy. Cf. Will (2015) 109. The present volume is concerned not with 'influences' of one on the other, but with their relationships and affinities.

[3] Tragic elements in the works of the ancient Greek historians have drawn a good deal more scholarly attention than comic ones, e.g. Chiasson (1982) and (2003), Macleod (1983), Pelling (1997), Saïd (2002), Griffin (2006), Rutherford (2007), and Baragwanath (2012a), 300–10. For the relation between tragedy and comedy, especially in respect to comedy's direct engagement with contemporary issues and figures, cf. e.g. Taplin (1986).

Herodotus' implicit commentary on, late-fifth century imperial Athens.[4] Many other commonalities of theme, compositional mode, and subject matter were also important, however, and the following introduction offers a foundation for reading the papers included here. It looks first at some aspects of how the comic poets and historians in fifth- and early-fourth-century Athens related to their shared audiences. It addresses their high expectations of that audience in terms of its responsiveness, intelligence, and knowledge of previous literature, and then discusses the rivalry among comic poets or among historians by means of which authors in both genres appealed to their demanding audiences by claiming superior usefulness. It goes on to review the presence of humour and comic modes in historiography, including the use of aggressive humour, of jokes that memorialise excellence, and of grotesque details. The introduction concludes with brief remarks on the importance of comedy as a source for fourth-century historiography.

The Fifth-Century Audiences of Comedy and Historiography

As was just mentioned, Attic comedy and historiography developed analyses of important social and political topics for their fifth-century audiences. Moreover, both genres offered their audiences serious political suggestions. For instance, Herodotus advertises the perils of tyranny and imperialism. Thucydides and Aristophanes expose the danger to the democracy of demagoguery. Three of Aristophanes' plays (*Acharnians*, *Knights*, and *Lysistrata*) campaign at length for peace in the war and *Ecclesiazusae* goes to bat for those who had been involved with the

[4] For politicians of the Peloponnesian war as treated in the Old Comedians, see *inter alia* Strasburger (1955), Rusten (2006), Henderson (2017), esp. 609–11, and 613–14. Herodotus' implicit commentary on imperial Athens: Strasburger (1955); Stadter (1992) and (2012); Moles (1996).

tyranny of the Thirty, pleading for their acceptance back into Athens.[5] Aristophanes' political lessons and interventions appeal to an actively engaged audience, just as the audiences implied by our earliest fully extant historiographical text, the *Histories* of Herodotus, are responsive, critical, intellectual, feisty. Herodotus' listeners are not so unlike the audiences (which we know rather better) of Athens' assembly, with their highly vocal reactions,[6] or those of the Athenian jury courts seated in the Heliaia, whose discernment, intelligence, and engagement the orators take care to imply; both groups overlapped with the audience that sat in Athens' theatre of Dionysus to watch Old Comedy.[7] We may sense Herodotus' awareness of this challenging audience when he refers to the jealousy he may arouse by insisting that the Athenians (no longer popular in the later fifth century) were the saviours of Greece in the Persian Wars (7.139); or in his care in framing the contentious account of the Argives *inviting* Xerxes into Greece (7.150–2), so as to deflect possible aggravation on the part of some audience members.[8] His admonishment of those who had registered disbelief at an earlier recitation of the Constitutional Debate (3.80.1)[9] invites comparison to Aristophanes' critique of his own audience's response to an earlier performance of *Clouds* (*Clouds parabasis*, 518–62; *Wasps parabasis* 1015–20).[10] Aristophanes' critique is more vehement than Herodotus'; however, the historian is also capable of taking a swing at the democracy, as when he has the last laugh on his Athenian readers in claiming that it was easier for Aristagoras to fool 30,000 Athenians (i.e. the

[5] Konstan (2010); Henderson (2017), esp. 607–8.

[6] Thomas (2011).

[7] Biles (2016) 118, 128ff. develops the relation between the two audiences (that of the law courts and that of comedy).

[8] It is preceded by two other versions, and by Herodotus' warning that his role is merely 'to say what is said' (7.152.3).

[9] If the remark is fictional, rather than reflective of an actual audience response, it nonetheless constructs an audience of this sort.

[10] See Platter (2007) 91–106; Biles (2016) 118–21.

Athenian assembly, at its late fifth-century size) than a single Spartan (5.97.2).

As even this brief description of the relationships between these writers and their audiences already shows, the comic poets and the historians had high expectations of their audiences' intelligence (and could become openly critical if they felt that the audience had not been intelligent enough).[11] They also had high expectations of their memories. Like Herodotus, who expected his audience to remember their Homer, Aristophanes expected his audience to have retentive memories for the rhythms of Aeschylus' tragedies or the speeches and costumes of Euripides' *Telephus*.[12] Both historians and comic poets also expected their audiences to have a grasp of historical development. Herodotus could refer forward to his own time, relating Peloponnesian War events;[13] Aristophanes

[11] Cf. e.g. the *parabasis* of *Wasps*, where Aristophanes accuses his audience of having betrayed him because of its lack of appreciation for *Clouds*, a more difficult play that they had rated third out of three in the previous year (on which cf. Biles (2016) 118–20), or Aristophanes' consistent emphasis, in *Knights*, on the demos' stupidity in allowing itself to be led by Cleon. Likewise, Thucydides' archaeology suggests (among other things) that most people are careless in their search for the truth (1.20.1), drawn more to attractive stories than to true ones (1.21.1), and sunk in the glories of the past, always evaluating past wars as greater, rather than looking at actual events (1.21.2).

[12] Wright (2012) emphasises the very large number of literary quotations, especially of tragedy and other comedies, but also of epic, used by all comic poets, not just Aristophanes. See especially 141ff.

[13] As has been argued elsewhere, Herodotus' text is also shaped in its structure and emphases for an audience for whom the Peloponnesian War looms: cf. e.g. Stadter (2012). Beyond the evocations of the Athenian empire (the mantle of which Athens is on the point of assuming as the work ends, and which Herodotus explicitly looks ahead to at 8.3), the anachronistic pairing of Athens and Sparta as the two powers approached by Croesus, directed by Delphi to ally with the strongest Greek state, supplies the occasion for Herodotus to outline the early history of each of these two cities (1.59–69). Herodotus' account of the assembly at Sparta, dominated by the long speech of Socles of Corinth arguing against Sparta's reinstitution of tyranny at Athens (5.92), irresistibly evokes a later crucial assembly on the eve of the Peloponnesian War: cf. Strasburger (1955); Grethlein (2013) 215–17.

could refer backward to the Persian Wars, or, as Rob Tordoff in this volume shows, to revolutions twenty years in the past. Focusing on *Assembly Women*, Tordoff argues that Aristophanes reactivated the vocabulary of *sôtêria*, conspicuous in Thucydides' description of the anti-democratic revolution of 411 BC, in 392 BC, a time when Athenians were once again fearing for the stability and well-being of Athens.

Thucydides shared Herodotus' and the comic poets' sense that the audience could be relied upon to remember Homer—and also to know Herodotus and the plays of Aristophanes (see Foster in this volume). Recent studies emphasise the consistency of Herodotus and Thucydides in terms of their description of the Greek past, and show how particular passages, narratives, or narrative practices in Thucydides respond closely to Herodotean paradigms.[14] One implication of these studies is that just like his historiographical (and comic) contemporaries, Thucydides directed considerable effort toward connecting his narrative with works that were already well known to his audience, a strategy for negotiating a relationship with audiences that seems to have been important for comedy as well.[15]

Herodotus also refers explicitly to the Peloponnesian War, which at the time of completion of the text and its performances in final form was well underway: he describes the Theban attack on Plataea that began the war in 431 (7.233.2), as a well as a plan, fulfilled by the Athenians in 424, to invest Cythera (7.235.2–3), and finally, in thanks for their return of Helen to the Spartans after her abduction by Theseus, *τοῖσι δὲ Δεκελεῦσι ἐν Σπάρτῃ ἀπὸ τούτου τοῦ ἔργου ἀτελείη τε καὶ προεδρίη διατελέει ἐς τόδε αἰεὶ ἔτι ἐοῦσα, οὕτω ὥστε καὶ ἐς τὸν πόλεμον τὸν ὕστερον πολλοῖσι ἔτεσι τούτων γενόμενον Ἀθηναίοισί τε καὶ Πελοποννησίοισι, σινομένων τὴν ἄλλην Ἀττικὴν Λακεδαιμονίων, Δεκελέης ἀπέχεσθαι* (9.73.3). The Spartans would indeed establish a base at Decelea in 413 BC, hence the passage provides the *terminus ante quem* for the *Histories*' composition. See Marincola (2001) 24–5.

[14] Consistency of description of past: Hornblower (1996) 19–38 with Annex B (137–46); Rood (1999). Thucydidean narrative patterns responding to Herodotean paradigms: Stadter (2012) 40; Foster (2012); Lateiner (2012).

[15] Wright (2012) 145.

But who was Thucydides' audience? Might it not be supposed that the audiences of the two genres were very different, one elite and learned, the other popular and passionate? This recreation of the division between comic and historiographic audiences is only partly satisfying. Tradition records that Herodotus recited from his *Histories* at various cities including Athens; Lucian describes a performance in front of a mass audience at the Olympia festival. While Olympic performances were perhaps not on the cards for Thucydides or Xenophon,[16] in their case we may imagine oral recitation in the context of smaller groups, such as are depicted in Plato's dialogues, which would read and discuss various works of literature.[17] This hypothesis encourages us to test whether they wrote in response to the challenging dynamic of oral recitation in a communal context, in which argumentative readers with a variety of views and experiences would discuss their work.[18] Even the exiled Thucydides can be drawn out of isolation and into the oral culture of Athens: the examples provided in Morrison (2006a) seem to show that Athenian literature was read aloud in small groups whether the author was present or absent (one thinks of the long absences from

[16] But perhaps they were: Hornblower (2004) 33 n. 118 raises this possibility.

[17] See Rawlings (2017) 199: '"Close reading" by Thucydides' elite audience meant group reading that no doubt led to discussion and enhanced appreciation of the form as well as of the meaning of the prose. For contemporary examples of such group reading, see Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.14; Plato, *Theaetetus*, opening passage; *Parmenides* 127b–d; *Phaedo*, 97b–98b; *Phaedrus*, 228a–b.'

[18] See Morrison (2006a) and (2006b). The argument made here is not new: see Momigliano (1978). Thucydides' numerous continuators, together with responses to Thucydides in the orators and other writers, indicate that he had become well known: cf. Hornblower (1995) 52–3. Rood (2004) shows Thucydides' continuators' close familiarity with his writing. Schepens (2007) has demonstrated that not only continuation, but also reflection upon Thucydides was a regular feature of fourth-century historiography. Some of this reflection famously takes the form of adopting opposing historiographic principles, but this implies that Thucydides was a, or perhaps even *the*, known benchmark against which to rebel. Cf. Grethlein (2011).

Athens of figures such as Plato, Thucydides, and Euripides). Some Thucydidean narratives would seem well suited even to a more flamboyant recitation context, perhaps at symposia (a performance context Hornblower has proposed): the description of civil war at Corcyra, or the night attack on Epipolai, among others.[19] Later than the period with which we are concerned, but nonetheless intriguing in its implication of a shared culture of historical declamation and comedic performance, is the comedian Hegesias' recitation of Herodotus' *Histories* (*τὰ Ἡροδότου*) in the Great Theatre of Alexandria.[20]

Thus, rather than separating the two genres, as we might assume, the context of oral performance in fact aligns them. In addition, Wright (2012) argues that we should take Aristophanes' readers at Athens more seriously, with the result that the audiences of the two genres begin to look even less dissimilar: the revision of *Clouds*, for instance, was never performed, but rather copied and read (63–4), much like historiographical or philosophical literature.

These possible consistencies between the audiences of the two genres encourage us to speculate about the shared ways in which they appealed to that audience by establishing characteristic authority, superiority, and impartiality in each case.

Rivalries and Association

We noted at the outset (above, p. 1) how the founding historians shared comedy's concern for contemporary history and personalities. In another important type of connection with their audiences' contemporary world, comic poets and historians alike set themselves in rivalrous dialogue with

[19] Hornblower (2008) 31 (with a list of possible recitation units in 5.25–8.109). Hornblower even suggests (11) the possibility of a recitation of the whole Sicilian narrative, in approximately eight hours. For a less ambitious gathering, at forty-two chapters, Thucydides' Pylos narrative would be a good afternoon's work.

[20] Athenaeus 14.620d, citing the historian Jason as his source. See Priestley (2013) 40–1.

predecessors and contemporaries.[21] Their mode of so doing ranges from explicit authorial comment to subtle intertextual connections. For example, Comic *parabaseis* frequently indulge in competitive mockery, as in that of Aristophanes *Clouds* (545–6, 551–62, tr. W. J. Hickie):[22]

> I, although so excellent a poet, do not give myself airs, nor do I seek to deceive you by twice and thrice bringing forward the same pieces … But these scribblers, when once Hyperbolus has given them a handle, keep ever trampling on this wretched man and his mother. Eupolis, indeed, first of all craftily introduced his Maricas, having basely, base fellow, spoiled by altering my play of the *Knights*, having added to it, for the sake of the cordax [lascivious dance], a drunken old woman, whom Phrynichus long ago poetised, whom the whale was for devouring. Then again Hermippus made verses on Hyperbolus; and now all others press hard upon Hyperbolus, imitating my simile of the eels. Whoever, therefore, laughs at these, let him not take pleasure in my attempts; but if you are delighted with me and my inventions, in times to come you will seem to be wise.

Like the historians, then, the comic poets set themselves up against the careless, the ignorant, and other comic poets, claiming superior usefulness and intelligence. For, as we know, Herodotus positions himself in relation to Homer and Hecataeus, but also to a range of fifth-century thinkers including the sophists and natural scientists, Thucydides to Hellanicus (1.97.2) and also to Homer and the 'ancient poets' (e.g. 1.21.1).[23] Such competition seems to draw first-

[21] Even as both in historians and comedians, tacit connections that spoke to an ancient audience must frequently elude us.

[22] Comic poets mocking one another: Ruffell (2002); Biles (2011).

[23] Herodotus: Thomas (2000); Grethlein (2010); Kim (2010) 24–46; Baragwanath/de Bakker (2012) 29–31. The historians more generally: Marincola (1997).

person statements even from Thucydides,[24] which connects it to the direct address of the comic *parabaseis*.

The competitiveness between historians or between comic poets serves an important end. Like Aristophanes above, Thucydides observes that his account aspires to be useful not to those who want to be (merely) entertained, but to those who wish to be better informed: 'whoever wish to know the truth' (*ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται … τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν*) of events past and future (1.22.4). Both genres, then, have an underlying educative aim, and the rivalrousness stems in each case from the writer's claim to be more 'useful' than particular contemporaries (Aristophanes, for example, more useful than rivals in the dramatic festivals, as we saw in the quotation above; Thucydides, more useful than those who prioritise delighting the ears (1.21.1) and recounting fabulous stories (1.22.4) over telling the truth).

Similar didactic aims as provoked rivalry may also have inspired the historians to associate themselves with important contemporary and past paradigms. Thucydides, for instance, adapted important structural and thematic elements from Homer, Herodotus, and the tragedians.[25] Revealing too is the opening of his work—an important place for establishing its character and credentials. Thus his first words follow closely the syntax of Herodotus' opening words; he then presents his subject as encompassing (like Herodotus') not only Greeks but also barbarians; only to trump Herodotus' project with the claim that 'the greatest part of mankind' (1.1.2) was involved in his war.[26] Finally he

[24] *ἔγραψα δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ τὴν ἐκβολὴν τοῦ λόγου ἐποιησάμην διὰ τόδε, ὅτι τοῖς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἅπασιν ἐκλιπὲς τοῦτο ἦν τὸ χωρίον καὶ ἢ τὰ πρὸ τῶν* Μηδικῶν *Ἑλληνικὰ ξυνετίθεσαν ἢ αὐτὰ τὰ* Μηδικά*· τούτων δὲ ὅσπερ καὶ ἥψατο ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ ξυγγραφῇ Ἑλλάνικος, βραχέως τε καὶ τοῖς χρόνοις οὐκ ἀκριβῶς ἐπεμνήσθη* (1.97.2).

[25] As Rutherford (2012) and Stadter (2012) have demonstrated. See Rood (1999), Greenwood (2006) ch. 5, Foster and Lateiner (2012), Joho (2017).

[26] *κίνησις γὰρ αὕτη μεγίστη δὴ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐγένετο καὶ μέρει τινὶ τῶν βαρβάρων, ὡς δὲ εἰπεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀνθρώπων* (1.1.2). See Rusten (2015) and Munson (2015) on *kinesis*; Stadter (2012).

builds the case for his war as the greatest yet—in the devastation it caused.[27] Xenophon likewise set himself in dialogue with his two historiographical predecessors and Homer, connecting but also competing.[28]

Nor does either historian or comic poet shrink from claiming superior impartiality as one reason why he is superior to his colleagues. The individual ruminative process of reading may seem opposed to the theatregoer's immediate experience of rapid-fire comedic performance; and yet the comedians, similarly to the historians, laid claim to a permanent sort of objectivity. For although the comic poet is not afraid openly to take partisan positions,[29] key to Old Comedy's broad appeal is its overarching refusal to be categorised as moderate or radical, progressive or conservative, as favouring democrats or oligarchs; *all* parties are lampooned, and (in the words of Moggi) Aristophanes as poet and intellectual 'flies higher than the political personalities or publics of his day'.[30] The historian likewise bolsters his authority by remaining above the fray, impartial in his judgements, 'in his books' (as Lucian put it) 'a stranger and a man without a city'—who neither spares friends nor grudges enemies, and does not fear the powerful (*How to Write History*, 38–41). Cleon—negatively portrayed in Aristophanes and Thucydides—is one of Lucian's key examples: 'Neither will Cleon with his great power in the assembly and his mastery of the platform frighten him from saying that he was murderous and lunatic' (38, tr. A. M. Harmon). Thus Lucian—a forerunner to Foster in this volume—rather than explaining Thucydides' portrait of Cleon as a product of personal resentment, underscores the possibility that the historian may be expounding the character of a harmful politician. In similar vein, Aristophanes' characterisation of Cleon (so Ralph Rosen),

[27] For historians presenting their own war as the greatest and most worthy of narration, see Marincola (1997) 34–43; also Dillery (1995) 123–7.

[28] Rood (2004); Nicolai (2006); Baragwanath (2012b).

[29] Henderson (2017) 608; Foster in this volume.

[30] Moggi (2012) 47–8: 'vola più alto dei personaggi politici o pubblici del suo tempo'.

beyond or rather than being motivated by a real-life quarrel, exposes an essential truth about unscrupulous demagoguery.[31]

Historians and Comic Poets in Real Time

Like the historians, the Attic comic poets were bound into the historical events they so vividly lampooned—comic poets were charged alongside Alcibiades in connection with his alleged profanation of the mysteries, Aristophanes' *Babylonians* incited a prosecution by Cleon, against whom Aristophanes subsequently waged a long public campaign, and Plato regarded Aristophanes' *Clouds* as implicated in the trial of Socrates. In Herodotean vein, *Acharnians* develops a critique of Pericles by depicting the Peloponnesian war as precipitated by reprisals for the abduction of slave-girls.[32] Many, including the historian Duris (on whom see below), accepted the story about Alcibiades taking vengeance on the comic poet Eupolis by drowning him. Moreover, the comic poets were involved not only in making or breaking the reputations of aristocratic individuals. They inserted themselves into contemporary responses to the on-going war, frequently levying charges of cowardice, for instance, after military defeats,[33] or celebrating Athenian victories:

[31] See Rosen (1988) ch. 4 on Aristophanes' portrait of Cleon as conventional and influenced by the tradition of Iambos, rather than a personal attack; cf. 79: '*Equites* gains political significance precisely when the audience can transcend the trivial pretence of a real-life quarrel between Aristophanes and Cleon, and approach the essence of what Cleon stands for—unscrupulous demagoguery'. The limits of criticism and attack of course differ across genres, and part of the particular character of the impartiality of comedy is that Aristophanes' insults are unrestricted; whereas the opposite kind of impartiality (restraint in immediate judgements) is more typical of historiography. And yet even in comedy there are *some* limits to laugher: Old Comedy cannot laugh about the plague, or about other disasters too close to home, such as the Sicilian Expedition.

[32] See Mash, below, pp. 69–70;; cf. Lateiner, below, p. 56.

[33] Cf. van Wees (2004) 193–4, with n. 48: 'I suggest that every single play composed by Aristophanes—and conceivably by the other comic

Aristophanes' *Knights* (595ff.), for instance, celebrates a cavalry victory over the Corinthians (cf. Thuc. 4.42–4) and *Birds* both parodies and celebrates[34] Athens' claim to rule the sea (a Thucydidean theme) by showing Athenians who fulfil their aspiration to rule the sky.

The same embeddedness was characteristic of the historians. Thucydides and Xenophon both describe events in which they were intimately involved, and at times themselves become actors on the pages of history, Thucydides in the failed defence of Amphipolis (which caused his exile), Xenophon as commander of the Ten Thousand who marched in support of Cyrus the Younger.[35] Herodotus stands at a further temporal remove from the events he describes, and yet is implicated, or was imagined to be implicated by those who fashioned the traditions about his life:[36] for instance, there is a story that Artemisia's grandson, tyrant of Halicarnassus, put to death his kinsman Panyassis and prompted Herodotus' withdrawal to Samos. As a possible result Samos wins a major role in his *Histories* and perhaps inspired Herodotus' interest in themes that would become key to his future work.[37] Herodotus himself

poets, too—during this period made a point of mocking a notorious coward.' For a single example: Aristophanes immortalised the cowardice of one particular member of the army at Delium, Cleonymus, who was said to have dropped his shield, mocking him in four successive plays: *Clouds*, *Wasps*, *Peace*, and *Birds*. In addition to mocking cowards, Aristophanes often excoriated his audience for its failing virtue. See Rosenbloom (2002) 326–7, who provides many examples.

[34] Henderson (2017) 608 suggests that *Birds* displays support for the Sicilian expedition at lines 186, 640, 813–6, 1360–9.

[35] Failed defence of Amphipolis: 4.102–8, cf. 5.25–6; march of the Ten Thousand: briefly at *Hell.* 3.1.2; at length in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, in which he himself is the central character.

[36] See Priestley (2014) 19–50 on these contested, at times improbable, biographical traditions, by means of which audiences sought to forge connections between Herodotus and their own *poleis*.

[37] A suggestion of Harvey (2014). If tradition is accurate, Herodotus also returned to Halicarnassus to put an end to its tyrant (*Suda*). But ancient biographical traditions were frequently built up on the basis of an author's works; see previous n.

also appears as a character more often than his successor historians, for instance in Book 2 on Egypt, where he depicts himself engaging in ethnographic enquiries. Moreover, the *Histories* contains a cast of figures that recent scholarship has found to serve metahistorical functions, especially in illuminating aspects of the Herodotean narrator.[38] In Old Comedy we might compare Aristophanes' stories of his own bravery in confronting Cleon, for instance, in the *parabasis* of *Acharnians*, or his self-characterisation via his comic heroes: thus how (so Biles argues) the Sausage-seller of *Knights* maps on to Aristophanes in his agonistic practices, or how (so Olson and Biles) the views of Bdelycleon in *Wasps* represent those of Aristophanes and his set.[39] Thus both comedians and historians were not only embedded in history, but also themselves wrote up their embeddedness, framing their historical roles with narrative self-representations.

Comic Modes of Writing in Historiography

A. Aggressive Humour

Another response to their historical situation and likewise an aspect of the competitiveness of both comedy and historiography is to showcase aggressive humour. One sure target of Aristophanes' biting humour is those with intellectual pretentions, whether the sophists or others—whose familiarity to his audience made the humour all the more powerful. Herodotus likewise expects his audience to relish the humorous mockery of people who claim knowledge they don't possess, whether Hecataeus in asserting divine ancestry at only sixteen generations' remove (2.143), or the contemporary mapmakers who are deluded about the shape of the world (4.36). A picture emerges,

[38] Christ (1994); see also Baragwanath (2008) 59–78, Grethlein (2009), Demont (2013), Branscome (2013).

[39] Sausage-seller/Aristophanes: Biles (2011) ch. 3; Bdelycleon/Aristophanes: Olson and Biles (2015). See also Mash, below, p. 90, on Dicaeopolis/Aristophanes.

then, of authors of both camps, historiographic and comedic, jousting and engaging with members of their intellectual community, a community either already familiar to their audiences, or soon made so by witty and stinging characterisations.

Aggressive, victimising humour involves outwitting and insulting one's opponent. It shares targets across both genres, such as the tyrannical individual or group who abuses its power; and its serious monitory lessons are part of the educative tendency of both genres.[40] Donald Lateiner focuses on premeditated insults, situating them in the context of the agonistic character of relations between Greek males in this period. Both genres reflect this aspect of Greek social relations, Aristophanes more intensively, the historians more rarely, and with the purpose of endowing certain characters and events with instructive vividness. Mark Mash in this volume analyses in detail a Herodotean staging of victimising humour and one-upmanship in the Ethiopian king's response to the messengers from Cambyses. As Mash shows, the historian's representation of this character's use of competitive, victimising humour contributes to the *Histories*' serious critique of imperialism.[41] Humour serves to deflate intellectual presumptions or arrogant ethnocentrism or—even more arrogant—the drive to conquer others. For while Herodotus is in general terms a cultural relativist, there is a problem for him with the *nomos* of Persian imperialism (as with the drive for conquest that Herodotus reveals to be a key motivation of most human communities): in depriving others of political freedom, it negates their *nomoi*. The display of the Ethiopian king's dexterous use of victimising humour is, then, a *mise-en-abyme* of the historian's own use of a favourite tool of the Old Comedian.

[40] On victimising humour in comedy see *inter alia* Rosen (1988), Storey (1998).

[41] See also Dewald (2006) 12–13 on ethnic humour in the *Histories*; Mash (2016) on Herodotus' use of tales of humorous deception to explode ethnic stereotypes.

A humorous trick can also be the means of provoking someone to reveal his character; and another historiographical narrative which exposes imperialism and greed, where the apparently weaker party triumphs, and a foreigner criticises the Persian king, is the humorous trick (*ἀπάτην*, 1.187.1) played by Herodotus' Babylonian Queen Nitocris. To display—and memorialise (see next section)—the greed of some future conqueror of Babylon, and to take comeuppance on him, she sets her tomb high atop the main city gate, with an inscription inviting a future king to open it, should he need the money; but warning him otherwise to leave it alone. Undisturbed until Darius' time, the tomb is opened, but Darius finds only a corpse and an inscription with the rebuke: 'If you were not greedy of money and sordidly greedy of gain, you would not have opened the coffins of the dead' (1.187.5). Triumph of the underdog—in this case, of a representative of victims of future imperialism—is a favourite scenario of comedy. Biting personal humour thus again becomes a serious means of resisting empire.

(B) Jokes as Memorials of Individuals and of Excellence

On the other hand, it is clear that the historians use not only aggressive humour, but a wide variety of types of humour. Xenophon's historiographical works attach humour to portraits of individuals who keep their sense of humour even under the most difficult circumstances. Thus Theramenes' witticism as he faces hasty execution at the hands of the Thirty is a testament to his character that stands in contrast to the craven silence of the Council (*ἡ δὲ βουλὴ ἡσυχίαν εἶχεν*, *Hellenica* 2.3.55):

> And being compelled to die by drinking the hemlock, they said that he cast the dregs out of the cup as if he were playing the *kottabos*, and he said as he threw it, 'Here's to the beautiful Kritias.'[42]

[42] *Hell.* 2.3.56; discussed by Lateiner, below, pp. 52–3.

Xenophon defends the inclusion of this remark in his history as a tribute to the man's character, to how, even with death close at hand, Theramenes' mind lost 'neither its sense nor its playfulness' (or 'sense of humour') (*μήτε τὸ φρόνιμον μήτε τὸ παιγνιῶδες*, 2.3.56). In this way humour may in itself be a historical event worthy of record. The verb of speaking ('they say') highlights the fact that this story was already being recalled and remembered: which brings us to the potential of humour to serve the purpose of historiography's memorialising function.

For instance, Herodotus' memorialising of the dead at Thermopylae includes a less tangible memorial to one of the Spartan fighters alongside the concrete epitaphs: Dieneces' witty and brave response to the Trachinian man's observation that the enemy are so many that their arrows will hide the sun (7.226.2–227.1):

> He, not frightened by these words, but making light of the number of the Medes, said that 'the Trachinian friend brings us entirely good news, for if the Medes hide the sun, we shall fight them in the shade, and not in the sunshine.' This saying and others like it, they say, Dieneces the Lacedaemonian left behind as a memorial.

The verb of speaking again highlights the fact that tradition has already memorialised the courageous saying, and with it, Dieneces' bravery.[43] Herodotus lays emphasis on the memorialising function (the sayings were 'left behind as a memorial', *λιπέσθαι μνημόσυνα*). In the narratives of both Theramenes and Dieneces, the respective historian employs a polarised depiction of character (another typical resource of comedy): the courage of one individual is illuminated through the foil of another's or others' trepidation.

[43] The verb of speaking is also emphasised in Herodotus' introduction of the anecdote: 'They say that he uttered this saying before they joined battle with the Medes' (7.226.1).

It may be that humour most easily finds a home in historiography in biographical contexts; as Plutarch centuries later would observe, 'a slight thing like a phrase or a jest' (*πρᾶγμα βραχὺ … καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ παιδιά τις*) may be more revelatory of character than great battles, armaments, or sieges (*Alex.* 1.2). It is of Thucydides' anecdotal, biographical narrative of Cylon that an ancient scholiast remarked, 'here the lion laughed'.[44] Humour punctuates Xenophon's biographical works about Socrates, especially the *Symposium*, where it serves as a means of engaging readers in contemplating serious truths.[45] In that work the philosopher indeed jokes about his own physical appearance (satyr-like with bulging eyes and squashed-down nose: *Symp.* 5.5–6), a variety of burlesque that is kept well out of the picture when he makes his appearance in Xenophon's historiographical works.[46] But in *Anabasis* Xenophon reports a joke that is revelatory of character, made by the Greeks to their foreign audience of Paphlagonians after a slave girl has performed a splendid pyrrhic dance. The foreigners have asked whether the Greeks' women not only dance but also fight at their side, and the Greeks reply: '*these* (the courtesans) were the women (*αὗται*) who had chased the Great King out of the camp!' (i.e. at Cunaxa; cf. 6.1.13). The joke reflects a serious power-dynamic; and a treaty with the Paphlagonians follows the next day, since the Greeks have adequately demonstrated their martial worth (6.1.14).[47] Thus even as his

[44] Thuc. 1.126; Patterson (1993) extends the saying to refer to the narratives of Themistocles and Pausanias as well.

[45] See (on the *Symposium*) Huss (1999a) and (1999b); thus e.g. Socrates uses a joke to invite his listeners to reassess their assumptions about female abilities: *Symp.* 2.9 with Baragwanath (2012c): 636–8. Cf. Lateiner, below, pp. 52–3, on the biographical aspect of Xenophontic humour.

[46] In *Hellenica* at the Arginusae trial, in *Anabasis* in advising Xenophon.

[47] Note too Xenophon's own grim repartee to the man who has attempted to bury alive the invalid he had been instructed to assist, and justified this on the grounds that the man was going to die anyhow (5.8.11): "*καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς*," *ἔφη ὁ Ξενοφῶν*, "*πάντες ἀποθανούμεθα· τούτου οὖν ἕνεκα ζῶντας ἡμᾶς δεῖ κατορυχθῆναι*;" ("'Why", said Xenophon, "all

non-historiographical, biographical works more frequently adopt a humorous tone and deliberate mixture of the playful and serious,[48] such comic elements do surface also in Xenophon's historiography. In its avoidance of the personal and anecdotal, Thucydides' work has less comic potential.[49] And yet we gain a glimpse of how events themselves may take a shape that is comic: both Thucydides and Aristophanes, for instance, show how Cleon is trapped by his own machinations: a comic plot that might happen also to have been true.

C. Irony, the Grotesque, the Frightful, the Incongruous

Rob Tordoff's paper suggests the serious side of Aristophanic comedy. Old Comedy dealt with hard political issues, and while the humour of Old Comedy is in many respects out of keeping with the serious register of historiography, as Christopher Pelling has well emphasised,[50] certain—more serious—types of humour do appear

of us are likewise going to die; but should we on that account be buried alive?"').

[48] The funniest/most fully-fledged joke in the *Cyropaedia* (though perhaps not to modern tastes) may be that at 2.2.11–16, which bears affinities to Old Comedy's occasionally absurd brand of humour. One of Cyrus' captains tells a tall story about the extraordinary obedience of his men: how he once instructed them always to advance as a unit, each taking care to 'follow the man in front'. A rider was about to set off for Persia, so the captain had ordered his lieutenant to run and fetch a letter for the man to take with him, with the upshot that the entire company of soldiers 'followed the man in front', and the letter was given a military escort. The audience laughs (ἐγέλων ἐπὶ τῇ δορυφορίᾳ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, 'they were laughing at the military escort of the letter'), with the exception of one earnest listener; Cyrus laughs, but also uses the joke to initiate genuine praise (ἅμα γελῶν οὕτως ἐπήνεσε τοὺς στρατιώτας, 2.2.7–11).

[49] For what (grim) humour there is in Thucydides, see Rusten (2006) 547–8.

[50] Pelling (1999) 337–8: 'When elements of the comic are found in Greco-Roman historiography … the settings are always too serious, usually indeed too deadly, for the comic intrusion to be anything but chilling. The flavour is less that of comedy itself, more of the comic

across both genres (for example the aggressive humour found in Herodotus' *Histories*: see above), as do certain targets of humour (especially the tyrannical individual or group which abuses its power). Nor does Old Comedy inevitably follow the happy, 'comic plot' of disruption resolved: witness *Cloud*'s grim ending. The tone here is perhaps not so far removed from the deeply unsettling incongruity Dan Tompkins (in this volume) finds in Thucydides' final judgment of Nicias. History more generally capitalises on the multiple valences of appearance and reality, double meanings, and lexical ambiguities, on which one strand of comedic humour also thrives. Indeed at some level the writing of history may be inherently ironic; irony may be history's preferred rhetorical mode.[51]

Across both genres the biting humour of one-liners or puns (including speaking names) may similarly carry a serious commentary: these are ubiquitous in Aristophanes; in Herodotus we might think of Themistocles' retort to Timodemus (8.125: 'This is how it stands: if I had been a man of Belbina I would not have been honoured in this way by the Spartans; nor would you, sir, even though you are Athenian'), or Cleomenes' grim joke about his adversary 'Krios' as a ram about to be sacrificed (6.50).[52]

In Herodotus' story of the thief of Rhampsinitus' treasury, black humour—in the man's evasion of capture by first decapitating his own brother and then extending a

elements which intrude into tragedy or epic. … Historiography is simply too high and serious a tradition, and (like epic) too concerned with death and suffering, for the humorous to be anything other than an occasional and intrusive visitor.'

[51] Cp. White (1973) 37–8, 375–425; *pace* Strasburger (1961) 13 ('ein durchgehend ironischer oder satirischer Zug eignet allenfalls dem historischen Teil eines politischen Pamphletes, nicht aber einem Geschichtswerk von höherem Anspruch').

[52] 'Now is the time to plate your horns with bronze, Mr. Ram [= Krios], for great calamity will confront you.' A similar (but gentler) pun on the same Krios' name occurs in Aristophanes (*Clouds* 1356): see Podlecki (1984) 184–5. On Aristophanic one-liners, see Storey 1998 (§II i), with (in Part Two) a helpful overview of the manifold scholarship on the question of Aristophanes' seriousness.

severed limb to the prostituted royal daughter—combines with the triumph of the underdog: the King acknowledges his superior intelligence, and thus gives his former builder's son the hand in marriage of his daughter the princess (2.121).[53] We have then a comedic happy ending, accompanied by a reversal in social stature from lowly to high. Amasis (2.162, 172–82)[54] is another in the *Histories* who transforms in status. Amasis also brings a measure of scatological humour into the historical text in farting his message to King Apries, a comic gesture aimed at deflating the recipient's royal pretensions. His communication is of a piece with Hippocleides' vulgar display as he dances upside down on his aristocratic host's table, legs in the air.[55] Moreover, Amasis himself possesses a comedic nature. As king, after conducting serious business in the morning, 'he would drink and make jokes about his drinking companions, and was irreverent and fond of games/jokes' (*ἔπινέ τε καὶ κατέσκωπτε τοὺς συμπότας καὶ ἦν μάταιός τε καὶ παιγνιήμων*, 2.173.1); previously too, as a commoner, he was said to have been 'fond of drink and of joking and not at all an earnest person' (*φιλοπότης ἦν καὶ φιλοσκώμμων καὶ οὐδαμῶς κατεσπουδασμένος ἀνήρ*, 2.174.1). In keeping with this bodily, comedic characterisation is the mention of his sex problems. Amasis justifies his way of life on the (serious) grounds that just like a bow that is ruined by being kept ever taut, a human being who is always at work will snap under the strain.

Elsewhere a single word injects vividness by sounding a vulgar, comic note: as in the imagery of sausage-making and meat preparation Herodotus applies to the wounds that Cleomenes inflicts upon himself, and those the heroic

[53] On this story see Dewald (2006); West (2007) on its possible provenance.

[54] On Amasis see Kurke (1999) 89–100; Baragwanath (2015) 31–4; Mash (2016) 161–5.

[55] Discussed in detail by Lateiner, below, pp. 45–7; see also Will (2015) 111–12.

Pythes endures at the hands of Persian marines.[56] As Tompkins in this volume emphasises, a single word can change the tone of an historical account in crucial ways.

Fifth-Century Comedy and Fourth-Century Historiography

The shared connection of comedy and historiography to the political life and events of the fifth century, noted above, had an important effect on their subsequent reception. As Jeffrey Rusten has observed, since both genres illuminate aspects of fifth-century political, social and cultural reality, Old Comedy (with its philological and prosopographical density) was called upon throughout its ancient reception to illuminate serious history, *rather* than to entertain through re-performance, so that *historical* interest in Old Comedy kept its texts alive through the Alexandrian age and beyond.[57] Thus, despite its distortions, Old Comedy has been regarded by historians since the fourth century as a source for historical information: the two genres have been used in concert as evidence in constructing accounts of classical Greek history from Duris, through Plutarch, to

[56] Ps.-Longinus draws attention to these examples (*Subl.* 31.2): *ὧδέ πως ἔχει καὶ τὰ Ἡροδότεια*: "*ὁ Κλεομένης*" *φησὶ* "*μανεὶς τὰς ἑαυτοῦ σάρκας ξιφιδίῳ κατέτεμεν εἰς λεπτά, ἕως ὅλον καταχορδεύων ἑαυτὸν διέφθειρεν.*" *καὶ* "*ὁ Πύθης ἕως τοῦδε ἐπὶ τῆς νεὼς ἐμάχετο, ἕως ἅπας κατεκρεουργήθη.*" *ταῦτα γὰρ ἐγγὺς παραξύει τὸν ἰδιώτην, ἀλλ οὐκ ἰδιωτεύει τῷ σημαντικῶς*. ('The same may be observed of two passages in Herodotus: "Cleomenes having lost his wits, cut his own flesh into pieces with a short sword, until by gradually *mincing up like a sausage* his whole body he destroyed himself"; and "Pythes continued fighting on his ship until he was entirely *hacked to pieces/cut up as by a butcher.*" Such terms come home at once to the vulgar reader, but their own vulgarity is redeemed by their expressiveness.' H. L. Havell, trs.)

[57] Rusten (2006) 556–7 and an unpublished paper 'Historical Interests in the Ancient Commentaries on Old Comedy' presented at the 'Greek Historiography and Attic Comedy' panel at the Association of Ancient Historians meeting, Durham, North Carolina, May 2012.

modern historians.[58] In this volume, Chris Baron charts Duris' use of poetry as evidence in historical narratives, situating Duris' practices in the context of early third-century debates about the nature of historiography. After describing Duris' use of Aristophanes, noting that Duris' practices seem similar to those found in Ephorus, and mentioning Aristophanes' influence on Theopompus, Baron unpacks a passage in which Duris quotes Heraclides (a poet of Middle Comedy) for the sake, he argues, of fulfilling his own historiographical aim to present a vivid account. Baron's evidence shows the lasting impact upon historiography of comedy's historicity.

Conclusions

Clio and Thalia flourished in a rich context of competing and interconnected genres. To cite one more historiographic example, the resemblance especially of Thucydides' speeches to those of Euripidean drama (so often the target of Aristophanic parody!) has long been a focus of interest.[59] Beyond historiography, readers have often noted the connections between Euripides, Aristophanes, and Plato.[60] In this context, inter-connections between historiography and Attic comedy are inevitably complex, as this introduction has tried to show. Much remains to be understood, and the papers in this volume necessarily address particular aspects of the relation.

In this introduction, we have elucidated some connections between comedy and historiography, connections that relate to their shared engagement with the issues and personalities of contemporary political life at Athens, and

[58] Comedy's potential as a source for history: Pelling (2000) chs. 7, 8 and 10; Perusino and Colantonio (2012). On Plutarch's use of comedy as a historical source: Lenfant (2003); cf. Athenaeus' use of comedy and history: Lenfant (2007).

[59] Finley (1938). On the competition of genres see *inter alia* Grethlein (2010); Kurke (2011).

[60] Sansone (1996), who points out (41) that Plato cites Euripides more often than any authors except for Homer and Simonides.

likewise to their means of reaching their audiences: emerging together with the emerging practices of writing and reading books, both genres appear to have been transmitted through the various practices both of oral performance and of group and individual reading. The comic poets and historians, unlike the tragedians, appealed directly to their listening and reading audiences, claiming to be more useful than their careless, less talented, or unimaginative colleagues, and offering important statements and analyses in their own voices. Likewise, both genres integrated previous literature, with the views and reputations of which they also often competed, and which they expected their audiences to know and remember. Did historiography occasionally imitate comedy's literariness, its 'extensive use of other texts as a way of negotiating a relationship with its audience'?[61]

Finally, both genres integrated humour. This point is obvious for the comic poets; here we have tried to introduce some of the ways in which the papers of this volume examine the use of humour in historiography. The papers here collected point to humour's numerous uses for the historian. Humour may serve to create vividness (Baron), to challenge the audience with depictions of stated or subtly suggested put-downs (Mash and Lateiner), to memorialise bravery or contribute to an argument (as in Xenophon, above), to awaken memory (Tordoff), or to contribute to characterisation and the deepening of themes (Tompkins). In both comedy and the historians, humour can be reformative, destabilising assumptions and prejudices and promoting ignorant audiences to think more critically. But far more often in the historians humour is consequential (to employ the terminology of Stephen Halliwell).[62] Thus the Herodotean humour that Mash describes undercuts notions of *alterité*: it does *not* license Greeks to laugh at the Other, but illustrates the power of cross-cultural interaction and understanding. This example shows once again how the

[61] Wright (2012) 145.

[62] Halliwell (1991) 282–3; id. (2008) *passim*.

didactic intentions of humour cross genre lines: beyond its value for understanding particular comedies or particular narratives of the historians, studying the connections between comedy and historiography helps us to understand the didactic drive that was central to both genres and is an important aspect of their lasting value.

ebaragwanath@unc.edu
edithmfoster@gmail.com

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