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The Court of Comedy

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Sicilian Pioneers of Comedy and Rhetoric and Their Transmission to Athens

εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ ψευδεῖς ἀντιθέσεις, οἷον καὶ Ἐπίχαρμος ἐποίησεν·
τόκα μὲν ἐν τήνων ἐγὼν ἦν, τόκα δὲ παρὰ τήνοις ἐγώ.

There are also false antitheses, such as when Epicharmus wrote,
“Sometimes I was among them, and other times I was with them.”

—Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.9.10.1410b3–5, quoting Epicharmus fr. 145

Both comedy and rhetoric have Sicilian pioneers who preceded the better-preserved and better-known later Athenian practitioners. Also common to the early history of both comedy and rhetoric is that recovering the accomplishments of these pioneers is hobbled by limited fragmentary remains and by later pseudographic sources that distort what little information has been preserved. These difficulties raise substantive issues for reconstructing and understanding the transmission of Sicilian traditions to Athens, with consequences for the revised history of early rhetoric and how Athenian comedy responded to it.

THE SICILIAN FOUNDERS OF RHETORIC IN THE FIFTH CENTURY

The reputed founders of the discipline of rhetoric were Sicilians from the middle of the fifth century named Corax and Tisias. Ancient sources recite that, after the Sicilians had thrown out their tyrants and began establishing democracies, especially in Syracuse, there grew a need for effective speech making in public debate, and one source links this need to the disputes over the distribution of property.¹ This scenario would put their activity in the 460s and 450s. From this start, then, would develop an environment in which persuasive speech was paramount, methods to that end increasingly valuable, and in turn from this environment would arise a speaker and thinker like Gorgias, who then makes his famous embassy to Athens in 427 B.C.E. Other links can be inferred for the transmission from Sicily to Athens. Cephalus, father of the orator Lysias, for example, was a wealthy immigrant in Athens but was originally from Syracuse.

Much of this early Sicilian narrative is insecure and controversial. First, the historicity of Corax has fallen into doubt. He is not attested in the earliest sources, and patterns in later sources indicate that he may be a doublet or nickname (“crow”) for Tisias.² In any case, most of the post-Aristotelian accretions to the story of these founders can be dispensed with for purposes of historical reconstruction. The limited references just to Tisias even in the classical period are problematic in themselves. He is first named in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (266e–67e), of the fourth century, linked to arguments from probability. One difficulty is a comment Plato adds at one point about Tisias: ὁ Τεισίας ἢ ἄλλος ὅστις δὴ ποτ’ ὦν τυγχάνει καὶ ὁπόθεν χάριει ὀνομαζόμενος, “Tisias, or whoever else he might be and wherever he might take his name from” (273c). If Tisias already had the nickname Corax, perhaps this is an oblique reference to it, but it also suggests Plato is aware of a slipperiness with regard to Tisias’ name and ideas. Later, Aristotle makes him the first name among pioneers of rhetoric, but not the first overall, being Τεισίας μὲν μετὰ τοὺς πρώτους, “Tisias after the first ones” (*Soph. el.* 33.183b31), the others not being named, again a hint that, even for Aristotle, Tisias was not simply “the founder” of rhetoric. Because Aristotle has just been talking about the growth, through accretion, of the skills of rhetoric, scholars used to take Aristotle to mean that Tisias established the basic division of speeches (a claim later scholars of antiquity were happy to

1. AS (AV.6–11).

2. Cole (1991b).

infer as well), but in the wake of the work of Cole and Schiappa, this claim does not hold.³ Taking a fresh look at what Plato says of Tisias in *Phaedrus*, Michael Gagarin makes a strong argument that the significant development associated with Tisias was not speech division or just probability arguments, but specifically the reverse-probability argument (e.g., a smaller man argues that it was improbable that he would attack a larger man, but the larger man counters that, because he would likely receive blame, it is improbable that he would have started a fight).⁴ This would be a significant step toward applying arguments to either or both sides of a dispute and thus represents substantial progress toward more sophisticated, and sophistic, argumentation. Even if Gagarin is right, though, it does not explain why Plato and Aristotle are vague about Tisias as an individual or why his contribution would become a topic of interest and debate roughly a century after he supposedly laid the foundation for rhetorical speech making, points that will be taken up again later in this chapter.

SICILIAN COMEDY IN THE FIFTH CENTURY

Sicily was a creative center for drama in the early and middle fifth century, attracting Aeschylus early on to the court of Hieron of Syracuse, where he staged new plays. Sicily developed its own brand of stage comedy, but, as with rhetoric, its relationship to later Athenian productions is unclear and still debated.⁵ Of the handful of names known of these early Sicilian comic playwrights, only the fragments of Epicharmus provide more than the slightest material for study. The limited testimony points to a career including, but not necessarily limited to, the 480s and 470s and also including a probable meeting with Aeschylus. It is possible that his life and career extended into the 460s and beyond, but no surviving fragment or testimony requires a date beyond the 470s.⁶ Consequently, while it would be illuminating if Epicharmus' comedy reflected the activities of Tisias, the burgeoning democracies, or rhetorical practice and theory as they were developing in Sicily, there are no sure indications of this activity. The paucity of fragments means it is imprudent to draw any conclusions from this absence of evidence, but there

3. See Roberts (1904) for an example of how this framework can affect historical reconstruction. Roberts argues that the fragmentary rhetorical treatise on *POxy.* 410 was authored by Tisias himself in the 420s.

4. Gagarin (1994) and (2007).

5. Kerkhof (2001, 133–77).

6. See Olson (2007, 6–12) and Rusten (2011, 59–60) for an overview.

is one provocative fragment that raises issues for the legacy of both Sicilian rhetoric and comedy for later Athenian practice.

In the interest of thoroughness, what follows presents everything from Sicilian comedy that pertains to speakers and language. In terms of speakers, no fragment or testimony names or describes someone using rhetorical language or refers to someone otherwise linked with the history of rhetoric. Aristotle cites Epicharmus himself, but only to quote a single line as an example of a false antithesis (*Rhet.* 3.9.1410b3 = Epicharmus fr. 145, quoted above).

Because a crucial part of the revision of the history of early rhetoric focuses on the development of specifically technical vocabulary for rhetoric, it would be helpful to know if early Sicilian comedy reflected knowledge of any technical vocabulary with regard to rhetoric. No such vocabulary appears, and this is consistent with the arguments of Cole and Schiappa that such terminology develops a century later, but remains are too scanty for this argument from silence to constitute certainty.⁷ Epicharmus did title one of his plays *Λόγος καὶ Λογίνα* (The Word and the Female Word).⁸ The three brief fragments of the play, however, give no help with the title or much of the content of the play. The longest fragment, at three lines, refers to Zeus ordering a meal for Pelops, which suggests that, like the majority of Epicharmus' fragments, this one has a mythological setting (fr. 76). One fragment, a single line, lists seafood (fr. 78). The last fragment, a couplet, mentions another Sicilian comic poet, Aristoxenus, introducing iambic verse (fr. 77). The single line of Aristoxenus' writing to survive mentions the word *ἀλαζονία*, which is later applied to orators and rhetoricians, among others, but here modifies prophets (*μάντεις*).⁹

Epicharmus did use dialogue and thus opened the door to scenes of debate, although there is almost never enough of a fragment to indicate scene or context. Athenian drama makes extensive use of formal debate, and Athenian comedy in particular will explicitly link debate to philosophical and political institutions, but there are only potential hints at such material in Epicharmus. Five brief fragments, none linked to named plays, are consistent with the staging of discussion or debate within a play, but none requires that such a scene occurred:

7. Cf. Schiappa (1999, 3–84) on the importance of stable terminology for focalizing a discipline.

8. Readers may be alert to the gender bias in this translation, which, however, reflects the gender bias in the Greek; *λόγος* is grammatically masculine and would culturally be read, unmarked, as masculine, while the neologism *λογίνα* would be read as marked, for indicating female gender; how Epicharmus handled the gender dynamics is completely unknown.

9. See MacDowell (1990) on the history and use of *ἀλαζών* and related words.

Fr. 144 (unmetrical)

ἀρτίως τε γὰρ λέλεκται, καὶ εὐθέως φαίνεται οὐ καλῶς ἔχον.
As soon as it has been said, it immediately seems to be wrong.

Fr. 161

τὰ πρὸ τοῦ δὴ ἄνδρες ἔλεγον, εἷς ἐγὼν ἀποχρέω.
For what two men said before, I myself am sufficient.

Fr. 163

ἀλλὰ καὶ σιγῆν ἀγαθόν, ὅκκα παρέωντι κάρρονες.
But it's good to be silent, when your betters are present.

Fr. 175

ἅμα τε καὶ λόγων ἀκούσας ἀδύμων
at the same time listening to sweet words

Fr. 184

οὐ λέγειν τύ γ' ἐσοὶ δεινός, ἀλλὰ σιγῆν ἀδύνατος¹⁰
You are not inspiring at speaking, but incapable of staying quiet.

Nothing in these statements allows inferences about context, so there is no way to determine if such comments occurred in the topical political atmosphere found in Aristophanes and other Athenian comic poets. While in general most of the fragmentary quotations from Epicharmus have mythological contexts, there is some evidence that he explored more topical issues and set them in less remote settings. Among direct quotations, one fragment could require a more immediate setting and address civic life: the speaker charges the addressee with making the city uncultured (ἀγρὸν τὰν πόλιν ποιεῖς, fr. 219).

Beyond these isolated lines, the extant fragments are too brief to convey how Epicharmus staged scenes or constructed plots. The papyrus remains

10. This line, preserved in Gellius, might be the earliest appearance of the phrase δεινὸς λέγειν “awesome at speaking”, which was used pejoratively of court speakers in Athens in the fourth century (e.g., Plato, *Apol.* 17b; *Lys.* 12.86; *Isoc.* 21.5; *Dem.* 22.66). The notoriety of the phrase, however, also makes the line a reasonable candidate for forgery (a problem to be addressed later in this chapter).

of *Pyrrha and Prometheus* (fr. 113) offer strands of hundreds of lines and, while not complete enough to provide coherent flow, do confirm the use of dialogue between characters and, so far, no participation by a chorus. The most extensive evidence, however, for what sort of scenes Epicharmus staged arrives yoked with a perennial philosophical problem and the most important extant link between him and the Athenian intellectual milieu.

As with the pioneer in rhetoric, Tisias, the earliest references to Epicharmus come in mid-fourth-century Athenian authors (e.g., the gnomic frs. 236 and 271 from Xenophon *Mem.* 2.1.20). By far the most important comes from Plato's *Theaetetus* (152e), where Socrates and Theaetetus are discussing the philosophical problems of perception and change, and whether change over time makes an individual a being distinct from who he was at an earlier time. Socrates groups Epicharmus with thinkers who agree that identity changes over time. A fragmentary commentary on papyrus explains Epicharmus' position on this issue in large part by summarizing how he dramatized the problem (fr. 136):

Ἐπίχαρμος, ὁμιλήσας τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις, ἄλλα τέ τινα εὖ . . . κεν δράματ . . . οὐ αύξομένου, ὁ λόγῳ ἐφοδικῶ καὶ πιστῶ ἐπέβαινε. οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' ὡς ἀφοδοὶ γίνονται πρόσοδοί τε ἐναργές, εἰ οὐχ ἔστῶς τις γίνεται μείζων ἢ ἐλάττων· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, οὐσίαι ἄλλοτε ἄλλαι γίνονται διὰ τὴν συνεχῆ ῥύσιν. καὶ ἐκωμώδησεν αὐτὸ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀπαιτουμένου συμβολᾶς καὶ ἀρνούμενου τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἶναι διὰ τὸ μὲν προσγεγενῆσθαι, τὰ δὲ ἀπεληλυθέναι, ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ ἀπαιτῶν ἐτύπτησεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐνεκαλεῖτο, πάλιν κάκεινου φάσκοντος ἄλλο μὲν εἶναι τὸν τετυπτηκότα, ἕτερον δὲ τὸν ἐγκαλούμενον.

Epicharmus, through his association with the Pythagoreans, in plays well explored (?) issues, including the problem of growth, which he accomplished with a methodical argument and proof. It is not obvious how approach becomes departure, if someone fixed does not become bigger or smaller. But if this happens, essences sometimes become different through constant flux. And he made comedy of this by having the same man requested to pay his share at a symposium and then refuse on the basis of becoming and departing, and, when the one who invited him struck him and was indicted, he in turn claimed to be someone other than the one who did the beating and who was indicted.

The commentary suggests six actions: (1) one man invites another to a

symposium, and (2) when the guest refuses to pay his share, (3) he argues that he is no longer the same man who accepted the invitation; (4) the host in turn beats the guest, and (5) when indicted for battery, (6) he argues that he is no longer the man who did the beating. Plutarch alludes to these events in Epicharmus briefly, but perhaps with additional information (*De Sera num. vind.* 15.559a–b, also cited in fr. 136):

ταῦτά γε τοῖς Ἐπιχαρμείοις ἔοικεν, ἐξ ὧν ὁ αὐξόμενος ἀνέφνυ τοῖς σοφισταῖς λόγος, ὁ γὰρ λαβῶν πάλαι τὸ χρέος νῦν οὐκ ὀφείλει, γεγωνῶς ἕτερος, ὃ τε κληθεὶς ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἐχθρὸς ἄκλιτος ἦκει τήμερον· ἄλλος γὰρ ἐστὶ.

It's like this with the Epicharmians, among whom the argument arose about growth: for the one who owed a debt now does not owe it back, because he is someone else, and the one who was called to dinner yesterday is uninvited today, for he is someone else.

Plutarch's reference is brief but adds the additional element of someone refusing to pay back a debt by the same reasoning (he is no longer the same individual who incurred the debt). Aristotle also cites Epicharmus briefly in the context of repaying debts (*NE* 9.7.1167b17 = fr. 142). It is possible that Plutarch and Aristotle allude to an element from the plot of Epicharmus' play. The two pieces of testimony together strongly suggest that Epicharmus treated the issue at some length. At a minimum, the plot developments require some extended narration. If the storyline was not staged in the play, but only reported or narrated within a monologue, the entire sequence of events would still require a long-enough speech to explain who the two men are, and relate the invitation, the subsequent refusal, the violence, and the dialogue after the violence. A fully staged version of the events would contain the meal, potentially the invitation earlier in the play, certainly the slapstick, and potentially also a separate, subsequent scene in court playing out the indictment. Taken together, these scenes could make up a substantial portion of a play or an entire short one.

Supporting the idea of a staged version of events is fragment 146 (= Olson A15), which indicates that Epicharmus did stage sympotic scenes with dialogue in them. A short dialogue features two characters talking about behavior at symposia, with one character articulating how drunkenness leads to violent behavior and thence to legal trouble and finally to punishment.

‡ ἐκ μὲν θυσίας θοίνα
 ἐκ δὲ θοίνας πόσις ἐγένετο.
 (B.) χαρίεν, ὥς γ' ἔμοι <δοκεῖ>.
 (A.) ἐκ δὲ πόσιος κῶμος, ἐκ κώμου δ' ἐγένεθ' ὑάνια,
 ἐκ δ' ὑάνιας δίκαι, <κ δίκαις ἐγένετο καταδίκαι>,
 ἐκ δὲ καταδίκαις πέδαι τε καὶ σφαλὸς καὶ ζαμία

‡A sacrifice leads to a feast,
 and feast leads to drinking.
 (B.) Sounds good to me, at least!
 (A.) But drinking leads to wandering the streets drunk;
 wandering the streets drunk leads to acting like a pig;
 acting like a pig leads to a lawsuit;
 <a lawsuit leads to being found guilty;>
 and being found guilty leads to shackles, stocks and a fine.
 (following the supplements of Dindorf in line 2 and Meineke in line 4, as
 printed and translated by Olson)

This fragment has a certain sociopolitical content, insofar as it expresses, in a compressed form, causality between unrestrained symposiastic behavior and punishment for that behavior meted out by established legal institutions. It is tempting to say that the scenario fits a democratic environment, since punishment is meted out through lawsuits and courts, with no reference to a local ruler, but such a suggestion is speculative. Nonetheless, combined with the summary testimony, this fragment makes a case that Epicharmus devoted a substantial portion of at least one comedy to dramatizing philosophical, civic and political tensions. It is thus the closest to evidence that Sicilian comedy, or at least Epicharmus, incorporated the issue of sophistic reasoning in a sociopolitical context, including political institutions like courts. Only the reasoning is highlighted in the testimony, however. No reference points to the particular manner or techniques either party used when constructing a speech in support of their position. Thus while the evidence is valuable in several ways, and the silence about speech-making techniques is not at all proof that Epicharmus did not raise the issue, there is no reference to any activity that would match any definition of “rhetoric.”

Scholarship for the most part has studied this evidence with an eye toward parallels in later Athenian dramatic technique. Epicharmus was not the last comic poet to stage satire of communal and even political institutions through a sympotic situation. R. Kerkhof looks to Strepsiades in

Clouds and Philocleon in *Wasps* as potential *Nachleben*.¹¹ Likewise scholars have been drawn to other fragments for the speech of a parasite and various aspects of mythological parody in Epicharmus as direct predecessors of such material in later Athenian comedy.¹² With regard to the symposiastic setting, Kenneth Rothwell provides much evidence that many core techniques of Athenian comedy had their origins in performances at symposia.¹³ If there is any direct link between Epicharmus and Athenian comedy, the institution of the symposium might provide it.¹⁴ This is not to claim additional influence for Epicharmus on Athenian comedy except to suggest that it could be valuable to see this scene in Epicharmus as fundamental for Greek stage comedy's method of engaging its audiences with topical and cultural issues.

The philosophical issue debated here also has a legacy that raises further issues for the links between Sicily and Athens, with suggestive parallels to the transmission of early rhetoric. A series of forged writings in Epicharmus' name circulated and became popular. The date and origin of the various forgeries can be determined only within general limits, but Aristotle's pupil Aristoxenus is the earliest person we know of who specifically identified one of these works as a forgery (by identifying its true author, Athenaeus 14.648d = Aristoxenus fr. 45 Wehrli and cited in PCG as Epicharmus Ψευδοπειχάρμεια Ti). Circulation of these forgeries in the late fourth and early third centuries would also be consistent with a reference in Alexis to writings of Epicharmus (fr. 140 = Olson G3).

Among the forgeries was a work by an otherwise unknown Alcimus entitled *To Amyntas*. Alcimus evidently claimed that Plato had plagiarized a significant amount of doctrine from Epicharmus, and cited forged Epicharmic writings to make his case. One of these doctrines was Plato's position on the problem of growth and change.¹⁵ Diogenes Laertius (3.11) preserves

11. Kerkhof (2001, 171–73) explores this topic with particular reference to the influence of Epicharmus for the rustic characterization of Strepsiades in *Clouds*.

12. See Olson (2007, 55) for bibliography.

13. Rothwell (2007, 6–35).

14. The possibility of a genetic link from sympotic scenes in Epicharmus to those in Athenian comedy also suggests that symposiastic contexts were core to comic performance, and it is worth exploring if it remained so more than has been appreciated to date. We are relatively well equipped to explore this possibility, since, because of Athenaeus, our remains of Greek comedy derive overwhelmingly from sympotic scenes. This is not to say that every symposium was the topic of philosophical or topical debate, or that every list of fish hints at intellectual discourse, but there might be more there than we realize if we are not just looking for civic, public contexts such as we are accustomed to in Aristophanes, or domestic scenes such we are accustomed to in New Comedy. Translocation of civic debate will be crucial in Aristophanes' plays (see Chapters 3–6). Cf. Wilkins (2000, 320–31) and Carrière (2003).

15. See *Prot.* 356e for the simile of odd/even and lesser/greater numbers, likely the reference for the forgery.

the forgery from Alcimus, which provides a glimpse of how Epicharmus' dramatic writings could be later reconstituted (Pseudepicharmia fr. 276):

(A.) αἰ πότ' ἀριθμόν τις περισσόν, αἰ δὲ λῆς πότ' ἄρτιον,
ποτθέμειν λῆ ψᾶφον ἢ τᾶν ὑπαρχουσᾶν λαβεῖν,
ἢ δοκεῖ κα τοί γ' <ἔσθ'> ωύτὸς εἶμεν;

(B.) οὐκ ἐμίν, γα κα.

(A.) οὐδὲ μὰν οὐδ' αἰ ποτὶ μέτρον παχυαῖον ποτθέμειν
λῆ τις ἕτερον μᾶκος ἢ τοῦ πρόσθ' ἐόντος ἀποταμεῖν,
ἔτι χ' ὑπάρχοι κῆνο τὸ μέτρον;

(B.) οὐ γὰρ.

(A.) ὦδε νῦν ὄρη
καὶ τὸς ἀνθρώπους· ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὔξεθ,' ὁ δὲ γα μὰν φθίνει,
ἐν μεταλλαγᾷ δὲ πάντες ἐντὶ πάντα τὸν χρόνον.
ὁ δὲ μεταλλάσσει κατὰ φύσιν κούποκ' ἐν τωύτῳ μένει,
ἕτερον εἶη κα τόδ' ἦδη τοῦ παρεξεστακότος.
καὶ τὺ δὴ κάγῳ χθὲς ἄλλοι καὶ νῦν ἄλλοι τελέθομες,
καῦθις ἄλλοι κούποχ' ωύτοὶ καττὸν αὐτὸν αὐ λόγον.

(A.) Then if someone to an odd number, or to an even one if you want,
wants to add a pebble or to take one away that is lying there,
does it seem to stay the same to you?

(B.) Certainly not to me.

(A.) Nor, if to a thick measure someone wants to add
an additional amount, or to cut away from what is present,
would that measure remain?

(B.) No.

(A.) So now look at
people: one grows and another shrinks,
and they are all in the process of change all the time.
But what changes naturally never remains in the same state:
it would be something other than that from which it transformed.
Even you and I were one thing yesterday but now become different,
and will never be the same again by the same reasoning.

The testimonia in fr. 136, the example of fr. 146 (cf. fr. 147 = Olson A14 for another snatch of dialogue in a sympotic setting) and the text of this forgery encapsulate the difference between fifth-century stage comedy and later writings under the influence of the Platonic style of promulgat-

ing philosophical doctrine. The speakers in the forgery bluntly lay out the philosophical topic with no hint of the stage action implied in fr. 136 and 146. This forgery served the purpose of trying to discredit an Athenian philosopher, but Epicharmus did dramatize the topic, and Plato seems to have been aware of the original dramatization. This gives some idea of how complex and problematic the reception of Sicilian influence in Athens could be, more so now through the fragmentary state of all these sources.

THE RECEPTION OF SICILIAN COMEDY AND RHETORIC IN ATHENS

Comparison of the evidence for the Sicilian pioneers of comedy and rhetoric does not yield certainty about the interrelation of the two genres, but it is suggestive and allows for some provisional conclusions. A chronology combining the two will be helpful. Aristotle would have Epicharmus established as early as the sixth century, nearly back to the time of Pythagoras, but other evidence points to a *floruit* in the 480s and 470s (not entirely incompatible with Aristotle, but it suggests his chronology should not be pushed to expect too much precision). Tradition, presumably Aristotelian, held that, following the overthrow of tyrants in the 460s, Tisias was a critical pioneer in developing techniques for speech making in the new democracies. Aristotle claims that Epicharmus and Sicilian comedy were the first to incorporate *μῦθοι*, “stories,” into their comedies, and then cites Crates, active in the 450s and 440s, as the first Athenian comic playwright to do so (*Poetics* 1449b5–9). As noted above, Aristotle is circumspect in citing Tisias, and scholars have been rightly cautious with regard to how accurate Aristotle could have been about Epicharmus. Even the idea that Sicilian comedy was a crucial influence on Athenian comedy by the time of Crates is only an inference from Aristotle’s brief statement.

The relevance of Tisias or the comic playwrights for Athenian practice, in either comedy or rhetoric, in the fifth century is not clear. Despite efforts to discern Sicilian influence on Athenian drama, “no positive evidence exists to suggest that Sicilian comedy (or other texts assigned to Sicilian comic playwrights) directly influenced any Attic author before the time of Plato and Xenophon.”¹⁶ Much the same is true for Tisias. Even if Gagarin is right about Tisias’ importance for the development of the reverse-probability

16. Olson (2007, 11).

argument, its impact in Athens was limited at best until the time of Plato.¹⁷ The early attempts at defining the proper components of a speech and their order, which the traditional narrative of the early development of rhetoric ascribed to Sicilian pioneers, is not yet in evidence in Athenian oratory from the fifth century.¹⁸

In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Tisias emerges as a topic of contemporary debate. Both Plato and Aristotle are cautious in referring to him. Around this same time, Plato cites Epicharmus in *Theaetetus*.¹⁹ Aristotle cites and discusses Epicharmus in a limited way, but by this point Epicharmus was a poet of the distant past. If there was some chain of influence on Athens, direct or indirect, at the latest by the generation after Aristotle, Epicharmus' comedies were not circulating sufficiently to prevent the drastic rewrites of them. Rather than present an archaic Doric Sicilian comic scene, Alcimus presents a rewrite to make it contemporary and modern by fourth-century standards. Alcimus and others took the authentic fifth-century Sicilian Epicharmus and reinvented him as an authoritative ancestor in the development of fourth-century Athenian philosophy. Likewise, for both Plato and Aristotle, whatever circulated under Tisias' name in the fourth century was problematic enough for each of them to be circumspect in the way they referred to him, but they, too, faced the prospect of an authoritative mid-fifth-century Sicilian predecessor to Athenian achievement. There is no way to determine if the stories or writings attributed to Tisias were bald forgeries, rewrites of real material, or in fact authentic, but the coexistence of authentic and forged writings for Epicharmus, some used explicitly to discredit Plato, indicates there were parties ready, willing and able to insert Sicilian predecessors, of dubious veracity, into the narrative of the history of ideas, and specifically to try to claim credit for fundamental ideas prior to Athenian contributions.

Whatever the historical Tisias said, did or wrote to be invoked as a Sicilian founder of rhetoric is now beyond productive speculation, but the scenario reinforces Cole's and Schiappa's contention that formalized disciplinary study of rhetoric originated in fourth-century Athens, not fifth-

17. The First Tetralogy (Antiphon 2.2.3 and 2.2.6) makes use of the reverse-probability argument, but whether this results from a connection to the historical Tisias cannot be determined. See Gagarin (1997) 14.

18. Timmerman and Schiappa (2010, 153–70).

19. The date of composition of *Phaedrus* is still a matter of some dispute, but most evidence favors a late composition, close in time to *Theaetetus*. See Rowe (1986, 120–21). In the context of the idea that Sicilian influence is suddenly the rage near the mid-fourth century, while it is too much to say it is additional evidence, it is interesting that *Phaedrus* makes much of the oratory and rhetoric of Lysias, the son of a Syracusan.

century Sicily. Such a conclusion should not be taken as a disparagement of Sicilian accomplishments in speech making in the fifth century, but merely a lament that we can no longer recover what those accomplishments were. Had we access to even the slimmest of references to Tisias prior to his resurrection in the fourth century, we might find, as with Epicharmus, a vital and creative force, though perhaps in a rather different form than extant testimony leads us to expect. The diversity of the surviving fragmentary evidence is, however, perhaps a reminder of the wild and woolly ways that drama and oratory can intertwine in the milieu of the Greeks in the classical period.

In Athenian comedy, scenes that can seem like elaborations on the one found in Epicharmus do exist, such as the elaborate trial and Philocleon's subsequent disruptive behavior at a symposium in *Wasps*. Still, nothing allows us to confidently infer that Aristophanes or other Athenian comic playwrights reacted to or incorporated either comic or rhetorical traditions as Sicilian. For the purposes of the rest of this study, then, in analysis of Athenian comedy of the fifth century and for the duration of Aristophanes' career, Sicilian predecessors for both comedy and rhetoric will be considered beyond the playwrights' line of sight, except for individuals and ideas for which there is other evidence of links to Athens. Thus Gorgias' visit and reputation in the city provide a demonstrable link to Sicilian tradition, but the point is that Gorgias developed a distinct presence and reputation in Athens, as did other non-Athenians, and similarities to Sicilian rhetoric or comedy do not have resonance simply because of the pioneering creativity that flourished there. The next chapter, then, turns to Athenian stage comedy prior to the availability of the first complete extant comedy in 425 B.C.E., focusing on the fragmentary evidence for its engagement with intellectuals and their pursuit of language, along with testimony about the effects of these pursuits on the language used in public discourse.