

INVENTING THE COMEDIAN: ARISTOPHANIC SELF-DEFINITION THROUGH
BARBARIANS

By

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τῷ ἐμῷ κυρίῳ καὶ σωτῆρι Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, ὃς σέσωκέν με ἀπὸ τῶν ἐμῶν ἁμαρτιῶν,
et Magistrae Swart, cui meum amorem Classicarum Linguarum debeo,
and to my parents, who have supported and loved me unconditionally

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Lines 1565-1693 of the *Birds* and 1001-1231 of the *Thesmophoriazusae* represent two out of only three scenes in extant Aristophanic comedies in which a barbarian speaks. In the *Birds*, Tribballos enters as the member of a divine embassy that includes Poseidon and Heracles, suing the birds for peace. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, a Scythian archer guards the captured relative of Euripides. Both scenes play a vital role in the conclusion of these plays, and Aristophanes uses these characters to highlight his own dramatic art and underscore the importance of comedy in Greek literature.

These characters speak a barbarized Greek with thick accents. The inability to speak proper Greek, together with Aristophanes' characterization of the non-Greeks as stupid, lazy, and backward, give occasion for laughter to the Athenian audience. Most scholars focus on the language of the garbled Greek: what is wrong with it and what was the character really trying to say? While these debates are enlightening, this thesis focuses instead on the dramatic function of these characters and how they fit into the overarching story of the play. By doing so, I contend that the barbarians in the plays of Aristophanes serve primarily to call attention to the author's dramatic ability and establish a hierarchy between comedy and tragedy.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

From the ancient world to the modern, foreign accents are a staple of verbal humor. The comedian elicits a laugh by caricaturing stereotypical features of a given culture's accent and mannerisms. While the exaggerated characteristics of such characters are often humorous in themselves, they also raise questions about the comedian's broader work: why use that particular culture, why exaggerate those particular traits, how does this comic figure fit into the rest of the work at hand? This thesis investigates the use of barbarian characters in the comedies of Aristophanes and attempts to answer those particular questions. I will argue that Aristophanes does not characterize his barbarians in any depth, but rather uses non-Greeks in his plays as a comic foil to exaggerate traits (good and bad) of his other comic targets and to support his dramatic art, both by underscoring his own abilities as a playwright and by emphasizing the supremacy of comedy.

In the extant comedies of Aristophanes, three non-Greek characters are given speaking lines. For the purposes of this paper, I will not investigate those barbarians who are not allotted any speaking part. The three extant speaking barbarians occur in *Acharnians* 93-125, *Birds* 1565-1693, and *Thesmophoriazusae* 1001-1231. In the *Acharnians*, Pseudartabas, introduced as the "Eye of the Great King" (93), speaks twice to announce the king's decision regarding Athenian ambassadors sent to him. His first line is unintelligible, and his second clearly denies the possibility of monetary aid to Greece from Persia. The scene is brief and plays no role in the development of the plot. Triballos, a Thracian god introduced in the *Birds*, is a member of the divine embassy sent to sue for peace with Peisetairos and his feathered kingdom.¹ Although Triballos is only allotted three lines of Greek, his presence on stage is considerably longer than

¹ "Peisetairos" is the transliteration of the protagonist's name as printed in Dunbar 1995.

that of Pseudartabas and, more importantly, vital to the conclusion of the play. The Scythian *toxotes* is the most important of these three barbarians, as he plays the largest role of any of them. His extended interaction with Euripides and his relative includes more than fifty spoken lines and an important role in the comic finale.

In this paper, I will only investigate the characterization of Triballos and the Scythian. While a study of Pseudartabas would be worthwhile, there are several reasons for excluding him from the present study. First and foremost, his scene is the shortest and provides the least material for analysis. Triballos may have only one more spoken line but his extended stage presence creates more opportunities for interaction with the Greek characters. Triballos' first and last lines are separated by more than sixty lines, whereas Pseudartabas' two fall within four lines of each other. Such brief exposure limits the worth of in-depth study of his characterization. In addition, I have chosen to exclude the *Acharnians* due to the similarity of content. In many ways, Triballos and Pseudartabas fulfill similar functions. Both are sent as representatives of a foreign people and both are (purposefully) misinterpreted by their Greek audience. A close study of this scene from the *Acharnians* would thus largely overlap the conclusions of the chapter on Triballos. Were one to apply similar scrutiny to Pseudartabas as to Triballos and the Scythian, the conclusion would remain the same. Thus, in the interest of space, I will pass over the *Acharnians* in my study.

An examination of barbarians in the comedies of Aristophanes encounters several textual and literary pitfalls. The process of textual criticism, difficult for any ancient text, is even more arduous when dealing with the lines spoken by non-Greeks. The text as written was not *meant* to be correct, and so modern scholars are at a loss as to what was actually said on the stage. Unfortunately, the degree of uncertainty inherent in any modern version of an ancient text is

amplified in the lines of Pseudartabas, Triballos, and the Scythian. Scribal errors and other variations of the text can be introduced leaving little or no indication of the corruption. What was meant to be a mistake may be corrected, or what was supposed to be correct may become an error. For this reason, I have avoided entering the debate over the accuracy with which Aristophanes reflects the Thracian or Scythian accents. I have also tried not to base any conclusions on specific syntactical mistakes made by the barbarian speakers.

While we must be careful with these texts and recognize the likelihood that the lines spoken by barbarians no longer reflect with certainty what Aristophanes wrote, I believe that it is fair to assume that the general gist of each line has been maintained. Willi makes the following important observation:

I have stressed that we must not rely too much on the textual transmission when dealing with a passage representing foreigner talk. The Aristophanic text began as the script for a dramatic performance. An actor did not read out exactly what was written but created his own version of a foreign accent. Our text gives only the most basic indications for the principal phonological features of 'Scythian' Attic. It was sufficient if these indications were given a few times since the actor would automatically generalize them. (2003: 220)

The text as we have received it, then, cannot be relied on too closely for specific words within a given line. This does not, however, hinder an in-depth investigation of the characterization of Aristophanes' barbarians.

For this paper, I have used Dunbar's edition of the *Birds* (1995) and Austin and Olson's text of the *Thesmophoriazusae* (2004).² I also have taken into consideration the text of Hall and Geldart's Oxford Classical Text for both (*Birds* 1900; *Thesmophoriazusae* 1907), though I generally followed Austin and Olson. Although I also consulted Sommerstein's 1987 edition of the *Birds* and 1994 edition of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, I found the text of Dunbar and Austin and

² Both of these editions print the barbarized Greek without accents but with breath marks. According to Austin and Olson 2004: 308 this is a suggestion of Dover.

Olson to be the most authoritative. I will make clear in the body of the paper where I follow any other edition.

The argument of this paper explores a trend consistent throughout the Greek world – that is, a barbarian-Hellene antithesis. Much has been written elsewhere of the role this ideology plays in other genres,³ but unfortunately, this has not been a prevalent field of study in Aristophanic scholarship. The second chapter of this thesis, therefore, attempts to place this work within the broader trends of scholarship on the role of barbarians in tragedy. Bacon’s *Barbarians in Greek Tragedy* and Hall’s *Inventing the Barbarian* have laid the groundwork in tragedy. Long’s empirical approach in *Barbarians in Greek Comedy* also contributed to the foundations of this thesis. An in-depth study of these three works will help to center this paper within the broader field of barbarian-Hellene studies.

In the third and fourth chapters, I will examine the role of Triballos in the *Birds* and the Scythian archer in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. These chapters will examine the way in which these two barbarians interact with the Greek characters on stage in both what is said and what is left unsaid. In chapter three, I will demonstrate that Triballos serves primarily as the butt of the Greeks’ jokes and is characterized in typically “barbarian” ways in order to highlight Aristophanes’ dramatic abilities. In the fourth chapter, I will show that the Scythian archer is not characterized in and of himself, but is only stereotyped as a non-Greek. More importantly for an interpretation of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the Scythian’s most important role is to demonstrate the superiority of comedy over tragedy.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, I will explore the ways in which these two characters are similar to each other. The similarity of their characterization will show that Aristophanes relies

³ Cf. Harrison 2002.

on a more or less “stock” description of a barbarian character. Jokes at the expense of barbarians are not the central purposes of the play, but instead highlight the failings and foibles of the other characters, providing a comic foil for the Atheno- and comic-centric ideas of Aristophanic plays.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the aftermath of the Persian Wars, Greece experienced a period of self-definition: the world was divided between Greek and non-Greek, or barbarian. Herodotus blazed a path of ethnocentrism with his portrayal of the barbarians in his *Histories*. He divided the East and West into two distinct worlds, separated by an impassable chasm of culture and habits. While Herodotus may have been the first in literature to create this glaring dichotomy, Aeschylus was hard on his heels to do the same in tragedy, and the other playwrights were close behind him. From what we can tell of the fragments and known titles of lost plays, foreign locations and people were a popular subject in the tragedies. Comedy, too, paraded non-Greeks. The interaction of Greeks and non-Greeks on the Athenian stage has received considerable attention, though the scholarship has focused more attention on tragedy than on comedy.

If one wishes to learn about the relationship between Greeks and barbarians in any specific play, tragic or comic, there is little difficulty in doing so. The issue of Greeks and non-Greeks has been taken up most thoroughly in Bacon's *Barbarians in Greek Tragedy*, Long's *Barbarians in Greek Comedy*, and Hall's *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*. This thesis is intentionally directed toward scholarship on comedy, but seeks to do so within the groundwork laid by seminal scholarship in tragedy. The methods, conclusions, and central questions of each of these works have shaped the approach I take toward barbarians in Aristophanes.

The first groundbreaking work in the study of the Hellene-barbarian antithesis on the Athenian stage came with Helen Bacon's work, published in 1961. Bacon is unapologetic about her methodology from the first sentence of the introduction: "The largely quantitative observations of this study are not presented as a substitute for literary criticism. What follows is

mainly an attempt to establish facts—to find out how much, and in what ways, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides used the knowledge of their own day in representing foreigners” (1961: 1). The subsequent work is largely a list of all the instances in extant Greek tragedy. Each chapter covers a single playwright and is broken down into sections that deal with language, appearance, religion, geography, etc. Analysis of the passages is purposefully limited (1961: 2), though some inevitably comes with the territory.

Bacon must, of course, define who is and who is not Greek before she can embark on such a study. While some barbarians are easily defined, others, such as the Macedonians, fit less obviously into one category or another. Bacon chooses to separate between the Greek and barbarian by using Aeschylus’ description of Pelasgus’ realm at *Suppliants* 254-61 (1961: 6). Thus, according to Bacon, the Macedonians qualify as barbarians, as well as the inhabitants of Cyprus, Crete, and Lemnos. Other peoples, such as the Trojans, Persians, Lydians, and Taurians, are automatically considered foreigners (1961: 5-7). She uses a literary source to distinguish between Greek and barbarian, thus relying on the ancients’ own definition of Greek and non-Greek, but she does not explain *why* or *how* these particular distinctions occurred.

She also does not concern herself with the question of when the Greeks began to view themselves as a self-identified group. She does, however, consider the meaning of the term, ‘barbarian’. Bacon argues that *barbaros* can mean unintelligible or foreign, whether in a neutral sense to identify a non-Greek or pejoratively to mean inferior to the Greeks (1961: 11). The last meaning developed as a result of intensified national consciousness following the Persian Wars (1961: 11). Bacon shows that all three of these definitions are possible and indeed all are used by the tragedians.

As she addresses each of the tragedians in turn, she includes very little analysis and seeks only to draw basic conclusions about each. She argues that Aeschylus does not merely add Eastern elements to his plays for ‘color’ or decoration, but to represent foreigners as they really were—that is, a foreigner is not just foreign, but “*a Persian, a Trojan, an Egyptian*” (1961: 62, Bacon’s italics). Aeschylus does not use his portrayal of foreigners to denigrate them as inferior to the Greeks, rather, there are “many different and fascinating varieties of human beings” (1961: 63). Bacon argues that Sophocles—to judge from the relatively limited data in extant literature and the overwhelming flood of evidence which the fragments point to—may actually have been more precise than Aeschylus in his characterization of foreigners (1961: 114). Sophocles’ approach displays a bias toward the “more scientific criteria of truth set up by Herodotus” (1961: 113). He makes frequent allusion to actual foreign words and customs, many of which are also found in Herodotus (1961: 114). Euripides, on the other hand, characterizes the barbarian only symbolically, emphasizing the theme of foreignness (1961: 168). Aeschylus and Sophocles use foreigners to portray the world of myth as some pre-historical reality, and “foreign people are the background for and the explanation of the present” (1961: 170). Euripides, on the other hand, “is committed to destroying the illusion that the events of myth ever took place in any literal sense” (1961: 171). Thus, Euripides’ foreigners must not appear realistic: “Like the myths in which they appear they have lost their historical reality” (1961: 171). Euripides is not concerned with accuracy like Aeschylus and Sophocles, but explores the idea of foreignness through his barbarian characters.

What is most important about Bacon’s work is the necessary compilation and numeration of instances of foreigners in Greek tragedy. Both Long and Hall respond directly to Bacon’s empirical methodology and interact with *Barbarians in Greek Tragedy* throughout their

respective works. For the purposes of this thesis, her conclusions on Euripides are particularly important. In comedy, characters are necessarily exaggerated and often reflect stereotypes rather than actual characteristics of individuals. Understanding the way the tragedians, particularly Euripides, portrayed barbarians will help bring focus to Aristophanes' characterization of non-Greeks.

Timothy Long's *Barbarians in Greek Comedy*, published in 1986, is a self-conscious imitation of Bacon's seminal work (1986: xii). Unlike Bacon, however, Long's synchronic study of Old and New Greek comedy is organized thematically rather than by author, investigating matters such as religion, costume, and music. Although his work differs in many ways from Bacon's, it too is primarily empirical. Literary analysis of the specific instances of barbarians is lacking, though Long does go beyond Bacon with a chapter which places his research into the Hellene-barbarian antithesis.

Long does not define 'Greek' or 'barbarian' until his sixth chapter, where he allows the ancients to provide his definition. While the early definition of *barbaros* was a distinction in language (1986: 130), the word later became "as much an ethical description as a national designation" (1986: 132). As Bacon noted above, *barbaros* can carry negative connotations in itself. Even after these moral connotations were attached to the word, language remained the essential marker to distinguish Greeks from non-Greeks (1986: 136). He does not specify whether fringe groups such as the Macedonians or Cretans should be classified as Greek or barbarians in comedy or if this changes between Old and New Comedy. Long does note that there are two sets of barbarian stereotypes in comedy: Asian and Northern (1986: 142-43). All of these stereotypes add up to a uniformly negative picture (1986: 145).

Long traces the rise of the Hellene-barbarian antithesis to the Persian Wars (1986: 145). Although Greeks differentiated themselves from non-Greeks before this time, such differentiations were not inherently antagonistic (1986: 131). After the Persian Wars, the comedians portrayed “an unquestioning acceptance of the world order as it is perceived” (1986: 144). Comedy was, essentially, culturally conservative by looking at non-Greek influences through such a lens (1986: 159). The Persian Wars and the rift it caused between East and West led to the barbarian’s role as the butt of a joke in comedy: “To the comedian the globe is not so much a community as it is a collection of targets” (1986: 162).¹

Whenever they came into contact with these other cultures, the comic playwrights had a variety of responses. The comedians could use other cultures to satirize their own or create an imaginary utopia to try to escape from culture altogether. As Long puts it, “Comedy either crystallized the local or conjured the imaginary, and therefore foreign material offered contrast for Greek phenomena and a ready extension of boundaries for fantasies” (1986: 167). For the comedians, then, barbarians are valuable for their otherness; they are a useful tool for the comedians to accomplish their own ends.

Long’s empirical methodology naturally leads to conclusions about which stereotypes were prevalent in Greek comedy. His work does not concern itself with how the comedians manipulated these stereotypes or why these generalized characterizations were so frequent in comedy. Like Bacon, he is interested in where and how barbarians appeared onstage, but not why. These are the kinds of questions about tragedy that Edith Hall addresses in *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*.

¹ Significantly, the use of barbarians as the butt of jokes means that consistency within a given poet or even a given play should not be expected. The portrayal of a barbarian may be self-contradictory and display two opposing stereotypes of a foreign group, but “comedy is not an analysis of prejudice but a syntopicon of it” (1986: 162).

Published in 1989, Hall's work is perhaps the most important work on the role of Greeks and barbarians in tragedy. She acknowledges the importance of Bacon's empirical method, but seeks to correct her "almost complete absence of historical and philosophical perspective" (1989b: xi). In order to understand the interaction of Greek and non-Greek in tragedy, she concentrates on tragedy as "a producer and product of contemporary ideology" (1989b: xi). She is the first to ask the essential questions that she poses: "*Why* were the tragedians so interested in barbarians, and how was their interpretation of myth affected by this preoccupation?" (1989b: xii).

Like most other scholars, Hall separates Greeks and barbarians based on language (1989b: 166). She disagrees with Bacon, however, in her classification of some of the 'fringe states'. She includes Lemnos, Crete, and Cyprus as part of the Greek world, as well as other parts of Western Asia (1989b: 168-70). Hall argues that there was no collective Greek self-consciousness before the Persian Wars: "It can hardly be an accident that the emergence of the barbarian and the tragedians' reinterpretation of myth from a radically ethnocentric viewpoint coincide not only with the combined Greek efforts against the Persian empire but also with the consolidation of Athenian democracy and Athenian hegemony in the Aegean" (1989b: 54-55).

The barbarian, according to Hall, is a literary construct by which the Greeks defined themselves against the barbarians. As she says in her preface, "The title might therefore almost as well have been *Inventing the Hellene* as *Inventing the Barbarian*" (1989b: ix). While she agrees there is some colonial sense of identity, the sense of panhellenic self-identity really comes to the foreground in post-Persian Wars literature: "The Greeks' sense of collective identity was an element underlying even the earliest epic, but is still in competition with and overshadowed by the group identity attached to individual city-states. The all-embracing genus of anti-Greeks

later to be termed ‘the barbarians’ does not appear until the fifth century” (1989b: 54). The barbarian embodied all things non-Greek, but most importantly, the foreigner is despotic and anti-democratic (1989b: 59). The *Persians* of Aeschylus demonstrates the triumph of Greek values of equality, freedom, and austerity over an Eastern temperament liable to despotism, slavishness, and excess (1989b: 100). Tragedy was a language of self-definition whereby the Athenians proclaimed themselves separate from their barbarian counterparts.

For Hall, tragedy was a form of Athenian rhetoric, a verbal technique of differentiating themselves from the barbarians. The playwrights manipulated the mythical subjects of the plays “to suit not only the demands of the dramatic medium but also the political climate of fifth-century Athens” (1989b: 160). In light of the Athenian empire and the war with Sparta, “tragic rhesis provided a vehicle for popular generalization about the undemocratic regimes of the barbarians, in the darkest hours of the Peloponnesian war consonant with the struggle for the preservation of Athenian democracy” (1989b: 194). Even when Euripides occasionally overturns this orthodoxy with noble barbarians and savage Greeks, this shows “not that he or his contemporaries had disowned the usual belief in Hellenic superiority over other peoples... but that it was so fundamental a dogma as to produce striking rhetorical effects on being inverted” (1989b: 222). The fundamental opposition of Hellene and barbarian had been ingrained into the Greek mind, a distinction underlined by the myths of tragedy.

Unfortunately for scholars of comedy, Hall’s seminal scholarship has no parallel in Aristophanic studies. Although Long’s synchronic study of Old and New Comedy is illuminating, it falls short from asking the essential questions of *Inventing the Barbarian* for comedy. Why was Aristophanes interested in barbarians? How did this preoccupation affect his plays? The rest of this thesis will attempt to answer these questions, with particular attention to

the Triballo scene in the *Birds* and the Scythian archer scenes of the *Thesmophoriazusa*. The groundwork laid by Bacon, Long, and Hall, even when not stated explicitly, will form the fundamental underpinnings of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3
THE DIVINE BARBARIAN: *BIRDS* 1565-1693

The penultimate scene of the *Birds*, produced in 414 at the Dionysia, features an embassy of the gods who have come to Cloudcuckooland to negotiate peace terms with Peisetairos. Included in this embassy are the blustering Poseidon, the gluttonous Heracles, and a barbarian, Triballos. Aristophanes grants Triballos three lines that he delivers with varying levels of intelligibility. He only speaks when spoken to, yet the other gods only ask him to speak when a crucial decision is at stake. Careful analysis of this scene reveals that, since he is characterized only by basic barbarian stereotypes, Triballos serves primarily as a comic foil for the other characters in the scene.

The attempt of Peisetairos and Euelpides to escape from Athens and to find a place away from the hubbub of *polis* life is the central story of the *Birds*. They visit the king-turned-Hoopoe Tereus in an attempt to learn from him the secret of becoming a bird in order that they may fly away to some remote place. Once there Peisetairos decides to lead the birds in a cosmic coup, creating a city in the sky, Cloudcuckooland, which rules over the boundary between heaven and earth. From this mid-air metropolis the birds begin to exercise control over the whole earth, attempting to bring the gods to submission by preventing the aroma of sacrifices from reaching their heavenly destinations. Prometheus decides to come to the aid of the birds, delivering crucial information of the state of affairs within the circumvallated heavens: the gods are starving and Zeus is under pressure from the Triballi, a group of barbarian gods from Thrace. Prometheus encourages Peisetairus to take advantage of the situation by demanding the scepter of Zeus and a marriage to Basileia, a beautiful young goddess who takes care of Zeus' thunderbolts and watches over his other affairs. The embassy of gods, then, including the Triballian's

representative Triballos, is the deciding council in a dispute over the rule of the universe, no small role for the three dignitaries.

Given the importance of this scene, it has received surprisingly little scholarly attention. Many discuss the embassy as though the gods merely rubber stamp Peisetairos' world domination and conclude that this scene represents only the ability of the "companion-persuader" Peisetairos.¹ Even less attention has been given to Triballos as a character.² A few scholars have conducted linguistic studies of Triballos' Greek, but very little has been done beyond that.³ In this chapter, I will examine the characterization of Triballos in depth, and, in light of this, seek to explain the role of Triballos in the play and to understand what impact his interactions with Peisetairos and the other gods have on our understanding of the play.

The God is Silent

When the embassy of the gods arrives to Cloudcuckooland at line 1565, Poseidon begins immediately with a tirade directed at the clumsy, bumbling, and backward Triballos. Until line 1615, Triballos is silent. The silence of Triballos in these lines says much about his character, particularly when seen in light of Poseidon's lines directed against him.

Upon entering the stage, Poseidon has barely finished his formulaic character introduction when he immediately turns on Triballos and begins berating him for the state of his dress:

It is possible to see here the city of Cloudcuckooland, to which we are ambassadors. You, what are you doing? Why is your cloak hanging to the left? Will you not change it so it is hanging to the right? What, are you an idiot? Are you like Laispodias in your nature?

¹ Cf. MacDowell 1995:218-20; Whitman 1964:196.

² E.g., MacDowell 1995: 219: "The Triballian god, on the other hand, is purely an Aristophanic invention. He is hardly characterized at all, and his dramatic function is to reduce the negotiation to comic confusion by speaking unintelligibly."

³ Cf. Whatmough 1952, where he attempts to clarify the reading of Triballos' first line, and Dunbar 1995 *ad loc.*, where he concludes that a clear understanding of the meaning is impossible for the first two lines.

τὸ μὲν πόλισμα τῆς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας
ὄραν τοδὶ πάρεστιν, οἱ πρεσβεύομεν.
οὔτος, τί δρῶς; ἐπαρίστερ' οὔτως ἀμπέχει;
οὐ μεταβαλεῖς θοιμάτιον ὧδ' ἐπιδέξια;
τί, ὦ κακόδαιμον; Λαισποδίας εἰ τὴν φύσιν; (1565-69)

His cloak is on backwards and he cannot get it right himself. Poseidon tries to help him, but to no avail – Triballos is too fidgety and the cloak keeps slipping (1572). Throughout this episode, Triballos remains silent, the boorish object of Poseidon's criticism.

The humor of this episode is largely for its slapstick value. After all, presumably the actors playing Poseidon and Triballos would have played up this interaction, trying and failing to fix the barbarian's dress. Yet, Aristophanes draws on more than just slapstick. The barbarian god is characterized as stupid and backward – after all, how difficult could it be to put one's clothes on properly? Even with Poseidon's help he still cannot get it right. To the audience, this god must have seemed particularly inept and undignified. Yet, the scene is little more than a comic commonplace. In the *Wasps* 1122ff., Bdelycleon forces his father, Philocleon, to put on a variety of different garments, including a Persian cloak and Spartan boots. The argument between father and son and Philocleon's indignation at being told what to wear, as well as the sharp contrast of the Persian cloak compared to Philocleon's normal clothes, create humor in the *Wasps*, but the focus in the *Birds* is on Triballos' inability to get his clothes right.

The generic nature of dress scenes is further illustrated by *Thesmophoriazusa* 130ff. Euripides and his relative visit Agathon to enlist his help against the women. When they find him, however, he is dressed as a woman. When the relative asks why Agathon is dressed this way, Agathon replies, "I wear clothes suited for my feelings. A poet needs to match his customs to the plays which he makes" (ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν ἐσθῆθ' ἅμα γνώμη φορῶ, / χρὴ γὰρ ποιητὴν ἄνδρα πρὸς τὰ δράματα, / ἃ δεῖ ποιεῖν, πρὸς ταῦτα τοὺς τρόπους ἔχειν, 148-50). Agathon

then refuses to infiltrate the Thesmophoria, but Euripides' relative agrees to do so instead. Using women's clothes borrowed from Agathon, he then dresses up as a woman. This scene demonstrates, then, both that dress scenes were a generic comic joke, but that they also were used as a reflection of the character of the individual changing clothes.⁴

In the midst of this dress scene, Poseidon declares that Triballos is the *barbarotaton* of all the gods (1573). Triballos has not yet spoken, but he is already the most barbarian god. Triballos, incapable of putting on his Greek-style clothing, is as far from "Greek" as possible. Prometheus had already told Peisetairos to expect a representative of the Triballians (1532-33), and the audience would have had very little trouble distinguishing him from Poseidon and Heracles thanks to easily recognizable symbols. The audience may remember Prometheus' pronouncement, and they would have known immediately that there was something wrong with this third god. They may even have laughed as soon as the gods entered the stage and before Poseidon could say anything, simply from the ridiculousness of Triballos' garb. Poseidon's declaration, then, that Triballos is the most barbarian of all the gods puts the nail into the coffin for the poor Thracian. This line removes any doubts from the audience's mind that this is a god who is truly *not* Greek.

Even as he distances Triballos from the Greeks, Poseidon identifies the embassy of the gods with the Athenians. In a ludicrous anthropomorphizing, Poseidon wonders where *democracy* is leading the gods if they choose such emissaries as Triballos (1569-70)! The scholiast suggests that this is a conflation of Athenian and divine affairs and may be a reference to a recent election by the Athenian people (Holwerda 1960: 225). Dunbar considers this an

⁴ Cf. *Frogs* 494ff., where Dionysus and Xanthias exchange clothing several times, ultimately setting up the test by beating when both claim to be the god. Since the doorkeeper cannot tell them apart, the implication is that clothing plays a large part even in determining godhood.

attack on Laispodias, whom Poseidon had just criticized in the previous line for dressing improperly, and who had probably been elected *strategos* a few weeks before the performance (1995: 717). Since Laispodias was later an envoy sent to the Spartans on behalf of the Four Hundred and with known activities in the region of Thrace, it seems likely that Aristophanes intended for his audience to make the connection between Triballos and Laispodias (Dunbar 1995: 716-17).⁵ Thus, Aristophanes is able to attack Laispodias not only for his curious manner of dress (1569), but also for his Thracian connections and oligarchic sympathies.

Throughout this exchange, Triballos remains silent. That he is capable of understanding what the Greeks are saying is made clear by the fact that he speaks intelligibly later in the play, but for now he silently receives the tirade against him by Poseidon. Triballos' passive reception of insult at the hands of his Greek counterparts will become a regular occurrence in this scene and serves to underscore Triballos' "rightful place" within the group of gods. He occupies a peripheral position on the divine council. His inclusion allows Aristophanes to exploit a typical comic dress scene and, by so doing, to attack a well-known contemporary figure. Aristophanes is not concerned with Triballos himself as a character. His silence in the first part of this scene sets him up as a "sounding board" for generic comedy and typical political insults.

The God Speaks

Finally, Triballos is allowed to speak. Continuing to be only peripheral to the action, however, he only speaks when directly asked to respond to a question. Throughout this entire scene, he will never take the initiative himself, but will always defer to Poseidon or Heracles. In this scene, Triballos speaks three times, each of which makes increasingly more sense in Greek.

⁵ Dunbar 1995: 716-17.

This section will examine his first two spoken lines; I will cover the third and final response in the next section.

The first time Triballos speaks, Heracles and Poseidon have already decided together that Peisetairos' arguments are well spoken and make good sense. Peisetairos asks Triballos for his opinion, but his answer appears to be little more than gibberish: να, Βαισατρευ (1615).⁶ Even if the line does mean anything, it is clearly less intelligible than his subsequent lines. What Triballos actually says here, though interesting, has little relevance to how Aristophanes characterizes the god. Two things, in particular, are more important than this: first, Aristophanes plays his humor off of the humanization of the god; second, Triballos continues his passivity in relation to Heracles and Poseidon.

The humanization of Triballos comes in his very unintelligibility. Why would a god be unable to make himself understood? Surely if Aristophanes had chosen to endow his Thracian god with any "typical" divine powers, intelligibility would be one of them. After all, even the birds speak intelligible Greek! This basic ability is not allowed to Triballos, however, as fits the distinction based on language seen in the review of literature—that is, a barbarian is both one who cannot speak Greek and an ethical designation. The inability to speak Greek is the very thing which sets Triballos apart as non-Greek. Thus, as long as Aristophanes does not allow him to speak intelligibly, he continues the characterization of Triballos as non-Greek and as a sub-divinity. In addition, gibberish lines spoken by non-Greeks are a commonplace of comedy, as

⁶ Here I follow Dunbar's reading. Whatmough's argument that this represents the Thracian epithet of Zeus Βελσοῦδρος seems to have convinced very few, as most subsequent scholars continue to read this line as mere unintelligible Greek. The scholiast, on the other hand, argues that this is clearly an affirmative answer: βαρβαρίζων συγκατατίθεται ὁ βάρβαρος θεός. αἱ γὰρ ἄσημοι φωναὶ ἀντὶ συγκαταθέσεως (Holwerda 1960: 228).

part of what Pseudartabas says in the *Acharnians* is unintelligible.⁷ Ascribing a line of gibberish to Triballos, then, is a typical barbarian joke.

Just as Triballos remained silent while Poseidon harangued him for his inability to dress himself, so he also silently allows Heracles to twist his answer to fit his own ends. The gluttonous Heracles, hungry for a meal, simply wants to come to an agreement on peace terms so that he can eat sooner. The humor of the humanization of Triballos is apparent here as well, for clearly if Heracles had severely twisted his meaning Triballos could have corrected him.⁸ Yet, Triballos does not try to do any such thing, but lets Heracles do with his words as he will. Once he has spoken, Triballos returns to the periphery and the humor once again centers on the Greeks. The importance of Triballos' line is primarily to elucidate the gluttony of Heracles and to give Aristophanes the opportunity for a generic joke about unintelligible barbarians.

Triballos' second line further reinforces these ideas. Heracles and Poseidon disagree over what to do after Peisetairos requests the hand of Basileia in marriage. Heracles, looking for a quick meal, agrees to hand her over immediately, but Poseidon needs more convincing. Poseidon has the idea of allowing Triballos break the tie. Heracles turns to the Thracian god and threatens him with his club. Triballos' response, "Yew hitta hide wit steek?" (σᾶν νᾶκα / βακταρι κρουσα, 1628-29),⁹ lends itself primarily to one of two interpretations. Dunbar suggests that,

⁷ His first spoken line, ἰαρταμαν ἐξαρχας ἀπισονα σατρα (100), is thought to be a collection of Persian-sounding words that do not in fact constitute a real statement. See Colvin 1999: 288-89; Long 1986: 134.

⁸ The physical motions of the actor may have given the audience the visual cues necessary to clarify the meaning of Triballos' garbled Greek. Since we cannot know what these actions were, we are left with the possibility that Heracles did not misinterpret Triballos' words at all but simply reinforced them. Even if one accepts this as the case, there still remains the clear characterization of Triballos as second-class by Aristophanes' humanization of him. For, regardless of whether or not Heracles interpreted Triballos correctly, the focus is on the inability of the barbarian god to speak intelligible Greek. Thus, the humanizing element remains, even if Heracles happened to understand Triballos correctly.

⁹ In translating the garbled Greek of the barbarians I have chosen not to maintain the same phonological mistakes as contained in the Greek, nor have I maintained a specific modern accent. Rather, I have attempted to convey how jarring the barbarian Greek is to a reader.

depending on how one reads *σαν ναχα*, one could understand it either as Triballos asking if he is about to be beaten by Heracles' club or as a counter-threat to Heracles to hit *him* instead (1995: 728).¹⁰ Either interpretation lends itself to further characterization of Triballos as a barbarian, but I prefer the first.¹¹

If one reads Triballos' line as one spoken out of fright, this helps make more sense out of the subsequent action. Heracles responds that Triballos agrees with him, which is clearly not the case regardless of which interpretation one adopts. If Triballos was threatening Heracles, then the threat was certainly one with no force behind it, since Triballos then allows Heracles to claim that they agree with each other. This feigned agreement, then, would immediately undercut the stereotype of the Thracian as violent. On the other hand, if one reads this line as spoken out of fear, then there is at least some consistency within the character of Triballos. He is too scared to speak against Heracles when threatened, and remains too frightened to speak up when Heracles twists his words.¹²

Regardless of which interpretation one adopts, Heracles' threat against Triballos serves to further characterize the god as *barbarotaton*. To be threatened with beating was, after all, something one expected of slaves, and the Athenian court system required that testimony by slaves be admitted only under torture.¹³ Long notes that by the time of Menander slave and

¹⁰ Sommerstein 1987: 304 agrees with this first interpretation, though he does not provide argumentation for his reading over another.

¹¹ The second interpretation would lend itself to a more violent image of Triballos as a rustic Thracian. This interpretation would fit well with Long 1986: 142-43, where he describes the frequent characterization of northern barbarians as violent. For the Thracians as violent, see also Hall 1989b:103-5 and Bacon 1961:150-51.

¹² Certainly comic license allows Aristophanes to lack consistency. Such an abrupt shift from one line to the next, however, is uncharacteristic even for Aristophanes.

¹³ See Demosthenes 30.37; Lycurgus 1.29; Isaeus 8.12; Isocrates 17.54. For a discussion of the *basanos* and its rhetorical implications, see Gagarin 1996.

barbarian had become terms equivalent with each other (1986: 151).¹⁴ I contend that this scene represents a forerunner to this same idea. Thus in this scene Heracles commands Triballos to give an answer to his question under the threat of abuse much like one ordering a slave to give an answer under torture, highlighting the connection between barbarian and slave.

Aristophanes uses threats and beatings to humorous effect in the *Frogs* as well, when he pits Dionysus against Xanthias in a contest of wills over who can go the longest without crying out over a beating. In this scene, the purpose of the beatings is to determine which of the two is the god and which is the slave, as the god would be able to withstand punishment but not the slave. Similarly, Triballos should have no fear of physical abuse, as he is a god. Yet, his cowardly fear of a beating at the hands of Heracles further reinforces his slavishness and his sub-par status compared with Poseidon and Heracles. Yet, even while he is depicted as inferior to the Greek gods, Triballos is not characterized in his own right, but only with comic stereotypes and equation to slaves.

After providing an answer to Heracles' threat, Heracles once again "interprets" Triballos' words for him. Although Triballos' answer clearly does not mean what Heracles claims, Triballos makes no attempt to correct him. Whether out of fear or stupidity, the effect is the same as it was after his first line. Once again Triballos adapts a peripheral role in the scene. He is merely a catalyst for the humor of misinterpretation. The primary focus of Aristophanes is on the Greek gods and their interaction with Peisetairos. His answers are free to be misinterpreted and used in whichever way the Greek gods see fit.

Even as Triballos is given a voice, it is silenced. He is merely a peripheral character who provides an occasional laugh by embodying stereotypes of stupid, cowardly, and slavish

¹⁴ Long 1986: 151. In addition, Demosthenes 21.48 lends further support to this idea, where slaves are equated with the barbarian nations whence they were imported.

barbarians. Throughout the scene so far, Triballos has been twisted and manipulated by the whims of the Greeks and ultimately barred from the action, the rightful position (to an ancient Greek) for the barbarian.

The God Decides

As the scene progresses, Peisetairos, Poseidon, and Heracles commence a lengthy debate over Athenian inheritance law and how it relates to Heracles' status as a bastard son of Zeus. Triballos, who of course has no interest in this discussion, returns to his state of silence. Once again, he is shunted to the side and is not Aristophanes' main concern in the scene. Finally, the moment of decision has finally come. Soon, Poseidon and Heracles are again at variance as to how to proceed. Poseidon remains opposed to the marriage of Peisetairos and Basileia, Heracles is in favor of it because of the free lunch that is sure to follow. Unable to decide between the two of them, the decision turns to none other than Triballos.

One has to imagine that this moment came as a bit of a surprise to the Athenian audience. After all, the gods are debating with Peisetairos about the rule of the world, and the decision is left up to a barbarian? Where *has* democracy led the gods, if a decision as important as this actually *does* fall into the hands of one such as Triballos?

Thankfully, there is no need to fear. When Triballos responds, his Greek is nearly comprehensible: “Da pwetty and tall girlie I give to the boids,” (καλανι κοραυνα και μεγαλα βασιλιναν / ὄρνιτο παραδίδωμι, 1678-79). Although there has been some speculation over whether his response is positive or negative, the key for our sake is the sheer intelligibility of the answer.¹⁵ At the moment of the gods' greatest need, it is not the cowardly barbarian who

¹⁵ Cf. Dunbar, *ad loc.* for the various readings. While one could argue that the inability to determine decisively whether this was a positive or negative reply means that it is *not* intelligible Greek, I would reply that the Greek itself, whichever reading one adapts, leaves little doubt. The question of interpretation is not due to a lack of clarity

answers, but a Hellenized Thracian god who is capable (at last) of making his will clear. Democracy, after all, hasn't failed the gods.¹⁶

The Hellenization of Triballos is apparent also in the adjectives he uses to describe Basileia: *καλανι* and *μεγαλα* – “beautiful” and “tall.” Sommerstein notes that this is an essentially Greek idea of beauty (1987: 307). When Triballos makes his decision regarding Basileia, he does so in a manner that characterizes him as thinking in Greek terms. He acts as a quasi-Greek, seeing the world in Greek terms and speaking comprehensible Greek, as one who would be enlightened enough to make such a momentous decision.

After this shining moment of civilized speech, however, Triballos falls back into his previous peripheral role. Almost immediately after giving a comprehensible answer, Heracles and Poseidon begin to debate his meaning once again, and, as before, Triballos remains silent throughout the exchange. His pivotal moment complete, Triballos will remain silent for the remainder of the scene, not offering his opinion about the situation again. Clearly, Triballos is capable of understanding what is happening. For whatever reason, he keeps silent and does not interject. Like his previous two comments, he allows his Greek counterparts to decide what he meant. In this way, Aristophanes actually undoes the very process of involving the barbarian god in the decision-making process. Even though Triballos was granted a say and he did so from a “proper” Greek standpoint, his foreignness dictates that he remain in a position below Poseidon and Heracles. The most important part of his involvement in this scene is to create further opportunity for humor by and about his Greek counterparts, such as Heracles' gluttony and the comic debate over Athenian inheritance law.

in the Greek, only in scholarly disputes over which reading is correct and because of the inherent difficulties of reading a text which was meant to be acted out, which would have supported whichever answer Triballos gave.

¹⁶ As Long 1986: 135 puts it, “Climactically, [the actual resolution of the play] happens at precisely the point at which we can be surest of the Triballian's answer.”

During the debate over the meaning of Triballos' words, Aristophanes takes one final parting shot at the barbarian. Sommerstein notes that line 1682, "he's saying hand her over to the swallows" (οὐκοῦν παραδοῦναι ταῖς χελιδόσιν λέγει), allows two interpretations: either Triballos is speaking to the swallows, or he is commanding them to hand Basileia over to the swallows (307). The idea of a Thracian speaking in the manner of a swallow appears again in *Frogs* 674-84, where Aristophanes speaks of the people as more honor-loving than Cleophon, who speaks with the twitterings of Thracian swallows – a manner of speaking which he describes as ἀμφίλαλος ("double-speaking"). For a Thracian to speak like a swallow appears to have negative connotations. In this scene, the use of the swallow serves to remind the audience of the humble position of Triballos. Just as the rest of the Athenians are better than Cleophon who speaks like a Thracian swallow, so the Athenians are also better than the Thracian Triballos speaking like a swallow. This demonstrates, then, that Aristophanes once again employs a stereotypical joke about Thracians to get a laugh out of what Triballos said.

Conclusion

Throughout this scene, Aristophanes portrays Triballos as a stereotypical barbarian. He is slavish, stupid, and cowardly. The rest of the scene reinforces Poseidon's declaration at the outset that Triballos is the *barbarotaton* of the gods. By characterizing Triballos in such a way, Aristophanes places the Thracian god on the periphery of the embassy. A foreigner may have a place in this entourage, but only insofar as he gives way to his Greek counterparts.

When situated within the larger context of the *Birds*, the Triballos scene serves as a reminder to the Athenians that Athens is still a better place to live than any other land (particularly a barbarian one). Cloudcuckooland looks a lot like Athens by the end of the play. Besides the numerous other characters he has driven out, the gods in this scene disrupt Peisetairos from the all-important task of punishing those who tried to undermine the democracy

(1583-84)! As Reckford brilliantly put it, “You can take Peisetairus and Euelpides out of Athens, but you cannot take Athens out of them. They carry it with them... and they impose it, rebuild it wherever they go” (1987: 333). When Triballos makes the decision to hand over dominion to the birds, in effect Aristophanes is saying that even the barbarians recognize the superiority of the Athenians. In his moment of greatest civility, the Thracian god actively gives control to a new Athens.

While the barbarian is granted a place in this divine assembly, he remains on the periphery to the action of the scene. Aristophanes only characterizes him enough to fit with typical stereotypes of the slavish barbarian. He serves as a placeholder to allow for the debates between Poseidon and Heracles and the jokes that arise from their discussions. The primary focus is on Poseidon, Heracles, and Peisetairos.

One may rightly ask here why Aristophanes included Triballos at all in this scene. After all, his words do little to advance the action of the play, as every time he speaks the others need to decipher his meaning and then settle on whatever best suits their own wishes. In many ways, Triballos is a superfluous character. In my opinion, Aristophanes includes the barbarian god to further demonstrate his mastery of the comic art. As one scholar observes, “In *Birds* Aristophanes seems to have set out to dazzle his audience with a display of metrical and musical virtuosity” (Parker 1997: 297). Modern commentators tend to view *Birds* as Aristophanes’ masterpiece for its seamless interweaving of utopian fantasy, lyrical genius, and pastoral beauty.¹⁷ Even more striking, *Birds* has twenty-two speaking parts, more than any extant

¹⁷ “It is a pastoral world, of natural simplicity endowed with the poetic self-consciousness of high art” (Reckford 1987: 331). And, as Cartledge 1990 comments, “There is no denying the brilliance of Aristophanes’ fantastic notions” (62).

Aristophanic play, but can still be performed by only three actors (Sommerstein 1987: 5).¹⁸ In a play of remarkable diversity then, it comes as no surprise that Aristophanes expands his repertoire and includes a stereotypical barbarian, particularly in a play with much humor based on language. The inclusion of Triballos allows Aristophanes to demonstrate his control over language-based humor and over basic jokes made at the expense of hapless barbarians. Triballos, then, is a comic stereotype pushed to the periphery of the action while underscoring Aristophanes' dramatic ability.¹⁹

¹⁸ Sommerstein assigns the part of Triballos to a supplementary performer, much like the role of Pylades in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*.

¹⁹ This conclusion is by no means meant to exclude the possibility that the audience members interpreted Triballos very differently. Depending on an individual's social standing, political ties, or level of democratic activity, he might feel very strongly toward the characterization of the god. For a member of the community who is highly active in the assembly, the level to which rational "debate" is ignored in this scene may be disconcerting. To an audience member with landholdings in Thrace, the scene may be offensive. Audience response to this scene is sure to have varied. For further discussion of Aristophanes' interaction with expected audience interaction, see chapter five below.

CHAPTER 4
THE BARBARIAN IN ATHENS: *THESMOPHORIAZUSAE* 1001-1231

In the final scenes of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, produced in 411, Euripides' relative has been captured by the assembly of women and is guarded by a *toxotēs* from Scythia. This archer, a member of the "police force" under the command of the Prytaneis,¹ proves to be a rather unworthy guard and fails miserably in his duties, as Euripides manages to save In-law.² After several unsuccessful attempts to rescue his kinsman through highbrow literary parodies of his own plays, Euripides is successful once he uses a woman to lure the Scythian away. By giving the archer a larger part in the action, Aristophanes explores the characterization of the Scythian archer and the role of the barbarian in Athens itself. In this scene, Aristophanes reinforces comic stereotypes of barbarians and, more importantly, uses the archer as a foil to attack the larger target of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, tragedy.

The plot of the *Thesmophoriazusae* centers on the Athenian women's condemnation of Euripides and his attempts to infiltrate their meeting and convince them that he does not present a threat to them. He enlists the help of his relative who dresses up as a woman in order to sway the vote of the assembled women. His defense of Euripides catches the women's attention, and before he knows it, In-law is their prisoner. In-law tries to escape by parodying Euripides' *Telephus*, in which Telephus holds Orestes hostage. He grabs the nearest bundle of blankets to hold an infant hostage and make his escape, but the "baby" In-law has taken turns out to be only a wine skin. Next, hoping to involve Euripides in the drama (ὄν αὐτὸν προσαγαγούμεν

¹ As numerous scholars have noted, this group of archers bears little or no resemblance to modern police forces. Their sole purpose was to keep order at the Assembly and they could take no action without the order of the Prytaneis. See Hall 1989a: 43-45, Sommerstein 1994: 216, Austin and Olson 2004: 292-93.

² Throughout this chapter, I will refer to Euripides' relative as "In-law" when I employ a proper noun. Many scholars have concluded that this relative is in fact Mnesilochus, Euripides' father-in-law, but there is enough debate about this identification that I have decided to leave the character unidentified. Cf. Sommerstein 1994: 157, Austin and Olson 2004: 76-77

δράματι, 849), he parodies Euripides' *Helen*, and Euripides enters the stage dressed as a shipwrecked sailor, but this ploy too fails to convince the women. With In-law now under the guard of the Scythian, Euripides enters dressed as Perseus and stages an elaborate parody of his own *Andromeda*, in which he is trying to save the "maiden," In-law. The archer refuses to fall for this ploy, despite Euripides' theatrical use of the *mēchanē*. Finally, Euripides abandons tragic theatrical parody and disguises himself as a procuress leading a beautiful lady, Elaphion. When she runs offstage, the archer scampers after her, leaving Euripides free to release his kinsman. When the archer returns looking for the procuress (and his charge), the chorus of women frustrates his efforts, ending the play with the barbarian as the butt of the joke.

Edith Hall's 1989 article considers this scene in considerable detail, and she convinced many scholars. In her reading, the final scenes of the *Thesmophoriazusae* represent a comic travesty of Euripidean escape-drama (1989a: 41). The play represents the comic collusion of actor, chorus, and audience to overcome the inferior barbarian (1989a: 52). Under Hall's interpretation, the Scythian deserves to be defeated because of his cultural inferiority and inability to understand Athenian cultural institutions (1989a: 50). Finally, she argues that the "most barbarian archers" (τοξότας ... βαρβαρωτάτους) who defected to the oligarch Aristarchus in Thucydides 8.98 were Scythians and that the *Thesmophoriazusae* reflects contemporary distaste for the corps of Scythian archers (1989a: 53-54). While Hall's argument is illuminating, some scholars contend that she takes her argument too far.³ In addition to Hall's article, others continue to debate about various linguistic elements of the archer's spoken lines.⁴

³ For instance, MacDowell (1995: 270-73) disagrees with Hall's interpretation. In addition, Austin and Olson 2004 do not mention her argument about Aristarchus, though they make liberal use of her other points.

⁴ There is considerable debate over textual variations, linguistic consistency, and the extent to which the archer's speech reflected "real Scythian." See Austin and Olson 2004: 308-09, Long 1986: 137, Willi 2003: 214-25, Hall 1989a: 39.

In this chapter, I will examine the characterization of the archer in depth, making clear throughout where I disagree with Hall's interpretation.

The Scythian as Guard

The Scythian enters the stage as a silent character in line 929 to receive his orders from the Prytanis: guard In-law and allow no one to approach him (κάπειτ' ἐνθαδὶ / στήσας φύλαττε καὶ προσιέναι μηδένα / ἔα πρὸς αὐτόν, 931-33). The Scythian leaves with In-law at 946 and re-enters at line 1001, now leading In-law bound to a plank. This first sequence features a brief scene between the two characters in which Aristophanes demonstrates the barbaric nature of the archer and his disregard for his orders. Lines 1001-1007 do not, however, characterize the Scythian in any depth, but only with basic barbarian stereotypes.

The aspect of the archer's personality elucidated most clearly by this scene is his cruelty and reliance on brute force. He leads In-law onstage, telling him to "shout to 'da air" (ἐνταυτα νυν οἰμῶξι πρὸς τὴν αἰτρίαν, 1001)⁵ paying no heed to whatever imprecations In-law had been shouting on his way onstage. It is unclear from the text whether the archer drags In-law or if a silent slave does the job for him. Hall notes that if he does the job alone, the actor must be a well-built man, and, combined with the accoutrements of his garb, he thus would strike a rather intimidating pose (1989a: 48). Whoever drags In-law onstage, the Scythian's line makes clear that he has little regard for his charge.

The next part of the dialogue continues to set up the cruelty of the Scythian. In-law begins to beg, but he is once again immediately rebuffed by the archer: "Don' yew beg wit' me," (μη μ' ἰκετευσὶ σὺ, 1002). Austin and Olson describe this line as demonstrative of the archer's "cold and sometimes actively hostile manner" (2004: 310). The Scythian clearly has little care for the

⁵ As with Triballos' lines in chapter 3, my translations do not attempt to maintain the same phonetic mistakes as the Greek. Rather, I have simply tried to capture how jarring it is to read the garbled Greek.

well being of In-law. In and of itself, this detached attitude towards his prisoner says little about his disposition. When this is taken in conjunction with the rest of his actions in this brief scene, it becomes apparent that it points to his cruelty.

In-law is apparently uncomfortable in his bonds, and asks the archer to loosen them, but the Scythian proceeds to tighten them instead.⁶ When Euripides' kinsman cries out in pain and tells the Scythian what he is doing, the archer simply asks, "Would ya like some mo'?" (ἐτι μᾶλλον βούλεις; 1005). This vignette lends itself to two interpretations. Austin and Olson and Hall accept the reading that sees this as a deliberate act of the Scythian's cruelty (Hall 1989a: 48; Austin and Olson 2004: 310). Sommerstein, however, notices that the Scythian could have actually misunderstood In-law's Greek, hearing *kolason* ("give a beating to") instead of *khalason* ("slacken") and taking the indicative verb *epikroueis* as an imperative (1994: 222). Sommerstein presents both interpretations but does not choose between the two. If one reads these lines as a misunderstanding, they emphasize the Scythian's stupidity. The Scythian is still cruel by acquiescing to this supposed request, and so, as Sommerstein notes, this passage could be ambiguously funny (1994: 222). Several factors, however, seem to preclude this reading. First, there is no indication elsewhere in the text that the Scythian has difficulty *understanding* Greek, as he carries on conversations with other characters with little difficulty. Second, as Long notes, the Scythians were characteristically cruel: "Of course a Greek expects sadistic delight, or at least indifference to the suffering of others, from a Scythian" (1986: 106). An interpretation which deemphasizes this cruelty seems to miss one of the most distinguishing traits of the

⁶ Notice that In-law's request is not a continuation of his truncated supplication in the previous line, as the verb is in the imperative mood, thus a new grammatical thought. This has interesting ramifications for the characterization of In-law and the staging of this scene. How does In-law deliver this line? As an angry command barked at an inferior person? With a note of pleading in his voice? Either reading (or any other) changes the timbre of this scene considerably.

Scythians to the Greeks. Third, the ἀλλ' at the beginning of the archer's line appears to be dripping with sarcasm. Finally, it seems over-complicated to infer a misunderstanding on the part of the Scythian. Since the lines make sense by supposing that the Scythian is acting out of cruelty, there is no need to assume that the Scythian misunderstood In-law.⁷

In addition to the Scythian's cruelty, this opening scene demonstrates the archer's ineptitude and foreshadows his ultimate failure. As noted above, the archer had two jobs: guard In-law and allow no one to approach him. After torturing his captive, however, the Scythian next leaves the scene to retrieve a mat. Whether he returns immediately and falls asleep or is offstage for a longer period of time is unclear, but what is obvious is his failure to do his job. Instead of guarding In-law as commanded, he allows Euripides to approach and to attempt a rescue. Austin and Olson observe that this action serves to characterize the Scythian as a "typically unreliable comic slave" (2004: 310). As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the equation between slave and barbarian was clear, and this serves to further reinforce the connection. The Scythian simply does not follow the explicit orders given to him by the Prytanis, whether out of laziness, forgetfulness, or even spite. Regardless of his motives, his actions clearly show that he was an inept guard who failed to do his duty.

The opening sequence between In-law and the Scythian is brief, but it is packed with stereotypical characterizations of the Scythian. He has already revealed himself to be slavish, cruel, and inept, qualities that Aristophanes will expand upon in the rest of the play and ultimately lead to the Scythian's final failure, the escape of In-law. These character traits are,

⁷ MacDowell 1995: 272 argues, on the other hand, that this scene is not indicative of cruelty at all, but is rather simply so that the In-law's squeals can be amusing to the audience. I think that this interpretation too narrowly limits the purpose of these lines. The audience may find the shouts of pain funny, but surely there must be an element of cruelty to the individual actually inflicting the pain on In-law.

however, shallow and stereotypical of other barbarians; Aristophanes does not characterize the Scythian in his own right.

The Scythian and Tragic Parody

Following the Scythian's departure (and possible immediate return), Euripides and In-law undertake a complex rescue attempt in which Euripides relies upon parodies of his own *Andromeda*. The scene begins when In-law sees Euripides make a brief entrance, apparently signaling the action about to follow. In-law commences a paratragic monody in which he takes on the role of Andromeda, chained and guarded by the "monster" Scythian, praying for rescue. When Euripides re-enters the stage, he appears in the guise of Echo, parodying a scene that was found at the beginning of the *Andromeda* (Austin and Olson 2004: 321). Euripides promises to repeat everything In-law says, and the two are soon engaged in a shouting match, waking the archer (or at least bringing him back onstage). The ensuing scenes serve to characterize the Scythian's stupidity and to demonstrate the impotence of tragedy.

At first, the Scythian does not realize that In-law is not alone. He asks, "Wut yew sayin'?" (οὐτος τί λαλις; 1082), and then soon becomes frustrated with Euripides' incessant echoes: "Wut da 'ell?" (τί κακον; 1084). The archer begins looking frantically around the stage for the source of the voice, presumably running from one side of the stage to the other (Sommerstein 1994: 229). He is already lost in the world of tragedy, confused by something as simple as an echo, and soon returns to In-law to accuse him again of speaking (1086). Austin and Olson note that this serves to characterize the Scythian as dull, since he cannot figure out even this simple trick (2004: 325). Euripides soon departs, only to return in the full guise of Perseus to attempt his dramatic rescue.

The placement of the Echo scene deserves further thought. The scene has been moved from its original location in the Euripidean story and does not at all advance the Aristophanic

plot. Why then, did Aristophanes place this vignette in its current location, or even include it at all? Undoubtedly, the scene is funny.⁸ In my opinion, there are two reasons for this sequence. First, the physical humor of the confused Scythian running around onstage searching for the source of the echo not only creates worthwhile laughs but also serves to characterize him as dim-witted. Second, and more importantly, this vignette mocks Euripides. The *Thesmophoriazusae*, after all, is primarily a comic portrayal of Euripides, and Euripides' failure to accomplish anything as Echo adds to the comic criticism. Sommerstein notes that Euripides does not lure the Scythian away from this scene, and seems to offer little help to In-law, prompting the kinsman to push the blame away from himself and onto Euripides (1994: 229). Euripides is not a perfect hero; while the audience may desire his success over the barbarian, they are also to be wary of Euripides. While Hall may be correct to recognize the larger comic travesty of Euripidean escape drama (1989a: 41-43), her reading of the *Thesmophoriazusae* relies too much on an assumption that this is the *only* purpose of these final scenes. The comic travesty may give an overarching support to the final scene, but this does not mean that Euripides is an unambiguous Euripidean hero or that the sole purpose of the final scenes is to represent the "ultimate collusion of actor, chorus and audience" (1989a: 52) to humiliate the Scythian. While this conclusion holds some merit, as I will discuss below, Euripides remains one of the comic targets of the play, along with the Scythian, women, and tragedy in general.

Aristophanes underscores the inferiority of tragedy to comedy (in his opinion, at least) by parodying this scene from the *Andromeda*. By echoing a Euripidean Echo scene, the effect is doubled. On one level, Euripides is unsuccessful: thus, tragedy is impotent. On another level,

⁸ Consider small children who find great amusement in repeating everything adults say. They may take great humor in it, but the adult is soon exasperated. Even if the echoes themselves are not funny to a spectator, the adult's frustration will probably raise at least a few chuckles.

however, Aristophanes imported a tragic scene solely for comic purposes: thus, comedy is better than tragedy. Aristophanes demonstrates his artistry and mastery of stagecraft by incorporating the Euripidean scene into his own play. In some ways, this scene is similar to the opening sequence of the *Frogs*, where, by “refusing” to use any of the standard jokes of comedy, he actually uses many of them (1-34). Similarly, Aristophanes has removed this Echo scene from its original context and has employed it as a standalone comic sequence where Euripides is humiliated.

The following dialogue, where Euripides acts as Perseus and In-law as Andromeda, serves to further stereotype the Scythian archer and to denigrate tragedy. In full tragic mode, Euripides celebrates his victory over the Gorgon and laments the plight of the “maiden” Andromeda. The Scythian, however, refuses to be duped by either of them. When Euripides says “Gorgon,” the archer hears “Gorgos,” an otherwise unknown secretary (*grammateus*, 1103). The Scythian once again shows his penchant for bloodlust, taking a certain measure of joy in the supposed decapitation of Gorgos (Austin and Olson 2004: 327). When Euripides declares his pity for the “maiden,” the Scythian is quick to try to correct Euripides, calling In-law a “wickud ol’ man and a thief and a scowndrul” (ἀμαρτωλή γερωῶν / και κλεπτο και πανουργο, 1111-12).⁹ The Scythian will not buy into the tragic parody and refuses to recognize Euripides and In-law as Perseus and Andromeda.

Euripides continues his attempt to convince the archer to take part in the tragic parody, now asking the Scythian to give “Andromeda’s” hand to him and allow them to proceed to the marriage bed (1121-22). This is too much for the Scythian, who declares: “If ya relly wanna do

⁹ The grammatical gender throughout these lines creates a fascinating layer of analysis. Euripides uses the correct theatrical gender for each character (referring to In-law in the feminine), In-law tries to use correct theatrical gender but occasionally refers to himself in the masculine, and the Scythian normally uses correct natural gender but occasionally uses feminine forms for In-law. For discussion of the use of gender by these characters, cf. Hall 1989a: 49 and Sommerstein 1994: 230.

‘dis ol’ man, drill a ‘ole in da wood an’ poke ‘im from be’ind” (εἰ σποδρ’ ἐπιτυμεις τη γεροντο πυγισο, / τη σανιδο τρησας ἔξοπιστο πρωκτισον, 1122-23). Euripides, frustrated, declares that he must try something new:

Alas, what shall I do? What words should I try now? His barbarian nature doesn’t understand these. If you try new tricks on the stupid you use waste them in vain. Some other plan more suited to this one must be used.

αἰαί, τί δράσω; πρὸς τίνας στρεφθῶ λόγους;
ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἂν ἐνδέξαιτο βάρβαρος φύσις.
σκαιοῖσι γάρ τοι καινὰ προσφέρων σοφὰ
μάτην ἀναλίσκοις ἄν. ἀλλ’ ἄλλην τινὰ
τούτῳ πρέπουσαν μηχανὴν προσοιστέον. (1128-32)

To Euripides, the problem with the Scythian and the failure of his rescue attempt is due to the *barbaros phusis*, his barbarian nature. In the mind of the tragic playwright, understanding tragedy is inherently linked with one’s nature. Thus, Euripides thinks that because the Scythian has a barbarian and thereby inferior nature, he is incapable of understanding tragedy and partaking in the drama that he and In-law have created onstage.

Lines 1128-32 have led most scholars to accept Euripides’ statement as Aristophanes’ position on the matter. Austin and Olson, Hall, and MacDowell all interpret the Scythian’s inability to partake in the tragic parody as indicative of his stupidity (Austin and Olson 2004: 332; Hall 1989a: 49-50; MacDowell 1995: 270). Yet, what if the archer had gone along with the parody and let “Andromeda” escape? No doubt scholars would still consider him stupid, but now because he was not able to distinguish between fiction and reality. Willi observes the power of language in this scene:

The contrast between tragic and barbarian language is a source of humour, but at the same time it makes the audience realize what would happen if the Scythian were an ordinary Athenian and therefore able to be duped by Euripides’ tragic language. Euripides’ failure to deceive the Scythian by cultural means therefore draws attention to tragedy’s usual success in deceiving its non-barbarian audience. The Scythian’s broken language may be primitive, but its counterpart, Euripides’ tragic language, is treacherous. (2003: 225)

We must remember, then, that it is Euripides speaking lines 1128-32. He wants to believe that his attempts have failed because of the *barbaros phusis*, but really they were unsuccessful because tragedy is not capable of saving In-law. Instead, Euripides has been made to look like a fool by the Scythian. The tragic playwright has just been told to drill a hole in the board and to have sex with his own in-law by a barbarian (1122-23). For tragedy, this is the ultimate humiliation.¹⁰

As the comic hero, Euripides must still save his relative. Hall is correct to notice the overarching parody of the escape-tragedy (1989a: 41-42), which means that the barbarian must still be defeated. Since tragedy is incapable of resolving the plot, Euripides will be forced to use something else more suitable (1132). Aristophanes defeats both the barbarian and tragedy by forcing Euripides to accept the superiority of comedy. Willi recognizes how this scene reinforces the importance of comedy:

...the foreigner-talk scene has a dramatic as well as a comic function. It reminds the Athenian people of Aristophanes' *ceterum censeo*: comedy is on their side and laughs with them at both the savage and the intellectual. (2003: 225)

Therefore, since the *Thesmophoriazusae* is a comedy, not a tragic parody, Aristophanes resolves his play with a comic device: a beautiful girl.

The Scythian and the Girl

Once Euripides abandons his tragic attempts, he finally recognizes how best to dupe the Scythian and reenters the stage, now dressed as an old procuress, leading a flute boy and a dancer, Elaphion ("Fawn"). Euripides begins by securing the goodwill of the chorus of women, who agree to forget their ill-will towards him but ask Euripides to take care of the Scythian

¹⁰ As Whitman 1964: 226 poignantly phrased it, "The Scythian and the plank are solidly, grimly real, and for Euripides to try to obviate such clear facts by tricky talk and poetic fancy is simply another example of the fellow's unconscionable, fatuous drivel. The answer to the Scythian is not a pretended tragic heroine, but a real comic strumpet, and the sexual act which ends the play brings down in a final crash the cloud lands of transvestite poesy."

(1170-71). This scene continues the negative characterization of the barbarian but also brings a final resolution to the comic plot.

The Scythian's stupidity increases to unprecedented levels in this scene. Whereas in the Echo scene his foolishness could be written off as part of Aristophanes' mockery of Euripides, his lack of understanding is the primary target of the jokes in this scene. When Euripides enters in costume, the women have no difficulty in recognizing him. He never makes a declaration of who he is, but the women never question his identity.¹¹ The Scythian, on the other hand, is completely duped, right to the end of the play, never realizing that the procuress who tricked him is the same as the man who just disappeared after trying to rescue the "beautiful maiden."

In addition, the archer shows a surprising lack of sense when it comes to his property. In his enflamed desire to obtain Elaphion, he is willing to give up his weapons (1197). As Sommerstein notes, these are state property and the archer would be expected to take good care of them (1994: 235). Clearly, one who is willing to give up the property with which he is entrusted to a total stranger (particularly a procuress) lacks a good bit of common sense. As might be expected, the archer is rather concerned over the disappearance of both the "old woman" and In-law. He seems more concerned, however, with Euripides' departure, probably because of his equipment. He laments his missing weapons-case, "Ya relly are a shaft, 'cuz ya sure shafted me!" (ὄρωτος συβηνη δ' ἦν, καταβεβνησι γαρ, 1215).¹² He has not only failed in

¹¹ One could argue that Euripides may have revealed himself in some way to the women with his costuming, but some sort of indication in the text of what he was doing likely would have accompanied this. Alternatively, one could argue that Euripides first request to make treaties would have given away his identity immediately. One would expect, however, that he would have included his name in his opening line if the audience were expected to believe that the women did not recognize him in disguise.

¹² There is considerable debate over this line. I have accepted Austin and Olson's reading. Alternatively, Sommerstein reads *katebeinesi*, "I lost it by shafting." Either way, the pun between *sybenes* and *binein* is clear.

his duty to keep anyone from approaching In-law, but has completely failed in his duty as a guard and as a Scythian in the employment of the Athenian state.

Conclusion

In many ways, this scene is irrelevant to the plot. Euripides could have easily secured the goodwill of the women and absconded with In-law while the archer was still asleep (Sommerstein 1994: 233). The degradation of the Scythian in this scene, then, deserves careful inspection. His stupidity and failure are the subject of special humiliation. Long summarizes the characterization of the barbarian in the *Thesmophoriazusae*:

He is certainly the most biting portrayal of the foreigner in Aristophanes. In him are combined the cruelty and stupidity which the Greeks felt separated the Hellene from the rest of humanity, and he is portrayed not as a good-natured joke that could be made at the cost of someone to whom the society has given limited acceptance but as an intruder condemned to the outside. (1986: 107)

The Scythian is everything anti-Greek in this play. In light of this figure, Euripides and the women can finally join forces against a common enemy and put aside their differences (Hall 1989a: 52). In this way, the final scene is more than just superfluous comic fluff. Aristophanes needs this scene to demonstrate the cooperation of men and women, the ultimate humiliation of their common enemy.¹³

Throughout the play, the Scythian is not the only target of the *Thesmophoriazusae*. Aristophanes maintains his loyalty to comedy and the primacy of comedy in two principal ways. First, the presence of a beautiful girl to end the play is clearly a comic stratagem, such as the conclusion of the *Lysistrata*, where the naked “Peace” plays a definitive role in placating the Athenian and Spartan men. Second, although Euripides has abandoned his tragic parodies, he still has to come on stage in costume in order to deceive the Scythian. Euripides must rely on a

¹³ In many ways, this reinforces Reckford’s arguments about the importance of *communitas* to the story of *Thesmophoriazusae*. Cf. Reckford 1987: 309-10.

low comic ploy and has been transformed into an ugly, old woman (Sommerstein 1994: 233). Aristophanes uses one of tragedy's most notable figures to demonstrate the superiority of comedy.

The barbarian in this scene is cruel, stupid, and incompetent. His grasp of Athenian cultural institutions is nonexistent. Euripides must defeat the barbarian, but he too falls short of comedy. By using both the barbarian and tragedy as foils to comedy, Aristophanes is able to ridicule both at the same time, while still maintaining a hierarchy between the two. Euripidean escape plots may have their place in tragedy, but the defeat of the barbarian is best handled by comedy.

On a more practical level, Aristophanes encourages his audience to put aside other differences in light of common enemies. It is not a coincidence that the *Thesmophoriazusae* is performed around the same time as the *Lysistrata*, which also encourages men and women, Athenians and Spartans to put aside their differences in light of the outside enemy – Persia (Austin and Olson 2004: lxvi).¹⁴ Austin and Olson comment about the conclusion of the *Thesmophoriazusae*:

...much of what is clearly intended to be the hilarity of the final scenes consists in the systematic humiliation of [the Scythian] first by Aristophanes (who depicts him from the very first as a clumsy brute) and then in the final scene by Euripides and the chorus. In both *Helen* and *Andromeda*, Greeks triumph over non-Greeks, so that what goes on on stage here is still in one sense Euripidean parody. But the united front Euripides and women so readily construct against what is now abruptly defined as their common enemy also diverts attention from the irresolvable (although allegedly resolved) conflict between men and women, with which most of the play is concerned, onto another conflict, the rights and wrongs of which must have appeared far clearer to the average late fifth-century Athenian. (2004: lxvi)

¹⁴ Alternatively, one can read the *Lysistrata* as an encouragement to the Athenians to band together against the Spartans. Either way, the theme of uniting against a common enemy is prevalent in 411.

The playwright encourages the Athenians to find common ground with one another, to remember that there are other more important enemies than the petty differences within. I do not believe we need to create a link between the *Thesmophoriazusae* and the oligarch Aristarchus, as Hall does (1989a: 54).¹⁵ Rather, the Scythian and his *barbaros phusis* represent barbarians everywhere and the need for Athens to present a unified front against them.

The Scythian archer is characterized in a decidedly negative light throughout the finale of the *Thesmophoriazusae*. Aristophanes repeatedly portrays him as cruel, stupid, foolish, and inept. Yet, for most of his time on stage, he is not the central target of Aristophanes' humor. Rather, he plays a peripheral role in the more important denigration of tragedy. When he does finally play a more important part, as the common target of Euripides and the women, this is only to demonstrate the larger point of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the necessity of working together against a common enemy.

¹⁵ Contra Hall, cf. MacDowell 1995: 272-73.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The barbarian in the extant comedies of Aristophanes plays a surprisingly static role. Whether he is divine or employed by the city of Athens, a supplementary character with only three lines or the target of a joint effort of men and women, the barbarian is characterized only stereotypically and used primarily to highlight the foibles of other characters and to underscore Aristophanes' dramatic art.

In the *Birds*, Triballos embodies stereotypical characteristics of barbarians. He is stupid, cowardly, and slavish. Aristophanes portrays the god in a startlingly humanized manner, thus emphasizing the foolishness of this character. The barbarian is always peripheral to the action of the scene. Triballos is allowed to speak, but only in order to give comic fodder to Heracles and Poseidon. His gibberish Greek is a comic commonplace, and his cowardice equates him with a slave. The only time his character has any significant importance is when he is supposedly given final say over whether or not to give Basileia to Peisetairos in marriage. His clearly intelligible answer framed in Greek terms of beauty characterizes him not as a barbarian but as a Greek. Aristophanes immediately undercuts this moment of civility by once again returning the barbarian to the periphery of the action. Even though he was supposed to be given the final say in the decision, his voice is immediately ignored and the decision is actually made by the Greek gods. Triballos is not a central concern for Aristophanes, but rather serves to emphasize the playwright's mastery of the comedic art.

In a similar way, the Scythian archer of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, though he occupies a much larger role and serves as the main target for the end of the play, is not Aristophanes' primary concern. He is characterized in generic and stereotypical terms, never receiving any depth or motive to his character. He is cruel, stupid, lazy, and incompetent, but these

characteristics are incidental to the larger task of subordinating tragedy to comedy. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the Scythian's role is important insofar as it forces Euripides into ridiculous and foolish situations. The final moments of the play, where Euripides and the women team up against the Scythian, represent not the ultimate collusion of opposing forces in a paratragic escape travesty, as Hall argues, but rather the proper Aristophanic hierarchy: comedy first, then tragedy, barbarians last. While the portrayal of the Scythian is certainly biting and negative, this is primarily to allow Aristophanes to praise his own art.

Both of these scenes, then, present the audience with a non-Greek who is characterized in general terms, characters who occupy peripheral space in the plays of Aristophanes. He is not especially concerned with attacking them specifically or in using them to construct any particular lesson for the Athenian people. They are foils by which he criticizes other targets of his plays and emphasizes the importance of comedy and his own dramatic ability. In some ways, they are comic placeholders – able to be used when necessary, but otherwise kept outside of the action.

The stereotypical characterization of the barbarians raises the question of how prevalent “stock” characteristics are for other characters and whether this is a feature common to the larger body of Aristophanic characters or only to these relatively minor roles. Silk argues that we should try to see Aristophanic characters in terms of imagist representations (1990: 150-73). Under this interpretation, the interplay of words and images serves to deliberately disrupt realistic characters, thus helping to understand the seeming inconsistencies in Aristophanic characters. For a character as minor as Tribballos, this is largely unnecessary. His character is too short-lived to require Silk's imagist reading to make sense of any inconsistencies. The Scythian, on the other hand, due to his longer time on stage, engages with imagery, such as the tragic parodies, but remains remarkably consistent as a stereotyped character. We must understand this

in light of the peripheral role of the barbarian. Were the Scythian the central focus of the climax of the *Thesmophoriazousae*, we would expect to find him undergoing the same inconsistencies and imagist moments that Euripides and In-law experience. Instead, he is characterized only with stereotypes and comic commonplaces.

Near the beginning of this paper, I raised two questions about the role of barbarians in the comedy of Aristophanes. Why was Aristophanes interested in barbarians, and how did this preoccupation affect his plays? Aristophanes' interest in barbarians stemmed from the ease with which they could be mocked. Whatever negative characteristics Aristophanes ascribed to them were sure to be met with glee from his Athenian audience. Aristophanes could attack barbarians with little fear of alienating his audience. By attacking a common enemy, he could remind spectators of the importance of setting aside other differences in order to work together against a common foe. Aristophanes used a number of comic commonplaces to lampoon his barbarians, from accents to the inability to dress themselves. These generic comedic elements gave Aristophanes an easy means by which to make the barbarians look foolish.

The ease with which Aristophanes could attack barbarians meant that they became a conduit to emphasize the importance of comedy. Barbarians could be easily manipulated in his plays and, as soon as their comic purpose was fulfilled, could be quickly disposed of. Thus, the barbarian only occupies a peripheral role in the comedies of Aristophanes and is of little interest in and of himself to the playwright.

Aristophanes likely did not expect everyone in his audience to react the same way to his plays. A hallmark of a good comedian is the ability to connect with audiences from a broad span of backgrounds. Thus, some audience members who enjoyed tragedy more than comedy may have found more humor in the assault of the Scythian than the embarrassment of Euripides.

Perhaps an audience member who greatly preferred Sophocles to Euripides found Aristophanes' portrayal of Euripides especially entertaining but was less amused by the jokes about the Scythian. In many ways, I suspect that Aristophanes intended for a certain level of comic ambiguity to exist in his plays.¹ Triballo and the Scythian archer allow for a wide variety of audience reactions. This spectrum of responses further highlights Aristophanes' dramatic ability.

Aristophanes' use of the barbarian differs significantly, then, from the barbarian of tragedy. While Aristophanic barbarians in some ways reflect the non-Greeks of Euripides, they serve very different purposes. In both Aristophanes and Euripides, barbarians are "the types of the outsider, the exploitable caste, or nation, or sex, of every period" (Bacon 1961: 172). Yet, the Euripidean barbarian has been removed from his historical reality and instead is a "real stranger" (Bacon 1961: 171-72). The barbarians of Aristophanes, on the other hand, are not "real strangers," but are types, most useful for the ease with which they can be exploited. In the same way, although "[t]ragic rhesis provided a vehicle for popular generalization about the undemocratic regimes of the barbarians" (Hall 1989b: 194), Aristophanes is not concerned with such issues. The literary construct of tragedy used to construct Athenian ideology against barbarians is absent in comedy. Instead of the complex barbarians of tragedy, Aristophanes builds his barbarians from stereotypes and generalities, leaving the barbarian on the outskirts of Athenian society.

While Aristophanes does not use the barbarian to construct an Athenian ideology or to aid in the process of self-definition as the tragedians did, they nonetheless serve an important purpose for his comedies. The barbarian of comedy emphasizes the ability of the playwright and

¹ For a modern comparison, consider the stand-up routine of Jeff Dunham and Achmed the Dead Terrorist. Dunham, a ventriloquist, interacts with a skeleton puppet wearing a turban, Achmed. Depending on who one watches this with, some will think that Dunham is mocking extremist Muslims, others will think that he is mocking conservative Republicans, still others will think that he is criticizing those who oppose military efforts in the War on Terror. Personally, I think that the ambiguity of his comic intentions is what has allowed for his popularity.

is a comic literary construct available for exploitation by the comedian. Aristophanes uses his barbarians to paint a negative picture of non-Greeks, highlight the foibles of his other comic targets, and, most importantly, stress the primacy of comedy in the literary world of Greece.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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