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Titelbild: Danny Sapani as Jason and Helen McCrory as Medea © Richard Hubert Smith.

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Vorwort der Herausgeberinnen

Vor einem Jahr erschien „**eisodos** – Zeitschrift für Antike Literatur und Theorie" zum ersten Mal. Wir als Herausgeberinnen blicken zufrieden auf ein erstes Jahr mit vielen gedankenreichen und anregenden Beiträge zurück, wir haben spannende Interviews geführt und haben uns entschlossen, nun auch Theaterkritiken von Inszenierungen antiker Stücke zu veröffentlichen, die ein besonderes Augenmerk auf die Zugangsweise richten.

Dieses Anliegen, unseren Zugriff auf antike literarische Texte zu befragen und darauf zu reflektieren, war Anstoß für die Gründung von **eisodos** und nach einem Jahr und drei bereits erschienen Ausgaben sehen wir uns in der Notwendigkeit und Wichtigkeit einer solchen Fragestellung bestärkt. Wir freuen uns auf ein zweites Jahr **eisodos** mit vielem „Weiter so" und einigem Neuem.

Unsere Einsenderichtlinien haben sich unter Einbeziehung unserer im ersten Jahr gemachten Erfahrungen leicht verändert: wir akzeptieren nun auch längere Beiträge (bis zu 15 Seiten) und freuen uns über Einsendungen von Bachelor- und Masterstudierenden sowie Doktoranden. Wir legen allen, die das Einsenden eines Beitrags in Erwägung ziehen, ans Herz, sich das **eisodos**-Rezept zum Schreiben eines wissenschaftlichen Artikels anzuschauen, der Ihnen eine Hilfe sein soll: `http://eisodos.org/eisodosrezept/` Für Nachfragen jeglicher Art sind wir erreichbar unter herausgeber@eisodos.org

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In dieser vierten Ausgabe findet sich erneut ein Beitrag von Dr. Julie Ackroyd, diesmal eine Rezension der *Medea*-Inszenierung, die im vergangenen Jahr am National Theatre in London Premiere hatte.

Daneben erscheint ein Artikel von Evan Levine (Texas Tech University), der sich mit dem Motiv des Vielfraßes in der antiken Dichtung beschäftigt und damit Betrachtungen über den Adressatenkreis von Lyrik verknüpft. Im Interview berichtet Dr. Dirk Pilz über seine Erfahrungen als Theaterkritiker und liefert interessante und streitbare Thesen zum Umgang mit der Antike im zeitgenössischen Theater.

Vielleicht haben Sie es bemerkt: ab dieser Ausgabe besitzt **eisodos** eine ISSN und ist somit in das Verzeichnis der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek aufgenommen. Das erleichtert bspw. für Bibliotheken die Aufnahme von **eisodos** in ihre Datenbanken und vergrößert somit auch die nachhaltige Auffindbarkeit von **eisodos**-Artikeln.

Wir möchten erneut Nico, unserem technischen Helfer, und Gisela, unserer Korrekturleserin, danken, wie auch unserem wissenschaftlichen Beirat; sie alle machen das Erscheinen dieser Zeitschrift erst möglich.

Die Herausgeberinnen

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Antikes Theater heute
Transformationen des Fremden

Ein Interview mit Dr. Dirk Pilz

Dr. Dirk Pilz

Theaterkritiker und Publizist, Redakteur für nachtkritik.de, Autor der Berliner Zeitung und Neuen Zürcher Zeitung

eisodos Warum gibt es im zeitgenössischen Theater eine so große Faszination für die Antike?

Dirk Pilz In der Literatur, in der Kunst allgemein, ist Alter ja keine Kategorie, weil es in der Kunst nichts gibt, das veraltet wäre. Es gibt nur immer wieder bestimmte Texte oder Kunstwerke, die für eine bestimmte Zeit stumm bleiben, später aber wieder zu sprechen beginnen. Bei den antiken Tragödien ist es erstaunlicherweise so, dass sie im Grunde nie aufgehört haben, lebendig zu sein, sprechende, ansprechende, herausfordernde, schöne Texte zu sein. Auch wenn man sie nicht im Original lesen kann, ist ihre sprachliche Kraft noch zu spüren. Das macht sie so faszinierend im Wortsinne: Sie fesseln die Phantasie, setzen die Sinne und das Denken in Bewegung. Zudem ist es bei den Tragödien so, dass man es oft mit dramaturgisch klar ausformulierten Konflikten zu tun hat, die unserer Gegenwart nicht unbekannt sind; Konflikte zwischen Recht und Rechtsempfinden, zwischen den Generationen, zwischen den Zwängen der Wirklichkeit und dem Utopischen zum Beispiel. Daher werden diese Stücke auch heute noch gespielt. Solche Stoffe sucht das Theater ja immer, Stoffe mit solch einer Kraft, die einen großen Assoziationsraum mitbringen und sehr bildkräftig sind.

eisodos Ist die Antike außer in den antiken Stücken auch noch in anderer Weise präsent im zeitgenössischen Theater?

Dirk Pilz Es hat immer wieder Bearbeitungen antiker Stoffe gegeben, mal dichter, mal weiter entfernt von ihren Vorlagen. Man findet die Antike überall, wann immer man danach sucht, bei Brecht und Sarah Kane, bei Dürrenmatt, Edward Bond und Botho Strauß, bei Heiner Müller oder Elfriede Jelinek – lauter sehr verschiedene Dramatiker. Es gibt auch immer wieder groß angelegte Versuche der Neuschreibung der antiken Vorlagen, von Simon Werle zum Beispiel, der acht antike Stücke zu dem Zyklus *Mythen. Mutanten* umgearbeitet hat.

eisodos Welche Inszenierung antiker Stücke aus der letzten Zeit fanden Sie besonders

gelungen? Und warum?

Dirk Pilz Es gibt keine in Stein gemeißelten Kriterien, nach denen entschieden werden könnte, was eine gute, gelungene oder missratene Inszenierung ist. Im Kern geht es immer um die Frage, ob man eine ästhetische Erfahrung macht oder nicht, und es spielen für das Machen einer solchen Erfahrung viele Faktoren eine Rolle, auf Seiten des Rezipienten genauso wie auf Seiten der Inszenierung. Dazu kommt, dass man die Qualität einer Inszenierung nicht jenseits der jeweiligen Kontexte eines einzelnen Hauses und eines einzelnen Regisseurs beurteilen kann. Ich finde es deshalb generell langweilig, eine Inszenierung danach zu beurteilen, ob sie gut ist oder nicht – das bloße Bewerten ist eine Schrumpfform von Kunstkritik. Ich bin immer daran interessiert, die Mach- und Denkart einer Inszenierung zu begreifen, mein eigenes Denken und Fühlen zu ihr in Beziehung zu setzen.

In diesem Sinne habe ich inspirierende Inszenierungen gesehen. Das waren oft Arbeiten, die Antworten auf die Frage zu finden versuchen, warum man diesen konkreten Stoff, dieses Stück auf die Bühne bringt. Warum macht man *Medea*? Warum die *Orestie*? Das ist ja keineswegs selbstverständlich. Die Künstler, die Regisseure, Schauspieler, Bühnenbildner müssen für sich eine klare Antwort darauf haben, eine Haltung zum jeweiligen Stoff. Sie übermittelt sich dann auch an den Zuschauer, und es ist dabei sekundär, ob man dieselbe Haltung wie die Künstler hat. Viel zu oft sind aber haltungslose Inszenierungen zu erleben, das ist das eigentliche Problem einer Kulturindustrie. Ein Stück nur deshalb zu inszenieren, weil es zum Kanon gehört, ist der Tod der Kunst. Das ist stumpfsinniges Anbeten von Autoritäten, das Wiederkäuen von Vorurteilen über bestimmte Texte.

Anregend fand ich eine Inszenierung wie die der *Elektra* von Stefan Pucher am Deutschen Theater Berlin: Es war bei ihm kein Stück über Rache oder Schicksal, sondern über Gegenwelten. Pop und Antike unversöhnlich vereint, Elektra als eine Frau, die gerade keine Identifizierung stiftet. So hatte ich das Stück vorher noch nicht gelesen, ich stimme der Lesart auch nicht rundum zu, aber sie hat eine eigene, nachdenkenswerte Perspektive. Eine sehr umstrittene Inszenierung mit hervorragenden Schauspielern zudem – das ist schon viel.

Vor sechs, sieben Jahren gab es eine kleine Renaissance der *Orestie*. Michael Thalheimer hat sie zum Beispiel in Berlin inszeniert und Karin Neuhäuser in Frankfurt. Sehr eingeprägt hat mir sich aber die *Orestie* von Wolfgang Engel in Leipzig. Er hat seine Schauspieler um einen runden Tisch und die Zuschauer in ein Mini-Amphitheater gesetzt. Die Schauspieler hatten nichts als die Sprache, kleine Figurinen, etwas Theaterblut und ihre körperliche Präsenz als Spielgrundlage. Es entstand eine Art kammermusikalischer Chor, und aus den Besetzungsverschiebungen innerhalb der drei Teile wurde ein Gesamtgewebe. Carolin Conrad war damals zum Beispiel erst Kassandra, dann Elektra, zum Schluss Athene und jede Figur war zwischen feinfühliger Dünnhäutigkeit und harschem

Grimm aufgespannt. Engel hatte damit die Tragödie durchweg als einen Resonanzkörper behandelt, mit dem auch die gegenwärtige Krise der Demokratie zum Ausdruck kam. Ein ganz starker Abend.

eisodos Wenn man die Rezeptionssituation der Stücke in der Antike und heute betrachtet, was fällt bei diesem Vergleich auf?

Dirk Pilz Es ist ja bekannt, dass das antike Publikum die Stoffe bestens kannte. Das Neue war die jeweilige Art der Darstellung, wie der Konfliktknoten geschnürt und wieder gelöst wird und unter welche Perspektive diese Konflikte gestellt wurden. Die Stoffe wurden nicht als selbstverständlich hingenommen, sondern hinterfragt und kritisiert.

Das ist heute grundlegend anders. Der historische Graben ist zu groß; wir wissen nicht, wie damals gespielt wurde, es gibt nur Vermutungen, Annäherungen, aber diese wirken in der Moderne durchweg befremdlich. Diese Fremdheit zu markieren, nicht zu überspielen, halte ich für die Grundvoraussetzung, um die Stücke überhaupt verstehen zu können. Das sofortige Eingemeinden in das schon Verstandene ist immer ein Anzeichen dafür, dass man den Kern noch gar nicht begriffen hat.

Innerhalb der letzten zwanzig, dreißig Jahre haben sich zudem noch zwei weitere Dinge geändert. Zum einen gab es noch bis Anfang der 90er-Jahre den unausgesprochenen Konsens oder zumindest die Hoffnung, dass es so etwas wie einen bildungsbürgerlichen Konsens gibt, dass man also die Kenntnis bestimmter Stoffe und Stücke voraussetzen kann. Den gibt es aus verschiedenen Gründen nicht mehr. Erstens, weil das Theater, zum Glück, zusehends aus einer bildungsbürgerlichen Nische herauskommt und damit von all den Funktionen befreit wird, die dieses bildungsbürgerliche Theater hatte. Es ist nicht mehr der Repräsentationsort des Bürgertums, sondern im besten Falle für eine ganze Gesellschaft. Zum anderen haben sich die kulturellen Hierarchien verändert. Dass eine Aufführung der *Medea* oder der *Orestie per se* künstlerisch und kulturell irgendwie höher anzusiedeln ist als ein Live-Konzert von Madonna, war vor 20, 30 Jahren noch die feste, weit verbreitete Ansicht einer selbsternannten Hochkultur. Noch immer gibt es Leute, die finden, dass Pop keine Kunst ist. Aber das ist sowohl theoretisch als auch praktisch in keiner Weise zu halten – diese Hierarchien sind substantiell nicht zu begründen.

Sophokles ist ja nicht *per se* ein großer Künstler, der Kunstcharakter eines Textes, einer Inszenierung, einer Musik muss sich jeweils immer wieder erweisen, durch die Lektüre, durch die Inszenierung. Sophokles ist zwar ein Kandidat, von dem man annehmen kann, dass ihn auch die nächste Generation noch entdecken wird, aber sicher ist das nicht. Man kann das nicht an äußerlichen Merkmalen ablesen. Deshalb ist es auch zutiefst kunstfeindlich, wenn man vom Theater verlangt, dass es Texte einfach vorträgt. Man kann das machen, natürlich, aber aus der Inszenierung muss hervorgehen, warum man das macht. Das schiere Anbeten von Texten hat mit Kunst nichts zu tun. Ich glaube außerdem, selbst die texttreuesten Altphilologen fänden an Inszenierungen keinen Gefallen,

die einfache Texte aufsagen. Das Theater ist ja eine eigene Kunstform. Dass es seit dem 18. Jahrhundert üblich wurde, das Theater als bloßen Diener des Textes zu begreifen, ist nur eine historische Form des Theaters unter anderen. Sie hat ihre Berechtigung, aber sie ist eben nicht die einzige. Auch hier gilt, dass die alten Hierarchien nicht mehr greifen – wir haben heute eine Pluralität der Formen und Spielweisen, die ich für schützenswert halte. Man darf nur nicht dem Aberglauben verfallen, dass es in Kunstfragen irgendeine Fortschrittsgeschichte gäbe. Das Theater eines Frank Castorf ist nicht moderner als das von Peter Stein, es geht von anderen Voraussetzungen aus.

Es sind heute also zweierlei Dinge verschwunden: einerseits ein Kanonwissen, andererseits der Glaube an Hierarchien. Ich halte das für begrüßenswert.

eisodos Von zentraler Bedeutung für das Verständnis des antiken Theaters ist das Verständnis des Tragischen. Wie wird damit im zeitgenössischen Theater umgegangen?

Dirk Pilz Bezüglich der Tragödie ist die gattungstheoretische Perspektive vorherrschend. Hans-Thies Lehmann hat aber ein umfangreiches Buch geschrieben und – wie zuvor schon Christoph Menke – überzeugend gezeigt, dass die Tragödie keine Frage der Textgattung ist. Tragödien sind Texte, die für das Spiel, für das Theater gemacht sind. Tragödien finden auf der Bühne statt. Die Tragödie ist ein Effekt des Tragödienspiels. Es ist entscheidend, dass man nicht, wie Nietzsche, die Tragödie in einem Tragischen sucht, einem Wesen, einer tragischen Verfasstheit, sondern im performativen Moment. So gesehen ist das berühmte Diktum von George Steiner von 1961, dass die Tragödie in der Moderne tot sei, schlicht falsch.

eisodos Wie geht das zeitgenössische Theater mit Elementen der antiken Dramen um, die uns besonders fremd sind, wie 21. dem Chor oder der Göttervorstellung?

Dirk Pilz Wenn der Chor heute auftaucht, hat er häufig nur die Funktion eines theatralen Beeindruckungsmoments: Chorisches Sprechen macht theatral immer einen starken Eindruck, vor allem wenn es gut gemacht ist – und es gibt sehr gute Chöre auf deutschen Theatern. Und wenn der Chor weggelassen wird, dann in der Regel aus inhaltlichen Gründen. Damit wird aber die Instanz der Reflexion und der Kritik rausgestrichen, und das ist ein heftiger Eingriff. Man tut dies, um die Konflikte zwischen den Protagonisten schärfer, kenntlicher, konturierter zu gestalten. Darin drückt sich ein Begriff von Tragödie aus, den ich für schwierig halte. Was man dadurch aber preisgibt, ist genau das, warum es die Tragödie überhaupt gibt – da argumentiere ich ganz mit Wolfram Ettes großem Buch *Kritik der Tragödie*. Die Tragödie ist für Ette nicht eine Vorführung und Bestätigung von angeblich unlösbaren oder nur blutig zu lösenden Konflikten, sondern eine Kritik an dieser Art von Konflikten – und diese Kritik, zum Beispiel am Umgang mit Göttern oder an einem herrschenden Weltbild übt oft der Chor. Streicht man diese Reflexionsinstanz, naturalisiert man die Konflikte, stellt sie also als unveränderlich hin, als etwas, das der

Veränderbarkeit und der Kritik nicht zugänglich ist. Ettes starkes, an den Texten sehr genau herausgearbeitetes Argument ist, dass man damit den Kern der Tragödien verfehlt.

Dennoch bleibt natürlich, dass unserer Gegenwart die antiken Götterwelten fremd, fern sind. Ich sehe auch keine Möglichkeiten, das antike Verständnis von Theologie und Religion auf die Bühne zu bringen, jenseits von musealen Aspekten. Die Götter der Tragödie sind dennoch nicht folgenlos zu streichen, weil man dann genau den Horizont wegstreicht, innerhalb dessen die Tragödie überhaupt erst triftig wird. Fällt diese Ebene weg, erhält man den Eindruck, bei *Medea* handele es sich nur um einen Ehestreit. Man muss vielmehr, glaube ich, gerade anhand der Tragödien die Transformationsgeschichten des Göttlichen reflektieren – die Religion ist ja nicht verschwunden, aber die Glaubensformen und ihre entsprechenden Erfahrungsweisen haben sich geändert. Man muss, wenn man Tragödien inszeniert, theologisch denken können, nicht allein literarisch.

Hier wird triftig, was Herbert Schnädelbach, ein Berliner Philosoph, gesagt hat, der sich als frommer Atheist bezeichnet: Die Aufklärung hätte heute vor allem zu leisten, wieder klarzumachen, was Religion überhaupt ist, gerade in den intellektuellen, akademischen Milieus. Es gibt ein großes Wissensdefizit, was Religiosität angeht. Sie wird abgelehnt, ohne überhaupt einen Begriff von Religion zu haben. Einer Art Vulgärsäkularismus folgend wird gern unterstellt, dass Religion mit wachsender Aufklärung verschwinde. Darin steckt eine Vorstellung von Metaphysik, die in Religion nur die Heimstatt des Irrationalen und des Unaufgeklärten sieht: Wer richtig nachdenkt, verliere sofort jegliche transzendente Vorstellung. Das stimmt weder soziologisch noch empirisch, und Philosophen wie Charles Taylor oder Hans Joas haben es eingehend analysiert. Das Theatermilieu ist aber in der Regel religionsdumm.

eisodos Als Theaterkritiker, aber auch als Zuschauer insgesamt: wie geht man mit Vorerwartungen um?

Dirk Pilz Es gibt eine grundlegende Widersprüchlichkeit, der man sich bewusst sein muss, das betrifft aber nicht nur die Antike: Man geht natürlich niemals als leeres Blatt ins Theater, man bringt immer etwas mit. Wissen, Seherfahrungen, vor allem aber Vorurteile. Gegenüber dem Stoff, dem Regisseur, dem Theater, den Schauspielern, dem Raum. Man hat Bilder im Kopf. Die Aufgabe ist – für alle Zuschauer, aber für den Kritiker ganz besonders, weil er es explizit macht – sich dieses mitgebrachten Fundus' bewusst zu sein. Es ist illusionär zu glauben, man könne all das wegräumen, sich sozusagen blank machen. Es ist auch illusionär zu glauben, man könne über seinen eigenen Schatten springen. Ich glaube aber, man muss als Kritiker gut vorbereitet ins Theater gehen, das Stück lesen, die jeweilige Fassung lesen, sich mit der Übersetzung beschäftigen. Man muss sich in einem hohen Grade all dieser Dinge bewusst sein. Das ist die permanente Arbeit, deshalb ist der Job so anstrengend. Praktisch ausgedrückt: Auch wenn man 20 Mal bei Claus Peymann war und es 20 Mal ganz furchtbar fand, muss man sich die Fähigkeit bewahren, für möglich

zu halten, dass die 21. Inszenierung anders ist. Dass Peymann sich verändert hat, dass ich mich verändert habe, dass das Theater sich verändert hat.

Man muss sich bemühen, nicht immer den eigenen Erwartungen oder Vorannahmen hinterher zu schreiben. Man muss seinen Gedanken und seiner Reflexion treu bleiben, dem vertrauen, was man wirklich sieht und erfährt beim Zusehen. Aber dem steht eine tief sitzende Angst vor ästhetischer Erfahrung entgegen. Diese Angst ist verständlich, weil einen eine solche ästhetische Erfahrung tatsächlich hoch verunsichern und verändern kann. Das ist die Angst, dass das Schauspiel etwas mit mir macht, was ich nicht mehr im Griff habe, weder wissenschaftlich noch emotional. Kunst – gerade die Theaterkunst – kann eine enorme Wirkung haben. Das will man aber nicht immer. Denn man kommt von der Arbeit, am nächsten Tag hat man früh wieder die Kinder und dies und jenes; man kann und will es sich nicht leisten, dass das ganze Leben auf den Kopf gestellt wird. Und so stellt man einfach zwischen sich und dem Theater einen Schutz auf, eine bildungsbürgerliche Wand. Das Theater hat auch als Ort zur Entspannung und Unterhaltung seine Berechtigung, nur macht man dann eben keine ästhetische Erfahrung.

The Peasant's Banquet

*Gluttony on the Move in the Greek Poetic Consciousness**

Evan I. Levine
Texas Tech University

1. A staple of the human condition, gastronomic themes abound throughout epic, lyric, pastoral, and bucolic poetry and are employed for a diverse assortment of often-standardized yet critically emotional purposes. Consequently, the broad social and meta-literary implications of consumption in ancient literature have long been the subject of philological analysis from one end of the ancient literary corpus to the other.[1] Following this scholarship, one finds that scenes of agricultural plenty illustrate picturesque and prosperous countries,[2] while depictions of scarcity and famine spell the downward spiral of once-great nations.[3] Truly, as Pindar articulates that ἡσυχία δὲ φιλεῖ μὲν συμπόσιον ("peace loves the symposium"), poets of all eras represent the values and sophistication of Hellenic culture through scenes of communal consumption.[4] However, food can just as easily be employed to demonstrate the innate foreignness of non-Greek poetic figures.[5] Nevertheless, despite the fact that culinary themes are employed within Greek poetry in various contexts and for several purposes, their associations remain rather static from the earliest examples of epic to later Alexandrian compositions—in short, abundance is customarily uplifting while famine is habitually undesirable.

This static relationship between culinary themes and their allusive associations becomes less stable when it encounters extraordinary examples of consumption, particularly those deemed abject in nature. Following the work of Julia Kristeva (1980), this exploration of grotesque, improper, and disorderly themes, at its simplest, forces an audience to determine the conventional from the unusual.[6] With regard to food tropes in ancient, as

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[1] For instance, Bakker (2013) notably employs the theme of meat, hunting, and cattle within Homeric Epic as a lens for better understanding the nuances of this genre, while Gowers (1993) has examined the implications of consumption in Roman satire and poetics.

[2] Hom. *Od.* 15.405–7.

[3] Hdt. 1.94.

[4] P. *N.* 9.48.

[5] Eur. *Cyc.* 136.

[6] Kristeva (1980) 2–4, 15–17.

in contemporary literature, abject subject matter has a distinct opportunity to specify the Other, thereby demarcating the conventional and the unconventional, often with implicit consequences. As referenced above, encounters with foods deemed unusual, disgusting, off-limits, or the consumption of food during abnormal situations, carry certain negative, foreign, or suggestive connotations, all of which can be seen throughout the Greek poetic tradition. However, when one examines literary episodes whereby characters engage with abnormal quantities of food, it becomes clear any ensuing repercussions are far less concrete than other exchanges between poetry and cuisine.

I argue that there are certain thematic shifts within the Greek poetic corpus which mirror the transition of verse from an Archaic and Classical popular art to a form of elite entertainment in the Hellenistic world.[7] To substantiate this claim of parallel shifts—both thematic and in terms of audience—this paper explores the trajectory of the portrayal of gluttons and gluttony over the literary longue durée. Where Epic, Archaic, and Classical gluttons are traditionally portrayed as distinctly Other, the poetic environment of the Hellenistic accepts the glutton, often depicted as satirized members of the author's own social amoeba. In these later poems, those who overeat take on identities and endure consequences dissimilar to their earlier predecessors. To the readers and writers of these later compositions, gluttony existed far less in the realm of the socially distant aristocrat, but was instead a facet of life with which they may have been intimately familiar.

2. Before continuing, one must briefly examine the nature of archaic Greek poetry. It was a performance art—a verbal, musical, and visual composition—conducted in various settings, public and private, religious and secular, by members of all social classes.[8] The egalitarian consumption of Greek poetry made it a popular art, one of the first of its kind.[9] As a result, these works were often composed to make them universally accessible, regardless of the social class or physical location of either the author or consumer. In these early poems, politicians are slandered or praised, and emotions, felt by members of all social classes, are illustrated with heartrending description. Pindaric victory odes, Archilochean and Hipponactean Iambic verses, and the epic poems of Homer and Hesiod

[7] Although exhibiting the changing audience of Greek verse in such a way is to create and engage with a potentially troublesome binary of popular versus elite, I am by no means suggesting that, at any time, there were concrete socio-economic boundaries within audienceship (see for example the largely elite sympotic poetic context in the Archaic Greek world). Instead, I employ this dichotomy as a means to illustrate the general concept that, in the archaic world, poetry was often composed for and consumed by a more egalitarian audience than that of the Hellenistic world. This shift in audience is well-documented and deeply analyzed in Morrison (2012) and very clearly in Fantuzzi and Hunter (2005). Moreover, this shift in audience may also correspond to a development of Greek verse from a largely oral/aural art, as has been argued by Svenbro (1988) and Edwards (1990, 2004) regarding epic, Garner (2011) regarding elegy, and Day (1989) regarding inscribed verse, to a much more literary genre, a claim raised by Hopkinson (1988) and Bing (1988). However, it must be stressed, as Barnes (2003) convincingly argues, that neither of these traditions was at any time exclusively oral/aural or entirely literary.

[8] Campbell (1982) xiv.

[9] For a contemporaneous example from the epic corpus, see Ross (2005) regarding Panhellenic language in the *Iliad*.

themselves were created for and consumed by all levels of the Hellenic social order.[10]

The nature of Greek verse undergoes several significant changes during its transition into the Hellenistic world. A new type of poetry, while founded heavily on its archaic antecedents, has little in common, socially, with the Greek lyric and epic tradition of the past.[11] Greek poets no longer composed in a popular vernacular, discussing their themes through well-known mythological or humorous scenes. Instead, poets such as Philoxenus of Cythera, Machon, Theocritus, and Callimachus composed highly complex verse, employing obscure language and uncommon allusions.[12] These works, in stark opposition to those of earlier poets, are no longer an egalitarian product, written for any and all members of Hellenic society. Instead, poetry took the form of small, technical compositions, written for a more exclusive group of elite, highly educated, and politically influential consumers.[13]

With this shift in poetic direction came a parallel shift with the theme of gluttony, overindulgence, and culinary excess. In the poetry of Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, and Solon, gluttons are depicted as reprehensible creatures, worthy of attack. In the Iambic verses of Hipponax and the epinician odes of Pindar, gluttony manifests as an avenue for, not only attack, but also ridicule and public shaming. However, the Hellenistic poets Philoxenus, Machon, and Theocritus represent gluttons with a formula of quasi-impolite, often satirical, comic endearment. As these poems began to be composed for an elite audience, socially removed from the hungry masses, gluttons are no longer the Other, members of the out-group to be attacked or ostracized. Instead, they are elite members of the author's own social circle, satirized but not shunned.

3. Hesiod begins his Theogony with a description of himself as a simple shepherd who receives his poetic ability after being approached by the Muses.[14] However, he employs a dialogue between himself and the Muses to differentiate himself with his newfound skill, and, by association, his assumed audience from individuals with gluttonous tendencies.[15] Despite the fact that this dialogue is directly spoken toward a pre-inspired Hesiod,[16] with this single line, Hesiod indirectly labels all field-dwelling shepherds as γαστέρες οἶον ("nothing more than bellies"). These are individuals who, unlike the inspired Hesiod, the Muses, or the audience with whom he interacts—active consumers and contributors of poetry—seem to be motivated only by their desire for food.[17] With this brief passage, we

[10] Scodel (2009) 176–177.

[11] Specific elements of this transition are examined below, but for more broad reviews and analyses of this phenomenon, see Acosta-Hughes (2002) regarding the relationships between Callimachus and his Iambic predecessors, Acosta-Hughes (2010) concerning the re-presentation of archaic lyric verse in the Hellenistic world, and Rosen (2007a) regarding the changing nature of satire in the classical world.

[12] Bing (2013), Hopkinson (1988) 7–8.

[13] Barbantani (2001) 12, Fantuzzi and Hunter (2005) 451.

[14] Hes. *Th.* 29–35.

[15] Hes. *Th.* 26.

[16] West (1966) 160.

[17] Katz and Volk (2000) 123.

witness a stark differentiation between gluttons and non-gluttons.[18]

Moreover, this singular culinary motivation marks this group as one who is κάκ᾽ ἐλέγχεα ("worthy of reproach"). Not only are Hesiod's gluttonous shepherds distinguished from his target audience, but they are also individuals worthy of nothing better than reproach. Therefore, through the poetic guise of a divine conversation between the Muses and their target for inspiration, Hesiod succeeds in creating more than just a division between conventional eaters and those with abject tendencies.[19] He articulates a social setting in which those who eat unconventionally should be treated not only as separate from the public but also with a certain level of abhorrence.

This concept is also seen in the Homeric tradition, most notably within the stories of Iros, Thersites, and the pseudo-Homeric Margites, but also in more natural descriptions, like the dogs and birds who look to feast upon the flesh of the unburied Ajax.[20] In these poems, gluttony is employed as an almost caricaturist feature, the pinnacle of which is the use of Μαργίτης, from μάργος ("glutton"), to name the foolish protagonist of the poem of the same name. However, further comment on this poem shall be withheld due to its fragmentary nature and speculative authorship, save to say that the actions of Margites, from what we may gather, paint a comedic yet negative image of the epic glutton.[21] Instead, Odysseus' initial encounter with Iros shall serve as a case study in Homeric gluttony.

Upon his return to Ithaca, Odysseus spies a beggar in a colorfully portrayed scene.[22] Described as well-known on account of his γαστέρι μάργῃ ("gluttonous stomach"), Homer portrays Iros to be able to continuously eat and drink. Moreover, we see that this gluttonous lifestyle has effected Iros, seeing as he is οὐδέ ἦν οὐδὲ βίη ("without strength or power"). This figure proceeds to berate Odysseus in his own home, albeit unknowingly (18.10–15), before being forced to fight him by a group of suitors (18.75–80). He is quickly defeated by Odysseus (18.95–99), before finally being physically removed from the home of the hero (18.101–4).

In this scene, Homer provides a succinct representation of the dangers of gluttony in the archaic Greek world. Not only is Iros physically detestable, he also does not abide by the concept of ξένια ("hospitality") and is subsequently punished. As a result, he is made an outsider both physically, by his removal from the home of Odysseus, as well as being treated as φαρμακός ("scapegoat"), labeled as distinctly Other as a direct result of his gluttony. However, as Steiner (2009, p. 88) postulates, Iros is more than a simple glutton,

[18] The concept of consumption is further developed through a real-world example in in Hes. WD.299f., creating of a dichotomy between hunger and plenty. Therein, Hesiod sings the praises of agricultural plenty—and by association the ability for consumption—but is explicit in articulating the potential dangers of such a lifestyle.

[19] Thalmann (1984) 143.

[20] Morgan (2008) 54.

[21] For an extended analysis of Μαργίτης and his gluttonous tendencies, see Bossi (1986).

[22] Hom. *Od.* 18.1–4.

but instead "the personification of the spirit of consumption that preys on Odysseus' oikos."

In addition, throughout the Odyssey, the Proci who harbor and encourage the indulgent Iros are also depicted as extravagant gluttons in their own right. While occupying the home of Odysseus, they take advantage of the ξένια offered to them. They are routinely seen organizing and taking part in elaborate feasts, ravaging the stores of Odysseus and the livestock raised within his estate.[23] The detail portrayed in these scenes emphasizes the grotesque nature of the suitors' gluttony. As with the case of Iros, this gluttony has explicit repercussions, thereby justifying the brutal treatment that they receive at the hands of the returning Odysseus in *Od.* 21–22. For the Homeric audience, rich or poor, gluttony is portrayed as a lifestyle with drastic physical and social repercussions.

Within the transition from epic to lyric poetry, the gluttony's effects on different aspects of popular Hellenic life are exhibited. Politically, the glutton is seen as a civic risk and public detriment within early Greek lyric poetry. In our earliest surviving example of Athenian verse, Solon implores the citizens of Athens to behave in a way that befits their great city.[24] Describing the contemporary political landscape, Solon portrays his political opponents as individuals who οὐ γὰρ ἐπίστανται κατέχειν κόρον οὐδὲ παρούσας / εὐφροσύνας κοσμεῖν δαιτὸς ἐν ἡσυχίηι[25] ("They do not know how to withhold their *koros* ("gormandizing"), nor, being among festivities, how to conduct their merriment in peace"). These are characters who, as Solon makes clear in the remainder of the fragment, are responsible for the downfall of Athenian prosperity and political decency. Their inability to act as anything other than gastronomic indulgers directly parallels their desire for money, power, and pleasure, at any cost to the Athenian people. Through this exposé, Solon exhibits the public Athenian opinion of the glutton for both the upper and lower classes of the communal Greek civic environment. For the elite, gluttony is always already threatening, waiting to strip them of their moral barometer. For the average Athenian, only the elite have the opportunity to act with culinary gluttony. For all citizens of the Athenian state, gluttony was something to be avoided.

Shifting from realm of politics, it is in the corpus of the Iambic poets Archilochus and Hipponax that abuse, mockery, and satire toward gluttonous individuals reaches its zenith.[26] Indeed, they seem to draw inspiration for their abuse strictly from subjects which are deemed to be socially abject.[27] Overindulgence is a critical component to these poems in which these poets are often linked—in their own works or in those of their successors—with gluttony, albeit often physical rather than gastronomic.[28] Archilochus clearly

[23] See for example Hom. *Od.* 1.144–155 as indicative of the language employed in depicting the gluttonous actions of the Proci.
[24] Campbell (1982) 231; 240.
[25] Sol. 3.9–10.
[26] Rosen (2007b) 51.
[27] Lavigne (1998) 3.
[28] Steiner (2002) 301.

disdains the overindulgent elite, writing that οὐ φιλέω μέγαν στρατηγὸν οὐδὲ διαπεπλιγμένον / οὐδὲ βοστρύχοισι γαῦρον οὐδ' ὑπεξυρημένον[29] ("I do not love the great general, not his prancing about, his haughty curls, or his shaved face"). While making no remark toward any culinary gluttony, in fact his use of the equine διαπεπλιγμένον ("prancing about") may indicate a certain level of fitness, the physical indulgences of the στρατηγός ("general") are enough to mark him as a member of the elite who is too far removed from reality to function admirably in archaic Greek warfare.[30] Much too concerned with his hair, his beard, and his proud appearance, such an individual is marginalized by Archilochus and, presumably, by his comrades. Instead, Archilochus presents a more common character, a small man with bandy legs and a courageous heart.[31] Toward those who overindulge in food, Archilochus articulates his opinion through an explicit address to an unknown individual.[32] For the Greek audience, it is clear that to partake excessively in wine, or indeed to allow one's stomach to lead their mind, was to provide an opportunity for public rebuke and abuse.

While Archilochus is concerned with levying aggressive, abusive, and humiliating assaults toward his enemies, we experience another development in the use of the glutton as a poetic theme within the work of Hipponax. Nursing a seemingly lifelong feud with the sculptor Bupalus, who was said to have sculpted an unflattering likeness of Hipponax, the poet turns to gluttony as the vehicle for his verbal abuse.[33] Hipponax employs a character by the name of Arētē ("the Prayed-for"), perhaps functioning as the mother or daughter of Bupalus, or Bupalus may be acting as a competing suitor.[34] Nevertheless, Hipponax recounts a number of possible erotic encounters between Bupalus and Arētē in which his body and his actions are unquestionably gluttonous. Hipponax labels his rival ὁ μητροκοίτης Βούπαλος ("mother-fornicating Bupalus") before remarking that he is σύν Ἀρήτῃ[35] ("with Arētē"). Scholia have deduced that this is no reference to Bupalus' extreme piety toward the Magna Mater or any other goddess, but a direct reference to his incestuous gluttony, and that Arētē, his sexual partner, must therefore be his mother![36] While this conclusion may perhaps be a bit spurious, it paints a clear picture of the type of response that this imagery may have conjured for the contemporaneous Greek audience. Moreover, Hipponax leaves no doubt that Bupalus is not only a sexual deviant, but also sexually gluttonous, worthy only of rebuke and defamation. Bupalus, for Hipponax, is τὸν θεοῖςιν ἐχθρὸν τοῦτον, ὃς κατευδούσης / τῆς μητρὸς ἐσκύλευε τὸν βρύσσον[37] ("one who is hated by

[29] Archil. fr. 114.1–2.
[30] Brown (2006) 38.
[31] Archil. fr. 114.3–4.
[32] Archil. fr. 124b.1–5.
[33] Campbell (1982) 374.
[34] Rosen (1988) 39.
[35] Hip. 12.2.
[36] Degani (1991) 39; Wöhrle (2000) 113-115.
[37] Hip. 70.8–9.

the gods, who used to touch the sea anemone of his sleeping mother"). As a direct result of fornication with his own mother, an act skillfully and comically portrayed, Hipponax labels Bupalus as worthy of not only earthly abuse, but that of the gods.[38]

Politically, the poetry of Hipponax minces no words in articulating his views toward conventional gluttony and its relationship with an overindulgence of power. Many of these take the form of small quips regarding the tyrants of his native Ephesus, serving no small part in his eventual exile. For instance, he attacks a certain Sannus, remarking that he is γαστρὸς οὐ κατακρα[τεῖς[39] ("not in control of his stomach"). In another example, Hipponax makes an invocation to the Muses filled with mythic allusions.[40] Labeling his victim as the son of Eurymedon—the mythic titanic king of gigantomachean fame—Hipponax instantly succeeds in conjuring images of non-human ancestry, immediately marking this individual as different than his (presumably) all-human audience.[41] Moreover, employing not his traditional choliambic meter, but dactylic hexameter, Hipponax further reminds the audience of the mythic and detached nature of Eurymedon—and presumably his offspring—while linking this poem to tales of Homeric gluttony and abuse.[42] This leads into his identification of this individual with monikers such as τὴν ποντοχάρυβδιν ("the sea-swallower") and as τὴν ἐγγαστριμάχαιραν ("the belly-knife"), which, when combined with a Titanic parentage, exhibit an individual who is not unfamiliar with the dinner table. Hipponax makes certain that his audience understands that this is a man ὃς ἐσθίει οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ("who eats not according to custom"). With this final claim, Hipponax establishes this figure and his physical being as abject, literally that which goes against custom.

Having classified the son of Eurymidon in undeniably gluttonous terms, Hipponax beseeches the muses to tell him ὅπως ψηφῖδι κακὸς κακὸν οἶτον ὀλεῖται / βουλῆι δημοσίηι ("how he may perish, a terrible doom, by a vote of the boule"). Just as in Homer, with the story of Odysseus and Iros, Hipponax's target becomes a φαρμακός, forced out of the community as a direct result of his gluttonous ways.[43] For his contemporary audience, Hipponax makes clear the dangers of gluttony for both the common man, and for the political elite. To act as a glutton, whether one was a lowly sculptor or a powerful tyrant, is to lead oneself into exile, abuse, and dishonor.[44]

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[38] Masson (1962) 141.

[39] Hip. 118.2.

[40] Hip. 128.

[41] For scholiastic and editorial discussion on the identity of Εὐρυμεδοντιάδεα, *cf.* Degani (1991) 128–9 and Masson (1962) 89. For further analysis of the implications of this nomenclature, *cf.* Faraone (2004).

[42] Rosen (1990) 22–25.

[43] Compton (2006) 66.

[44] The satirizing nature of the early Iambic tradition persists, to some extent, in the Athenian Old Comedic tradition. For example in both the *Plutus* and *Ecclesiazusae*, Aristophanes depicts agricultural plenty for the masses as a utopian ideal, but is quick to criticize the gluttonous. This is perhaps no more clear than in the ultimate feast of the latter poem (Aristoph. *Eccl.* 1170–1174), in which the audience is provided the description of the supremely gluttonous dish titled λοπαδο-τεμαχο-σελαχο-γαλεο--κρανιο-λειψανο-δριμ-υπο-τριμματο-σιλφιο-καραβ-ομελιτο- κατακεχυ-μενο-κιχλ-επι-κοσσυφο-φαττο-περιστερ-

4. Alongside the Hellenistic shift in philosophical, academic, and literary focus from the Eurasian mainland to Alexandrian Egypt, a revolution takes place with regards to poetic themes, not least of all concerning gluttony. As stated above, this was a period in which poetry was primarily written for and consumed by the politically and socially elite. By no means did poets of this era separate themselves completely from their predecessors, continuously drawing on these earlier compositions as sources of inspiration,[45] but their compositions certainly reflect this change in intellectual scenery. For example, Callimachus' Iamb 13, as stated by Steiner, is a direct display of his knowledge and familiarity with the Iambic Hipponax and Archilochus. However, this poem engages with gluttony only to illustrate the fact that the contemporaries of Callimachus were less well-versed in the Iambic tradition than he.[46] Nowhere is this transition of audience, and consequential transition in gluttonous perspective, more pronounced than in the poetry of Philoxenus of Cythera, himself a strong influence on the work of Callimachus.[47]

In a work *Deipnon*—fragments of which are preserved in both The *Deipnosophistae* and the Suda—Philoxenus articulates the plans for an unbelievably elaborate and lavish dinner.[48] He paints a scene in which a troop of slaves furnish a room with a great many extravagant and exotic dishes, all of which are described in great detail. The keynote dish of this feast is an unnaturally large tureen, so large as to necessitate it being riveted together from many pieces of bronze, containing a dish of eels about which Philoxenus describes as ϑεοτερπές[49] ("fit for the gods"). Philoxenus proceeds to partake in the feast himself, before reclining on his kline and receiving a bath from one of the slaves.[50]

Within this poem, at least in the fragments preserved by Athenaeus, there are no apparent repercussion against those who partake in such a feast, only humorous anecdotes with regard to their luxurious habits. In this way, Philoxenus' *Deipnon* appears as a satirical take on the luxurious habits of the Sicilian aristocracy in whose court he resided, but without pronouncing any of the gluttonous participants as abject, other, or in any way detestable. Gluttons function as the butt of Philoxenus' jokes, comical and perhaps

αλεκτρυον-οπτο-κεφαλλιο-κιγκλο-πελειο-λαγῳο-σιραιο-βαφη- τραγανο-πτερύγων. This is a view of gluttony which may well have been ubiquitous in Old Comedy. Evidence for this may be found in the depiction of the Underwolrd, of all places, as the land of plenty in Pherecrates' unfortunately fragmentary play *Miners*.

[45] Lavigne (2008), Fantuzzi and Hunter (2005), and Acosta-Hughes (2002) make clear that there is a continuation of the genre from the Archaic Iambos to the Hellenistic composer of Epigram. This is especially clear regarding the close relationship between the novel verse of Callimachus and the iamboi of Hipponax.

[46] Steiner (2009) 15, 22; *cf.* also Steiner (2007).

[47] Cairns (2000) 11.

[48] Athenaeus interestingly distinguishes this work from that of an actual glutton: a certain Philoxenus of Leucas, who is said to have been quoted by the comic poet Plato (Ath. *Deip.* 5b.7–8; 146f.4–6). Perhaps this warrants further investigation with regards to Machon 9, which seems to make no difference between the two (combining the gluttonous tendencies of the Leucadian Philoxenus with the maritime feast of the Cytherean, and leaving no doubt as to the identity of his Philoxenus, labeling him Φιλόξενον τῶν διϑυράμβων).

[49] Ath. *Deip.* 147a.10–11.

[50] Ath. *Deip.* 147e.8–10.

excessive, but not at all criminal.

Throughout the corpus of Hellenistic verse this trend persists in, notably in the work of Machon, an Alexandrian lyric poet working mainly within the genre of New Comedy. In Machon fr. 9, also preserved by Athenaeus, he relates a humorous account of the aforementioned Philoxenus of Cythera, labeled Φιλόξενον τῶν διθυράμβων τὸν ποιητὴν γεγονέναι / ὀψοφάγον[51] ("Philoxenus, the poet of dithyrambs, who delights in delicacies"). Described in no uncertain terms as a gourmand, Machon articulates that Philoxenus once brought with him to Syracuse an octopus measuring two forearms in length, which he proceeded to prepare in a lavish manner before gluttonously consuming the entirety of the cephalopod, save its head.[52] As a result, Philoxenus is gripped by a case of indigestion so great that he calls on a physician who informs him that he will perish before the next morning.[53] Philoxenus, in a case of classic New Comedic trope, articulates that his affairs are in order[54] and laments his situation for a moment,[55] before finally exclaiming: ἵν' ἔχων ἀποτρέχω πάντα τἀμαυτοῦ κάτω / τοῦ πουλύποδός μοι τὸ κατάλοιπον ἀπόδοτε[56] ("so that I may depart downward with all of myself, give the rest of the octopus back to me!").

A direct reference to the work of Philoxenus himself,[57] not least of all his *Deipnon*, this fragment concisely synopsizes the Greek poetic opinion of gluttony in the Hellenistic era. Philoxenus is depicted as being acutely gluttonous, one who acts on these tendencies to such a degree that he brings sickness upon him. Nevertheless, he is anything but unhappy, proceeding with abandon in his plan to consume anything and everything he wishes. In fact, while his impending doom is inferred within the fragment, he survives until the end, with no real consequences save a bit of indigestion.

As an Hellenistic poet and comedian, composing a tale for a distinctly Hellenistic audience, Machon employs another, widely renowned writer of Hellenistic verse as his mock protagonist. The gluttonous individuals are no longer Other, someone in the outgroup to be attacked or ostracized. Instead they are elite members, albeit satirized, of the author's own social circle. This shift in the representation of the glutton mirrors the poetic shift from a public spectacle to a form of elite private entertainment. In the Alexandrian world, poetry is no longer the voice of the popular and elite alike. The ways in which gluttons are approached in this era exhibit a deliberately elite artistic form. Indeed, the producers and consumers of these later works, composed solely of the socially elite, would have felt at home at the deipnon.

5. While this study is focused primarily on the Archaic and Hellenistic Greek literary

[51] Ma. fr. 9.2–3.
[52] Ma. fr. 9.3–6.
[53] Ma. fr. 9.8–10.
[54] Ma. fr. 9.11–12.
[55] Ma. fr. 9.17–19.
[56] Ma. fr. 9.22–23.
[57] Hordern (2000) 42.

traditions, its overall arguments are not strictly limited to these periods. Indeed, it could conceivably (and perhaps very usefully) be expanded indefinitely, allowing for the juxtaposition of consumption and social class to be examined in many different genres of verse. In this case, however, the iambic revival of the late antique world will serve as a brief example of this opportunity.[58]

In his dialogues, Lucian often engages with gluttony to exhibit both a conscious acknowledgement of the past, as well as the contemporary implications regarding overindulgence. The protagonist of his aptly titled *De Parasito*, Simon labels himself a παρασιτικός by profession. Lucian employs this self-proclaimed glutton as a means of not only satirizing the overindulgent in a manner which is refreshingly self-conscious, but also as a means of exhibiting the ever-present implications of such behavior. These repercussions are perhaps best illustrated by the humorous reaction of Tychiades' disbelief that Simon is ready to divulge his profession, and the logic with which the parasite rationalizes his lifestyle. Tychiades remarks ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἐρυθριᾷς παράσιτον σαυτὸν καλῶν[59] ("But, do you not blush, calling yourself a parasite?"); to which Simon is quick to respond οὐδαμῶς: αἰσχυνοίμην γὰρ ἄν, εἰ μὴ λέγοιμι[60] ("Not at all; for I would be ashamed, if I did not say it."). In doing so, Lucian shows that, while gluttony is still an exceptional behavior, one worthy of reprimand, here is perhaps a contemporary cultural phenomenon on which this satire is founded.

Finally, and in conclusion, Lucian further explores the concept of overindulgence of a distinctly non-gastronomic type his Lexiphanes. Therein the appropriately named Λεξιφάνης is exhibited as a parody of one who acts with gluttony in their rhetoric. As such, Lucian provides a thorough and humorous description of this figure.[61] To counteract this behavior, Lexiphanes is prescribed a κεράννυμι ("mixture, potion, prescription," etc.) from the physician Sopolis so that he might be able to abstain from pretentious literary exclamations. This literary and rhetorical overindulgence, itself leading to a series of penalties all its own, provides a compelling development whereby such literature is conscious of its elite consumption, and is found to be actively pushing against this phenomenon to some extent. Lucian's characters of Simon and Lexiphanes, like the tyrants of the Hipponactean corpus or Machon's representation of Philoxenus, are unabashedly depicted as grotesque gourmands. However, unlike their Archaic or Hellenistic antecedents, Lucian's dialogues exhibit a proximity between his audience and excess previously unseen, despite maintaining a strict demarcation of their gluttons as the Other. Through this novel method of interaction with the overindulgent, we see that the implications of being γαστέρες οἶον are never truly at rest.

[58] Hawkins (2014) provides novel perspectives on this topic, exploring the Archilochean, Hipponactean, and especially the Callimachean influences on the Latin and Second Sophistic literary corpora.
[59] Luc. *Par.* 40.
[60] Luc. *Par.* 41.
[61] Luc. *Lex.* 20.

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Theaterrezension

Medea, *National Theatre, London*

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When she was offered the part of Medea, Helen McCrory admitted "I had never read it and I'd never seen it" but "it always sounds wonderful if they say you are playing the title of the play."[1] This does not sound the most auspicious start to casting, however, McCrory's depiction of Medea is successful and she believably conveys the tragedy of a woman who has lost almost everything at the start of the play and is willing to deliberately deprive herself of the little she has left in order to stay true to her beliefs and defend herself, retaining her dignity when all else has been taken from her. McCrory has said that Greek plays, when adapted into English, should "allow the audience to contemplate what happens when people who are highly intelligent are disenfranchised. If you don't include people in society the only way they can express themselves is criminally and against society"[2] or, in the case of Medea, emotionally against herself and her ex-husband.

The play opens with in the domestic setting of a living room where two boys are lying on the floor in sleeping bags watching TV. They play with plastic dinosaurs and Transformers; these are Medea's two boys. The modern setting and clothes chosen by the director, Carrie Cracknell, serve to illustrate to the audience that there are more

[1] McCrory (2014) on-line.
[2] McCrory (2014) on-line.

similarities than differences between this household and those of its watchers. In this way the distancing between audience and subject, often experienced in a classically dressed or more timeless production, is removed. This environment is a recognisable one close to home. Carpeted, with peeling paint and wall paper the stage set conveys a feeling of former opulence gone to seed. A 1960's concrete open plan, Corbusier type house, angular, formally stylish and the height of fashion but now neglected. Ian Shuttleworth of *The Financial Times* described this design, by Tom Scutt, as "comparatively low-rent, like a 1980s eastern European presidential palace: recently built but already falling apart, not unlike its anti-heroine's marriage".[3]

The house's abandonment mirrors the hopelessness of the occupants left behind within it and reflects the isolation of Medea and her lack of status within society. Her husband, Jason, has left her and as a result of this Medea's support and role within society has gone too. Ben Power's who adapted the play has one of the characters point out that "This is no family home. / This family died / The day Jason left."[4]

Throughout the production the upper mezzanine level of Medea's house allows a secondary story to be told. Warm lighting reveals and conceals vignettes in the new life of Jason. These occur in a more opulent setting with the chorus staging tableaus of wedding preparations as Jason gets ready to remarry. This literal window on another world depicts a society, which formerly embraced and included Medea but which now excludes her, the chorus are moving away on trajectory which does not and cannot include Medea or her children. The mezzanine events seen above impinge on the life of the occupants within the lower levels as Jason's new, younger wife appears from the centre of the chorus and ceases to dance with them instead forming one half of a dancing couple with Jason. Curtains to the rear of the living room, directly underneath the mezzanine level, open to reveal two children's swings in a dark forest, pale tree trunks give a shimmer to the otherwise unremittingly grim, dark and foreboding outlook. Two swings suspended between the trees are the playground of Medea's children and it is into this forest which Medea will eventually take their bodies. Her ending, and that of her boys, is literally the underside of the sparking society which carries on oblivious to its underdogs.

Yet, whilst Medea's environment is impoverished, and she has been abandoned by the family she left her previous life to join, there is still loyalty at work; her nurse still stays with her. Michaela Coel gained the part of the nurse after initially being cast as a chorus member. The decision to depart from the usual old family retainer image in favour of a younger woman who still has fight left in her is a bold move; it adds significant weight and resonance to her speeches in support of Medea. Here is a young woman who has just as much to lose as Medea has; both are threatened by a reduced status in a foreign land.

[3] Shuttleworth (2014) on-line.
[4] Power (2014) 6.

The nurse, in the first of several metatheatrical moments directly challenges the audience with; “I ask you / Who watch in darkness / Can there be any ending than this?”[5]; “this” being the events which Jason’s leaving has set in motion. This is not a nurse who will allow the audience to forget the injustice of Jason’s actions towards her ‘friend’.[6] The nurse has a significant role to play in the proceedings as she takes on dialogue which is originally believed to have been given to the tutor of Medea’s boys. She delivers the closing epilogue after the children’s bodies have been removed by Medea and again reminds the audience of their role of witness in the proceedings; “From today I know / That truly / Hope is dead. / I ask you again / You who watch. / How can there ever be any ending but this?”[7] The nurse is the only permanent ally Medea has within her home, initially the Chorus is sympathetic, however, as the play evolves they gradually move to side, literally, with Jason’s new bride. They cease to join Medea in her space on-stage and instead inhabit an upstairs world of pretty dresses, wedding presents and make-up. Preparing with Kreusa for the big day when they will support her as bridesmaids and guests. Periodic forays by the chorus into the downstairs world of Medea only lead to pleadings from them for her to behave well towards Jason and give in gracefully, adapting to her new role with dignity and calm. Yet, even the chorus grudgingly admits that should Medea choose to act in a strident manner and take the lives of her boys “Your revenge, if you can take it, / Would be well justified.”[8]

The performance by McCrory which leads up to the taking of the children’s lives is a very compelling interpretation of the Euripides play. After working on the text in rehearsal McCrory realised that the crux of her portrayal of Medea is that not only has the actor playing her got “an hour and a half to get the audience to believe that this woman is going

[5] Power (2014) 6.
[6] Power (2014) 3.
[7] Power (2014) 61.
[8] Power (2014) 11.

to kill her children"[9] but that you also have to make them understand why she does this. However, there were discussions in the rehearsal room as to the appropriate way to end the play. These included whether Medea would be "sectioned"[10] for her acts of violence against her children and wear a straight-jacket at the end of the play. An ending which McCrory "battled against" "because I think if you say someone's ill it sort of excuses", this is because it takes away the fact that "this woman was wronged by her husband, by society and by those who had previously been her friends".[11] In making Medea fully conscious and complicit in the act of murder this version of Euripides' play does not excuse the actions of those in the wider society who surround Medea. The lack of a dragon chariot making an appearance to rescue Medea at the end, after the murder of her sons, means that as she retreats into the darkness of the forest carrying the bodies the audience can only guess how the retribution will unfold. The forest which has hitherto being a dark and foreboding motif now envelops her and her crime.

McCrory makes her first appearance on-stage wearing a masculine, oversized, camouflage green vest teamed with combat style khaki trousers which are tightly belted at the waist to make them fit. This initially seems an odd choice of outfit and suggests that either Medea is turning her back on her womanhood and has stopped dressing for others, now dressing for comfort and practicality, or is taking on the persona of a warrior. However, when asked why this particular outfit was chosen McCrory stated that it was a deliberate move to show that whilst Medea may be coping with her new independence she still maintains a tenuous link to her estranged partner through the wearing of his clothes. This motif was formulated in rehearsal and contrasts strongly with the later change of costume as Medea appears in an outfit which could at first be mistaken for a feminine evening gown, but later reveals itself to be a slinky catsuit. The pleated white material drapes seductively and echoes a pleated classical peplos. Feminine yet with a practical side which is not necessarily conventional. This change into a more seductive Medea, who has formulated a plan of action and decided what she must do, is prompted by her encounter with Kreon in her own home. He visits her whilst she is still in her male attire and, even as Kreon admits that he has arranged to banish her, he is forced to admit that "Honestly, [...] I'm afraid of you."[12] It is then she realises that she still has a power to influence what will happen next. Later in the scene she adopts a debased submissive manner taking a suppliant's pose and stating "I bend my knees, and beg."[13] Clasping his knees she claims the status of "a defenceless woman", yet as soon as Kreon is gone her body language changes, she stands tall and with a swagger tells the nurse "I might be choked

[9] Trueman (2014) on-line.
[10] McCrory (2014) on-line.
[11] McCrory (2014) on-line.
[12] Power (2014) 12.
[13] Power (2014) 14.

with misery / Famished by grief ... / But there is still life in me. I'm not finished."[14] This steely-eyed woman knows that she has stage-managed the encounter, given Kreon a publicly acceptable image of her as dependant and broken woman which leaves her and her family, for the moment, safe.

The translation of Euripides' work by Ben Powers provides a strong scaffold upon which a cast and director can build a performance. In choosing to avoid verbally setting the text in any particular country or adopt any specific political regime he allows the emotions of the production to come through. Director Carrie Cracknell when commenting on the translation has said that it provided "a clarity of psychology and a modernity in the language which felt really exciting".[15] The press reaction to the text in performance has been very positive with Charles Spencer of *The Daily Telegraph* stating that "[a]t the end of this thrilling and merciless production you leave the theatre feeling both appalled and strangely elated – the sure sign that a tragedy has hit its mark".[16] Whilst *The Times* felt that the play conveyed "love and vengeance with a modern twist".[17] Since the play is quite a neutral adaptation the identification of a "modern twist" is a very clear indication that the work of Euripides, and the themes which it contains, do resonate in the current world.

The motif of the chorus is however a theme of the piece which has not been watered down or economised on it been utilised in a very classical manner. It consists of thirteen members, all women of a variety of ages, whose roles are fluid as they change from confidents to Medea, through to bridesmaids, flower girls and wedding guests and even the new bride Kreusa. Cracknell pointed out that

> there was a lot of trial and error in the rehearsal room [...] we knew that we wanted them to sing [...] we knew that we wanted them to dance [...] and so we had a strong sense that we wanted the language of the chorus to have a strong connection to this otherworldly magic that Medea has.[18]

The choral movement and dance, choreographed by Lucy Guerin, is very modernistic.[19] No flowing curves, arabesques and pointed toes. This is an angular and jarring, almost clockwork, evocation of a chorus who are possibly powered by a greater force, in the form of the gods, who oversee all. This harsh quality works especially well during the segment where Kreusa reacts to the burning sensation created by the wearing of her wedding gift from Medea; "A cloak of delicately tissued silk. / Given my people by the Sun God."[20]

[14] Power (2014) 14; 16.
[15] Cracknell (2014) on-line.
[16] Spencer (2014) on-line.
[17] Bassett (2014) on-line.
[18] Cracknell (2014) on-line.
[19] Guerin (2015) on-line.
[20] Power (2014) 39.

Here the cloak is not so much poisoned as made to burn through the agency of its original creator who, being a sun god, can do nothing else.

Putting music, dance and movement together to make a coherent chorus is a very demanding skill for both cast and director. It is not one which modern theatre is able to tackle very often as the casting of such a large number of actors, on the professional stage, is not necessarily achievable on modern theatrical budgets. However, since the National Theatre is a significantly subsidised company the tendency is to allow for a large chorus in their plays on the main Olivier stage. It is a very large stage to fill, even when the back third is, as in this case, filled with the set which pushes the action forwards towards the auditorium. Whilst the number of chorus members successfully fills this performance space Cracknell identifies the difficulty of finding a modern presentational language in order to make the dialogue actions and motivation of the chorus accessible for a modern audience. These viewers may not necessarily understand the role of the chorus and their traditional presentation methods. With this in mind Cracknell, together with the textual adaptor and the choreographer tried to create a new presentational vocabulary:

> We were trying to find, I guess, a contemporary language for choral work which we don't have in our theatre culture. In the same way we wanted it to feel related to the Greek and related to that idea that there were a group of people from a community, singing, and dancing, and telling a story and commentary on that story but we also wanted it to feel very modern.[21]

This exploration of the chorus contribution to the play initially took place in masks during rehearsal. This is possibly why the resultant unmasked chorus on-stage eschew any facial emotions but appear composed and slightly detached from the action. Their voices rise and fall in a measured cadence and are underscored by electronic music by Alison Goldfrapp & Will Gregory, which evokes a slightly off kilter world, where things are not quite right. It creates a soundscape in the form of a threatening subtext which runs underneath the veneer of respectability and the controlled language. This underscoring never overpowers the chorus or draws attention to itself, but carefully charts the emotional arc of the piece. The two composers, Goldfrapp and Gregory, working in the past as the indie pop duo Goldfrapp have been composing together since 1999, the seamless integration of their contribution to the performance proves that they have the magnanimity not to try and overshadow the work of the cast and chorus on-stage. Paul Taylor of *The Independent* described the score as one which "gets right under your skin as it eloquently intensifies the atmosphere of the foreboding'.[22]

Rather disappointingly, the male characters in the play come over as weak and vacillating. Kreon, played by Martin Turner, in his fear of Medea at least has a motivational

[21] Cracknell (2014) on-line.
[22] Taylor (2014) on-line.

aspect to his reticence when dealing with her. However, there is never any hint of former attraction or back story when it comes to the interaction between Medea and her estranged husband Jason. Danny Sapani, whilst he cuts a masculine figure in the role of Jason, never really becomes more than a convenient foil to Medea's wiles and anger. He is so stoic and impassive in his relations with her that it is difficult to see how she ever developed any attraction for him in the first place. The visiting King of Athens, Aegeus, played by Dominic Rowan, comes over as a much stronger male character. Taking the role of the only external ally for Medea, he appears to be a solid man who will be true to his word of protecting her should she chose to take refuge in his kingdom. However, this promise is extracted as a sworn oath. One which Medea is at pains to ensure that he understands the significance of "An oath will mean that you can't give me up / When they come to drag me off."[23] This does add additional frisson at the end of the play, when Medea exits carrying her children's bodies, will she head for Athens and what will be the aftermath?

It is rather surprising, and more than a little shocking, to find that this is the first time in its fifty two seasons that the National Theatre has produced *Medea*. London had the distinction of being the site of the first *Medea* translated into Latin by George Buchanan, for an educated audience at Westminster School in the 1540's. In this instance the performers were grammar school boys from the school. Yet, Medea should be one of the major roles for an experienced and confident female actor. In bringing it into the National's main stage hopefully this will result in the play being seen as one which contains a solid female role with emotional highs and lows which should be a regular part of the theatrical repertoire.

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About the author Julie Ackroyd obtained her B. A. (Hons.) in mixed English and Humanities with the Open University in England; she then continued to study with them completing an M.A. in Classical Studies. Having won the Open University Travel Bursary she represented the University, in Epidaurus, at the first conference organised by the Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama run by Oxford University, whilst there she presented a paper on "The Use of Butoh in the Peter Hall production of *Bacchai* for the National Theatre, London."

In 2007 Julie was selected to be part of the judging committee for the Society of London Theatres Olivier Awards 2008 in London. As part of the play panel she viewed seventy eight shows over nine months in order to find and commend the best casts and creative teams working in London theatre.

[23] Power (2014) 30.

Most recently she has been awarded her Ph. D. by Birkbeck College, University of London for a thesis on 'The Recruitment and Training of the Child Actor on the London Stage c.1600' and is now an Honorary Associate of the Open University Classics Department.

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Figure 1: Danny Sapani as Jason and Helen McCrory as Medea © Richard Hubert Smith.

Figure 2: Joel McDermott as Medea's son, Danny Sapani as Jason, Jude Pearce as Medea's son and Helen McCrory as Medea © Richard Hubert Smith.