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INTRODUCTION

1 TESTIMONIA

1. *IG II². 2325* (cf. Pickard-Cambridge, *DFA²* 114, Mette v c 1 col. 3)

Φίλιπ[πος] II
 Χόρη[γος]
 Ἄναξα[νδρί]δης III
 Φιλέτα[ιρο]ς II
 Εὐβουλος ΠΙ
 Ἐφιππος Ι[
 [Ἄ]ντιφάνη[ς] ΠΙΙΙ

This inscription records the list of successful comic poets at the Lenaeen festival together with the total number of their Lenaeen victories; the poets are arranged chronologically in the order of their first Lenaeen victory.¹

2. *Suda* ε 3386 Εὐβουλος· Κήττιος, Ἀθηναῖος, υἱὸς Εὐφράνορος, κωμικός. ἐδίδαξε δράματα ρδ'. ἦν δὲ κατὰ τὴν ρα' Ὀλυμπιάδα (376/3), μεθόριος τῆς μέσης κωμωιδίας καὶ τῆς παλαιᾶς.
3. *Vita Aristophanis* xxxi. 11 ff. Koster = Σ Pl. *Apol.* 19c Greene (Arethae) τρεῖς δ' ἔσχεν υἱοὺς [sc. ὁ Ἀριστοφάνης], Φίλιππον τὸν τοῖς Εὐβούλου δράμασιν ἀγωνισάμενον, καὶ Ἀραρότα ἰδίοις τε καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς δράμασι διηγωνισμένον καὶ τρίτον, ὃν Ἀπολλόδωρος μὲν (*FGrH* 244 F 75) Νικόστρατον καλεῖ, οἱ δὲ περὶ Δικαίαρχον (fr. 83 W²) Φιλέταιρον.
4. A number of citations refer to Eubulus as ὁ τῆς μέσης κωμωιδίας ποιητής, cf. Ammonius 169 Nickau (= Eub. fr. 40), *Etym. Mag.* 451.29–30 (= Eub. fr. 31), Zenobius apud Miller, *Mélanges* 353 (= Eub. fr. 136); note also Ath. 7.300b ὅτι δ' ἦσθιον τὰς ἐγγέλεις . . . πολὺ μὲν ἔστι καὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις κωμικοῖς, καὶ Εὐβουλος δὲ κτλ.

¹ This is an assumption, but one dictated by common sense, and this hypothesis fits well with the rest of the evidence, cf. U. Köhler, *MDAI* (A) 3 (1878) 255–6 and Th. Bergk, *RhM* 34 (1879) 306–7.

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5. Harpocration s.v. Εὐβούλος. Ὑπερείδου λόγος ἐστὶ περὶ τῶν Εὐβούλου δωρεῶν . . . ἕτερος δ' ἐστὶν ὁ κωμικός οὗ μνημονεύει Ὑπερείδης ἐν τῷ κατ' Ἀρχεστρατίδου (fr. 48 Jensen).

2 MIDDLE COMEDY

Modern scholarship has inherited an ancient division of Attic Comedy into three periods, the παλαιά (or ἀρχαία), the μέση and the νέα; this tripartite system is, however, a refinement of a simpler division, traceable to early peripatetic research and to the influence of Aristotle himself, into two periods, the παλαιά and what followed it.¹ For ancient scholarship the fundamental break in the history of Comedy came with the change in subject-matter and tone and the decline of the role of the chorus in the first part of the fourth century;² our sources never clearly identify any period as marking the change from the μέση to the νέα³ and there is no distinction drawn between the subject-matter of plays of the μέση and those of the νέα which can be compared to the firm distinction drawn between the παλαιά and the μέση. It is a result of this latter distinction that the surviving extracts from the treatise

¹ Cf. G. Kaibel, *Die Prolegomena* περὶ κωμωδίας (Abh. Göttingen n.F. 2.4, 1898) 48–53, Wilamowitz, *Einleitung* 135 n. 21, A. Rostagni, *SIFC* n.s. 2 (1922) 134–41, Wehrli, *Motivstudien* 16–18. Kaibel's view in *H.* 24 (1889) 56–66 that the alternation between a division into two periods and into three reflects the work of two different schools, the Pergamene and the Peripatetic, is generally rejected now; the doctrines and analyses which are found in the extant treatises are too fluid to allow clear separation into different schools. There is a convenient summary of post-Aristotelian theory in M. Fuhrmann, *Einführung in die antike Dichtungstheorie* (Darmstadt 1973) 63–70.

² There is, however, no good reason to assign the invention of the tripartite system to very late antiquity, as was attempted by W. Fielitz, *De Atticorum comoedia bipartita* (diss. Bonn 1866): for work on the μέση by Alexandrian scholars cf. below p. 185.

³ Cf. Körte, *RE* 11.1267.

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MIDDLE COMEDY

of Platonius class the Ὀδυσσεῖς of Cratinus as a forerunner of Middle Comedy (1.30 Koster)¹ and that Plato *comicus*, who belongs chronologically to the παλαιά, is often treated as a leading figure of the μέση.² The reason for this, as the case of the Ὀδυσσεῖς of Cratinus suggests, must be the preponderance of mythological themes in Plato's work.³

The often conflicting reports about the history of Comedy which survive from antiquity identify important changes in the genre after Susarion and the very earliest formal drama, after the Βάπται of Eupolis⁴ and after the overthrow of the Athenian democracy in the Peloponnesian War. It is, however, clear that ancient scholars could not, any more than we can, separate firmly a chronological from a qualitative division of Comedy, and there is some evidence that at least one branch of ancient scholarship identified a particular period in the fourth century as signalling the change from the παλαιά to the new style: the Suda (α 3737) describes Aristophanes' son Araros as 'διδάξας τὸ πρῶτον ὄλυμπιάδι ρά' (376/3), Anaxandrides in an obviously corrupt entry (α 1982)⁵ as 'γεγονὼς ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσι Φιλίππου τοῦ Μακεδόνοσ ὄλυμπιάδι ρά' and Eubulus as 'ἦν δὲ κατὰ τὴν ρά' ὄλυμπιάδα, μεθόριος τῆς μέσης κωμωιδίας καὶ τῆς παλαιᾶς' (ε 3386 = Test. 2). These notices must create a very strong suspicion that 376–373 is no more than a conventional date,

¹ Cf. Kaibel, *H.* 24 (1889) 57–9. That this play had no choral songs seems to me a possible (if not in fact the natural) interpretation of Platonius' remark; for the opposite view cf. Kaibel, *H.* 30 (1895) 75. It is of very little importance that the statement is false: the Ὀδυσσεῖς was presumably singled out because it was known in other contexts as a forerunner of Middle Comedy (cf. 1.51 Koster).

² Cf. Σ Dion. Thrax xviii.42 Koster, Anon. iv.17, xib.37 Koster and Ps.-Andronicus xxiii.11 Koster. For Horace, *Sat.* 2.3.11 cf. Kiessling-Heinze *ad loc.*

³ Cf. C.G. Cobet, *Observationes criticae in Platonis comici reliquiis* (Amsterdam 1840) 113–17, Körte, *RE* 20.2540. For mythological drama in the μέση cf. below pp. 22–30.

⁴ Cf. below p. 99, n. 1 on Eratosthenes' research.

⁵ Cf. Kaibel, *RE* 1.2078.

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and more than one reason for the choice of this date may be conjectured. It would certainly not be surprising if ancient scholars had placed a major break in the history of Comedy at the time when the son of the leading figure of the παλαιά began to exhibit plays (or was thought to have done).¹ A second possibility is that this date assumed significance as marking the first victory of Anaxandrides at the City Dionysia (*Marmor Parium* 70): the statement of the Suda about this poet (α 1982), πρῶτος οὗτος ἔρωτας καὶ παρθένων φθορὰς εἰσήγαγεν, suggests that he was sometimes regarded as the πρῶτος εὐρετής of the new style in Comedy.² Anaxandrides certainly enjoyed a brilliant start to his career: his first City victory was immediately followed by another in the next year (*IG* II².2318 = *Mette* I col. 12,10).

In this book I use the term Middle Comedy in the fairly loose way which is now normal to designate Attic comedies written in the fourth century before the death of Alexander.³ The customary warnings that literary fashions do not change overnight, that poets overlapped from one period to another and that there is a very strong continuity in the comic tradition should not be necessary. The concept of Middle Comedy, as a genre which bridges the gap between Aristophanes and Menander, is a useful tool of literary history and to do away with it would be to obliterate the considerable progress which scholarship, both ancient and modern, has made in this area.

¹ Cf. below pp. 15–16.

² Cf. *ZPE* 36 (1979) 35 n. 61; Wehrli, *Motivstudien* 19 n. 1, dismisses the statement of the Suda too lightly. For ἔρωτας καὶ παρθένων φθορὰς cf. Diomedes 1.488.16 Keil (= xxiv.2.38 Koster), *Vita Aristophanis* xxviii.54 Koster, Satyrus, *Vita Euripidis* 39 vii.8 Arrighetti, Plut. *Mor.* 712c.

³ The best modern discussions of Middle Comedy are Meineke, *Hist. Crit.* 271–435, Körte, *RE* 11.1256–66, Webster, *SLGC*² 10–97 and K.J. Dover in *Fifty Years (and Twelve) of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968) 144–9.

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3 THE CHRONOLOGY OF EUBULUS' CAREER

Anaxandrides, who won his first victory at the City Dionysia in 377/6 (*Marmor Parium* 70), stands two places above Eubulus on the list of victors at the Lenaeian festival (Test. 1). We do not know when Anaxandrides began to compete at either festival, nor when he was first successful at the Lenaea, although we do know that he competed unsuccessfully in that festival in 376/5,¹ the year in which he won his second successive victory at the Dionysia. There is no real evidence that success at the Lenaea had to or usually did precede success at the Dionysia,² and there is no reason to assume that the chronological relationship between two poets would be the same at both festivals.³ The standard chronological framework of the Lenaeian list⁴ puts Anaxandrides' first victory at that festival very near in time to his first victory at the Dionysia and Eubulus' first Lenaeian victory at c. 370. The nature of this inscription, however, and the absence of the didascalical record for the Lenaeian contests of these years preclude any attempt at precision, and a discrepancy of up to five years can hardly be excluded. A survey of other major comic poets indicates that they usually won a victory at one of the two important festivals within a few years of their first production,⁵ but we ought not to assume that this phenomenon was universal. In short, the epigraphic evidence alone suggests that Eubulus' first production and probably also his

¹ *IG* xiv.1098 (= *Mette* vi A 4). I adopt the interpretation of W. Dittmer, *The Fragments of Athenian Comic Didascalicalae found in Rome* (Leiden 1923).

² *P. Oxy.* 2737 (= *Ar. fr.* *56 Austin) has been regarded as such evidence, but the matter is far from clear, cf. Dana Sutton, *ZPE* 38 (1980) 59–63.

³ Cf. the case of Eupolis and Phrynichus, *Mette* v. B1 col. 2.8–10 and v. C1 col. 1.9–11 (= *Pickard-Cambridge*, *DFA*² 112–13).

⁴ Cf. E. Capps, *AJP* 28 (1907) 179–87.

⁵ Cf. Dittmer *op. cit.* (n. 1 above) 30–2.

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first victory fell in the period c. 380–370, but these dates are not to be pressed.

The Suda Life (Test. 2) is one of a large number of such entries which derive from a ninth-century epitome of Hesychius' Ὀνοματολόγος.¹ I have argued above that there is good reason to doubt more than the general accuracy of the statement that Eubulus ἦν (i.e. *floruit*²) κατὰ τὴν ρά' ὀλυμπιάδα, if the *floruit* date refers, as is most probable, to his first victory at the Dionysia.³ The description of Eubulus as μεθόριος τῆς μέσης κωμωιδίας καὶ τῆς παλαιᾶς poses a further problem, and this is the only example of such a description among the Hesychian Lives in the Suda. Ehippus (ε 3929) and Antiphanes (α 2735)⁴ who are immediately below Eubulus on the Lenaeon list are ascribed by the Suda to the μέση, but the corresponding description is unfortunately not preserved for any poet above Eubulus. The composer of these brief notices is more likely to have used some kind of chronological criterion than to have made any stylistic assessment, and the few doubtful cases among these Lives tend to confirm this view.⁵ Whatever criterion was in fact used, μεθόριος is a not inappropriate description for a poet

¹ Cf. Schultz, *RE* 8.1323–4, Wagner, Chap. III, Adler's edition of the Suda 1, xxi; the relevant Lives are conveniently listed by Wagner 33–5.

² Cf. E. Rohde, *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Tübingen and Leipzig 1901, 1969) 114–84.

³ Cf. E. Capps, *AJP* 21 (1900) 57.

⁴ The chronology of Antiphanes is a difficult problem, cf. E. Capps, *AJP* 21 (1900) 54–8 and A. Wilhelm, *Urkunden dramatischer Aufführungen in Athen* (Vienna 1906, 1965) 55–8. The later dating proposed by Capps is to be preferred, but Wilhelm is probably right in believing that there is more than one 'Antiphanes' represented in our collection of fragments.

⁵ Philyllius, who belongs to the transitional period in the early part of the century (Körte, *RE* 20.212–13), is assigned to the ἀρχαία and Straton, who is totally obscure but for fr. 219 Austin (cf. R. Kassel, *ZPE* 14 (1974) 126), is put in the μέση. It is a reasonable conclusion from fr. 219 Austin that Straton was a contemporary or successor of Philemon and this would suit a career in the late μέση and early νέα, and the reference to Philites in fr. 219.43 would also fit such a chronology; the supplement ΣΤ[ράτων] at Mette III. B2 col. 2.23 (from the end of the fourth century) is far from secure.

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whose *floruit* is the same as the period which marked the change from one literary style to another, and no subtler interpretation of the notice in the Suda is necessary.

Of two remaining pieces of external evidence, Test. 5 is of no assistance as we do not know the date or circumstances of the speech *Against Arcestratides*. A second clue is more interesting: Professor Mabel Lang has published¹ an Athenian sherd on one side of which is scratched Προσοσια καλη Πανταλεων καλος and on the other Πανταλεων καλος Προσοσια καλη; the sherd was found in a well together with a number of vases decorated with scenes from Comedy.² As proper names, both Προσοσια and Πανταλέων are known from the fourth century,³ but Professor Lang notes that the pairing of male and female love-names in this way is not found elsewhere and she suggests that the inscription refers to the Πανταλέων of Theopompus (fr. 45–6 (1, 745–6))⁴ and the Προσοσια ἢ Κύκνος of Eubulus, the connection between them being that they were produced at the same festival. The original publication of this well-deposit used a red-figure *chous* (P 23896) 'in the manner of the Meidias painter'⁵ to fix an approximate lower limit for the deposit, and this would suggest a *terminus ante quem* for the sherd of c. 390,⁶ as all the material in the deposit seems to be of a piece and to have been deposited together. We need not, however, assume that the deposit was made very close in time to the latest datable

¹ *The Athenian Agora* xxi: *Graffiti and Dipinti* (Princeton 1976) 15. I am grateful to Professor Lang and Professor P.E. Corbett for correspondence on this subject.

² Cf. M. Crosby, *Hesperia* 24 (1955) 76–84. The well-deposit is described by B. Sparkes and L. Talcott, *The Athenian Agora* xii: *Black and Plain Pottery* (Princeton 1970) 397–8.

³ Πανταλέων: *PA* 11599–604, Προσοσια: *IG* II².8769, 12533–5.

⁴ The authorship of this play was disputed in antiquity (Pollux 10.41).

⁵ J. Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vases*² 1324.40. This pot is pictured in *Hesperia* 24 (1955) Plate 36 B.

⁶ Cf. R.M. Cook, *Greek Painted Pottery*² (London 1972) 184. Professor Corbett tells me that he does not think that this *chous* can be later than c. 400, give or take five years.

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object in it and, in any case, Professor P.E. Corbett informs me that he considers two of the red-figure pieces from the well to belong to the first quarter of the fourth century and one probably to the second. Theopompus was still active in the 370s,¹ and so a date for the sherd which is more in keeping with our other information about Eubulus would certainly not rule out Lang's attractive interpretation of it. Even if the sherd does come from the late fifth or very early fourth century, Eubulus may well not have been the first comic poet to use the title Προσοσία, and so this tantalising scrap is not sufficient to alter the chronology for Eubulus' career, which is based on more certain evidence.²

The internal indications of date which occur in the fragments are discussed at the appropriate place in the Commentary. None give any reason to doubt the limits suggested by the external evidence, i.e. c. 380–c. 335.

4 THE NUMBER OF THE PLAYS

The implications of ἐδίδαξε δράματα ρδ' (104) in the Life preserved in the Suda are somewhat uncertain. Although ἐδίδαξε most naturally refers to Eubulus' total output and not to the number of plays preserved in one of the Hellenistic collections, we must consider the possibility that the standard formula, ἐδίδαξε, has been wrongly attached to a figure which originally referred to some quite different total.³ Nevertheless, in this instance that possibility seems a very slight one. 57 titles are extant and this ratio of approximately 1:2 for the

¹ Cf. P. Geissler, *Chronologie der altattischen Komödie* (Dublin/Zürich 1925, 1969) 74–80, Körte, *RE* 5A.2174–6.

² If ΠΡΟΣΟΣΙΑ is rightly interpreted as Προσοσία, orthographical considerations do not assist in the dating, as O for OY is regularly found until the middle of the fourth century, cf. Meisterhans³ 6. We can only make guesses about the contents of Eubulus' play, cf. below p. 183.

³ Cf. E. Mensching, *MH* 21 (1964) 23.

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THE NUMBER OF THE PLAYS

number of known titles to the number given by the Suda is roughly accurate for all the major poets of the Middle Comedy, who seem to have been very productive indeed.¹ There are approximately 580 titles known from this period² and Anon. iii.45 Koster reports τῆς μὲν οὖν μέσης κωμωιδίας εἰσι ποιηταὶ ντζ' (57) καὶ τούτων φέρεται χιζ' (617).³ As the sum of plays based on the totals in the Suda for individual poets would be well over 900, it is very likely that the figures in the Suda refer to a poet's total known output and not only to the plays which survived to be catalogued. In support of this view may be adduced the fact that on the Roman didascalic inscription which recorded all of a poet's plays the notes σῶιω[ι]⁴ and σῶι[αι] or σῶι[ζονται] occur beside play titles, and the total number of plays recorded on this inscription seems to have been much closer to the total in the Suda than to the number of titles known today.⁵

At 8.336d Athenaeus puts into the mouth of one of his characters the claim to have read more than 800 plays τῆς μέσης καλουμένης κωμωιδίας. This has often been interpreted as the total collection of the Alexandrian library, but there is a clear distinction in this section of Athenaeus between the plays which this character claims to have read and the ἀναγραφαὶ of Callimachus (fr. 439 Pf.), Aristophanes of Byzantium and the Pergamenes. It is not to be doubted that over 800 plays were written during the Middle Comedy period and that Athenaeus, who was very well read, however much his compilation owes to earlier anthologies and

¹ Cf. Körte, *RE* 11.1265–6.

² Cf. E. Mensching, *MH* 21 (1964) 45–7.

³ For the correct text cf. Koster, *Prolegomena* p. iv. In such contexts φέρεσθαι has the meaning 'be in circulation' or 'be known', cf. LSJ s.v. A.viii.1.

⁴ On this stone the second ω is only represented by a horizontal mark on the edge of the stone at the level of the letter bases, cf. the photos in *Athenaeum* n.s. 38 (1960) 283 and L. Moretti, *Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae* (Rome 1968) I, 188. Gould and Lewis *apud* Pickard-Cambridge, *DFA*² p. 121 propose σῶι[ζε]ται.

⁵ Cf. Dittmer *op. cit.* (p. 7, n. 1) 12–13.