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Introduction:

Laughter is nonverbal social communication. From a physiological point of view laughter is a sudden expulsion of air followed by a prolonged inhalation that fills the lungs with the lost air, and from a psychological point of view the laughter elicits positive emotions in the laugher (For laughter as emotion, Darwin 2009: 195-6; Noël 2014; for the stability of laughter as a positive emotion, Nikopoulos 2017). These laugh pulses elicit a distinct sound that not only captures the attention of those who hear it, but may also arouse certain emotional reactions in the listener. Accordingly, laughter is from the point of view of *the laugher* connected with positive feelings (even the gloating laughter at enemies elicits the sweetest joy, Sophocles *Aias* 79), and thus laughter may convey an atmosphere of friendliness among the participants (e.g. Bachorowski & Owren, 2001; Owren & Bachorowski 2003), perhaps through a collective recognition of non-seriousness (e.g. Chafe 2007; Glenn & Holt 2015; Darwin 2009: 196 “a happy frame of mind”). In recent studies on laughter in antiquity (Halliwell 2008; Beard 2014), laughing is seen as a fundamentally ambiguous phenomenon, but the sound of laughter, its distinct vocalization and structure, is rarely misunderstood as anything but real laughter (Provine 2016: 1533-4, 2000; Bryant & Aktipis 2014), and thus a positive emotion. You may try to fake a laugh, as Agyrripus does in Plautus’ *Asinaria* (841-2), but he does not fool Demaenetus, who wishes that his enemies would laugh like that, viz. that they don’t laugh at all. Laughter is not only a natural, and to a certain degree involuntary, response to certain experienced phenomena, e.g. joking and tickling; its effect is also to arouse a social response whether positive (group coherence) or negative (derisive and excluding to the benefit of a certain group’s coherence): “Laughter is about relationships” (Provine 2000: 44). These effects are however part of everyday conversational laughter, spontaneously and intricately entwined in a social context, of which we mainly catch a glimpse in ancient Greek and Roman literature showing social contexts, e.g. the dialogues of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero and Plutarch (well discussed by Jazdzewska: 2016 and forthcoming). There is no reason to believe that the Greeks or

the Romans did not laugh and smile as part of every day conversations as we do,¹ but whereas laughter as a physiological phenomenon seems to be generally the same for all humans, past and present, the *attitude* towards laughter and those who laugh is clearly historical, and located deep within the structures of the society in question. These structures, hierarchies, ideologies and religious thoughts define the boundaries of laughter, the decorum of when and how to laugh and what the object of the laughter may be. Therefore, “laughter is forced into ambiguity by the sheer complexity of human cognition and interaction” (Nikopoulos 2017: 10). The emotions and intentions behind facial and acoustic signals are without doubt often ambiguous and in need of some cue in the situation for us to interpret them, but if the sound of laughter or the look of a smile were *a priori* ambiguous, why then would both signals be considered inappropriate at e.g. a funeral?²

However, whereas modern studies on laughter often begin with the canned joke, that is laughter and pragmatics surrounding the deliberate creation of laughter (cf. e.g. Attardo 2001), the ancient theories of laughter stem from thoughts and observations on conversational laughter, that is laughter and the ethics surrounding a community in which laughter may or may not occur (e.g. Cicero, *De Or.* 2. 270). Such approaches artificially subsume the laughter elicited from the intentionally created humour of comedians either under the category of interpersonal relations or simply as envoys of canned jokes. But comedy brings forth laughter and amusement in an entirely different context and far more complex manner than simply by jokes. Comedy was a multimodal performance by masked actors of a carefully constructed text in front of an audience, who often went long distances to enjoy a good laugh, generating a specific atmosphere during the festivals appointed for comic performances, whether at the Greek Dionysia or the Roman *scaenici ludi*, not to mention the important fact that comic actors wore masks, and could thus not use facial markers to show emotions. Furthermore, whereas conversational laughter arises at a single instance (“You should have been there!”), a comedy can be performed and potentially enjoyed again and again. To make comedy is an art-form (*technē*), and Aristophanes claims that it is the hardest job on earth (*Knights* 515-16). The focus of this chapter will be on the laughter elicited from consciously constructed humorous texts, whether performed as comedy or mainly for readers (See also Rosen

¹ I fully agree with Beard (2014: 33) that “there was plenty of good-natured laughter” in Greek literature and culture, but I would extend this not only to the Roman culture, but even to the lives of the Greek and Roman people.

² On inappropriate laughter, see Provine (2000) 153–87.

2007: 15). Thus I follow Carroll Noël's (2014: 27-8) distinction between found and invented humour. The laughter elicited by *invented comedy* is the main object of this chapter; where is it found, by whom, to whom, and its effects.

Comic Laughter

That comedy and laughter are intrinsically connected seems to be beyond doubt, and that the comic playwrights thought likewise is shown not only, and not surprisingly, by Aristophanes (e.g. *Clouds* 539; *Frogs* 1-2; *Assemblywomen* 1155-7), but the idea is even found in Menander (e.g. *Dys.* 965-9; *Mis.* 464-6; *Sik.* 421-3). One late-antiquity commentator argued that comedy begins and ends in laughter (*gelōs*; see Kidd 2011: 445). This however, is a doubtful claim, since many of the surviving comedies actually begins with distress, but end in joy (e.g. *Acharnians*; *Knights*; *Lysistrata*; *Aspis*; *Perikeiromenē*). But clearly the audience of a comedy (more so Old Comedy, perhaps) “gives scope for laughter from its very first line” (Halliwell 2008: 198). That is, the audience of a comic performance expects to feel merriment and hopefully to laugh, because “the fact of people coming to a theatre, sitting in an auditorium and watching other people, especially other people framed by the stage, is a powerful stimulus to semiosis,” (McAuley 2000: 42). Thus a comic performance frames the spectator's cognitive response with a “play” frame (see above), within which exaggeration, violence, nonsense etc. are funny phenomena, and not something to act upon. This facilitates the spectator's recognition of linguistic humour such as *double entendres*, irony, parody, paratragedy, puns etc. and physical/visual comedy like Philokleon's obscene dance at the end of *Wasps*, the drunken and belching Pseudolus in Plautus' *Pseudolus*, and the incongruous opening tableau of *Frogs*. Instead of seeing all such phenomena as meaningless, the comic framing gives such instances a humorous relevance (rather than straightforward meaning), however illogical and absurd. This framing also explains why Terence's team of actors had to put on the comedy *Hercyra* three times in order to succeed; the audience simply did not want to see comedy, but other kinds of entertainment:

When I first began to perform it, there was talk of a boxing match, and there were also hopes of a tightrope walker too; slaves were arriving, there was a din, women were screaming—these things forced me to leave the stage before I'd reached the end. I began to follow my old custom with this new play, and I tried again: I brought it back

anew. The first part went down well; but then word got around that a show of gladiators was going to be given: people flocked together, there was an uproar, they were shouting and fighting for a place. While that was going on, it was impossible for me to hold my place. (33-42 trans. Brown 2006: 62.)

First of all, we need to establish what laughter is when written down, and what the recognition or articulation of laughter within a fictional world means to an audience or readers. A reader or a spectator may also bring laughter with them into the fictional world depending on their mood, and they may find something laughable which was never intended to raise a laugh, and on the stage everything may happen, intended or unintended, just as when the Greek tragic actor Hegelochos by a slip of the tongue raised an unintended laugh during Euripides' tragedy *Orestes* (279, see Aristophanes *Frogs*. 303; *Wealth* 693; Strattis. fr. 1, 63; Sannyrion fr. 8.).

As will be clear from this chapter, laughter is seldom heard in the fictitious and humorous worlds of Greek and Roman comedies, and in ancient literature in general; in fact not a single laugh is found in Greek comedy, though we have plenty of laughter-words in the texts. A few *ha ha haes* are found in Roman comedy, but not all are laughter elicited from humour. Would we expect to hear laughter in literature, where laughter is mainly indirectly noticed by the author (e.g. as a locutionary speech act - "they laughed", "don't laugh" etc.), or on the stage, where masked actors may just as well *show* a laugh by a gesture, while speaking the lines of the play? It is the readers and the spectators who are to laugh at deliberately comic routines, visual and linguistic, and those laughs are of course history by now. And to laugh is, like all other emotions, a combination of many psychological elements within the single individual, but comedians know this, and exploit the common laughs again and again, otherwise comic routines, *lazzi*, plots, would hardly work.³ This chapter will try to elucidate these fictitious laughs and place them in their historical moments of humour, since humour fluctuates not only through history but also from person to person in a single moment in time. The laughter of the spectator/reader of a comic play/text is first and foremost elicited by the intended humour through different comic techniques, but - and this pertains perhaps more to the tradition of New Comedy - also by the joyous relief (not in the Freudian sense) of the happy ending (Arist. *Poet.*1449a31-38). Indeed comedy has two ways of eliciting laughter; by the narrative *structure* (the plot with its ups and downs, and the pleasurable happy ending), and by *local*

³ On laughter, cognition and spectating, see McConachie 2008: 105-110)

phenomena, such as jokes, *lazzi* etc. These two means do of course not exclude each other, but a playwright may put his trust in one rather than the other. But what then, when laughter is articulated or even uttered within the plays/texts? I will show that often the mentioning of laughter words (e.g. “it’s funny”) has lost its sonic and emotional meaning – its assertive and perlocutionary force – and simply becomes a linguistic marker for something out of the normal, or outright derision, where no burst of laughter is ever heard. Such articulation of laughter is rarely a cue for the audience to laugh, but an encouragement to think what emotion lies beneath the reason for indirect or the artificial laughter, the “I laugh” or the “*hahaha*”.

Greek laughter:

We do not know how ancient Greeks laughed, but it would be rash to assume that it was very different from our laughs (Provine 2000; Gervais & Wilson 2005). In two fourth-century AD papyri of magico-cultic content found in Egypt, we are able to see how the user(s) of the papyri perceived the sound of laughter (though divine) as a recognisable *cha cha* (Kidd 2011; Gilhus 1997: 20). And though this must have been an Egyptian laugh, the language was Greek and must have been sensible in the ears of a Greek speaking person. Chronologically, it is of course a very late source, but classical Greek laughter-vocabulary like *ka(n)chazein* (epic *kanchalān*) and *kichlizein* clearly seems to be genuinely onomatopoeic and maintain a clear connection to the special acoustics unleashed (*ha ha, hi hi*) due to an positive emotion of mirth.⁴ The basic Greek word for laughter and its cognates is *gelōs*, and though the Greeks did differ between to laugh (*gelān*) and to smile (*meidiān*), *gelān* has a wider semantic field than *meidiān*, and may cover the function of *meidiān* at least figuratively (as in Eur. *Medea* 1162; Ar. *Lys.* 512). *Gelān* though, has a closer connection to the acoustics of laughing, while *meidiān* fathoms the facial features of experiencing joy or mirth. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* encapsulated the physical and psychological response to intended humour very well, since the goddess as a response to the jesting of Iambe “smiled, laughed and had a joyful mind” (204). Greek religion and myth embraced laughter from the beginning for its, we must conjecture, positive effects. Though laughter was never deified in Greece, it was apparently seen as a power of nature (Halliwell 2008: 12-13), which neither gods nor humans could resist; even the earth and the sea are caught laughing in Greek literature (e.g. Homer *Il.* 19. 362; Hom.

⁴ E.g. Hom. *Od.* 23.1; see Gow on Theocr. 5.142. For a negative emotion, see Soph. *Ai.* 199-200, where Aias’ soldiers contrast the laugher and the laughingstock.

Hym. De. 14). In fact, the Olympic gods are very often mirroring humans, and so laughter among them is the norm, and they not only laugh internally (e.g. Zeus in Hom. *Il.* 21. 389-90;), they also laugh together, when tension needs to be (or finally is) released (Hom. *Il.* 1. 599), at each other (e.g. *Il.* 1. 406-9; 21. 408), but never, at least in the archaic literature (i.e. Homer and Hesiod) do the Olympians laugh at mortality and humans, while they do cry for them (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 16. 458-61).

Classical Greek Laughter

The literary evidence for intended humorous texts in archaic Greek is scant, and the highly derisive genre of the *iambos* of Archilochus and Hipponax (see Ormand 2015; Rotstein 2010; Rosen 2007) seems not to have elicited outright laughter, unless among the certain group of friends whom the poets entertain (e.g. Archil. fr. 168, see also Rosen 2007: 19-20). The genre is clouded by our ignorance, so it is not safe to conclude how laughter worked within this genre, though Old Comedy was often seen in antiquity as the heir of the *iambos* (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b5-8). On the other hand, early in Greek culture visual humour was clearly established as an art form, a derivative art form that distorts and cannibalises on existing cultural phenomena through the modes of parody, caricature and visual contrasts. The main body of visual humour consists of thousands of Athenian vases from the late archaic age to the classical period. They consistently defy what seem not only artistic conventions of their time, but also decorum in general, thus “while there were numerous forms of control in the Athenian democratic society, our vase-painters could still get away with mocking everything that was dear to Athenians.” (Mitchell 2009, see e.g. figure 60). What becomes clear from two recent studies of visual humour in Greece is that these vase-painters intentionally created pictures that were meant to raise a laugh among the onlookers, and they exhibit not only a great self-confidence but also a great self-reflective stance in their art (Walsh 2009; Mitchell 2009). Many of the techniques used on the humorous vase-paintings resemble comic routines, known from later jokes and comedy, and it is likely that a certain cross-fertilization existed between the stable cartoons of the vases and the embodied comedies in the theatres experimenting and expanding the repertoire of comic routines (e.g. the character of Heracles and drunken women, e.g. Mitchell 2009, fig. 26).

When comedy was finally institutionalised in Athens in 486 BC, the comedians must have enjoyed a long tradition of humour-making in different forms of choral performances, but it seems likely

that from an early date the symposia of the Athenian upper class had attracted parasites (already comic butts in Eupolis' *Kolakes* (*Toadies*) from 421 BCE,⁵ and jesters (*gelōtopoioi*), like Phillippos in Xenophon's *Symposion* (Brown 1992; Bremmer 1997). Indeed the sympotic tradition shows great awareness of humorous jesting and laughter as part of the institution (Halliwell 2008: 100-154), and many elements of the symposium have been found in the comedies not only because the world of the comic hero often centres on food, drinking and sex, but also because the practises of capping, riddles (e.g. Aristophanes' *Wasps* 20-4, see Potamiti 2015; Collins 2005), word play, light-hearted mockery among friends and so on (e.g. *Wasps* 1258-61; see Pütz 2003) turn up everywhere in the plays. Being in general among the upper class, the playwrights of Attic Old Comedy knew these traditions by heart, and employed them in their comedy-making - not without irony - to the delight of the spectators.

Laughter and Attic Comedy

The word stem for laughter, *gel-*, is found fairly often in Aristophanes (Sommerstein 2009: 104-15), less so in the fragments of Menander; but as far as we can see in the surviving texts, nobody laughs on stage in Greek Comedy (Kidd 2011). This may seem surprising, since there are plenty of lamentations in tragedy. However, it is possible that the actual sound of laughter was deliberately avoided and the emotion was performed instead, by a gesture - perhaps like the modern one of holding on to one's stomach. An interesting passage, where laughter could (should?) have occurred is in Aristophanes' *Birds*, when the Hoopoe enters:

Euelpides: O Herakles! What kind of creature is this? What plumage have we here? What triple crest?

Hoopoe: Who's looking for me?

Peisetairos: It seems that all twelve gods have tried to finish you off!

Hoopoe: Are you two teasing (*skōpteton*) me, because of this plumage you see? I used, my guests, to be a man.

Euelpides: We're not making fun (*katagelōmen*) of you.

Hoopoe: Well what?

Euelpides: It's just that beak we find quite funny (*geloion*).

⁵ Fragments in Rusten 2011: 244-9; cf. Storey 2003: 188-96.

Hoopoe: Well this is the sort of outrage Sophocles inflicts on me in those tragic plays of his.
(93-101, trans. Halliwell: 1998, 18 with minor adjustments)

Both Euelpides and Peisethairos utter an interjection (linguistic instead of non-verbal laughter) that Hoopoe understands as ridiculing (*skōpteton*); however, they assure him that they are not laughing at him (*ou sou katagelōmen*, figuratively speaking), but at his beak, which looks funny (*geloion*, on this see below), though no one has apparently uttered a laugh. Thus the dialogue seems to have priority over the expected outbursts of actors' laughter, because Aristophanes needs to build up the metapoetical punch-line reference to Sophocles' tragedy about Tereus' transformation into a bird, and the complete acceptance by the Hoopoe/Tereus that his beak actually looks risible (*geloion*). This is the cue to make *the audience* laugh. The linguistic and the visual are part and parcel of making the audience laugh here. No doubt Hoopoe/Tereus had a very funny beak as well as no feathers (part of the next humorous movement) and when the performance articulates the emotional response to his costume through dialogue and gestures, the audience falls victim to the laughter-frame. Likewise the Sausage-seller in Aristophanes' *Knights* 696 could have gestured a silent laugh while saying: "I enjoyed your threats, I laughed (*egelasa*) at your boasting!" He is at least jumping frantically around Paphlagon. But no sound of laughter is uttered. The same goes for the flatterer Strouthias, in Menander's *Kolax* (fr. 3), who asserts that he laughs (*gelō*), but no burst of laughter is uttered, in contrast to his alter ego, Gnatho in Terence's *Eunuchus*. Here Gnatho utters a *hahaha* twice (see below). The meaning of *katagelān* ranges from light ridicule among friends (e.g. *Knights* 319), to being fooled, and thus ridiculous (e.g. *Ach.* 76; 680; *Knights* 713, *Wasps* 515), to outright derision (e.g. *Clouds* 1238; *Wasps* 1406; *Peace* 476, 1245; *Birds* 1407, *Frogs* 1089-93, *Wealth* 838). Such derision is mainly articulated by the laughing-stock, and often the derision is nothing more than the main character ignoring or somehow deliberately misconstruing the victim's words or actions. Thus through simple humorous means (wordplay or the like) Aristophanes lowers the victim's too bloated self-esteem (*Ach.* 1081, 1107, 1126; *Frogs* 42-46; *Wealth* 880).⁶ Likewise, the few times *katagelān* is used in Menander, the focus is on the victim's fear of being laughed at, e.g. *Perik.* 990. However, it is not the derision in itself that raises the laugh, it is the manner, the ingenuity, of the derision. We also find the adjective *katagelastos* (most ridiculous) in passages where friends (or at least companions) try to prevent another friend from being a laughing stock (*TWF* 226; *Frogs* 480) or as a mildly corrective term (*Lys.* 907, 1020, 1024). In tragedy, however,

⁶ On the comic hero, see Rosen 2014; for the fear of being laughed at, see Halliwell 2008: 28.

to be a *katagelastos* is worse than death itself (Eur. *HF* 284-6). Thus *katagelān* and its cognates have a wide range of meaning within Greek comedy, but always with a taint of scorn. However Halliwell's "hostile act" (2008: 248) becomes softened on the comic stage by the comic theatrical frame (Grodal 1997: 185-208 on "comic brackets"), because the comic "is a paradoxical figure, who, on the one hand, routinely violates any number of social and legal protocols in his behaviour on stage, but, on the other, never seems to offend the audience. He is 'wicked', 'wayward', and 'grotesque', but somehow at the same time, amusing and easy to forgive" (Rosen 2014: 225). Both the intrinsic "hostility" of *katagelān* and the character type, as Rosen describes him, are clearly shown by Philokleon's distorted behaviour in *Wasps*, where there is a surprising intrusion of *katagelān* into a conglomerate of words that elsewhere demand a non-derisive laugh:⁷

"at once he stuffed himself with all the good stuff,
jumped up, danced, farted, and mocked (*katagela*, sc. the guests)" (1304-5)

Thus the drunk Philokleon laughs at others, while in similar passages, a laugh is a bodily eruption (like farts, or Pseudolus' barfs - see below, and compare Darwin 2009: 80, 195) - and the sound of uncontainable emotion (also *Peace* 540, 600; notice the use of *asmenos*, denoting happiness), which is, not surprisingly, also found in passages of joy:

Peace 335-45:

Chorus: I'm glad, I'm happy, I fart and I laugh (*gelō*) about getting free of my shield, more than if I'd shed my old age!

Trygaios: Please don't rejoice just now; you can't be certain yet. But when we've got her [Peace], then you may rejoice and yell and laugh (*gelāte*), for then at last you'll be free to travel, stay home, screw, sleep in, attend big festivals, feast, roll dice, live it up, and yell "hey hey!"

(Trans. Henderson 1998: 470-1)

Birds 729-33:

We'll always give to each of you,
And to your families evermore,

⁷ Compare Grodal, discussing the film *Lord of the Flies* (1997: 200) "when laughter is transformed into ridicule" as in *Wasps*, ridicule may "function as a transitory stage between civilized behaviour and primitive sadism".

Great wealth-and-health, long lives of peace,
With youth and laughter (*gelōta*), dancing, feasts—
In short, birds' milk for you to drink.
(Trans. Halliwell: 1998, 43)

Wealth 757-62:

The others, though, processed behind in garlands.
They laughed (*gelōsin*) and chanted hymns: the rhythmic beat
Of old men's feet rang out as all marched on.
So come, let everyone with one accord
Lift up their legs and join the happy dance!
You'll never again come home to hear the news!
(Trans. Halliwell: 1998, 238)

Thus, the verb *gelān* is clearly connected with positive emotions, the sound of exuberant living and dreaming (the exact point of the Weaker Argument in Aristophanes' *Clouds* 1077-8). The mere mentioning of laughter in these passages addresses the audience, not by *making* them laugh, but by making them *feel* the emotion of laughter.

As opposed to the marked, but fairly opposite meanings of *katagelān* (connotative, aggressive and interpersonal) and the simple *gelān* (denotative, emotional and personal), the use of the simple adjective *geloios* (funny) seems to be rather neutral, taking its colour from its context. In *Birds* (802) for instance, Peisethairos has difficulty holding back his laughter (he does not laugh in the text, however), when Euelpides has grown his wings. This scene is parallel to the Hoopoe-scene above, and Euelpides take the *geloion* to be potentially negative - and thus he at least will not laugh. On the other hand, when Xanthias in *Frogs* (1-2) asks Dionysus whether he can say something funny (*geloion*), the point is clearly that he should tell something laughter-inciting, *viz.* joke-making. This seems also to be the case in a fragment of Cratinus (fr. 208 [Rusten 2011: 206-7], quite possibly metatheatrical), where Cleisthenes is to become a laughable character in a comic scene (*geloios*, see Ruffell 2011: 169-70). In Menander's *Georgos* (fr. 4), however, the meaning of *geloion* becomes more ambivalent:

Are you crazy? It's absurd (*geloion*)! Here you've lost your heart to a free-born girl, and then say nothing! When a wedding's fixed for you, you ignore it without reason!

(Trans. Arnott 1979: 130-1, who translates *geloion* with "preposterous".)

The meaning of the speaker, possibly a friend of the young man in love, seems here not to be the speaker wanting to laugh, but rather giving a light reproach to the young man's conduct. Thus, the meaning of the word is closer to 'absurd'⁸ or 'ridiculous' rather than risible or funny, since there is nothing to laugh at. In *Misoumenos* 223 the fragmentary state of the passage makes it impossible to see whether *geloios* is 'risible' or 'absurd', and in *Perikeiromenē* 325 *geloion* seems to be a corrective reproach. As far as we can conclude from the fragments of Menander, the slight reproach without expecting any bursts of laughter is the most common use of the *gel*-stem, though in *Samia* 686, Moschion clearly expects that people will laugh at him (within the play), while the audience may laugh at the depth of his ignorance (is it in fact a metatheatrical cue?).

Scholars have wondered where and how laughter fits into the worlds of Menander's comedy. Arnott (1997: 69) once wrote: "Yet a far larger number of smiles - smiles I think, rather than laughter - is evoked by the imaginative quality of Menander's scripts" and Halliwell (2008: 428) argued: "If the goddess Nike (Victory - emblem of success in the theatre, but also of the difficulties defeated in the world of the plays) was well disposed to Menander in the end, she must have learnt to expect from him something other than instant gratification of her "laughter-loving" nature." In contrast to Old Comedy, neither joke-making (*skōptein*) nor laughter (*gelōs*) receives much attention from Menander, and he never articulates or discusses them, but his plays were nevertheless labelled comedies and very successful indeed. It is not that we cannot find laughter-inciting techniques in Menander; in fact, as Zagagi argues, it was the dramas of Aristophanes that provided Menander with his basic humorous tools (1995: 58), and thus we find parody of tragedy (well discussed by Petrides 2014a: 49-83, see also Hannink 2014), asides, appeal for applause, eavesdropping, verbal puns, sarcasm and so on. However, all these techniques have been toned down in comparison with Old Comedy, and may or may not have raised laughter; they probably just made the audience smile. Nonetheless, we might expect that the festivities at the end of *Dyskolos* (855-9) raised if not a

⁸ Not absurd in the manner of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where the nonsensical is clearly a means to raise a laugh, but absurd as in meaningless in a given situation. Such absurdism is not meant to raise a laugh, but to set things in the right order.

laugh, then an emotion of mirth among the spectators, just like that which Aristophanes tries to elicit at the end of (for instance) *Peace* and *Birds*. Furthermore, a great deal of the laughter-inciting is perhaps to be found in the linguistic subtleties of Menander's characters, such as the Doric-speaking 'Doctor' in *Aspis*, in the wonderful abusive language of Knemon in *Dyskolos* (see Scafuro 2014: 225-9), and in the communicative misunderstandings so fundamental to much humour (see Martin 2014).

Halliwell (2008: 388-428) argues that Menandrian comedy is not about *raising* laughs, but *about* laughing. While this is a very subtle reading of the plays, one wonders if seeing the plays generated the same understanding among the spectators (Petrides 2014a discusses the visual aspects of masks); one would also perhaps have found a more articulated use of laughter-words within the plays themselves. Furthermore, Menander may through his plot structures elicit emotional arousal, such as desire and pleasure (Grodal 1997: 206-8), and intertwined with what made the plays comic in Greek terms, i.e. the expectation that everything will turn out well, communal laughter at the end of the play buttresses the order of society (Halliwell 2008: 427).

Thus the laughter elicited (or expected) here, resembles Plato's discussion in the dialogue *Philebus* (48-49), of the mixed feelings evoked when watching comedies, where it is stated that those who lack self-knowledge are objects of our laughter (*geloious*) and that we laugh *at* them (*katagelōmenoi*). However, as Plato assumes that the laughter elicited in (satirical) comedies is intended to be aggressive, those who laugh at others' faults laugh because they feel *Schadenfreude* (Greek *phthonos*), an emotion that Plato argues is a pain in the soul. Plato had no room in his philosophy for the comedies and the popular humour of his day (cf. e.g. *Republic* 388e and *Laws* 935e-6b), but the ambiguity of laughter and its social effects was actually discussed by the playwrights themselves. Aristotle, in his *Poetics* (1449a 31-35), has a different point of view from Plato. Here he argues that the risible (*geloion*) is the part of faults and inferiority that does *not* cause serious alarm and pain.

Greek comedy on laughter and humour

Old Comedy was a highly self-conscious genre. It was also a gluttonous parasite not only of the politics and ideas of its day, but also of other musical and dramatic genres, such as tragedy and

contemporary comedy. At the start of Aristophanes' *Frogs* the slave Xanthias and the god Dionysus discuss comic movements and jokes before they actually take on their fictitious characters.

Xanthias: Hey, boss, shall I tell one of the old jokes (*geloion*) –

The sort that always get a laugh (*gelōsin*)?

Dionysos: Yes, by Zeus, whatever you like, except

“I’m in great pain”:

Don’t use that one – it always makes me sick.

Xanthias: No other clever jokes?

Dionysos: Except “I’m tightly squeezed”.

Xanthias: Well, can I tell the best one of them all?

Dionysos: By Zeus,

Get on with it –but just don’t say –

Xanthias: Say what?

Dionysos: - that when you shift your load you need a crap.

Xanthias: I can’t say I am carrying so great a weight

That if no one relieves me, I will fart out all my shit?

Dionysos: No, please, I beg you, not unless I need to puke.

Xanthias: Then why did I have to bear all this stuff,

If I can’t do anything like Phrynichos

And Lykis and Ameipsias?

They carry luggage on in all their comedies.

Dionysos: Don’t do it! I am always in the audience,

And when I see one of their clever tricks,

It takes more than a year out of my life.

Xanthias: Then thrice cursed is this neck of mine,

It’s *in great pain*, but cannot get a laugh.

(1-20 trans. Ewans 2010:163)

It is taken for granted that comedy makes the spectators laugh and that the playwrights have the means for this effect. Laughter is incited by verbal means, repetition, slang, etc. and by actions, visualizing the meaning of the words and so on. Through this tableau, Aristophanes thus shows

what comedy is all about. Furthermore, it quickly becomes apparent that not all means to elicit laughter are on equal terms. Some witticisms and comic routines are impoverished and dull, and only bad poets use them, repeatedly. Aristophanes here parodies those poets and their craft (ironically labelled *sophismata*, “clever tricks”), while employing the very same jokes and routines at the same time - highly ironic, since he would surely hope that the audience was laughing at these two characters, whose words and deeds were obviously incongruous. But there is a further ironic layer to the passage; the audience is forced to laugh at what is deemed to be bad jokes, and thus to laugh at themselves, and this is parallel to the fact that Aristophanes claims to refrain from telling such bad jokes, while employing them himself. Everyone laughs at themselves *and* with each other.

The distinction between good and bad humour is clearly part of the humorous tactics of the playwrights of Old Comedy (see Biles 2010; Sommerstein 2009: 116-53; Ruffell 2002), and resurfaces in the works of Aristophanes again and again, always ironic in his conspicuous self-promotion (e.g. *Knights* 550; *Clouds* 545; *Peace* 771, see Bakola 2005), always critical of his colleagues (in *Clouds* 524, *phortikoi*, vulgar, in *Peace* 748, *bōmolocheumata*, buffooneries) and of the spectators, while pleasing the latter and simultaneously hoping for a laugh (e.g. *Knights* 37-9, 225-33) and a victory. Such attacks on other comic poets are fairly common among the fragments of Aristophanes’ colleagues; thus we find a joke at Aristophanes’ expense in Sannyrion’s now lost play *Laughter* (*Gelōs*) and another from Kratinos inventing a wonderful neologism: to be an Euripidaristophanizer (fr. 342 [Rusten 2011: 216]; see Ruffell 2011: 383-5). Eupolis seems to call out all other comic poets for mere nonsense (fr. 205, thus Lech 2012) and Aristophanes more than once claimed that he was the best poet alive (e.g. *Wasps* 1046-7; *Peace* 736-8). Thus the intra-theatrical rivalry was clearly part of the laughter-inciting techniques, while at the same time it articulated and evaluated comedy and laughter in Athens, generating the language for speaking about comedy. When the comic poets did not tease each other, they had a common “enemy” in Megarian comedy, which was, among comedians, counted as a very primitive type of humour that only made boys laugh (see Eupolis fr. 261; Ephantides fr. 3 [Rusten 2011: 136]). In *Wasps*, Xanthias tells the audience: “not to expect something overly ambitious, but neither a laugh stolen from Megara” (56-7). He then proceeds by going through some comic routines that the audience should not expect, the hungry Heracles, parody of Euripides, or an attack on Kleon. *Wasps* will offer the audience a plot that is not too smart for the audience, but more clever than *low* comedy (*komōidias phortikēs*) (63-6). Aristophanes tells his audience that the comedy of his opponents is

Megarian low comedy and that they will do anything for a cheap laugh (e.g. *Clouds* 539, 560; *Ass.* 1155-7; *Wealth* 797-9), while countering the claim that he steals others' comic material (Biles 2010 162-3; 182-3). Nonetheless the whole passage is highly self-referential, conventional and ironic, since Aristophanes himself was not above using all of these routines. The playwrights of Old Comedy discussed the extent of their humour and their comedies, and as Platter (2014: 147) states "Aristophanes' technique, and presumably that of his peers, was to exploit whatever possibilities for laughter existed." Did they on occasion go to far? While Plato simply dismissed laughter, Aristotle took a different view, seeing laughter as an essential part of human life, since it is a relaxation from the seriousness of life. However, entertaining a certain ambiguity towards laughter and the laugher, Aristotle endorses the middle ground of the witty jesting of gentlemen among each other (*eutrapelia*) between buffoonery and vulgar humour (using the terminology found in Old Comedy, *bōmolochia* and *phortikos*) and the complete humourless. He then applies this distinction of conversational laughter to comedy on the stage. The comedy of old, he argues, used non-decorous speech (*aischrologia*, see Rosen 2015; Halliwell 2008: 215-63) to elicit laughter, while the contemporary comedy (i.e. New Comedy) is more aligned with decorum and uses innuendo (*hyponoia*), whatever this actually means. Laughter should not harm anyone, neither the laugher nor the laughing stock (Arist. *E.N.* 1128a 22ff. Cf. chapter 2 p. xx)

Halliwell differentiates between consequential and inconsequential laughter, seeing that laughter has the potential for hurting – hence the ambiguity of the phenomenon. Exploiting the real-life potential of laughter in order to raise laughter among the spectators, Aristophanes boasts of taking the risk of battling Kleon and other dubious politicians on the stage (e.g. *Clouds* 549-52; *Wasps* 1030-35; *Peace* 751-60; Dobrow 2010b: 7; Rosen 2014), while acknowledging that however cleverly he opposes the bad seeds of democracy, nothing happens in the real world (*Clouds* 581-3; compare Lysias fr. 53). Platter (2014: 147) rightly argues that the "separation of the character from his real-world double complements the separateness of festival laughter from everyday life, and helps explain how the mockery of the festival, bitter as it sometimes seems, does not rise to the level of "consequential laughter," which is perceived as having a negative effect on the reputation of its target." The fiction on the stage offers no one-to one-recognition between the stage character and the real living person, though a victim of satire might try to retaliate on the playwright, like Kleon did to Aristophanes after his play, *Babylonians* (see Olson 2002: l-ll, and on politics in general>>). Conversational *aischrologia* may harm and turn a symposium into a disaster, like

Philokleon's (see above), but the theatrical frame of comic *aischrologia* did not harm anyone for real, and turned the humorous conflicts of the plays into party and celebration (Halliwell 2008: 259).

Roman laughter

Laughter and Roman Comedy

The first comedians to stage plays in Latin translated and absorbed Greek comedies from a large variety of popular playwrights from the previous generation - from the so-called Greek New Comedy. (McElduff 2013: 61-95; Manuwald 2011:144-56; Brown 2014.). Such Roman plays were called *comoedia* or *fabula palliata*, "comedies in Greek cloak". However, the Italic ground was fertile and there were a number of different of indigenous, primarily, pre-literary genres, such as the Oscan *fabula Atellana* and different types of mime, that influenced the playwrights of the *palliata* (e.g. Petrides 2014; Manuwald 2011: 144-186); as such genres steadily became literary, the cross-fertilization among staged genres ensured that the "resulting mix that constitutes Roman comedy consists of exuberant stage-action in a Greek-based fictional world and an underlying plot that may convey messages relevant to contemporary Roman audiences" (Manuwald 2011: 151; see De Melo 2011: li-liv), a process of "a shared literary culture of laughter and "laughterhood," a bilingual cultural conversation." (Beard 2014: 89).

The Roman comic playwrights, adopting a plot from a Greek New Comedy, "translated" not only the written text, but also the action within the framework of Roman society and performance culture in order to make the Roman spectators laugh. Thus, we are able to recognise through these translations how and where the Roman poets remodelled Greek humour into Roman humour.⁹ Leaving aside the cultural politics of such translating, we know from the poets themselves that they adapted a wide array of Greek New Comedy poets, and sometimes even combined two Greek plays into one Roman play, a manoeuvre called *contaminatio*, in order to generate even more complex and rather "fantastic" plots. We are able to compare the fragments of Caecilius Statius' play *The Necklace (Plocium)*, which Aulus Gellius has preserved, with the passages of Menander's *The Necklace (Plokion)*, on which they are based (See De Melo 2014; Ruffell 2010). Gellius judges

⁹ We have no contemporary visual evidence for humorous art until a century later; see Clarke 2007.

Caecilius severely; though the Roman comedy at first seemed charming (*lepide, vesuste*), it was vulgar (*sordere*) and cold (*frigere*) compared to Menander's wit (*facetiis*). What Gellius opposes is perhaps Caecilius' obvious literary effects (e.g. contrasts: *liber servio; vivo mortuus inter vivos*; sounds: *plorando, orando, instando atque obiurgando*, etc.), effects that Menander tends not to use. In this, he was followed by Terence (on his humorous tactics, see Vincent 2014), while Plautus, Caecilius and most likely the other Roman comedians, transposed the comic potential in the Greek plays to their own plays, but added linguistic effects, wordplay, *lazzi* etc, in order to satisfy the Roman public's taste in humour (see e.g. Duckworth 1952: 344; Sharrock 2009: 167–8). Terence still wrote comedies for Romans, but “(p)art of the success of the *palliatae* was to develop laughter around the distance between the stage and the audience, offering them a cloudy glimpse of another life, but in the moments, where Terence is developing a connection with that audience, he often turns out an image, a cross-reference, a cultural convention that catches Romans where they are and leaves the Greeks in Menander's or Apollodorus' Athens” (Starks 2013: 154). Leaving the cultural bias aside (see May 2014: 758-9), one reason why Gellius does not appreciate Caecilius' play is perhaps the lack of the performance. Gellius and his friends are after all readers, not spectators, and thus they miss the pace and the visual background of the dialogue and the play's actions. De Melo (2014: 457) opts for another reason arguing that “Caecilius has aims vastly different from those of Menander. *Menander makes us smile, but rarely laugh*. Individual scenes are not independently important, but gain their significance from their function in the play as a whole. (*Italics mine*)” Thus we are back to the question of laughter and Menandrian comedy as discussed above, with the implication that laughter is a significant part of Caecilius' comedy.

Roman comedy on laughter and humour

Like Greek, Latin has a core verb for laughing, *ridere*, and its noun, *risus*, which may by prefixal extensions (*arridere, inridere, deridere* etc.) expand its meaning from the pure physical and sonic laugh (see Cic. *De Or.* 2. 235 for the physicality of laughter; Pl. *Cas.* 857-8; *Merc.* 502, for the positive emotion of laughter.) to include the semantic field from a smile¹⁰ to outright derision. The verb *arridere* is connected with positive emotion and seems to denote a *response* (*ad-*) of something

¹⁰ Beard (2014, 74-5) argues that since the Romans did not have a special designated word for smiling, a smile did not have the same cultural relevance in Rome. But I wonder whether Demaenetus expects a smile, as we would understand it, from Argyrippus in Plautus *As.* 837 and 850.

amusing or pleasant (e.g. Cic. *De Or.* 2. 229) through smiling (Pl. *As.* 207) or by raising a laugh (e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 5, 60; Ter. *Eun.* 249-50; Ov. *Met.* 3. 459). The verb *irridere*, however, has a more active scope than *arridere* and may point at joking, making fun of something (e.g. Ter. *HT* 982.) without necessarily meaning mocking somebody seriously (e.g. Ter. *Andria* 204), playing one a trick (e.g. Pl. *Amph.* 587) or mockery (e.g. Pl. *Epid.* 520). The verb *deridere*, on the other hand, holds strictly a negative meaning pertaining to pure derision (*derisio*). As among the Greeks, derision is feared (e.g. Pl. *Epid.* 262-3), but (unlike in the few examples that we have of Greek New Comedy) the young man in love in Roman comedy may fear to be laughed at by the girl of his dreams (Pl. *Bacch.* 506, 515). Thus, the simplex *ridere* and its derivative *arridere* have a denotative function both visual and sonic, while *irridere* and *deridere* are connotations that have lost the physical features of the former. This is parallel to the Greek use of *gelān* and *katagelān*, where the semantic range of *ridere* and *arridere* is comparable to the function of *gelān*. These verbs focus on the actual laughter or the means of eliciting laughter (*risum movere*, (Cic.) *Ad Heren.*, 1. 6. 10; Cic. *De Or.* 2. 236), and on the fact that in real life one recognizes the effect either visually through facial features or by the sound of laughter. The negative laughing verbs, *irridere* and *deridere*, on the contrary do not need the physical features¹¹ and rely solely on the linguistic aspect of laughing at a victim. That these two verbs cover basically the same semantic ground is clear from Plautus' comedy *Aulularia*:

Euclio: Really now, Megadorus, you aren't doing the decent thing by behaving like this, laughing at me (*irrideas*), a poor man who's never done anything wrong to you and your family: I haven't said or done anything to deserve that you should do to me what you're doing now.

Megadorus: I haven't come to laugh at you (*te derisum*), and I'm not laughing at you (*derideo*), and I don't think you'd deserved it. (220-4, trans. De Melo: 2011, 280-1)

Just as we saw in Greek comedy, it is mainly the victim who states a case against ridiculing either in the second person ("are you mocking me?", e.g. Plautus *Curc.* 18; *Merc.* 909; *Poen.* 1031; Terence *Andria.* 204; *Eun.* 710) or in the third person (e.g. Plautus. *Poen.* 1202 and *Bacch.* 506; Terence *Phorm.* 669). Only one character in the surviving comedies of Plautus and Terence states that he will deliberately mock someone, and that is the pimp Ballio in Plautus' *Pseudolus*:

¹¹ See however, Plautus *Epid.* 429-30, where Periphanes expects his son to laugh at him with a big gloating smile, "me albis dentibus / meus derideret filus", see also *Capt.* 485-6.

“I know quite for sure, I’d rather perjure myself with solemn word a thousand times over than let him make a laughingstock of me (*deridiculum*). Now I’ll make fun of him (*deridebo*) if I meet him.” (1056-8)

However, while this statement spells out Ballio’s extraordinarily mean character traits, the audience also knows that Pseudolus, the clever slave, will prevail, and Ballio will get what he deserves.

The Greeks differentiated *geloios* from *katagelastos* (see above). The Romans used the adjective *ridiculus* to mean that something is absurd (e.g. Terence *Phorm.* 901; *Ad.* 676), for its being funny (Plautus *Men.* 217-8; *Stichus* 171-7¹², Terence *Eun.* 244,¹³ and for denoting that someone is a laughingstock (e.g. Ter. *HT* 952; *Andria* 712;), though they may also use *deridiculum* and *irridiculum*, (but not *arridiculum*), to spell out the negativity of the word (e.g. Pl. *Amph.* 682; *MG* 92; *Cas.* 877; Ter. *HT* 952). It is hard to tell whether the Roman playwrights adapted the neutral use of *geloion* to *ridiculum* or it was a colloquial feature of early Latin, but the use is, like that of the Greeks, devoid of the sound and emotion of laughter.

Whereas it was difficult to find evidence for the sound of laughter in the surviving Greek comedies, the case stands a bit better in their Roman counterparts. Here we do in fact have a few examples of the sound of laughter written into the script, and thus we are talking about, not real laughter, but the fictitious and conventional sound of a laugh, (*ha*)*hahae*. This sound is heard around ten times in the surviving Roman comedies, but is it the sound of laughter? In Terence’s *Hauton Timorumenos* (869) Chremes clearly laughs (*hahahae*), when he thinks about his cunning slave Syrus’ trick, which in fact is not a trick at all. Menedemus replies, “why did you laugh (*ridisti*)?” This must imply that Menedemus at least heard Chremes laughing, while the audience recognises the passage as an example of laughter within the fictitious world, though his laugh explicitly shows his lack of understanding of the situation. Terence, then, exploits the laughter of an ignorant man to make the audience reflect on the situation, where Menedemus at least acknowledge that he does not really know what is happening. Chremes’ single and conventional laugh is a sign of his psychology rather than a cue for the audience to laugh. In Terence’s *Eunuchus*, the parasite Gnatho laughs out loud,

¹² On this passage, see Fontaine (2010: 239-41).

¹³ See Barsby 1999 *ad loc.*. For *ridiculus* as a technical term for a jester, see also Karakasis 2005: 135-6.

not once but twice – in the fragment of Menander that seems to be the source for this passage (*Kolax* fragment 3; Terence “contaminating” Menander’s *Eunuchos* with his *Kolax*, see Ter. *Eun.* 19-34), Menander merely had an assertive speech act, “I laugh”. The first laugh occurs in a splendid scene of flattery:

Thraso: What about that other time, Gnatho—the way I scored off the Rhodian at dinner? – Haven’t I ever told you?

Gnatho: Never. But please do. I’ve heard it more than a thousand times!

Thraso: This Rhodian I’m talking about, a young lad, was with me at dinner. I happened to have a floozy with me. He began to make up to her, and to poke fun at me. ‘I say’, I said to the fellow, ‘You’re very impertinent. Are you hunting for meat when you’re a hare yourself?’

Gnatho: Ha ha ha!

Thraso: What is it?

Gnatho: Clever! Smart! Fine! Al! Was that joke really yours? I thought it was an old one.

Thraso: Had you heard it before?

Gnatho: Often; and it’s reckoned to be one of the best.

Thraso: It’s mine. (419-29, trans. Brown 2006: 172, with minor corrections)

Whatever the joke is about (see Beard 2014: 8-11), Gnatho’s laughter is clearly false as only a flatterer’s laugh can be (see e.g. Ter. *Eun.* 249-50). And though Gnatho laughs again in verse 497, nothing has changed. He is still just flattering, but Terence thus shows how Gnatho clings to his stereotypical character traits that he himself outlined in his monologue (232-69, see Barsby 1999: 126-8). It is not his laugh that may raise a laugh among the spectators, but the fact that the spectators already know that Gnatho’s repeated laughs are not in response to an old joke; Gnatho is unable to laugh from joy, but quite able to laugh on command, hopefully the exact opposite of the watching audience at a comedy.

The sound of (*ha*)*hahae* in the other comedies of Terence (*Andria.* 754; *Phorm.* 411; *Hec.* 862) shows different types of reaction, where none are reactions to something deliberately funny. In *Andria*, Davus’ “*hahae*” is more a reaction to something expected. Unlike in the *The Self-Tormentor* and *The Eunuch*, the *hahae* is not articulated further, and thus it seems here only to denote Davus’ character. Likewise, Terence uses the *hahae* to enforce a certain attitude from

Parmeno's approving "hahahae" (Ter. *Hec.* 862, thus Goldberg 2013 *ad loc*) to the parasite Phormio's gloating, and annoying, laughter at Demipho:

Demipho: Although I've been wronged, all the same, rather than taking it to court or listening to you, I'll act just as if she were my relative: the law says how much she should be given as a dowry; take her away; I'll give you the five minas!

Phormio Ha ha! What a fine fellow!

Demipho: What? It's not an unreasonable request, is it? Can't I even get what the general public's entitled to? (Ter. *Phor.* 407-11, trans. Brown 2006: 225, with minor corrections).

Phormio's laughter is as far I can see the clearest example in all the ancient texts, where the sound of laughter also is the sound of superiority and scorn. And Demipho obviously reacts with disbelief ('What?') since he naturally assumes that there must be something to laugh at, which he cannot see, and Demipho ends the act by leaving the scene even more confused than before. The laughter here may frame the scorn within the play, where the clever Phormio (123, 591-2) outwits Demipho, who has no clue about what is in fact happening, while the audience does. Thus the audience may enjoy the outwitting of the old man from the same superior vantage point as the "hero" Phormio.

From the meager Terentian laughs, we may conclude that Terence actually use the sound of laughter as a clear token to the audience of the laugher's character traits, since the laugh is employed to show levels of knowledge of the laugher, from the superiority of Phormio to the dimwit Chremes. It is however, unlikely that the laugh, *hahahae*, has any direct contagious response in the audience.

We also find the "(ha)hahahae" in Plautus, but these few instances are used in connection with the joyous feeling of personal relief (*Pseud.* 946; *Truc.* 209) and sudden realization of the situation (*Poe.* 768). However, in *Pseudolus*, Ballio (see above) is the only one to laugh, but even here, the sound of laughter, *hahae*, is nothing more than a sound of the joy of relief (*mea laetitia* 1062). However, given Ballio's malevolent character, the audience may presume that his relaxation is due to his self-confidence and a self-delusive feeling of superiority to the clever slave, Pseudolus. This becomes clear immediately from his monologue (cited above), where he, as previously noticed, alone among all ancient comic characters, actively derides his foe, Pseudolus. This, of course fails,

and thus Ballio's laugh equals the laugh of Chremes in Terence's *Hauton Timorumenos*, with one major exception: Ballio is by far the bigger scoundrel of the two, and thus the poetic justice that befalls him later in the play must have made the audience laugh with joy and relief. Of course, the spectators may laugh at his final, and incongruous, statement too, "I've decided to make this my death day instead of my birthday (1237)," but humor alone does not play the major role in generating mirth here; the feeling of justice does. However, Plautus carefully diminishes the possibility of a concluding and uproarious laugh among the spectators at this point by letting Simo plan his attack (*insidias*, and thus no word of laughing at a foe) on Pseudolus immediately after Ballio's exit. This deliberate occluding of spectatorial laughter is a means to strengthen and enhance the bodily humor of the last scene, where the drunken Pseudolus finally settles with Simo after belching in his face (to the sound of a half-laugh, *hae!* 1294), and thus - like the Dikaiopolis of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, who exits the play drunken and victorious followed by the singing chorus, and (no doubt to the laughter and merriment of the audience) - Pseudolus and Simo plead for the audience's applause, of which laughter presumably is a great part. But the parallel is perhaps mischievous. The Greeks and the Romans laugh at different things; they both laugh with the victorious hero and his bodily reactions, but Dikaiopolis is an intoxicated, erotic *citizen*, who has reinstated his power in the public sphere. Pseudolus on the other hand, is an intoxicated *slave*, who has cunningly outwitted the free citizens Ballio and Simo, and succeeded in getting the pair of lovers together. In both comedies, folly has been eradicated - Lamachos' warmongering and Ballio's greed (on folly in comedy, see Gelven 2000: 49-62); but the audiences' laughter evinces that the hierarchy of social structures remains - whether it is the individual citizen, who stands up for his right and his city, or the slave, who will by any means necessary do his duty for his young master.¹⁴ The laugh of joy at the victory is also a laugh of relief that the social structures have not been breached: Comedy has settled things right either in the city or in the household.

The last, but not the least, laugh!

In the fifth century CE Roman comedy, *Querolus* ('*The Complainer*?'), a *fabula togata* (comedy in Roman dress), sonic laughter plays an hitherto unseen role within the fictitious world, while non-

¹⁴ See Beard (2014: 137): "The idea of the clever comic slave who raised a laugh at the expense of his dim owner both subverted the power relations of slavery as an institution and, I suspect, served to legitimate them."

sonic laughter is far less employed by the unknown author.¹⁵ The comedy echoes Plautus' *Aulularia*, but there is no use of metre and the play (labeled *fabula*) is written for a dinner-party, apparently for the friends of one Rutilius. Thus, whether read aloud or acted at this dinner, the context of this comedy is far from the comedies of stage, and far more intimate. If it was performed, would the actors then have used masks, just as masks are depicted in manuscripts of Terence (Nervegna 2014: 729-31)? If read aloud without the use of masks, would the bursts of laughter then have worked as a cue for the audience to laugh? Or would the laugh have been conventional, merely *ha ha he*, and just a marker of the character traits of the laugher, just as Goethe once wrote: "Nothing betrays one's character more than what one finds laughable" (1994:139)?

In the prooemium to Rutilius, the author offers a clear frame of who to laugh at, since laughing at people who complained about their lives was a trade mark of Rutilius. The comedy is quick to settle that both the parasite Mandrogerus and the ever-complaining Querolus are ridiculous (5 *inrisum*; 14 *ridendus*). And while the parasite at the end of the play has made himself a laughingstock (93, *ridicule*), Querolus has been fooled by his dead father (107, 'He laughs at him' [*ridet*]). What is more interesting however, is the use of *ha ha he* in the play. Nine times a character laughs out loud, and this equals the number of laughs in all the plays of Plautus and Terence taken together. The family spirit, the Lar, laughs twice benignly at the sorry state of Querolus' character, and he makes Querolus laugh once by whispering his unheard plan to Querolus, and again when Querolus does not recognize that the Lar is playing a joke on him. The swindler, Sycophanta, is prone to making jokes out of others' words, and distorts both Querolus' (50) and Mandogerus' (53) words to create the play's most obvious play on words - and both times he laughs alone at his own wit. Mandogerus laughs when he acts as a priest in order to get into Querolus' house. This laugh is the laugh of someone who feels superior to others, like the laugh of Ballio in *Pseudolus*. And again, the feeling of superiority is self-delusion. But when all has gone awry for Mandogerus, Querolus may finally laugh at him. However, being a character that turns "tears into laughter", Mandogerus gets the final laugh of the play, while the dead Euclio, who has arranged everything, laughs at all the characters along with the audience as the play closes.

Concluding laughs

¹⁵ For the text and introduction, see Jaquemard-Le Saos (1994).

The laugh elicited by ancient comedic art works on two levels. Firstly, the laughter exists as a fictional, and conventional, laughter within the fictitious worlds of comedy. As such, the laughter very seldom was sonic laughter elicited because of something funny said or done within the fiction, but mainly the non-sonic representation of someone reacting to actual or believed mockery (from slight to strong) at their person by others. The emotions of joy and relief (often intertwined) may also make comic characters assert that they laugh, but even on the stage of Greek and Roman comedy, the actual sound is rarely heard. Thus, whereas tragedy needs lamentation even on the stage, laughter is not central to the fictitious worlds of comedy. Secondly, given that Plato and Aristotle offer comments on laughter and mix conversational laughter with the laughter of the comic stage, laughing audiences must have been a fact. Greek Old Comedy confirms this view, but among the spectators laughter may be good or bad depending on the manner and the perceived quality of the comedy. Such discussions fade in Roman Comedy (the best example is in Plautus' *Casina* 1-20, but this prologue was written for a re-performance after his death), but the audiences are often invited to applaud at the end, and relief and laughter seem quite appropriate at such times. But given the self-consciousness of all our comic playwrights, laughter is, they assure us, not the foremost thing on their mind. The fictional worlds of comedy seems to confirm this lack of laughter, but it might be self-delusion, since they would probably be just as disappointed as the parasite Ergasilus in Plautus' *Captivi* (480-4), when nobody laughs at his wit. Engaging others in laughter is to accept, and appreciate, being laughed *at* and *with*.

Horace noticed that we laugh when seeing a laughing face (*Ars Poetica* 101-2). Parvulescu (2010: 8) takes the argument a bit further and argues that "if man is a laughing animal, his specificity as a laugher is bound up with his specificity as an animal with a *face* (my *italics*)", and perhaps the conspicuous lack of laughter in the ancient comedies is a result of the use of masks, which meant that comic laughter was first and foremost a bodily thing (especially in Aristophanes);, but as comedy evolved, especially in Rome, language took control of the laughter and conventionalized it into a *ha ha hae* as a means to show a character's personality, not as a cue for the audience to laugh.