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## ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE BRAGGART SOLDIER

### PART TWO: ARISTOPHANES' LAMACHUS AND THE POLITICIZATION OF THE COMIC TYPE\*



ABSTRACT: The Lamachus of Aristophanes' *Acharnians* presents a large number of close similarities to the *milites gloriosi* of Middle and New Comedy and their Roman offshoots. Common points include the ostentatious uniform and impressive weapons, together with the humiliation of the soldier by means of the removal of these items; verbal aggressiveness and loud threats against the braggart captain's adversaries; use of specialized military terminology; comparison of the *miles* to gods or demigods; considerable wealth amassed through service as an officer; exploits in distant exotic lands and Munchausenesque tales about marvels; cowardice and retreat before self-assertive opponents; exhibitionistic display of false wounds; ample imitation or parody of high-style poetry (epic and tragedy) in the soldier's speech; and exclusion of the vainglorious captain from the hero's final sympotic triumph. Aristophanes must have inherited these motifs from the comic soldiers of earlier stage tradition. His Lamachus, however, does not merely reproduce such stock *alazones* but combines the typical comic *miles* with a historical personality from contemporary Athens, a prominent military leader and supporter of pro-war policies. Aristophanes' politicization of the comic soldier's type was afterwards imitated by other playwrights (Plato Comicus, Mnesimachus), up to the mid-fourth century.

### 1. ARISTOPHANES' LAMACHUS AND THE TYPE OF THE COMIC *MILES*

IN THE FIRST PART of this study, published in the previous volume of the *Logeion* (Konstantakos [2015]), it was shown that the braggart soldier was an established figure in the humorous imagination of the Greeks already

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\* As in the first part, comic fragments are cited according to the collection of Kassel-Austin (1983–2001). For the extant plays of Aristophanes, the edition of Wilson (2007) is used. For the plays of Menander that survive on papyri, the edition of reference is the three-volume Loeb of Arnott (1979–2000). I am deeply thankful to Stavros Tsitsiridis for his pertinent comments on my text and his bibliographical suggestions.

from an early age. Examples of the *miles gloriosus* have been traced in the archaic satirical poems of Archilochus and in the comic dramas of Epicharmus. Aristophanes will doubtless have been familiar with such appearances of the military *alazon* in earlier literature and may also have discovered antecedents of the same character in popular tradition. Thus, the great comic author had easily available exemplars for his own stage version of the boastful captain, namely, general Lamachus of the *Acharnians*, produced at the Lenaia of 425 B.C.

Lamachus son of Xenophanes, probably from the deme Oe, was a well-known Athenian military commander and served in many expeditions during the Peloponnesian war, until he was slain in battle at Sicily in 414 B.C. In the *Acharnians* Lamachus introduces himself as a *stratēgos*, an office he certainly held one year afterwards, in 425/424 B.C. He may also have exercised the generalship earlier, in 436/435. It is a debated question whether Lamachus was actually a *stratēgos* in the very year of the *Acharnians* (426/425), although the answer is of small importance for the present investigation. Lamachus might have already been elected *stratēgos* for 425/424 by the time the *Acharnians* was performed at the Lenaia, in January or February 425. Alternatively, his prospective candidature for the office may well have been known and discussed in the *polis* around that time.<sup>1</sup> In that case, Aristophanes would make Lamachus attribute to himself a rank he had not yet actually attained, presumably in order to stress with comic exaggeration the man's ambition and boastfulness.<sup>2</sup>

The theatrical Lamachus of the *Acharnians* bears many close similarities to the *militēs gloriosi* of Middle and New Comedy and their Roman offshoots — the creations of subsequent periods, when the soldier's type had been standardized and was reiterated as a stock personage in the comic repertoire. Apart from individual traits and scenic motifs, it is significant that analogies also extend to the function of the soldier's figure within the overall plot of the comedies. Diachronically, the military *alazon* appears as the comic hero's antagonist and counterpoise. He is the enemy that threatens to subvert the main character's plans, one of the great obstacles that the protagonist needs to overcome in order to achieve his comic self-fulfilment and

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1. For surveys of this problem, see MacDowell (1995) 68; Bertelli (1999) 55–56; Ercolani (2002) 237–241, 249–254; Olson (2002) 149–150, 221–222. Regardless of historical reality, in the present study the Aristophanic Lamachus will occasionally be called “general” because he is so styled in the dramatic world of the play.
  2. The soldiers of New and Roman comedy similarly pretend to high rank, in order to aggrandize themselves; see Legrand (1907) 225 for examples.

bring about the happy end. This pattern remained more or less stable in the history of the Graeco-Roman comic tradition, although it was incorporated in quite different types of storyline, as the forms of comic drama evolved with time. In the Aristophanic script, the braggart Lamachus is a political adversary of the hero, the representative of a rival ideological group and civic power faction, which clash with Dicaeopolis' vision of the welfare of the *polis*. In New and Roman comedy, the contrast is acted out in the private and domestic sphere, with the soldier being as a rule the young hero's rival for the love of a beautiful girl. The deep structure is essentially the same, even though the dramatic settings and themes are entirely dissimilar. In both cases, the *alazon* adversary is defeated and humiliated in the end, so that the hero may achieve his triumph.<sup>3</sup> This functional standardization of the *miles gloriosus* is an important factor that contributed to the type's theatrical durability over such a long period. Viable character types facilitate the development of the dramatic plot by fulfilling recurrent and recognizable operations in the layout of the comic mythopoeia.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, almost all of Lamachus' characteristics are paralleled in the stereotyped braggart captains of the later comic stage. Sometimes the Aristophanic play offers a variation of the stock pattern, rather than the form that is recurrent and typical in the fourth-century and Hellenistic comic tradition. Nonetheless, in all cases the similarities are recognizable and striking, as will become evident from the survey that follows.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.1. Impressive weapons

Lamachus sports a magnificent outfit and an array of weapons. He wears with ostentation an impressive triple crest on his helmet, decorated with large ostrich feathers (*Ach.* 567, 575, 584–589, 965–967, 1074, 1103–1111, 1182). He especially flaunts his horrendous shield, which bears the ghastly

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3. Only Menander dared upturn this standard pattern by transforming the soldier into the positive protagonist, who is rewarded at the finale, and relegating the traditional hero to the place of the sidelined antagonist. Even so, the basic structure of contrast (the soldier versus an opponent, each one striving to annul the other's plans) is retained. See Konstantakos (2015) 42 with bibliography, and below, 1.11.

4. I owe this important point to the perspicacious remarks of Stavros Tsitsiridis. The functional stability of the soldier's type will also be stressed below (1.8, 1.11). For a reading of Aristophanic comedy in terms of such standardized structural functions, see the seminal essay of Sifakis (1992). It would be interesting to undertake a comparative study of Old and New/Roman comedy in this respect; but this is a topic for a different essay.

5. A few of these parallels have been noted by Süß (1905) 45–48 and Gil (1975) 78–79.

Gorgon's head as its emblem (574, 582–583, 964–966, 1095, 1122–1124, 1140, 1181). In the side-splitting scene of his preparation for battle (1097–1141), Lamachus also assembles and puts on more pieces of weaponry. He unpacks his spear (1118–1121) and dons a heavy breastplate, which he lauds with pompous phrases (1132–1134). It is likely that Lamachus was carrying these and perhaps other arms also in the scene of his first appearance (572–622), when he is sarcastically described by the comic hero as “well-armed” (*εὖοπλος*, 592). Dicaeopolis challenges Lamachus to circumcise him, if he is strong enough (591–592); this indicates that the general must be carrying a sword or large dagger.<sup>6</sup>

The impressive uniform and weapons are also stock characteristics of the braggart officers of later comedy.<sup>7</sup> Pyrgopolynices, the *miles gloriosus* of Plautus' eponymous play, extols with rhetorical exaggeration his lustrous buckler, whose radiance surpasses the sun and dazzles the eyes of his foes (*MG* 1–4). Significantly, both Lamachus and Pyrgopolynices include the encomium to their shield among the very first words they pronounce, as soon as they make their initial appearance on stage (*Ach.* 574, *MG* 1ff.). Further, during his arming scene, Lamachus, assisted by his slave, polishes his bronze shield with oil, so as to make it shine like a mirror (*Ach.* 1128–1129); in the same way, Pyrgopolynices orders his attendants to render his shield dazzlingly bright, like the rays of the sun. The braggart Leontichos in Lucian's *Dialogues of Courtesans* 13 (a brief sketch imitating the plot patterns of New Comedy) is also said to have fought a duel armed with an admirable gleaming shield (13.3, *ἡ πέλιτη ἐμάρμαιρεν*), exactly like his adversary, the grandiose barbarian satrap, whose gilded arms were brightly shining (13.2, *ἀποστίλβοντα ... ἐπιχρύσοις τοῖς ὅπλοις*). In another dialogue of the same Lucianic collection, the boastful captain Polemon takes pride in the shiny lustre of his own and his soldiers' weapons (9.5, *στίλβοντας τοῖς ὅπλοις*).<sup>8</sup>

Many other passages of Middle, New, and Roman comedy enumerate in detail the weapons and armour parts of comic soldiers, such as spear, lance, sword, dagger, helmet and crest, breastplate, buckler, or light leather shield

6. On Lamachus' costume and props, see Olson (2002) 222–223, 226; English (2007) 212–213, 222–225. On their scenic use as symbols of boastfulness and false courage, cf. Halliwell (1984) 11; Mastromarco (2002) 212–213; Lauriola (2006) 89–92.

7. See Ribbeck (1882) 27, 34; Fest (1897) 9; Süß (1905) 46–47; Legrand (1907) 224; Cornford (1914) 156; Legrand (1917) 488; Boughner (1954) 12–13, 62; Webster (1970) 174; Gil (1975) 78; Petrides (2014) 217–218, 232–234.

8. On the affinities between these Lucianic sketches and the braggart soldiers of New Comedy, see Legrand (1907) 223–230; Legrand (1908) 55–57, 70–74; Mras (1909) 81–83.

(compare the accumulation of arms in Lamachus' preparation scene, *Ach.* 1097–1141).<sup>9</sup> Emphasis is often given to special pieces of impressive quality or luxury: for example, a gold-inlaid sword (Men. fr. 24) or a gold-hafted dagger (Philemon fr. 73); a plumed helmet (Men. *Perik.* 294, cf. the feathers in Lamachus' crest); a metal-scaled breastplate decorated with images of terrible serpents (Poseidippus fr. 28.7–9, cf. again the horrendous Gorgon emblem of Lamachus' shield); and Pyrgopolynices' personified *machaera*, which has developed a will of its own to make mincemeat of the enemies (*MG* 5–8). Indeed, in some Menandrian plays that feature soldiers, a particular weapon may become a stage prop of central importance for the development of the plot and the happy solution; this is the case, for example, with Kleostratos' shield in the *Aspis* and Thrasonides' sword in the *Misoumenos*.<sup>10</sup> Although these officers differ from the typical *miles gloriosus*, the theatrical use of their weaponry shows how vital was this kind of martial equipment for the role of the comic soldier.

Concerning the character's overall outfit, in fourth-century and Hellenistic drama the comic captain standardly wore a military cloak (*chlamys*), sometimes fabricated of expensive fine wool (*chlanis*). Compare Leontichos' bright red cloak (*φοινικίς*) and Polemon's purple-bordered mantle (*ἐφεστρίδα περιπόρφυρον*) in Lucian's humorous sketches (*Dial. Mer.* 9.1, 13.3). The Aristophanic Lamachus may similarly have been dressed in a flamboyant purple-red robe, of the type often sported by the high officers of the Athenian army (cf. *Pax* 1173–1175, *φοινικίδ' ὀξεῖαν πᾶν*).<sup>11</sup>

Because the impressive uniform and weapons are the emblematic attributes of the comic braggart captain, the latter may be mocked and humiliated

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9. See e.g. Antiphanes fr. 17; Apollodorus of Gela fr. 5; Men. *Col.* 30–31, *Perik.* 355, 392–396, fr. 242, 570, 676; Adesp. Com. fr. 1018.29–31; Plaut. *Bacch.* 887, *MG* 1423, *Pseud.* 735, *Truc.* 492, 506, 927; cf. Luc. *Dial. Mer.* 13.1–3. Generally on the soldiers of all these comic passages, see Legrand (1917) 488; Webster (1970) 42; Petersmann (1972) 241; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 13–14, 27–29, 32, 53, 55, 57–59, 92–93, 96, 134–135, 147; Gil (1975) 87; Nesselrath (1990) 276, 326–328; Papaioannou (2009) 404–406.
10. Another example may be the sword in the rusty scabbard in Adesp. Com. fr. 1085.9, 20–22 (= Men. *Fab. Inc.* 6 Arnott). See MacCary (1972) 294–295; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 23–24; Arnott (1979–2000) III 520–525.
11. See Ephippus fr. 19.4; Antiphanes fr. 17; Men. *Perik.* 354, *Sam.* 659, fr. 242; Plaut. *Curc.* 611, 632, *MG* 1423, *Pseud.* 735. Cf. also the *Excerpta de comoedia* prefixed to Donatus' commentary on Terence (VIII 6, I p. 29 Wessner): *militi chlamys purpurea*. See Legrand (1907) 223–224; Legrand (1917) 488; Duckworth (1952) 90; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 42, 45, 70; Blume (2001) 192; Olson (2002) 222; Brown (2004) 6–7, 10, 12.

precisely through the visible removal of these items on stage. In the *Acharnians*, Dicaeopolis makes Lamachus put down some of the most conspicuous parts of his military outfit, namely, his terrible Gorgon shield and a large plume from the crest of his helmet; then the hero comically debases these very objects by using them in order to vomit (580–587) and by deriding them as signs of vain boastfulness (588–589). By stripping the *alazon* of his ostentatious martial equipment, the hero humbles and ridicules his opponent in a spectacular manner. In the finale of the play (1190ff.), Lamachus is brought back injured and crestfallen, and his belittlement is emphasized again by the lack of his characteristic pieces of armour. To judge from the messenger's foregoing description of Lamachus' accident in the ditch, the general presumably appears without the plumes in his helmet (which have fallen on the rocks, 1182–1183) and without his shield (which was badly battered because of the violence of Lamachus' fall, 1180–1181). His fine garments are also tattered and reduced to rags.<sup>12</sup> In both these scenes, the removal of Lamachus' emblematic arms is closely combined with the exposure of his true nature as a coward and a braggart. The pretentious *miles* is unmasked precisely by being divested of the symbols of his military profession.

The same effect is already foreshadowed in Archilochus fr. 5, where the soldier's loss of his much-praised shield initiates the Falstaffian avowal of his flight from battle. The boaster must be deprived of his showy weapons, if the audience is to perceive his inefficiency in matters of actual war. The pattern survives up to the Roman *palliata*. At the end of Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, Pyrgopolynices is captured and violently abused by his neighbour and his neighbour's servants (1394ff.). The latter have taken away the captain's military emblems, his *chlamys* and sword (1423), and now give him a good thrashing and threaten to castrate him with a cook's knife. Forgetting all his previous boasts and affectation, Pyrgopolynices is now extremely frightened and can only utter supplications and cries of pain. His plight resembles that of the badly battered Lamachus at the final scene of the *Acharnians* (see below, 1.11); significantly, the scenic humiliation once again takes place after the soldier has been stripped of his characteristic uniform and arms.

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12. On Lamachus' scenic humiliation through the loss of his weapons, see Slater (1993) 408–409, 412, 415; Bertelli (1999) 55; Compton-Engle (2003) 512–514; cf. Whitman (1964) 72–75; Ketterer (1991) 51, 54; Olson (2002) 357–358; Mastromarco (2002) 215; English (2007) 225.

## 1.2. Verbal aggressiveness

Lamachus voices many loud threats and aggressive statements, especially against his main adversary, the comic hero Dicaeopolis. He attempts to intimidate the hero with menacing questions (577a, 580, 593, 1113, 1126), indignant exclamations (1107, 1117), insults (577a, 593), and self-aggrandizement (“me, the general”, 593, cf. his invocation of the Athenian democracy he pretends to represent, 618). He threatens Dicaeopolis with death (590) and with prosecution for military desertion (1128–1129). At the end of his first scene, Lamachus leaves the stage with a thundering menace that he will plague all the Peloponnesian enemies both on land and in sea battles (620–622). The same traits are shared by the boastful captains of New and Roman comedy, who use colourful language to threaten with various kinds of extreme violence anyone who rivals or annoys them. The *miles* makes ponderous vows e.g. to take the life of his opponent (Plaut. *Bacch.* 847–849, 860, *Curc.* 536, *Truc.* 624, Luc. *Dial. Mer.* 9.5), swallow up his soul (*Bacch.* 869), transfix him with his sword (*Curc.* 567, *Truc.* 927), slice him into small pieces (*Curc.* 576, *Truc.* 613, 621, 626), catapult him like a missile (*Curc.* 689), beat him black and blue with his fists (*Curc.* 725–727, *Poen.* 1289–1291, Ter. *Eun.* 774), pound his brains to bits (*Poen.* 494), or smash down his entire house (*Truc.* 638, cf. the soldier’s boastful slave in Men. *Perik.* 388–395). The soldier also roars that his wrath has levelled entire towns and humiliated kings (*Curc.* 533–534, 555–556), in the same way that Lamachus utters blustering threats against the entire Peloponnesians.<sup>13</sup>

Like the Aristophanic general, the comic captain of later drama bombards his rival with insults and menacing rhetorical questions (*Curc.* 551, 571–573, 611–614, *Poen.* 1296–1318, *Truc.* 604–611, 621–623, 925–933, *Eun.* 794–798, 804), and overall poses as a redoubtable man not to be trifled with (*Bacch.* 845–846, 864, *Curc.* 539, 571–575, *Poen.* 1280–1288, *Truc.* 603, 643–644, *Eun.* 771–772; cf. the captain’s slave in *Perik.* 375–399). Needless to say, none of the threats pronounced by these soldiers ever materializes; they all prove to be empty blusters (see below, 1.8). More particularly, Lamachus’ haughty contempt for the pauper he takes Dicaeopolis to be (*Ach.* 577a, 593) corresponds to the attitude of the soldier’s orderly

13. On these traits, see Ribbeck (1882) 35; Legrand (1917) 95; Duckworth (1952) 264, 322; MacCary (1972) 293–294; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 37–38, 94–96, 121, 146–147; Hunter (1985) 68; Brown (2004) 5.

in Plaut. *Pseud.* 911ff. The latter similarly goes about with arrogance (911) and openly declares that he feels contempt for other persons, since he is himself such a celebrated army man (916–918). Other Plautine captains also give themselves airs and treat people curtly and peremptorily (*Curc.* 623–633, *Epid.* 437–443). In these Roman cases, the scope of the motif is enlarged to comic excess, given that the braggart's superciliousness is not displayed towards a mere beggar but extends to the whole of humanity.

### 1.3. Military terminology

Lamachus peppers his speech with the vocabulary of army tactics and military language: e.g. *πολεμιστηρίας* (572), *βοηθεῖν* in the sense of military succour (573), the combination *ναυσὶ καὶ πεζοῖσι* for naval and hoplite forces (622), *κατὰ τὸ καρτερὸν* for open combat (622), *ξυμβολῆς* for battle (1210), and various specialized names of soldierly accessories (*σάγματος, τοῦλντρον, κιλλίβαντας*, 574, 1120, 1122).<sup>14</sup> Significantly, this practice occurs in episodes which mockingly travesty military skirmishes or war events on stage. Lamachus' first appearance is envisaged as an operation of reinforcements that are sent to a severely battered unit in battle. The first semichorus cries for military assistance (*βοήθησον* 567, *βοηθησάτω* 571) to be derived from generals and taxiarchs (569–570); and Lamachus describes the situation in terms of proper warfare (572–574). Later, the general's preparation for battle (1097–1143) parodies the scenes of the warrior's arming that are usual in epic and tragedy.<sup>15</sup>

The braggart soldiers of New Comedy use specialized military language and tactical terminology in analogous contexts of mock battle.<sup>16</sup> In Terence's *Eunuch*, Thraso prepares to storm the house of the *meretrix* Thais with the help of a squad of slaves armed with household utensils (771ff.). In this travesty of a siege, the vainglorious captain employs the distinctive vocabulary of battle tactics in order to arrange his forces (*in medium ... agmen, in sinistrum cornum, in dexterum, instrue, post principia, signum dabo*, 774–775, 781); he further assigns to his attendants the titles of army

14. On all these terms, see Olson (2002) 223, 234, 342–343, 361. In particular, for *βοηθεῖν* cf. Hdt. 1.82.3; Xen. *HG* 1.2.3, 4.8.38; Thuc. 3.97.3, 4.72.1, 8.11.2 etc. For *ναυσὶ καὶ πεζοῖσι* see also *LSJ* s.v. *πεζός* 2. For *ξυμβολῆς* cf. Hdt. 1.66.4; Xen. *HG* 4.2.21 etc.

15. See Konstantakos (2012) 159 with references, and below, 1.10.

16. See Legrand (1908) 56, 70; Mras (1909) 81–82; Boughner (1954) 70–71; Gomme-Sandbach (1973) 502–505; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 127–129; Goldberg (1980) 48–50; Lamagna (1994) 235–242; Barsby (1999) 230–238.



ranks and units (*centurio*, *manipulus*, 776) and envisages the whole venture as a martial operation (*aedis expugnabo*, 773). Thraso's parasite and slaves play along, mimicking their master's idioms (*imperatoris virtutem ... et vim militum, volnera, instruxit, caederes, facerent fugam, inruimus*, 778–779, 782, 787–788). The entire scene, including this amusing linguistic gimmick, may have been inspired from a corresponding episode in Menander's *Colax*.<sup>17</sup>

Menander employs the same technique in the *Perikeiromene* (467ff.), but applies it this time to Sosias, the soldier's slave, who takes over many of the standard traits of the *miles gloriosus*. Once again, the context is an abortive attempt to attack a rival's house on stage. During this operation, Sosias spouts a series of terms borrowed from military discipline and siege warfare (*στρατόπεδον, ἐπισήμηγον, πολεμείς, τὸν πόλεμον διαλύσεται, λαβεῖν κατὰ κράτος, ἡγεμόν, πολιορκίαν, ἀναβαίνειν, περικαθῆσθαι*, 468, 476, 478–480, 483–484). In the same play, Moschion, the soldier's young opponent in love, has also assumed some of the *miles'* usual braggadocio, due to Menander's amusing reversal of the stock comic typology. The young man uses extravagant military language, inspired from the wars of the Diadochi, in order to describe the go-between missions he assigns to his slave (279–283, 295–296). Lucian, presumably taking his cue from Greek New Comedy, reproduces the same technique in his *Dialogues of Courtesans* (9.5). There the boastful captain Polemon plans an assault on the house of his former mistress in the form of a tactical martial operation; a phalanx of Thracian infantrymen is to block the alley, hoplites flanked by archers and light troops will face the house, and the entire army will advance with stretched-out spears.

#### 1.4. Divine and supernatural associations

The Aristophanic Lamachus is repeatedly compared to a supernatural being, a demigod or a divinity, because of his impressive external appearance and supposedly invincible bellicosity. The Chorus members invoke Lamachus with a parody of a prayer for divine assistance (566–568); they even attribute to the general a cult epithet of the goddess Athena (*γοργολόφα*, 567). Similarly on a later occasion (964), Lamachus' servant describes his master with an epic adjective typically borne by the war-god Ares in the *Iliad* (*ταλάριος*, *Il.* 5.289, 20.78, 22.267). Dicaeopolis twice addresses Lamachus

17. See Pernerstorfer (2009) 113–117, 130, with further references.

with a mock-reverential exclamation, ὦ Λάμαχ' ἦρωες (575, 578), ironically equating him with the mythical demigod heroes that were born of Olympian divinities, or with the local city-patron deities, who received cult honours from the ancients.<sup>18</sup> These exorbitant links with the divine are of course comically depreciated in the course of the action, which brings forth Lamachus' ridiculous cowardice and inefficiency.

The braggart officers of Middle and New Comedy are also invested with grotesquely exaggerated godlike associations. The blowhard peltast of Ehippus' homonymous play compared himself to a god or a mythical hero, by analogy to the historical marshal Nicostratus of Argos, who styled himself "the new Heracles" (fr. 17). The mercenary captain of Poseidippus fr. 28.7–9 looks like the giant Briareos in his scale armour (cf. Timocles fr. 12 on the braggart Demosthenes). Plautus' Stratophanes (*Truc.* 515) and a boastful captain in Licinius Imbrex's *Neaera* (fr. unic. Ribbeck) pose as Mars, in the same way that Lamachus was paralleled to the Iliadic Ares. Another *miles* in Naevius' *Colax* was compared to Hercules by his flatterer (27–29 Ribbeck); Thraso in Terence's *Eunuch* also fancies himself in the role of the same hero (1027). The pinnacle is reached with Plautus' half-crazed Pyrgopolynices, who claims to have given battle with Mars and the grandson of Neptune (*MG* 11–15) and to be an age-old superhuman, born one day after Juppiter (1078–1083). Because of his beauty and manliness, women are supposed to take him for a god, for Achilles or Achilles' younger brother (61–62, 1043, 1054a). Accordingly, Pyrgopolynices introduces himself as the grandson of Venus (*MG* 1265), an expression sarcastically turned against him by other characters after his humiliation (1413, 1421, cf. Dicaeopolis' ironical addresses to the "hero Lamachus").<sup>19</sup> The motif is taken up in Lucian's *Dialogues of Courtesans*, evidently under the influence of comedy. Once again, a parasite pompously compares his patron, the braggart soldier, to Achilles (13.3).

18. On all these passages, see Kleinknecht (1937) 77–79; Horn (1970) 23; Halliwell (1984) 11; Olson (2002) 221–223; Lauriola (2006) 88–92.

19. On this comic motif generally, see Fest (1897) 9, 17, 27, 36; Süß (1905) 46; Legrand (1907) 226; Legrand (1917) 164, 222; Tolliver (1952) 50–51; Boughner (1954) 72–73, 94–95, 109–111, 171, 284; Hanson (1965) 60; Webster (1970) 42; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 55, 65–66, 71–72, 75, 93, 101, 135; Hilgar (1982) 253–254; Papaioannou (2009) 103–104, 407–408, 412–413; Petrides (2014) 237–242. On the connection with the Aristophanic Lamachus, cf. Rennie (1909) 174.

### 1.5. Wealth and gains

In New Comedy, the mercenary officers are usually wealthy, thanks to the opulent spoils they have acquired from their participation in various campaigns (cf. *Men. Asp.* 32–90 and *Luc. Dial. Mer.* 9). They are famous for their riches (*Men. Col.* 16, cf. 43–51, *Sic.* 13–15, 139, 415; *Plaut. Epid.* 153, 300, 449–451, *MG* 980; *Ter. Eun.* 1078). Sometimes they boast of their wealth in extravagant terms (*Plaut. MG* 1063–1065, cf. *Luc. Dial. Mer.* 9.2) or spend excessive sums for exorbitant self-aggrandizement (*Curc.* 439–441).<sup>20</sup> They regularly display with ostentation the precious vases, gold plates, jewelled cups, purple fabrics, and other valuable possessions which they have brought along from distant expeditions and foreign lands (*Men. fr.* 24, 26, cf. *Col. fr.* 2; *Diphilus fr.* 81; *Hipparchus fr.* 1; *Nicostratus fr.* 8; *Damoxenus fr.* 1; cf. *Theophrastus' alazon, Char.* 23.2).<sup>21</sup> They own many slaves (*Men. Col.* 38–39, *Mis.* 39, *Sic.* 393 and *fr.* 4 *Arnott*; *Plaut. MG* 1ff., 1338, 1354, *Truc.* 530–533; *Ter. Eun.* 771ff.). Above all, they can spend a lot of money on their mistresses, make them lavish gifts of gold, expensive jewellery, and luxurious objects, and even promise them with exaggeration the vast treasures of the East.<sup>22</sup>

Aristophanes offers a variation of this motif, which slightly diverges from the pattern of later comedy. The Aristophanic *Lamachus* does not amass wealth from spoils or booty gathered in campaigns. He does obtain rich revenues, however, from another source: namely, he receives exorbitant sums of money from the Athenian state, by way of payment for his services as an official. *Dicaeopolis* directs this charge collectively against *Lamachus* and all his political comrades in power, the Athenian warmongering demagogues, who are accused of taking advantage of the war in order to gain high positions and

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20. See in general *Ribbeck* (1882) 36, 41–42, 44–46; *Fest* (1897) 7, 9, 38, 48; *Legrand* (1907) 224–225; *Legrand* (1917) 96–97, 221–222; *Boughner* (1954) 5–6, 13–14, 20; *Hanson* (1965) 55–56; *MacCary* (1972) 279–280, 284–287, 291–294; *Petersmann* (1972) 241–246, 249; *Hofmann-Wartenberg* (1973) 5, 9–11, 16–17, 19–29, 31, 43, 51, 53, 91–96, 142; *Gil* (1975) 76, 79–80, 87–88; *Arnott* (1979–2000) II 159; *Cagniard* (1999) 760, 771; *Brown* (2004) 2, 7–8, 13; *Diggle* (2004) 435–436; *Pernerstorfer* (2009) 91–92, 123.
21. Sometimes a precious trophy of this kind becomes a key prop for the comic intrigue and the development of the plot; this is the case of the golden *patera* which the war hero *Amphitruo* prides himself on winning (*Plaut. Amph.* 260–261, 418–421, 760–797). Cf. above, 1.1, for the same effect with regard to the soldier's weapons.
22. See *Philemon fr.* 15; *Men. Col.* E231–235, *Mis.* 39–40, *Perik.* 516–525, *Sic.* 386–395; *Plaut. Curc.* 343–348, *Epid.* 153–155, 299–301, 463–473, *MG* 981–982, 1099–1100, 1204–1205, 1338, 1349–1350, *Truc.* 522–550, 893–913, 952; *Ter. Eun.* 135–136, 266–283, 447, 1055–1057, 1078.

public emoluments (*Ach.* 597–619). Like all these men, Lamachus uses his public office as a pretext for securing his appointment to various diplomatic missions to distant lands (Thrace, Epirus, Sicily, Persia).<sup>23</sup> In this way, he obtains the large remunerations that are concomitant with such official assignments (three drachmas per day, i.e. triple the wages of an Athenian workman or serviceman at that period).<sup>24</sup>

The sources of Lamachus' profits are therefore different. The general of the *Acharnians* is an important state official, lavishly paid from public funds; nowhere in the comic script is it implied that he ever served as a mercenary, nor is there any indication of this in historical sources. Nonetheless, the core of the motif remains the same as in the case of the soldiers of New Comedy: both Lamachus and the later comic *miles* derive a considerable income from their involvement in war. Further, Dicaeopolis clearly insinuates that Lamachus has made large debts in the recent past (614–617); this implies in turn that the Athenian general seeks to exercise military office precisely for its high emoluments, which will permit Lamachus to pay off his debts and escape penury. The situation is similar for many captains of New Comedy, who are said to have begun in great poverty and to have been turned into rich men thanks to their mercenary employment (see *Men. Col.* 16, 29–52, *Sic.* fr. 6; cf. *Asp.* 8ff. and the penniless braggart in *Phoenicides* fr. 4.4–10, who waits in vain for a lavish endowment from the king he has served).<sup>25</sup> The motif was taken up by Lucian (*Dial. Mer.* 9): the braggart Polemon used to be a poor man (9.3) but returns vastly rich from a campaign abroad.

The reason for the variation of the motif in the *Acharnians* is intrinsically connected with Aristophanes' satirical targets and political agenda in this particular play. As indicated by the text, the comic poet wanted to lampoon the corrupt and profiteering pro-war politicians of Athens and to criticize the squandering of public funds on a pointless war. For the sake of this satirical programme, the Aristophanic *miles gloriosus*, instead of growing rich on booty from enemy lands, like his later colleagues of New Comedy, was shown rather plundering the public treasury of Athens. This point will be further analyzed below (section 2).

23. Cf. Walcot (1971) 42–43; MacDowell (1995) 69–70; Spielvogel (2003) 13–15, 20; Lauriola (2006) 90–92.

24. Aristophanes here grossly inflates, for satirical purposes, the amount of money actually paid by the Athenian state to ambassadorial functionaries. See Olson (2002) 91–92, 227–229; cf. Ehrenberg (1962) 228–231.

25. See Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 28–31, 43; Brown (2004) 13; Pernerstorfer (2009) 91–92, 123.

### 1.6. Exploits in distant countries

The mercenary soldiers of Middle and New Comedy standardly claim to have fought in foreign and distant lands, beyond the sphere of the familiar Hellenic areas, where they have performed admirable feats and gained rich spoils. The geography of their adventures spans almost the entire periphery of the Greek world, from Macedonia in the north (Plaut. *MG* 44) to Libya in the south (*Curc.* 446). Above all, it extends over the greatest part of Asia: from the close-by western regions of Sardis (Plaut. *MG* 44), Phrygia (*Truc.* 536), Caria (*Curc.* 329–340, 438), and Lycia (Men. *Asp.* 23ff., Plaut. *Curc.* 444), through the Anatolian heartlands of Paphlagonia (Plaut. *Curc.* 442), Cappadocia (Men. *Col.* fr. 2, Plaut. *MG* 52), and Cilicia (Men. fr. 26.1, Plaut. *MG* 42), up to Syria, Arabia (*Curc.* 443, *Truc.* 530, 539), and the famous capital of Babylon (Philemon fr. 15, Plaut. *Truc.* 84, 202, 392, 472); sometimes the comic captains attain even further to the faraway oriental empires of Persia (Men. fr. 26.2, Plaut. *Curc.* 442) and India (*Curc.* 439).<sup>26</sup> Plautus in particular, the master of the comic grotesque, may make up fantastic locations with extravagantly exotic names, in which his *militēs* are supposed to have triumphed: *campi Curculioniei* and *Scytholatronia* (*MG* 13, 43), *Peredia*, *Perbibesia*, *Centauromachia*, *Classia Unomammia*, and *Conterebromnia* (*Curc.* 444–446). These vainglorious captains have proved their valour and made their name truly outside the existing world.

The wide geographical dispersion and exotic locations of the soldier's experiences accord, of course, with the international conditions of the Hellenistic age, when both New Comedy and the early Roman *palliata* flourished. The continuous conflicts between the eastern kingdoms of the Diadochi (with the involvement of Rome from a certain point onwards) created a multitude of opportunities for the employment of mercenary troops throughout the vast territories that were controlled or contested by these empires. Nevertheless, military campaigns and service in distant foreign lands were not an exclusive phenomenon of the Hellenistic period. The army and navy of fifth-century Athens had already seen a fair share of action in several remote regions at the periphery of mainland Greece, including Egypt, Macedonia and Thrace, the Hellespont, and Sicily.

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26. See Fest (1897) 35; Süß (1905) 47; Boughner (1954) 5–6, 62, 110, 261–264; Petersmann (1972) 241–246, 249; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 29–30, 93–96, 101–103, 117–118, 139.

Indeed, Aristophanes includes a variation of this characteristic motif in the *Acharnians*, although he once again diverges somewhat from the standard scheme of New Comedy. Lamachus' activities as a high military commander are also located in various distant regions, far away from Athens, at or beyond the familiar boundaries of metropolitan Greece. The text generally attributes this practice to the entire category of corrupt Athenian officials that profiteer from the war; but Lamachus is expressly designated as one of these officials and party to all their deeds. Thus, general Lamachus and all the other ambitious panjandrums of his kind are sent on diplomatic missions to Thrace, the Chaonians in the mountains of Epirus, Sicily, and Ecbatana in the Persian Empire (*Ach.* 602–614). The main difference from the captains of New Comedy is that Lamachus is not dispatched to these remote areas in order to fight battles; he does not even pretend to do so. All his missions abroad are ambassadorial delegations addressed to potential allies of Athens, with a view to securing military or financial assistance for the war.<sup>27</sup> In fact, Dicaeopolis suggests that Lamachus keenly pursues such diplomatic appointments to faraway places precisely in order to distance himself from the actual theatres of war in mainland Greece and avoid true military service on the battlefield (600–601, *νεανίας δ' οἶονος σὸν διαδεδοκότηας*).

Aristophanes' divergence from the common pattern of later comic theatre is again due to the special satirical targets that he has set up for lampooning in the *Acharnians*. The poet has employed a peculiar method for the creation of his comic Lamachus, namely, the amalgamation of the traditional comic type of the braggart soldier with historical officials and real institutions of the Classical Athenian state. Because of this fusion, some of the typical elements of the boastful soldier's role had to be adapted to the particular socio-political conditions of Athens during the early phase of the Peloponnesian war (see further analysis below, in section 2). Nonetheless, the essence of the comic pattern is recognizably the same both in the *Acharnians* and in New Comedy. In either case, the braggart officer exercises his duties abroad, in distant and often exotic lands. Also, both for Lamachus and for the soldiers of New Comedy, these faraway activities are the source of great profits. The *milites* of Menander and Plautus amass rich booty and valuable possessions during their campaigns in foreign empires (see Men. *Asp.* 23–89, fr. 26; Plaut. *Curc.* 438–441, *Epid.* 449–451, *Truc.* 530–541; and generally the passages cited above, under 1.5); Lamachus receives plenty of money as a salary for his missions abroad.

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27. See Walcot (1971) 42–43; MacDowell (1995) 69–70; Olson (2002) 228–232; Ercolani (2002) 236–237. In *Ach.* 61–173 two such delegations return to Athens to report about their mission.

### 1.7. Munchausenesque tales of marvels

In Middle and New Comedy, another motif is closely connected with the soldier's service in foreign campaigns. The braggart captain, when he returns from expeditions in distant lands, makes long speeches about the wondrous sights he has beheld or the marvellous experiences he has undergone there. These narrations include elements of grotesque fantasy and imaginary impossibilities, like many travelogue tales of ancient literature, from Herodotus to Lucian's *True History* and the *Alexander Romance*.

For example, in Antiphanes' *Stratiotes* (fr. 200), the *alazon* soldier has come back from a war in Cyprus and describes the extraordinary spectacle of the king of Paphos, who was fanned at dinner by doves flapping their wings. This tall tale highlights especially the king's extravagance and luxuriousness (v. 4, *τρυφερὸν διαφερόντως*). The monarch anointed himself with a special kind of perfume, in order to attract the doves with its smell; a number of attendants were employed to shoo the birds away from the king's head, while keeping them at the required distance and harmoniously distributing them around the royal figure, so that the breath of air would be smooth and pleasant (vv. 8–17). A similar story in Alexis' *Eisoikizomenos* fr. 63 may also have been recited by a braggart soldier (cf. the supercilious tone of vv. 1–2).<sup>28</sup> In this case, during the dinner party of a certain dignitary, the doves are dipped into perfume and let loose to fly around and sprinkle the guests and the couches with ointment. The emphasis falls again on the excess of luxury.

Further, in Ehippus' *Peltastes*, the boastful title-hero (presumably an officer of a light troops division)<sup>29</sup> related at dinner a fantastic fairytale about a gigantic fish, larger than Crete, which was supposedly cooked in an analogously proportioned casserole for a fabulous king. A forest was cut down to sustain the cooking fire; a whole lake was drained for the broth; the amount of salt required was carried by a caravan of pack animals over eight months; five nations had to labour in the process (fr. 5 and 19). The sympotic luxury exhibited in the other tales takes here specifically the form of exorbitant gluttony, focusing on the vast quantity of food that is prepared and consumed by the extravagant ruler. Menander's *Halieus* also included a soldier returning with rich booty from an expedition abroad, probably from

28. See Webster (1970) 64; Nesselrath (1990) 327–328; Arnott (1996) 188–192.

29. Note the expensive woollen cloak (*χλαῖδ*?, fr. 19.4) which he ostentatiously drags along. On the context of this passage, see Parke (1933) 234; Webster (1970) 42; Gil (1975) 87; Nesselrath (1990) 276–277, 326; Konstantakos (2011a).

the Black Sea. It was presumably this character that described the extravagances of Dionysius, the tyrant of Heracleia at the Pontus, as he had heard them from a group of refugees from that city (fr. 25).<sup>30</sup> The tyrant is pictured as a monstrous wonder because of his extreme voluptuousness and especially his voracity. Obese like a pig, he was lying down in his rolls of fat and wished to die from too much eating and rot away in pleasure. This Menandrian narrative of unsurpassable gluttony is a worthy counterpart of the tale of Ehippus' peltast.

The series of comic soldiers' tall tales is completed with Antamoenides' account in Plautus' *Poenulus* (470–487), which combines the fabulous travelogue wonders with the warrior's personal exploits. The Plautine soldier encountered thousands of winged flying men in a fantastic place (*pugna Pentetronica*, 471), but managed to bring them down by shooting balls of bird-lime against them; the bird-lime presumably stuck on the creatures' wings and immobilized them. Antamoenides then exterminated them by piercing their skulls with a feather. The final offshoots of this ancient comic tradition are the fantastic tales of Baron Munchausen, who is also represented as an army officer and fills his narrations with supernatural marvels and outrageous adventures.<sup>31</sup>

In the *Acharnians*, the same kind of story is not placed in Lamachus' mouth but recounted by another group of *alazones*, closely associated with the swaggering Athenian general. The envoys returning from an embassy to Persia, in the prologue of the play, report the extraordinary marvels which they supposedly encountered during their travel to the Persian capital (61–90). Exactly as in the stories of the blowhard captains in Middle Comedy and Menander, the Aristophanic envoys primarily emphasize the extreme luxury and gross food consumption in the exotic land.<sup>32</sup> The Persian king defecates on mountains of gold and needs eight months to empty his bowels (81–84); compare the voluptuousness of Antiphanes' Paphian monarch or Menander's Dionysius. The Persian royal table is loaded with whole roasted oxen and gigantic birds, three times the size of the fattest Athenian glutton (85–89); this recalls the huge fish cooked for the king in Ehippus' *Peltast*. The strange giant *φέβαξ* birds (*Ach.* 88–89) may also bring to mind Antamoenides' bizarre winged men. Further, throughout the

30. See Petersmann (1972) 241–246.

31. On fantastic traveller's tales in the comic soldier's mouth, see Konstantakos (2000) 216–221; Konstantakos (forthcoming).

32. On the envoys' narrative in the *Acharnians* and its fairytale motifs, see Konstantakos (2011b) 59–99 with further bibliography.



Persian Empire, only those that can eat and drink a lot are considered true men (77–78); compare again Menander’s Dionysius, who asserts that only a death from too much food is worthy of him (fr. 25.3–6). The Athenian envoys have spent the entire time comfortably lying on soft covered carriages and drinking sweet wine from golden cups (69–75); Alexis’ boastful soldier (fr. 63) must have had similar experiences, while he was lying on the couch at the banquet and was showered with perfume from above.

Lamachus is inextricably linked to this group of braggart charlatans. Dicaeopolis expressly includes him in the category of Athenian officials that take advantage of the war in order to participate in diplomatic delegations, travel to remote foreign lands at public expense, and avoid active military duty (601–614). Most characteristically, Lamachus is identified with the kind of people that the Athenian state sends as ambassadors to Ecbatana, the Median capital and summer residence of the Persian king (*Ach.* 613); the same city was invoked as soon as the envoys from Persia appeared in the prologue of the *Acharnians* (64). Lamachus might well be himself one of these *alazones* that return from their mission abroad and spout extravagant traveller’s tales. The emblematic traits of the braggart soldier, which coexist within a single military personage in Middle and New Comedy, are distributed among more boastful characters in the *Acharnians*; but all these Aristophanic blowhards are strongly connected to each other and represent the same ethical and social type.

### 1.8. Cowardice and retreat

In spite of his boasts and aggressiveness, the *alazon* of the *Acharnians* does not possess a single drop of true courage. In his first encounter with Lamachus, the comic hero Dicaeopolis unmasks this pompous general as a coward and a loafer; like all his political comrades, Lamachus secured himself a high state position in order to be exempted from true military service. He undertook the office of the *stratēgos* not with a view to fighting on behalf of his homeland but, paradoxically, for the exact opposite purpose — to avoid the battlefield. While plain citizens risk their lives at war, Lamachus takes care to be appointed to one diplomatic mission after another, so as to safely keep his distance from combat (see above, 1.6 and 1.7). Within the dramatic fiction of the play, this presentation should not be simply interpreted as a demagogic attempt of Dicaeopolis to smear and discredit Lamachus in front of the Chorus. The character Lamachus confirms the hero’s accusations with his own behaviour on stage.

Indeed, for all his angry outbursts against Dicaeopolis, Lamachus does not dare lay a finger on the hero, not even when the latter overtly mocks and humiliates him (see *Ach.* 581–589). As Dicaeopolis points out, Lamachus, with his frightful weapons, could have caused severe bodily harm to his opponent, had he wished to act in accordance with his vocal pugnacity. However, the general has limited himself to shouting without taking any action, a clear sign that he lacks true courage and force (590–592). Indeed, as soon as the comic protagonist lays down the role of the humble beggar and dynamically asserts his own rights (594ff.), Lamachus suddenly becomes quite tame and cowers. Abandoning his previous threats and warlike cries, he now barely manages to interpose a few words between Dicaeopolis' torrents of indignant speech. He perplexedly wonders who this forcefully speaking hero may be (594, ἀλλὰ τίς γὰρ εἶ;). Faced with Dicaeopolis' charges of cowardice and evasion of duty, the general pathetically takes cover behind poor excuses ("I was elected", 598, 607) or weak exclamations ("In the name of democracy, is this to be tolerated?", 618). His exit at the end of the scene with a bombastic promise of total war against the enemies of Athens (620–622) is nothing but a meagre attempt to save face. As it seems, Lamachus must have grown truly afraid of Dicaeopolis and would gladly get away from the hero under some specious excuse.<sup>33</sup>

The same pattern of behaviour characterizes the braggart captains of New Comedy. Antamoenides in Plautus' *Poenulus* (491–503) is incensed when the leno refuses to hear another preposterous narration of his incredible battles. The soldier fiercely threatens to batter the pimp's head with blows; but the pimp coolly states that he would prefer death and damnation to hearing another boastful tale. Obviously, he pays no heed to the braggart's all too loud blustering. Taken aback by the leno's indifference, Antamoenides immediately calms down; instead of fulfilling his threats of violence, he abruptly changes attitude with a "well then..." (*tum ... igitur*, 497) and strikes a deal with the pimp to hire one of his girls for the holiday. The soldier also displays a similar turnaround later in the play (1296–1321), when he suddenly sees Anterastilis, the girl he had hired, in the arms of another man (Hanno, who is in fact Anterastilis' newly found father). On the spot, Antamoenides is enraged and hurls angry insults against Hanno and his nephew Agorastocles, who is also present in the scene. But as soon as Agorastocles calls for a stick to beat the noisome soldier with, Antamoenides

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33. Cf. Whitman (1964) 68. On Lamachus' cowardice generally, see Gil (1975) 78; Blume (2001) 182; Lauriola (2006) 90–92.

immediately forgets his aggressive roars and tries to laugh the matter away: “Hey, come on! If I said something as a joke, don’t take it so seriously!” (1320–1321). Both these scenes are very close to Lamachus’ volte-face before Dicaeopolis.

Thraso in Terence’s *Eunuch* displays the same cowardly attitude. Believing that his mistress Thais is flirting with another man, the newcomer Chremes, Thraso wrathfully declares that he will not put up with such an insult; he prepares to storm the hetaira’s house, organizing the venture like a martial operation (771ff., see above, 1.3). However, after he has arranged his slaves like an army corps, and as the time for the attack approaches, Thraso leaves the command to his parasite and retires behind the “front line”, to give the signal and overview the combat from there, in the manner of King Pyrrhus (781–783). Presently, the parasite exhorts the captain to begin the assault; but the braggart, obviously uneasy with such a prospect, wisely prefers to parley first with Thais, for she might be persuaded without force, and “the wise man should try everything before resorting to arms” (788–791). The development of these negotiations only provides more indications of Thraso’s faintheartedness. Chremes, averted by Thais as to Thraso’s true nature, spouts a series of insults against the soldier; yet the latter does not have the nerve to respond in the same aggressive tones, but merely mumbles a few amazed questions (797–810). Chremes’ self-assertive bravado has completely unnerved Thraso, in the same way that Dicaeopolis’ dynamism daunts Lamachus. In the end, Chremes and Thais enter back into the house in clear contempt of Thraso (810). The downtrodden captain, instead of continuing the blockade, disbands his “army” and leaves with his tail between his legs (811–816). His only chance of saving face is to hold on to a desperate pretext ironically offered him by the parasite: Thais will soon come back begging of her own accord, for this is what women generally do when they are spurned (811–813). This recalls Lamachus’ hurried exit in *Ach.* 620–622, when the general’s pompous declarations of total war are simply a cover-up for his defeat and flight before Dicaeopolis.

Other plays include similar examples. The soldier Cleomachus in the *Bacchides* enters the stage like a fierce bully, full of loud threats of violence, and swears to exterminate both his rival and his unfaithful mistress (842–849, 859–869). However, as soon as he is offered a good sum of money in return, he is delighted to forget the whole case, and even accepts to be showered with vilifying insults by the cunning slave (872–903). We remember Lamachus, who similarly swallowed Dicaeopolis’ humiliating invective without any sign of practical reaction. Pyrgopolynices, in the finale of the *Miles*

*Gloriosus*, is captured *in flagrante* as a would-be adulterer, thrashed, and threatened with emasculation by his neighbour and his neighbour's slaves. The soldier forgets, of course, his previous arrogant pose, his boasts of being divine and irresistible; he now becomes completely obsequious and begs for pardon. In the end, he is delighted to escape with a good thrashing and a monetary fine (1394–1427). The boastful *miles* in the *Epidicus* appears on stage with a peremptory attitude, giving curt orders and asserting that the entire human race owes him gratitude. Nevertheless, when he meets a greater braggart than himself, he is quickly discouraged, leaves his swaggering aside, and limits himself to business matters (437–457). The confrontation between captain Stratophanes and the slave Cyamus (*Truc.* 603–630) may similarly be read as the quarrel of two cowards; they angrily hurl menaces against each other, but neither of them is too keen to act accordingly. The *miles* is here spared the humiliation at the last moment, since the slave proves to be the greater coward and retreats at the sight of the soldier's longer sword.

All these scenes, including the one with Lamachus, bring to the fore with the keenest satirical pungency the braggart soldier's most essential characteristic: namely, the discordance between show and truth, appearances and reality, outward aggressive attitude and inner timidity. The *miles* always begins with a conspicuous display of shouts and threats, which gives way to tameness and dejection, as soon as his braggadocio is met with stout opposition.<sup>34</sup> These are the episodes that bring about *par excellence* the unmasking of the military *alazon*. The comic effect of the figure, and sometimes of the entire play, depends on them.

In general, this pattern affords another example of the braggart soldier's function in the plot, which is diachronically preserved in ancient comic drama. The *miles*, as the perennial antagonist, is also a reverse image of the hero, an inverted carnival mirror which reflects the protagonist's qualities by turning them upside down. Every one of the main character's virtues has its counterpart in the *alazon*'s corresponding vice. The comic hero's courage meets the soldier's cowardice; the former's genuineness of passion and steadfastness of purpose bring out more clearly the latter's feebleness of spirit and easy discouragement. This basic scheme of oppositions remains essentially unaltered, whether the hero's purpose is the ending of the Peloponnesian war or the heart and the bed of a lovely woman.

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34. Cf. Ribbeck (1882) 35, 40; Fest (1897) 9–10, 38–39, 61–62; Legrand (1917) 164–165; Wehrli (1936) 104, 109; Duckworth (1952) 265, 322; Boughner (1954) 15–18, 82–90, 107–108; Perna (1955) 195; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 128–129, 140; Gil (1975) 80–81; Hilgar (1982) 256.

### 1.9. False wounds

The finale of the *Acharnians* completes the picture of Lamachus as a chicken-hearted braggart. After all his loafing and evasion of martial combat, as described by Dicaeopolis (*Ach.* 600–617), Lamachus is finally obliged to undertake a moderate military assignment; he is ordered to guard the passes from the north and curb the bands of Boeotian raiders that are expected to invade Attica from there (1071–1079). The expedition is prematurely aborted, because the great general falls victim to an unheroic accident. Leaping across a ditch, Lamachus was struck by a vine-prop stake, twisted his ankle, collapsed, and hit his head on a stone (1174–1186). The general's wounds do not originate from a brave clash with the enemies on the battlefield. They are rather the type of injuries that befall a careless fool, who is bouncing about without watching his step or calculating his leaps. Alternatively, Lamachus may have intentionally inflicted harm on himself, wilfully jumping into the ditch, so as to contract a relatively slight injury and thus avoid the frightful confrontation with the enemies.<sup>35</sup> This is not expressly stated in the messenger's words; but the audience may easily suspect such a motive after all they have seen and heard about Lamachus, the coward who is always hunting for pretexts to avoid military combat (*Ach.* 600–614).

Nevertheless, as Lamachus is brought on stage, supported by attendants, he bursts into a lyric lament, permeated by echoes of tragic style; he cries out like a hero of tragedy, as though he were another Hippolytus or Heracles, deploring the hideous wounds that have supposedly undone him (1190–1226). Above all, he claims that he has been gravely injured by the spear of an enemy (*δορός ὑπὸ πολεμίου τυπείς*, 1194; *λόγχη τις ἐμπέπηγγέ μοι δι' ὀστέων*, 1226) in battle (*ξυμβολῆς βαρείας*, 1210). The audience knows that this is a downright lie, given the messenger's detailed account about the exact circumstances of Lamachus' unwarlike accident. Lamachus thus emerges as a perfect representative of the *miles gloriosus* type; he is the grand general of ditches and ankle twists, the hero with the crests, the shield emblems, and the medical plasters on his aching foot.<sup>36</sup>

The braggart soldiers of New Comedy are also prone to displaying the marks of wounds that they have supposedly sustained in warfare, as ostensible signs of their martial valour. However, as in the case of Lamachus, it

35. See Thiery (1986) 134.

36. Cf. Mastromarco (2002) 213–214; Kornarou (2007) 556.

is often indicated or implied that these injuries are false, far less severe than claimed by their boastful bearer, or that they have been received in unmilitary and undignified contexts. Thraso in Terence's *Eunuch* has a habit to narrate his battles and parade the scars of his wounds (482–483, *cicatrices suas ostentat*). Given the overall portrayal of this vainglorious character in the play, especially the cowardice he displays during the siege of Thais' house (771–816, cf. above, 1.8) and his patent fatuousness (e.g. 391–453, 1025ff., 1053–1093), the audience has good reason to doubt the origins and true nature of these scars. Similarly, the military captain in Phoenicides fr. 4.4–10 passes all his time describing his battles and showing the injuries he suffered in each one of them. It is easy to suspect that all this show contains no more truth than the purported endowment which the soldier vainly expects to receive from his king and which is never bestowed.

In a Menandrian play (probably the *Colax*), a soldier is asked about a certain injury he carries on his body. He explains that he was hit by a javelin, while he was climbing up a wall with a ladder, suggesting a context of siege warfare. The people present, however, burst into sneers, perhaps because the supposed battle scene is comically mimicked by a parasite (Men. fr. 607 = *Col.* fr. 7 Arnott). Clearly, the soldier's claims were not taken seriously. If the scene comes indeed from the *Colax*, the boastful *miles* could have received the injury in question during the attack on his rival's house (the Menandrian model of the scene in Ter. *Eun.* 771ff.).<sup>37</sup> In that case, the military *alazon* would be passing off as a war trauma a cut or bruise he received in a civilian and inglorious occasion, in the same way that Lamachus aggrandizes the hurts from his fall into the ditch. Another Menandrian passage (fr. 662) apparently describes a cowardly warrior who bears a few injuries on his backside; these clearly signify not his courage but rather the fact that he turned tail and fled from battle.<sup>38</sup> Lamachus' bruised limbs are similarly no indicators of valour but rather of inefficiency and foolishness.

### 1.10. High style and parody of serious poetry

The Aristophanic Lamachus usually speaks in a grandiloquent and bombastic style, full of pompous expressions borrowed from epic or tragic

37. See Pernerstorfer (2009) 121–122; see also Legrand (1917) 96; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 48; Arnott (1979–2000) II 192–195; Kassel-Austin (1983–2001) VI.2 314.

38. See Ribbeck (1882) 81; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 23; Kassel-Austin (1983–2001) VI.2 333.

poetry.<sup>39</sup> Upon his first entry on stage, the general utters a characteristically epic word (*κνδοιμόν*, 573, a Homeric term for the tumult of battle). He then continues with a series of pronouncements coloured with paratragic diction and rhythm.<sup>40</sup> Later in the play (964–965), Lamachus' slave describes his master with a pastiche of high poetic locutions, which combines Homeric touches (*ταλαύριος*, a typical Iliadic epithet of Ares; *πάλλει* and *κραδαίνων* for brandishing a weapon) with Aeschylean parody (*τρεις κατασκίους λόφους*, cf. Aesch. *Sept.* 384–385).<sup>41</sup> In the final scenes of the comedy, Lamachus is called to war duty by a gloomy messenger, who appears like a tragic *angelos* bearing bad news (1069ff.). The general's responses to the unpleasant orders are fraught with elevated tragic expressions.<sup>42</sup> The following scene, in which Lamachus prepares for the expedition by wearing piecemeal his armour and weapons (1097–1141), parodies a common pattern of epic and tragedy, the arming scene of the hero that sets out for war. Once again, epic and tragic echoes are fused in Aristophanes' composite kaleidoscopic parody.<sup>43</sup> In the course of his arming, Lamachus continues to praise his weapons or upbraid his opponent with occasional tragic pastiche.<sup>44</sup> Finally, in the exodos of the play, the wounded Athenian general is carried back by his soldiers and laments for his injuries in imitation of the *threnoi* that conclude many Greek tragedies (1190ff.). Lamachus' words

39. Cf. Blume (2001) 180–181; Mastromarco (2002) 213–214.

40. See *Ach.* 572–574, in strict, tragic-like iambs and recalling e.g. Soph. *OC* 884–890; *Ach.* 577a, which imitates Eur. *Telephus* fr. 712a; *Ach.* 618, cf. Soph. *Phil.* 987. Throughout the scene, Lamachus speaks in an austere rhythm, with very few resolutions, approximating in this respect the metrics of tragedy. See Rau (1967) 40–42; Edmunds (1980) 13; Olson (2002) 222–224, 233.

41. For *ταλαύριος* see *Il.* 5.289, 20.78, 22.267, and above, 1.4. For *πάλλειν* a weapon, see e.g. *Il.* 3.19, 5.304, 5.495, 6.104, 16.142, 19.389, 22.320 etc. For *κραδαίνων*, cf. *Il.* 13.504, 16.614, 17.524. Both these verbs were taken up in tragic poetry (for the former see Eur. *Andr.* 697, *IT* 824, *Ba.* 783, for the latter Eur. *Her.* 1003), but the epic colouring seems predominant. See Rau (1967) 187; Edmunds (1980) 39; Olson (2002) 309.

42. See *Ach.* 1072 (for which cf. Eur. *IT* 1307, *Tro.* 520) and the paratragic exclamations in *Ach.* 1078, 1083. Cf. Rau (1967) 137–138; Olson (2002) 331–334; Thévenaz (2004) 83–84; Kornarou (2007) 551–555.

43. For epic models, see e.g. *Il.* 3.328–339, 11.16–45, 16.130–148, 19.364–399; cf. Edwards (1992) 302 with bibliography. For tragic models, see Aesch. *Sept.* 675–676; Eur. *Her.* 942–943, *Heraclid.* 698ff., *Pho.* 778ff.; Harriott (1979) 95; Mastromarco (2002) 214; Konstantakos (2012) 159.

44. See *Ach.* 1124 (*φέρει δεῦρο γοργόνωτον ἀσπίδος κύνκλον*), for which cf. Aesch. *Sept.* 489 (*ἀσπίδος κύνκλον*), Eur. *El.* 455 (*ἀσπίδος ἐν κύνκλω*), *Tro.* 1136 (*χαλκόνωτον ἀσπίδα*), *Pho.* 1130 (*σιδηρονώτοις δ' ἀσπίδος κύνκλοις*). For the indignant question of *Ach.* 1126 cf. Eur. *Ion* 528; Olson (2002) 343.

here are naturally permeated with tragic vocabulary and phrasing, but also peppered with sporadic echoes of the epic language.<sup>45</sup>

Aristophanes is here adopting and developing the stylistic practice of Archilochus and Epicharmus, who similarly coloured the speeches of their braggart warriors with abundant loans from the diction of high poetry. As was to be expected, these two earlier poets exploited especially the style and vocabulary of Homeric epic, which was the most prominent genre of serious poetry in their times and also the main model for the ideal of heroic warfare. The boastful soldiers of Archilochus and Epicharmus were thus constructed as parodies and comic debasements of the Homeric image of the grandiloquent warrior-hero. The Aristophanic general, on the other hand, imitates chiefly the discourse of tragedy, which is generally the most favourite target of poetic parody in Aristophanes' entire *oeuvre*. Tragic drama was rapidly replacing the epic as the most popular form of elevated poetic composition in Classical Athens. Tragedy was also intensely preoccupied with war myths, often thematised warfare in its various aspects, and offered a rich repertoire of martial characters. Aristophanes' turn towards tragic parody in the representation of his own comic braggart is thus easy to explain. The Athenian comic dramatist took over from earlier tradition the linguistic techniques for the characterization of the swaggering soldier; but he developed them in a new direction, imbuing the character's braggadocio with the language of the predominant and most fashionable high-style genre of his own age.

Still, several touches of distinctively epic vocabulary have been preserved in Lamachus' scenic idiolect, as a link with the earlier tradition of the boastful soldier's type. The Aristophanic general enters the stage, in his very first appearance in the play, with a striking and rare Homeric word (*κνδοιμόν*), as though looking back to the mock-epic style of the blowhard warriors of iambus and Sicilian comedy. A moderate amount of epic expressions also keep surfacing in Lamachus' subsequent scenes, to remind the

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45. See for example the characteristically tragic *στυγερά/στυγερός* (*Ach.* 1191, 1208), *διόλ-λυμαι δορός ὑπὸ ... τυπείς* (1193–1194), *αἰακτόν* (1195), *παιωνίασι* (1223); the paratragic anadiplosis *λάβεσθέ μου, λάβεσθε ... προσλάβεσθ'* (1214–1215); and the tragic exclamations in 1204–1205, 1208, 1210, 1212. But *κρνερά* (1192) is commoner in the epic (e.g. *Il.* 13.48, 24.524), and the description of the spear transfixed into the bones in v. 1226 (*ἔμπέπηγέ μοι δι' ὀστέων*) brings to mind similar fatal injuries in Homeric battles (e.g. *Il.* 4.460–461, 5.66–67, 11.95–97 etc.). See in detail Rau (1967) 142–144; Edmunds (1980) 24; Foley (1988) 39; Ketterer (1991); Olson (2002) lxi, 357–363; Thévenaz (2004) 85; Kornarou (2007) 553, 555–563.



audience that the *miles gloriosus* started in Greek tradition as a comic distortion of the grandiose epic fighter.<sup>46</sup>

The parody of high-style poetry (mostly tragedy, but also epic) is retained in later specimens of the braggart soldier's type, in Middle and New Comedy. A systematic analysis of the language of the comic *militēs* in Greek and Roman drama is a *desideratum* of research. If such a study were produced, it would reveal to what extent the post-Aristophanic Greek authors and their Latin adapters exploited the linguistic techniques developed during the earlier phases of the type, how far they imitated tragic or epic diction in order to highlight the boastful captain's arrogant affectation and pretentiousness.

Nevertheless, even without such a systematic examination, examples of the stylistic practice in question spring to the eye during a quick perusal of the texts. The Munchausenesque *miles* of Alexis fr. 63 highlights his description of a marvel by reproducing a line from Euripides (fr. 63.7 = Eur. *Telephus* fr. 703). Thrasonides in Menander's *Misoumenos* expresses his erotic passion in grandiloquent tones (fr. 4 Arnott) reminiscent of the tragic Heracles (Soph. *Tr.* 1058–1063). Stratophanes in Plautus' *Truculentus* also appropriates tragic locutions for exalting his own formidable heroism. He preposterously demands that his newborn son should presently take arms, join a legion, and perform martial feats (*Truc.* 505–511); this can be read as a burlesque of the Sophoclean Ajax's pride in his own little son, who is supposed to have inherited his father's harsh warlike ways (Soph. *Ai.* 545–549). Stratophanes' wrathful outburst against the slave of his rival (*Truc.* 603) sounds lofty and paratragic (compare e.g. Ennius, *Medea exul* fr. CVIII, 229–231 Jocelyn).<sup>47</sup> The slave Sosia in Plautus' *Amphitruo* serves a military leader and displays himself many traits of the braggart and cowardly *miles*. Accordingly, he adorns his long account of the battle against the Teleboans (186–262) with abundant echoes of high poetry, which recall the messenger speeches of tragedy or the epic style of Ennius and Naevius.<sup>48</sup>

46. Cf. Mastromarco (2002) 214–216.

47. See Ribbeck (1882) 38; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 135; Hunter (1985) 163.

48. See Hanson (1965) 67, 77; Christenson (2000) 172–194. Plautus' boastful *militēs* also regularly parody the formulas of official Roman military discourse, as reflected in commemorative and honorific inscriptions, epitaphs, exalting biographies, and other state-ly genres; see Hanson (1965) 56–67; Goldberg (1980) 111, 142; Christenson (2000) 174–177. Generally on the comic soldier's pompous manner of speaking, see Ribbeck (1882) 27, 35; Wehrli (1936) 101, 108–110; Boughner (1954) 95–96, 114–115; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 92; Gil (1975) 76; Hunter (1985) 66, 68.

### 1.11. Exclusion from love and wine in the finale

In New Comedy, and perhaps already in the *Mese*, the braggart soldier is standardly involved in the love plot, usually as the rival of the young enamoured hero for the favours of a hetaira or the possession of a beautiful slave-girl. As a rule, the boastful *miles* loses the woman in the end, due to the intrigues of his young adversary or the unexpected development of the events.<sup>49</sup> In the finale, the young man triumphs by gaining the beloved girl for himself and celebrating his erotic union with her. The soldier, by contrast, in spite of his larger financial means, leaves empty-handed (*Epid.* 475–492; cf. *Poen.* 1322ff., where Antamoenides loses the desired woman, even though he has no rival in love, because she is recognized as a freeborn lady and no longer available for hire).

In addition, the *miles* is often discomfited and ridiculed by the other personages. Pyrgopolynices is severely thrashed and mocked by his neighbour's household (*MG* 1394–1437). Thraso is to be financially exploited and made a laughing stock by the circle of the hetaira Thais and her friends, without even being conscious of it, due to his stupidity (*Eun.* 1073–1094). Cleomachus, although he receives a fair sum of money for relinquishing his girlfriend, is obliged to suffer a torrent of humiliating abuse which is hurled against him by his rival's cunning slave (*Bacch.* 884–904). Polymachaeroplages' orderly, who (as is usual with soldiers' slaves in comedy) mimics the military appearance and boastfulness of his master, is made fun of by the leno and the young man's father with obscene jests (*Pseud.* 1167–1190). Stratophanes is scorned by the hetaira and sneered at by his boorish rival (*Truc.* 896–963); although he is admitted in the end into the woman's house, he is only to have a demeaning second place in the hetaira's favours, after the lucrative rustic lover. Notoriously, Menander reversed this stock pattern in a series of comedies (*Perik.*, *Mis.*, *Sic.*), turning the soldier into the play's true enamoured hero, who finally wins the girl and triumphs over his young rival. This kind of innovative treatment in the hands of a sophisticated and refined playwright indicates how widespread and overworked the pattern had become by the mature years of New Comedy.

In Aristophanes' play there is no trace of such a love plot. Lamachus is not involved in a love affair and does not antagonize Dicaeopolis for the

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49. See Wehrli (1936) 101–112; Duckworth (1952) 264; Boughner (1954) 55, 65–68; Hanson (1965) 55; Webster (1970) 174; Gil (1975) 60, 76; Cagniard (1999) 762–763; Konstantakos (2000) 211–212; Kerkhof (2001) 163; Mastromarco (2002) 211; Brown (2004) 2; Papaioannou (2009) 59–60.

favours of a girlfriend. Nevertheless, at the end of the comedy, the contrast between the triumphant comic hero and the defeated braggart officer does include the erotic element. The military *alazon* is brought on stage wounded and suffering, while his opponent Dicaeopolis enjoys the erotic ministrations of two prostitutes, who hold him in their arms, shower him with lustful kisses, and caress his genitals (*Ach.* 1198ff.). Thus, the comic hero beats his boastful martial adversary also in the field of love. Dicaeopolis enjoys sex and wine simultaneously, as an indissoluble pair. He reaps the pleasures of love in the embrace of his girlfriends, and at the same time he savours the delights of drinking, having emptied a pitcher of wine at a dinner-party in the Choes festival (*Ach.* 1203, 1211, 1225–1234). Similarly, the young rival of the soldier in New Comedy finally enjoys the company of his ladylove in a banquet; he lies with her on the same couch, indulging in her embrace, and thus combines the erotic and the sympotic in his triumphant celebration (see Mnesilochus in Plaut. *Bacch.* 835–838, 1203–1205; Phaedromus in *Curc.* 661, 728; Calidorus in *Pseud.* 1043–1051, 1259–1272, 1310–1311; Phaedria in Ter. *Eun.* 1073–1087; cf. Strabax in *Truc.* 914–958). By contrast, the *miles* is deprived of the woman and is regularly excluded from the celebratory banquet of the lovers' couple (as e.g. in the *Bacchides* and the *Pseudolus*). In the same way, Lamachus is barred from the pleasures of drinking and sex, which his adversary enjoys at the end. The Aristophanic general is also derided by Dicaeopolis, much like the soldier of later comedy, who is mocked by his opponents in the finale.<sup>50</sup>

There are even correspondences in small details between Lamachus' discomfiture in the finale of the *Acharnians* and the ridicule of the down-trodden soldiers in later comedies. Pyrgopolynices' cries of pain and exasperation as he is being cudgelled (*MG* 1396, 1400, 1406, 1424–1425) recall the lamentations of the injured Lamachus (*Ach.* 1190ff.). Compare the former's *perii* (*MG* 1400) with the latter's *διόλλομαι* (*Ach.* 1194), the former's *oiei* (*MG* 1406) with the latter's *ἀτταταῖ* (*Ach.* 1190) and *ὶὸ ἰὼ* (*Ach.* 1205), or the former's *mitis sum equidem fustibus* (*MG* 1424) with the latter's *εἰλιγγιῶ ... πεπληγμένος καὶ σκοτοδιγιῶ* (*Ach.* 1218–1219). Pyrgopolynices is sarcastically called by his chastisers *Venerium nepotulum* (*MG* 1413, 1422); Lamachus is similarly scoffed by his adversary with an ironical diminutive, *Λαμαχίππιον* (1207). Dicaeopolis' phallic jokes, with which he ridicules Lamachus' exclamations of suffering (*Ach.* 1216–1217, 1220–1221), are comparable to the obscene sexual jests, with which Ballio and

50. Cf. Süß (1905) 47–48; Wehrli (1936) 101; Gil (1975) 78; Baldwin (1997) 131–132.

Simo poke fun at the captain's orderly (*Pseud.* 1180–1181, 1188). Some Plautine scenes include quick repartee between the *miles* and his detractors; the latter take up the soldier's pronouncement and develop it into an insult or a curse, in the same way that Dicaeopolis sarcastically distorts Lamachus' cries into gibes.<sup>51</sup> In the finale of the *Truculentus*, captain Stratophanes has to watch the hetaira amorously hugging and kissing his opponent, the rustic Strabax (*Truc.* 924–945). Similarly, the suffering Lamachus is left to look at Dicaeopolis, who enjoys himself with the embraces and kisses of the two prostitutes.

The ending of the *Acharnians* thus corresponds, to some extent, to the soldier's erotic deprivation and his exclusion from the feast in the finales of Hellenistic and Roman comedy. Once again the braggart's basic operation in the comic structure, as the vanquished antagonist that becomes a foil for the hero's triumph, persists by being adapted to divergent subject-matters and storylines. This is presumably the essence of a successful character type. Such a figure can be effectively used in widely different plots without losing his recognizable dramatic identity; and this is achieved not only thanks to a common denominator of ethological traits, but also through the fixed function of the typical character within variable plot schemes.

Perhaps the *miles'* involvement in a love story was already a known pattern in the comic theatre of Aristophanes' time. Pherecrates wrote a series of plays that featured the hetaira in an important role and thematised her love affairs. One of them, the *Korianno*, included among the main figure's sympotic companions a man from abroad, who might have been a soldier.<sup>52</sup> Possibly, therefore, Pherecrates or other comic authors like him had already shown the military man as a hetaira's lover in rivalry with other men. In that case, the ending of the *Acharnians* might be echoing the soldier's scenic fate in contemporary comedies with domestic themes — in the same way that *Wasps* 1341–1381 may offer a comic reversal of another theme familiar from fifth-century domestic plays, namely, the profligate young man that is enamoured of a prostitute and tries to escape the restrictions of his stern father.<sup>53</sup> The different structure and nature of Aristophanic comedy, which is prominently political and fantastic, not centred on domestic and amorous

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51. See e.g. *Bacch.* 902–903: (CLEO.) *abeo ad forum igitur.* (CHRY.) *vel hercle in malam crucem.* / (CLEO.) *hodie exigam aurum hoc?* (CHRY.) *exige, ac suspende te.* Also *Pseud.* 1182: (HA.) *in malam crucem?* (BA.) *ire licebit tibi tamen hodie temperei.* Cf. *Ach.* 1208–1221.

52. See Pherecrates fr. 74; Kassel-Austin (1983–2001) VII 137; Konstantakos (2015) 78.

53. Cf. Wehrli (1936) 24; Handley (1985) 391–393; Konstantakos (2002) 151–153.

affairs, would obviously not allow the poet to develop the soldier's love interests in the course of the play.<sup>54</sup> Lamachus' contrast with the erotically triumphing Dicaeopolis at the finale was the only trace of the theme that remained in the Aristophanic plot pattern.

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As indicated by this survey, the number of parallels is too large to be coincidental. In most cases, the Aristophanic text and the later examples from Middle, New, and/or Roman comedy are linked not only by the same basic pattern or general ethological trait, but also by close similarities in particular details. Sometimes, Aristophanes diverges from the scheme that is usual in later comic theatre, and produces a peculiar variation of the motif; this is usually conditioned by the satirical programme of Aristophanic comedy and reflects the specific historical conditions of Athens at the time of the performance of the *Acharnians*. Nevertheless, even in these instances, the overall likeness between Lamachus and the later comic soldiers is clearly recognizable and reinforced again by numerous striking correspondences in colourful details.

It has been argued that all these parallels can only demonstrate a single, one-way process of influence and transmission: namely, they indicate that the Aristophanic character of Lamachus exercised a strong influence on the formation of the type of the *miles gloriosus* in later Attic (Middle and New) comedy. Under this point of view, Aristophanes must have invented all these characteristics of the braggart soldier practically on his own. He was based, of course, on his own acute observation of actual military officials in contemporary Athens, such as Lamachus and other keenly belligerent statesmen, and he also employed his fertile comic imagination. The boastful character thus created by Aristophanes proved to be so amusing that many of his traits were taken up by later comic poets for analogous braggart figures. In this way, the Aristophanic Lamachus stood at the beginning of a comic tradition that was destined to have strong reverberations until much later, in the Hellenistic and Roman age.<sup>55</sup>

There is, however, another possible explanation. As demonstrated in the first part of this study (Konstantakos [2015]), the figure of the braggart

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54. This also answers the objections of certain scholars, who argue that Lamachus cannot represent the type of the *miles gloriosus* because he is not involved in a love plot, unlike the captains of New Comedy; see Wüst (1950) 362; Kerkhof (2001) 163; cf. Mastro-marco (2002) 211.

55. Thus Wüst (1950) 362; Kerkhof (2001) 163–164; Ercolani (2002) 246.

soldier was well developed long before Aristophanes' *Acharnians* in archaic iambus and other satirical lyric poetry, as well as in the early Sicilian drama of Epicharmus. Under the influence of such literary examples, which were familiar to educated Athenians of the Classical age, other authors of fifth-century Attic comedy, such as Pherecrates, may also have taken up the type of the boastful captain and presented him in their own plays. The Lamachus of the *Acharnians* may have sprung from these earlier poetic and dramatic traditions, which Aristophanes exploited and reworked in his own peculiar manner. Thus, most of the similarities between Lamachus and the *milites* of later comedy may represent not influential inventions of Aristophanes but rather traditional elements of the comic soldier's type, which were formed already before the *Acharnians* and continued to be part of the standard role of the *miles* until much later phases in the history of comic theatre. Aristophanes did not create the basic distinctive traits of Lamachus on his own, but inherited them from earlier models; these same characteristics remained operative in the comic tradition throughout the fourth century and the Hellenistic age, and were subsequently bestowed to the Roman writers of the *palliata*. The Lamachus of the *Acharnians* is not the progenitor of this long comic relay, but rather one instance in a much more extensive literary line, which stretches back far beyond the Old Comedy of Athens, to Sicilian drama and archaic iambus.

Indeed, some of the features surveyed above are well documented in Archilochus and Epicharmus: namely, the emphasis on the soldier's impressive outward appearance and excellent weapons (1.1, cf. Archilochus fr. 114 and fr. 5); the ample use of linguistic material from high-style (especially epic) poetry, in order to highlight the captain's pompous grandiloquence (1.10, cf. Archilochus fr. 5 and fr. 101; Epicharmus fr. 97.11–16 and perhaps *Periallos*); and also the soldier's tameness and retreat when he is faced with resolute opposition (1.8, cf. Epicharmus' Odysseus, who abandons his military duty when threatened with a beating, fr. 97.6ff.). It is easy to imagine that many of the remaining traits may have gone back to the same models. Archilochus or Epicharmus might well have represented their braggart soldiers uttering aggressive threats against their opponents, peppering their speeches with special terms of military tactics, amassing rich booty and wealth from their war service, arrogantly comparing themselves to gods or mythical heroes, boasting about false wounds, or displaying their fake scars.

It would have been equally feasible for these poets to make the martial *alazon* fight (or claim he has fought) in distant foreign lands and recite tall tales about the marvels he supposedly encountered there. Already around

Archilochus' time, Ionian mercenaries were serving in Egypt, in the army of Pharaoh Psammetichus I (664–610 B.C.). The employment of Greek professional soldiers in Egypt, as expeditionary forces or royal bodyguards, continued until the times of Apries and Amasis, at the end of the Saite Dynasty (589–526 B.C.). Further, in the early sixth century, adventurers such as the brother of Alcaeus of Lesbos fought in the Near East, under the monarchs of Assyria and Babylon.<sup>56</sup> Theoretically, the boastful warrior's involvement in an affair with a hetaira or his erotic rivalry against other young men might also have been treated by these early authors. The hetaira is a recognizable figure in Archilochus and other archaic iambographers, and she is also traceable in the theatre of Epicharmus, even though we have scarce information as to the manner in which her character was developed in these poets' works.<sup>57</sup> If we possessed more of the poetry of Archilochus or the dramas of Epicharmus, much of the ethological constitution of the Aristophanic Lamachus might be discovered to derive from this literary ancestry.

## 2. THE POLITICIZATION OF THE COMIC TYPE

In spite of all his similarities to the standard character of the braggart soldier, the Aristophanic Lamachus is not merely a reproduction of the traditional *miles gloriosus*. In creating the military *alazon* of the *Acharnians*, Aristophanes has in fact combined and amalgamated two originally autonomous ingredients: on one hand, the stock type of the boastful captain, as generally known from the comic tradition; on the other hand, a well-known public figure of contemporary Athens.<sup>58</sup> This is indeed an important point of difference between the Aristophanic Lamachus and the soldiers of Middle and New Comedy; the latter are entirely fictional personages, invented by the comic poets, and do not overtly refer to a historical personality from contemporary political life.<sup>59</sup> The Lamachus of the *Acharnians*, by con-

56. See Parke (1933) 1, 3–6; Trundle (2004) 4–5, 13, 16–17, 23, 28, 44; Lavelle (2008) 149–150.

57. See Konstantakos (2015) 62, 64, with many references.

58. See Blume (2001) 180; Kerkhof (2001) 163; Mastromarco (2002) 211; Ercolani (2002) 235–242, 246–248; cf. Gil (1975) 78, 86; Halliwell (1984) 10–12, 14; Nesselrath (1990) 325.

59. Scholars have sometimes detected satirical allusions to Hellenistic rulers under the boastful captains of New Comedy. For example, the *Αἰρησιτελής* of Diphilus and the Therapontigonus of Plautus' *Curculio* have been considered as travesties of Demetrius Poliorcetes; see Wagner (1905) 20–21; Elderkin (1934). Therapontigonus has also been read as a

trast, is a more composite literary construct; in his person, facets of the typical comic *miles* and traits of the corresponding Athenian official are fused together into an integral unity.

The real-life model of the Aristophanic character, the historical Lamachus, was repeatedly elected in the body of the ten *stratēgoi*, the supreme army commanders of the Athenian state, and participated in many campaigns of the Peloponnesian war. To judge from Aristophanes' acrimonious lampoons, Lamachus must have belonged to the pro-war faction, the statesmen that supported the continuation of the armed conflict with Sparta and opposed the negotiations for a peace treaty. This is also suggested by Thucydides, who regularly presents Lamachus as an agent of the intransigent policy of war against the Lacedaemonians and their allies, which was advocated by belligerent leaders such as Cleon and Alcibiades.<sup>60</sup>

Of course, there was another important reason for which Aristophanes selected this particular personage as his comic target, from among all the available pro-war military commanders and demagogues that were active in Athens at the time. This was Lamachus' eloquent name ("great fighter"), which automatically pointed to war and battle. This felicitous coincidence came in very handy for the comic poet, given that he could easily blend the suitably named Athenian general with the stock figure of the braggart soldier, who also traditionally bears a warlike *nomen*.<sup>61</sup> Aristophanes often exploits the comic potential of Lamachus' name, making puns and etymological jokes on the associations between this name and the Greek word for "battle" (*μάχη*, see e.g. *Ach.* 269–270, 1071). The same kind of wordplay is later taken up in the *Peace* (304, 1293); the poet was evidently fond of it.

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composite creation that conflates characteristics from several Hellenistic kings; see Grimal (1966); Whitehorne (1975) 113–114; Sharrock (2008) 8–9, 13. The Plautine Pyrgopolynices has been brought into connection with a range of historical figures, from Alexander the Great and Demetrius Poliorcetes to Hannibal; see Petrides (2014) 240 for bibliography. However, this kind of allusive or allegorical reference (*ἐπώνοια* in Aristotelian terms, *Eth. Nic.* 4.8.6, 1128a 22–25), which consists in the use of a historical paradigm as an implied "subtext", is clearly different from the overt and *ὀνομαστί* caricature of a specific contemporary Athenian politician, as practised by Aristophanes in the case of Lamachus. For the "New Historicist" and politically engaged reading of Menander's soldiers that has been forwarded by Lape (2004), see the reservations of Brown (2004) 2, 14.

60. See Thuc. 4.75.2, 6.8.2, 6.49.1, 6.50.1, 6.101.6; Mastromarco (2002) 211; Ercolani (2002) 241, 246–247.

61. Cf. Cornford (1914) 155; Whitman (1964) 67; Walcot (1971) 42; Edmunds (1980) 13–14; Halliwell (1984) 11; Thiery (1986) 195; Reckford (1987) 166; MacDowell (1995) 70–71; Storey (1998) 110; Mastromarco (2002) 212–213, 216; Ercolani (2002) 233–236; Lauriola (2006) 90.



In fact, the traditional characteristics of the comic *miles* sometimes overshadow or replace the historically attested qualities of the actual Athenian individual.<sup>62</sup> The real-life Lamachus, according to extant ancient sources (Thucydides, Plato, Plutarch), was not at all similar to the cowardly dodger and deserter whom Aristophanes denounces. He was clearly not the kind of man that would try to avoid the battlefield with tricks or pretexts. On the contrary, Lamachus regularly and actively served in proper military expeditions and was finally killed in battle, fighting for his city at Sicily in 414 B.C. If the historical Lamachus had a flaw, this was exactly the opposite of what Aristophanes claims: far from displaying cowardice, Lamachus appears to have been excessively bold and reckless in battle, and this eventually caused his death. In a clash with the Syracusans, Lamachus, accompanied by a few soldiers, apparently ventured too far into the lines of the enemy; as a result, he was cut off from the Athenian contingent, surrounded by foes, and slaughtered together with his party (Thuc. 6.101.6).<sup>63</sup> Occasionally, even fear may prove useful to the combating soldier, as we are warned by Bertolt Brecht. In short, Aristophanes has projected the typical *fanfaron* of the theatrical stage on the brave veteran of contemporary Athens; historical fact is thus refracted and deformed in the distorting mirror of comic fiction.<sup>64</sup>

In this way, Aristophanes effectively politicizes the material of the comic tradition. The Lamachus of the *Acharnians* is not merely a caricature of military braggadocio. He is not simply the blowhard buffoon of popular farce, the ethological *alazon* of satirical iambus, or the ludicrous version of a Homeric warrior in the context of a mythical travesty. The boastful general of the Aristophanic play becomes a medium for public denunciation, which the dramatist launches against the warmongering demagogues of Athens. This latter group of politicians, especially Cleon and his collaborators, the populist mediocrities that succeeded Pericles in the leadership of the Athenian *dēmos* and the manipulation of the Assembly — these are the main targets of comic criticism in the *Acharnians*. Through the figure of Dicaeopolis and his comic argumentation against the Peloponnesian war, the poet strives to convey to the audience that the conflict with Sparta does not concern important strategic or geopolitical interests of the city. This war

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62. Cf. the remarks of Whitman (1964) 67; Gelzer (1970) 1423; Edmunds (1980) 14; Halliwell (1984) 11–12; Halliwell (1993) 331; Mastromarco (2002) 216–217; Ercolani (2002) 235–236.

63. On the military qualities of the historical Lamachus, cf. Whitman (1964) 67; Gil (1975) 78; Olson (2002) 149–150.

64. Cf. the remarks of Whitman (1964) 67; Gil (1975) 78–79; Halliwell (1984) 11, 14.

only serves to benefit the aforementioned privileged political clique, whose members exploit the crucial situation in order to occupy public posts, gain key appointments in diplomatic delegations or negotiation parties, draw large salaries from the city funds and bribes from the various interested sides.<sup>65</sup>

It is not fortuitous that Dicaeopolis associates Lamachus with an entire group of Athenian statesmen of the time that exercised highly paid offices (*Ach.* 597–619). The blustering general is presented as a member of the same corrupt political elite; he takes part himself in the deception of the Athenian people in order to secure personal gains. Lamachus builds his career on the war; he accumulates offices, emoluments, and fame without ever setting foot on the battlefield. It is enough for him to tread on the corpses of the naïve Athenian patriots, who sacrifice their lives in this vain combat.<sup>66</sup> Thus Aristophanes brings about the political transformation of the traditional *miles gloriosus*; the stock comic type is adapted to the topical contemporary conditions of the Athenian republic in a state of war.

As noted in the first part of this study,<sup>67</sup> the standard military captain of the comic stage, especially in the Hellenistic and Roman theatre, appears as a mercenary that serves in the professional army of one or the other potentate. An analogous phenomenon may have occurred already in Epicharmus' dramas,<sup>68</sup> given that the tyrants of Sicilian cities, during the late sixth and early fifth century B.C., were keen on using mercenaries, both as troops of war and as bodyguards for personal protection.<sup>69</sup> The boastful *condottieri* in the service of these rulers will have formed a conspicuous social group in the Sicilian *poleis* of Epicharmus' time. They even became proverbial for their sham haughtiness, which came in sharp contrast with the precarious conditions of their employment. The proverbs "Sicilian soldier" and "the Sicilian soldier pushes away payment" were used to describe the kind of people that

65. On this point, see mainly MacDowell (1995) 46–79 and Olson (2002) xl–lii.

66. Cf. Walcot (1971) 42–43; Spielvogel (2003) 13–15; Lauriola (2006) 90–92. On the strong connections between the Aristophanic Lamachus and contemporary Athenian political reality generally, see Nesselrath (1990) 325; Kerkhof (2001) 163; Ercolani (2002) 235–241.

67. See Konstantakos (2015) 44–46.

68. Cf. Wysk (1921) 3–6; Körte (1921) 1225; Duckworth (1952) 19; Pickard-Cambridge (1962) 282; Gil (1975) 77.

69. Especially Gelon and Hieron of Syracuse, under whose rule Epicharmus flourished as a playwright, employed thousands of paid professional soldiers. So did other Sicilian magnates, such as Hippocrates of Gela, Theron and Thrasydaeus of Acragas. For the evidence, see Parke (1933) 7, 10–13; Trundle (2004) 5, 28–29, 44, 54.

arrogantly pretend to reject fictitious offers.<sup>70</sup> This trait fully accords with the ethological core of the *miles gloriosus*, the discrepancy between pretentious appearance and meagre reality. It is an interesting hypothesis that these proverbial expressions might derive from Epicharmus' works and his comic portrayal of boastful soldiers.<sup>71</sup> Analogous mercenary armies were also known to mainland Greece already in the Classical age. During the Peloponnesian war, Athens repeatedly used foreign mercenaries, especially Thracians, as light infantry troops for auxiliary operations. Even non-citizen hoplites and sailors were hired for pay by the Athenian state, especially in the middle and later phases of the long conflict, the Sicilian expedition and the Ionian war. Sparta and Corinth also employed mercenary peltasts and hoplites at various times, mainly for distant expeditions.<sup>72</sup>

Aristophanes, therefore, could have portrayed his own military *alazon* in the *Acharnians* as a mercenary soldier, conforming both to the comic heritage of earlier Epicharmean drama and to the historical practice of his contemporary Athenian state. Nevertheless, the great comic author did not take up this traditional motif without change, because the nature of his art and the particular satirical programme of the *Acharnians* were different. As an artist of the democratic *polis*, Aristophanes felt obliged to target primarily the leaders of the *dēmos*, the holders of real political power in Athens. This is regularly forwarded as a point of honour in the Aristophanic parabases, where the poet proclaims his satirical credo. In such passages, Aristophanes stresses that the comic writer's primary duty is to attack the veritably powerful, the protagonists of Athenian politics, not minor accessories or unimportant figures (see e.g. *Eq.* 510–511, *Nub.* 549, *Vesp.* 1029–1043, *Pax* 751–760).

Therefore, Aristophanes was bound to place at the centre of his satirical attack a genuine citizen and a member of the political elite that was truly governing Athens, not some foreign mercenary. The latter would have been

70. See Zenob. 5.89 (*CPG* I 157): *Σικελὸς στρατιώτης: παροιμιῶδες. Ἐπεὶ ξένοις ἐχρῶντο στρατιώταις ὡς ἐπὶ πολὺ οἱ ἐπὶ Ἱέρωνα.* Similar are Diogenian. 8.6 and Apostol. 15.47 (*CPG* I 306, II 641). See also Macar. 7.65 and Mant. Prov. 2.80 (*CPG* II 208, 770): *Σικελὸς στρατιώτης μισθὸν διωθεῖται: ἐπὶ τῶν ἀπωθεῖσθαι προσποιούμενον, ἃ μηδεὶς αὐτοῖς δίδωσιν.* Zenobius' explanation expressly connects the proverbs with the servicemen of Hieron, presumably Hieron I of Syracuse, the patron of Epicharmus. Cf. Freeman (1891) 235; Parke (1933) 13.

71. See Parke (1933) 13.

72. For the historical information, see Parke (1933) 14–21 and Trundle (2004) 6, 13–19, 30–31, 40, 47–48, 51–54, 75; cf. Ehrenberg (1962) 303–304, 314–315. On the comic ridicule of such mercenaries in Athens, see *Ach.* 155 ff., *Lys.* 563–564; Kerkhof (2001) 164.

suitable only as the object of a peripheral, occasional scene of ridicule, such as the one mocking the Thracian Odomantoi in *Acharnians* 155–173. But the main recipient of comic criticism in the play had to be one of the leading personalities of the city. Thus, the Aristophanic *miles gloriosus* is not a member of an alien mercenary army. On the other hand, he is also a far cry from the ordinary patriotic citizen that is conscientiously fighting for his homeland. Like the standard braggart officer of comedy, Lamachus is a war professional, a careerist of military administration, who receives high pay from the state for his services. Perhaps for this reason Aristophanes lays so great stress on the considerable salaries that Lamachus and his clique draw from the state funds (see above, 1.5). Apart from the criticism against the squandering of public money by corrupt politicians, there is also here a recollection of the typical wage-earning *fanfaron* soldier of the comic tradition.

In conclusion, the Lamachus of the *Acharnians* has arisen from an artful combination of stock comic patterns with contemporary actuality. The standard figure of the *miles gloriosus* has been assimilated to the political agenda of satirical Old Comedy. The Aristophanic general represents an “atticization” and a topical updating of the familiar theatrical type. The *alazon* is remoulded in accordance with the political life and institutions of democratic Athens.

### 3. THE EPIGONES OF LAMACHUS

As far as we know, the Aristophanic Lamachus was the first character in Athenian theatre that amalgamated a traditional comic type, such as the boastful *miles*, with the peculiar personal features of a contemporary statesman. Nevertheless, the general of the *Acharnians* did not remain an isolated case in this respect. On the contrary, Aristophanes’ experiment seems to have been a source of inspiration and a model of imitation for later comic writers, who similarly sought to combine the stock comic soldier’s figure with elements from political actuality. Thus, the Lamachus of the *Acharnians* left a notable line of descendants in the history of Attic drama.

#### 3.1. The taxiarch of the *Peace*

The first example of such an imitation comes from Aristophanes himself. It occurs in the next play in which the poet advocated again the termination of the Peloponnesian war, a few years after the *Acharnians*: namely, the *Peace* of 421 B.C. This latter comedy does not bring on stage a *miles gloriosus* figure

in the manner of Lamachus, although the grotesque Polemos, the personification of war, does carry some characteristic traits of the braggart captain. Nevertheless, Aristophanes includes a brief but vivid description of a corrupt, blustering, and cowardly military official, placed in the mouth of the Chorus at the end of the second parabasis (1172–1190). The target of the satire remains here anonymous, and his military office is specified as that of a taxiarch, the commander of one of the ten tribal divisions of the Athenian infantry, a rank immediately below that of the *stratēgos*. Otherwise, the description strongly recalls the Lamachus of the *Acharnians*:

μᾶλλον ἢ θεοῖσιν ἐχθρὸν ταξίαρχον προσβλέπων  
 τρεῖς λόφους ἔχοντα καὶ φοινικίδ' ὀξεῖαν πάνν,  
 ἦν ἐκεῖνός φησιν εἶναι βάμμα Σαρδιανικόν·  
 ἦν δέ που δέη μάχεσθ' ἔχοντα τὴν φοινικίδα,  
 τηρῖκαυτ' αὐτὸς βέβαπται βάμμα Κυζικηνικόν·  
 κᾶτα φεύγει πρῶτος ὥσπερ ξουθὸς ἰππαλεκτρῶν  
 τοὺς λόφους σείων· ἐγὼ δ' ἔστηκα λινοπτώμενος.  
 ἠνίκ' ἂν δ' οἴκοι γένωνται, δρωῶσιν οὐκ ἀνασχετά,  
 τοὺς μὲν ἐγγράφοντες ἡμῶν, τοὺς δ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω  
 ἐξαλείφοντες δις ἢ τρίς. (...)   
 ταῦτα δ' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀγροίκους δρωῶσι, τοὺς δ' ἐξ ἄστεως  
 ἦττον, οἱ θεοῖσιν οὔτοι κἀνδράσι ἑνψάσπιδες.  
 ὦν ἔτ' εὐθύνας ἐμοὶ δώσουσιν, ἦν θεὸς θέλη.  
 πολλὰ γὰρ δὴ μ' ἠδίκησαν,  
 ὄντες οἴκοι μὲν λέοντες,  
 ἐν μάχῃ δ' ἄλώπεκες.

Much better this than to stare at some goddamned taxiarch wearing three crests and a very bright crimson cloak, which he claims to be the dye of Sardis; but if he has to give battle on some occasion, dressed in this crimson cloak, then he himself gets drenched in the dye of Shitland. Afterwards, he is the first to run away, like a tawny horsecock, shaking his crests, while I stand there as though guarding the hunting nets. And when they return home, they do intolerable things; they enter some of our names on the roster and erase others, haphazardly, two or three times. (...) This is what they do to us, the country folk, though not so much to the city people, these fellows that throw their shields away before gods and men. For all this, god willing, they will render account to me; because they have done me much wrong, acting like lions at home but like foxes in battle!

The taxiarch wears an impressive uniform, with a triple crest on his helmet and a bright purple cloak, exactly like Lamachus; this kind of magnificent outfit is the most emblematic outward sign of the boastful comic captain

(see above, 1.1). Further, the officer proudly lauds his military cloak, emphasizing its pure Sardinian fabrication, much like Lamachus, who also pompously praises his armour and is especially fond of extolling his extraordinary shield. However, the taxiarch's grandiose exterior is only a superficial veneer that hides the man's pusillanimity; this is the typical contradiction between appearance and reality that characterizes every *miles gloriosus*. The taxiarch runs away from battle, shaking his plumes in fright and soiling his fine uniform with faeces;<sup>73</sup> this recalls again Lamachus, another inveterate coward, who tries to avoid the battlefield and keep clear of military action at all costs.

Although the taxiarch of *Peace* 1172–1190 is not given a name, the specificity of the description points to a particular class of Athenian dignitaries: namely, the warmongering statesmen and officers, more or less the same group of pro-war demagogues that were also envisaged in the *Acharnians*. The outwardly ostentatious and hypocritically belligerent taxiarch might well be one of the collaborators of the Aristophanic Lamachus, those men that exploit the situation of the war in order to procure money and power for themselves at the expense of the common Athenian people. Once again, a few years after the first such experiment in the *Acharnians*, the ethological framework of the comic *miles* is projected on the reality of late fifth-century Athens and mingled with the historical identity of a recognizable elite group within the Athenian *polis*.

Indeed, the similarities between the taxiarch of *Peace* and the Lamachus of the *Acharnians* are so strong that they can hardly be fortuitous or unconscious. It seems rather that the poet intended the taxiarch's description, in the second parabasis of the later play, to function as a deliberate allusion to the portrait of Lamachus in the earlier comedy. Producing a new drama about the excruciating Peloponnesian war and its termination, four years after the *Acharnians* which treated much the same subject, Aristophanes may have wished to connect these two "peace plays" with each other, to make his second *oeuvre* on this topic look back to the first one. For this purpose, he inserted into the later one of these comedies a brief sketch of the same type of warlike braggart that had played a leading part in the earlier drama. The chief villain of the *Acharnians* makes again a cameo appearance in the choral interlude of the *Peace*.<sup>74</sup>

73. On the scatological implications of *βάμμα Κυζικηνικόν*, see Olson (1998) 292.

74. See Wehrli (1936) 101; Gil (1975) 79; Halliwell (1984) 12; Storey (1989) 257; Nesselrath (1990) 325; Kerkhof (2001) 163–164; Mastromarco (2002) 213; Lauriola (2006) 90. Occasional touches and borrowings from the traditional *miles gloriosus* are also incorporated into the portraits of other prominent *komoidoumenoi* of the Aris-

### 3.2. Plato Comicus' *Peisandros*

Indications for another specimen of the same comic technique can be traced in the remains of a celebrated poet of Old Comedy, Plato Comicus, who was roughly a contemporary of Aristophanes. Plato produced a comedy titled *Peisandros*, clearly a full-scale personal satire against an important political figure in late fifth-century Athens: the eponymous Peisandros son of Glaukertes of the deme Acharnai, who held various administrative, political, and military offices during the 420s and 410s, until he was forced to flee Athens after the collapse of the oligarchic regime of 411 B.C. Peisandros was a favourite target of mature Old Comedy; the numerous jokes directed against him by the comic poets allow us to form a fair idea of his standard comic persona, which is likely to have been ridiculed also in Plato's play.

In comedy, Peisandros is presented as a haughty man, full of warlike arrogance. He goes about with raised eyebrows and crest-feathers on his helmet (*Pax* 395, *Πεισάνδρου βδελύττει τὸς λόφους καὶ τὰς ὀφρῶς*), like a comic braggart captain. According to the ancient scholiast, Peisandros wore a triple crest and carried imposing weapons in order to give the impression of bravery, a quality he did not actually possess (Sch. on *Ar. Pax* 395, *ἐχρῆτο δὲ τριλοφία καὶ ὄπλοις ἐπισήμοις ὑπὲρ τοῦ δοκεῖν ἀνδρεῖος εἶναι μὴ ὄν*). The comic Peisandros is also portrayed as a greedy and corrupt

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tophanic theatre, such as Cleon, the notorious butt of the *Knights* (424 B.C.). Cleon, who appears in this comedy under the thin disguise of the slave Paphlagon, is represented as the epitome of corruption and political crime. He is also a warmonger and displays distinctive traits of the braggart soldier, such as sham heroism and a false pretense of battle courage. Paphlagon misappropriates the military achievements of other officials —such as the victory over the Spartans at Pylos, actually gained by the general Demosthenes— and presents them to the Athenian Demos as though they were his own feats (*Eq.* 52–57, 391–394). This is the cheeky attitude of the Shakespearean Falstaff, who falsely claims to have slain the redoubtable Hotspur (*Henry IV First Part* 5.4). Generally, boasting about false, non-existent, or usurped war feats is a standard characteristic of the comic *miles gloriosus*; see Konstantakos (2015) 51–52 with many examples, and cf. the remarks of Lauriola (2006) 88–92, who offers a detailed comparison between the Aristophanic Cleon and Lamachus. Nevertheless, in the case of Cleon in the *Knights*, military *alazoneia* is only one particular dimension in an exceedingly complex and multifaceted dramatic character. The *miles gloriosus* is one of the many dramatic personae that have merged into the multilayered and composite Aristophanic portrait. Paphlagon is not merely another braggart captain projected onto a contemporary Athenian politician, but rather an omnivorous theatrical creation that assimilates a wide range of stock comic types, ethological idiosyncrasies, character and behaviour patterns, including the comic *miles*.

warmonger that fosters the war with Sparta in order to have ample opportunities for gaining bribes and embezzling public money (Aristophanes, *Babylonians* fr. 84, *Lysistrata* 489–491; cf. Sch. on Ar. *Pax* 395, φιλοπόλεμος ἦν καὶ πολεμοποιὸς κερδῶν ἰδίων ἔνεκεν). The man was therefore placed in the same category as the hateful pro-war demagogues of the *Acharnians*, the clique of Lamachus and Company, who exploit the crucial war situation of the *polis* for their own profit.

Above all, Peisandros is depicted as a consummate coward and is often overtly branded as δειλός in ancient sources: see Phrynichus fr. 21 (*Πείσανδρον ... ὁ μὲν γε δειλός*); Sch. on Ar. *Av.* 1556 (*οὔτος δειλὸς ἦν ... ἀπανταχοῦ δ' ἦν δειλός*); Sch. on Ar. *Pax* 395 (*ἐπὶ δειλία γὰρ ἔσκώπτετο παρὰ πολλοῖς ... ἦν δὲ δειλὸς καὶ μέγας*); Aelian, *NA* 4.1. Once, in a military campaign, Peisandros proved to be the worst man in the army (Eupolis fr. 35). He was so timorous that he could not even set his eyes on enemy spears (Xen. *Symp.* 2.14). His lack of courage and spirit was so great that his soul seemed to have abandoned his body while he was still alive (*Av.* 1556–1564, cf. the Sch. on 1556). In fact, Peisandros' cowardice was so notorious that it was encapsulated in a proverbial expression: *Πείσανδρον δειλότερος* (Apostolius 14.14, *CPG* II 607, cf. *Suda* δ 319, π 1467). The combination of sham belligerence with inveterate faintheartedness is of course typical of the comic *miles gloriosus*, as is also the careerist and self-interested promotion of the war. Peisandros further displayed additional accessory characteristics of the boastful theatrical soldier; he was strikingly large in outward appearance (Eupolis fr. 195, ὁ μέγας, cf. Hermippus fr. 7, Sch. on Ar. *Pax* 395), presumably due to his gluttony and overeating (Eupolis fr. 99.1–4, *Adesp. Com.* fr. 119, *Ael. VH* 1.27).<sup>75</sup>

Plato's comedy may have largely fostered this same comic image of Peisandros. Although its scarce textual remains do not always lend themselves easily to interpretation, fr. 102 (a dialogue about stomach problems caused by fish consumption) may be connected with Peisandros' gluttony and love for good food.<sup>76</sup> Other passages may allude to embezzlement of state money (fr. 103) or to the hard and tyrannical way in which Athens treated its allies, like a harsh and punitive husband that always chastises his wife

75. On Peisandros' comic persona, see Ribbeck (1882) 28–29; Radermacher (1926) 53–57; Halliwell (1984) 14; Dunbar (1995) 712–713; Olson (1998) 153–154; Sommerstein (2000) 439, 447; Storey (2003) 75–78, 146, 213, 341; Lauriola (2006) 90; Pirrotta (2009) 220–222; Storey (2011) 138–139; Jouanno (2012) 260–261; Stama (2014) 153–156. On Plato's homonymous comedy, see Sommerstein (2000) 439–440, 446–447; Pirrotta (2009) 220–237; Storey (2011) 138–143.

76. Cf. Sommerstein (2000) 440; Pirrotta (2009) 222–224; Storey (2011) 139.



(fr. 105).<sup>77</sup> All these elements tally with the picture given of Peisandros in other comedies.

There is also a solid indication that Plato touched upon the theme of Peisandros' military *alazoneia*. According to the Suda (*a* 3824 = fr. 112), Plato used in the *Peisandros* the phrase *Ἄρεως νεοττός*, "fledgling of Ares", to denote a man of great courage (*ἐπὶ τῶν θρασυτάτων*). It may safely be assumed that the ancient lexicographer missed the irony inherent in the comic poet's text. In Plato's original formulation, the words *Ἄρεως νεοττός* would doubtless have been applied to Peisandros himself in an ironical and mocking sense, in order to taunt him for his hypocritical belligerence, by which Peisandros strove to hide his profound cowardice. The high-style, mock-elevated tone of the phrase brings to mind the Homeric formula *ἄζος Ἄρηος*, which is attributed to several brave Iliadic heroes (see *Il.* 2.540, 2.663, 2.704, 2.745, 2.842, 3.147, 12.188, 20.238, 23.841, 24.474), and this adds to the parodic and sarcastic effect. The comic Peisandros pretended in epic style to be the worthy offspring of the war-god Ares, while in fact he was no more valorous than a small nestling.<sup>78</sup> The descriptions found in other passages about the man's ostentatious soldierly dress (*Pax* 395 with Sch.) suit Plato's satirical image. With the triple crest and crest-feathers on his helmet, the pusillanimous Peisandros would definitely look like a strangely oversized bird's nestling.

It thus seems likely that the protagonist of Plato's comedy was brought on stage dressed in his impressive military uniform, with the multiple crests on his headgear. Possibly Aristophanes' reference to Peisandros' loathsome "crests and drawn-up eyebrows" (*Pax* 395) was inspired by the stage spectacle of this same *komoidoumenos* in Plato's play, which may have been performed shortly before the *Peace*. Plato's fr. 104, which describes a man that "looks as though he were stuffed full with padding and feathers", might also be a satirical jibe against Peisandros' pompous bearing and stance.<sup>79</sup> The warlike *alazon* would strive to take a majestic poise, puffing up his large body, only to produce a grotesque and laughable image.

If these assumptions are true, then Plato's Peisandros offered another case of merge between the stock comic *miles gloriosus* and the historical personality of an Athenian politician. Perhaps Plato was inspired by the very example of the Aristophanic Lamachus for producing his own character

77. See Sommerstein (2000) 440; Pirrotta (2009) 224–225, 227–229; Storey (2011) 139.

78. See Radermacher (1926) 53–55; Pirrotta (2009) 235–237.

79. For these hypotheses, see Radermacher (1926); Pirrotta (2009) 222, 226, 235–237; cf. Sommerstein (2000) 439.

amalgam. Although the exact date of the *Peisandros* is not known, the comedy doubtless postdated the *Acharnians*. Two passages from the parabasis of Plato's play (fr. 106 and 107, transmitted in various ancient lexica, scholiasts, and paroemiographers)<sup>80</sup> seem to take issue with Aristophanes' own self-presentation in the parabasis of the *Wasps* 1017–1044 (422 B.C., cf. also the parabasis of the *Peace* 749ff., from 421).<sup>81</sup> Besides, as shown by Sommerstein, the *Peisandros* must have belonged to a brief literary vogue of “demagogue-comedies”, that is, plays that concentrated on the satirical portraiture and lampoon of a specific democratic leader of Athens — a vogue that was presumably triggered off by Aristophanes' *Knights* (424 B.C.), the first and most famous exemplar of this type of comic drama. Along with several other representatives of this rather short-lived theatrical fashion — Eupolis' *Marikas* (421), Hermippus' *Artopolides* (probably 420 or 419), and Plato's own *Hyperbolus* (between 419 and 417)—, the *Peisandros* should belong to the late 420s or the early 410s, with 422 or 421 being the most likely years for its production.<sup>82</sup>

Thus, Plato Comicus was doubtless familiar with the *Acharnians* and could have been sufficiently impressed by their version of Lamachus, this novel and idiosyncratic crossbreed between comic tradition and contemporary political actuality. Emulation of the Aristophanic Lamachus presumably induced Plato to strive and produce something of his own in the same mode.

### 3.3. Mnesimachus' *Philip*

The last known descendant of Aristophanes' Lamachus is found in a comedy produced much later, in the period of Middle Comedy, some eighty years after the premiere of the *Acharnians*. Mnesimachus' *Philip*, as indicated by the title, was a play largely concerned with Philip II of Macedon and the burning issue of Macedonian imperialism, which was causing an acute political

80. See Photius, *Lexicon* a 2817; Suda a 3946; Eustathius on *Il.* 302.27–36; Apostolius 3.73 (*CPG* II 305); Zenob. Ath. 2.68, 2.78 (V pp. 294, 381 Bühler); Zenob. vulg. 2.59, 6.7 (*CPG* I 47–48, 163); Pausan. Att. a 151, τ 23.

81. See Pirrotta (2009) 22–32.

82. See Sommerstein (2000) 439–440, 446–447; Olson (2007) 215; Pirrotta (2009) 222; Storey (2011) 139. After 417, the “demagogue-comedy” apparently fell dormant for a long time and only knew a second brief period of acme in the last years of the fifth century, with a triad of closely dated plays: Plato's *Cleophon* (405), Theopompus' *Teisamenos* (around 404), and Archippus' *Rhion* (402 or 401). This latter period, however, is too late for Plato's *Peisandros*, whose protagonist completely disappeared from political life and from ancient sources after his flight from Athens in 410.

crisis in Athens and the rest of mainland Greece in the decades after the mid-fourth century. One of the extant fragments of Mnesimachus' comedy (fr. 8) refers to a specific event of the time: the capture of the city of Halos, in southern Thessaly, which Philip besieged and conquered in 346 B.C., only to cede it immediately to his allies, the inhabitants of Pharsala, by way of revenge. In the comic passage, the Pharsalians are described as eating the vanquished city roasted — a bold and grotesque metaphor of destruction. Mnesimachus' play must therefore have been performed shortly after 346.<sup>83</sup>

Another fragment from the same work (fr. 7) is spoken by a character who brags in outrageous terms about the superhuman martial capacities of himself and his comrades:

ἄρ' οἴσθ' ὅτι πρὸς ἄνδρας ἐστὶ σοι μάχη,  
οἱ τὰ ξίφη δειπνοῦμεν ἠκονημένα,  
ὄψον δὲ δᾶδας ἡμένας καταπίνομεν;  
ἐντεῦθεν εὐθὺς ἐπιφέρει τραγήματα  
ἡμῖν ὁ παῖς μετὰ δεῖπνον ἀκίδας Κρητικᾶς,  
ὥσπερ ἐρεβίνθους, δορατίων τε λείψανα  
κατεργότ', ἀσπίδας δὲ προσκεφάλαια καὶ  
θώρακας ἔχομεν, πρὸς ποδῶν δὲ σφενδόνας  
καὶ τόξα, καταπάλταισι δ' ἔστεφανώμεθα

Do you realize that you will have to give battle against men like us that use to eat sharpened swords for dinner and gulp down flaming torches for a side-dish? Then, after the main course, the waiter immediately serves us crunchy Cretan bayonets for dessert; and for dried fruit we have broken splinters from javelins. In place of pillows, we use shields and breastplates, and our feet rest on slings and bows instead of cushions, and on our heads we wear catapults instead of wreaths.

The wild exaggeration of these boasts brands the speaker as a blowhard. It would be naturally impossible for any living serviceman to fulfil such a gigantesque repertory of exploits. We recall the Munchausenesque yarns of Plautus' Pyrgopolynices, who supposedly scatters whole armies with a puff of his breath, smashes the leg of an elephant with his bare fist, and slays thousands of men within a single day (*MG* 16–18, 25–30, 42–47).<sup>84</sup>

83. See Breitenbach (1908) 37–38; Webster (1970) 43; Nesselrath (1990) 327; Papachryostomou (2008) 213–214, 217–218; Konstantakos (2011c) 167–168.

84. Compare further Therapontigonus in Plautus' *Curculio*, whose emblem is a warrior cutting an elephant in two with his sword (424); he is also said to have singlehandedly conquered half the nations of the world within twenty days (442–452). Similarly, Antamoenides in *Poenulus* 472–487 brags of having slain 60,000 flying men with his

Mnesimachus' blustering warrior is patently a liar. As in many other comic examples of mendacious military men, it seems likely that this character's lies are intended to cover up his deeper feelings of cowardice and indolence (compare again Pyrgopolynices or the braggart Leontichos in Lucian's *Dialogues of Courtesans* 13). The speaker shamelessly brags and vociferates, probably in order to intimidate his adversary — exactly as Lamachus does before Dicaeopolis (*Ach.* 572–622) or as Heracles strives to scare his interlocutor in Ephippus' *Bousiris* (fr. 2). In fact, however, his braggadocio would be merely a make-believe hiding his own fear of the enemy he is faced with.<sup>85</sup>

According to some scholars, fr. 7 is placed in the mouth of the orator Demosthenes, who is here addressing King Philip of Macedon. In this way, the Athenian statesman is ridiculed for his pompous and grandiloquent harangues against the Macedonians. Indeed, Demosthenes is mocked in very similar terms and with comparable comic imagery in Timocles fr. 12; there the orator is presented as a braggart that fakes military prowess, pretending to swallow javelins and catapults, although he is in fact a coward.<sup>86</sup>

In my view, the speaker of Mnesimachus fr. 7 is more likely to be King Philip himself, portrayed as a boastful military leader.<sup>87</sup> The mention of the catapults (v. 9) would perfectly suit the chief of the Macedonian army; it was most probably Philip that first introduced these war engines in mainland Greece, to a deadly effect.<sup>88</sup> In addition, the grotesque style and imagery of fr.

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own hands in one day. Cf. Legrand (1917) 466–467; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 119–120, 138–139; Konstantakos (forthcoming).

85. On the speaker of fr. 7 as a *miles gloriosus* cf. Ribbeck (1882) 31; Legrand (1917) 227; Webster (1970) 64; Gil (1975) 77; Carrière (1979) 280–281; Nesselrath (1990) 327; Papachrysostomou (2008) 210–211.

86. See Breitenbach (1908) 36–37; Papachrysostomou (2008) 212–213; Apostolakis (2014) 107–108.

87. Cf. Meineke (1840) 577; Webster (1970) 64; Carrière (1979) 280; Nesselrath (1990) 327.

88. See Marsden (1969) 58–62; Cuomo (2004). The catapults are often taken as an indication that the speaker of Mnesimachus fr. 7 must be Demosthenes, because these particular war engines are also mentioned in connection to Demosthenes in Timocles fr. 12 (Demosthenes supposedly “eats catapults”, a sign of his martial valour). There is, however, a significant difference between these two comic passages. In Timocles fr. 12, Demosthenes consumes the catapults that are presumably turned against him by the enemy; the grotesque comic image metaphorically signifies the courageous and successful resistance to the weapons of the opponents (clearly here the Macedonians) on the part of the Athenian orator. In Mnesimachus fr. 7, by contrast, the speaker and his comrades use the catapults for their own benefit and recreation, wearing them on their heads in the symposium, in place of celebratory wreaths. This quasi Rabelaisian metaphor would best suit the warriors that employ themselves the catapults in their

7 accord with the satirical attack against the Pharsalians, Philip's allies, in fr. 8. If the Pharsalians can devour an entire city, their Macedonian patrons could have been depicted in an equally phantasmagorical manner. In any case, fr. 8 indicates that the Macedonian coalition was a target of ridicule in Mnesimachus' comedy. It seems unlikely that the comic poet would have equally lampooned both the Macedonians and their sworn enemy Demosthenes within the same script, given the tense polarization and the sharp rift between pro-Macedonian and anti-Macedonian political factions in Athens at that period. In the charged climate of public strife, the comic poets would have been obliged to take sides and attach themselves to one or the other political camp.

In any case, whether he is identified as Philip or as Demosthenes, the speaker of fr. 7 is a stage version of a prominent historical personality of the time, and in this respect he is a close kinsman of the Aristophanic Lamachus. As in the *Acharnians*, so also in Mnesimachus' drama the popular farcical type of the *miles gloriosus* has been amalgamated with a personage from the poet's contemporary public environment, a conspicuous representative of warlike ambition in the actual political life of Greece. By the time of the *Philip*, in the mid-fourth century, the braggart officer had been well established as a stock type on the stage of Middle Comedy. Mnesimachus could thus easily have projected this familiar theatrical personage on the satirized figure of King Philip (or of Demosthenes). The result, as in the case of Lamachus in the *Acharnians*, was again a composite, double-natured comic creation that fused the traditional comic material and the blazing political actuality into an organic unity.

It is probable that Mnesimachus drew inspiration from the Aristophanic Lamachus of the *Acharnians* or perhaps from Plato's *Peisandros* for this complex character construct. As I have shown in other studies, during the 340s and 330s, while political passions were rekindled in Athens under the pressure of Macedonian imperialism, a small group of playwrights (including Mnesimachus and other contemporaneous poets, such as Timocles and Heniochus) strove to revive political comedy as a response to the turbulent atmosphere of public strife in the *polis*. For this purpose, the aforementioned playwrights rediscovered the works of Old Comedy, the great fountainhead of public satire from the fifth century, and intensely studied them as models for their own politically engaged *oeuvres*.<sup>89</sup> Especially two kinds of Old

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own martial operations. These should doubtless be the Macedonians, who first introduced torsion catapults in mainland Greek warfare.

89. See Konstantakos (2011c) 167–171 and Konstantakos (2014).

Comedy play were likely to exercise the strongest impact on these fourth-century dramatists and provide apt inspiration in the turmoil of the Macedonian crisis. On one hand, the war comedies of Aristophanes would have appealed to the concerns of a city that was facing the aggression of belligerent King Philip and debating whether to wage war on him. On the other hand, the “demagogue-comedies”, with their acrid portrayal of struggles between political leaders, suited the agitated clashes of opposed (pro- and anti-Macedonian) factions that were prevailing anew in Athenian public life. The *Acharnians* belonged to the first category of plays, the *Peisandros* to the second one. Either of them or both could have influenced Mnesimachus’ portrait of the braggart warrior.<sup>90</sup>

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90. Papachrysostomou (2008) 210–219 has even argued that the very text of fr. 7 and 8 may betray Mnesimachus’ familiarity with the Aristophanic scripts. She compares the robust image of the superhuman Macedonians, who feast on the arms of war, with the hilarious scene near the end of the *Acharnians* (1071–1149), in which Dicaeopolis and Lamachus are contrasted with each other. Lamachus is called to a military campaign, and thus wears his armour and collects his weapons, in order to face the enemies. Dicaeopolis, by contrast, is metonymically “armed” with wine-cups and fine food, so as to participate in a banquet. Another passage of the *Acharnians* (977–985) similarly juxtaposes martial and convivial imagery; the personified Polemos is shown participating in a symposium where he behaves badly, overturns the tables, spills the good wine, and picks up fights with the other guests. In these comic passages, there is a strong osmosis between the military and the sympotic. This may have inspired, to some extent, Mnesimachus’ grotesque concept, which expands the Aristophanic effect into a gross comic hyperbole. In the *Acharnians* the world of army and battle was simply confronted with the domain of the banquet and its pleasures. In Mnesimachus’ *Philip* these two worlds are inextricably mingled, as the war perversely usurps the place of sympotic entertainment and the weapons are used instead of food, wine, or the other paraphernalia of the feast. If there is any truth in Papachrysostomou’s suggestion, then the ultimate stage of development of this comic osmosis would be found a few decades after Mnesimachus’ play, in Menander’s *Colax*, also known from its Latin adaptation in Terence’s *Eunuch*. The *miles* of this comedy (Bias in Menander, Thraso in Terence) never once brags of his military virtues or war feats; instead, he boasts about his achievements in the symposium, such as the large amounts of wine he has gulped down, the witty jokes he has made in convivial occasions, and the excellent companionship he has thereby offered to the king (Men. *Colax* fr. 2–6 Arnott; Ter. *Eun.* 397–433). If in Mnesimachus’ satire war took the place of the symposium in the *miles*’ boastful discourse, the Menandrian play offers the exact opposite phenomenon, as the soldier fully replaces the martial boasts we would have expected of him with sympotic accomplishments. Cf. Legrand (1917) 96–97; Hofmann-Wartenberg (1973) 125–127, 129–130; Pernierstorfer (2009) 126.

#### 4. EPILOGUE

The personage of Lamachus in the *Acharnians*, often considered as the first fully developed *miles gloriosus* in the history of western theatre, was not created by Aristophanes *ex nihilo*; neither was it based solely on the satire of pro-war policy and its advocates in the embattled Athens of the Archidamian war. Aristophanes was the heir of a rich humorous tradition of Hellenic poetry and theatre, in which the figure of the braggart soldier had been well developed already since the archaic age. The pompous and cowardly general of the *Acharnians* is a composite creation that combines the traditional comic character of the boastful captain with the lampooned public persona of a prominent leader and war supporter from contemporary Athens.

The lesson of the Aristophanic Lamachus was not forgotten. Other poets, both younger contemporaries of Aristophanes and later revivalists of political drama, imitated the great comic master's conception, in order to create composite theatrical personages of their own, which similarly combined character schemes inherited from the comic tradition with topical satire of contemporary public life. The gallery of merry types, which was developed from an early period by the humorous imagination of the Greeks, was repeatedly politicized on the Attic stage of the fifth and the fourth century, so as to offer critical commentary on the great public issues of the city.

In essence, the examples analyzed in this essay may correlatively point to a broader conclusion. As suggested by Jeffrey Henderson, "political comedy" does not seem to have been a primary and natural phenomenon in ancient Greek theatre history.<sup>91</sup> Rather, the politically engaged comic drama (as known mostly from the last decades of the fifth century and from its short-lived renaissance in the mid-fourth century) was the result of a deliberate creative effort on the part of specific dramatists. These authors gave topical colouring and a public conscience to a comic tradition that was fundamentally apolitical by birth, so as to express the agonies of the democratic *polis* in times of crisis and turbulence.

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91. See Henderson (2015).

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