

**Michael Fontaine and Adele C. Scafuro (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Comedy*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. xiv+894 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-974343-4.**

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This book is an obviously useful addition to the shelf. Scafuro's introduction is followed by "Part One: Greek Comedy", "Part Two: Roman Comedy", "Part Three: Transmission and Ancient Reception", two appendices, and a detailed index.

Of the 18 chapters of Part One, the first three, under the rubric "I. Beginning", are concerned with Greek comedy in the fifth through early third centuries B.C.E. Chapters 4 to 13 constitute "II. The Greek Comedians and Their Plays". For example, Bernhard Zimmermann's "Aristophanes" is followed by a chapter by Ioannis M. Konstantakos on mythological burlesques from the fourth century B.C.E. Two chapters are devoted to Menander. Johanna Hanink's Ch. 12, "Crossing Genres: Comedy, Tragedy, and Satyr Play", is followed by David Konstan's Ch. 13, "Crossing Conceptual Worlds: Greek Comedy and Philosophy". The latter begins by stating (278):

There is something naturally funny about philosophy, or at least about philosophers, and this makes them an especially fit subject for satire and comedy.<sup>1</sup> Classical philosophy in particular was susceptible to such caricature, since it did not limit itself to abstract questions of logic or metaphysics but purported to serve as a guide to life<sup>2</sup> and investigated such areas as psychology, ethics, politics, and religion. In this respect, it was as vulnerable to send-up as psychoanalysis in our own day, and contradictions between the ostensible comportment of philosophers and the doctrines they preached<sup>3</sup> were fair game for comedians, along with ridicule of pretentiousness, wild utopian schemes, and scientific gobbledygook.

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<sup>1</sup> Nearly twenty years ago, I was honoured to have a light lunch with a famous philosopher (and faculty dean) at an Israeli university, in the dairy rather than meaty area of a mensa on campus at an Israeli university (that separation of the tables is in order to satisfy the needs of kosher observing customers). Quite possibly, this was not extraneous to my coming up, years later, with this joke:

- A. What does a philosopher order, at a restaurant?
- B. Sitz im Leben.

This is a pun. In present-day Hebrew, *im leben* means "with yoghurt". As for the *denotatum* of the international German compound *Sitz im Leben*, few would deny that this is something philosophers long for.

<sup>2</sup> I told you so.

<sup>3</sup> Diogenes is famous for his extreme asceticist rejection of even what others would consider bare necessities. The Italian poet and prose author Giacomo Leopardi wrote, on 22–24 February 1824, a satirical short prose which is part of his *Operette Morali*. It is entitled *Proposta di premi fatta dall'Accademia dei Sillografi*, i.e., *A Call for Submissions to Awards of the Academy of the Sillographers* (i.e., burlesque writers). It was a contest for three awards, for three machines to be developed: a machine that would be a truly good friend, a steam machine that would have the virtues of a generous and magnanimous human, and a machine that would be a good and faithful woman. The three awards were to consist of quite heavy golden medals with a ribbon. The medals are of increasing cost, in that order. The last paragraph explains how those prizes are to be funded:

L'Accademia ha decretato che alle spese che occorreranno per questi premi, suppliscasi con quanto fu ritrovato nella sacchetta di Diogene, stato segretario di essa Accademia, o con uno dei tre asini d'oro che furono di tre Accademici sillografi, cioè a dire di Apuleio, del Firenzuola e del Macchiavelli; tutte le quali robe pervennero ai Sillografi per testamento dei suddetti, come si legge nella storia dell'Accademia.

[The Academy has decreed that the expenses incurred for these awards are to be funded with what was found inside the bag of Diogenes, formerly a secretary of the aforementioned Academy, or with one of the three golden asses that belonged to three academic sillographers, namely, Apuleius, Firenzuola, and Machiavelli, inherited by the Academy as willed by them, as one can read in the history of the Academy.]

And indeed, *Clouds*, a comedy by Aristophanes, lampoons none else than Socrates (279):

Aristophanes's *Clouds* provides abundant examples of ridicule. Socrates is represented as running a school (called the *phrontisterion*, "Theory-House" or, in local Attic parlance, more like "Worry-Joint"), where his disciples carry on ostensibly secret research on how far a flea can jump in proportion to its size and whether gnats make noise with their mouths or anuses,<sup>4</sup> along with investigations into the nether earth, the heavens (Socrates appears suspended in a swing, to get a better view), and geometry, so as to map and measure the world. It is unlikely that Socrates himself indulged in this kind of speculation, but he is a convenient figure on which to pin and lampoon the explorations into natural science that were pursued by some of his contemporaries (sometimes paradoxically referred to as "pre-Socratics"), such as Diogenes of Apollonia, [etc.]

Ian Storey's very clear, tantalising Ch. 4, about the earliest Greek comedigraphers, tells for example how "[t]he testimonia reveal Cratinus as the grand old man of Old Comedy" (99), In fact (110–111):

A more representative triad for Old Comedy would have been Cratinus (myth + politics), Pherecrates (myth + domestic comedy), and Aristophanes (politics + tragedy). Old Comedy began, I suspect, as something primitive and basic, an animal chorus, slapstick with crude and obvious jokes, and an emphasis on song and dance. [...] But by the 440s and 430s we begin to detect sustained mythical burlesques [...] We also find the repeated theme of the ideal society, comic utopias being sought in the past (paradise lost), in the future (paradise regained), and somewhere out there (paradise found). [...] But the most striking theme [...] is the combination of political comedy and personal humor, as comedy responded to the flourishing and vigorous Athenian democracy. Here comedy was seen as having a redeeming social value, and Cratinus celebrated for wielding his "public whip".

The three chapters of "III. Attic Comedy and Society" are devoted to relations to respectively politics, law, and religion. Two chapters are included in "IV. The Diffusion of Comedy in the Hellenistic World". Of these, the second is Costas Panayotakis' "Hellenistic Mime and Its Reception in Rome", aptly so as the following Ch. 19 is "The Beginnings of Roman Comedy" by Peter Brown.

"Part Two: Roman Comedy" comprises three chapters in "I. Beginnings", the third of these on Plautus' relation to Greek comedy and Atellan farce. "II. The Roman Comedians and Their Plays" comprises chapters on Plautus and Terence, Ch. 24 on "Metrics and Music", Ch. 25 on prologue, Gesine Manuwald's Ch. 29 across genres: "Tragedy, Paratragedy, and Roman Comedy", and Ch. 28 on "The Language of the *Palliata*".

Wolfgang David Cirilo de Melo's Ch. 22, "Plautus' Dramatic Predecessors and Contemporaries in Rome", begins by explaining (this is something with which ones who know the basics will be rather familiar): "Roman comedy is traditionally divided into four

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<sup>4</sup> In their book *Birds Britannica*, Cocker and Mabey (2005, p. 45) relate, concerning the booming note of the bittern (*Botaurus*):

Another aristocrat captivated by the bird's 'mystique' was Lord Buxton, creator of the Anglia TV series *Survival*, who originally offered £1000 in the 1950s [at the time, with £2500 you could buy a house] to anyone obtaining film footage of a bittern booming. Buxton claimed it was a vision he had 'yearned to see for decades'. Later, however, on achieving his wish with a captive bird, he could not avoid a sense of comic anticlimax: 'Quite honestly I was a bit embarrassed at first, because the bittern looked as if it was blowing off through its backside. This seemed a rather tawdry climax to the greatest discovery on earth and I wondered in what language I was going to announce it to the world'.

In the United States, the great prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*), also known as the *pinnated grouse*, is sometimes called a *boomer* because the courting male makes a sound resembling the sound of blowing into a bottle.

distinct genres: the *fabula palliata* or ‘comedy in Greek dress’, [...]; the *fabula togata* or ‘comedy in Roman dress’, [...]; the *fabula Atellana* or ‘Atellan farce’, a genre named after the Oscan town Atella and less dependent on Greek material, [...]; and the *mimus* or ‘mime’, the only theatrical genre that was staged unmasked and had actresses as well as actors” (447).

That same Ch. 22 includes such sections as “Language and Literary Motifs in Gnaeus Naevius”, “Caecilian Elements in Caecilius”, and “The *Setina* by Titinius”, that comedy about the woman from Setia being the play by Titinius of which more text survives (18 fragments). “Menander makes us smile, but rarely laugh. [...] If for Menander the sum is more than the whole of its parts, then for Caecilius and Plautus it is the individual scene that is emphasized, even if the coherence of the whole suffers” (457).

In Ch. 26, “Between Two paradigms: Plautus”, Michael Fontaine begins his unnumbered preamble with a paragraph that uses a defamiliarisation device, but introducing Plautus in a different category from the one to which Plautus is usually assigned (516):

Two centuries before Horace demanded Melpomene’s laurels (*Odes* 3.30), Plautus might well have claimed her garland. Alongside Horace, Catullus, and Statius, he reigns as Rome’s fourth great lyric poet — with the critical difference, however, that his lyrics were set to music.

Section 1 in Fontaine’s Ch. 26 is entitled “Plautus as Comic Librettist” (517). Its final two paragraphs state the following (518–519):

Because Roman comedy is written in Latin instead of Greek, it invites us to inquire about *translation* (including cultural translation) rather than *adaptation*. (It also means that Plautus tends to get studied by Latinists rather than Hellenists, whereas he really should be of equal interest to both.) Moreover, with every passing year our knowledge of Plautine song increases (see Deufert in this volume and now Moore 2012, the flower of this research), but because the music has long since disappeared and because all of Plautus’s meters are rather complex, students, novices, and nonspecialists reading alone are least apt to recognize songs or other musicalized verse as such — they are least apt to appreciate, that is, the very feature that in recent years Plautine scholars have become increasingly interested in. Our growing appreciation of the musical dimension of Roman Comedy promises to shed light on some familiar questions of Plautine criticism as well as suggest new ones.

This is not to say, however, that the comparison of Plautus’s texts to his models is not illuminating on other grounds. It is, for several reasons. In particular, if one wants to understand the two competing paradigms into which the comedian is slotted and how we arrived at them (see §5 below), we must begin by comparing Plautus to his models.

“I call the two paradigms ‘Saturnalian’ and ‘Hellenistic’ respectively, and I trace the split between them to 1968” (529). The Saturnalian paradigm was inaugurated by Erich Segal’s (1968) *Roman Laughter*.

Named for Rome’s winter festival as the spirit in which Plautine comedy was performed, the Saturnalian paradigm emphasizes ‘freedom’ in a number of respects. It emphasizes Plautus’s independence from or subversion of his model, it emphasizes the temporary freedom from Roman social mores that his audience enjoys while watching the plays, and within the dramatic illusion of the plays it emphasizes a ‘topsy-turvy’ world free from mimetic reality itself (529–530).

The Hellenistic paradigm instead emphasizes Plautus’s continuity with the Greek tradition” (530). For example, in some coinages of Plautus, such as *trifur* and *triparcus*, the prefix does not necessarily stand for ‘thrice’ (‘thrice a thief’, ‘thrice cheap’), but rather Plautus was adopting a pattern from the Greek comic material, of using the prefix τρι- “meaning not literally ‘three’ but simply ‘very, super’” (531), and moreover Plautus uses this in puns, just as “Aristophanes punned repeatedly on the number three” (531). There are nuances aplenty in

Plautus that one only can appreciate by resorting to the Hellenistic paradigm. Fontaine provides several examples of this.

Chapter 27, is by Michael Fontaine. It is entitled “The Terentian Reformation: From Menander to Alexandria”. It begins with a survey of scholarship from the 1970s to the present concerning Terence and his comedies.

The convergence of these interventions has put Terence’s comedy in a new light. We now see more clearly than before that Terence boldly reformed Rome’s rich tradition of *comœdia*. Although he did musicalize his source texts extensively, he all but eliminated its polymetric musical showpieces and its other perceived excesses — the varied singsong meters, rollicking jokes, general buffoonery, and above its exuberant verbal style. His comedies are more subdued and artistically coherent, they do not break the fourth wall unexpectedly, and their verse approaches the cadence of prose [...] The result is greater realism in speech, ethics, psychology, and sentiment, heightened suspense, and thus — in a word — drama as we know it. Collectively these choices read as a fundamentalist turn, a shift away from the bastard operatic form in which Rome had adopted Athenian comedy in the Hellenistic period, and an attempt to return instead to the genre’s original, mimetic roots. What remains now is largely the question of influence and inspiration (538–539).

“Like a stalactite, scholarship on Terence tends to accrete slowly” (553). Fontaine discusses accusations of plagiarism and what they may have actually meant, after pointing out (551):

Terence prologues are autobiographical. That does not mean they are true, though it is usually assumed that they are, but unlike the statements of later biographers, they show us Terence as he wished to portray himself. They are occupied largely with literary polemics, and collectively they depict a man constantly dogged by rival comedians’ accusations: of “contaminating” plays, of plagiarism, of accepting help in writing, and of stylistic incompetence (*Phormio* 5). They also suggest that Terence repeatedly failed to win a crowd (*Hecyra* 10–27), even though other sources reveals that each of his plays was in fact a success that and [*recte*: and that] Eunuchus itself was an unprecedented success [...] What is remarkable is that most of these elements have direct parallels with Menander’s life.

“III. Roman Comedy and Society” comprises three chapters, on relation to the social scene, law, and religion, in that order. One can see then a sensible and useful symmetry between III in “Part One: Greek Comedy”, and III in “Part Two: Roman Comedy”.

“Part Three: Transmission and Ancient Reception” comprises Chs. 33 to 41, beginning with “The Transmission of Aristophanes”, by Nigel Wilson. Benjamin Victor’s Ch. 36 is “The Transmission of Terence”. Ch. 35, by Walter Stockert, is concerned with a manuscript discovered in the early 19th century at the Ambrosian Library in Milan, a palimpsest whose overwritten text is parts of a fifth-century Plautus codex, as well as fragments of Seneca’s tragedies. The future Cardinal Angelo Mai had tried to bring out the underlying, suppressed text by means of a reagent made of gallnuts, and this badly damaged the parchment. “Wilhelm Studemund so occupied himself with the palimpsest that deciphering the badly damaged manuscript finally became the important scholar’s life work” (682), and he “stressed his eyes to such a degree in carrying out the work that he finally lost his sight” (682, fn. 6).

Stockert himself worked with digital data, trying to find out something new in the comedy *Cistellaria*. Multispectral photographs were taken, in ultraviolet and infrared. The ultraviolet “did not give any result” as “useful photos are only possible for an ink that contains some ingredients of iron” (684, fn. 9). “Studemund’s *Apographum* is reliable [...] But the digital photographs sometimes enable us to see material that Studemund did not detect” (685).

In Ch. 38, Regina Höschele traces the impact of Greek comedy on the novel and epistolography (letter writing). In Ch. 39, “Roman Comedy in the Second Sophistic”, Regine May considers how between ca. 100 and 230 C.E. there “was a time of renewed interest in the comic genres of Athens and Rome” (753). Menander’s popularity ensured the survival of his



texts. “It was, however, Plautus who returned to center stage during the archaizing Second Sophistic. The Latin sophistic movement was characterized by the archaists’ predilection for the single word rather than the *sententiae* of Seneca or the period of classical times [...], and this predilection triggered and contributed to a renewal of interest in Plautus” (754).

Rolando Ferri’s Ch. 40, “The Reception of Plautus in Antiquity”, distinguished between “Phase Ia: Reperformance” (this is the title of Sec. 1), and “Phase Ib: The Comic Tradition” (this is the title of Sec. 2). Section 3 is entitled “Phase II: Late Republic and Early Imperial Period: Swing Phase”. “Among Republican scholars interested in Plautus, M. Terentius Varro stands out. He fostered the critical appreciation of the playwright. He discussed issues of authenticity, exegesis, and literary history, and he recreated some of Plautus’s spirit in his *Menippeans Satires*” (775). The latter “are a literary hybrid of prose and verse in various meters, including dramatic. [...] In the *Menippeans*, his debt to Plautus is certainly relevant” (775). For example, Varro makes use of a playful neologism introduced by Plautus: *uirgidemia*, “an invented compound from *uirga* ‘rod’ and (*uin*)*demia* ‘vintage’” (775); the sense is “a harvest of flogs”.

In contrast, Cicero quoted Terence more than he did Plautus, and then, what Cicero admired Plautus for, was as “a paradigm of good, old-fashioned Latin — one step further from admiration as a creative, influential writer. In *De oratore* 3.45, the leading character of the dialogue, Crassus, describes his mother-in-law’s more conservative manner of speaking as something that reminds him of Plautus” (776). “Horace’s criticism of Plautus centers mainly on Plautus’s failure to maintain the (ultimately social) distinction between the dramatic roles of young lovers, strict fathers, pimps, and servants” (778),<sup>5</sup> whereas “Donatus, for example, constantly praises Terence for maintaining distinctions (*seruare*) between *honestiores* and *humiliores*, between *liberale* ‘what is proper for free individuals’ and *seruile*” (778). In Rolando Ferri’s chapter, Sec. 4 is entitled “Phase III: Second Century CE: Revival”, and is followed by Sec. 5, “Phase IV: Late Reception”, which begins as follows (779):

Second-century authors of the second sophistic, namely Gellius and Fronto, were fundamental in elevating Plautus to the status of a recognized linguistic authority in the works of later lexicographers (especially Nonius Marcellus, ca. 400 CE) and other grammatical writers. So, for example, at the end of the fourth century, Servius’s commentary of Vergil largely resorts to Plautus to defend the use of archaic language in Vergil, and even goes so far as to argue, without much regard for genre or register expectations, that Plautus is the source of a passage in the *Aeneid* (Serv. *In Verg. Aen.* 6.62). Close in time to Servius, Macrobius mentions Plautus in his *Saturnalia*

<sup>5</sup> H. Rushton Fairclough (1913, pp. 189–190) claimed (with a flourish present-day scholars would avoid):

If Cicero could eulogize Terence as

quiddam come loquens atque omnia dulcia dicens,

if Caesar could compare him to the polished and graceful Menander, and describe him as *puri sermonis amator*, ‘lover of Latin undefiled’, while at a later day the discriminating Quintilian could apply to his plays the significant epithet *elegantissima*, if to the Latin writers of mediaeval and modern times he has been the chief model for purity and refinement in conversational style, if Sainte-Beuve calls him *le lien entre l’urbanité romaine et l’atticisme des Grecs*, and assures us that if Virgil had written comedies he would have written them as Terence did, we need not hesitate to believe that Horace also recognized in the work of Terence a remarkable achievement, being nothing less than a near approach to literary perfection in the field of comedy.

Fortunately, we have positive as well as negative evidence of Horace’s admiration for Terence. The comic writer’s influence in moulding the admirable style of Horace’s *sermo cotidianus* has often been commented upon, and a comparative study of Horace and Terence will show that the later poet owes not a little of his success to his intimate familiarity with the plays of Terence.

And yet, Post (1930), “inspired, at least in part, by indignation”, invoked Caesar among others against Terence...

as one of the two most eloquent ancient Latin writers, on a par with Cicero (Macr. *Saturnalia* 2.1.10 [...]).

The school tradition, however, remains firmly dominated by Terence and the particular type of dramatic illusion his works promoted. [...]

In Ch. 37, Sebastiana Nervegna discusses how comedy is reflected in mosaics and miniatures. Graphic illustrations are also the subject of Sec. 2 in Chrysanthi Demetriou's Ch. 41, "Aelius Donatus and His Commentary on Terence's Comedies". Donatus "was active around the middle of the fourth century" (782), and was Jerome's teacher. "Donatus's commentary on Terence is found in about forty manuscripts of the fifteenth century, and in two manuscripts of the eleventh and thirteenth centuries that preserve only a part of the work" (782). A subsection of Sec. 2 contrasts the commentaries of Donatus and EUGRAPHIUS (794–797). There exists an electronic edition of Donatus, *Hyperdonat* (797).

As a supplement to Colin Austin's 1973, *Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta in Papyris Reperta*, the first appendix in the book under review "draws attention to some of the ways the post-1973 [Greec comic] papyri have enriched our understanding of ancient comedy. [Appendix 1's] Part II is a table which synoptically presents the post-1973 comic papyri one by one" (803).

Appendix 1, by Benjamin Millis, is "Post-Menandrian Comic Poets: An Overview of the Evidence and a Checklist". For example, under the rubric "Athens: City Dionysia", in the alphabetic list we find Posidippus, of the third century B.C.E., "victorious five times" (877), whose entry follows the second century "Po[---]" (*sic*: not even his full name is known), "victorious an unknown number of times" (877). The only known victor from the Sarapiea in the town of Tanagra is Poses, who won in ca. 85 C.C.E. (882).

This is a beautifully done, rich and complex book whose editors and authors are to be congratulated. Perforce this is a volume one first savours in small morsels, before delving in depth in the individual chapters and their wise sequence.<sup>6</sup> Treatment goes deep into the

<sup>6</sup> A remark about the index. Take the entry "utopia": it points to pp. "286–8". Why not also mention other quite relevant pages? Utopia is prominent in the central part of p. 109, and then a nice taxonomy appears at the bottom of p. 110 and at the top of p. 111. In his overview article about Greek Old Comedy, Ian Storey wrote the following in a section about Pherecrates (p. 109, Storey's own brackets):

There was some debate about the authorship of *Miners* and *Persians*, but both seem to have turned on the familiar theme of the Golden Age and "automatic" utopian life. K-A fr. 113 (*Miners*) consists of a dialogue of thirty-three lines in which a woman details the ideal life that awaits one in the underworld, while K-A fr. 114 describes meadows and flowers that, if also part of the underworld, remind one of the home of the dead initiates in *Frogs* 323–459. This is a utopia to be found "out there" (or rather "down there"), while the speaker of the ideal society described in *Persians* (a people presented in art and literature as stereotypically wealthy and fortunate) asks:

What need have we now of your [sing.] lows and your yoke-makers, of your sickle-makers or coppersmiths, of seeds and stakes? For on their own [*automatoi*] through the crossroads shall flow rivers of black broth with shiny speckle cakes and Achilles-buns.

This appears to be a utopia realized in the future, although it could be the result of relocating elsewhere, e.g., Persia — compare Metagenes K-A fr. 6 [*Thurio-Persians*], where life in Thuri is described as a utopian ideal.

This is a Cockaigne utopia (international tale type 1930). The international tale type 1935 is described as follows by Uther (2004, p. 266 in Vol. 2):

**Topsy Turvy Land.** Various tall tales often in the form of a sermon, a poem, a song, or a travelogue in which everything is mixed up or inverted. For example: the weak overpower the strong, cripples can catch hares, lying is the "finest art form", the laziest person is the king, etc. [X1505] Cf. Types 1930, 1965.

respective subject matter, but these chapters are usually readable, and do not put off the reader, who is by no means expected to necessarily be a specialist, even though specialists will certainly benefit. The reader with good will is led by hand, and will not be disappointed. Whatever your level of preparation, there is much to learn from this book.

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This is different from tale type 1930:

**Schlaraffenland.** (Land of Cockaigne.) [X1503, X1712]. A tale about a world where impossible, utopian things happen and everything is topsy-turvy.

For example, doves pluck a wolf, frogs thresh grain, mice ordain a bishop, etc. Generally there is an abundance of food and drink, such as a river of honey, food growing on trees, edible houses and mountains, and roasted chickens and pastries that fly into people's mouths, etc.

**Combinations:** This type is usually combined with one or more other types, esp. 1882A, 1889E, 1920, 1920A–H, 1935, and 1960.

**Remarks:** Early literary version see e.g. Herodotus (III, 17–18), and later Boccaccio, *Decamerone* (VIII, 3), and Philippe le Picard (nos. 12, 49, 85). Popular Münchhausen tale (Münchhausen, ch. 20, Münchhausen/Bürger, ch. 17). Known as a proverbial phrase (“roasted doves fly right into your mouth”).

Variants of tale type 1930 are widespread worldwide, including not only Europe, but also the Near East, China, and east and Central Africa. Variants of tale type 1935 are found in Europe as well as Central Asia, Korea, Japan, and Egypt. The concept of Cockaigne from folklore and fiction is discussed, e.g., in Fortunati and Zucchini's edited volume (1989) about the subject, as well as in a book by Hilário Franco Júnior (Franco 1998) — Franco devotes much attention to the Old French *fabliau de Cocagne*, whose text he analyses — a book by Pleij (2001), and a posthumous book by Cucchiara (1980). This subject is related to the topic of fantastic food staples, itself related to the topic of fantastic creatures (see Clemente 2001). A famous painting by Pieter Bruegel, of 1567, and titled *The Land of Cockaigne*, shows idle individuals lying on the ground amid food. Cf. in the *fabliau de Cocagne*, vv. 27–28: “Li país a a non [=a nom] Cocaigne; / Qui plus i dort, plus i gaaigne” (“That country is called Cocaigne; / He who sleeps there more, earns more”). An edition by Väänänen of *Le fabliau de Cocagne* was published in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 48 (1947), 3–36. It was published again, with a translation and analysis, in Franco's book.

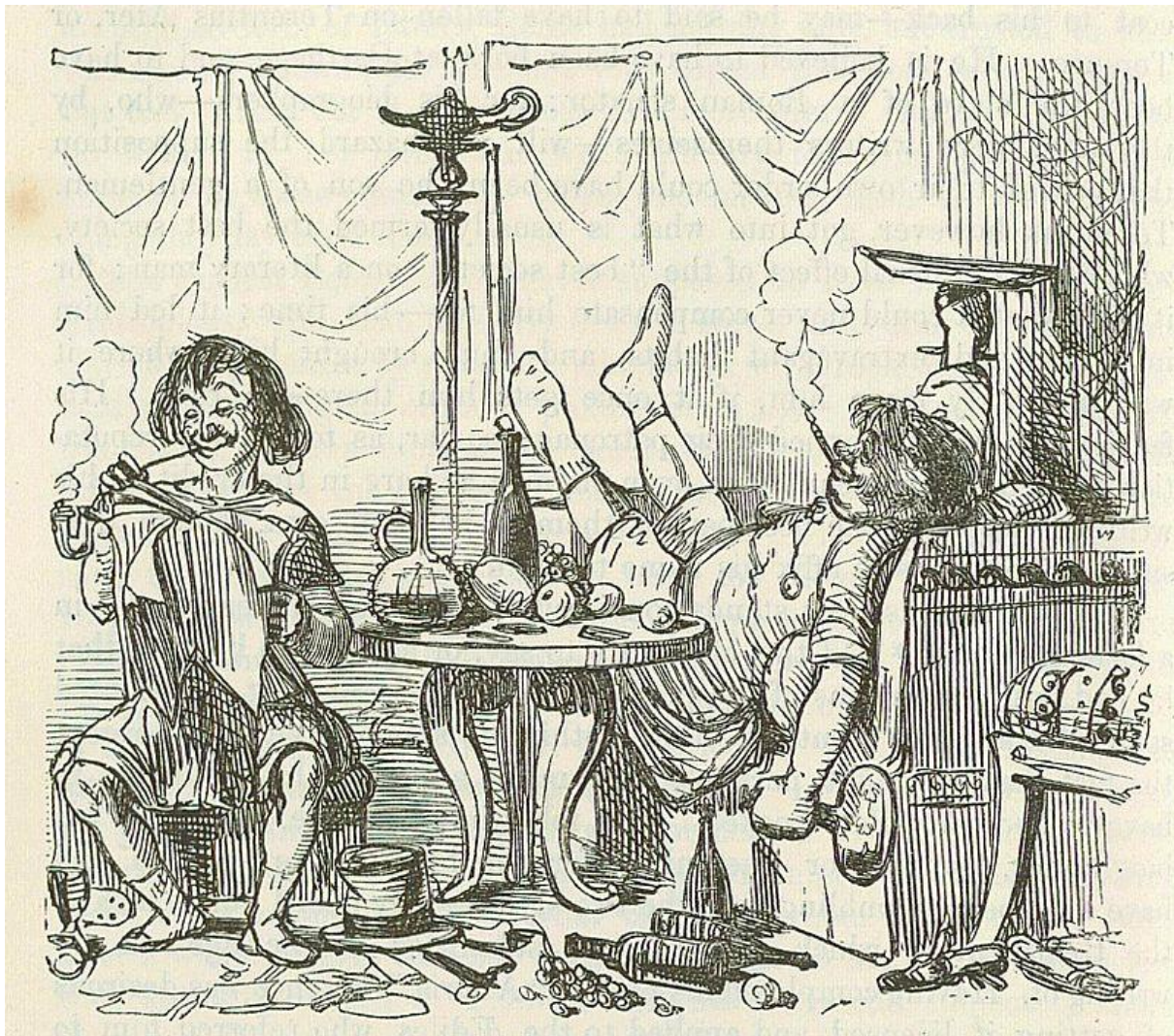
That text of the *fabliau de Cocagne* goes on (it contains 188 lines in all), relating that all walls are made of fish, that the roofing tiles are made of lard, that the fences are made of sausages. Meat encircles the wheat fields, and geese are roasted in the streets, and turn on the fire by themselves. Everywhere on walkways and roads one finds tables and food one can eat freely. There is a creek of whine, and pitchers approach it all by themselves, and both red wine and white wine flow in that very same creek. The inhabitants are virtuous and courteous. Every month comprises six weeks, and every year comprises four Easters, four St. John festivals, and four vintages. Each and every day is festive, a Sunday indeed. Every year, also All Saints' Day and Christmas, as well as Carnival and Candlemas, each occur four times. Lent instead only occurs once every twenty years, and even so fast then is a pleasure, and from the morning until well into the afternoon neither fish nor meat is forbidden to eat during Lent. Every week, puddings rain down during three days. In that country, one finds purses full of coins strewn on the ground. But you don't need to buy or sell anyway. Women are available, and the more available they make themselves, the more they are honoured. They actually take the initiative. Quite elegant cloths are found there, and every month, garments of various kinds are distributed free of charge, and everyone gets the ones he (or she) likes better. If you are well, change nothing; experience teaches that doing otherwise is often harmful.

Apart from that Old French *fabliau*, cf. in Spanish *La isla de Cuccaña*, edited in Duran (1829, p. 282 ff.). Also cf. Martin Ciego di Lucca, *Il trionfo della Cuccagna*, (ed. Rossi 1888, p. 400 ff.), and an Italian text by Giulio Cesare Croce (b. San Giovanni in Persiceto, near Bologna, 1550, d. Bologna, 1609) — an author especially known for his *Bertoldo*, a version of the Marcolf tradition — namely, *Capitolo di Cuccagna*, ed. Zenatti (1884, pp. 55–62). Of course, Cockaigne is also known by other names. For example, Spanish knows of Cuccaña, but also of the land of Jauja. *Jauja* by Joan Jolis (Barcelona, n.d.) was reproduced in Amades (1954). Cf. Lope de Rueda, *La tierra de Jauja*, in *Pasos*, ed. F. González Ollé and V. Tusón (1992, pp. 162–165). The mythical Jauja was so called after a rich mining region in the Andes. One should not confuse this myth with that of El Dorado.



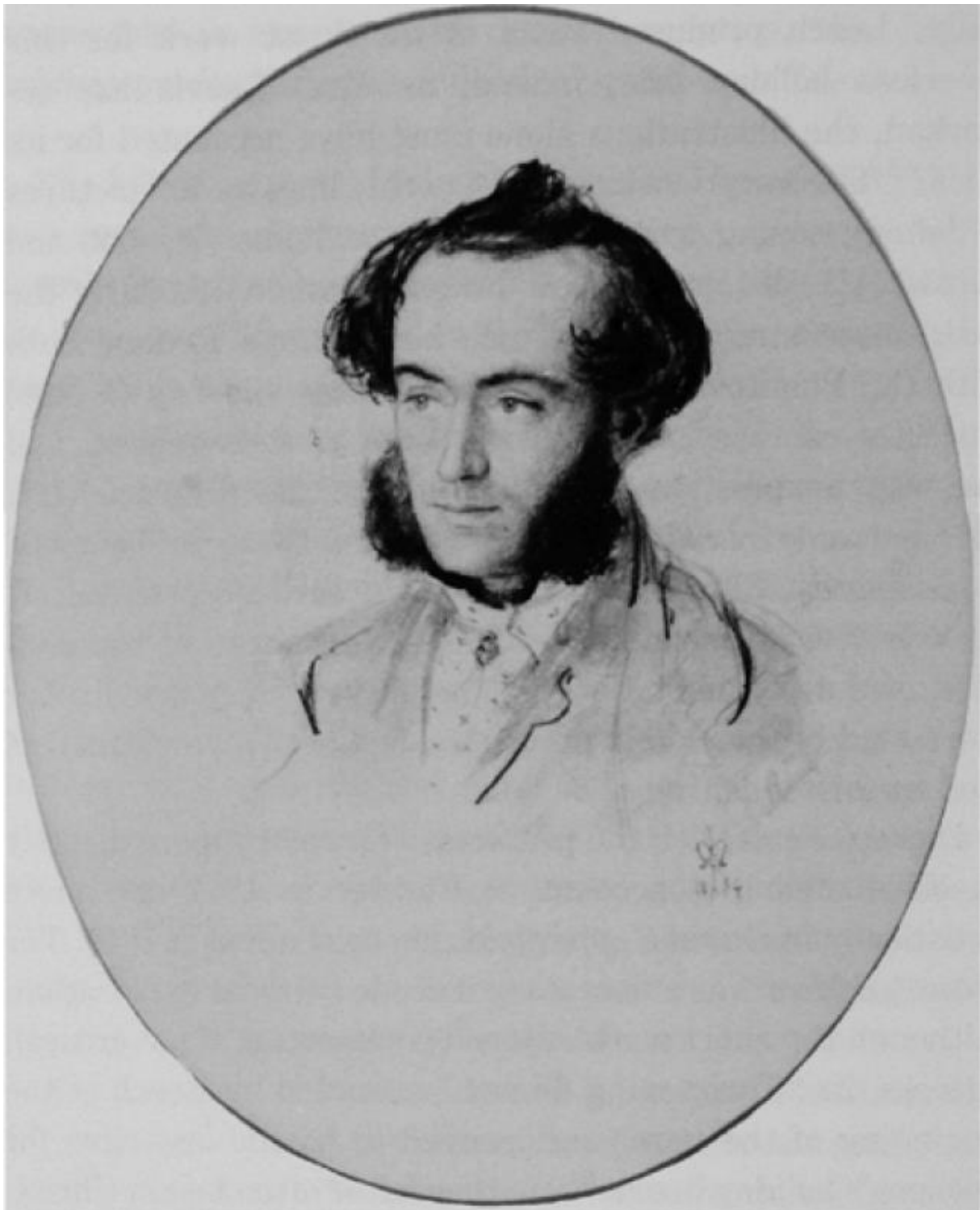
### Post Script 1

In 1851, Gilbert Abbott à Beckett's *The Comic History of Rome* appeared (London: Bradbury, Evans & Co.); its funny illustrations, by John Leech (1817–1864) — a cartoonist to *Punch* and an illustrator of Dickens (e.g., for *A Christmas Carol*, for *The Cricket on the Hearth*, and for *The Haunted Man*: see Ch. 7 in Cohen 1980, pp. 141–151). In an illustration that purports to show the ancient Roman comedigraphers Terence and Caecilius under the influence, with the former smoking a pipe and reading a play of his to Caecilius, whereas Caecilius wears modern socks and smokes a cigarette. (This reminds of funny imagery from Italy about some peplum film being made in Cinecittà, the film-making neighbourhood of Rome: it is a cliché, in cartoons about such a situation, to show some supernumerary who impersonates an ancient Roman legionnaire, smoking a cigarette.) Incidentally, the Israeli Hebrew word for 'cigarettes' as spelled is found in the corpus of Roman- and Sasanian-era rabbinic texts, but as found there, it means something altogether different.



This figure by John Leech is taken from p. 210 in *The Comic History of Rome* (Beckett 1851), and purports to show “Terence reading his Play to Caecilius”.





A portrait of John Leech, made in 1854 by John Millais. In 1851, Bradbury & Evans published *The Comic History of Rome* as 10 parts in 9 in octavo. It comprised 10 hand-coloured steel engravings and 98 woodcuts by Leech.<sup>7</sup> Before Gilbert Abbott à Beckett's *The Comic History of Rome*, which gets as far as Julius Caesar, The Punch Office had published in 1847–1848 his *The Comic History of England*, in three volumes, and it, too, was illustrated by John Leech.

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<sup>7</sup> See all those images at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:The\\_Comic\\_History\\_of\\_Rome](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:The_Comic_History_of_Rome)



Tom Smart and the Chair, as drawn by John Leech for the *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. This drawing was made by Leech in 1836 as a demonstration, when he was initially approaching Dickens. He was rejected by him five times. Dickens had already hired Hablot Browne as an illustrator for *The Pickwick Papers*, and informed Leech accordingly. “Undaunted, Leech once again approached Dickens at Furnival’s Inn in late August to leave a drawing of Tom Smart and the chair, illustrating the Bagman’s story then appearing in *Pickwick* (fig. 129). Understanding that the young artist wanted to attract the attention of Chapman and Hall in order to secure their good opinion and possibly even a post on something like their *Library of Fiction*, the author forwarded the sketch to the publishers with a disparaging note. ‘The chair’s not bad, but his notion of the Bedroom is rather more derived, I should be disposed to think, from his own fourth pair back, than my description of the old rambling house’ [...] His note to the artist, who ‘threatened’ (in Dickens’s words) to call again, was more tactful. Acknowledging that leech’s design was ‘extremely well conceived and executed, he said he had sent it to Chapman and Hall, though he thought they were already provided with artists for their *Library*, an enterprise he himself had nothing to do with” (Cohen 1980, p. 141).

The phenomenon by which if you were to search an online corpus of early rabbinic literature for Gaddafi's name as spelt in the Israeli newspapers (גדפי *GDFY*), you would find it there, even though in the ancient corpus it means something quite different ('the Coptic language'),<sup>8</sup> is not unique. The Israeli Hebrew word for 'cigarettes' is *sigáryot*. The Hebrew spelling (here romanised) is *sygrywt* (it is סיגרייה the Hebrew script). That spelling *sgrywt* (it gets an entry in Jastrow 1903)<sup>9</sup> occurs in early rabbinic literature: it apparently denotes vegetables preserved in vinegar (or at any rate, Jastrow believed so), and the etymology is from the Greek *oxygaron*, from the Latin *oxygarum* (itself containing a Greek prefix), whether when Jews referred by *sygrywt* to a staple they would eat, that food contained or not, as an ingredient, the *garum* which the ancient Romans considered a delicacy (Apicius' cookbook even prescribed it as an ingredient in rose petal marmalade),<sup>10</sup> and which was obtained from rotten fish entrails.

Recent archaeozoological research in the Near East suggests that fish was indeed an ingredient in sauces widespread in the region in Roman times.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Gdfy* or *kfy*, usually *gyfyt* (Jastrow 1903, pp. 214, 682, 241). If read *gadfei*, the word spelled *gdfy* is an Aramaic word for 'wings' or 'wings of', 'feathers' or 'feathers of', or in some contexts, 'birds', 'feathered creatures' (Jastrow 1903, p. 214). In the *Targum* to *Job* 38:13, *gdpy* means 'borders of' the earth.

Egyptian or Coptic is mentioned sporadically in the early rabbinic literature with the spellings *gypyt* (*gypyt lgyptym*, "in Coptic for Coptic-speakers", *Megillah* 18a) and metathetically *ktpy* (*Sanhedrin* 4b and *Zevahim* 37b) or even, as printed sometimes, *gdpy* (the latter happens to be how Israelis are used to see the late Col. Mu'ammar Gaddafi's family name transcribed). Arguably the spelling *gdpy* arose by both metathesis, and interference with the Hebrew and Aramaic root of verbs for 'to blaspheme', and of a Jewish Aramaic noun whose acceptations or rather lexemes include 'rim', and, from another etymon, 'bird', 'plumage'. In the *Targum* to *Job* 38:13, *gdpy* means 'borders of' the earth.

In *Numbers Rabbah*, 10, one finds a Hebrew homiletic statement concerning Sisera (the general of the city state of Hatzor in the Galilee, defeated by the army led by Deborah and Barak): "because he disgraced and reviled them (*lēfi šehayá mēharēfám umēgaddēfám*) with oppressive measures (*binēhišá*), therefore he died an ignominious death (*lakhén met mitá gēdufá*)". This is an example of retribution in kind (or poetic justice), called *middá kénéged middá* in rabbinic discourse, *recirculatio* in Church Latin, and *contrappasso* in Dante Alighieri (cf. Nissan 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Jastrow's (1903) entry *sgrywt* (*ibid.*, p. 956) points to 'ksygrwn (*ibid.*, p. 64): "m. (ὀξύγαρον, *oxygarum*) a sauce of vinegar and garum; in gen. a sauce of all kinds of vegetables." There are three occurrences in the Babylonian Talmud, one in the Tosefta (and two more spelled differently), and one in the Jerusalem Talmud. The plural form was 'ksyrgrywt, or shortened into *sgrywt*. The definition of the plural form in Jastrow is "vegetable sauces, vegetables used for *oxygarum*." Several variant spellings are documented, and listed by Jastrow, s.v. 'ksygrwn.

It must be said that for the occurrence in the *Mishnah*, tractate *Shevi'it*, 9:5, one finds the the variants *snrywt* (סנריות), *sgrywt* (סגריות), and *sndywt* (סנדייות). The context is about the fallow year (the seventh year, when deliberate crop-growing is forbidden, and spontaneous crops are not private property but *res nullius* from which anybody can benefit): "*Okhlin barēgila* [or: *barēgela*] 'ad šeyyikhlu sinnariyyot mibbiq'at Beit Nētofa", i.e., "It is permissible to eat (literally: They eat) of (literally: in) the purslane until the *sinnariyyot* run out of (literally: are exhausted from) the plain of Beth Netofah". In his commentary to the *Mishnah*, Hanokh Albeck *ad loc.* explains, concerning the *sinnariyyot*: "and they are a kind of *rgylh*". In the *Mishnah*, tractate *Shevi'it*, 7:1, he defined *rgylh* as "Portulaca, Purslane". At any rate, it would appear to be the case that *sinnariyyot* or *siggariyyot* in the *Mishnah*, tractate *Shevi'it*, 9:5, denotes a plant taxon, rather than a kind of processed food.

<sup>10</sup> For a cultural equivalent of an ingredient that ends up in most dishes, consider, from U.S. cuisine, ketchup, or then what the producers of corn syrup have long tried to make of their product, persuading prospective customers to add it to almost any dish.

<sup>11</sup> Archaeological research is sometimes concerned with the remains of fish products in the Near East. Van Neer and Parker (2008) discuss fish remains found at the bottom of a ceramic jar from Ayla (the ancient Eilat), at present-day Aqaba, Jordan, and dating from the Early Roman period in the Near East. The remains from the jar are bones, and these are "the gill apparatuses of at least 33 medium-sized tunas (*Auxis*; Scombridae) and a single individual of a lizardfish (*Trachinocephalus myops*; Synodontidae)". (Note that both tunas and lizardfishes have scales, and are kosher; as no special slaughter is required for fish, the product was apparently kosher.)

Van Neer and Parker (2008, p. 1821) propose that these remains are *haimation*, a — they claim —





## Post Script 2



Some readers would presumably find this remark useful. It is far from being the case that humour is only found in the genre of the comedy, within ancient Greek and Roman literature. Consider the following. Morgan (2003) is concerned with the novel *Daphnis and Chloe* by the second-century Longus. “In general terms, the effect of Longus’ narrative strategy, as it grows from the prologue, is that *Daphnis and Chloe* is told by its narrator as if it were a simpler and more conventional story than it really is, and invites its reader to read it in the same way. One way to describe this textual duplicity is to think in terms of a surface ‘narrator’s text’ and a deeper ‘author’s text’. We can conceive the narrator, as established by the prologue, as a distorting and simplifying lens between the story and us” (Morgan 2003, p. 178). Morgan explains (*ibid.*, p. 179):

[T]he young Methymnaians in the novel [...] come to the countryside for a vacation: they want to play at enjoying the simple life for a while and to act out the urban fantasy of pastoral simplicity without confronting the realities of subsistence agriculture. In order not to spoil their vacation with petty haggling or arguments, they are happy to pay over the odds for food, and content themselves with a few complaints when their mooring-rope is stolen to replace a broken one needed in the vintage (2.12.4, 2.13.2). It is only when their ship and everything on board is lost, a loss too serious to ignore, that they become angry, resort to violence and start to treat the country people as their inferiors. Their experience measures the distance between wilful pastoral fantasy and a rural reality

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highly prized fish sauce, documented previously only from ancient textual evidence, was typically made from the gills and the entrails of tunnids to which salt was added. The sauce was not imported from the Mediterranean or the Black Sea, but made from local Red Sea fish as shown by the zoogeographical distribution of the lizardfish that is considered as stomach content of the tunas. Because the fish bones were found in a locally produced jar and because the calculated volume of the *haimation* that the bones represent corresponds more or less to the volume of the jar, it is concluded that this high-quality *garum* was produced in this container at Aila itself.

Also consider the following quotation from an article on the Roman trade in Nilotic salted fish products, by Van Neer et al. (2007, p. 184):

The fish products described in the present article are the first assemblages dating to the Roman period that consist of small Nilotic fish and that are believed to represent a local variant of the famous ‘genuine’ fish sauces and *salsamenta* produced on an industrial scale in the Roman Mediterranean. That the fish bone assemblages were found at a great distance from the Nile implies that the fish must have been salted to prevent spoilage during transport, and ascertains their identification as fish sauce or *salsamenta*. Additional arguments that support this assumption are the fact that the two products from Mons Claudianus were found in vessels, and that one of them, as well as the sample from Quseir, contained herbs and other additives. As argued above, the Quseir sample and the Mons Claudianus Fort South East assemblage clearly represent *salsamenta*, i.e. whole fish prepared in brine, in this case small specimens. The small assemblage from Mons Claudianus Fort West II gives no clue as to whether it was a fish sauce or *salsamenta*. In any case, it consisted of small Nilotic fish that were either preserved whole or fermented to a higher degree, which then resulted in a more decomposed product that can be classified as fish sauce. If a fish sauce, it then contained bones and should therefore be considered as *altec*, as opposed to *garum*. Within the fish sauce manufacturing chain, *garum* is the higher quality product, obtained by decanting the volume of brine and fermented fish. *Garum* is a liquid that contains no, or almost no, fish bones, and is thus usually impossible to detect archaeozoologically.

Quseir el-Qadim is on the Red Sea coast of Egypt, whereas Mons Claudianus is not far from the Red Sea coast. Wim Van Neer is affiliated with the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, in Brussels.

where the equipment is rotten and no one will buy what he can steal instead. The story itself exposes their fantasy as the unreality it is, and their hostility as a conditioned social reflex.

“The hidden author comments on his narrator and indeed the whole enterprise of pastoral literature” (Morgan 2003, pp. 179–180). Morgan supplies this example of humour (*ibid.*, p.180):

In Bk. 1 Daphnis has been abducted by pirates but is rescued when some trained cows respond to a tune on the panpipes and leap overboard, capsizing the pirates’ ship and sending them to a watery grave. The already ludicrous sequence (obviously the author’s parody of the use of pirates and shipwreck as plot-staples in the romance genre) is expanded by an enthusiastically pedantic explanation of the mechanics of the sinking of the ship. The narrator rounds things off with a little paradoxographical excursus, clearly to be read as his own elaboration of the basic data (1.30.6): your cow is an excellent swimmer (he tells us), much better than your human being, in fact second only to ducks and fish. Cows, however, are handicapped by the fact that their feet drop off when wet. The absurdity of this has dismayed scholars. Castiglioni proposed the excision of the whole section: *utinam recte*, comments Michael Reeve in the apparatus of his Teubner edition, *sed Longum sapit* (“I wish rightly; but it smells of Longus”). No other ancient writer shares the belief that cows lose their feet in moist conditions: I myself live in the dampest area of the United Kingdom, where cows pass their entire lives standing in puddles, but I have never seen one hoof-less. The excursus is humorous, but in a complex way: the humour is the author’s; the joke is on the narrator, who purveys this surreal nonsense in all seriousness.

As for irony, Morgan remarks (2003, p. 189):

Before it can be read ironically, the novel must be read at its face value; and it is an historical fact that many readers have felt no compulsion or direction to go further. What is more, Longus, the real human being with a second-century pen in his hand, was not a narratologist. There are thus equally places in the text where the irony is palpable but refuses to come into focus in narratological terms. One example must suffice. At 1.12.5, after Daphnis emerges from the wolf-trap, the goat he was chasing is also pulled out, with both its horns broken. “So that was how it was punished for what it had done to the goat that lost the fight” (τοσοῦτον ἄρα ἡ δίκη μετήλθε τοῦ νικηθέντος τράγου). The evocation of providential justice in such a context is surely ironic, but we lose our time if we try to decide whether the irony is that of the urban narrator using the incongruity to raise a superior smile at the expense of his rustic subject matter, or of the hidden author mocking a sentimental worldview seriously held by the narrator.

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<sup>12</sup> Jastrow's Dictionary was often reprinted by various publishers; New York: Chereb (2 vols. in 1, 1926, later reprinted in Jerusalem by Chorev); London: E. Shapiro [i.e., Shapiro, Vallentine] (1926); New York: Title Publ. (1943); New York: Pardes Publ. (1950, 2 vols.); and with a new title, *Hebrew-Aramaic-English Dictionary...* (2 vols., 1969). Also (with the standard title), New York: Judaica Press, 1971 (2 vols. in 1); New York: Jastrow Publishers, 1903, repr. 1967 (2 vols. in 1); Brooklyn: Shalom (2 vols., 1967); Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., 2005 (in 1 vol. of 1736 pp.).

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