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P.Oxy.219 (Mim. Pap. fr. 4 Cunn.): an allegorical paraclausithyron behind an untragic lament?

Abstract

The outline of the story of the mime contained in *P.Oxy. 219* runs as follows: a cock falls in love with a hen and flies away with her. The cock-breeder laments gravely over this erotic adventure and the concomitant loss. However, a range of masterfully latent elements encourages a different interpretation, pointing toward a homosexual story with an unhappy ending, suitably adapted to the style of the genre. This paper attempts to illuminate a different aspect, relying on a net of specific keywords and components, all differently presented and modified within the context of an allegorical story. The final interpretation diverges from the prevailing view that the text is a parody of the literary lament for a familiar person, and instead prompts a reading of its driving *topoi* as borrowed from the *paraclausithyron* motif. From this perspective, the sorrowful complaint culminates in a lament with tragic reminiscences, yet with an unambiguously comic function.

La storia del mimo contenuto nel *P.Oxy. 219* si può riassumere così: un gallo si è innamorato di una gallina ed è fuggito via con lei. L'allevatore si lamenta per l'avventura erotica del proprio animale e ne piange la perdita. Tuttavia, una serie di elementi celati ad arte spinge verso un'interpretazione differente, orientando il lettore verso una storia di amore omosessuale con esito negativo adeguatamente adattata allo stile di un mimo. Questo articolo mira a mettere in luce un aspetto differente della narrazione sulla base di un insieme di parole chiave ed elementi caratterizzanti, tutti presentati in maniera diversa dal solito e modificati nel contesto di una storia allegorica: l'interpretazione finale devia dall'opinione prevalente che analizza il testo come una parodia del lamento per una persona familiare, e invita a considerare i motivi che guidano la narrazione come ripresi del *paraclausithyron*. Sotto questa prospettiva, il compianto addolorato dell'allevatore culmina in un lamento pervaso da forti reminiscenze tragiche, ma allo stesso tempo rifunzionalizzato in chiave indubbiamente comica.

The so-called popular mimes of the Hellenistic and Imperial era claim a place in the theatrical tradition with absolute generic self-consciousness, deliberately consolidating a relationship of opposition to high literature¹. Already before the Hellenistic era the genre of mime was divided into sub-genres, which relied in the exploitation of dramatic situations and stereotypical characters, well known from tragedy and comedy, and their adaptation *κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ἀγωγὴν καὶ διάθεσιν*². Thus, *hilarodia*, *simodia*, *magodia*, *lysiodia* and *kinaidologoi*³ constitute mimic entertainments which, despite their

¹ On mime's peculiar relationship to high literature, see SPANOUDAKIS (2007, 14, 24); PETRIDES (2008, 469).

² Athen. XIV 621 c-d.

³ Cf. Athen. XIV 620 d-622d.

differences, are formed as a par excellence opposition to the high genres⁴. Consequently, the affinities between the aforementioned mimic production and the decent literary and theatrical genres highlight the familiarity of the mimographers with a very specific art and techniques, respectively. Under this prism, it seems that the sharp distinction between elite and popular production, and the application of a “Manichean” logic undermine the insightful and all-encompassing reception, leading to distorted and overly simplified readings⁵. As has been aptly and persuasively pointed out, the application of the term *osmosis*⁶ is more suitable and variably helpful to describe this process – especially regarding the genres that thrived during the late Hellenistic and Imperial era – since the writers re-elaborated the models and provided their audiences with stories already popular and well-known, easily understandable and entertaining. A wide range of verbal and thematic parallels, plot elements and structure patterns ascribed to the code of other genres attests to the hypothesis that components of the literary and theatrical tradition, which enjoyed recognized success, are duly amalgamated and inserted with renewed dynamics, aiming primarily to satisfy the function of these dramas, namely the need for entertainment⁷. Additionally, this kind of function seems to be strictly reliant to the various social and national stratifications of the population of the cities of Egypt during the Imperial era⁸, where it is reasonable to suppose that tastes and preferences would be extremely difficult to coincide in the context of this heterogeneous complexity.

In the frame of the aforementioned fertile and productive *osmosis*, the anonymous mime preserved in P.Oxy. 219, entitled by the first editors as *Lament for a Cock*⁹, a *paignion*, a performance of mimic entertainment¹⁰, is of special interest. In this paper I will attempt to illuminate a different aspect, arguing that the lament derives from and constitutes the culmination of an erotic complaint and consequently the driving *topoi* are borrowed from the *paraclausithyron* motif. Although individual traits and markers,

⁴ For a detailed description of the mimic sub-genres, see TSITSIRIDIS (2014, 201-203 and n.1 and 2015, 205-41, specifically 216-19 for a comparison of the sub-genres with theatrical entertaining forms from other eras and places); on the relationship of the dramatic mime to the various sub-genres, see SONNINO (2020, 411-13, 434-36).

⁵ See ANDREASSI (2002, 30); SPANOUDAKIS (2007, 14, 25); PETRIDES (2008, 264 f.); PANAYOTAKIS (2010, 3f.) rightly points out that the distinction was not made by the ancient authors, who generally downplayed the genre; SONNINO (2014, 145). For a different opinion, see SWIDEREK (1954), who categorizes the ensemble of these mimic performances as strictly “popular” without literary pretensions.

⁶ ANDREASSI (2002,45); see also ANDREASSI (1997, 1-21 and 2001, 34f.); SONNINO (2014, 148).

⁷ TSITSIRIDIS (2011, 218 and n. 86).

⁸ On the function of the mime of the Imperial age and its connection to the heterogeneous national and sociolinguistic identities of the audience, see ANDREASSI (2002, 44f.); TSITSIRIDIS (2011, 218).

⁹ GRENFELL – HUNT (1899, 39-41); see also CRUSIUS (1914, 131), who gives the fragment the title Παις ἀλέκτορα ἀπολέσας.

¹⁰ See FUNAIOLI (2010, 69-80).

such as the lament for a beloved, also occur in the poetic erotic discourse and are not exclusively tied to the *paraclausithyron* motif, I suggest that the accumulation of several recognizable *topoi* within the framework of a brief synthesis, along with similarities with other mimic *paraclausithyra*, advocates in favour of the *paraclausithyric* nature of the text. Under this perspective, the lover's complaint maintains the dominant role and evolves into a lament, based on key components known from tragedy, further testifying to mime's penchant for depicting various generic interplays.

I quote the text from Cunningham's edition (Mim. Pap. fr. 4)¹¹:

]ε.ρ[]σαννα[[]..[]η].ετων νυ[.]δ[.]μ[...]γ].ατην ιδίω[.] καλλονήν]σ[...].εχων ἐν τῆ[ι ο]δῶι	5
]γτωσι[...].ωγ[...].ς]των ἐμην[...].ν]ν καὶ πολλα[...].γωγ].σ.[.] ἰλ[] ἀλέκτορά μου [δ]υνάμεθα	10
]τη..σασω[.]ασω ἐκ περιπάτου].ιθο[...].σα..... δρόσοις]κουσ[...].[...].νησα[.]τρα τὸν βαρ[...].χη π]αιδὸς ἐφύλασσεν ὁ φίλος μου τρυφῶν τέ]κνον τη[ρ]ῶν ἐν ταῖς ἀγκάλαις	15
ἀπορο]ῦμαι ποῦ βαδίσω. ἢ ναῦς μου ἐρράγη. τὸν κ]α[τ]αθύμιον ἀπολέσας ὄρνιθά μου κλαίω φ]έρε τὸ ἐρνίψ[ν] τροφήν αὐτοῦ περιλάβω τοῦ μ[αχ]ίμου τοῦ ἐπεράστου τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ. χάρ]ιν τ]ούτου ἐκαλούμην μέγας ἐν τῶι βίω[ι] καὶ [έ]λεγγόμην μακάρι[ο]ς, ἄνδρες, ἐν τοῖς φιλοτροφί(οις).	20
ψυχομαχῶ· ὁ γὰρ ἀ[λ]έκτωρ ἡστόχηκέ μου καὶ θακαθαλάδος ἐρασθεὶς ἐμὲν ἐγκατέλιπε. ἀλλ' ἐπιθεὶς λίθον ἑμαυτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν καθ[η]συχάσομαι. ὑμε[ι]ς δ' ὑγιαίνετε, φίλοι.	

(v.4 «beauty», 5 «in the street», 9 «my cock we can», 10 «from the walk», 11 «with water»)¹²

] of the boy, my dainty friend defenced] the child, holding it in his arms I'm uncertain where to go. My ship is wrecked.	15
I've lost my darling bird and weep for it	

¹¹ CUNNINGHAM (2004, 40f.); the lack of symbols indicating the speakers suggests that the fragment is not of a technical nature and was instead intended for private use, see ESPOSITO (2005, 16); SONNINO (2020, 428); on the use of algebraic notation denoting the roles of the actors in dramatic mimic texts, see ANDRIEU (1954, 249-52); JORY (1963, 65-67).

¹² The translation is quoted from CUNNINGHAM (2002, 373, 375).

] come let me embrace his offspring, brood
 of the fighter, the beloved, the Greek.
 On account of him I was called great during his life
 and I was said to be blessed, men, among the breeders. 20
 I fight for my life; for my cock is missing
 and in desire for his hen has left me.
 But setting a stone on my own heart
 I shall find rest. Farewell to you, friends

The mimographer organizes the scenario as follows: a cock falls in love with a hen and flies away with her. The cock-breeder laments gravely for this erotic adventure and the concomitant disgrace. This conclusion can be deduced, *prima facie*, from a superficial reading of the text, yet an array of masterfully latent elements encourages a different interpretation, leaning towards a homosexual story with an unhappy ending, adequately adapted to the style and disposition of the genre. The cock-breeder is the abandoned lover who mourns the loss of his partner and the latter's decision to change his sexual identity and orientation, and get involved in an erotic affair with a woman (vv. 21f.).¹³ The metaphorical depiction of the story, presenting the main characters as cock-breeder and fighting cock, seems to draw its inspiration from the latter's complex and multifaceted symbolism in ancient Greek culture – one aspect of which is its connection with male homosexuality¹⁴ – and, on an equally important level, from the peculiar duality of a rooster's identity, which combines the qualities of Mars and Venus, the virile aggression with the excessive sexual desire¹⁵. Under this prism, the fighting cock can consequently be recognized as an invented *persona* for a man of homosexual predilection and martial prowess, involved in marginal, yet lucrative, activities.

Those who suffered from love frequently arrived at their beloved person's door, addressing directly to them. The first appearance of the term *paraclausithyron* is in Plutarch, to describe the situation of an old woman who is in love with a young man¹⁶. Attempts at a definition have resulted in a wide range of interpretations, both broad and narrow¹⁷, often blurring the borders between what is considered to be a *komos*, a *paraclausithyric* situation, and a *paraclausithyron*¹⁸. Yet the main *consensus* seems to be

¹³ FUNAIOLI (2010, 74f.). Plots involving amorous triangles are common in mime, eg., Herondas' 5th *Mimimb*; the Greek popular mime script surviving in *P.Oxy.* 413 *verso*; the mime preserved in O. Florida Inv.21. Additionally, regarding the theme of triangular erotic relationships and adultery as a widespread dramatic situation consistently exploited by the genre of mime, see REICH (1903, 89f.); REYNOLDS (1946, 77-84); KONSTANTAKOS (2006, 591-98).

¹⁴ CSAPO (1993, 21f.).

¹⁵ CSAPO (1993, 9-16).

¹⁶ See CAIRNS (2020, 265-68).

¹⁷ See CANTER (1920, 355-68); COPLEY (1942, 96); YARDLEY (1978, 19). For further examination of the definitions and relevant bibliography, see CUMMINGS (1996, 8-25 and 2006, 89 n.1 respectively).

¹⁸ For a recent discussion on the terms *komos* and *paraclausithyron*, see CAIRNS (2020, 262-71).

achieved through the acceptance of the complaint, sung or recited, at or near the beloved person's door as the organizing condition and the necessary premise¹⁹. In the aforementioned nucleus are ascribed more *topoi* such as the *servitio amoris*, threats of suicide, the presentation of love as a disastrous passion, the existence of a rival, the offer of presents, and accusations of unfairness. Considering that the *topoi* of the *paraclausithyron* undergo several modifications dictated by and depending on the genre in which they are embedded, one can identify a deliberate manipulation of the dramatic scenario and the standard *topoi*, additions out of the conventional formula and artistic flexibility with playful declinations, particularly in the context of the genre under discussion²⁰.

Given that the story of the P.Oxy. 219 is displayed allegorically and its rich content is artfully concealed behind appropriate symbolisms, it is reasonable to expect that the incorporation of the relevant *topoi* will not adhere to the traditional, let us say, orthodox, manner, but will align with the spirit and organizing principles of the context, primarily the search for deeper meaning. Additionally, a twenty- four -line work featuring a lover's complaint would need to be extremely condensed and carefully constructed in order to convey as much information as a work of similar length. Based on the text, the search for the fundamental components that constitute the main nucleus of the *paraclausithyron* – meaning the door and the complaint, as discussed above – leads to the following considerations: in the well preserved part of the papyrus, which constitute the end of the lament, there is no direct and clear reference to the house or the place the lover may be; however, a previous mention in the twelve corrupted verses of the *incipit* cannot be safely excluded²¹, particularly since references to the door are typically preferred at the beginning of a *paraclausithyron*²². Relying on the intelligible words of this part and their connection to the words of the satisfactory, to a certain extent, surviving part, I will attempt to recompose the scene to produce a coherent reading. Strong evidence consists in v. 5 (ἐν τῆ[ι ὀ]δῶι), which suggests the speaker is

¹⁹ CUMMINGS (1996, 16, 27).

²⁰ A comparison with the variety encountered in other *paraclausithyra* of mimic theatre would be both justified and useful at this juncture, e.g., in the *Alexandrian Erotic Fragment* (= Mim. Pap. fr. 1 Cunn. 2004) the *paraclausithyric* lover is a woman, probably a courtesan; in P. Tebt. 2d^v (= Mim. Pap. fr. 3 Cunn. 2004) the lover falls asleep and the companion likely undertakes the task of singing the *paraclausithyron*; in P.Oxy. 3700 (= fr. 3a Cunn. 2002) the mythical Hercules is found outside a brothel, in love with a courtesan.

²¹ On the Theocritean *Id.* 11, which represents a different type of *paraclausithyron*, one without a door or threshold, see DU QUESNAY (1979, 45, 48-50). A playful variation regarding the door is also found in *Id.* 3, where, instead of a door, there is a curtain made of ivy.

²² E.g., in the *paraclausithyron* of Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, which extends from v. 960 to v. 975, the door is mentioned in v. 962; in Theocritus' *Id.* 11 the ivy- made curtain that functions as a door is mentioned in v. 14; see also Theocr. *Id.* 23, 27; Men. *Mis.* 6; in the *paraclausithyron* surviving in P.Oxy. 3700 (= fr.3a Cunn. 2002) the first reference to the door can be found in v. 3.

in the street, further supported by the mention of the rooster (v. 9 ἀλέκτορά μου), and primarily by the phrase ἐκ περιπάτου (v. 10)²³, implying pacing up and down outside the ex-lover's place. This latter evokes a tantalizing analogy to Thrasonides' *paraclausithyron* in the opening nocturnal scene of Menander's *Misoumenos* (v. 7 περιπατῶ τ' ἄνω κάτω). A few verses later the phrase ἀποροῦμαι ποῦ βαδίσω (v. 15) seems causally connected to the previous words, favoring its literal reception and interpretation: the cock-breeder realizes his irrevocable loss outside the place where his ex-lover is and expresses his confusion and bewilderment; he literally does not know where to go²⁴.

An apostrophe in v. 17 (φ]έρε) supports further the hypothesis of the *paraclausithyron*, providing a safer indication of the cock-breeder's presence outside the place where the unfaithful lover is. A similar apostrophe can be detected in the *paraclausithyron* contained in the *Alexandrian Erotic Fragment*²⁵, entitled by Wilamowitz as *Des Mädchens Klage*²⁶, where a woman, also after a process through the street, as evidenced by textual markers²⁷, arrives at the place where her ex-lover is. Driven by her passionate impulses, tries to persuade him to return to her. Her lament reveals the assimilation of a strong network of the *paraclausithyron*'s topoi mentioned above, which tally well with her emotional fluctuations and her painful struggle with passion and overall distress. It is also notable that there are neither direct nor indirect references to a door or anything similar. After receiving no response, she realizes the loss of her last hope and the dramatic situation reaches a climax, a culmination point; she then apostrophizes her companion asking him / her to give her the garlands – the gift intended for her ex-lover – so she can adorn herself (v. 25 μοι τοὺς στεφάνους βάλε). In the context of the mime under discussion, the apostrophe φ]έρε indicates, in addition to the proximity to a very specific place, that there is also another person accompanying the cock-breeder, who is the one being addressed. Although there is no other hint of a companion in the text, it can be deduced from the reading of the *Alexandrian Erotic Fragment* and other dramatic mimic fragments with similar

²³ For a different opinion on the meaning and function of the term *περίπατος*, see SPANOUDAKIS (2007, 17).

²⁴ In v. 11 the word *δρόσοις* («with water») may allude to humidity or rain. It is common for the lovers in *parcalausithyra* to mention the weather they are obliged to endure in order to emphasize their passion and proclaim the strength of their love; for literary parallels drawn from Greek and Latin *paraclausithyra* see CUMMINGS (1996, 141 and n. 165).

²⁵ Mim. Pap. fr. 1 in CUNNINGHAM'S edition (2004, 36-38). On its relationship to the *paraclausithyron*, see BING (2002, 383f.); for a detailed analysis of the fragment, see ESPOSITO (2005).

²⁶ WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF (1896); for various opinions regarding the sub-genre to which this mime belongs, see WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF (1896, 117f.); CRUSIUS (1914, 124); ESPOSITO (2002, 205 n. 35); PETRIDES (2008, 448); PANAYOTAKIS (2014, 383); TSITSIRIDIS (2015, 220 and n. 45).

²⁷ CUMMINGS (1996, 254).

themes²⁸ that it is quite usual for *paraclausithyric* lovers to be accompanied by another person, who supports them and undertakes various roles. At this point the cock-breeder requests that he be given the chick that his companion is holding, which is typically recognized as the abandoned offspring of the unfaithful lover. Given the peculiar nature of the text, I tend to suppose that the chick is not the descendant but rather a gift for the lover that the cock-breeder asks to hug, in a manner reminiscent of the damsel in the *Alexandrian Erotic Fragment*. In the context of stories of homosexual love, as often evinced in literature and art, the cock, or more generally a bird, serves as a figurative representation of homosexual attraction, a way for male suitors to show their affection for someone of the same gender or to seduce an *eromenos*²⁹. Within the framework of P.Oxy. 219, where everything draws inspiration from the broader environment of cockfighting, the most fitting gift appears to be a chick, which functions as a substitute for the usual garland and may also metaphorically signify erotic desire, constituting a literary addition to the representation of the cock as a symbol of lust.

The second fundamental axis for the formation of a *paraclausithyron* is the complaint, frequently accompanied by tears and expressions that signify internal pain and psychological turmoil. The key word, the verb *κλαίω*³⁰ (v. 16), which alludes directly to the second component of the term – possibly preceded by a similar verb in v. 8. (πολλὰ [στέ]νον)³¹ – and is reinforced by the *topos* of desperation and inner distress (v. 15 ἀπορο]ῦμαι ποῦ βαδίσω. ἡ ναῦς μου ἐρράγη). The allegorical formation of the story favors the metaphorical expression of sentiment, emphasizing emotional and psychological deconstruction through the eloquent image of a broken boat³². The cock-breeder seems disorientated, completely immersed in painful rejection. The cause of this turmoil is the existence of a rival – frequently found in several *paraclausithyra*³³ – appropriately presented on theatrical and dramaturgical grounds as a hen, to whose allure the cock apparently succumbed. Although the woman is mentioned only once, described by a term judiciously associated with the metaphor, the ex-lover receives praise, which also constitutes a stable part of a *paraclausithyron*. This praise offers the

²⁸ E.g. P. Tebt. 2d^v (= Mim. Pap. fr. 3 Cunn. 2004); P.Oxy. 3700 (= fr. 3a Cunn. 2002).

²⁹ See SCHMELING (1971, 336 n. 16); DOVER (1978, 92) and the illustrations of the following vases: R348 (the cockerel as a courting gift from Zeus to Ganymede); R758 (Zeus and Ganymede with a cockerel); R791 (a man offering a cockerel to a boy); R833 (Zeus and Ganymede with a cockerel); see also CSAPO (1993, 16 and n. 76).

³⁰ On the use of the word *κλαίω* and its frequent appearance in *paraclausithyra*, see CUMMINGS (1996, 139 n. 150).

³¹ PRESCOTT (1910, 168 n. 1).

³² A similar verb is also found in a mimic fragment surviving in P. Tebt. 2d^v (= Mim. Pap. fr. 3 Cunn.), depicting the *paraclausithyric* lover's distress and frustration (v. 14 κατ<έ>αγμαί); cf. Aesch. Ag. 505 πολλῶν ῥαγεισῶν ἐλπίδων.

³³ CUMMINGS (1996, 88 n. 89).

cock-breeder the opportunity to establish more favorable conditions by elevating the *status* of his beloved³⁴.

The mimographer masterfully depicts the charismatic nature of the man who flew away through the emblematic triptych of the words τοῦ μ[αχ]ίμου τοῦ ἐπεράστου τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ (v. 18), which serve as signifiers of physical strength, martial valour and beauty intertwined with a tone of eroticism – attributes all ascribed to the function of the cock as a symbol in ancient Greek culture. These characteristics evoke memories of a past, triumphant era when the cock-breeder garnered admiration and was called μέγας (v. 19) and μακάριος (v. 20). Notably, these qualities are not actually credited to the cock-breeder but to the fighting cock, further underscoring the latter's excellence, likely in the field of marginal activities. The loss of magnitude and distinction, along with the concomitant downfall, constitutes an indirect reproach against the unfaithful lover, introducing an inventive variation on the *topos* of accusation of unfairness³⁵. Most importantly, it establishes one of the main axes that support the formation of a tragic story, the key element of the περιπέτεια³⁶, as has already been pointed out³⁷. In the *paraclausithyron* of the *Alexandrian Erotic Fragment* the woman's lament centers, for comic purposes, on the tragic concept of the error of judgement (ἀμαρτία)³⁸; similarly, in the mime under discussion, the reversal of the situation — understood in the context of the technical term περιπέτεια — constitutes the crucial component of the plot, skillfully embedded in the host-genre³⁹ of mime and in sync with the context, serving the comic effect through its connection with a man of questionable character. Aristoteles, in describing the construction of the plot of the perfect tragedy, highlights that the transition of a bad man from prosperity to adversity, and vice versa, is totally alien to the spirit of tragedy, as it fails to excite pity and fear, which is the distinctive mark of tragic imitation, and thus fulfill its function⁴⁰. The mimographer, by ingeniously branching the *paraclausithyron* towards the precincts of the tragic genre,

³⁴ Lovers who experience the pain of unrequited love often resort to praising the beloved person in an effort to create favorable conditions and earn their favor. Cf. the Theocritean *paraclausithyron* in *Id.* 3, where the anonymous goatherd attempts to glorify Amaryllis by calling her χαρίεσσα (v. 6) and attributing her the status of a nymph (v. 9 νύμφα). Sometimes the praise culminates in a multitude of flattering qualities attributed to the recipient, as seen in Polyphemus' *paraclausisthiron*, where he extravagantly describes Galatea (Theocr. *Id.* 11, 19-21).

³⁵ Cf. Mim. Pap. fr. 1. in CUNNINGHAM'S edition (2004), where the *topos* of accusing an ex-lover of unfairness is explicitly employed twice by the *exclusa* (v. 17 ταῦτά μ' ἀδικεῖ, v. 22 τὴν τυχοῦσαν ἀδικίην). Although the cock-breeder does not directly blame the fighting cock, I suggest that the reference to the loss of past glory and the present wretchedness, due to the fighting cock's amorous adventure, contains a slight reproach.

³⁶ Arist. *Poet.* 13. 1452a 22-29.

³⁷ SPANOUDAKIS (2007, 24).

³⁸ Arist. *Poet.* 13. 1453a 7-17.

³⁹ For the term host -genre, see HARRISON (2007, 16).

⁴⁰ Arist. *Poet.* 13. 1452b 28-1453a 7.

deliberately inverts the Aristotelean principle for comic purposes, adopting exactly what Aristoteles advises tragedians to avoid in crafting their plots. Thus, the reversal of fortune for a man engaged in marginal activities who profits from exploiting his lover's prominence in a particular, likely disreputable, field rather than possessing a tragic quality, further enhances the comic colouring.

The remembrance of past glory intensifies psychological agitation and leads to dramatically charged expressions, such as the use of the verb ψυχομαχῶ (v. 21), which conveys a sense of desperate and anguished struggle. While similar expressions are often found in erotic discourse⁴¹, this verb aligns well with the martial prowess of the roosters. A striking depiction occurs in Polybius (*Hist.* I 58, 7-9), where he employs the verb ψυχομαχῶ to emphasize the paralyzing effect on the strength of both the Romans and the Carthaginians due to the strenuous and continual fighting. It is noteworthy that he uses this verb in the context of describing the spirit exhibited by the enemies, comparing their remarkable persistence to that of gamecocks engaged in death-struggles (*Hist.* I 58, 7 τοῖς ψυχομαχοῦσι τῶν εὐγενῶν ὀρνίθων). In a similar way, the cock-breeder, exhausted and in a critical state, refers to death as an extreme solution to the wrenching pain he experiences from unrequited love, alluding to a *topos* commonly found in *paraclausithyra*, often expressed as a suicide threat⁴²; yet, the suicidal disposition of frustrated lovers seems to serve as a dramatic expression of emotional manipulation rather than suggesting a literal intention. A significant example is the case of the anonymous goatherd in the *paraclausithyron* in Theocritus' *Id.* 3, who humorously changes his mind about the manner of his death (hanging, plunging into the sea, being eaten by lions)⁴³. In the case of the scorned cock-breeder the authenticity of his suicidal intention, aside from the weird manner in which he chooses to end his life by placing a stone on his heart (v. 23 ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν), is further called into question by the use of the verb καθ[η]συχάσομαι (v. 24), which superficially seems to suggest that he will find peace on death, further expanding on the aforementioned ψυχομαχῶ. Upon a second reading, and in the context of the comic undermining, the term καθ[η]συχάσομαι contains a latent reference to a future sexual abstinence and distance from passionate erotic stories⁴⁴. This reasonably echoes Theocritus' *Id.* 7, where

⁴¹ On the use of nearly identical terms in the Hellenistic erotic epigram that suggest the concept of suspended death due to abandonment, see SPANOUDAKIS (2007, 23).

⁴² E.g., Theocr. *Id.* 3, 9, 24-27, 52-54; 23, 21-24, 36f.; on the image of the lover who falls dead, see ROSSI (1973-1974, 667-75); for additional literary parallels from Greek and Latin *paraclausithyra*, see CUMMINGS (1996, 160 n. 191).

⁴³ See above n. 42.

⁴⁴ SPANOUDAKIS (2007, 24), relying on the use of the term in Hellenistic philosophical disciplines and the poetry of the same era, cogently points out, further highlighting the literary merits of the fragment, that the verb καθησυχάσομαι at the *excipit* of the mime humorously undermines the truth of the intention and suggests a decision to abstain from sexual desires and passion.

Simichidas concluding his song with the brief description of a *paraclausithyric* scene (vv. 122-24), advises Aratus to stop waiting outside Philinus' door all night long. Such waiting entails painful longing, sentimental frustration, and physical exhaustion. Instead, he suggests that Aratus leave the erotic pain to his rival (v. 125) and exempt himself, focusing on the *ἀσυχία* (v. 126). In the same spirit, the protagonist of the mimic *paegnion* concludes his *paraclausithyron* by implying the idea of a life free from erotic plight through a farewell to sexual activity, which precedes his farewell to the audience.

Conclusion

The reading of *P.Oxy. 219* demonstrates that the host-genre of mime avails itself of features and topics of the literary tradition, adhering to its fundamental principle of supporting generic interplay through ingenious and playful modifications aimed at achieving the genre's primary objective: the laughter. Within the context of an allegorical story of homosexual love, a remarkable array of *topoi* suggests a deliberate exploitation of the *paraclausithyron* motif by the mimographer. The metaphorical nature of the dramatic mime and its latent content allow and justify artistic flexibility and concomitant variations that introduce new dynamics to several standard conventions of the *paraclausithyron*. In this regard, it is the peculiar reception and adaptation of the key *topoi* of the lover's complaint that facilitates its evolution into a lament, which effectively resides, on theatrical and dramaturgical grounds, in the tragic key component of the *περιπέτεια*. This reversal of fortune further enhances the comic effect, as the transition from good fortune to bad occurs by a manner *ἀτραγωδότατον πάντων*⁴⁵, concerning a man of questionable reputation.

⁴⁵ Arist. *Poet.* 13. 1452b 37f.

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