The Flight of Pegasos

a collage of ancient texts
including
the fragments of
***Euripides'* Bellerophon**

INTRODUCTION

The Flight of Pegasos incorporates scenes from Aristophanes' anti-war plays *Acharnians* and *Peace*, most of the surviving fragments of Euripides' lost *Bellerophon*, and the story of Bellerophon as told by Glaukos in Book 6 of *The Iliad*. In *Peace,* Trygaios' flight to Olympos on the back of a dung beetle is an extended parody of Bellerophon's flight on Pegasos in Euripides' play, which was made with the intention either of proving the gods' non-existence or of remonstrating with them for tolerating so much injustice in the world. Zeus maddened the winged horse, however, causing Bellerophon to fall to earth. Trygaios, on the other hand, arrives successfully on Olympos which he finds has been abandoned by the gods in their despair at the Greeks' continual warring among themselves. Nonetheless he manages to free Peace from her imprisonment by War and the play ends in joyous bucolic feasting. As for Bellerophon, he appears to have recovered some piety or at least humility before he dies from his injuries.

The main point of combining these texts is to explore the differences and the relationship between Attic Tragedy and Attic Old Comedy. However, reconstruction of *Bellerophon* is highly uncertain. As Collard puts it, "The gnomic character of nearly all the thirty or so book-fragments, and the scantiness of secondary information, frustrate reconstruction."[1] In this Introduction, therefore, I outline my main choices in reconstruction and the reasons for them.

Most importantly, no attempt is made here to suggest the scope and structure of *Bellerophon* as a whole. Focus is entirely upon the flight, its motivation and consequences. Still, there seems little doubt that this was the central concern of the original play too. Fr 304a suggests there may have been a sub-plot involving the son of Stheneboea, the wife of Proitos (called Anteia in *The Iliad*), who had attempted to seduce Bellerophon and whom he had killed (at least, according to the story told in Euripides' *Stheneboea*). I ignore this. As for motivation, the fragments only tell us in general terms that Bellerophon has experienced a reversal from good to bad fortune. For simplicity, I assume this to have been the loss of two of his three children as narrated in *The Iliad*. But in an important sense the real motivation for his flight is his psychological-cum-philosophical response to that reversal, rendering the specifics of the latter less materially relevant. In relation to this response, I take the ambiguity of his intention, either to demonstrate that there are no gods or to complain to them of their failure to promote justice on earth, to be significant in itself more than simply as an uncertainty due to the fragmentary nature of the play's remains. This is because, in a certain sense, these alternatives come down to the same thing, as is reflected in one possible interpretation of line 7 of fr 286b (292 N), "if gods do what is shameful, they

[1] *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary* Plays vol. 1, edited by C. Collard, M.J. Cropp and K.H. Lee, Aris & Phillips Classical Texts, Warminster, 1995, p. 98.

are not gods". The logic is either a) 'if immortals do what is shameful they are not worthy of reverence *as gods*,' which might be Bellerophon's own argument (that gods as such do not exist but one can still visit them as the immortals), or b) 'since gods are gods, they do not do anything shameful,' which might be an argument against him. So the question here turns on whether gods are gods or not – not whether the beings people think of as gods exist. Bellerophon's 'atheism,' that is, is not like today's so-called New Atheism, which advocates a pure rationalism within which any concept of divinity or even of the supernatural is merely superstitious wishful thinking, although it has some similarity with broadly rationalistic Enlightenment arguments about the 'problem of evil'.

In order to stress the quintessentially human quality of Bellerophon's questioning of gods, I have suppressed the story merely hinted at in Homer that he had divine lineage.[2] Moreover, I have not made any attempt to explain Bellerophon's possession of Pegasos, since this would have established some closer than usual relationship between him and divine powers.[3] In recounting Bellerophon's killing of the Chimera, Homer does not mention Pegasos. I have therefore inserted fr 665a (from *Stheneboea*) to establish Pegasos' part in that, so that it does not come as a complete surprise when Bellerophon announces his intention to ride Pegasos to heaven.[4]

The other characters who appeared in *Bellerophon* are not known. For simplicity, I have treated the fragments like 'one actor tragedy,' giving all speeches other than the hero's to the chorus, which, following the hint in fr 286, I take to be of farmers.[5]

I have assumed that, after deciding to fly to Olympos, Bellerophon would have left the *orchestra* and that he would have appeared on Pegasos lifted by the crane from behind the stage building. This is how Aristophanes stages the flight of the dung beetle in *Peace*, and it seems more practical than any attempt to bring Pegasos into the *orchestra* to launch the flight from there.[6] I have also assumed that frs 306, 307, 307a

[2] Homer introduces him as the son of Glaukos, grandson of Sisyphos, but a little later Proitos recognizes his apparently divine origins. This seems to allude to the story that Bellerophon was actually the son of Poseidon, as in Hesiod and Pindar.

[3] The story that Athena gave Pegasos to Bellerophon to avoid the injustice of his being killed by the Chimera (since the demand that he face it was prompted by Anteia's / Stheneboea's false accusation against him) would be ironic in this context.

[4] It is of course 'unrealistic' that a mortal hero has a divine horse. But Pegasos might be seen as symbolic of Bellerophon's hubris in imagining that he might confront gods with their shortcomings. Interestingly, Pegasos is a hybrid, and the root of 'hybrid' and 'hubris' is the same; both words imply crossing natural or given limits. It is arguable that Bellerophon could only defeat the *bad* hybrid, the Chimera, with the aid of the *good* hybrid, Pegasos.

[5] This happens to provide a useful link with *Acharnians* and especially *Peace* too.

[6] Either the horse representing Pegasos would have been brought into the *orchestra* already attached to the crane by ropes, or that attachment would have needed to be made while in full view. But in any case, it is not clear that the crane, which was positioned behind the *skene*, was capable of lifting from the *orchestra*.

and 308 were delivered ‘in flight’. One reason for this has just been given, that Bellerophon probably mounted Pegasos behind the stage building, so could only have spoken these lines when flown into view. Aristophanes’ parody itself provides a further reason. It also seemed appropriate that the *agon* between Bellerophon and the chorus should be separated from the flight by a *stasimon*, for which I have elaborated frs 303 and 304.

I take Bellerophon to have been crippled by his fall, but to have appeared in rags from the start. I do not see why Aristophanes should have mocked Euripides’ predilection for dressing his heroes in rags, citing Bellerophon among the members of that set, had it merely been the consequence of the fall – but the point is not certain. In any case I make no attempt to explain those rags. I prefer to interpret line 399 from *Acharnians* as implying that Euripides is composing a tragedy on top of the stage building, as against merely with his feet up, as this helps establish the idea of the tragic fall around which the story of Bellerophon turns.

Lastly, I have tried to keep supplementary, invented material added to the fragments of *Bellerphon* to the minimum required for dramatic continuity. Needless to say this has involved decisions as to the interpretation of particular fragments, their ascription either to Bellerophon or to his adversary in the debate, and their sequencing which are more than likely to be wrong. As for the section of *The Flight of Pegasos* from *Peace*, it closely follows Aristophanes’ play up to the intervention of the Crane Operator, elaborating a few jokes and leaving out a few others that do not work in English. The material from *Acharnians* is better described as adapted; apart from introducing the name Bellerophon and Euripidies’ predilection for dressing tragic heroes in rags, it serves to stress the seriousness of Comedy. Glaukos’ speech from *The Iliad* has merely been pruned.

See the APPENDIX (p. 18) for some discussion of the nature of parody.

CHARACTERS

From *Acharnians*:

DIKAIOPOLIS
SERVANT
EURIPIDES

From *The Iliad*:

GLAUKOS

From *Bellerophon* (fragments):

BELLEROPHON
CHORUS OF FARMERS

From *Peace*:

SLAVE 1
SLAVE 2
TRYGAIOS
DAUGHTER 1
DAUGHTER 2

CRANE OPERATOR
CHORUS-NARRATORS

Note: < > indicates supplementary material added to the fragments of *Bellerophon*.

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The Flight of Pegasos was performed on May 10th, 2012, at the International Center for Hellenic and Mediterranean Studies, Athens, by students on the Attic Tragedy in Translation course. The cast was as follows:

Melanie Britnall:	Chorus, Servant, Slave 2
Jessica Brockman:	Chorus, Trygaios
Devon Carew:	Chorus, Glaukos, Crane Operator
Ruth Steinhour:	Chorus, Dikaiopolis, Slave 1
Jessica Tindle:	Chorus, Euripides, Daughter 1
Daniel Tolan:	Chorus, Bellerophon, Daughter 2

The CHORUS aligns itself with the audience, then boos DIKAIOPOLIS as he enters in rags.

DIKAIOPOLIS: Spectators, don't be angry if I dare to speak *in a comedy* to the people of Athens about what's right or wrong for the City. *Comedy is about justice too*, you know. It's not only tragedy. Anyway, what I say is not going to please you…. It will be the truth.

I'm Dikaiopolis, by the way, but that might as well have been my author speaking. The author of my being. Aristophanes. I find I am his mouthpiece.

By the way, I borrowed these rags from Euripides, the tragedian. I was about to start speaking the truth to you when it occurred to me that it might help if I dressed in a manner more likely to arouse pity. In other words, I was terrified. Euripides, I thought, he'll have the right costume. Well, I knocked on his door (*a stage knock*) and asked if Euripides was at home….

SERVANT: (*opening*) He is…. And he isn't.

DIKAIOPOLIS: He is… and he isn't?

SERVANT: He's off somewhere collecting clever-dick phrases. But that's just his mind wandering; in the flesh he's still at home, perched high up there. He's composing a tragedy.

DIKAIOPOLIS: Like master, like slave, I see. Can I...

SERVANT: No.

The SERVANT slams the 'door' shut.

DIKAIOPOLIS: (*calls*) Euripides, my little Euripides, sweet Euripides, it's Dikaiopolis, the farmer, he's in need of your skills as a tear-duct-drainer, a sob-story merchant, a master of lachrymatory provocations….

EURIPIDES: (*as if from aloft*) What is it that you prattle on about?

DIKAIOPOLIS: Why on earth… I mean, why NOT on earth do you compose tragedies perched up there? – surely you could do it with your feet on the ground, I mean, I'm not a bit surprised it was you introduced cripples to the tragic stage – I mean, how many times have you fallen on your face or your butt? – and why do you too dress in those miserable tatters? – it's no wonder half or more of your heroes are beggars. But that's exactly what I'm here for. Euripides, I beg you, give me some old rags – I've got to make a long speech to

the chorus and if I don't do it with flair… or is it aplomb?… or is it panache?… if I don't do it real good, I'm a dead man.

EURIPIDES: You would acquire some raiment of the kind that has seen better days, I gather? But which? Aye, there's the rub. What of that my poor Aeneus donned, that wretched, ill-starred, ancient man?

DIKAIOPOLIS: No, I need something a bit more heart-rending.

EURIPIDES: Phoenix, he was blind too, how about his?

DIKIOPOLIS: No, no, when I said heart-rending I really meant heart-wrenching.

EURIPIDES: What disintegrating dusty garb is he after, I wonder? Could it be, I venture to suggest, that it is Philoctetes the beggar that you have in mind?

DIKAIOPLOLIS: No, no… something more hopelessly vagrant, not just homeless, really down-and-out.

EURIPIDES: Let me see… let me see…. I have it! What you want are the filthy rags of the cripple Bellerophon.

DIKAIOPLOIS: Bellerophon…. No.

EURIPIDES: … Telephos?

DIKAIOPOLIS: Telephos!!! That's the one!

CHORUS: Bellerophon…

CHORUS: Bellerophon…

CHORUS: Bellerophon… who bridled and could ride the winged horse, Pegasos.

CHORUS: Bellerophon???

CHORUS: Cut to Troy.

CHORUS: Diomedes asks Glaukos, "Stranger, who are you?"

GLAUKOS:[7] Why ask the story of my birth, Diomedes? Men are like leaves, old withered leaves strewn upon the ground by Autumn winds, young leaves sprouting fresh and green in Spring – so it is with mortal men, the young arise and flourish even as the old falter and fade away. If you would know the line from which I spring, there are many that can tell my story. Ephyra is a city in the land of Argos. There, long ago, lived Sisyphos, the slipperiest of men. He was father of Glaukos, who in his turn became the father of Bellerophon – to whom the gods gave both beauty and courage. But Proitos, a more powerful

[7] Glaukos' speech from *Iliad* 6. Ellipses indicate brief cuts.

king, sent him out of Argos which Zeus had made subject to him. What happened was this. Beautiful Anteia, the wife of Proitos, lusted for Bellerophon. But he, being honorable, refused to be seduced. So Anteia went to her lord and whispered: 'If you would not be killed by him, then kill Bellerophon, for that man sought, against my will, to couple with me'.

Rage filled the king's heart. Yet he shrank from murder. So he sent Bellerophon into Lykia, bearing secret symbols in a folded tablet, a message deadly to Bellerophon, telling him to show it to the king there – Anteia's father. Indirectly, thus, Bellerophon would be destroyed.

God-guided, he went into Lykia, to the river Xanthus, where the king of that land received him with an open heart and nine days' feasting. But with the tenth rose-fingered dawn, the king desired to know his mission, what message Proitos his son-in-law had sent. Deciphering those malice-loaded signs, he changed. His guest, he said, must go to where the vile Chimera was, to kill it – that strange and god-spawned beast none might approach, lion-fronted, ending as a snake, goat in between, her snorting breath flaming with brilliant fire.

Well, Bellerophon killed it – for he followed a path of signs traced out by gods.

Three members of the CHORUS have formed the Chimera.

BELLEROPHON: (***Fr 665a***) I slash the Chimera's throat, from which a jet of flame assaults me, blackening the thickly-feathered wing of Pegasos.[8]

GLAUKOS: [….] The king now understood the young man's power. He would have him stay. He offered him his daughter for a wife and half his royal privileges, to which the Lykian men donated fertile land for plough and vineyard, the best they had.

The king's daughter bore Bellerophon three children: Isandros, Hippolokhos and Laodameia. [….] But Bellerophon came to be hated by all the gods and he wandered the Aleion plain in isolated torment, self-consumed by grief and veering wilfully from the trodden track of men. Isandros, his son, was killed by Ares the Insatiate, in close combat with the Solymi, and Artemis of the Golden Reins killed Laodameia in anger. But Hippolokhos was my father. [….] This is the line I, Glaukos, claim. This is the story of my birth. (*He goes*)

[8] Attributed to Euripides' *Stheneboea*.

The CHORUS begins a farming mime.

CHORUS: He has taken it badly, feeds anger on grief.

Once, he had joy…

A king's daughter for a wife and half his royal privileges, fertile land for plough and vineyard.

In a day, all changes…

Isandros, his son, was killed by Ares the Insatiate, and Artemis of the Golden Reins killed Laodameia.

Now he wanders this Aleion plain, tormented, grieving…

Questioning gods.

BELLEROPHON: (***Fr 285****. To the audience, like a prologue*) It's a commonplace everywhere, of course, but I too say it's best for a man not to be born. Of life's three lots – wealth, or noble birth, or poverty – that's the sum total I acknowledge – I judge one of these to be best. The very wealthy man, lacking good birth, suffers – yes, he suffers. True, it is a glorious suffering when he opens his coffers; but after, for all his wealth that was, he is terribly vexed to fall under the yoke of ruin. The man from high and noble seed, who lacks the means of life, he has the fortune of good birth but poverty reduces him – it is a pure mental torment to him, yet manual work would shame him. But the absolute nobody, who suffers from start to finish and experiences nothing else, he is superior in precisely this, that he is unaware of his misery, having nothing to compare it to. The highest state, then, is not to have experienced good things. For that is what I remember, the manner in which I lived among men when I prospered in my life.

(***Fr 286****. Turning to the CHORUS*) Does anyone assert that there are gods in heaven? There are not, no, there are not, if a man is ready not to swallow whole the old tales. Think it through yourselves, do not make my words the foundation of your opinion. I declare that tyranny kills many, robs them, that tyrants break their oaths to plunder cities, yet in this they prosper more than those whose unassuming habit is true piety. I see minor states that honor gods subject to greater ones that revere none, for 'might is right'. I think that you, <as farmers,> if a man were merely to pray to gods for his living, too lazy to plant and reap with his own hands, you would < consider it unjust if gods were to grant such a prayer. Look around you! That is just what they do. And I am sick to see it. >

CHORUS: (***Fr 286b*** (***292N***)) A doctor can only cure an illness after diagnosing it. / A medicine that happens to be at hand may not be the right one. / The diseases of men are either self-generated or sent by gods, but we treat them as best we can. / But this is what I really want to say: if gods do what is shameful, they are not gods.

< Your misfortune is great, but it is due to circumstances. >

(***Fr 287***) There is no point in getting angry at circumstances. They are uncaring, utterly unconcerned. / But a man who responds to them in the right way, he fares well.

BELLEROPHON: < Yes, one who is 'clever'. > (***Fr 290***) Always I fear an unintelligent but naturally strong man less than a weak and clever one. (***Fr 288***) Trickery and devious devices are man's unmanly means to meet his needs.

< Think of war. > (***Fr 289***) Men's murderous quarrels and battles *have to be* carried out with cunning; the way of truth is useless, War is friend to lies.

< No, my way is open. What I feel, I show. And I have Pegasos. It is decided. On the wings of Pegasos I shall take my complaint to the gods themselves – or find Olympos' top deserted. >

CHORUS: (***Fr 291***) Son, the hands of young men always itch for action, but the judgment of the old is sounder. / Time teaches discrimination.

< To reach beyond your reach is wrong – and risky. >

BELLEROPHON: (***Fr 293***) [….] In such a case I'd rather die. Life has no value when the bad are seen to thrive unjustly.

CHORUS: < Think. Could that be merely envy? > / (***Fr 295***) I have seen even the most sincere advocates of justice succumb to that base emotion.

BELLEROPHON: < I do not care if men call me envious or an overreacher. Think – you also. > (***Fr 297***) There is evil in all men. Whoever gets his hands on good money and is seen to be wicked, he is roundly condemned. But if he were yet more daring, gaining even greater reward, he would have less of a problem enduring being criticized by others.

< What *I* dare is not for a reward. Even so, what you say of me either to my face or behind my back is well outweighed. >

CHORUS: (***Fr 301***) You see reversals unexpected and without number. / Many survive the sea storm surge. / Many are defeated by the spears of lesser men, only to come to better fortune.

BELLEROPHON: < You are telling me to wait. But I have lived past hope. >

BELLEROPHON goes.

CHORUS: (***Fr 303*** – *lyric*)[9] It must not be believed

that the wicked thrive
securely
though puffed-up-proud in their prosperity
nor the long line of injustices go on and on
uninterrupted –
Self-generating Time
(slowly – slowly) lays
the yardstick of justice –
into the open (at least) brings
all iniquities of men.
For all that. For all that.

(***Fr 304*** – *lyric*) Where – where –
for those that die
life's sure foundation? If we were ships
over the depths of ocean
winds would drive us
straight.
But those that die
their fortune shifts, it veers
in twists of fate – as Time
(slowly – slowly) generates itself
at its own leisure
reducing what was great
to nothing – raising up
another…
Something else.

BELLEROPHON and Pegasos appear.

[9] I have taken liberties in rendering (elaborating) this and the following fragment.

BELLEROPHON: (***Fr 306***) Come, my friend, my swift-winged Pegasos.

(*The Flight of Pegasos begins....*)

(***Frs 307, 307a, 308***) Go, my golden-bridled one, raising your wings,

< To beat the vibrant ether on your soaring flight. >

Hurry, my heart!

Give way, you shade-giving tops of trees,

I would cross the water-cut valleys.

I hasten to see the sky overhead,

What state it has for a good journey….

Music. BELLEROPHON and Pegasos disappear.

After a time, the music changes mood – radically.

Finally – a cacophony of farting noises.

SLAVE 2 is kneading cakes of dung in a tub. Enter SLAVE 1 from a shed.

SLAVE 1: Come on, move it, bring me a cake for the beetle! Hurry!

SLAVE 2: Here it is. (*SLAVE 1 takes it inside.*) Give it to the vile creature, and may he never taste anything so 'delicious'!

SLAVE 1: (*returning*) Give me another, will you, made of donkey dung.

SLAVE 2: Here you are. What! But you just took him one! He can't have eaten it already!

SLAVE 1: Eaten it? He grabbed it from me, rolled it into place, then – (*loud slurping/guzzling sound*). Gone! So – keep kneading, will you, fast as you can, we need a lot more. (*Goes in*)

SLAVE 2: (*working as hard as he can. To audience*) Come on, all you dung collectors, couldn't you give me a hand, I mean you're used to it, but I could be asphyxiated.

SLAVE 1: (*returning*) Have you got one from the dung of a boy prostitute? He wants it well pounded.

SLAVE 2: Here. (*SLAVE 1 takes it inside. To audience*) At least I can say one thing. Nobody can accuse me of having my fingers in the pie… (*he holds up his dirty hands*) I mean to sneak a bit to eat!

SLAVE 1: (*returning*) Beeeyukkk!!! Eearrghh!! Another, quick, and another, and, just to be on the safe side, one more. And keep kneading!

SLAVE 2: NO!!!! By Apollo, no! I can't take it anymore!

SLAVE 1: Then I'll have to take it. (*He picks up the tub and takes the whole thing in*.)

SLAVE 2: Yes, and take yourself off with it! (*To audience*) Do any of you have any idea where I can get me a nose with no holes in it? Because I've just found out the hard way that there's no more disgusting job than chef to a dung beetle! Now, you take a dog or a pig, both will lap up shit, just slobber it up there where it fell. But this particular entomological metabolic system in there is so refined it refuses to eat anything that's not been mashed and kneaded all day long and finally rolled up to make crap keftedes! I'll just take a peek, open the door just a crack so it doesn't see me, see if it's downed the lot yet. Go on, gorge away! Eat till you explode! What vile eating habits! (*Imitates*) Head down low, like a wrestler, his great jaws (*imitates with his arms*) chomping from the sides in circles… like those men who make thick ropes for ships.

SLAVE 1: (*returning*) Talk about malodorous. That's one hell of a stink. I'll tell you one thing, of all the gods it can't have been Aphrodite sent us this plague – nor the Graces.

SLAVE 2: Which one was it, then?

SLAVE 1: Zeus the Thunderer.

Loud farting noise.

SLAVE 2: It's at this point that some smart-ass young man in the audience will be saying, 'What is all this? What is the meaning of the beetle?'

SLAVE 1: Then some visitor sitting beside him will opine, 'Doubtless an allusion to the politician Kleon, to imply that, though he is now in Hades, he is still a brown-nose. Ha ha'. (*Acts as if he needs to urinate*) But I'm off inside, got this pressing need to give the beetle a drink.

SLAVE 2: While I explain the plot to the audience. My master is insane – not like you are, it's not your common or garden idiocy – he's off his rocker in an entirely original way. All day long he gapes heavenward, like this, bad-mouthing Zeus. "Zeus, Zeus," he cries, "the ways of god are not just strange, they don't make sense. Put down your broom! Don't sweep Greece away like so much dirt!" But listen! Shhhh! I think I hear his voice.

TRYGAIOS: (*inside*) Zeus, Zeus, what in the name of Z… what are you doing to our people? You will bulldoze every city in Greece before you even know it!"

SLAVE 2: I suppose it beats talking to yourself. This is his standard lunacy, the quotidian form you could say. But I'll tell you what he first said, the first time steam started coming out of his ears. He'd just mutter away, "How can I get through to him, to Zeus, like directly?" So he made himself a long thin ladder, started clambering up towards heaven, fell down and broke his pate. But that didn't bring him to his senses, damn it. Yesterday, off he goes, Zeus knows where, and comes home with this enormous Etna beetle. And yours truly is to be its groom. But he, he pets and strokes it like it's a young colt, saying, "My little Pegasos, my noble wingèd one, it's your job to fly me up to Zeus". I'll just take a peep and see what he's up to now. (*Looks through door*) Oh, no! It can't be! Help! Come here, here, neighbours! My master is flying off into the air mounted on a beetle!

TRYGAIOS: Gently, my beauty, gently, calmly –
Not too abruptly lift me aloft –
Straight from the start, in your strength trusting,
Till fully warmed and limbered up
Your lissome limbs, your whirring wings.
Just please don't turn your rank breath on me –
Or it's back in the pen for you, boy.

SLAVE 2: Master! Mighty one! How stark flying mad can you get?

TRYGAIOS: Speak not so.

SLAVE 2: In that case, why are you flailing around up there in the air?

TRYGAIOS: My flight is for all Greeks.
First of its kind, this venture forth.

SLAVE 2: But why the lift off? What kind of screwy hare-brained idea is this?

TRYGAIOS: Utter not such inauspicious words,
But cry hosannas.
And bid all men be silent from the other end,
Brick up all Johns – and lonely alleyways
And – preferably – bung up asses too.

SLAVE 2: I'll not keep quiet till you tell me where you mean to fly off to.

TRYGAIOS: Where else would I be going up here but to Zeus in heaven?

SLAVE 2: But what for?

TRYGAIOS: To ask him what he means to do with all us Greeks.

SLAVE 2: What if he won't tell you?

TRYGAIOS: I'll take him to court for betraying Greece to the Persians!

SLAVE 2: Over my dead body!

TRYGAIOS: There is no other option!

SLAVE 2: (*calling*) Woe! Woe! Hey, children! Your father's abandoning you, leaving you to your own pitiful devices, while he sneaks off to heaven! Beg him, you unhappy ones, implore him not to go.

DAUGHTERS: O father, father, can it really be
This rumor that has just reached me
That you're off to high heaven, forsaking your offspring?
If you love me, tell me why you've taken wing.

TRYGAIOS: One might well conjecture, girls, that the truth is – I'VE HAD ENOUGH! Of you always bleating for bread, calling me daddy, pappy, popsicle…. Wheedle away. Well, you can't get blood out of a stone and there's not a penny in the house. But if I succeed in this doughty venture you'll get tasty treats galore – and a knuckle sandwich for starters.

DAUGHTER 1: But in what manner will you wend your way? There's not a ship can make this trip.

TRYGAIOS: This winged steed will bear me there, not o'er the briny deep, but through thin air.

DAUGHTER 2: But what weird whimsy is it, daddy, to wide a beetle to the gods?

TRYGAIOS: It is the only creature to be able to reach the gods – according to Aesop's Fables, that is.

DAUGHTER 1: That's a tall tale, daddy – it would have stank the gods out of heaven.

TRYGAIOS: Once only it went, in days long gone, to revenge itself upon the eagle.

DAUGHTER 2: Wouldn't it have been wiser to hitch a ride on Pegasos – that way you'd have looked more *tragic* to the gods?

TRYGAIOS: What? And pay for food twice over? This way, *my* grub serves us both. Me first, him a bowel movement later.

DAUGHTER 1: Well, be careful. Mind you don't fall off, cripple yourself and end up in one of Euripides' tragedies.

TRYGAIOS: I won't. Farewell! (*To audience*) And as for you – and remember it's for your sake I'm undertaking this labor – please don't pass a single stool for three

days, not even a secret solitary fart, for if this creature catches the scent of it, one whiff, he's sure to toss me off to seek out pastures new.

Go, my golden-bridled one, raising your wings[10]
To beat the vibrant ether on your soaring flight;
Hey! What are you doing? What are you doing?
Why are you nose-diving towards the dark alleys?
Bravely leave the earth behind you,
Stretch your racing wings and soar
Straight to the dwelling place of Zeus,
Keeping your nose out of anyone's 'business,'
Eschew all mortal shit. Hey you down there!
Yes, you that's defecating just outside
The brothels in Piraeus, you'll be the death of me!
Bury the stinking stuff, pile earth on top,
Plant thyme and scatter perfumes. I'm an Athenian citizen –
There's a fine for causing my death!

Help! I'm scared stiff! This is no joke, I'm serious! Hey, you, Mr. Crane Operator, take more care! I can feel a serious bubbling-up of wind in the abdominal region and if you're not gentle with me I'll have to feed the beetle right here! Hey, Mr. Crane Operator, steady pleeeaaase, I don't want to fall from up here like Bellerophon and end up crippled!

CRANE OPERATOR: Like Bellerophon?[11]

TRYGAIOS: Yes! Help!

CRANE OPERATOR: Ha, ha, ha! You don't know much about theatre, do you? Bellerophon didn't actually 'fall' from up there, as you put it. I let him down, gently enough, behind the stage building. Then, a bit later, he walks back on – well, not exactly walks, he's crippled, you see – well, he's not really crippled, he's just pretending to be crippled – anyway, he comes back on and *pretends* that Zeus – not me – I'm just a crane operator (and a good one) – he pretends that Zeus caused him to fall off Pegasos, by maddening the horse. 'Fall from up there' indeed! Ho, ho, ho!

[10] Here, I substitute fr 37 from *Bellerophon* for l. 154 from *Peace*, which is obviously based on it. After some very brief invention, I pick up Aristophanes' words at his l. 157 ("What are you doing").
[11] The Crane Operator is spoken to but does not respond in *Peace*.

TRYGAIOS: Oh.

Breaking the 'illusion' of having been flying high, TRYGAIOS walks away.

The tragic music is heard again. The CHORUS of Lykian farmers gathers.

CHORUS: (***Fr 299***) Faced by necessity, all else is weak.

BELLEROPHON is brought on.

BELLEROPHON: Faced by necessity, true, all else is weak.

(***Fr 300***) My misery!

But why should I cry aloud, 'My misery!'?

For my misery is merely human.

CHORUS: (***Fr 302***) Courage has fortitude against misfortune.

BELLEROPHON: (***Fr 310*** (***311 N***)) < My heart >

When alive, you wondered at gods,

You were open to strangers, firm towards friends.

CHORUS: (***Fr 311*** (***310 N***)) This ill-driven man, take him inside.

CHORUS: (***Fr 312***) Now Pegasos serves Zeus, hauls his lightning.[12]

Pause.

CHORUS: And the dung beetle?

CHORUS (TRYGAIOS): Made it all the way to Olympos, amazingly, where the farmer Trygaios… I… found that all the gods had evacuated the place, leaving Greece to the mercy of Austerity. Sorry, I mean to the mercy of War, who was pulverizing all the Greek cities in a giant mortar. War had shut Growth – sorry, I mean Peace – up in a cave. I set her free. We then had a feast, experienced the deeper meaning of 'make love not war,' and started beating swords into ploughshares. Having started with a vile stench, *my* play, called *Peace*, ended with flowers and sweet perfumes.

CHORUS sprays air fresheners over audience, begin (mutely) partying in celebration. During this…

BELLEROPHON: (*out of character*) But the problem of injustice remains the same.

Don't just take my word for it, but look around you. Just look around you.[13]

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[12] It is likely that this line would have been spoken by a god at the end of *Bellerophon*.

[13] Performed in Athens on May 10th, 2012, the actor's gesture here had simply to imply looking at the world just outside the theatre, where those suffering the disastrous consequences of the economic policy imposed on Greece by the European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund were not the ones responsible for the crisis in the first place.

APPENDIX: BRIEF NOTES ON PARODY….

(The issues here are subtle, deserving much fuller treatment. Since I don't feel able to give that, I restrict myself to notes that might stimulate some further thought.)

Let's call the parody P and the object of that parody O. Does P imply that O is 'already funny' in some sense? A 'yes and no' answer seems appropriate here. O is incipiently or latently funny. Or it's 'already funny' to a certain uncommon (warped and therefore warping) sense of humour, that of the parodist, who creates P to communicate this more broadly. But in this case, is the wider audience somehow invited to see *now* that O was 'already funny' although they did not see this before? (Comparably, satire can arise through simple exaggeration – the goal of which is to make one see in a new light what *was* exaggerated, i.e. *as it (truly) was before* being exaggerated.)

We might put the initial question differently: does P *introduce* or merely *increase* the incongruity?

Incongruity, as a source of comedy, is not necessarily parodic – thus, even *if* it's a necessary condition of parody, it's not a sufficient one. A good example is the Monty Python football match between Greek philosophers and German philosophers; there's a major incongruity, but no parody here. This example reveals something else. Incongruity *in itself* is not funny; if it were, the mere idea of this match would cause laughter. Laughter arises from what might be called a secondary 're-congruizing' in which the philosophers play the game (or fail to play the game) as if they are philosophizing – and this becomes a visual gag that can be varied at some length.

Ignoring, for the moment, the possible need for some kind of 're-congruizing,' the incongruity of riding a dung beetle to Olympos can be considered comical in itself, funny, that is, without any reference back to (in other words, in ignorance of) Bellerophon's flight on Pegasos. But if we *are* aware of O in this case, surely this adds something to the laughter that would arise anyway. But what?

Chaplin aping Hitler in *The Great Dictator* or certain scenes from Brecht's *Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* can be compared. In these cases, P would surely be only marginally funny in ignorance of O. The flight of the dung beetle seems, differently, to be more funny in itself. But where O = Hitler, surely O is not 'already funny'. Instead, O is 'grotesque already' – frighteningly so. P then 'reduces' the grotesque to the ridiculous – 'reduces' in the sense of 'deflates' rather than of underestimates (it is not an underestimation because the act of deflation acknowledges what is deflated).

Bellerophon's flight on Pegasos, as O, is not grotesque, of course. Nevertheless, deflation is an appropriate word for P's relation to O here too. Deflation of pretention. That holds for Hitler too, but if *only* pretention were deflated in Hitler's case there

would be a serious underestimation. Moreover, it's Euripides' pretention that is deflated, not Bellerophon's.

What is 'already funny' in the flight of Pegasos is an incongruity – or, to be more accurate, it is something *not*-already funny because it is *only* an incongruity (i.e. without any re-congruization). To understand this, we must see that O here is not the flight of Pegasos as such but the *theatricalization of that flight*. This is why the object is Euripides', not Bellerophon's, pretention. That theatricalization entails, or sets up, an incongruity between the *poetic*, as inherent in the myth, and the *mechanical*, as inherent in the theatrical means.

Aristophanes' parody, in consequence, has two levels or stages. Firstly, substitution of the dung beetle for the winged horse 'deletes' the poetic – but in a way that draws attention to it through its absence. If this level (already) draws our attention to the 'already funny' – or at least to the incongruity – in the flight of Pegasos, it must be because somehow there is *less* of that incongruity in staging the flight of a dung beetle! (This, note, is distinct from the incongruity of riding a dung beetle to Olympos.) Secondly, the machine (i.e. crane) itself is openly referred to. In this, it is as though we are invited to ask, what would be the effect if the machine were to be referred to in this way during the flight of Pegasos? Disastrous, clearly. The 'poetic' in that mythic flight would be wholly undermined (and this is the essence of the incongruity that's already there). But perhaps we are also invited to go on to ask, what is the effect here, where the 'poetic' has already been displaced? Reference to the crane *now* undermines nothing. There is a sense, then, of Aristophanes 'saying,' as if to Euripides, "Look what I can get away with and you can't!"

It is wrong to see comic 'self-subversion' in this. It is more like comic self-celebration!

And is there something *not*-already funny, because merely incongruous, in Hitler too? Surely, yes. Hitler *is already*, prior to any parody of him, a grossly puffed-up little-man. But that is both 'not-already' funny and, simply, *not* funny. And yet… and yet… when we laugh at a parody of Hitler, are we not, in some sense, laughing at Hitler (O) rather than at the parody (P)?

But, more generally, P can 'take over,' become enjoyable in and for itself. As John Wright points out in *Why Is That So Funny*, the job of parody is "to make us think and laugh – at the same time. Meaning is never far away in parody, but it falls apart as soon as we lose sight of what you're really saying" (p. 253). Maybe that's exactly what happens with the flight of the dung beetle. The parody, in this case, is a pretext – for a staging that comes to justify itself as the ludicrous is shifted to the ludic. As this happens, 'meaning falls away' – we lose sight of O. Maybe.[14]

[14] And maybe too when Chaplin's Hitler plays with the globe-balloon.