A Brush with Patrophagy: Philemon fr. 43 K-A

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In this article I will discuss a brief, three-verse joke appearing among the fragments of the comic poet Philemon. The joke itself, although funny, is quite simple, even trite, and should require no more than a short note; I will, however, try to provide some context for it, by placing it in the larger tradition of New Comedy joking along similar lines. Here is the text as published in Kassel-Austin's *Poetae Comici Graeci:*[1]

Ἀγύρριος δὲ παρατεθέντος καράβου
ὡς εἶδεν αὐτὸν "χαῖρε πάππα φίλτατε"
εἶπας τί ἐποίει; τὸν πατέρα κατήcθιεν (fr. 43 K-A = 42K)

Agyrrhius was served a crayfish, famously also a popular nickname for his real-life father Callimedon. As soon as he has spotted the dish, a simple sympotic event turns into an emotional family reunion. As a proper *opsophagos*, his appetite prevails and, instead of merely kissing his father, Agyrrhius proceeds to gobble him down. The pun is simple, and it in fact appears elsewhere as well: in a similar wordplay in Theophilus Callimedon's frigid style is also humorously ridiculed:

"τευθὶc ἦν χρηστή, πατρίδιον. πῶc ἔχειc πρὸc κάραβον;"
"ψυχρός ἐστιν, ἄπαγε", φηcί· "ῥητόρων οὐ γεύομαι" (fr. 4.3-4)

And in Antiphanes where the joke is part of a more sustained wordplay:

τὸν κάραβον δὲ τόνδε πρὸc τὰc μαινίδας
ἀπόδοc· παχύc γε νὴ Δί'. ὦ Zεῦ, τίc ποτε,
ὦ Καλλιμέδων, cὲ κατέδετ' ἄρτι τῶν φίλων;
οὐδεὶc ὃc ἂν μὴ κατατιθῆι τὰc cυμβολάc. (fr. 27.5-8)[2]

[1] Comic fragments will be quoted from Kassel, R., Austin C. *Poetae Comici Graeci*, Berlin 1983-2001; other texts follow the most recent OCT editions.

[2] I am grateful to Ioannis Konstantakos for letting me consult his unpublished PhD thesis *A Commentary on the Fragments of Eight Plays of Antiphanes*, Cambridge 2000.

Konstantakos interprets the Antiphanes fragment as something of a novelty: we seem to have on stage a fishmonger going through the fishes he intends to sell, a scene usually relegated offstage. 'After every fish, he names the particular customer who will buy it. While talking, he is apparently arranging the fishes, probably on a table or stall, assigning particular fishes to particular places.'[3] Konstantakos is right that the Antiphanes fragment is the best development of the same joke among the three poets, but it is only natural because that Middle Comedy poet would be more interested in giving us a catalogue of contemporary celebrities and listing puns on their culinary and erotic preferences. He could rely on his audience's knowledge of each individual's fish-related nickname, undoubtedly very well known from real life and repeatedly invoked on stage also in other comedies, such as Archippus' *Fishes*. Both the *komoidoumenoi* and their nicknames must be recognizable to be funny and so clearly poets of New Comedy, whose interest in overly topical references waned, would not be willing to provide such sustained catalogues of local Athenian celebrities.

It is noteworthy that both the Theophilus and Antiphanes fragments contain additional wordplay (ψυχρός 'cold/frigid', παχύς 'fat/rich') whereas Philemon's joke does not, so far as I can see, contain any wordplay. In that respect, it seems to be the weakest joke of the three.

Agyrrhius and his father Callimedon

What is novel, however, is the father-son relationship, so typical of New Comedy plays. In other comic fragments the focus is squarely on Callimedon. In Philemon, we have the son's perspective. Agyrrhius is otherwise not known in comedy. Incidentally, because of this joke appearing in the comedy entitled *A Man Fetching a Bride*,[4] Crates' pupil Herodicus could demonstrate in his *Miscellaneous Notes* (p. 126 Düring) that Agyrrhius was the son of the famous Callimedon nicknamed ὁ Κάραβος. Apart from this fragment, Agyrrhius (II)[5] is known to us only from two decrees: in 285/4 BC he proposed honours for King Spartocus (*IG* II^3 1 870) and in 282/1 BC moved to honour the archon Euthius (*IG* II^3 1 881) – the latter preserves his name in full: Ἀγύρριος Καλλιμέδοντος Κολλυτεύς, thus

[3] Konstantakos 2000, 67.
[4] For this translation of ὁ Μετιών, used of a bridegroom 'fetching' his bride, see Erdmann, W., *Die Ehe im alten Griechenland,* Munich 1934, 257f, and cf. Alexis fr. 168.4 K-A (with Arnott's note ad loc.), Men. *Samia* 158, 433, 610, 676.
[5] PA 180 – not 179 as given in K-A, PAA 107665, cf. Davies, J. K., *Athenian propertied families, 600-300 BC*, Oxford 1971, 279 (no. 8157, III).

proving Herodicus right.[6] This Agyrrhius is otherwise little known and this led some editors, including Meineke, to wrongly conflate him with the Agyrrhius (I) of Old Comedy. Although Agyrrhius (II) appears in Comedy only here, his relatives were a constant butt of jokes in both Old and Middle Comedy plays.[7]

Callimedon (active c. 345-318 when he was condemned to death in absence) was a familiar face on the comic stage both for his squint and his *opsophagia*.[8] Such a character naturally attracted quite a lot of punning: both his eyes (κόραι/daughters, Timocles 29) and his *opsophagia* (he particularly liked μήτρα, sow's womb, Athen. 3.100d-e) were ridiculed by poets of Middle Comedy. He is also the only contemporary politician ridiculed in Menander's *Methe*. Athenaeus' list of the plays in which Callimedon is ridiculed (8.338e, 339e-340e) seems directly indebted to a treatise on *komoidoumenoi*.[9] Herodicus wrote a book on the subject and clearly returned to it again in his *Miscellaneous Notes*.

In Alexis fr. 57.4 grateful fishmongers erected a bronze statue of Callimedon holding a roasted crayfish (κάραβον ἔχουσαν ὀπτόν Blaydes, Arnott). In Athen. 8.338b-c we hear of a joke by Lasus of Hermione who would call even raw fish ὀπτός (normally 'roasted') because it is *visible*. Whether the audience imagined the crayfish here as ὀπτός or not, Philemon quite reasonably does not wish to complicate a simple joke with a potentially distracting pun on εἶδεν - ὀπτόν.

My first remark then concerns the Father – Son relationship portrayed in the joke. It departs from the focus on Callimedon and comes closer to the problems that New Comedy was interested in: how should a father react to his dissolute son's behaviour? Should he be strict, or rather lenient and overlook it as a youthful folly? More self-aware of the New Comedy fathers freely confess to having themselves behaved in the same way when they were younger or that they were prevented from

[6] Meritt, B. D., 'Greek Inscriptions' *Hesperia* 7 (1938), 100-9.

[7] For his great-grandfather Agyrrhius (I) (PA 179, PAA 107660, e.g. Ar. *Eccl*. 102, Plato 201 K-A), see the discussion in Stroud, R. S. *The Athenian Grain-Tax Law of 274/3 B.C. Hesperia Suppl*. 29, 1998, 16ff.

[8] Athenaeus 3.104c-d ascribes the nickname to Callimedon's fondness for crayfish (K-A in their note on Euphron 8 seem to believe Athenaeus). Bechtel, F. *Die einstämmigen männlichen Personennamen des Griechischen, die aus Spitznamen hervorgegangen sind*, Abh. Gottingen 2.5, Berlin 1898, 23-4, prefers to see Callimedon's strabism as the more obvious reason for the nickname; see also Arnott's commentary on Alexis fr. 57. Hunter, R.L., *Eubulus. The Fragments*, Cambridge 1983, 95-6. warns, however, that the reason for the nickname may well be totally unrelated and so unknown. On crayfish or spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*), see Thompson, D'Arcy W., *A Glossary of Greek Fishes*, London 1947, 102-3., *RE* s.v. *Krebs*.

[9] Steinhausen, J. *ΚΩΜΩΙΔΟΥΜΕΝΟΙ. De grammaticorum veterum studiis ad homines in comoedia Attica irrisos pertinentibus*, Bonn 1910, 57-8.

such behaviour only by financial constraints. I will return to the portrayal of such relationships below.

***Opsophagia* and dangerous eating habits**

Opsophagia, viewed with suspicion, was an intense, almost indecent craving for a side dish in preference to staple food. In Athens it meant predominantly an obsession with fish.[10] Fondness for fish may have been a trope in the invectives against enemies: Demosthenes notes in disgust that when Philocrates betrayed his city to the Macedonians, he went around purchasing prostitutes and fish with the money he made from selling the interests of Athens.[11] Aeschines in his attacks on his opponent Timarchus recalls as damning evidence the many occasions when he was seen around the fish-stalls with Hegesander.[12]

Unlike the communality of meat consumption, 'eating fish... was not a serious or venerable activity. Fish were not slaughtered or distributed in a ritualized symbolic context. Fish stood outside the theatre of sacrifice and outside official banquets. It had no public role or responsibilities, free to play itself, the quintessential modern commodity fully fetishized for the private consumer, a food whose value could be gauged only according to desirability and demand.'[13]

Athenaeus (8.336f) has a quotation from Alexis' Ἀcωτοδιδάcκαλοc that summarizes the danger to which pleasure-seeking may subvert social norms, human decency, even filial piety: 'nothing produces more pleasure than the belly. It's your only father and your only mother too':

γαcτρὸc οὐδὲν ἥδιον.
αὕτη πατήρ coι καὶ πάλιν μήτηρ μόνη. (Alexis fr. 25.6-7)

Athen. 8.337e lists three virtues connected with eating crayfish: they must be shelled, so they occupy your time, provide a fine meal and are nice to look at.[14] Callimedon himself was φίλιχθυc (Athen. 8.339e gives examples from Alexis 249=87, 149, Antiphanes 77, Eubulus 8) and *opsophagos* (Athen. 3. 100d-e quoting Alexis 198, Euphron 8, and Dioxippus 3, if ἐκεῖνον πέμπε refers to him). In this

[10] Davidson, J., *Courtesans and Fishcakes. The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens*, London 1997.
[11] ὁ δέ, ὧν τὰ τῆc πόλεωc πράγματα χρημάτων ἀπέδοτο, τούτων πόρνας ἠγόραζε καὶ ἰχθῦc περιών. Dem. *De fals. leg*. 229.
[12] Aeschin. 1.57, 58-9, 65.
[13] Davidson 1997, 20.
[14] τοὺc δὲ καράβουc ἔφη τρία ἔχειν, διατριβὴν καὶ εὐωχίαν καὶ θεωρίαν. Athen. 8.337e.

fragment he falls victim to his son's vice – a comic version of 'live by the sword, die by the sword'.[15]

Although we cannot place the fragment – it is too short for that – into an identifiable place within the plot of Philemon's play, the description of Agyrrhius' *opsophagy* seems to point at either a parasite or a cook speaking. It may have been a self-contained joke anywhere in the play or part of a narration of a banquet prepared by the cook, similar to Sicon's narration in *Dyscolus*. If a cook is speaking, then we would have here a deliciously audacious Atreus, his crime brought down to a comic level, and in Agyrrhius a shameless version of a Thyestes, not only not shying away from an ominous feast, but knowingly gobbling down his own father.[16]

Let us look at the language used to describe Agyrrhius' obsessive, rash behaviour: παρατεθέντος καράβου: παρατίθημι is used of serving the main course (on a small table, ἐπὶ τῆς τραπέζης), less commonly of putting down tables or cups by the guests. For serving side dishes (τραγήματα), περιφέρω is commonly used instead. That παρατεθέντος is used here (and not e.g. παρακειμένου or παρόντος) stresses the quick succession of events: Agyrrhius' reaction came immediately after crayfish was served.

ὡς εἶδεν αὐτὸν: lengthier narratives may begin with ὡς γάρ (τάχιστα) 'as soon as he saw...': Ar. *Plut*. 653, Eub. 111, Men. *Peric*. 537, *Sam*. 219, *Dysc*. 670 (ὁ Γοργίας γάρ, ὡς τάχιστ' εἰσήλθομεν). As a matter of fact, this is the only 'convivalis narratio' in Philemon.[17] A typical convivial scene is described e.g. in Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus* 758ff. Uncontrollable passions begin with the sight: a young man catching sight of a beautiful girl or a greedy old man spotting enormous war booty, behave in a similarly rash way.

The narrative structure is similar to the description in Menander's *Periciromene* of the chance meeting between siblings (the infatuated boy is not aware that the girl is in fact his long-lost sister, he rushes up to her to kiss her and she, aware of their kinship does not push him away):

ἔτυχ' ἑσπέρας
πέμπουσά ποι θεράπαιναν, ὡς δ' ἐπὶ ταῖς θύραις
αὐτὴν γενομένην εἶδεν, εὐθὺ προσδραμὼν

[15] Aesch. *Ag*. 1529.
[16] Other possibilities include a parasite, his mind firmly on the topic of food, describing a symposium. Or it may have been part of a jocular *exemplum* after the fashion of Demeas' invoking the example of Androcles in Men. *Samia* 606-8.
[17] Fraenkel, E., *De media et nova comoedia questiones selectae*, diss. Göttingen 1912, 31, 48ff.

ἐφίλει, περιέβαλλ', ἡ δὲ τῶι προειδέναι
ἀδελφὸν ὄντ' οὐκ ἔφυγε· (Men. *Peric*. 153-57)

Although Philemon's language shows some novelties (εἴπας is a late form, appearing first in New Comedy, and there only in the nominative singular), the imperfect in τὸν πατέρα κατήσθιεν is probably not a sign of syntactic laxity. Why is the imperfect used here and does it somehow add to the humorous description of the scene? A similar use in Ar. *Ran*. 560 puzzled Sedgwick.[18] Here, it could mean 'he got down to the business of eating up his father' although Tucker's explanation in his 1906 commentary on *Ranae* was perhaps right to see in Aristophanes' passage the use of the so-called panoramic imperfect – to use the term Shilleto[19] introduced. κατέφαγεν would probably not do if the crayfish was large. In Athen. 3.104c-d we in fact hear of gigantic crayfish: παῖδες ἐπεισῆλθον φέροντες ἐπὶ δίσκων καράβους μείζονας Καλλιμέδοντος τοῦ ῥήτορος and one is immediately reminded of Martial mocking Calliodorus eating a huge, four-pound mullet, making him seem like a cannibal:

Addixti servum nummis here mille ducentis,
ut bene cenares, Calliodore, semel.
nec bene cenasti: mullus tibi quattuor emptus
librarum cenae pompa caputque fuit.
exclamare libet: 'Non est hic, inprobe, non est
piscis: homo est; hominem, Calliodore, comes.' (10.31)

A gluttonous *opsophagos* is a common motif: Agyrrhius is happy to see a delicious fish, he greets it as he would a relative after involuntary separation, and without much ado proceeds to eat it. It was the son's duty to look after his aging father, even serve him meals, but here such piety is mocked. A father, on meeting his family, would expect a welcoming dinner in his honour, but this father is instead eaten up by the relatives eagerly awaiting his arrival.

Let us look at some highly melodramatic places in Comedy where family members, kept apart by various twists of fate, even despairing of ever seeing each other again, are reunited and give expression to their emotions.

[18] Sedgwick, W. B., 'Some Uses of the Imperfect in Greek' *CQ* 34 (1940), 122.
[19] Shilleto, R. Thucydidis I. Cambridge 1872, 34, cf. Smyth 1898N.

An emotional reunion

Menander's *Misumenos*, though in other places lacunose, preserves an emotional reunion between Demeas and his long-lost daughter, separated during the warfare in Cyprus:

Δη. ὦ Ζεῦ, τίν' ὄψιν οὐδὲ προσδοκωμένην
ὁρῶ; (Κρ.) τί βούλει, τηθία; τί μοι λαλεῖς;
πατὴρ ἐμός; ποῦ; (Δη.) παιδίον Κράτεια. (Κρ.) τίς
καλεῖ με; πάππα· χαῖρε πολλά, φίλτατε.
(Δη.) ἔχω σε, τέκνον. (Κρ.) ὦ ποθούμενος φανείς,
ὁρῶ σ' ὃν οὐκ ἂν ὠιόμην ἰδεῖν ἔτι. (210-15)

The reunion was accompanied with hugs and kisses, as we hear from Getas: τίνα περιβάλλειν καὶ φιλεῖν οὗτος [δοκεῖς; 221.

In Men. *Epitrepontes* Habrotonon, a good-natured *hetaera*, is searching for the true mother of the child she is holding in her hands, all she knows is that the girl was ravished during the festival last year. By a stroke of good luck, as if on cue the girl comes out of the house next door. When Habrotonon spots her, her words are warm, as if spoken to a member of her own family: (Ἁβρ.) αὐτή ’στιν [ἣν] ἑ̣ό̣[ρ]α̣κ̣α̣· χαῖρε, φιλτάτη 860.

Other reunion scenes in New Comedy are rather sketchy, although we know they were modelled on tragic precedents. And Aristophanes could make such an emotional reunion into a particularly humorous scene with a twist:

Δι. ὦ φιλτάτη σὺ καὶ πάλαι ποθουμένη,
ἦλθες ποθεινὴ μὲν τρυγῳδικοῖς χοροῖς,
φίλη δὲ Μορύχῳ. δμῶες, ἐξενέγκατε
τὴν ἐσχάραν μοι δεῦρο καὶ τὴν ῥιπίδα.
σκέψασθε, παῖδες, τὴν ἀρίστην ἔγχελυν,
ἥκουσαν ἕκτῳ μόλις ἔτει ποθουμένην.
προσείπατ' αὐτήν, ὦ τέκν'· ἄνθρακας δ' ἐγὼ
ὑμῖν παρέξω τῆσδε τῆς ξένης χάριν.
ἀλλ' εἴσφερ' αὐτήν· μηδὲ γὰρ θανών ποτε
σοῦ χωρὶς εἴην ἐντετευτλιωμένης. (*Ach*. 885-94)

Dicaeopolis in a parody of a reunion scene addresses a Boeotian eel now that the war no longer keeps the two apart and immediately calls for cooking utensils – thus driving home the humour of the guest of honour at a welcome-home dinner party, only this guest of honour also becomes the main dish. *Pothos* is part of the emotionally charged reunion in all cases (ὦ ποθούμενος φανείς, ἥκουσαν...ποθουμένην[20]). In *Aspis*, Daos (wrongly) believes all hopes of a happy reunion have been dashed now that the young master is dead and will not return home nor see his sister married:

καὶ τὴν ἀδελφήν, ἥσπερ ἐξώρμας τότε
ἕνεκα, σεαυτοῦ νυμφίωι καταξίωι
συνοικιεῖν <u>ποθεινὸν</u> ἥκοντ' οἴκαδε, (8-10)

Let us look at how Philemon evokes such high emotions. Agyrrhius greets his father χαῖρε πάππα φίλτατε. φίλτατε occurs chiefly in late authors, most frequently used between family members and lovers: 'except for the examples in Plato, φίλτατε almost always expresses genuine, often deep, affection.'[21] Gregor[22] gives examples where it is used in Tragic recognition scenes. On πάππα, παππία, παππίδιον, μαμμία, μάμμη as expressions of affection, see again Dickey (1996) 81. πάππα features prominently, as we have seen, in the recognition scene in Men. *Mis*. 213 (πάππα· χαῖρε πολλά, φίλτατε), 248 (πάππα φίλτατε), 439. Agyrrhius' *pothos* is implicit, but the vocabulary of a recognition scene is in full force. Of course, we have no way of knowing whether Callimedon was already exiled (condemned in his absence) at the time of Philemon's joke – as this would only add to the poignancy of the scene: a son greeting his father after enforced separation and eating him up out of happiness.

Hypallage

'It is but a short step from *synecdoche* to *metonymy*, which consists in the substitution of one name for another, and, as Cicero tells us, is called *hypallage* by the rhetoricians... It is, however, perhaps more permissible to describe what is

[20] Cf. also the hopes of a father, absent from home on a business trip in Plautus *Mostellaria* 440-1.: triennio post Aegypto aduenio domum; / credo <u>exspectatus</u> ueniam familiaribus.
[21] Dickey, E., *Greek Forms of Address. From Herodotus to Lucian*, Oxford 1996, 138.
[22] Gregor, D.B., 'Ὦ φίλτατ'' *CR* 7 (1957), 14-15.

possessed by reference to its possessor, as, for example, to say of a man whose estate is being squandered, "the man is being eaten up."[23]

Suitors eating up Odysseus' property like rats, moths or bloodsuckers are the first and defining literary paradigm behind the metaphor of eating up one's own or someone else's property. This metaphor frequently lost its metaphorical distance and took on a real, literal meaning when great wealth was expended, or even the whole *oikos* destroyed by huge appetites. Telemachus even says: 'these eating up my substance / waste it away; and soon they will break me myself to pieces':

τοὶ δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἔδοντες
οἶκον ἐμόν· τάχα δή με διαρραίσουσι καὶ αὐτόν. (*Od*. 16. 127-28)

The act of eating, in perhaps every language on earth, can become a symbol for all sorts of behaviour of appropriation, whether out of some form of desire (culinary or sexual appetites) or out of revenge. It is a mixed symbol which can be both a gesture of love or a threatening, dangerous act of animosity. This ambiguity is intrinsically embedded in the carnivorous appetites, dangerous in the animal world, mitigated by communality and civility in the human world, although such behavioural norms may at any time lapse into violent or threatening antisocial behaviour. Let us look at some relevant examples while noting that metaphors connected with eating are some of the most productive in any language and would require a much lengthier analysis than is possible here.

Imagery connected with eating is not to be imagined as a unified whole, a group of images connected by some inner logic; rather, such images come from various sources, 'eating' on its own is a word without much meaning, and only concrete images taken over from particular animal species and their behavioural traits, carry the forceful metaphor forward. For example cruel, vicious fighting cocks are implied in this passage from Aristophanes:

μέμνησό νυν
δάκνειν, διαβάλλειν, τοὺς λόφους κατεσθίειν,
χὤπως τὰ κάλλαι' ἀποφαγὼν ἥξεις πάλιν. (*Eq*. 495-97)

[23] Nisi forte hoc potius est a possessore quod possidetur, ut 'hominem deuorari', cuius patrimonium consumatur.' Quint. *Inst. Or.* 8.6.23 and 25.

And goats (or she-goats) are almost universally invoked to draw parallels with men's (and women's) sexual appetites, perhaps all the way to the times of Shakespeare or Stuart literature, or at any rate to any time when knowledge of goats' behaviour was still common knowledge:

ἐπεκαλεῖτο δ' Αἴξ
ὅτι τὸν μέγαν <δὴ> κατέφαγεν ἐραστήν ποτε
Θαλλόν (Machon 424-26)

Demipho's dream in Plautus' *Mercator* features a 'she-goat' (*capra*, identified with the beautiful girl Pasicompsa) eating up his neighbour's dowry:

dicit capram, quam dederam servandam sibi,
suae uxoris dotem ambedisse oppido (Pl. Mer. 238-39)

Parasites may be compared to worms eating through a man's property until it becomes but a hollow stalk of wheat:

οἱ κόλακές εἰσι τῶν ἐχόντων οὐσίας
σκώληκες. εἰς οὖν ἄκακον ἀνθρώπου τρόπον
εἰσδὺς ἕκαστος ἐσθίει καθήμενος,
ἕως ἂν ὥσπερ πυρὸν ἀποδείξηι κενόν.
ἔπειθ' ὁ μὲν λέμμ' ἐστίν, ὁ δ' ἕτερον δάκνει (Anax. 32)

In Plautus' *Trinummus* (the Greek original was by Philemon) Callicles is an old man whom his friend Charmides asks to keep an eye on his property while travelling abroad. Now people wrongly suspect him of enriching himself at his friend's expense. He is compared to a vulture, perhaps to be imagined on a battlefield, not discriminating between the flesh of fellow citizens and enemies:

tum autem sunt alii qui te uolturium uocant:
hostisne an ciuis comedis parui pendere. (Pl. *Trin*. 101-2, cf. also 360, 417)

A wolf, with his jaws wide open, is also a perfect image for greedy men, the proverbial λύκος χανὼν ἄπεισι (διὰ κενῆς) e.g. in Men. *Asp*. 372-3. Anything that can be personalized, can also be imagined as eating or devouring its victims. Even

storms, sea monsters, eddying waters, and by extension *hetaerae*, have their victims for lunch:

ἡ δὲ Φρύνη τὴν Χάρυβδιν οὐχὶ πόρρω που ποιεῖ,
τόν τε ναύκληρον λαβοῦσα καταπέπωκ' αὐτῶι σκάφει; (Anaxilas 22.18-19)

In fact every use of the verb *deuoro* in Plautus or Terence has a metaphorical sense, taken over from the animal imagery. Animals' rapacious behaviour, devouring their prey, is of course devoid of any civility. It lends itself to extended usage, e.g. in patterns of threatening behaviour. Cnemon is so far from being civil to his fellow citizens, that in his anger he threatens to bite off the head of any passer-by and eat him alive:

κατέδεται / ἡμᾶς (Men. *Dysc*. 124-5).
<Γε.> μὴ δάκηις. (Κν.) ἐγώ σε νὴ Δία,
καὶ κατέδομαί γε ζῶντα. (*Dysc*. 467-8)

Eating up property or the man to whom it belonged thus became both a metaphorical extension from the animal realm, as well as a literal description of eating through a man's wealth. Examples of κατεσθίειν (βρύκειν or καταμασᾶσθαι) or *comedere rem* are numerous. Just a few examples are enough:

patria qui abligurrierat bona (Ter. *Eun*. 235, Donatus adduces a similar expression from Ennius: cum alterius abligurias bona).

A greedy man may not even care for the taste of what he is eating and if he hears of a place where a treasure is buried, he will willingly devour even the earth around it.

sed ut ego nunc adulescenti thensaurum indicem
indomito, pleno amoris ac lasciuiae?
minime, minime hercle uero. nam certo scio,
locum quoque illum omnem ubi situst comederit; (Pl. *Trin*. 750-53)

A victim is necessarily seen as a foolish loser. In Terence's *Eunuchus*, Gnatho proposes that Phaedria and Chaerea should accept the stupid soldier as a rival in

their expensive love affairs with courtesans – no one gives better or more lavish parties than him. He therefore suggests:

hunc comedendum vobis propino et deridendum. (*Eun*. 1087)

Pimps may take advantage of the silliness or willingness of young men to pay huge sums for their appetites:

scortum quaerit, habet argentum. iam admordere hunc mihi lubet.
SIMO. iamne illum comessurus es? BA. dum recens est,
dum calet, dum datur, deuorari decet iam. (Pl. *Ps*. 1125-27)

And one can be eaten even in his absence:

sine modo uenire saluom quem apsentem comes. (Pl. *Mos*. 12)[24]

There is a certain ruthlessness in taking such advantage of foolish men. Aristophanes could use this imagery to great effect in portraying a gullible *demos* and a ruthless demagogue eating public funds like figs:

Πα. ὦ γέροντες ἡλιασταί, φράτερες τριωβόλου,
οὓς ἐγὼ βόσκω κεκραγὼς καὶ δίκαια κἄδικα,
παραβοηθεῖθ', ὡς ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν τύπτομαι ξυνωμοτῶν.
Δη. Ἐν δίκῃ γ', ἐπεὶ τὰ κοινὰ πρὶν λαχεῖν κατεσθίεις,[25]
κἀποσυκάζεις πιέζων τοὺς ὑπευθύνους, σκοπῶν
ὅστις αὐτῶν ὠμός ἐστιν ἢ πέπων ἢ †μὴ πέπων. (Ar. *Eq*. 255-60)

However, there is one difference with Philemon's fragment: Agyrrhius would not be portrayed as an ordinary *opsophagos* who was ruined in the process of consuming his family's wealth. The family was in fact too wealthy (from mining) for a joke such as the following to work:

Υἱὸς καὶ γενετὴρ δῆριν φιλόνεικον ἔθεντο,
τίς πλέον ἐκδαπανῶν κλῆρον ἅπαντα φάγῃ.

[24] For more illustrative examples in Latin literature, see *ThLL* s.v. *comedo* 1767.72ff, *devoro* 876.55ff.
[25] Sc. πρὶν διανεῖμαι αὐτὰ ἁρπάζεις acc. to schol., cf. *Vesp*. 1116, *Plut*. 1124.

καὶ μετὰ τὴν βρῶσιν τὴν χρηματικὴν μάλα πᾶσαν
ὕστατον ἀλλήλους λοιπὸν ἔχουσι φαγεῖν. (*Anth. Pal.* 11.357)

Death wish against one's father

'Words meaning 'destroy' (*ἀναιρέω, διαφθείρω, ἀπόλλυμι*) are often used by Demosthenes to mean political or financial ruin, not death.'[26] Or, to put it differently, political and financial ruin was talked of, or seen as, a kind of death. And young men in Comedy, who are usually without financial means to buy time with their beloved courtesan, sink to suicidal desperation or may humorously wish for the death of their parents – if that means a prospect of a great inheritance which could then be spent on satisfying their erotic desires with a beloved paramour:

TH. triennio post Aegypto aduenio domum;
credo exspectatus ueniam familiaribus.
TR. nimio edepol ille potuit exspectatior
uenire qui te nuntiaret mortuom. (Pl. *Mos*. 440-43)

scribe. MN. quid scribam? CH. salutem tuo patri uerbis tuis.
PI. quid si potius morbum, mortem scribat? id erit rectius. (Pl. *Bac*. 731-32)

There is a certain delicate urbaneness in the sentiments expressed by some parents who do not wish to stand in their children's way out of fear that they would become otiose and a burden to them. Perhaps Callimedon here is a willing participant, self-sacrificing himself for his son, aware, just like the father in Menander's *Citharista*, that he himself has squandered much wealth in his youth on similar appetites.

To summarize, a joke is funny on many levels, none of which is very obvious or explicit on a conscious level. That precludes a systematic analysis and rather invites a discussion of interconnected images without any inner logic. The process of spelling out some of the areas on which Philemon is relying is by its very nature un-funny and open-ended. One could continue still further: on first meeting in a Comedy, an acquaintance's facial expression is immediately noticed and commented upon ('what is wrong? You look gloomy') and, as we know, the real Callimedon had strabismus, an obvious feature that everyone would have noticed on seeing him. We did not touch upon the topic of the cook – a presence felt in the background, who

[26] MacDowell, D. M., *Demosthens: On the False Embassy (Oration 19)*, Oxford 2000, 205.

was often imagined to be 'cutting people up' (κατακόπτειν) by his boastful talk, he does not even need his knives for that.[27]

In *Samia*, Demeas suspects his adopted son Moschion to have been seduced by Chrysis and cannot believe his brazen behaviour (καὶ τοῦτο τολμᾶις ἐμβλέπων ἐμοὶ λέγειν; 483). Children often avoided shameful behaviour out of fear of their parents, dead or alive – how could they look them in the eye here or in the Underworld? Clearly, Agyrrhius is not troubled by such niceties, he looks his father squarely in the eye and commits an atrocious act.

Should political questions also play a role in our assessment of the humour of the fragment? If Callimedon was pro-Macedonian, his son seems staunchly nationalistic in the two extant decrees that he proposed; but we do not know how their potentially dangerous rivalry played out in real life. If the play was performed during Callimedon's forced exile from Athens, then the nature of the reunion, and the true joy at seeing Karabos/crayfish would be given added poignancy. But it is difficult to explore this venue and it seems best to just assume an accommodating Callimedon being taken advantage of by his greedy son.

It is noteworthy that the fragment tries to bring down a political family to the level of a New Comedy plot: a typical relationship between an unruly son and his father. The joke becomes funnier if seen as a New-Comedy type of a relationship, so frequently rehashed in the dreamy world of nondescript and anonymous Athenian bourgeoisie but in this fragment it is presented in a particularly fresh and unusual way and given colour by drawing on a real life relationship between Agyrrhius and Callimedon. We may even allow for the possibility that something in their real-life relationship added humour to the joke. Even without additional punning seen in Antiphanes and Theophilus, Philemon is surprisingly witty exactly by evoking the nexus of images typical of New Comedy conventions and perfectly fitting a real-life situation into the conventionalized world of Comedy.

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[27] Πα. μάγειρ', ἐγώ, μὰ τοὺς θεούς, οὐκ οἶδα σὺ
ἐφ' ὅ τι μαχαίρας περιφέρεις· ἱκανὸς γὰρ εἶ
λαλῶν κατακόψαι πάντα πράγματα. (Men. *Samia* 283-5)