

HON 195 Ancient Comedy: Comic Fragments Project

GOALS

1. Paying our respects to Aristophanes' lost rivals. 2. Understanding the nature of fragmentary authors, an important but little-known dimension of ancient literature. 3. Overcoming the fear of working with literary material in a language you don't know. 4. Learning about the Loeb library.

INSTRUCTIONS

- A. Revisit *Death of Comedy*, Chapter 3, and pick one of the Old Comedy poets discussed there (but **not** Epicharmus or Susarion: there won't be enough material).
- B. In the Bailey-Howe Reference section (ground floor), find the 8-volume collection of Greek Comic Fragments (Kassel-Austin, *Poetae Comici Graecae*, PA 3249 .P63 1983). The poets are listed alphabetically. Find your poet.
- C. Scan through your poet's fragments looking for ones which were quoted by Athenaeus. These will appear as "Athen." just beneath the Greek text of the fragment (see example on back of page). Find **ten** of these for your poet, and write down **both** the Kassel-Austin fragment number (abbreviate as K-A 175, for the example on back) **and** the Athenaeus reference number (IV.138E in our example). In choosing your ten fragments, I recommend looking for the larger ones (more than a single line or word): this will give you more to work from in your analysis.
- D. Now find the 7-volume copy of Athenaeus in the Loeb reference library (**PA3612 .A87 1927**). The Loeb library, published by Harvard, contains all the major Greek and Latin authors with ancient text and facing-page English translation. This is the standard tool for people who need to deal with Greco-Roman literature but don't know Greek or Latin. It is kept behind the reserve desk on the ground floor. They are small books, green for Greek, red for Latin, and listed alphabetically by author. The reserve people will let you go back there if you show them this sheet. There is a desk right there you can work at.
- E. Read the first paragraph of the work so you know what it's original purpose was. This is in volume 1, where the Greek text starts.
- F. Now locate all 10 of your fragments. The Athenaeus numbers you wrote down in step C appear at the top of each page, and also along the left and right margins. Copy out both the English translation of this fragment, and the preceding sentence of Athenaeus which introduces it, for context. You may also wish to read the previous page or two of Athenaeus, to understand the larger discussion in which he has quoted the fragment.
- G. Collect all 10 fragments and list them one after another in one document, giving each the Kassel-Austin number too. For example:

K-A 175 (= Athen. 4.138E)

Athenaeus text here

fragment text here indented

Next K-A number in bold (and so on)

- H. Now that you have a small collection of fragments by your author, write a brief essay (1 page or so) discussing what you can deduce, from these fragments and the presentation of Athenaeus, about style or interests of this author, and/or contemporary Athenian society. You may want to supplement your discussion from other fragments cited in *Death of Comedy*. Of course, you only have a very small, and random, sample to work from. In some cases the fragment may not be long enough for you to understand what was happening in the play. When that happens you can put a negative slant on your discussion: how is your understanding **limited** by its fragmentary nature? Don't be frustrated if they don't yield a very coherent picture: realizing that is part of the exercise. In your discussion, cite each fragment only by its K-A number.
- I. Format the whole thing using single-spacing and ten-point Times. Spell-check. Put essay first, followed by fragment collection.