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Hijacking Sophocles, burying Euripides: Clytemnestra, Erinyes, and Oedipus in Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen*

Abstract: This paper identifies and analyzes several related, thematically significant tragedic resonances in Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen* as exemplifying his shift from outright paratragedy to appropriation. His treatment of politicized gender and sexual tensions owes much both to Orestes-plays (Praxagora emerges as a comic Clytemnestra; the three old women as Erinyes) and to Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*. The abduction scene in Aristophanes is modeled on abduction of Oedipus, which elucidates the comedian's attitude towards Sophocles.
Keywords. Aristophanes, *Assemblywomen*, Orestes-plays, Erinyes, Oedipus, Sophocles, sex, gender, abduction, burial, paratragedy.

Οἰδίπουν γὰρ φῶ
τὰ δ᾽ ἄλλα πάντ᾽ ἴσασιν· ὁ πατὴρ Λάιος,
μήτηρ Ἰοκάστη, θυγατέρες, παῖδες τίνες,
τί πείσεθ᾽ οὗτος, τί πεποίηκεν.

All I need to do is say "Oedipus"
and they know the rest—his father Laius,
his mother Jocasta, his daughters, sons,
what will happen to him, what he's done.
(Antiphanes *Poiesis*, frg. 189 K-A, tr. Slater in Rusten 2011)

"It is still hard to read any play, except possibly the *Ecclesiazusae*, and feel that it is falling apart." (Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero*, 9)

Aristophanes has been using and abusing tragedy since his earliest extant play, the *Acharnians* (produced in 425), where Euripides' now-lost *Telephus* (438) is parodied at length (*Ach*. 204-625). The *Women at the Thesmophoria* (411) arrange three recent plays of Euripides (*Palamedes*, *Helen*, *Andromeda*) in a

medley parody, while the *Frogs* (405) stage a contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in the underworld. One can only speculate about the focus of Aristophanes' output during the period between 405 and the 390s, from which no play survives, but something in his relation to tragedy certainly changed in his last two plays. Direct, extensive, and signposted tragic references in the *Assemblywomen* (390?) and the *Wealth* (388), appear few and far apart, ostensibly far less dramaturgically integrated than in his earlier plays. Aristophanes' interest in paratragedy is thus typically limited to the period between 425-405: "We know of no play outside this period with any substantial tragic presence."[1]

One reason for this changed attitude may be that the humorous effect of his "large-scale usurpation"[2] of tragedy as we know it eventually got worn out.[3] Practical circumstances would have certainly contributed: both Sophocles and Euripides were dead already by the time the *Frogs* was put on stage. This in itself, however, should not be overestimated—Aeschylus had been long deceased by 405, for that matter—but the audience could no longer watch Aristophanes and the two contemporary tragedians lined up at the same festivals. But whatever the explanation, it is difficult to imagine that Aristophanes would even be *able* to decide that in, say, 405 it was simply time to move on and jettison tragedy entirely, after systematically drawing inspiration from it for two formative decades of his career.

Likewise, even though it might seem justified to doubt the artistic relevance and audience appeal of parodying a tragedic passage or a play which would have to be at least fifteen years old, this was clearly not an obstacle. More than a decade separated Euripides' *Telephus* and the *Acharnians*. After all, Aeschylus' victory in the *Frogs* entailed extensive parody of his style and themes, which demonstrates that the audience must have been still familiar with—and interested in—his work decades later. The "shelf life" of target plays and authors was not safe to estimate, and evidently much longer than one might instinctively feel. One phenomenon that perhaps needs to be additionally factored in for the later stages of Aristophanes' career in particular is the transformation of "performance culture" into "reading culture" towards

[1] Silk 2000: 49, fn. 22. Cf. also, more or less explictly: Rau 1967, Ussher 1973, Taaffe 1993, Sommerstein 1998. Zelnick-Abramowitz 2002 identifies allusive material to Euripides' *Cyclops* in the *Wealth*, but in the presumed first version of the play from 408. A notable exception is the attractive argument of Compton-Engle 2013 that the *Wealth* is in close dialogue with Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*; more below.

[2] Henderson 1998-2002 I: 5.

[3] A new fashion of parodying entire plays of Euripides from beginning to the end seems to have appeared in the fourth century; a list in Rusten 2011: 27; among others, *Auge, Heracles*, *Bacchae*, *Danae*, *Orestes Humanized*, *Medea*; Aristophanes' own *Phoenician Women* is undatable.

the end of the fifth century."[4] Indeed the starting point of the *Frogs*, his reputedly last play with "substantial tragic presence," is that Dionysus got infatuated with Euripides not after or during a performance but while privately *reading* a text of his *Andromeda* (ἀναγιγνώσκοντί μοι | τὴν Ἀνδρομέδαν πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν, *Ra*. 52-3), which was performed some seven years earlier. Most explicitly, the Chorus later reminds the contestants that they *no longer* have to fear that the audience will miss some finer points (λεπτὰ) in their plays, for every spectator now owns a copy of the book to consult and understands the sophisticated effects (ὡς οὐκέθ᾽ οὕτω ταῦτ᾽ ἔχει... βιβλίον τ᾽ ἔχων ἕκαστος μανθάνει τὰ δεξιά, *Ra*. 1112-14). Thus, there is a good chance that some less immediately obvious tragedic resonances in Aristophanes' latest plays would not have gone unappreciated by its intended audience one way or the other. After all, staying alert to the possibility of paratragedy is worthwhile if only because in this respect Aristophanes should always be, so to speak, presumed guilty until proven innocent.[5]

In the present paper I identify and analyze several extended and related tragedic echoes in Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen* (*Ecclesiazusae*), which demonstrate that his habit of using tragedy as a reference point continues, and might help explain how it evolves. Arguably, Aristophanes and his audience have been internalizing comedy's paratragic discourse so fundamentally for so long that this initial intergeneric relation eventually arrived at a phase where there was less point in perpetuating the contrived self-defining attitude towards tragedy as comedy's Other. Tragedic patterns of the *Assemblywomen* will show that the two types of drama have apparently merged into a unified system of themes and signs, still distinguishable, but even so—or precisely thereby—mutually complementary. Accordingly, we shall also see a different dimension of relation between Aristophanes and the tragedians. Sophocles now enters the picture, introduced much less visibly than Euripides has routinely been, thus ultimately much more substantially.

The *Assemblywomen* is a play best known for short-circuiting the issues of politics and gender,[6] much like one of Aristophanes' other "women on top" plays, the *Lysistrata*. The protagonist of the *Assemblywomen* is likewise

[4] Wright 2013: 611-13 describes its impact on the development of comedy in the fourth century, which was written to a fair extent, if not exclusively, for readers rather than spectators. Compare Rawlings 2016, who attractively interprets Thucydides 1.22.4 as an indication that owning and rereading books was becoming increasingly fashionable at the turn of the century.

[5] Cowan 2008, for example, makes this perfectly clear.

[6] Foley 1982; David 1984; Rothwell 1990; Taaffe 1993: 103-133; Finnegan 1995; Saïd 1996; McClure 1999: 205-257; Zeitlin 1999; Farioli 2001: 139-155; Zumbrunnen 2006; Tordoff 2007.

a female leader, Praxagora ("Woman Effective in Public"[7]), who organizes a women's resistance front. Disguised as men, Athenian women occupy the assembly at first dawn and vote to transfer all power to women and introduce universal social equality. The goal of the newly imposed legislation, which mandates that everything is shared, is to level the playing field. For resources where competitiveness is inherent, this means tipping the balance in favor of the hitherto disadvantaged. Specifically, in obtaining sex, older and physically less attractive citizens are granted exponential priority over the younger and the more desirable.[8] Although the law is theoretically gender-neutral, it turns out to disproportionately favor old women. While young men and women are in an equally bad position, since the law requires them to have sex with older and sexually undesirable partners whether they want it or not, old men are not necessarily happy either. Praxagora's husband Blepyrus fears for men of advanced age like him, who have only so much sexual capacity available. If they have to satisfy the old and ugly women first, they will run out of energy for sex with the younger ones, however accessible they may be (*Ec*. 615-621).

Praxagora's approach is thus in a way the opposite from Lysistrata's. Whereas Lysistrata temporarily restricts sexual access to women to blackmail men into bringing about political change, Praxagora uses the political victory to redefine sexual relations permanently. Of all the hypothetical socio-economic and political ramifications of Praxagora's revolution, the disruption of gender hierarchy is by far the most elaborated, apparently deemed most symbolical for literary articulation.[9] A comparable disruption, although a temporary one and less strictly political than literary and cultural, is the female assembly in the *Women at the Thesmophoria.* If only because that play is a patchwork of several plays of Euripides, it is worthwhile to pay special attention to paratragedic potential of the *Assemblywomen* as well. Attic tragedy is, of course, densely populated with strong and resistant female characters, but the comparative scope can be usefully narrowed down to plays in which patriarchal anxiety comes to the fore when women *assume political power*. The

[7] Translation of Henderson 1998-2002 IV: 238. While appropriate for this play, it was an existing name: Kanavou 2011: 172.

[8] See Saïd 1996: 307 for comparison with an account of Babylonians in Herodotus 1.196. For fascinating modern parallels, see the opening pages of Rothwell 1990.

[9] Cf. Bowie 1993b: 264: "As befits a world dominated by the *oikos*, it is in nutritional and sexual matters that the results of the women's coup are most fully represented [sc. in the *Assemblywomen*]." Cf. Sommerstein 1998: 26, fn. 97: "Athenian tragedy is full of women who take the initiative, but almost always they do so only when their personal life has been injured or disrupted, normally in connection with family sexual or parental relationships."

prime example is Clytemnestra.[10]

1. Clytemnestra and Praxagora

One very significant layer of the myth of the Atreid dynasty on tragic stage is also the foundational premise of the *Assemblywomen*: a domestic revolution evolving into a female coup d'état. The immediate consequence of Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon is that she rules the city. The importance of this is foreshadowed early in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, when the Chorus reminds us that indeed she has already been in charge during his absence, so they now deem it proper to pay respect "to the wife of the ruler while the male throne is unoccupied" (φωτὸς ἀρχηγοῦ τίειν | γυναῖκ᾽ ἐρημωθέντος ἄρσενος θρόνου, *Ag*. 259-60).[11] Later in the trilogy Orestes is outraged because the glorious Argos, which once conquered Troy, is now ruled by two women—Clytemnestra and the cowardly Aegisthus (A. *Cho*. 303-5; cf. 1046).[12] Aegisthus is called a woman (γύναι), in the same passage where Agamemnon is referred to as ἀνήρ twice (A. *Ag*. 1625-7). Aegisthus is not man enough even to participate in the murder (*Ag*. 1435, 1463-4) despite his empty boast that he did (*Ag*. 1614). Only with the "real man" out of the picture[13] and the unmanly Aegisthus under her heel is Clytemnestra now able to rule, as she makes sure to remind us at the very last lines of the play (*Ag*. 1672-3).[14]

In Sophocles' and Euripides' versions of the story the political implications of the gender tensions are equally prominent. Euripides' Orestes justifies killing Clytemnestra on the grounds that the alternative would have been men enslaved to women (E. *Or*. 935-7; cf. his argument at 564-72); Electra prods him not to succumb to "unmanliness" (ἀνανδρία, E. *El*. 982; E. *Or*. 1031). One

[10] For specific takes on politics in the *Oresteia* see, e.g., MacLeod 1982, Bowie 1993a, Griffith 1995; gender and sexuality issues: Zeitlin 1978, Winnington-Ingram 1983, Goldhill 1984. For Clytemnestra, Foley 2001: 201-42.

[11] All translations are mine unless otherwise specified. A seminal work on ancient conceptions of matriarchy is Pembroke 1967.

[12] Aegisthus is effeminate ever since the *Odyssey* (3.262-4, 310).

[13] It is only the Agamemnon's helpless corpse that Clytemnestra can mock by referring to his paramour Cassandra with a masculine noun φιλήτωρ (A. *Ag*. 1446), insinuating that she was "the dominant partner and/or that Agamemnon had something effeminate about him" (Sommerstein 2008: 177).

[14] Winnington-Ingram 1983: 105 indeed suggests that her aspiration to masculinity and power was her main motive for killing Agamemnon. Cf. Sophocles' Electra addressing Clytemnestra as ἄνασσα (S. *El*. 666), perhaps deliberately inverting Agamemnon's Homeric epithet ἄναξ. Contrast the prologue of the *Agamemnon*: the Watchman, who hopes for an overturn of the current regime at *Ag*. 19-21, refers to Clytemnestra at 25-6 as the "wife of Agamemnon," Ἀγαμέμνονος γυναικὶ (cf. commentary of Raeburn/Thomas 2011: 68-9), just like the Chorus (260, above), even though she has been governing for a decade.

peculiar manifestation of this issue is the inversion of the traditional naming system. Euripides' Electra mocks the dead body of Aegisthus, who was always referred to as "Clytemnestra's husband," while one never heard the formula "his wife:" "O what disgrace, when the master of the house is the wife, not the husband" (Ὦ τῆς γυναικός, οὐχὶ τἀνδρὸς ἡ γυνή. | καίτοι τόδ' αἰσχρόν, προστατεῖν γε δωμάτων | γυναῖκα, μὴ τὸν ἄνδρα, *Or*. 931-3). Similarly, Sophocles' Electra toys with the sociopolitical significance of gendered personal address, as she criticizes her sister Chrysothemis for siding with Clytemnestra: "When you could be called the child of the noblest father among men, be called instead your mother's child" (νῦν δ' ἐξὸν πατρὸς | πάντων ἀρίστου παῖδα κεκλῆσθαι, καλοῦ | τῆς μητρός, S. *El*. 365-7). Most importantly, the effect was known to Aristophanes. Praxagora is referred to as "Lady Commander," ἡ στρατηγός (*Ec*. 500), and towards the end of the play her maid suggestively corrects her Freudian slip mid-sentence: "Women, tell me where my master is—I mean, my mistress' husband" (ἀλλ' ὦ γυναῖκες φράσατέ μοι τὸν δεσπότην, | τὸν ἄνδρ', ὅπου 'στί, τῆς ἐμῆς κεκτημένης, *Ec*. 1125-6, tr.).

One component of the gender inversion in the *Assemblywomen* also present in the Orestes-plays is the masculine rhetorical prowess of Praxagora and Clytemnestra. The Watchman's prologue introduces the Argive queen as ἀνδρόβουλον, "deliberating like a man" (A. *Ag*. 11), a compound which Eduard Fraenkel believes was coined for the occasion (anticipating γυναικόβουλος in A. *Cho*. 626).[15] During Praxagora's rehearsal for storming the assembly, the women fear if they, with their "female minds," can successfully address the people (καὶ πῶς γυναικῶν θηλύφρων ξυνουσία | δημηγορήσει; *Ec*. 110-11). After delivering their long speeches confidently and effectively, Clytemnestra is famously said to have "spoken wisely, like a reasonable man" (γύναι, κατ' ἄνδρα σώφρον' εὐφρόνως λέγεις, *Ag*. 351), and Praxagora as an "intelligent man" (ὡς ξυνετὸς ἀνήρ, *Ec*. 204).[16]

Several details further suggest the *Oresteia* as an archetype of the *Assemblywomen*. The connection, I argue, is activated in the opening scene where Praxagora waits for her co-conspirators at daybreak. Their means of communication are lamps sending light signals, and the play begins with Praxagora's

[15] Fraenkel 1950 II: 10, on *Ag*. 11, also citing a fragment where Sophocles might be imitating Aeschylus.

[16] Cf. McClure 1999: 244, and see also 48: "At first, Praxagora reconstructs herself as a traditional Athenian wife rather than a political leader, using a strategy similar to that of Clytemnestra in her speech to the Messenger (Aesch. *Ag*. 587-614)." For a short bibliography on "the relationship between Clytemnestra's masculine and feminine qualities, especially in her ways of speaking," see Raeburn/Thomas 2011: 59, fn. 90. For Praxagora, Rothwell 1990, *passim*, esp. e.g. 19, 55ff.

apostrophe to the lamp: "O radiant eye of the wheel-whirled lamp… broadcast now the fiery signal as arranged" (Ὦ λαμπρὸν ὄμμα τοῦ τροχηλάτου λύχνου... ὅρμα φλογὸς σημεῖα τὰ ξυγκείμενα, *Ec*. 1, 6; tr. Henderson). While the general paratragic tone of the address has been recognized,[17] the context particularly recommends the opening of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. The Watchman waits for a light signal from the beacon on the horizon, which is to announce Agamemnon's return, and with him the gender rotation on the Argive throne which the Watchman hopes for (*Ag*. 1-35; esp. καὶ νῦν φυλάσσω λαμπάδος τό σύμβολον, | αὐγὴν πυρὸς φέρουσαν ἐκ Τροίας φάτιν, 8-9).[18] The image continues later as Clytemnestra takes over narrating the transmission of flames in the beacon-relay (*Ag*. 281-315; 479-83, esp. 480: φλογὸς παραγγέλμασιν; 489-93, 587-90). Downscaling the tallest man-made object which was to report the outcome of the greatest war ever seen to a portable lamp gathering lady friends is paratragedy at its best.[19] The lamp is a very feminine domestic object, which Praxagora addresses personified (*Ec*. 7-17, tr. Henderson):

> σοὶ γὰρ μόνῳ δηλοῦμεν εἰκότως, ἐπεὶ
> κἀν τοῖσι δωματίοισιν Ἀφροδίτης τρόπων
> λορδουμένων τε σωμάτων ἐπιστάτην
> ὀφθαλμὸν οὐδεὶς τὸν σὸν ἐξείργει δόμων.
> πειρωμέναισι πλησίον παραστατεῖς,
> μόνος δὲ μηρῶν εἰς ἀπορρήτους μυχοὺς
> λάμπεις ἀφεύων τὴν ἐπανθοῦσαν τρίχα·
> στοάς τε καρποῦ Βακχίου τε νάματος
> πλήρεις ὑποιγνύσαισι συμπαραστατεῖς·
> καὶ ταῦτα συνδρῶν οὐ λαλεῖς τοῖς πλησίον.
>
> You alone we make privy to our plot, and rightly,
> for also in our bedrooms you stand close by
> as we essay Aphrodite's maneuvers;
> and when our bodies are flexed, one banishes
> no one from the room your supervisory eye

[17] For "eye of the Helios" and the like, see Rau 1967: 205, who cites S. *Aj*. 845ff, 856ff; *Ant*. 100, 102ff; E. *Tr*. 860, *Pho*. 1ff; cf. E. *IT*. 194; *Hipp*. 886, *Med*. 1251ff, *Cycl*. 599. For a prayer-parody reading of the prologue see Kleinknecht 1937: 93ff., with comparanda, e.g. Asclepiades, *AP* V 6 (cf. Parisinou 2000). Most frequently, critics conclude like Henderson (1998-2002 IV: 247): "[H]er opening lines parody an unknown tragic source or sources."

[18] See some remarks in Ussher 1973: 71-2. Compare also the image of a light in the dark as symbolizing revolution in the *Ecclesiazusae* with the luminal imagery in the *Agamemnon* (e.g. νῦν δ᾽ εὐτυχὴς γένοιτ᾽ ἀπαλλαγὴ πόνων | εὐαγγέλου φανέντος ὀρφναίου πυρός, *Ag*. 19-20).

[19] Praxagora's lamp may moreover be a case of multilayered paratragic allusion. In Aeschylus' ridicule of Euripides' lyric in the *Frogs* it is arguably the ephemeral λύχνος that illustrates the characteristically Euripidean slip from lofty tragic diction into banalities (Ar. *Ra*. 1331-1340).

> You alone illuminate the ineffable nooks between our thighs,
> when you singe away the hair that sprouts there;
> and you stand by us when stealthily we open pantries
> stocked with bread and the liquor of Bacchus;
> and you're an accomplice that never blabs to the neighbors.

This passage is not nearly as farcical as it might sound. Archeological evidence strongly suggests that lamps were indispensable in women's private lives, and some literary sources similarly describe women's emotional attachment to them.[20] Praxagora, therefore, uses one of the most intimate female possessions for plotting a political revolution. And, as A. M. Bowie observes regarding Clytemnestra's account of the beacons in the *Agamemnon*, she "tends not a domestic fire but a huge chain of beacons, involving herself most anomalously with fires in the outside world, the sphere of men. At the end of her recital of her beacon-chain, she compares it to a *lampadedromia* [*Ag*. 312], the best known of which in Athens took place at the Panathenaea. Here again we have a reversal, a woman associated with and, as it in charge of a major city rite."[21] Finally, Praxagora's clandestine plunder of the household supplies illustrates not only her status as a housewife but foreshadows a housewife soon to be in charge of the public supplies. The same goes for Clytemnestra, who claims her loyalty to Agamemnon by specifying that she did not open any storeroom during his absence (*Ag*. 609-10).

A highly symbolically charged motif in the Orestes-plays and the *Assemblywomen* is that of wardrobe and footwear. Cross-dressing, as seen in the *Women at the Thesmophoria*, is one of evergreen comic devices. Thus when the Assemblywomen steal their husband's cloaks to pass as men in the assembly (*Ec*. 40, 75, 99), and Praxagora's unsuspecting husband Blepyrus is left at home with no option but to wear her cloak instead (314-19), the gender inversion is as effective as it needs to be.[22] But Blepyrus' misfortune might be additionally indebted to one specific image of emasculation. The only reason he needs Praxagora's cloak is that he has to go out in the middle of the night and defecate, onstage. The toilet humiliation he experiences as a result of his wife's guile is not only perfectly timed— "[w]hile his wife has risen to the

[20] Parisinou 2000. Lamps were really used for genital depilation (Kilmer 1993: 136) and humorously so in Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria*, 238ff.

[21] Bowie 1993a: 29.

[22] Compton-Engle 2003 shows that in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, and the *Frogs*, "[s]uccessful manipulation of costume is associated with masculinity and heightened status, while failure to control costume is correlated with emasculation and lowered status."

highest position possible in the city, Blepyrus has sunk to the lowest"[23]—but it also functions as a comic version of the bathroom demise of Agamemnon, wrapped and trapped while bathing by Clytemnestra's net-robe.[24] Blepyrus is further humiliated in this scene by wearing Praxagora's Persian slippers (*Ec*. 319), since she also stole his boots, in a move subtly recalling Aeschylus' Clytemnestra, who famously persuades Agamemnon to take of his boots upon returning from Troy.[25] The motif of gendered footwear is picked up by Euripides in the *Orestes*, which would have hardly escaped Aristophanes.[26] The news of Orestes' assault on Helen is brought by her Phrygian slave, feminized and submissive in an oriental fashion (*Or*. 1507). He runs away from the crime scene onto stage stumbling in his "barbarian slippers" (*Or*. 1369-71), foreshadowing his account of Helen, who attempted to flee in her "golden sandals" but Orestes reached out his "Mycenaean boot" and tripped her (*Or*. 1468-1470).

2. Old but Furious: the three comic Erinyes

However one decides to account for the similarities above individually, the cumulative impression is that Aristophanes by no means left Greek tragedy behind after the *Frogs*. Tragedy as an interpretive background is particularly illuminating for analyzing the lengthy penultimate scene of the *Assemblywomen* (877-1111). A young man (named Epigenes in some manuscripts), is intercepted by three ugly old women just as he was about to enter his girlfriend's house, in clear violation of the new decree according to which the old women have unconditional priority. They enforce the decree and kidnap him

[23] Henderson 1991: 102. Blepyrus rightly fears he has become the butt of a joke, a "comic shitpot" (σκωραμὶς κωμῳδική, *Ec*. 371). See the brief and useful analysis of the scene in McClure 1999: 248.

[24] For ritual elements of funeral in Agamemnon's death, see Seaford 1984. Bremmer 1986 observes that "in many societies a man is at his most vulnerable when he is taking a bath" and briefly and illuminatingly lists several instances throughout history. For the lethal *peplos* in Greek tragedy, see Lee 2004.

[25] Additionally, Agamemnon agrees so as not to soil the red carpet upon entrance (A. *Ag*. 948), a detail perhaps lurking behind Blepyrus' relief that he luckily ran out before staining the beddings, which have just been cleaned (*Ec*. 344-7). For the rich symbolism of feet in the Oresteia, see Levine 2015. In general disrobing in the Oresteia foreshadows peril: Griffith 1998.

[26] Not only was Aristophanes "certainly the best qualified critic ever to "publish" on Euripides," as Dobrov reminds us (2001: 130), but Euripides' *Orestes* in particular was extremely popular in antiquity: Porter 1994: 1, with fn. 1 (West 1987: 28, somewhat exaggeratedly, claims that it was Euripides' "most popular play, indeed the most popular of all tragedies"). The messenger scene from the *Orestes* is imitated by Menander in the *Sykionios*: Katsouris 1975: 29-54, Hunter 1985: 129-30, Goldberg 1993. Most importantly, Scharffenberger 1998 identifies significant influence of the *Orestes* on the *Frogs*. Add finally the intriguing possibility of palimpsestous interaction, namely that the Phrygian's entry in the *Orestes* alludes to Aristophanes' parody of Euripides' *Andromeda*: Wright 2008: 12.

for sexual purposes. The unsettling oddity of the scene even by Aristophanes' standards is somewhat notorious among modern critics. Suzanne Saïd describes it as a "*scandal*… staged… in a long scene of rarely appreciated caustic comedy pushed to the limits of objectionable";[27] it has also been said that "[t]his memorable scene, with all its paraphernalia of funerals and imagery of animated corpses, verges on inappropriate to comedy."[28] Alan Sommerstein calls attention to "a sharp, and obviously designed, contrast" between the cries of the young man as he is dragged offstage—wretched, ill-fated, accursed (τρισκακοδαίμων, κακοδαίμων, βαρυδαίμων, δυστυχής, 1098, 1102, 1103; full passage discussed below)—and the opening words of the party invitation in the immediately following scene, "happy people, blest country, most happy mistress" (μακάριος… εὐδαίμων… μακαριωτάτη, 1112-13).[29] The echo underlines the sinister outcome of the gender revolution, as the latter words are uttered by Praxagora's maid who, moments later, emphasizes that Blepyrus is now the woman in his marriage (*Ec*. 1125-6, above).

Aristophanes further generates the unsavory spin by framing the abduction scene with two symmetrically contrasting formulations. At the onset of the assault one of the aggressors invokes proper divine authority: "Oh yes, by Aphrodite, whether you like it or not!" (νὴ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, ἤν τε βούλῃ γ᾽ ἤν τε μή, *Ec*. 981). Some hundred verses later, right before the victim's exiting *threnos* (τρισκακοδαίμων, above), the invocation is appropriately updated to reflect the less charming divinity now in charge: "Oh yes, by Hecate, whether you like it or not!" (νὴ τὴν Ἑκάτην ἐάν τε βούλῃ γ᾽ ἤν τέ μή, *Ec*. 1097).

Lastly, one notices that the dark undertones of the abduction are contrasted to the mock-sentimental lyric atmosphere of the immediately preceding scene, where the young man and a girl sing playful erotic songs to one another in turn, which C. M. Bowra labeled a "love-duet." In reply to his enthusiastic hypothesis that this scene is a trace of an otherwise lost lyric genre, Douglas Olson cautions that this is instead a sophisticated poetic commentary on the central theme of the play. Namely, the duet symbolizes the new regime of inverted gender roles, in that, for example, the strophes that should belong to the girl are assigned to the man and vice versa.[30]

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[27] Saïd 1996: 310.

[28] Wheat 1992: 167; Slater 1987 is among the few critics with sympathetic view of the old women in this scene.

[29] Sommerstein 1998: 232.

[30] Olson 1989: 328, on Bowra 1958: "In fact, *Eccl*. 952-75 is not evidence for a lost lyric genre, but a sophisticated literary parody, carefully designed as an elaborate poetic comment on the larger action of the play in which it appears. Bowra's 'love duet' is a critical fantasy, whose fictional existence only serves to obscure the real purposes and humour of this Aristophanic love-song."

If, as we have seen above, the gender tensions in the *Assemblywomen* are frequently articulated by invoking tragedic models, it is suggestive that in the "love-duet" the girl refers to the young man's hair locks with the word βόστρυχος (954-5). With only three instances in archaic poetry, the word is attested in tragedies nearly thirty times. Clearly a *vox tragica*, it is rarely without negative connotations: Medea's children's hair beneath the poisonous crown (E. *Med*. 116), lock of dead Hector swirling in the dust (E. *Tro*. 1175), cutting hair in mourning (E. *Hel*. 1087, 1224), locks of Dionysus to be cut off by Pentheus (E. *Ba*. 235, 493), and most regularly the locks of the Atreid family members (A. *Cho*. 168, 178, 229; S. *El*. 442, 901; E. *El*. 515, 530, 830, *Or*. 224). It is hard to imagine that with such a sinister pedigree on Attic stage the βόστρυχος of the young man in Aristophanes was not meant to recall its tragic usage. Indeed Aristophanes uses the word only once elsewhere, in the parabasis of the *Clouds* (536), referring to the lock of Orestes which Electra recognizes on Agamemnon's tomb.[31] In that extra-dramatic address to the audience, Aristophanes compares Electra's perceptiveness with the intelligence of the appreciative audience he hopes to win over. Aristophanes thereby takes the plot device for recognizing something *in* a play and uses it as a signal for recognizing something *about* the play. As Isabelle Torrance has demonstrated, the metapoetic potential of Orestes' lock has been already noticed and exploited by Euripides in the *Electra*, who invites the audience to recognize in his treatment of the lock as a recognition token allusions to Aeschylus' treatment of it in the *Oresteia*.[32] I suggest that in the *Assemblywomen* the βόστρυχος serves as a metapoetic intertextual *gnorisma* as well. Like a peculiar prototype of the "Chekhov's gun"—an early clue planted to account for a later event—the "Aristophanic lock" tests if the audience is discerning enough to anticipate the outcome worthy of an Atreid tragedy.[33]

In light of all these parallels between the *Assemblywomen* and the Orestes-plays, I suggest that the three ugly old abductors are designed to evoke the association with tragic Erinyes.[34] The First Old Woman, initially seductively

[31] On the grounds that such a reference would presume audience's familiarity with Aeschylus' version of the story, Newiger (1961: 422ff.) suggests the possibility that the Oresteia had been revived on Athenian stage shortly before the Clouds.

[32] Torrance 2013: 15-18, citing Goldhill (1991: 5, 24), who points out that ἀναγιγνώσκειν means both "recognize" and "read."

[33] In discussing recognition devices in the three Electra plays, Solmsen (1967: 52, fn.2) hypothesizes that "[c]onceivably the Athenian audience had developed something like a special affection for the lock." The lost 4th-century-comedy of Alexis entitled Βόστρυχος (33 K-A) might suggest that a lock as a token of recognition developed a literary life of its own.

[34] Frontisi-Ducroux 2007 believes that Aeschylus was the first tragedian to put the Erinyes on stage. Regarding the possible source of Aristophanes, cf. also Podlecki (1989: 23): "Improbable as it may seem, Aeschylus' play [sc. the Eumenides] appears to have exerted some influence on

"dressed in saffron" (κροκωτὸν ἠμφιεσμένη, *Ec*. 879),[35] is mirrored later by the Second Old Woman, described as "Empusa, dressed in a bloody blister" (Ἔμπουσά τις, ἐξ αἵματος φλύκταιναν ἠμφιεσμένη, *Ec*. 1057).[36] Empusa is a dreadful mythological female creature that Dionysus encounters in the Underworld in the *Frogs* (288ff),[37] which resembles the figure of personified Poverty (Πενία) in Aristophanes' *Wealth*, which, in turn, is explicitly compared to an "Erinys from tragedy."[38] Hemorrhaging phenomena are habitual attributes of Erinyes throughout Greek tragedies of the Atreid cycle. Aeschylus' Apollo foretold that Erinyes would punish Orestes with ulcers that eat away the flesh (σαρκῶν ἐπαμβατῆρας ἀγρίαις γνάθοις | λειχῆνας, *Cho*. 280-1); Erinyes breathe out blood (αἱματηρὸν πνεῦμα, A. *Eum*. 137), their eyes are bloody (αἱματωποὺς, E. *Or*. 255), or they specifically excrete disgusting blood (κἀξ ὀμμάτων στάζουσιν αἷμα δυσφιλές, A. *Cho*. 1058) or disgusting ooze (ἐκ δ᾽ ὀμμάτων λείβουσι δυσφιλῆ λίβα, A. *Eum*. 55).[39]

This horrendous image of excretion of gory fluids symbolizes the sexual repulsiveness and social exclusion of both the tragic Erinyes and their Aris-

later comic writers. A Eumenides by Cratinus is fairly well attested, and another by Telecleides rather less so." For a comprehensive discussion of Erinyes in myth, see Sewell-Rutter 2007, chapter 4. Brown 1984 is a well-documented survey of Eumenides in tragedy. Rothwell 1990: 71 lists other possible mythological models for the three old women in Aristophanes: "The old women, on the other hand, who are physically repulsive (940, 1052-3, 1068-70), have a long literary and mythological tradition behind them. Indeed they resemble the nightmare figures and witches in Greek literature who destroy men: the Sphinx, Moirai, Erinyes, Sirens; the erotic context could also suggest a parody of the choice of Paris."

[35] The irony of κροκωτός, "a woman's most attractive and dressy costume" (Stone 1981: 175; cf. Ar. *Lys*. 46, with Henderson 1987), is as grim as in Iphigeneia's sacrificial/wedding dress in A. *Ag*. 239.

[36] See discussion in Sommerstein 1998 on *Ec*. 1056 and Sommerstein 1989 on A. *Eum*. 137.

[37] Her face is ablaze (πυρὶ γοῦν λάμπεται | ἅπαν τὸ πρόσωπον, Ar. *Ra*. 293-4). For Empusa in the *Frogs*, see Brown 1991.

[38] ἴσως Ἐρινύς ἐστιν ἐκ τραγῳδίας: | βλέπει γέ τοι μανικόν τι καὶ τραγῳδικόν (*Plut*. 423). Further verbal resonances in this scene of the *Wealth* might reveal Aristophanes' self-allusion to the *Assemblywomen*. During the preparations for revolutionary imposition of universal equality, Praxagora encourages the women to "dare such a daring deed" (τόλμημα τολμῶμεν τοσοῦτον, *Ec*. 106). A similar expression is used for wealth redistribution in the *Wealth*. The two men who set out to rescue the blind personified Wealth are confronted by Πενία, who protests that she will be driven out of the city: "I'm going to give you the miserable death you deserve, for daring to commit an intolerable outrage, such as no one, human or divine, has ever done before" (ἐγὼ γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἐξολῶ κακοὺς κακῶς: | τόλμημα γὰρ τολμᾶτον οὐκ ἀνασχετόν, | ἀλλ᾽ οἷον οὐδεὶς ἄλλος οὐδεπώποτε | οὔτε θεὸς οὔτ᾽ ἄνθρωπος. *Plut*. 418-21; tr. Henderson 1998-2002 IV).

[39] Note the Sophoclean irony in referring to Oedipus' eyes as bloody in *Oedipus at Colonus*: τὰς αἱματηρὰς ὀμμάτων διαφθορὰς | ἔγνωκά σ', ὦ παῖ Λαΐου (*OC* 552-3); cf. a possible allusion to Oedipus in the healing of the blind Wealth (ἀντὶ γὰρ τυφλοῦ | ἐξωμμάτωται καὶ λελάμπρυνται κόρας, Ar. *Plut*. 635-6). More on *Oedipus at Colonus* and Aristophanes below; Compton-Engle 2013.

tophanic counterparts.[40] Aeschylean Erinyes are introduced in the *Eumenides* as the "abominable [lit. "to be spitted upon"] old maidens, these aged virgins, with whom no god ever holds any intercourse, nor man nor beast either…" (αἱ κατάπτυστοι κόραι, | γραῖαι παλαιαὶ παῖδες, αἷς οὐ μείγνυται | θεῶν τις οὐδ᾽ ἄνθρωπος οὐδὲ θήρ ποτε, *Eum*. 68-70).[41] The sexual double entendre in this description is apt given the known association of Erinyes with fertilty A. *Eum*. 903-12), and particularly with Aphrodite.[42] Further, Aeschylus' Erinyes repeatedly complain that the younger gods disrespect them (*Eum*. 150, 731, 778-9; cf. 149, 154, 163), and Athena later pointedly pays due respect to their seniority (*Eum*. 848-9, 882-4). The three old women of Aristophanes, having been understandably pushed at the end of the line when it comes to sex, take advantage of the new political circumstances to set things straight. When one of them spells out that she likes sleeping with young men, the man they are about to kidnap is explicit just the same: "And I just loath [sleeping with] women of your age" (ἐγὼ δὲ ταῖς γε τηλικαύταις ἄχθομαι, *Ec*. 1010).

In support of their claim to priority, one of the old women reads a passage from the new law which specifies the procedure of enacting it should a man try to disobey (*Ec*. 1014-20). Complementing the resemblance to Erinyes as righteous haunters, the text of the new decree contains a very rare word, ἀνατεί, "without punishment" (*Ec*. 1020). It is an Aristophanic hapax, but with three occurrences in tragedy, in all of which it refers to the most ill-famed punishments of Greek drama: Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone* (485), Medea (E. *Med*. 1357), and, most directly related, the retribution of Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (59).[43]

[40] For a case study of moral, religious, and political symbolism of bodily fluids in the *Oresteia*, see Vidović 2016.

[41] Translation of Sommerstein 2008, who argues for the deliberately ambiguous sexual connotation of μείγνυται. Sommerstein 1989, on *Eum*. 68, notes that the description is "oxymoronic, since κόραι would normally imply youth, beauty and innocence. Nothing qualifies the Erinyes to be called κόραι except their virginity."

[42] On Aphrodite and the Furies in Sophocles, see Parry 1986, who begins with pointing out Sophocles' source: "At a memorable moment in the Trachiniae Heracles, mortally afflicted by a poisoned robe, accuses his wife of fastening on his shoulders a 'net of the Furies.' This Aeschylean image is Sophocles' most particular debt to the Oresteia." Cf. also Rynearson 2013 for erotic undertones of persuading the Erinyes in Aeschylus' Eumenides; see e.g. his comment on Eum. 851-2, where Athena tries to convince Erinyes to stay in Athens, for otherwise they "will long for this land like lovers" (ὑμεῖς δ' ἐς ἀλλόφυλον ἐλθοῦσαι χθόνα | γῆς τῆσδ' ἐρασθήσεσθε): "Athena's use of the verb ἐρασθήσεσθε introduces a bold metaphor for the relationship of the Erinyes to the future Athens... [she portrays] the Erinyes as excluded lovers, erastai who will long for Athens as if for an aloof beloved... In contrast to Pericles' idealized portrait of the citizen as erastēs [sc. of the polis; Thuc. 2.43], however, Athena's image of the Erinyes as erastai constitutes a threat, a projection of the negative consequences of their refusal of her offer" (4).

[43] Fascinatingly, while these comic Erinyes are associated with tragic language, Aeschylean Erinyes are associated with comic language. Exceptionally instructive in this respect is Sommer-

3. Sophoclean themes and stage dynamics: the abduction and *Oedipus at Colonus*

While the capture is still in the preliminary phase, there occurs, at last, one of the very few unambiguous tragic references in the play. The girl defends her claim to the prospective lover by rebuking the old woman: "If you start enforcing law like this, you'll fill the whole country with Oedipuses" (ὥστ᾽ εἰ καταστήσεσθε τοῦτον τὸν νόμον, | τὴν γῆν ἅπασαν Οἰδιπόδων ἐμπλήσετε, *Ec*. 1041-2). The thematic importance of this remark for the play has been typically downplayed by critics.[44] Sommerstein, for instance, believes that Aristophanes is cherry-picking the Oedipus myth for his comic purposes:

> "[I]ncest is irrelevant to the context of the girl's remark. She is not saying that the old woman is Epigenes' mother, only that she is old enough to be his mother (1040); and it seems likely that Aristophanes is here taking the same humorous attitude to the Oedipus story as is taken in *Frogs* 1193-4: the most terrible thing that happened to Oedipus was that he married a woman much older than himself—the fact that this woman was his mother was a trifle in comparison."[45]

Yet this conclusion is somewhat dismissive, for Oedipus' tragic fault looms large in one of the hypothetical consequences of the new state of affairs in the *Assemblywomen*. Blepyrus fears that if men are forced into indiscriminate sex paternity will become untraceable, but Praxagora responds that that is a good thing: then all the children will respect all elderly men, since any

stein's survey of the surprisingly frequent use of language from the comic register in the *Oresteia*. Through an astute analysis of the distribution of such language, he argues that linguistic transgression corroborates ethical transgressions in the play, namely that "far from being light relief of any sort, comic language is used in the *Oresteia* to heighten the blackness and bleakness of the vicious cycle of retaliatory violence, and disappears at the point where that cycle is broken." Most illuminating for our purposes is that "it cannot be a coincidence that almost all the instances of comic language in the *Oresteia* occur in passages that have to do with the Erinyes... The Erinyes, of course, are the embodiments of the vicious cycle of violence… the Pythia's words themselves [A. *Eum*. 34-63] suggest that comic language and the Erinyes go naturally together—that this is the only kind of language in which they can be properly described" (Sommerstein 2002: 151-168; citations from 163, 164).

[44] Likewise, the old woman replies with a threat of a fairytale villain: "But I will have my revenge!" (ἀλλ᾽ ἐγώ σε τιμωρήσομαι, *Ec*. 1044), which the Oxford editor dismisses as irrelevant: "we are not to look… for fulfillment of this threat in the play" (Ussher 1973, on *Ec*. 1044).

[45] Sommerstein 1984: 322. Cf. Sommerstein 1998: 14, fn. 62:"[t]he Oedipal incest scare raised by the Girl in 1038-42 is chimerical." Sommerstein 1998 on *Ec*. 1041 comments that "this assertion is designed to shock the old woman by raising the appalling spectre of mother-son incest, which in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* (362-7, 457-460, 791-3, 1207-15, 1256-7, 1288-9, 1403-8) is repeatedly spoken of with more horror even than parricide. This scare-tactic is *completely illogical*, for Praxagora, unlike Plato (*Rep.* 460b-d), has not been concerned with preventing mothers from knowing who their own children are, nor would any of the rules of her society have that effect; but it works for the second or two necessary for Epigenes to escape from his captor" (emphasis mine).

of them could theoretically be their father (πατέρας γὰρ ἅπαντας | τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους αὑτῶν εἶναι τοῖσι χρόνοισιν νομιοῦσιν, *Ec*. 636-7). Even though she predicts respect for unknown father instead of murder, the Oedipal premise is firmly in place, adapted for the needs of the *Assemblywomen*. If fathers are unknown, a "matrilineal family structure would soon emerge,"[46] a logical continuation of the matriarchal revolution. Matrilineal nomenclature is also very much in the background of the references to inverted naming system in all three tragedians' versions of the Atreid myth and Aristophanes discussed above. But since Blepyrus' fear is, practically speaking, far from an inevitable consequence of the new legislation, his remark is so gratuitous that the only explanation is that Aristophanes clearly had an important point to make—an Oedipal one in this case.[47]

Further exploration of the Oedipus reference is warranted by the imagery of the Erinyes discussed above. One of their functions is punishing familial transgressions, such as the matricidal Orestes in Aeschylus (μητραλοίας, *Eum*. 210), but they are also involved when father-children relations are an issue, especially in the Theban cycle (e.g. E. *Pho*. 622-4). Their most prominent appearance in the tragic corpus besides the *Oresteia* is in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, a play which owes a great deal to Aeschylus, especially in the portrayal of Eumenides.[48] In fact, the *Oedipus at Colonus* is, I argue, the prime suspect source for the scene that follows. In numerous individual details and the overall dynamics, the scene in which Creon abducts Antigone and attempts to abduct Oedipus (*OC* 800-885) bears remarkable resemblances to the abduction scene in the *Assemblywomen*. For convenient comparative analysis, I parse the two scenes into corresponding units:

1) The victims call for help from both imagined allies and actual bystand-

[46] Sommerstein 1998: 13.

[47] The fear expressed by Blepyrus' is above all counterintuitive, and Aristophanes could not have been unaware of that. There is no reason why paternity would be less traceable after forced intercourse with older women than after consensual sex with younger ones; if anything, the former scenario is arguably *less* risky, for with older women there is less chance of pregnancy to begin with, and old men would probably run out of energy to impregnate the young ones by the time they get to them anyway (as Blepyrus fears; above). Indeed the whole point of the revolution is to push to the very end of the line those who have previously been in highest demand, i.e., young women, who are at the same time the most fertile. That is to say, mass anonymous pregnancies would be the least likely result of Praxagora's legislation. As usual in Aristophanes, logical consistency is subordinate to the message; as Henderson reminds us (1980: 168), "inconsistencies of dramatic logic may frequently be excused as characteristic of the genre: once the poet has exhausted the humor of one idea he will passion to the next with little regard for consequence or logic. But before we apologize for Aristophanes we ought to make sure at any given point that he has no subtler goals in mind. Sometimes inconsistencies are simply inconsistencies, but sometimes they are deliberate mechanisms for the full realization of a play's chief themes."

[48] Scodel 2006: 71-77.

ers:

OC 815:
Οἰδίπους. τίς δ᾽ ἄν με τῶνδε συμμάχων ἕλοι βίᾳ;

With such allies, who could take me by force?

Ec. 1023-4:
Νεανίας. τί δ᾽ ἢν ἀφαιρῆταί μ᾽ ἀνὴρ τῶν δημοτῶν
ἢ τῶν φίλων ἐλθών τις;

What if one of my demesmen or friends
comes and offers bail for me?

OC 822-3:
Οἰδ. ἰὼ ξένοι. τί δράσετ'; ἦ προδώσετε,
κοὐκ ἐξελᾶτε τὸν ἀσεβῆ τῆσδε χθονός;

Hosts, what will you do? Will you betray me?
Will you not get rid of this unholy wretch?

Ec. 1054-5, 1067-8:
Νεα. μηδαμῶς με περιίδῃς
ἑλκόμενον ὑπὸ τῆσδ᾽ ἀντιβολῶ σ᾽.
…
Νεα. ἀτὰρ ἥτις εἶ γε, πόλλ᾽ ἀγαθὰ γένοιτό σοι,
ὅτι μ᾽ οὐπεριεῖδες ἐπιτριβέντ᾽.

Don't just watch her dragging me away, I beg you!
…
Whoever you are, bless you if you don't just
stand by and watch me be tormented!**2)** Denial and cries:

OC 881-2:
Χορός. τά γ᾽ οὐ τελεῖ.

He will not do it!

Ec. 1011:
Νεα….κοὐκ ἂν πιθοίμην οὐδέποτ᾽.
I'll never consent!

OC 847:
Οἰδ. ὦ τάλας ἐγώ, τάλας.

Poor me, poor me!

Ec. 1051:
Νεα. *οἴμοι δείλαιος*.

Oh miserable me!

3) The abductors silence the victims:

OC 864:
Κρέων. αὐδῶ σιωπᾶν.

Keep quiet!

Ec. 1005, 1058, 1088:
Γραῦς Α. μὴ σκῶπτέ μ᾽ ὦ τάλαν ἀλλ᾽ ἕπου δεῦρ᾽ ὡς ἐμέ.
…
Γραῦς Β. ἕπου μαλακίων δεῦρ᾽ ἀνύσας καὶ μὴ λάλει.
…
Γραῦς Γ. σιγῇ βάδιζε δεῦρο**.**

No more jokes, my boy; just come this way to my place.
…
Come sissy, this way, quickly, no chattering.
…
Shut up and get moving. This way!

4) The abductors claim inevitability:

OC 862, 883:
Χο. δεινὸν λέγοις ἄν. *Κρ*. τοῦτο νῦν πεπράξεται.
…
Χο. ἆρ᾽ οὐχ ὕβρις τάδ᾽; *Κρ*. ὕβρις, ἀλλ᾽ *ἀνεκτέα*.

Outrageous threat! – And now it will be done.
…
The insolence of this! – The insolence you must put up with!

Ec. 1008, 1011, 1029, 1081:
ΓρΑ. νὴ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην δεῖ γε μέντοι σ᾽
…
ΓρΑ. *ἀλλὰ* νὴ Δία *ἀναγκάσει τουτί σε.*
…
Νεα. καὶ ταῦτ᾽ *ἀνάγκη μοὐστί; ΓρΑ. Διομήδειά γε.*
…
ΓρΓ. αὐτὸς σκόπει σύ· τάδε δέ σοι *ποιητέον*.

By Aphrodite, you do have to!
…
But this will force you, by Zeus.
…
Is it absolute necessity? – Diomedes' necessity!
…
That's your problem. Just now you must do this.

5) The abductors threaten "whether willingly or unwillingly":

OC 826-7:
Κῳ. *ὑμῖν ἂν εἴη τήνδε καιρὸς ἐξάγειν*
ἄκουσαν, εἰ θέλουσα μὴ πορεύεται.

Now is the time for you to lead her off.
If she won't go willingly, force her!

Ec. 981, 1097:
ΓρΑ. νὴ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, ἤν τε βούλῃ γ᾽ ἤν *τε μή.*
…
ΓρΓ. νὴ τὴν Ἑκάτην ἐάν τε βούλῃ γ᾽ ἤν *τέ μή.*

Yes, by Aphrodite, whether you like it or not!
…
Yes, by Hecate, whether you like it or not!

6) The abductors claim ownership:

OC 829-32:
Χο. *τί δρᾷς, ξένε;*
Κῳ. *οὐχ ἅψομαι τοῦδ᾽ ἀνδρός, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐμῆς.*
Οἰδ. ὦ γῆς ἄνακτες. **Χο**. ὦ ξέν', οὐ δίκαια δρᾷς.
Κῳ. *δίκαια.* **Χο**. πῶς δίκαια; *Κρ. τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἄγω.*

What are you doing, stranger? –
I will not take the man, but her who is mine.
– O lords! – Sir, this is injustice!
– It's just. – How can it be? – I'm taking what is mine.

Ec. 1037:
Νεᾶνις. ποῖ τοῦτον ἕλκεις; **ΓρΑ**. τόνδ' ἐμαὐτῆς εἰσάγω.
Where are you dragging him? – I'm taking my man home.

7) Repeated instances of push-and-pull routine:

OC 835, 838-40, 856-7, 874:
Χο. τί δρᾷς, ὦ ξέν᾽; οὐκ ἀφήσεις; … **Κρ**. *εἴργου*
…
Χο. μέθες χεροῖν τὴν παῖδα θᾶσσον.
Κρ. *μὴ ᾽πίτασσ᾽ ἃ μὴ κρατεῖς.*
Χο. χαλᾶν λέγω σοι. **Κρ**. *σοὶ δ᾽ ἔγωγ᾽ ὁδοιπορεῖν.*
…
Χο. ἐπίσχες αὐτοῦ, ξεῖνε. **Κρ**. *μὴ ψαύειν λέγω.*
Χο. οὔτοι σ᾽ ἀφήσω, τῶνδέ γ᾽ ἐστερημένος.
…
Κρ.*οὔτοι καθέξω θυμόν, ἀλλ᾽ ἄξω βίᾳ*

What are you doing? Release her! – Move!
…
Release the girl at once!
– Do not give orders you cannot enforce.
I tell you, let go! – I tell you take a walk!
…
Stop right there! – I warn you, do not touch me!
Give the girls back or you will not leave!
I'll not calm down, but take him away by force!

Ec. 1075, 1085, 1088:
ΓρΓ. ὡς οὐκ ἀφήσω σ᾽ οὐδέποτ'. **ΓρΒ**. οὐδὲ μὴν ἐγώ.
…
ΓρΒ. ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἀφήσω μὰ Δία σ᾽. **ΓρΓ**. οὐδὲ μὴν ἐγώ.[49]
…
ΓρΒ. σιγῇ βάδιζε δεῦρο. *ΓρΓ*. μὰ Δί᾽ ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐμέ.

I'll never let you go! – Me neither!
…
By Zeus, I certainly won't let go! – Me neither!
…
Shut up and get moving. This way! – No, by Zeus, but *this* way!

[49] Cf. Aeschylus' Erinyes: "I will never, never let that man go!" (τὸν ἄνδρ᾽ ἐκεῖνον οὔ τι μὴ λίπω ποτέ, A. *Eum*. 225, tr. Sommerstein). "Erinyes are nothing if not persistent" (Sewel-Rutter 2007: 94).

8) When the worst seems over, yet worse comes:

OC 818-20, 859-61:
Κρ. παίδοιν δυοῖν σοι τὴν μὲν ἀρτίως ἐγὼ
ξυναρπάσας ἔπεμψα, τὴν δ' ἄξω τάχα
Οι. οἴμοι.

One of your two daughters I captured already
and sent, and right away I'll take *this one*!
– Woe's me!

[*Κρ*.] ἐφάψομαι γὰρ οὐ ταύταιν μόναιν.
Χο. *ἀλλ' ἐς τί τρέψῃ; Κρ. τόνδ' ἀπάξομαι λαβών.*
Χο. *δεινὸν λέγεις*.

I will not take only these two girls.
– But what are you up to? – I'll take *him* away as well!
– The outrage you speak!

Ecc. 1052-3, 1069-70:
[*Νεα*.] *πόθεν ἐξέκυψας, ὦ κάκιστ' ἀπολουμένη;*
τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκείνου τὸ κακὸν ἐξωλέστερον.
…
[*Νεα*.] *ὦ Πᾶνες, ὦ Κορύβαντες, ὦ Διοσκόρω,*
τοῦτ' αὖ <u>πολὺ</u> τούτου τὸ κακὸν ἐξωλέστερον.

Where did you pop out of, you perdition!?
This horror is worse than the last one!
…
Pan, Corybantes, Dioscuri,
this horror is *far* worse than the last one!

9) Victims' own descriptions of being dragged away:

OC 844-6:
Ἀν. *<u>ἀφέλκομαι</u> δύστηνος, ὦ ξένοι ξένοι.*
Οἰδ. *ποῦ, τέκνον, εἴ μοι;* **Ἀν**. πρὸς βίαν πορεύομαι.
Οἰδ. ὄρεξον, ὦ παῖ, χεῖρας. **Ἀν**. *ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲν σθένω.*

Friends, I am <u>dragged</u> away, wretched me!
They are forcing me away!
Reach out your hands! – I cannot!

Ec. 1066, 1093-4:

Νεα. *οὐκ ἔγωγ᾽, ἀλλ᾽ ἕλκομαι*.

…

Νεα.οἴμοι κακοδαίμων ἐγγὺς ἤδη τῆς θύρας
ἑλκόμενός εἰμ᾽.

I'm not going anywhere: I'm being dragged!

…

Oh, what a sorry end! I'm dragged to the very threshold!

The similar tempo and verbal patterns are all the more remarkable since Sophocles' abduction scene was anything but common in the genre. Its length, the quick sequence of moves, and the frequency of violent physical contact between speaking actors are unparalleled on tragic stage. As Maarit Kaimio qualifies it in her monograph on physical contact on tragic stage, it is "perhaps the most elaborate and varied scene of violence in extant Greek tragedy."[50]

The similarities of the abduction scenes line up well with several thematic parallels between the plays. First is the theme of gender inversions, arguably already implicit in the fact that the victim of abduction in Sophocles was Antigone: in Aristophanes the victim is no longer a young, unmarried female, notorious for disobeying the human laws as unjust, but one such young man.[51] Politicized gender anxieties keep surfacing regularly throughout Sophocles' play. Theseus protests at Creon's assault as a coup d'état: "You thought that my city is emptied of men or slavish" (καί μοι πόλιν κένανδρον ἢ δούλην τινὰ | ἔδοξας εἶναι, OC 917), to which Creon replies: "No, I did not think that your city is without men" (ἐγὼ οὔτ᾽ ἄνανδρον τήνδε τὴν πόλιν λέγω, 939). Both the term and the image brings to mind the Persian city of Susa, infamously "menless" in Aeschylus' Persians (κένανδρον μέγ᾽ ἄστυ Σουσίδος, 118; ἀνάνδρων, 166; ἀνάνδρους, 289; ἄνανδρον, 298; Σούσων μὲν ἄστυ πᾶν κενανδρίαν στένει, 730). There the attribute illustrates not only the war casualties, but also, as Edith Hall provocatively interprets it, the effeminate and submissive Orient.[52] One such "unmanned" city would be the Athens of the Assemblywomen, where male citizens stay at home forced to wear their

[50] Kaimio 1988: 76.

[51] Praxagora's gender-based legislation perhaps also helps explain why Aristophanes introduces Oedipus just before the abduction scene, after running most of the play following the blueprint of the Atreid cycle. In Praxagora's topsy-turvy polis where women replace men and mothers replace fathers, the moral and legal focus duly switches to sanction not (Orestean) matricide but (Oedipal) parricide. Such tight and providential dramaturgic coherence is, to be sure, not necessary for this whole nexus of tragedic allusions, but it would adequately complement them.

[52] Hall 1993; cf. Anderson 1972.

wives' Persian slippers, like Blepyrus (τὰς ἐκείνης Περσικὰς ὑφέλκομαι, Ec. 319; above). Much in the same vein, Sophocles' Oedipus praises his daughters for stepping in when his sons abandoned him—in an oriental fashion (OC 337-45):

> ὦ πάντ᾽ ἐκείνω τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ νόμοις
> φύσιν κατεικασθέντε καὶ βίου τροφάς·
> ἐκεῖ γὰρ οἱ μὲν ἄρσενες κατὰ στέγας
> θακοῦσιν ἱστουργοῦντες, αἱ δὲ σύννομοι
> τἄξω βίου τροφεῖα πορσύνουσ᾽ ἀεί.
> σφῷν δ᾽, ὦ τέκν᾽, οὓς μὲν εἰκὸς ἦν πονεῖν τάδε,
> κατ᾽ οἶκον οἰκουροῦσιν ὥστε παρθένοι,
> σφὼ δ᾽ ἀντ᾽ ἐκείνων τἀμὰ δυστήνου κακὰ
> ὑπερπονεῖτον.
>
> The two of them have adopted the customs of Egypt
> in their nature and household provisioning:
> for there the men sit at home
> working at the loom, while their spouses
> are out there, breadwinning.
> And in your case, children, those who should do these tasks,
> sit at home and tend the house like girls
> while, in their stead, you two are helping me out
> in my misfortunes.

And he continues (445-7):

> ἐκ ταῖνδε δ᾽, οὔσαιν παρθένοιν, ὅσον φύσις
> δίδωσιν αὐταῖν, καὶ τροφὰς ἔχω βίου
> καὶ γῆς ἄδειαν καὶ γένους ἐπάρκεσιν.
>
> It is because of these two, who are girls, as much as they are naturally
> able, that I have daily bread
> and shelter and support of my family.

Oedipus finally explains his decision to be escorted to the last journey by his daughters (1365-9):

> εἰ δ᾽ ἐξέφυσα τάσδε μὴ ’μαυτῷ τροφοὺς
> τὰς παῖδας, ἦ τἂν οὐκ ἂν ἦ, τὸ σὸν μέρος·
> νῦν δ᾽ αἵδε μ᾽ ἐκσῴζουσιν, αἵδ᾽ ἐμαὶ τροφοί,
> αἵδ᾽ ἄνδρες, οὐ γυναῖκες, ἐς τὸ συμπονεῖν·
> ὑμεῖς δ᾽ ἀπ᾽ ἄλλου κοὐκ ἐμοῦ πεφύκατον.

> And if I had not fathered these two daughters
> to support me, I would not be alive, if it were up to you [sc. Polynices]
> But now they are saving me, they are my guardians,
> *they are men, not women*, in sharing my pains.[53]
> You are someone else's sons, not mine.

Third, the abduction scenes in Aristophanes and Sophocles implement that violence which was feared of earlier in the plays. Blepyrus worries that under the new regime women will force men to have sex (ἀναγκάζωσι πρὸς βίαν, *Ec*. 467), and concludes: "It's horrible when you're forced" (τὸ πρὸς βίαν δεινότατον, 471). In the *Oedipus at Colonus*, violence is omnipresent. For the sake of comparison, in this play Sophocles' uses the word βία about as many times as in his *Ajax*, *Electra*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and *Antigone* combined. During Creon's abduction, the Chorus cries: "City, my city, is being destroyed by force!" (πόλις ἐναίρεται, πόλις ἐμά, σθένει, *OC* 842). Oedipus repeatedly fears of being physically attacked (e.g. 649, 724) and Theseus keeps assuring him that he is perfectly safe: "I know that no one will take you by force against my will (πρὸς βίαν ἐμοῦ, *OC* 656)." While this type of prophetic irony was endemic for Sophoclean drama, Aristophanes' comedy used to manage fulfillments of the worst case scenarios differently. A comparable case is the concern of Lysistrata's fellow-rebels that husbands may force them into sex, as well as her advice to them to keep resisting since men will not enjoy if sex is not consensual (ἐὰν λαβόντες δ᾽ ἐς τὸ δωμάτιον βίᾳ | ἕλκωσιν ἡμᾶς; ... οὐ γὰρ ἔνι τούτοις ἡδονὴ τοῖς πρὸς βίαν, *Lys*. 163-5). This possibility is later incorporated in the oath of allegiance to the sex-strike cause (*Lys*. 225-232; "ἐὰν δέ μ᾽ ἄκουσαν βιάζηται βίᾳ,…" 225), but the fear of forceful intercourse proved unjustified. In the *Assemblywomen*, by contrast, men's nightmares did come true. The abduction scene is thus thematically very effective: on the one hand, it is comically absurd, for it is physically possible only for men to force women into sex, not vice versa. But, on the other hand, the whole point of the *Assemblywomen* is that men and women have exchanged places.

4. Sophoclean eschatology and para-Euripidean ultimate *aition*

Lastly, one of the leitmotifs of the *Assemblywomen* and the *Oedipus at Colo-*

[53] Cf. Hesk 2012: 167-8: "Antigone painstakingly guides Oedipus to sit on another rock just outside the sanctuary (170-206). This distinctive combination of dialogue and stage action emphasizes the old man's heavy reliance upon his daughter for advice and physical support… Oedipus expresses his extreme anger at his two sons (Eteocles and Polyneices) for not supporting him. His contrasting appreciation of the manner in which Antigone and Ismene have put his interests before theirs is marked (337-360)." For Oedipus' strong preference for his daughters, see also Easterling l967.

nus is old age. Praxagora's mission is to favor the old and the feeble. Appropriately, Aristophanes' three old abductors with teenage libido are imaged as Erinyes—old divinities disrespected by the young, and ironically known as *korai* (A. *Eum*. 69, above).[54] After all, in avenging family crimes the Erinyes are regularly on the side of the older ever since Homer (*Il*. 15.204). In the *Oedipus at Colonus*, it is not only Oedipus whose old age and weakness is emphasized, but Creon's as well.[55] At one point in the abduction scene Creon claims that he will carry it out by force even though he is alone, old, and slow (οὔτοι καθέξω θυμόν, ἀλλ' ἄξω βίᾳ | κεἰ μοῦνός εἰμι τόνδε κεἰ χρόνῳ βραδύς, 874-5). This is, I believe, not insignificant. It is as if the entire stage crew of Sophocles has grown old together—and together with the tragedian himself. Namely, in hypothesizing about what might have particularly attracted Aristophanes to Sophocles' abduction scene, we would do well to keep in mind that *Oedipus at Colonus* was not just *any* play: it was Sophocles' last, posthumously produced, and most celebrated play, already in antiquity praised as the great poet's quasi-autobiographical swansong.[56] This is how Thomas van Nortwick begins his essay "Last Things: *Oedipus at Colonus* and the End of Tragedy:"

> "It is one of the great exits in Western theater. Oedipus, old and blind, dressed in rags, leads his daughters and Theseus off stage, through the central doors of the *skene*. Lately abject and dependent, the old man walks with serene confidence toward his own death in the grove of the Eumenides. We know that *Oedipus at Colonus* was first produced posthumously in 401 BCE, and, though the play might have been written at any time, the subject and some stylistic features have led scholars to assume that it represents the playwright's final vision of the tragic hero. *Oedipus dies where Sophocles was born—a confluence that cannot be coincidental, suggesting that the playwright was also seeing the end of his hero's life through the prism of his own impending death*, itself just two years before the final defeat of Athens by Sparta in 404 BCE."[57]

This interpretation is all the more illuminating for our purposes since with

[54] Cf. Easterling 2008: 228: "old, grotesque female creatures with the performative power of youth."

[55] Passages: 733 (Creon), 724-7 (Chorus), 744 and 804 (Creon of Oedipus), 870 (Oedipus of himself and Creon), 961, 1008, 1146 (Oedipus), 1691 (Ismene of Oedipus); see esp. the choral ode at 1211-1248. "Creon is an old man, as Oedipus is old; and, as we shall see, the quality of the scene between them is partly determined by this fact… Great stress is laid on the age of both Oedipus and Creon" (Winnington-Ingram 1980: 251, 260, fn.35). See Falkner/De Luce 1989 for stimulating discussions of old age in ancient literature, esp. Hubbard's chapter on Aristophanes and Van Nortwick's on *Oedipus at Colonus*.

[56] See Hanink 2010 on the play's reputation.

[57] Van Nortwick 2012: 141, emphasis mine.

the *Assemblywomen* Aristophanes was approaching the end of *his* career as well. Indeed, Gwendolyn Compton-Engle has very attractively outlined parallels between the *Oedipus at Colonus* and Aristophanes' very last play, the *Wealth*. After analyzing some striking resemblances between the openings of the two plays, where old, weak, and blind protagonists are being led onto stage, as well as various thematic, verbal, and stage action parallels throughout,[58] she tempts us "to imagine Aristophanes in the twilight of his career choosing to appropriate late-Sophoclean character and theme as a kind of *emulative acknowledgment of the master of that genre*. Aristophanes begins this, the last play that was produced in his own name, by bringing onstage an aged yet ultimately vital character, resurrected from the final work of a preeminent playwright."[59] Compton-Engle's reading sits very well with Aristophanes' unusual attitude towards Sophocles. Unlike Aeschylus and Euripides, Sophocles was never really a *komoidoumenos*. To be sure, Aristophanes did engage with his opus in some ways, but the Aristophanic paratragedy as we think of it is hardly applicable.[60] Sophocles is the only one spared from ridicule in the *Frogs*. In fact, despite Dionysus' professed "desire" for Euripides (πόθος, Ar. *Ra.* 52) and the ultimate triumph of Aeschylus, the mission of the god of drama is, if anything, to find a worthy replacement for Sophocles.

If, therefore, in the *Assemblywomen* Aristophanes is similarly paying homage to Sophocles, it is quite in place that he concludes the kidnapping scene with a description of a burial, which is the *telos* of the *Oedipus at Colonus* (*OC* 576-82). As the young man is being dragged offstage by the three comic Erinyes, he utters his last will (*Ec.* 1105-1111, tr. Henderson):

> ὅμως δ' ἐάν τι πολλὰ πολλάκις πάθω
> ὑπὸ ταῖνδε ταῖν κασαλβάδοιν δεῦρ' εἰσπλέων,
> θάψαι μ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ τῷ στόματι τῆς εἰσβολῆς,
> καὶ τήνδ' ἄνωθεν ἐπιπολῆς τοῦ σήματος
> ζῶσαν καταπιττώσαντες, εἶτα τὼ πόδε
> μολυβδοχοήσαντες κύκλῳ περὶ τὰ σφυρὰ

[58] E.g.: "*Wealth* again echoes the action of *Oedipus at Colonus* in the installation of its once-blind and now beneficent figure at a site beneficial to Athens" (Compton-Engle 2013: 156).

[59] Compton-Engle 2013: 170; emphasis mine.

[60] Dobrov 2001: 105-132, for example, conducts an exciting but inevitably speculative reading of Aristophanes' *Birds* as a "contrafact" of Sophocles' lost *Tereus*. Starkey 2012: 215-75 surveys all possible instances of parody of Sophocles in Aristophanes, concluding that "Aristophanes' treatment of Euripides (especially in *Acharnians*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, and *Frogs*) is more explicit and more extensive than anything we see for Sophocles" (275). Compton-Engle 2013: 160 concludes that "*Wealth* takes an approach unique among surviving comedies by engaging so extensively with Sophocles rather than Euripides, and by doing this with no direct quotations at all from… its central model, *Oedipus at Colonus*."

ἄνω ’πιθεῖναι πρόφασιν ἀντὶ ληκύθου.

But if the very worst really does befall me
at the hands of these floozies when I sail inside,
bury me right where I entered the channel.
As for her, cover her alive allover
with pitch and press her feet
in molten lead up to her ankles,
and stick her over my grave instead of an urn!

Besides sealing the scene with an Oedipus-like ritual funeral, these lines may be additionally employing the unwelcoming harbor as a metaphor of the incestuous marriage from the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (422-4, 1208-10).[61] And yet, all along, the exit of the young man is curiously reminiscent of Euripides. Not only does the specific description of turning a woman into a statue by melting lead around her legs find its only literary parallel in Euripides’ *Andromache*,[62] but burial as a closural device is Euripides’ signature move. Virtually all of his tragedies end in some sort of foundational myth that connects the play with the outside world, typically in instituting a cult, such as in the *Hippolytus* (1423ff.). As W. S. Barrett describes its purpose, “[o]ften it was to explain an existing cult, name, etc. that a legend first arose, and the Athenian audience felt strongly the continuity of legendary past and present; and that apart, there is an evident emotional satisfaction in the feeling that the events and persons one has been witnessing live on in effect or name into the life of the present day.”[63] The single most common type includes burials and post-burial arrangements: *Andromache* (1240ff.), *Electra* (1270ff.), *Hecuba* (1270ff.), *Children*

[61] Sommerstein 1998, on *Ec.* 1106, rejects the possibility of an obscene double entendre, in my view, unconvincingly: “the harbour into which he is sailing is the Third Old Woman’s house (not, even secondarily, her vagina, … such a *double entendre* could hardly be understood without hand gestures, which Epigenes [i.e. the Young Man] is still unable to make, and what the audience can *see* is that he is about to be taken through the door and swallowed up in the darkness within).” Nautical imagery is regularly used by Euripides (Barlow 2008, *passim*), even more so by Aeschylus (Van Nes 1963); in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* ships are probably the single most frequent metaphor: see a list in Campbell 1986. Musurillo 1957: 40 moreover argues that “[f]or Sophocles [naval imagery] is, all through the play, a kind of “sunken metaphor” not always explicitly coming to the surface. Henderson 1991: 161-166 surveys abundant examples of nautical terminology for sex in Aristophanes; note esp. two in the *Assemblywomen*: a woman describing her husband “sailing her” all night (*Ec.* 37-9), and the young man referring to sex with the old women in the abduction scene above as “plying two sculls at once” (*Ec.* 1091); also *Ec.* 1087, 1104-6, 1109. For “various marine and nautical metaphors, similes, parallels, allusions, and analogies applied to love and sex” throughout ancient literature, see Murgatroyd 1995.

[62] κάθησ᾽ ἑδραία: καὶ γὰρ εἰ πέριξ σ᾽ ἔχοι | τηκτὸς μόλυβδος, ἐξαναστήσω σ᾽ ἐγὼ | πρὶν ᾧ πέποιθας παῖδ᾽ Ἀχιλλέως μολεῖν (E. *Andr*. 266-8). See commentaries on both passages in Ussher 1973, Sommerstein 1998, and Stevens 1971.

[63] Barrett 1966, on E. *Hipp*. 1423-30.

of Heracles (1030ff.), *Medea* (1381ff.), *Orestes* (1645ff.), *Suppliants* (1165), and so on.

Remarkably, it turns out that "[T]he closest thing to an *aition* in Sophocles comes near the end of *Oedipus at Colonus* [1520-23, 1533-34]... [but] the secret tomb could be considered a variation upon, or reversal of, the Euripidean *aition*, since the mantic hero announces that his impending death and burial will remain *unknown* to future generations."[64] In other words, in his magnificent meta-autobiographical departure from the tragic stage, Sophocles appropriates the characteristically Euripidean move.[65] As a retroactively self-fashioned Euripidean hero, Sophocles-Oedipus expands on his contemporary by leaving his own afterlife mysteriously open-ended where Euripides would have closed. If there is anyone who knew the techniques of the two tragedians too well to miss this, and who would have experimented with it at the twilight of his own career, it is Aristophanes.

As opposed to Aristophanes' longstanding commitment to thematically and linguistically more or less overt paratragedy, the *Assemblywomen* manifest how the comic message is articulated through unannotated appropriation of abstract ideas and virtually stock types emerging from tragedies. Even though Aristophanes' last two plays cannot but in some way reflect contemporary Athens, they do so by conspicuously shifting to a more universal sphere of ideas and relations that are comparably easy to extrapolate. It is hardly a coincidence that late Aristophanes paved the way for what will become known as Middle and New Comedy much like late Euripides did.[66] Similarly, the end of Aristophanes' career might help elucidate what has been the essence of his attitude towards Sophocles all along, hitherto perceived as somewhat vague

[64] Dunn 1996: 59-60; the whole passage reads: "The closest thing to an *aition* in Sophocles comes near the end of *Oedipus at Colonus* [1520-23, 1533-34]... The implication is that the tomb of Oedipus will survive into the world of the audience and will (like the tomb of Eurystheus in *Children of Heracles* or the buried knife in *Suppliant Women*) protect Athens from invading enemies. But a connection with the contemporary world is never spelled out. There is no reference to the future [...] that might establish such a link, and rather than appealing to a familiar name or place in the manner of an *aition*, Sophocles makes it clear that the site of Oedipus' death is unknown. The private and mystical atmosphere is entirely different from an appeal to public knowledge of civic institutions, and the secret tomb could be considered a variation upon, or reversal of, the Euripidean *aition*, since the mantic hero announces that his impending death and burial will remain *unknown* to future generations. Sophocles does not offer a precedent for the Euripidean *aition*, since *Oedipus at Colonus* was produced after Euripides' death. This one example that comes closest to an *aition* has a very different effect, emphasizing the intensely personal meaning of the ending, rather than connecting it to the larger world of the audience."

[65] In general theatrical technique, like other late Sophoclean plays, *Electra* and *Philoctetes*, "*Oedipus at Colonus* is the outcome of a process of mutual influence between Sophocles and Euripides" (Hesk 2012: 174).

[66] For Euripides as the inventor of New Comedy, see Knox 1979: 250-274.

and seemingly disinterested. If previously Sophocles had offered less material for outright parody than Euripides, his spectacular swansong departure seems to have been exactly what Aristophanes had been waiting for.[67]

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[67] Some of the arguments in this paper have been presented on various occasions. I thank Jeffrey Rusten and David Sansone for their comments.

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Отмица Софоклова, покоп Еурипидов: Клитемнестра, Ериније и Едип у Аристофановим Женама у скупштини

Апстракт: У овом раду откривају се и анализирају неки међусобно усклађени и тематски значајни трагички одјеци у Аристофановим *Женама у скупштини* који илуструју његов прелаз са отворене паратрагедије на књижевну апропријацију. За његов приказ родних и сексуалних тензија умногоме су заслужне трагедије Орестовог циклуса (Праксагора произилази у комичку Клитемнестру; три старе жене у Еринije) и Софоклов *Едип на Колону*. Аристофанова сцена отмице скована је према отмици Едипа, што расветљава комедиографов однос према Софоклу.
Кључне речи. Аристофан, *Жене у скупштини*, Орестов циклус, Ериније, Едип, Софокле, секс, род, отмица, сахрана, паратрагедија.