

Comedy and Transgression in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*

1. The generations of old comic poets (after Storey 2011)

c. 486-450s: First generation (e.g. Chionides, Magnes and Ecphantides)

c. 440s-420s: Second generation (e.g. Cratinus, Crates, Telecleides, Hermippus, Callias, and Pherecrates)

c. 420s-400s: Third generation (e.g. Aristophanes, Eupolis, Phrynichus, and Plato)

2. Proposed parallels between Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and comedy (#1 through #7 after Herington 1963; #8 after Sommerstein 2002)

(#1) Plot: The *prologue of Eumenides* is *episodic*, consisting of three parts

(#2) Plot: The *chorus* is *antagonistic* but then becomes *favorably disposed* towards a main character

(#3) Plot: There is a *location change*, from Delphi to Athens

(#4) Plot: The conclusion leads to *audience participation*, since they might join in the cheering

(#5) Plot: *Contemporary politics* is essential to the plot, through the recent Areopagus reforms

(#6) Plot: The conclusion contains a *happy torchlight procession*

(#7) Chorus: The chorus of Furies is portrayed as *animals*

(#8) Language: The language of *sexual innuendo and vulgar bodily descriptions* is prevalent

3. Sexual Innuendo

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1440-1443

ἦ τ' αἰχμάλωτος ἦδε καὶ τερασκόπος
καὶ κοινόλεκτρος τοῦδε, θεσφατηλόγος
πιστὴ ξύνευνος, ναυτίλων δὲ σελμάτων
ιστοτριβῆς.

Here she is, his captive and his diviner
and his concubine, his oracular
faithful mistress, and the pole-rubber of the
ships' benches.

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1446-1447

κεῖται φιλήτωρ τοῦδ'· ἐμοὶ δ' ἐπήγαγεν
εὐνῆς παροψώνημα τῆς ἐμῆς χλιδῆι.

She, his lover, is lying here, and she brings me
a side-dish to the pleasure of my bed.

4. Vulgar Bodily Functions

Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 52-53

αὗται μέλαιναί τ', ἐς τὸ πᾶν βδελύκτροποι,
ρέγκουσι δ' οὐ πλατοῖσι φυσιάμασι.

They are black, and their ways are completely
disgusting, and they belch out gases that
cannot be approached.

5. Evidence for First-Generation Comic Plots (and Sexual Innuendo?)

Magnes fr. 1

καὶ ταῦτα μὲν μοι τῶν κακῶν παροψίδες

And these are the side-dishes to my troubles

Bibliography

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