

Euripides at Plato's Symposium  
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Plato chooses Agathon to be his tragedian in the *Symposium*, pairing him with Aristophanes; however, there are numerous indications that Euripides was not far from Plato's mind when he composed the work. He has Eryximachus quote from the *Melanippe* early on, when he is proposing a competition in praise of Eros (177a). Phaedrus' mention of Alcestis' willingness to die for her husband would presumably recall Euripides' treatment of the subject (179b), and Phaedrus' characterization of Orpheus may have some overtones of Euripides' *Antiope* (179d). Pausanias' distinction of two kinds of Eros has some parallels in Euripides, though of course not uniquely. Aristophanes' complaint of Eros' neglect in cult seems to echo 533-42 in the *Hippolytus* (189c). Agathon quotes from the *Stheneboea* as part of his encomium to Eros (196e). Socrates quotes Hippolytus' famous line about his tongue having sworn but not his mind (199a). And Alcibiades' charge that Socrates is hybristic in being impervious to his charms (215b, 219c) may carry a suggestion of the opinion of Phaedra's nurse that resistance to the passion of love is an attempt to be stronger than the gods and therefore is hybris (*Hippolytus* 474-75).

While quotations of and allusions to Euripides would presumably have been common at symposia, I propose that Plato's use of Euripides may have extended further. The way in which Agathon responds to the speech of Aristophanes, making ingenious but outlandish claims, suggests that Agathon is trying to outdo Aristophanes in cleverness. Plato's idea for the speech may owe something to the opening of the *Thesmophoriazusae*, where Aristophanes pairs Euripides with Agathon, emphasizing certain similarities between the two. Plato, in a light-hearted and anachronistic way, may be giving Agathon his chance to compete with Aristophanes, and in so doing Plato himself competes with Aristophanes' scene. Agathon's word-play fits Aristophanes' caricature, and some of Agathon's assertions appear to draw upon ideas expressed in Euripides' plays. Thus while Euripides does not appear as a guest at Agathon's party, his presence is felt nonetheless. In support of this thesis I will comment on some scholarly discussions of the scene with Euripides and Agathon in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, e.g., P. Lévêque (1955), I. Waern (1956), P. Rau (1967 and 1975), R. Cantarella (1967 and 1975), M. L. Chirico (1990), A. Sommerstein (1994), E. Mazzachera (1999).