

Agathon's *Iliopersis* in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*

Existing scholarship has shown how Aristophanes in the *Thesmophoriazusae* parodies Agathon's style and music (Rau 1967, p. 104; Paduano 1983, pp. 85-6; Bierl 2001, pp. 163-4; Austin-Olson 2004, p. 87; Mastromarco-Totaro 2006, p. 449.), but this focus on form has led to relative neglect of content. In my paper, I show how the playwright mocks the content of Agathon's tragedies as well. At line 101, Agathon enters singing a freshly-composed choral song. This song, though an invention, is also a means by which Aristophanes mocks a specific tragedy by Agathon on the destruction of Troy.

To make this argument, I defend the manuscript reading in the first strophe of the song (lines 101-103): for its obscurity, the expression $\kappa\upsilon\ \epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\eta\ \rho\acute{\alpha}\ \pi\alpha\tau\rho\iota\ \delta\iota\ \chi\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon\ \sigma\alpha\sigma\kappa\alpha\iota\ \beta\omicron\alpha\ \nu$ has been considered corrupted and emended in many different ways by many different scholars. I defend the reading of the manuscript, proposing a new interpretation of the passage, based on a rhetorical analysis of these lines, and arguing that the poet is referring here to the last day of Troy.

Then I discuss the presence of Leto, Apollo and Diana in the song, three divinities tightly connected with the city of Troy, and the allusion to the foundation of a city by Apollo, the mythical founder of Troy.

This Trojan tragedy is the one referred to by Aristotle (*Poet.* 1456 a 11-19) among the worst examples of tragic art. I argue that Aristophanes in the *Thesmophoriazusae* has Agathon sing a song about Troy because he wants to mock this tragedy, which at his time, as well as some decades later (as Aristotle attests), was considered the most poorly composed and received of Agathon's works.

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