

Aristophanic *Paratragodia* of Late-Euripidean Tragedy: A Study of Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*

One of the most prominent literary tools in the Aristophanic corpus is his inclusion of criticism towards his tragic antithesis Euripides. As far back as Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, the playwright included references and criticism of his tragic counterpart. Scholarship on the topic of tragic parody has been immense since the introduction of Peter Rau's book "Paratragodia: Untersuchung einer komischen Form des Aristophanes" (Rau, 1967). Rau gives a comprehensive overview of cases in which Aristophanes employs tragic parody, while setting limits to his definitions. Rau defines *paratragodia* as places where Aristophanes employs either "tragic language" or "clear imitation" of tragic situations. This builds on the earlier work of Schlesinger, *Identification of Parodies in Aristophanes* (Schlesinger, 1937), who establishes three categories of tragic parody, each with varying degrees of direct quotation. His third category 'general parody' is parody in which Aristophanes does not use direct or partial quotation or mention of a tragedy, but rather the manner of the scene or his choice of words indicates a tragic parody to the audience.

By far the most extensive use of tragic parody from the Aristophanic corpus is the *Frogs*, which was produced in 405 B.C. The "happy plan" in this play centers on retrieving one of the three famous Athenian tragedians from the underworld. Most importantly, the *agon* at the end of the play includes many direct quotations from Euripidean tragedies. Aristophanes not only names these plays, but he quotes and mocks them before having Dionysus betray Euripides and select Aeschylus as the dramatist whom he will bring back to Athens. However, scholarship on Aristophanes' *paratragodia* of Euripidean tragedy has yet to investigate whether the two latest extant plays include this comic feature. In examining the unique plot features in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, specific references to late-Euripidean tragedy are apparent.

In this paper, I argue that Aristophanes' use of *paratragodia* did not stop after his *Frogs*, but rather by examining scenes from both the *Ecclesiazusae* and late-Euripidean tragedies, there is evidence that Aristophanes continued to critique the works of Euripides throughout his career and into the fourth century B.C. More clearly, I focus on the parallels between (1) Praxagora's opening prologue in the *Ecclesiazusae* and the prologue of Jocasta in Euripides' *Phoenissae*, (2) Chremes' *ecclesia* report speech and the report speech in Euripides' *Orestes*, and (3) the *sparagmos* of the young Epigenes and the famous *sparagmos* of Pentheus in the *Bacchae*.

I complete my analysis of Aristophanic *paratragodia* in the *Ecclesiazusae* by focusing on how and why Aristophanes continued to utilize *paratragodia* of Euripides' tragedies. One potential solution I suggest is the Athenian book trade during the late-fifth century and early-fourth century. As Hartwig argues, "the book trade would have encouraged and made possible some of the more intricate and detailed tragic parodies." Hartwig points out that the *Frogs* most certainly benefited from this development, especially since from *Frogs* 1119-1248 Aristophanes "quotes and criticizes numerous tragic prologues (Hartwig, 2014)." Lastly, I look at how fourth-century vase painting provides evidence for a performance revival of Euripidean tragedy. As Taplin shows, many fourth century pots found throughout the Greek world, including Sicily, often depicted scenes from productions of Euripides' tragedies (Taplin, 2007). This revival may allow Aristophanic *paratragodia* to remain relevant into the early-fourth century.

#### Bibliography

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