

Aristophanes' lost *Thesmophoriazusae* revisited: on the date and plot

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ABSTRACT: This paper renegotiates the question of the date and plot of Aristophanes' lost *Thesmophoriazusae*. The first part challenges the date proposed by Austin and Olson, and at the same time questions the validity of including fr. 341 in the corpus of this play, as well as eliciting chronological indications from what we know of the play's parabasis. In the second part I treat both indirect information and fragments of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* in order to explore the possibility of an appearance of Euripides on stage in this play, and then arrange and comment on selected fragments—that is, those that I found meaningful in some way—in order to reconstruct possible elements of the plot.

1. Date¹

The lost *Thesmophoriazusae* of Aristophanes is usually called 'the second' by scholarly research, and until recently it was unanimously considered as having been staged at least two years after the extant play by the same title, i.e. after 410. This *terminus post quem* was suggested by the scholion on *Frogs* 53, which mentions the *Antiope* of Euripides, along with the *Hypsipyle* and the *Phoenissae*, as plays of his staged between 412 and 405:

τὴν Ἀνδρομέδαν· διὰ τί μὴ ἄλλο τι τῶν πρὸ ὀλίγου διδαχθέντων καὶ
καλῶν, «Υψιπύλην», «Φοίνισσα», «Ἀντιόπη»; ἢ δὲ «Ἀνδρομέδα» ὀγδόω
ἔτει προεισήκται·
(Σ *Ran.* 53)

The *Andromeda*: why not [mention] another play, one of those only recently staged and fine, [as for instance] the *Hypsipyle*, the *Phoenissae*, the *Antiope*? *Andromeda* entered the contest eight years ago.

According to this scholion we are to infer that the *Antiope* was staged after the *Andromeda*, i.e. after 412. Because fr. 342 attributed to the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* parodies fr. 182 *TrGF* of *Antiope*, Aristophanes' play has to have been staged after 410.²

The soundness of this scholion, however, has been questioned by Cropp and Fick. In their monograph on dating the fragmentary tragedies of Euripides on the

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¹ An excellent summary of relevant research, up to and including Austin and Olson 2004a, is in Imperio 2004: 74-5 n.174. See also Pellegrino 2000: 157-8 n.3 mainly for older scholarship on the subject.

² See Gelzer 1971: 1410; summary in Butrica 2001: 44 with n.2, 50-1.

basis of the percentage of resolutions in iambic trimeters, they suggest that *Antiope* should belong to the year span 426-419. Since we possess an unusually—by comparison with the other fragmentary plays—large number of trimeters from *Antiope*, it is hard to refute the validity of their suggestion. Furthermore, Euripides' *Antigone* does seem to have been staged in the years after 412, so the reference intended in the scholion might have been to that play, whose title could easily have been corrupted to *Antiope*.³

Butrica, in his 2001 paper, made use of this finding in order to renegotiate the date of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* of Aristophanes. The 'Antiope-criterion' does not offer much help any more, since it only goes as far as indicating that the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* presupposes a play that might be as early as 426, whereas Aristophanes' career starts in 427. Butrica, therefore, brought forth new arguments in favor of dating the staging of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* before that of the extant play, namely at the Lenaea of 423.⁴ Furthermore, he established that the traditional designation of the lost play as 'second' (β') cannot be considered as a reliable 'witness' to the chronological order of the two homonymous plays.⁵

Austin and Olson, in their 2004 paper, on the one hand discarded Butrica's arguments as inconclusive and on the other hand proposed that the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* is to be dated in the years between 415/14 and 407/6. They based the suggestion of this date on a single piece of evidence, namely fr. 341, which mentions the poet Agathon. According to Plato's *Symposium*, Agathon won the dramatic contest the first time he entered the competition, in 416, and Aristophanes may therefore poke fun at him only thereafter.⁶ Butrica replied to their thesis in the same year; he proposed an emendation for the critical passage of the *Symposium*, arguing that Agathon did win in 416 for the first time, but that this was not his first participation in the contest; on the contrary, he may have entered the competition in previous years as well, failing to win first place.⁷

As to Butrica's 2001 arguments, let it suffice to say that I regard them as convincing, as Austin and Olson do not manage to refute them, but simply underestimate their cumulative cogency.⁸ Especially when taking into account the paucity of evidence, it seems to me that Butrica detected a relatively high number of indications. Since both sides, however, have adequately elaborated on their views, their arguments are there for everyone to judge. What I have to offer in this paper is first a counter-argument, unrelated to that of Butrica 2004, against the use of fr. 341 as a dating indicator, and against its inclusion in the corpus of the fragments attributed to the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* for that matter. Second, I will go on to propose a new and, in my opinion, decisive argument in favor of locating the play in Aristophanes' first creative period. Before embarking on both,

³ Cropp and Fick 1985: 75-6.

⁴ Butrica 2001: 45-51.

⁵ *Ibid.* 51-62.

⁶ Austin and Olson 2004a: 10.

⁷ Butrica 2004.

⁸ Butrica claimed that much in his response (2004:1; cf. 2001: 50). See also Storey 2006: 'Austin and Olson take dead aim at Butrica's controversial article ... They do raise some cogent objections to Butrica's theory, none fatal in my opinion ...'

however, I will briefly go over the issue of the title, i.e. the traditional designation of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* as second.

Butrica demonstrated that ancient sources differ as to the numeration of the two homonymous plays, and argued that, when Byzantine sources identify the lost one as 'second', this is due to Byzantine arbitration.⁹ Although his latter claim cannot be maintained, at least not the way he stated it,¹⁰ the important point is that his examination of early testimonies reveals inconsistency in the designation of the plays, both in general and in the case of the two *Thesmophoriazusae*. Let us look into his arguments afresh and reorganize the material. Hephaestion provides us with the sole testimony that the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* was the first (fr. 348 K-A). There is also, however, a mention in Clement of Alexandria stating that in the first *Thesmophoriazusae* Aristophanes parodied the *Empipramenoi* of Cratinus (*Str.* 6.2.26); the scholia on the extant *Thesmophoriazusae* do not include such information, and Clement could have meant the lost play, as Butrica proposed. Now, this is little evidence, but it cannot be dismissed. For one thing, Clement knew the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*, as he cites fr. 332 K-A. Furthermore, Hephaestion cites the *Thesmophoriazusae* in a passage that deals with variations in the use of cretics, along with the *Farmers* and the *Wasps*.¹¹ It is not a coincidence that these two are early Aristophanic plays that he uses in order to examine this phenomenon: the paeonic rhythm was indeed used by Aristophanes in his early period, and Hephaestion probably knew where to look for examples.¹² It is therefore possible that his mention of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* as the 'first' was founded on his knowledge of the fact that it indeed was. On the other hand, the ancient sources that designate the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* as 'second' are few as well (see fr. 334, 335, 349 K-A) and there is only Aulus Gellius (15.20.7) who calls the extant play 'first'.

This inconsistency could indeed be explained if different tendencies of numeration existed, and in the case of the two *Thesmophoriazusae* we can think of at least two. One would be to designate the lost play as first, because it is older—if this is the case, as I will argue, with Butrica. Another would be to designate it as

⁹ Butrica 2001: 51-62.

¹⁰ According to Butrica, numerals used in ancient times had become extinct in Byzantine times; although in the case of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* we come across numerals twice in Photius, Butrica proposed that the patriarch added them himself (2001: 51) and that, in general, the few numerals used in Byzantine sources do not betray a process of elimination of the rest, but are due to a few scribes who bothered to add them when none had survived (*ibid.* 60-1). In the case of Photius, this cannot be maintained, because there is no indication that he examined comedy in such detail as to go to the trouble of numbering the citations he copied from older sources. On the contrary, the absence of comedy from his *Bibliotheca* and other works reveals his personal lack of interest in this genre: Photius only alludes to the all-too-well-known *Wealth* in his *Letters*, see Wilson 1982: 112. Moreover, he was not interested in the passages he cited *per se*, but in what they contained. The same applies to what happened in general: the few instances of numerals used in Byzantium must stem from older times, from an environment where all the copies of ancient plays were collected and therefore the need to distinguish between homonymous plays arose, such as the Museum of Alexandria: cf. proposed explanation (a) for Antiphanes' *Agroikos*-plays in Konstantakos 2004: 14.

¹¹ See K-A 77 on the date of the *Farmers*.

¹² This is also a part of Butrica's 'metrical' argument (2001: 45), drawing on Parker 1997: 45.

second, because its action postdates that of the extant one: the extant *Thesmophoriazusae* takes place on the second day of the Thesmophoria, whereas the lost one took place on the third.¹³ This observation does not become less valuable even if we acknowledge, *pace* Butrica, the possibility that before the time of Photius the designation of the lost play as 'second' may have to some extent prevailed.¹⁴ Even so, it still is uncertain what tendency this convention originally reflected.

This having been established, I may proceed to the counter-argument against the extraction of chronological evidence from fr. 341; I propose that it cannot provide us with a *terminus post quem* of the play's dating because it may not have belonged to the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*. Let us read the fragment in question, along with Photius' text:

ἀντίθετον τὸ σχῆμα τῆς φράσεως, ὡς ἡμεῖς. Ἄριστοφάνης
Θεσμοφοριαζούσαις καὶ κατ' Ἀγάθων ἀντίθετον ἐξυρημένον.

(Phot. α2101 = Ar. fr. 341 K-A)

antitheton: the figure of speech, as now. Aristophanes, in the *Thesmophoriazusae*: 'An *antitheton* "shaved" according to Agathon's manner'.

A person is referring to the rhetorical figure *antitheton*.¹⁵ The *antitheton* in question has been constructed in Agathon's manner, who was notorious for his love for this figure.¹⁶ And, instead of saying 'constructed according to Agathon's manner', he says 'shaved', in order to poke fun at this effeminate poet's habit of shaving. Hence, the elements that constitute the joke are: Agathon, his poetical peculiarity, and his shaving. The exact same elements are prominent in the satire of Agathon in the extant *Thesmophoriazusae*.¹⁷ And, in fact, this fragment is transmitted to us as belonging to the *Thesmophoriazusae*, with no numeral attached. Now, when we come across the citation of lines attributed to an extant play with a lost namesake, and these lines do not appear in the extant play, we may offer two explanations. One is that the lines in question belong to the lost play of the same title. If a numeral had ever been used in order to distinguish between the plays, it was lost at some point in the process of transmission. It is not

¹³ Butrica 2001: 59.

¹⁴ In his *Lexicon*, Photius cites the *Thesmophoriazusae* ten times, and, as far as we can judge, he is consistent in eight of them: whenever he mentions the *Thesmophoriazusae* without numerical indication, he supplies us with text that is to be found in the extant play (six times): α1386, 2059, 2946, μ606 (ed. Theodoridis), σ499, 546 (ed. Porson). Whenever he mentions the *Thesmophoriazusae* β', he cites lines unknown to us, which we regard as correctly attributed to the lost play (2 times): λ48, 452 (ed. Theodoridis). Only when citing fr. 339 and 341 does Photius attribute to the *Thesmophoriazusae* lines that are not to be found in the extant play. This summary may reveal that a more or less canonical numeration was pre-existing: the extant play was not designated by any number at all—there would have been no use in designating it any more, since it would have been the only one surviving at that point—and the lost one was called 'second' or β'.

¹⁵ On this figure see Lausberg 1998: 349-58.

¹⁶ See K-A *ad loc.* for relevant passages.

¹⁷ Notably 191 on shaving and, apart from that, his appearance, including the fact that he shaves, is in any case the reason why Euripides asks him to spy on the women on his behalf. As to his poetic style, it is parodied throughout 101-205. He in fact uses an *antitheton* in 146-7, and also in 198-9, which Euripides' kinsman picks up and distorts in order to make fun of it (200-1); see Austin and Olson 2004b *ad locc.*

hard to imagine why: these numerals were useful in a time when both plays existed, but since only one of them survived eventually, the need to preserve the numerals perished as well. Or, since these passages were cited because of some peculiarity or piece of information they involved—in the case of fr. 341 it is the mention of a rhetorical figure—exact citations were beside the point. The other explanation would be that the attribution is indeed intended to the extant play, and is the result of an unfortunate intervention by someone who was by some indication misled to think that he could improve on what was handed down to him. This ‘someone’ could have been a scribe, but it is far easier to imagine a Byzantine scholar reading a manuscript and adding a title *in margine* or between the lines of his text, thus correcting what he perceived as a mistaken attribution or completing an ‘orphan’ citation; a copy of this manuscript would, of course, have his emendation incorporated into the text.

Resorting to the former of these explanations is common practice, as it is often our only resort. Fr. 339 of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* is one such case: it is, like 341, cited by Photius and attributed to the *Thesmophoriazusae* without any numerical indication, so our best guess is that the indicator β’ was at some point left out, or that it was in fact never used. When it comes to fr. 341, however, the applicability of the latter type of explanation cannot be denied: the attribution may have been altogether mistaken but intentional, caused by the content of the line. Let us assume that a contemporary reader of Aristophanes comes across this line and is asked to attribute it by heart to one of the comedies that are known to him: he would not be able to choose any other than the extant *Thesmophoriazusae*. I propose that someone who was part of the transmission process before Photius, in a time when most comedies were already lost—that is, to someone who did not have access to more evidence than we do—did the same thing. We should bear in mind the fact that not only does this line involve so many elements that evoke the extant *Thesmophoriazusae*, but also that Aristophanes seems according to our evidence not to have dealt with Agathon very often. Among the extant comedies and apart from the *Thesmophoriazusae*, Agathon is only mentioned in the beginning of the *Frogs* (83), between the names of many young tragedians—not the most memorable of references. Hence, at least ever since Aristophanes’ preserved plays reduced to those we have today, satire at Agathon’s expense is predominantly concentrated in the extant *Thesmophoriazusae*.¹⁸

I therefore find it far more plausible that this line was intentionally but erroneously attributed to the extant *Thesmophoriazusae* and, since it is now in search of its play, the lost comedy by the same title is no better suited candidate than any other lost Aristophanic comedy. It is noteworthy that we know of a very similar error in transmission: the false attribution of the first two lines of the

¹⁸ We have two more mentions in the fragments: the one in 592.35 (from an *incerta fabula*) does not even concern Agathon as a person; Aristophanes merely attributes to him the phrase he used (ἐκφέρετε πεύκας κατ’ Ἀγάθωνα φωσφόρους). The other is to be found in the *Gerytades* (fr. 178) and consists of the usage of the epithet *Agathōneios* in order to denote effeminate poetry. Ironically, fr. 592 has been attributed to the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* (see Butrica 2001: 72-3) but whether this is correct is beside my point; this is a papyrus fragment, and it does not betray an awareness of the content of the lost play at the time when the misattribution of fr. 341 probably occurred.

Lysistrata to the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* in the scholion on *Clouds* 52 can only be explained through their common reference to *Genetullis*. This goddess is mentioned in the extant *Thesmophoriazusae* and it was probably to this play that these lines were originally misattributed by the scholiast. Afterwards, someone may have seen that this was an erroneous reference and assumed that they should be attributed to the lost play by the same title—so he added a beta.¹⁹ The misattribution of fr. 341 to the extant *Thesmophoriazusae* due to its content resembles that of *Lysistrata* 1-2 to the same play, whereas the arbitrary solution of modern scholars resembles that of the ancient or Byzantine scholar or scribe who tried to correct things. In any case, it is worth considering that, were *Lysistrata* not preserved for us, its first two lines would now be included in the fragments of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*, as the *Clouds* scholion would be our guide. I therefore conclude that we must acknowledge the strong possibility that this line, which may have stemmed from any play, was thought of as being part of the satire against Agathon in the extant *Thesmophoriazusae* and was therefore attributed to it at some phase of the transmission. Hence, I propose that this fragment could be included in the *incertarum fabularum fragmenta* and that it by no means constitutes a safe criterion for the dating of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*.

I will now go on to present what I regard as an adequately compelling criterion for the dating of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* to the first creative period of the poet, the period until 421 that is, to which five of the eleven extant comedies belong.²⁰ First, however, I have to mention briefly the last of Butrica's 2001 four arguments. Fragments 346-8 belong to the parabasis of the play²¹ and under number 346 a summary of the parabasis by Galen is to be found, belonging to a work which has survived only in Arabic translation. According to this, Aristophanes explained to his audience that for four months he suffered from *ēpialos*, a 'cold illness', and then from *puretos*, 'fever'. This fragment evokes *Wasps* 1037-43:

φησίν τε μετ' αὐτοῦ
 τοῖς ἠπιάλοις ἐπιχειρήσαι πέρυσιν καὶ τοῖς πυρετοῖσιν,
 οἱ τοὺς πατέρας τ' ἠγγχον νύκτωρ καὶ τοὺς πάππους ἀπέπνιγον,
 κατακλινομένοι τ' ἐπὶ ταῖς κοίταις ἐπὶ τοῖσιν ἀπράγμοσιν ὑμῶν
 ἀνωμοσίας καὶ προσκλήσεις καὶ μαρτυρίας συνεκόλλων,
 ὥστ' ἀναπηδᾶν δειμαίνοντας πολλοὺς ὡς τὸν πολέμαρχον.
 (Ar. *Vesp.* 1037-43)

He [sc. Aristophanes] says that along with him [sc. Cleon]
 he attacked the shivers last year, and the fevers,
 who used to hang their fathers in the night-time and suffocate their grandparents,
 and lie in the beds of citizens who minded their own business,

¹⁹ Butrica 2001: 61, with n. 41.

²⁰ The use of the year 421 as the end of the poet's first period and 414 as the beginning of the second is, of course, arbitrary, and is due to the fact that his extant plays form two such groups, revealing that Aristophanes' technique changed notably in between.

²¹ See Gelzer 1971: 1415-16; K-A 182.

and construed affidavits and summonses and testimonies,
so that they caused many to jump up in terror and run to the polemarch.²²

We do not know whom Aristophanes refers to in this passage of the *Wasps*,²³ but it is probable that we are dealing with the same metaphor in both passages²⁴ and therefore, as Butrica proposed, the *perusin*, 'last year' of the *Wasps*, which means 'in the comedy' or 'comedies of the previous year', viz. of 423, may refer to the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*.²⁵ From what we gather from Galen's testimony, Aristophanes' reference to the *ēpialos* and the *puretos* was lengthy. Furthermore, in the first *Clouds*, staged for the Dionysia of 423, the use of the word *ēpialos* is again attested (fr. 399 K-A). Since the mention in the *Wasps* is vaguer, refers to the past and uses these two words in the plural as generic names, it may constitute the final link of a chain of plays in which Aristophanes attacked these persons; the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* and the first *Clouds* could have been the first and second link of this chain.²⁶

Austin and Olson deemed Butrica's proposal 'an ingenious theory, but lack[ing] any probative value'.²⁷ It is at this point that I would like to draw attention to a critical detail, which has been overlooked up to now. Even if we are to judge this proposed correlation as a bold one, the parabasis itself, nevertheless, involves elements which clearly relate it to the other parabases of Aristophanes' first period, often called 'personalized parabases': it unmistakably disrupts the sequence of the action of the play, and the Coryphaeus addresses the audience directly on behalf of the poet, the Chorus having relieved themselves of their dramatic identity.²⁸ As to the content, Aristophanes refers to the quality of his work, and excuses himself in case something should sound less than satisfactory, explaining that in the last four months he has been tormented by an *ēpialos* and afterwards a *puretos*. Since Aristophanes never refers to details that concern his private life, but reveals exclusively information that pertains to his adventures as a public person,²⁹ we may be sure that this is also the case here, and that such events underlie his words.³⁰ The references to the quality of his play in an apologetic manner and to his public adventures are, therefore, further elements that relate this

²² Translations are mine with loans from Henderson's Loeb translation in the case of Aristophanes, unless otherwise indicated.

²³ Imperio 2004: 73-4, n.173 sums up every relevant hypothesis that has been made.

²⁴ See Gelzer 1971: 1415-16.

²⁵ MacDowell *ad loc.* is confident that *perusin* refers to the comedy of the Lenaea of 423 and mentions a few possible plays, noting that we do not possess conclusive evidence in favor of any of them. On the intertextuality of the parabasis in general and in particular see Hubbard 1991 (esp. 31-2 on the intertextual relations between parabases of the first period).

²⁶ Butrica 2001: 46-9.

²⁷ 2004a: 9.

²⁸ This is how the physiognomy of the parabasis is described by Hubbard 1991: 28-9, who insists on referring, however, not to the period until 421, but to Aristophanes in general, although he takes all his examples from this era and his descriptions do not fit post-421 plays. In 157-8, however, he does make the necessary distinctions and explain that from the *Birds* onwards we watch the decline of the personalized parabasis and its integration into the dramatic plot.

²⁹ Cf. Hubbard 1991: 220-5.

³⁰ Cf. Butrica 2001: 47.

parabasis to the poet's first period.³¹ To state this argument inversely, it would be quite extraordinary if we came across a parabasis featuring all these elements and staged in the years following the *Birds*, as Austin and Olson hold. Naturally, we cannot rule this out; Aristophanes may, in the middle of his second period, have produced a parabasis comprising all the first-period elements. But in terms of the criteria we possess in order to research fragmentary comedies, the case I propose is, I think, as strong as it can be. Indeed, Imperio lists the case of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* as a 'parabasi personalistica', similar to those of the first five Aristophanic comedies (*Clouds* included), which, exceptionally, appears after 421. That is, instead of using her finding in order to reject the later dating of the play, she tries to fit it into the framework of Austin and Olson.³²

If the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* was written earlier than its extant namesake, we have here the same case as in almost every instance of 'double' Aristophanic plays, of which only one survives: the survivor is the later one.³³ A famous example is the *Clouds* and, in fact, if the thesis proposed here is accepted, we are able to infer something about the reception of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* in the Lenaea of 423 that relates it with the *Clouds*. It is clear, judging from what Aristophanes says in the *Wasps* (esp. 1043-5, see below), that 423 was a year of failures. Of course, his words were always understood as referring to the *Clouds* alone, concerning which we know for sure that it came third, much to his disappointment.³⁴ His complaints, however, must refer to the failure of both his 423 plays, if there were two:

τοιόνδ' εὐρόντες ἀλεξίκακον τῆς χώρας τῆσδε καθαρτὴν
 πέρυσιν καταπρόδοτε καινοτάτας σπείραντ' αὐτὸν διανοίας,
 ἃς ὑπὸ τοῦ μὴ γνῶναι καθαρῶς ὑμεῖς ἐποιήσατ' ἀναλδεῖς.
 (Ar. *Vesp.* 1043-5)

After finding such a protector from all evil, such a purifier of this land,
 you betrayed him last year, although he sowed ground-breaking thoughts,
 which you allowed to wither through your blurred judgment.

Should, therefore, the dating of the Lenaea of 423 be accepted, and I firmly believe it is our best guess, what we have here is a comedy that came second or third in the Lenaea of 423, a fact that, along with the failure of the *Clouds* a few months later, made Aristophanes talk of 'betrayal' in the *Wasps*. As it appears, both plays were in later years revised by Aristophanes, and the second version of

³¹ These are elements that systematically appear in all five of Aristophanes' first extant comedies, those of the years 425-421, without, however, necessarily characterizing the parabases of this era exclusively; see Hubbard 1991: 19-20. The way, however, in which they are delivered, i.e. by a coryphaeus who focalizes the poet's voice unmediated, strongly points to this year span.

³² See Imperio 2004: 72. Her choice is understandable, since the paper of Austin and Olson 2004a was the last one to appear when she was writing and she did not have the chance to read the reply by Butrica. However, she singles out only the references to the quality of the comedy and to public adventures as features that point to the first period, and does not mention the disruption of the dramatic action and the unmediated focalization of the poet's voice.

³³ Except for the elusive *Peace* II, which both Olson (1998: l-li) and Sommerstein (1985: xix-xx) believe existed, and probably was later than the extant one (Platnauer 1964: xvii-xx, however, favored rejecting its existence).

³⁴ See MacDowell and Sommerstein *ad* 1043, 1044.

both survives today. I use the terms 'revised' and 'version' only broadly here, as the context of the Thesmophoria may have been the only thing that the plot of the two *Thesmophoriazusae* had in common; this, of course, falls into the scope of the following part of this paper.

2. Plot

As far as the plot of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* is concerned, a primary question is that of the relationship it bore to the plot of the extant play by the same title. We know of instances where homonymous comedies were more or less the first and second version of the same play, but this is far from mandatory and we do not even know if it was common practice.³⁵ In our case we may be certain that for both plays the Chorus consisted of women celebrating the Thesmophoria, and it is attested that the plot of the lost play was set on the third and final day of the festival—and not the second as in the extant play.³⁶ But was Euripides included in the lost comedy? Butrica thinks he was, and bases this opinion on the following arguments, which I will go on to present and discuss:

(a) The scholion on *Wasps* 61b informs us of the following:³⁷

ἀνασελγαινόμενος· κατακωμωδούμενος, ὕβριζόμενος. κατ' αὐτοῦ γὰρ καθῆκε τὰς Θεσμοφοριαζούσας. φησὶν οὖν «οὐ δεύτερον ταυτολογῆσω περὶ αὐτοῦ, ὡς οἱ ἄλλοι ποιοῦσιν».

(Σ *Vesp.* 61b)

ὅτι τὰς Θεσμοφοριαζούσας καθῆκε κατὰ τοῦ Εὐριπίδου Lh

Anaselgainomenos: satirized, maltreated. Because at his [sc. Euripides'] expense he [sc. Aristophanes] staged the *Thesmophoriazusae*. He therefore says 'I will not say the same thing twice, as the others do'.

Because he [sc. Aristophanes] staged the *Thesmophoriazusae* at the expense of Euripides Lh

It is clear that the *gar* of the scholion (*hoti* in Lh [Triclinius]) conveys a causal connection: the scholiast holds that in the *Wasps* of 422 Aristophanes directly refers to the fact that in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, which however dates in 411, he already poked fun at Euripides. There are two ways to interpret this: either the scholiast did not know the date of at least one of those plays—which are separated by a good eleven years—or he is referring to the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*, which, as said before, was probably staged in 423.³⁸

Unfortunately, a different scholion on the same line (Σ *Vesp.* 61c), which seems to be well informed, does not include any *Thesmophoriazusae* among the plays of Aristophanes in which Euripides had a part and which antedate the *Wasps*. This fact was employed by Austin and Olson in order to discard Butrica's

³⁵ Konstantakos 2004: 13-16 offers lists of homonymous plays, those which were different in plot and those which were versions of the same plot, and rather correctly, as we will presently see, groups the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* with the former; see also Butrica 2001: 71.

³⁶ Fr. 331 says this much.

³⁷ I give the text of V and the Aldine edition, with the variant in Lh (Triclinius) in the apparatus.

³⁸ Butrica 2001: 45-6.

thesis and the evidence provided by Σ 61b. I will presently, however, venture to examine both scholia in detail and lend support to Butrica's conclusion, though not to his way of reaching it. Scholion 61c goes as follows:³⁹

οὐ μόνον ἐν τοῖς Δράμασιν εἰσῆκται οὕτως Εὐριπίδης, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ Προαγῶνι καὶ ἐν τοῖς Ἀχαρνεῦσιν.

(Σ *Vesp.* 61c)

οὐ μόνον δὲ ἐν τούτῳ τῷ δράματι, ὡς εἴρηται, εἰσῆκται ... Lh

Not only in the *Dramata* has Euripides been introduced in such a fashion, but also in the *Proagon* and the *Acharnians*.

Not only, then, in this play, as stated, has Euripides ... Lh

This scholion correctly mentions the *Acharnians*, whereas the *Proagon* is a tricky case, because it was not staged prior to, but in the same festival as the *Wasps*. A mention of the *Dramata* of Aristophanes should also be read here, *pace* Koster, who preferred the readings of Lh.⁴⁰ Hence, at first sight scholion 61c displays a more impressive knowledge of facts than 61b. However, I will go on to argue that scholion 61b is more concrete and precise. Let us read the line of the *Wasps* which it refers to: ἡμῖν γὰρ οὐκ ἔστ' οὔτε ... / ... / οὐδ' ἀῶθις ἀνασελγαινόμενος Εὐριπίδης (Ar. *Vesp.* 58-61, 'we do not have neither ... nor Euripides in a lewd part once more'). McDowell *ad loc.* mentions that this line seems to refer to some previous play of Aristophanes. He thought, however, that, because *anaselgainomenos* is a powerful word, this phrase must mean 'Euripides being treated lewdly' or 'behaving lewdly' and hence cannot refer to the *Acharnians*; the scene in the latter play 'is hardly lewd'. He therefore assumed that the line must refer to the work of another comedian, but did not think of the possibility that Aristophanes referred to one of his own plays which is now lost. Σ 61c, however, does relate the *Acharnians* with this line, and also with the *Dramata*—and we do not know if the latter featured personal invective against Euripides or simply parodied his plays, as the title suggests.⁴¹ Moreover, judging the information of Σ 61c in terms of the chronological relationship of these plays,

³⁹ Again, I give the reading of V, and the reading of Lh in the apparatus. I do *not* follow Koster's text, for reasons explained immediately.

⁴⁰ There are several reasons why *en tois Dramasin* should be read: first, it constitutes a *lectio difficilior* and is contained in the older manuscript (V); second, this play possibly did parody Euripides (see the *testimonia* under K-A 158-9), and the date usually proposed for it is 426-25 (see Geissler 1925: 33-4; Edmunds 1957: 649, 655), so it fits the purpose of the scholion. But most importantly, reading Σ 61c in conjunction with Σ 61b reveals that they were originally separate scholia (in V), but were glued together with unfortunate results in the Triclinian version (Lh). In the latter *en tois Dramasin*, incomprehensible as it was for someone who was not acquainted with Aristophanes' lost plays, has been mistakenly 'emended' and made to refer to the *Thesmophoriazusae* of Σ 61b, and the *de* and *hōs eirētai* have been added to articulate the connection. Butrica treated Σ 61b and 61c as if they were one and the same scholion, and Austin and Olson were right to rebuke him for this (2004a: 9), but they, in turn, did not see that the two separate notes are indeed combined in Lh. Admittedly, Koster's edition does not help at all with regard to this point. I am indebted to Professor Heath for his excellent understanding of these scholia.

⁴¹ Edmunds 1957: 649 seems not to see anything other than that it did include characters like Hercules. This rather makes it more difficult to think that Euripides was presented on stage as well, but he could have been the object of a good amount of personal satire in e.g. the parabasis.

we notice that in order to shed light on a line that belongs to the year 422, scholion 61c cites a play of the year 425, one of possibly 426-25, and a third one which was presented in—literally—the same festival as the *Wasps*: a somewhat odd selection. At the same time, this scholion does not include any indication of a causal relation, like the *hoti* or *gar* of 61b. Instead of interpreting the line of the *Wasps*, it looks as if it accumulates information which the scholiast deemed generally relevant.

On the contrary, scholion 61b cites only the *Thesmophoriazusae* and displays confidence that the line of the *Wasps* refers to that play. Why does it not mention other plays as well? Is it possible that the scholiast did not know of the *Acharnians*? And a telling detail: the scholion interprets Aristophanes' words as 'I will not say the same thing twice, as the others do' (οὐ δεύτερον ταυτολογήσω περὶ αὐτοῦ, ὡς οἱ ἄλλοι ποιοῦσιν). Note 'twice' (οὐ δεύτερον)! The scholiast is certain that the mention is only to *one* pre-existing Aristophanic comedy. And this, he says, is the *Thesmophoriazusae*. In sum, a careless look at this scholion gives the impression of a weak scholiast, who ignores the *Acharnians* and ignores the fact that the *Wasps* is older than the *Thesmophoriazusae*. On the other hand, if the reference of the scholion in fact pertains to the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*, it makes excellent sense. As argued, this play was probably staged in 423; it is, therefore, an ideal candidate for this reference in the *Wasps*. If its plot was even roughly similar to that of the *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411, then there would have been enough place for Euripides to be satirized in such a way as to justify the use of *anasegainomenos*. This would explain why the scholion does not mention other plays and displays such confidence: this scholiast had access to concrete information.⁴² I therefore think that, although conclusive results cannot be expected, the possibility of having Euripides in the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* remains open from this point of view.

(b) Satyrus' biography of Euripides (*POxy* ix 1176 fr. 39 col. x), as well as the anonymous *Vita Euripidis* 6 (6.10-11 Schwartz), include the same odd 'biographical' piece of information about the tragedian: the women rose up against him during the Thesmophoria because he accused them in his plays (according to both sources) and decided to murder him (according to the

⁴² Or, again, he was incompetent and confident at the same time. For instance, one could venture to interpret this scholion through the same question that I used for the source of Photius for fr. 342: when the scholiast read line 61 of the *Wasps*, which would be the first comedy to come to his mind, justifying *anasegainomenos*? The *Thesmophoriazusae*, of course, if he was not aware of the dates. However, this and the case of Photius differ: first, the scholion should come from much earlier times than Photius, when a lot of plays survived and the *Thesmophoriazusae* would not be so prominent as it would appear later, when only a few plays were around; and second, Agathon is much more easily identified with a single comedy (especially in a time when most comedies were lost) than Euripides, who appears often in Aristophanes. Note that it is not of importance to my study whether the scholiast was correct after all. It is possible, for instance, as Ioannis Konstantakos suggested to me, that Aristophanes in *Wasps* 61 was referring to the *Proagon*, which could have been staged one or two days before the *Wasps* under the name of Philonides (the first attested instance where a poet contested with two plays in the same festival belongs to the third century, see Konstantakos 2000: 183 n.53). What is interesting here is to consider whether the scholiast actually based his interpretation on knowledge of the plot and date of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*.

anonymous *Vita* [hereafter simply *Vita*]). So they went to find him, all of them together, in the place where he happened to be spending his time (Satyrus). In the end, they let him live (according to both sources) *πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τὰς Μούσας*, ‘first of all because of the Muses’ (*Vita*), *[αἰδ]εσθεῖσαι [τὰς] Μούσας*, ‘out of respect for the Muses’ (Satyrus), and secondly because he promised not to speak ill of them again (*Vita*).

This story has been regarded with certainty as stemming from the plot of a comedy, and indeed from the extant *Thesmophoriazusae*. It does, however, involve so many inconsistencies with the latter that Butrica proposed that in fact it should refer to the lost version of this play.⁴³ To be sure, this thesis is highly speculative, but it is the best one that we possess. Austin and Olson rejected it, claiming:

One significant objection to Butrica’s thesis is that the tale as presented in *Life of Euripides* 6 lacks the odd elements in Satyrus’ version and instead conforms neatly to the plot of the preserved *Thesmophoriazusae*, suggesting that Satyrus’ additional details have come from some other source and been worked into the Aristophanic narrative framework.⁴⁴

I believe, however, that their criticism is exaggerated. According to the *Vita*, the women (a) decided to murder Euripides and (b) then changed their mind and spared him ‘because of the Muses’. In the extant *Thesmophoriazusae* the elimination of the tragedian is a rumor that Euripides has heard (81-4) and a proposal bereft of response in the women’s council (428-31), but no one really threatens or spares him. And, most of all, the peculiar reference to the Muses cannot be explained through the extant play either—a reference that proves that the *Vita* and Satyrus have a common source, or that the *Vita* copied this information from Satyrus, who is the oldest source.⁴⁵ The only striking element that the *Vita* lacks but that is to be found in Satyrus is that the women moved in order to find Euripides. But this is not enough to allow us to say that ‘the tale as presented in *Life of Euripides* 6 ... conforms neatly to the plot of the preserved *Thesmophoriazusae*’. Furthermore, this objection is not significant in any case, because, even if we were to disregard *Vita* 6 as a secondary or an irrelevant source, we still have the account of Satyrus, who, as Austin and Olson say, had ‘some other source’ for the details in question; there is no reason why this source should not be, again, Aristophanes. These ancient biographies do, therefore, contain pieces of information that do not conform to the plot of the extant *Thesmophoriazusae*, and others that obviously do. Schorn rules out the scenario that the plot of the two homonymous comedies has been merged here and regards the reference to the Muses as a later development.⁴⁶ However, it still is an odd expression, and I would propose not ruling out any possibility yet.

⁴³ Butrica 2001: 64-5.

⁴⁴ Austin and Olson 2004a: 11.

⁴⁵ Lefkowitz 1981: 102-3 estimates that ‘the basic format of the *Vita* could have been set as early as the second century B.C.’ Schorn 2004: 294 holds that *Vita* 6 is dependent on Satyrus.

⁴⁶ 2004: 294.

In sum, there exists a coincidence of evidence that allows us to consider the possibility that Euripides was presented on stage in the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*, the plot of which bore some general similarities to the extant play. Apart from that, Butrica, as Kuiper a long time before him, holds that the attack of the women against Euripides in this play took place in the poet's cave in Salamis.⁴⁷ In Satyrus we read that the women found him 'in the place where he happened to be spending his time' (ἐπὶ τὸν [τό]πον ἐν ᾧ [σχολάζων [ἐ]τύχαιεν). Butrica combines this with the piece of information from another part of the anonymous *Vita* (5.11-12 Schwartz), namely that 'the women wished to kill him and entered the cave where he was writing'. The cave of *Vita* 5 must be the cave in Salamis, where Euripides was said to retire in order to compose, but it is unlikely that the attack of the women in the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* took place there. The tradition that Euripides used to work in a cave there not only is nowhere else to be encountered in Aristophanes, but must constitute an anecdote of a later time—it is mentioned by Satyrus (*POxy* ix 1176 fr. 39 col. ix) and, as far as we can trace it back in time, it seems to have originated with Philochorus.⁴⁸ To be sure, we cannot dismiss the possibility that it resulted from a depiction of Euripides in Old Comedy, but we should bear in mind that it is not attested by so early sources.⁴⁹ In any case, that it should have been part of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* is improbable, because, even if we accept that the narration of Satyrus and *Vita* 6 are indebted to this play, it is hard to understand why none of these sources mentions the cave in conjunction with it, even more so Satyrus, who knew of the cave but chooses to say that the women attacked the poet 'in the place where he happened to be passing his time'.⁵⁰ The very use of the phrase *skholazōn etugkhanen* denotes anything but Euripides working in the place where he systematically does. It is more likely that in *Vita* 5 the cave-anecdote merges with that of the women attacking Euripides.

After this discussion of recent scholarship, let us venture to reconstruct some elements of the plot on the basis of what the actual fragments of the play have to offer. And since up to here the focus has been on Euripides, let us see whether the fragments contain elements that may betray his presence. It has already been mentioned that fr. 342 is a parody of the *Antiope*, but that does not reveal much about the physiognomy of the play. Something of a Euripidean nature may be traced in fr. 331, which consists in a testimony: the first person made to speak in the lost play (*prologizousan epoiēsen*) was Kalligeneia. She was the goddess to whom the third and final day of the Thesmophoria was devoted. The expression

⁴⁷ Butrica 2001: 64-5.

⁴⁸ *FGrH* 328 F 219; see Arrighetti *ad* Satyrus 39 ix. In 1997 the discovery of 'Euripides' cave' in Salamis was announced. An ostrakon that was found inside it, bearing the name of the tragedian, dates to 430-420 BCE, but the inscription itself is of Hellenistic or Roman times, see Lolos 1997; it can therefore prove no more than that cave was a site of some sort, perhaps a pole of attraction for tourists, or even a site of worship.

⁴⁹ Lefkowitz 1979: 196 supposes that the biographers thought that Euripides must have lived near the sea because of the sea-imagery he uses and also that he lived in isolation because of his treatment in comedy, and therefore came up with the cave-idea; she does not consider whether the entire idea itself was already presented in comedy.

⁵⁰ See Schorn 2004: 294.

prologizousan epoiēsen may be somewhat general: it does not necessarily imply that Kalligeneia delivered an entire prologue-speech; it might simply mean that she appeared in the first scene of the play and was the first to speak.⁵¹ Nevertheless, if she did deliver a prologue-speech, that would probably constitute, as Kaibel had pointed out, a parody of Euripidean dramatic technique.⁵²

Fragment 332 consists of a dialogue, in the context of which a male speaker is enumerating female accessories in a sarcastic manner. At the end of his long list, he sums up with the words ἄλλα <πολλά> θ' ὧν / οὐδ' ἂν λέγων λέξαις. The expression, 'which, even if you mentioned, you would not be able to mention them' sounds peculiar and we encounter it just once more, in Eubulus (fr. 37 K-A); the paradox it conveys recalls the Aristophanic Euripides.⁵³ This, however, does not suffice in order to argue that Euripides is the speaker in this fragment.

Finally, we are lucky enough to possess three whole lines from an epirrheme of the parabasis (according to Hephaestion, they were to be found ἐν μέσοις τοῖς τετραμέτροις):

μήτε Μούσας ἀνακαλεῖν ἐλικοβοστράχους
μήτε Χάριτας βοᾶν ἐς χορὸν Ὀλυμπίας·
ἐνθάδε γὰρ εἰσιν, ὧς φησιν ὁ διδάσκαλος (Ar. fr. 348 K-A)

Neither summon the curly-haired Muses
nor call the Olympian Graces to the dance;
for they are here, as our poet says

The Chorus claims that there is no reason to proceed to the usual invocation of the Muses or Graces; the reason is that their *didaskalos* says that they are already here. These three lines can certainly be understood as a praise of Aristophanes' poetry.⁵⁴ He claims that his work is so excellent that the Muses and the Graces themselves are present at his performances. This is an original way of praising oneself, by rejecting the need for the traditional invocation.⁵⁵ Could it be, though, that what followed in the play had a surprise in store, lending a second meaning to the words of the Chorus? For they do not say, for instance, that the Muses or the Graces 'are listening to the songs' or are 'watching the play already'. They say that the *didaskalos* claims that they are *enthade*, in this place. The mention of the *didaskalos* in itself brings a shift of focus to the theatrical event, and so *enthade* may be understood as referring to the theatre in the literal, material sense.⁵⁶ Let us

⁵¹ Butrica 2001: 73-4.

⁵² See K-A *ad loc.* Aristophanes shows awareness of this technique of Euripides in the epirrheme of the *Frogs*: he presents the poet himself bragging that his plays always commenced with an informative prologue (945-7 with Dover *ad loc.*).

⁵³ Examples of paradoxical expressions used by both the Aristophanic and the real Euripides abound, see Olson *ad Ach.* 396.

⁵⁴ '[U]n' altrettanto orgogliosa affermazione di originalità poetica', Imperio 2004: 49.

⁵⁵ Imperio 2004: 94; on the *topos* of invocation of the Muses or other deities in the parabases of Aristophanes see *ibid.* 93-9; on the form see Willi 2003: 16-17.

⁵⁶ According to Willi 2003: 17 n.38 the word *deuro* is normally used in the invocations of the extant comedies, except for rare occasions as the *enthade* in *Thesm.* 1159. According to LSJ⁹ s.vv., *deuro* was still used in Aristophanes' time as 'hither', whereas *enthade* meant 'here', which explains why we have it in this case, since no motion is involved, but the Muses have already come. However, that does not explain why we have it in *Thesm.* 1159. The reason may be that

remember the obscure reference in both the afore-mentioned *Vitae* to the Muses that saved Euripides' life:

ἐφείσαντο δὲ αὐτοῦ πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τὰς Μούσας (Anonymi *Vita*)

They spared him, first because of the Muses

ἐφε[ίσαν]το τὰν[δρὸς] ἅμα μὲν [αἰδ]εσθεῖσαι [τὰς] Μούσας (Satyrus)

They spared the man, as they felt respect for the Muses

The reference of the *Vitae*, as already said, seems to stem from a comedy, where the Muses mediated for the rescue of Euripides. This would perhaps involve a parody of the introduction of a deity *ex machina*, which the tragedian was fond of.⁵⁷ It is then tempting to think that this play was the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* for this reason as well: fr. 348 would be a metatheatrical joke for the spectators, who were about to discover that the Muses were there indeed.⁵⁸

In all, we do have a few indications at our disposal which may relate Euripides to this play, but none compelling. They do allow us, in any case, to leave the door open. Apart from this, I believe that we stand a better chance than up to now admitted in order to proceed a little further with reconstructing other elements of the plot. We know that the play was set during the Thesmophoria. This festival, reserved exclusively for married citizen-women, had a duration of three days and two nights. The women camped and remained on the site of the celebrations throughout. This site was in any city to be found on an elevated area; its location is debated with respect to Athens, and the Eleusinion, on the northern slope of the Acropolis, as well as the slope of the Pnyx have been proposed.⁵⁹ What matters for our purpose is that for those three days men and women were

enthade also stresses the presence of the party invoked, as the expression in *Thesm.* 1159, *enthad' hēmin* shows ('here with us')—*enthade* has naturally a more concrete meaning than *deuro*, since it refers to a place and not a direction towards a place. Perhaps this helps in our case as well, but I would not favor putting too much stress on this linguistic choice.

⁵⁷ See Butrica 2001: 69-70. When referring to the *deus ex machina*, we should take into account that this standard phrase is misleading, as the use of a crane is not mandatory; what is fundamental to it is the use of the roof of the skene-building, which separated the *deus* or *deus*-like figure from the rest of the actors on the orchestra, and would be reached by means other than the crane as well; see Mastronarde 1990: 259-62 (on means of reaching the roof), 278-9 (summing up on the means of reaching the roof and the prevalence of the crane). In this case, it is impossible to picture the crane bringing in all nine Muses (we only know for sure that the crane was used for transferring up to two persons, *ibid.* 270). Since it would also be impossible to have all of them speak, we could imagine that the one speaking Muse would be brought in by crane. At the same time, more mute Muses could appear, not necessarily all on the roof (we have, however, a case of a very crowded roof in the *Prometheus*, but usually there are not more than three people to be found there simultaneously, see *ibid.* 266-8), but the one speaking Muse may also have sufficed in representing the rest.

⁵⁸ Butrica 2001: 70 and Schorn 2004: 294 reject this scenario, because they hold that interpreting the fragment as a praise of Aristophanes' poetry excludes a reference to the Muses as goddesses *ex machina*. I do not see, however, why we should have to choose between these two functions: they may both be at play in this passage.

⁵⁹ See Simon 1983: 18, with n.5 for a discussion on the two proposals.

spatially separated, in a way forming two opposing camps, which obviously offers a great opportunity for comic exploitation.⁶⁰

As previously said, the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* took place on the third day of the festival, which bore the name of Kalligeneia; this is indicated by the testimony according to which this goddess was the first person to speak in the play. There is, however, also a second indication; Demetrius of Troezen, the scholiast and renowned wit, called the play *Thesmophoriasasae*, viz. 'women who are over celebrating the Thesmophoria', possibly implying that the celebrations are over when the action starts, or that they reach their end during the course of the play.⁶¹ This should alert us to the possibility that, unlike the extant play where Aristophanes exploits the circumstances offered by the festival itself, in the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* the comic idea may have involved not only the separation between men and women, but also the return of the women to civic life thereafter.

As to the separation, this idea gains plausibility from quite a few fragments suggesting a theme of separation between men and women, which recalls the plot of *Lysistrata*.⁶² Fr. 332, the dialogical piece already mentioned, is preserved for us by Clement of Alexandria. Let us read his text:

πάνυ γοῦν ἐπιπόγως πάντα τὸν γυναικεῖον καταλεγόμενος κόσμον
Ἀριστοφάνης ἐν Θεσμοφοριαζούσαις ὑποδείκνυσιν ...: μίτρας—ἑλικτήρας.
ἐγὼ μὲν ἔκαμον καὶ λέγων τὸ πλῆθος τῶν κοσμίων, τὰς δὲ καὶ θαυμάζειν
ἔπεισί μοι, ὡς ἄρα οὐκ ἀποκναίονται τοσοῦτον ἄχθος βαστάζουσαι.

(Clem. Al. *Paed.* II 124.1 [cod. P])

So, Aristophanes in the *Thesmophoriazusae* blamefully enumerates and presents the female accessories ...; *mitras*—*heliktēras*. I, for one thing, got tired even enumerating the number of accessories, and it surprises me how they do not wear themselves out when carrying such weight.

Right after citing Aristophanes' passage Clement closes with the words 'I ... weight', which for a long time now scholars have assumed to be the ensuing lines of the fragment converted into prose.⁶³ Indeed, it does not look plausible that Clement himself should speak about women who carry all those things together, since under normal circumstances this does not happen. On the contrary, this sentence makes sense if uttered by a man who has seen the women, carrying all their means of beautification, when they were walking up towards the place where the Thesmophoria would be held. Let us keep in mind that this is the same person who utters the Euripidean phrase ὦν οὐδ' ἄν λέγων λέξαις.

⁶⁰ On the festival of the Thesmophoria see Deubner 1932: 50-60; Simon 1983: 18-22; Dillon 2002: 110-20; Austin and Olson 2004b: xlv-li. I have limited my account here to the more or less undisputed evidence. Dillon 2002: 119, whose approach often challenges common beliefs on the festival, questions the assumption that women participated *en masse* in the city Thesmophoria, arguing, however, that the local celebrations would allow more women to take part on a deme-level.

⁶¹ See K-A Θεσμοφοριαζούσαι β' test. ii; Austin and Olson 2004a: 10.

⁶² 'Indeed, the obvious parallel to what little we can recover of the action would seem to be instead the connubial strike in *Lysistrata*', state Austin and Olson 2004a: 11, without pursuing this idea further.

⁶³ Without, however, succeeding in reconstructing the original text, see K-A *ad loc.*

So, in this fragment a male is presented talking to (an)other male(s) in a disparaging tone about women, and in all probability this occurs in the women's absence. While they are celebrating the Thesmophoria, therefore, something is happening in the city, some men are speaking ill of them behind their backs. Taking this interpretation to a hypothetical extreme, which, however, can be supported from what we are to see in other fragments, these lines may be part of a speech conveying the idea that men are better off without women.⁶⁴ Moving on to fr. 337, we notice that this also seems to belong to the side of the men, as, again, someone is reporting what he saw of the women:

ὅσ' ἦν περίεργ' ἀνταῖσι τῶν φορημάτων
ὅσοις τε περιπέττουσιν αὐτάς προσθέτοις (Ar. fr. 337 K-A)

However many curious items of clothing they had,
and with however many ornaments they wrap themselves about⁶⁵

The speaker saw women dressed in bizarre garments and ornaments, and we should suppose that he is speaking to other men, if *autaisi* and *hautas* denote the separation that has taken place between men and women. Now, in fr. 334 the sexual element is clearly emerging:

οἶνον δὲ πίνειν οὐκ ἐάσω Πράμνιον,
οὐ Χῖον, οὐχὶ Θάσιον, οὐ Πεπαρήθιον,
οὐδ' ἄλλον ὅστις ἐπεγερεῖ τὸν ἔμβολον (Ar. fr. 334 K-A)

I will not allow the drinking of Pramnian wine,
nor Chian, nor Thasian, nor Peparethian,
nor any other that will arouse the ship's-ram

The objective of this prohibition of wine-drinking is the prevention of male erection. Indeed, these lines recall the diction of an oath, like the one in *Lysistrata*.⁶⁶ The content is also reminiscent of the *Lysistrata*, only inverted: in the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* erection must not occur, whereas in *Lysistrata* women need their men to be aroused in order to force them to accept a peace-treaty. Who is taking the oath here, the men or the women? The answer is probably, again, the

⁶⁴ According to Henderson 1975: 139, the phrases *olethron ton bathun* (fr. 332, 3) and *barathron* (*ibid.* 8) refer to the female genitalia; if this is so, they may be depicting them as a threat or menace. However, this reading is far from certain. In performance, the actor would be able to make a gesture in order to render such a meaning, but this is only one option. As Frietzsche had proposed (see K-A *ad loc.*) *barathron* could be a *para prosdokian* for *bathron*, a kind of shoe. *Olethron ton bathun* seems a more plausible candidate for a sexual meaning, as it does not seem to refer to anything else—it can hardly qualify the word before it, *eghousan*, which was a plant used as rouge (see Henderson *ad Lys.* 48), as the *bathun* does not seem to make sense that way. In all, without stage-directions there is not much we can do to interpret these particular phrases with precision.

⁶⁵ Translations for the fragments of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* hereafter belong to Austin and Olson 2004a with minor changes.

⁶⁶ These lines and the oath in *Lysistrata* 212-36 have a similar first couple of lines (*ouk+hostis+future indicative*): οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς οὔτε μοιχὸς οὔτ' ἀνὴρ / ὅστις πρὸς ἐμὲ πρόσεισιν ἐστυκῶς (this is the most elaborate example of oath in extant Aristophanes, see Dillon 1995: 137). The future indicative is, of course, anything but surprising, as this oath refers to the future, but the other similarities are striking; they are not, for instance, to be encountered in the parallels adduced by Henderson *ad loc.*

opposite of what happens in *Lysistrata*, for it is more plausible that, since erection is to be avoided, the men are the ones who do not want to drink, in order to avoid being tempted to sleep with their wives.⁶⁷ This fits the disparagement of women in fr. 332. Frr. 338 and 344 are also of sexual interest:

τὴν πτέρυγα παραλύσσασα τοῦ χιτωνίου
καὶ τῶν ἀποδέσμων οἷς ἐνήν τιτθίδια (Ar. fr. 338 K-A)

After she took off the covering of her inner robe
and of the breastbands her titties were in

ἀναβῆναι τὴν γυναιῖκα βούλομαι (Ar. fr. 344 K-A)

I want to mount my wife

Fr. 338 comes from yet another narration. Since the speaker sounds really interested in the fact that a woman revealed her *titthidia*, it is as good as certain that he is a man. As to fr. 344, the meaning is as clear as it could be; adding up the two we may infer that at this point patience on the men's side is wearing thin and the repression of sexual desire is turning out to be a hard task. Their initial plan does not seem to work.

Up to this point, it is impressive how many fragments are to be attributed to male speakers in a play with a female title and chorus. Indeed, the plot of this play may not have been dominated by female presence in the way the *Lysistrata*, the *Thesmophoriazusae* or the *Ecclesiazusae* are. Only in fr. 333 is it safe to say that we hear a female voice:

(A.) ἰχθὺς ἐώνηταί τις, ἢ σηπίδιον
ἢ τῶν πλατειῶν καρίδων ἢ πουλύπους,
ἢ νῆστις ὀπιᾶτ' ἢ γαλεὸς ἢ τευθίδες;
(B.) μὰ τὸν Δί', οὐ δῆτ'. (A.) οὐδὲ βατίς; (B.) οὐ φημ' ἐγώ.
(A.) οὐδὲ χόρι' οὐδὲ πυὸς οὐδ' ἦπαρ κάπρου
οὐδὲ σχαδόνας οὐδ' ἡτριαῖον δέλφακος
οὐδ' ἐγγέλειον οὐδὲ κάραβος; μέγα
γυναιξὶ κοπιώσαισιν ἐπεκουρήσατε (Ar. fr. 333 K-A)

[A.] Has any fish been bought, or a little cuttlefish
or some broad prawns or an octopus?

Or has a grey mullet been roasted or a dogfish or some squid?

[B.] Certainly not, by Zeus. [A.] No skate? [B.] Absolutely not.

[A.] No haggis or beestings or boar's liver
or honeycomb or pork belly
or eel or langouste? This is a great aid
you've lent to wearied women!

A woman, speaking on behalf of some 'wearied women', asks whether food has been bought and is being prepared.⁶⁸ A different person, speaking again on behalf of many (since the woman addresses him or her in second person plural) answers negatively. We may surmise that the woman speaks on behalf of the women that took part in the Thesmophoria: these women would of course be wearied after the

⁶⁷ So Austin and Olson 2004a: 11 n.17.

⁶⁸ On the culinary vocabulary of the fragment see Pellegrino 2000: 160-72.

festivities, which included dancing.⁶⁹ As to their hunger, this is explicable for another reason as well, namely that the second day of the festival was *Fasting*.⁷⁰ On the third day women were allowed to eat again, but we do not know if and what they sacrificed, nor what and when they finally ate.⁷¹ One thing is for certain, that during the third day they had to fulfill this need somehow. In this case, it seems that the women, after having celebrated, encounter another group of people, with the expectation that the latter have made the necessary arrangements so as to provide them with food. Their expectation is not, however, met, which suggests that at this point the expected sequence of events is disrupted, and this may be related to the comic idea of the play. We may now combine the fact that women are the 'victims' here with the above observations on male presence and male initiative in order to pinpoint the difference between the plot of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* and the plot of the three extant, and later, female plays of Aristophanes: while acknowledging that no argument may be conclusive in such context, nevertheless, as far as we can extract evidence from the fragments, men and not women seem to be the agents of the comic idea, the instigators of comic action in this play. It should, therefore, at least not be taken as granted that the title of this play proves that it should be grouped with its extant namesake, the *Lysistrata* and the *Ecclesiazusae*.

That the food has not even been bought may be related to a problem in the funding of the Thesmophoria. This was determined, of course, by men: it seems that the state had to cover some expenses, whereas on one possibly early fourth-century occasion it is attested that they were covered through a liturgy.⁷² If, therefore, men wanted to, they could (at least in comedy) impose a tighter budget on the festival, leaving the hungry and exhausted women unexpectedly without food on the day of *Kalligeneia*, and this would fit the decision to disrupt their relations with their wives, which we have seen as possibly emerging from previous fragments.

Fr. 347 stems from the trochaic tetrameters of the parabasis and does not appear at first glance to relate to the plot:

ἦ μέγα τι βρωῶμ' ἴῆστί ἡ† τρυγωδοποιομουσική,
 ἡνίκα Κράτης τό τε τάριχος ἐλεφάντινον
 λαμπρὸν ἐνόμιζεν ἀπόνως παρακεκλημένον
 ἄλλα τε τοιαῦθ' ἕτερα μὲν ἐκιχλίζετο (Ar. fr. 347 K-A)

Certainly a great bit of food †is the† production of comic poetry,
 when Crates considered his 'white as ivory' saltfish

⁶⁹ Bergk's suggestion, see K-A *ad loc.*

⁷⁰ On this Dillon 2002: 113.

⁷¹ Evidence is collected and presented in Dillon 2002: 15-16. As to the point of interest here, how the women used to fend for their diet on the third day, our evidence reveals next to nothing.

⁷² This comes from a speech by Isaeus and pertains to the deme-level (3.80, ἡναγκάζετο ἂν ... καὶ Θεσμοφῶρια ἐστῆσαν τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ τὰλλα ὅσα προσήκε λητουργεῖν ἐν τῷ δήμῳ); see Dillon 2002: 117. The speech is dated around 389 BCE on the basis of a statistical analysis of rhythm by Wevers 1969: 16, but further evidence in order to test this is, unfortunately, lacking (*ibid.* 21).

shining, and summoned with no effort,
and made countless other such jokes, as well.

The Chorus recalls Crates and, somewhat teasingly, somewhat in sympathy, refers to his attempts to raise laughs by means of easy nonsensical jokes like *tarikhos elephantinon*.⁷³ This reference is akin to the one in the *Knights*, where again culinary-related vocabulary is employed.⁷⁴ Here, however, we do not have a full-scale cooking-simile, but just the phrase that 'comic poetry is a great bit of food'. If we consider the fact that during the epirrhematic *syzygy* the Chorus speaks in character and makes use of elements of the plot,⁷⁵ the women's hunger may indeed have played a central role in the plot of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*. In any case, if they start off hungry in the play, after fasting on the previous day, it is not likely that they have managed to find food before the parabasis. Hence, during the epirrheme or antepirrheme they exercise literary criticism in terms that befit their identity as starving women.

As far as the question of funding is concerned, we have fr. 343 at our disposal: σακίον, ἐν οἷσπερ τάργυριον ταμιεύεται ('a little bag, (of the type) in which our money is being kept'). The plural *hoisper* shows that more similar items preceded the *sakion*. It is telling that we have word of money deposited: this fits in with our supposition about the money that was to be used for the Thesmophoria. We furthermore know that in the same play the proverb λύκος ἔχωνεν ('the wolf was left with his jaws open', fr. 350) was uttered, which refers to someone hoping to make profit from something without succeeding. The possibility, therefore, should be considered that, along with the theme of the breach in the relations between men and women, another theme was the disruption of funding for the Thesmophoria, perhaps involving embezzlement as well.

Finally, of interest to the plot is certainly fr. 335:

ἀγαθὰ μέγала τῆ πόλει
ἦκειν φέροντάς φασι τοὺς πυλαγόρους
ἐκ τῆς Πυλαίας καὶ τὸν ἱερομνήμονα (Ar. fr. 335 K-A)

They say that the ambassadors to the Amphictyonic council
have come bearing great blessings for the city
from Pylaia, and the *hieromnēmōn* as well

The speaker is announcing a rumor (*phasi*), that the *pulagoroi* and the *hieromnēmōn*, who have returned from the Amphictyonic council, brought with them great *agatha* for the city.⁷⁶ There is no indication as to the part of the

⁷³ It seems to me that Bonanno 1972: 41 sees Aristophanes' remarks on Crates in the lost *Thesmophoriazusae* as more severe than they are; in terms of how Aristophanes used to exercise personal invective, Crates still enjoys, as in the *Knights* (see Bonanno 1972: 40), rather well-meant satire. Crates, had not, after all, been his rival, see Heath 1990: 143-4.

⁷⁴ *Eq.* 537-40, a reference possibly to the simplicity of his art (and not the low cost of staging for his performances); see Imperio *ad loc.*

⁷⁵ Hubbard 1991: 30.

⁷⁶ It was possible for the regular autumn Amphictyonic council to end in the month *Pyaneption*, during which the Thesmophoria was being held. Aristophanes' information is, as one would have expected, accurate; Athens was indeed represented by *pulagoroi* and one *hieromnēmōn* (on the Amphictyonic council see Yunis 2001: 191).

comedy which this fragment belonged to, but Austin and Olson mention the hypothesis that an introduction of new characters bringing in new elements might be relevant to the *lusis* of the play.⁷⁷ The *agatha* might even be of a financial nature, thus relating to the financial element of the plot, but the most important piece of information this fragment provides us with is the political dimension of the lost *Thesmophoriazusae*. It has already been shown that a discrepancy between the men and women of Athens was part of the plot, and the fact that at some point the action was affected by new developments in the relations of Athens to other cities enhances the impression that the plot of this play concerned the city of Athens in its entirety. If, however, we would like to stress the scenario of the 'inverted *Lysistrata*-plot', we could situate this fragment near the beginning of the play, when men swear not to have sex with their wives; the ambassadors would then be able to bring news of a panhellenic male alliance.

If we try to combine the above elements, the result would probably sound like this: certain men turn against women, who are absent due to the Thesmophoria, and manage to cut off the funding for the festivities; they go on to take an oath of sexual abstinence. In this hypothetical pattern, which reveals a different play from the extant *Thesmophoriazusae*, Euripides would indeed be able to find a place: the misogynist Aristophanic Euripides is a well-suited candidate for the part of the instigator of this anomaly in Athens.⁷⁸ In fact, he could be the person speaking in fr. 332, persuading men, or a certain person who would play a key-role, to put their foot down against women. In that case, the play could indeed end according to the story related by the ancient biographies of Euripides, i.e. with the women intending to kill him for accusing them (not just in his plays, but in 'real life' [i.e. inside this comedy] as well) and the Muses ironically appearing *ex machina* and saving him.

It goes without saying that all this is extremely hypothetical; when dealing with fragmentary plays it is hard to prove a single point to begin with, let alone persuading that all proposals work together and are mutually corroborative, and any of those fragments may have belonged to a context which we would never guess.⁷⁹ In the case of the main speaker of fr. 332, it would be thrilling to find more linguistic indications pointing at Euripides, but the truth is that evidence is very limited. Apart from that, there is one more problem in the combination of the extant fragments with the *Vitae*: according to both, women were provoked against Euripides because of what he said in his plays, not because he inspired men to boycott them. Conversely, this sexual boycott, if it was instigated by Euripides, did not leave traces in the *Vitae*. These points could perhaps be explained: the former element could have been drawn from the extant *Thesmophoriazusae*, so that the plots of the two homonymous plays have been merged here, as mentioned above; or it could have co-existed with the other elements in the lost play. The latter may have left no trace because an influential Euripides—who is known to us

⁷⁷ 2004a: 11.

⁷⁸ On the comic depiction of Euripides as a misogynist see Schorn 2004: 285-6 (n.608 for bibliography).

⁷⁹ Cf. Kenneth Dover's witty 'Fragments' (2000) on the potential and limitations of this kind of research.

from the *Frogs* at least—contradicts the misanthrope-depiction of the *Vitae*. But it is now plain to see that we have pushed our hypotheses to the limit, and may better conclude our efforts. To sum up, if we are to choose which of the proposed aspects of the plot recommends itself as the most probable, this would be the ‘inverted *Lysistrata*’ theme, because it is suggested by the fragments themselves. At the same time, however, it should be noted that, as the women in *Lysistrata*, so do men need a person to lead them in order to abstain from their spouses, and Euripides would in any case be an obvious candidate for this part.

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