

## ARISTOPHANES AND EURIPIDES, ONCE AGAIN: FROM *HIPPOLYTUS* 345 TO *KNIGHTS* 16-18\*

Αριστοφάνης ὁ κωμωδιοποιός... ἐκωμωδεῖτο δ' ἐπὶ τῷ σκώπτειν μὲν Εὐριπίδην, μιμεῖσθαι δ' αὐτόν. Κρατῖνος· «Τίς δὲ σύ; Κομψός τις ἔροιο θεατῆς. ὑπολεπτολόγος, γνωμιδιώκτης, εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων».

(*Schol. Areth. (B) Plat. Apol. 19c* (= 15 B1 Cufalo); *Ar. Test. 3 K.-A.*)

“Aristophanes, the comic playwright... was ridiculed for mocking Euripides and yet imitating him. Cratinus (said): «Who are you? Some clever spectator may ask. A man who cavils about subtle words, a chaser of little saying, an *Euripidaristophanizing*»<sup>1</sup>.

1. Preface: Aristophanes' long-standing aversion to Euripides and the aim of this paper.

Aristophanes' particular interest in Euripides is a widely investigated and well-documented topic<sup>2</sup>. The *quasi*-obsessive engagement of the comic playwright with Euripides' production seems to comply with a specific poetic agenda as it is indirectly, and yet pointedly, declared in the *propositio thematis* of the comedy *Wasps*. At lines 54-63 one of the slaves who deliver the prologue announces his intention to tell the audience what the comedy is all about. By way of a *praeteritio* he actually tells what the comedy is not about, thus listing a series of items which the audience should not expect to see on this occasion<sup>3</sup>. They are items that, indeed, epitomize the 'usual' themes of Aristophanes' comedies, i.e., the usual targets of his comic abuse, which, in turn, constitute the common substratum of the plots of his plays.

\* I would like to express my gratitude for prof. Craig Kallendorf (A&T Texas University, College Station, TX - USA) for his helpful suggestions, which contribute to improving my script. Many thanks are also due to prof. Enrico Magnelli (University of Florence, Italy) for his useful feedback on this essay.

<sup>1</sup> The italics is mine. Unless differently stated in the footnotes, all translations are mine. The one given above is mine as well, based on Kovacs 1994, 113; Luppe 2000, 19; Olson 2007, 429. For more details about the *hapax legomenon* εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων, and its interpretation, see below, pp. 74 and 90-92.

<sup>2</sup> The bibliography is very vast. Well aware that any short list does not do justice to all the works that are worthy of being mentioned, as *exempli gratia* let me refer both to some 'pioneers', e.g., Mitsdoerffer 1943; Wycherley 1946; Prato 1955; Harriot 1962; Rau 1967 – many of these works focus on the parody technique targeting Euripides –, and to some of their 'successors', such as: Tschiedel 1984; Clair 1998; Schwinge 2002. For a comprehensive re-examination of the relationship between the comic and the tragic playwright, more recently see Lauriola 2010, 115-132.

<sup>3</sup> About the occurrence of the *praeteritio* in Aristophanes' plays as a device that the poet employs to convey specific messages in terms of literary criticism, see Lauriola 2012, esp. 69-72 with reference to the passage of *Wasps* mentioned above.

Among them Euripides is significantly mentioned as the one whom the audience must not expect to see “being abused once again” (l. 61). As a matter of fact, at such an early date as in the year of his third comedy, *Acharnians* (425 BC)<sup>4</sup>, Aristophanes was already mocking Euripides by parodying him through expressions, characters, themes, and entire scenes as he ‘plundered’ them from his tragedies<sup>5</sup>. Notoriously the first half of *Acharnians* almost entirely relies on the author’s subtle parody both of Euripides himself – who is represented through a set of features that reflect the characteristics of his tragedies – and of one particular tragedy, i.e., *Telephus*, which fits the comic plot well<sup>6</sup>. To a lesser, but not less significant, degree mockeries of Euripides are to be found in *Knights* and *Clouds*, i.e., in the other two comedies that were produced before *Wasps*<sup>7</sup>. And undoubtedly mockeries of Euripides as a basis for his comedies occur throughout Aristophanes’ whole production after *Wasps* as well. Suffice it to mention *Women at the Thesmophoria* (411 BC) and *Frogs* (405 BC). As for the latter, even *post mortem* – we may say – Euripides is singled out and made the target of ridicule in the domain of literary production, exactly as Cleon is – even *post mortem* – in that of politics.

All the time Aristophanes sniped at what he found provocative in Euripides’ tragedies in terms both of subjects and style. To Aristophanes’ eyes Euripides dared to challenge established socio-political and poetic conventions by building the plots of his tragedies around questionable themes and characters depicted in a shockingly new way. “Profane marriages” (*Frogs* 850), “whores like Phaedra and Stheneboea” (*Frogs* 1043-1044),

<sup>4</sup> So far as we can ascertain, before the *Acharnians* Aristophanes wrote two comedies, which are lost, with the title *Banqueters* (ca. 427 BC) and *Babylonians* (426 BC, cf. *Ach.* 377-378).

<sup>5</sup> Regarding this ‘practice of plundering’, see, e.g., *Acharnians* 430-478, where Dicaeopolis’ insistent request for several and varied items characterizing Euripides’ tragedies, to complete his disguise as an Euripidean character, is emblematic. Like the author (Aristophanes) so his character, who happens to overtly personify Aristophanes more than elsewhere (i.e., Dicaeopolis), is taking over and adopting Euripides’ theatrical ‘stuff’ to put on stage ‘something Euripidean’. The scene can be considered as a small-scale representation of what Aristophanes does with Euripides’ plays within his comedies.

<sup>6</sup> See Rau 1967, 19-50; Slater 1993, 410-415; Foley 1988, 34-38; Lauriola 2010, 181-193.

<sup>7</sup> As for *Knights* I am referring to ll. 14-20, of which in particular ll. 16-18 will be the object of the present discussion. As for *Clouds*, see ll. 1361-1378 with a parodic allusion to Euripides’ *Aeolus* focusing on one of Euripides’ ‘favorite’ themes, which Aristophanes insistently reproached, i.e., the incestuous relationship. I should also mention a lost comedy performed immediately before *Wasps* and including comic abuses of Euripides. It is the comedy *Proagon*, which was likely performed at the City Dionysia festivals in 422 BC. Judging by the few surviving fragments, it seems that it staged a parody of the grim banquet of Thyestes, from the lost tragedy of Euripides by the same name: see Mastromarco 1983, 55-57.

“procuresses, women giving birth in temples, women sleeping with their brothers” (*Frogs* 1071-1081)<sup>8</sup>, heroes turned into cripples and beggars (*Frogs* 842-843)<sup>9</sup>, these are all the typical components of Euripides’ world and, as such, they all embody Aristophanes’ ridiculing charges at the expense of the tragic poet. According to these charges, not only were Euripides’ tragic characters deprived of dignity, with their ripped clothes and presumable misconduct being a metaphor for their downgraded nature and actions<sup>10</sup>, but, what is more, they were ‘filled with quibbles’<sup>11</sup>, ‘subtlety’, ‘refined, squared-off words’, ‘prattling’, and ‘chopping logic’<sup>12</sup>. In other words, they were molded into rhetorically well-versed persons in the likeness of the ‘avant-garde’ intellectuals of the time, i.e., the Sophists<sup>13</sup>. Aristophanes’

<sup>8</sup> Questionable erotic relationships are among the features that, to Aristophanes’ eyes, epitomize the decaying theater of Euripides. Adulterous or incestuous love, i.e., ‘impious’ relationships, were often staged in Euripides’ plays. If Phaedra and Stheneboea symbolized adultery, Canace and Macareus, a brother and sister in love, symbolized incest. Reference to this incestuous relationship is also in *Clouds* 1371-1374 (on which see, above, n. 7). As for Phaedra and Stheneboea, see below, pp. 75-79. As for the ‘procuresses’, this refers to the questionable role that the nurse played in Phaedra’s story (on which, see below, pp. 77-79); her mention in this context is thus consistent with the criticism pertaining to the erotic situations of Euripides’ tragedy. And as for women that give birth in temples, the reference is to the lost tragedy *Auge*, mother of Telephus: see Mastromarco-Totaro 2006, 664 n. 177.

<sup>9</sup> To Aristophanes’ eyes one of the decadent aspects of Euripides plays was the inadequate portrayal of the traditional heroes whose raggedy dresses and physical handicaps, *ad hoc* emphasized, expressed their degradation. Aristophanes’ concern was certainly not an aesthetic one; rather it was an ethical concern, as proved by *Frogs* 1049-1051 where the poet referred to the negative effects of those debased and raggedy heroes on the citizens: regarding this, see Lauriola 2010, 120-123.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding this, see, e.g., Robson 2005.

<sup>11</sup> To say this with Dicaeopolis (*Ach.* 446-447) who, as soon as he put on the rags of Euripides’ *Telephus*, felt that he had become able to impress the audience not only with his pitiful appearance (*Ach.* 435-436), but also with his speaking skills. (*Ach.* 444). In the end Dicaeopolis chose Telephus since he was στῶμύλος, δεινὸς too (see *Ach.* 427-428). The speaking skills of Euripides’ characters were perceived as the effect of the Sophists’ influence on the tragic poet. Regarding this, see also below, n. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Above I paraphrased a few of Aristophanes’ several remarks on Euripides’ linguistic subtlety that he ascribed to the Sophists’ influence. *Frogs* 819-829; 955-957 provide an excellent cluster of this kind of remark and of its related terminology. An essential catchword denoting Euripides’ ‘sophistic style’ is the adjective λεπτός (alone and in compounds, like, for instance, ὑπολεπτολόγος in Cratinus’ fr. 342 mentioned by Arethas, and quoted above). Meaning ‘subtle, refined’ (LSJ, s.v. II.1), it became emblematic of the conceptual and expressive universe of Euripides: see, e.g., Imperio 1998, 115-116 and n. 135. Furthermore, it belonged to the technical terminology of the literary criticism that was beginning at that time: Deniston 1927, 119; Edwards 1990, 151. On the occurrences of λεπτός and its cognates in Aristophanes with reference both to Euripides and the Sophists, see Lauriola 2010, 130 and n. 53.

<sup>13</sup> On Aristophanes and the Sophists, see Imperio 1998; Carey 2000; Scholten 2003;

mockeries of Euripides, in fact, do not simply consist of lists of direct complaints, as occurred in *Thesm.* 391-405 and *Frogs* 1049-1051, 1063-1066, 1079-1081, to mention a few examples. True to Cratinus' words quoted in Arethas' scholium, Aristophanes' typical way of ridiculing the tragic poet was by mimicking him, i.e., by closely aping the features of his dramatic production, staging characters who talked and behaved like Euripides' characters and, on occasion, dressed like them<sup>14</sup>. As the scorning of Euripides is *per se* emblematic of Aristophanes' comedy, so is the mimicking of Euripides' tragic world, to such a degree that it in turn became an object of derision at Aristophanes' expenses. Arethas' scholium testifies exactly to this by quoting a fragment from Cratinus, i.e., fr. 342 K.-A.<sup>15</sup>. Identifying himself with an imaginary member of the audience, Cratinus provocatively asks Aristophanes who he is in the very end. The reply consists of three neologisms that identify Aristophanes as a poet who subtly cavils at the meanings of words (ὕπολεπτολόγος), pursues little maxims (γνωμιδιώκτης), and ends up being precisely like Euripides (εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων). That is to say: Aristophanes' mimicking of Euripides was so good that one could not detect a border between the two. Εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων vividly expresses such a close resemblance.

Interestingly, in his critical remark Cratinus singles out Euripides' linguistic and stylistic features among all the constituents of his tragic world that became the target of Aristophanes' *mimetic* σκώπτειν. Yet, as it has been fairly pointed out<sup>16</sup>, it was the tragedies centering on women's sexual misconduct and on their social role that for Aristophanes, and, presumably, for the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. BC-Athenian audience, as well, represented the essence of the Euripidean effrontery and provocative trend which the poet intended to ridicule. In this regard Aristophanes' use of Euripides' character Phaedra as a landmark cannot pass unnoticed.

Lauriola 2010, 126-132; 181-191.

<sup>14</sup> This characteristic of Aristophanes' mockery is to be traced back to an essential feature of his poetics whose theorization, so to say, is given through Agathon in *Thesm.* 149-156 (on which, see Paduano 1996a; Mazzacchera 1999; Sietta Cottone 2003; also below, p. 76). I am referring to the aesthetic concept of *mimesis*, which will be fully developed, as is well known, later by Plato and Aristoteles. For an analysis of the way in which *mimesis* works in Aristophanes' production, see Lauriola 2012.

<sup>15</sup> About this fragment see, in particular, Prato 1955, 36-37; Conti-Bizzarro 1999, 20; 91-104; Luppe 2000, esp. 19-20. To which comedy this fragment belongs is still a controversial topic. Many think that it might belong to one of the poet's later plays; but – as Luppe remarks 2000, 19, – it is possible that it belongs to the comedy *Pytine*, which, as is well known, constituted a counter-attack against Aristophanes for his bitter abuse of Cratinus in *Knights*.

<sup>16</sup> Regarding this, see, e.g., Micheli 1987, 75-76; 80.

It is the purpose of the present paper to re-examine a particular jocose allusion to Euripides' Phaedra within the framework of Cratinus' remark that rather pertains to Aristophanes' mocking and mimicking the style of the tragic poet. This analysis ultimately aims at testing whether and how Aristophanes' mockery of Euripides' language and style might harmonize with his mockery of Euripides' provocative themes about women and sexual taboos. The particular jocose allusion occurs in *Knights* 16-18<sup>17</sup>. "Is Aristophanes ὑπολεπολόγος, γνωμιδιώκτης, εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων in this context, too? In which specific sense, and why?" will be the leading questions of the present analysis.

2. "All without exception are Phaedras" (*Thesm.* 550): Phaedra in Aristophanes.

With a few exceptions, the most conspicuous of which is Hippolytus' well-known, sharp utterance ἡ γλῶσσ' ὁμώμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμοτος (*Hipp.* 612), Aristophanes' references to Euripides' *Hippolytus* all pertain to the character of Phaedra<sup>18</sup>. Whether she appears alone or 'in good company' with Stheneboea, by antonomasia she becomes the *par-excellence*-emblem of shameless, impudent women<sup>19</sup>. More often than Stheneboea, Phaedra is, in fact, mentioned by the poet as an example of Euripides' fondness for portraying what were perceived as immoral women. *Thesm.* 153 is peculiarly significant in this respect. The kinsman (i.e., the so-called Mnesilochus) and Agathon are here discussing some aesthetic principles pertaining to poetic composition, namely *mimesis*-theory<sup>20</sup>. Explaining the reason why he has appeared wearing a woman's dress, i.e., saying that his clothes suit his inspiration, Agathon states that "a poet has to adopt the characteristics of

<sup>17</sup> For all quotations from Aristophanes' comedies, I adopted the text established by Mastromarco 1983, and Mastromarco-Totaro 2006. As for the specific passage of *Knights* mentioned above, see Mastromarco 1983, 217-218: I have adopted the same order of the lines, according to which the quotation from Euripides (l. 16) is to be located after the reference to the tragic poet occurring at l. 18. The passage is quoted and discussed below, pp. 82-90.

<sup>18</sup> This observation is based on the data recorded in Rau 1967, 185-212. I shall discuss each reference to Phaedra (with and without other similar female personages) below (pp. 76-78). As for Euripides, *Hipp.* 612, perhaps the most famous line of this poet's entire production, it is quoted in parodic contexts and with some alterations in *Thesm.* 275-276; *Frogs* 103 and, partially, 1471.

<sup>19</sup> Once Phaedra is evoked together with Melanippe (see below, n. 24). As for Stheneboea, she appeared in two lost plays of Euripides: *Bellerophon* and *Stheneboea*. The story of Phaedra and Stheneboea presents some similarities in that, although married, they both fell in love with another man: Phaedra with her stepson Hippolytus; Stheneboea with Bellerophon, a guest of her husband (cf. *Thesm.* 403). Rejected, they both made a false accusation against their 'other' man, and committed suicide.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding this, see also above, n. 14.

what he is portraying.” Therefore, should he put on stage a woman, he must participate in all her habits with his own person (ll. 146-152). And – Agathon continues – what a poet does not have by nature (as when he must stage female characters) he must acquire *by imitation* (μίμησις: 154-156). In his reply Mnesilochus makes fun of this theory through some hilarious examples (ll. 153, 157-158). The very first one pertains to Phaedra, who is mentioned as representative, we may say, of a specific theme and a specific kind of woman.

Οὐκοῦν κελητίζεις, ὅταν Φαίδραν ποιῇς; (153)

“Would you assume the lovemaking horse position, if you compose a Phaedra?”

The image that Mnesilochus suggests, challenging Agathon ‘to imitate’ it (so that he might compose a drama about it), is based on a joke involving a word-play on the verb κελητίζω. This verb simply means ‘to ride, to straddle’, but it also has an obscene meaning which may evoke a particular sexual position<sup>21</sup>. With the intention of sniping at Euripides’ ‘excessively erotic/lustful’ and controversial women<sup>22</sup>, Aristophanes seems to have *ad hoc* chosen this verb to exploit its ambiguity and thus build a reference to Phaedra on the ground that, at the beginning of the tragedy (at least in the extant one), the woman allusively refers to her love for Hippolytus by strangely expressing some longing for horse-riding (Eur. *Hipp.* 227-231)<sup>23</sup>. And horse-riding, as we all know, was one of the favorite activities of Hippolytus (e.g., *Hipp.* 581). It is Phaedra, and not her *quasi*-twin Stheneboea, the one whom Aristophanes almost automatically recalls here, so that he may provide an example of the poetic principle which is under discussion, without missing, at the same time, the chance to mock and criticize the Euripidean erotic theme and kind of women that characterize that poet’s world.

Still in *Women at Thesmophoria*, when it comes to complaining over Euripides’ malicious denigration of women, Phaedra is singled out once again. First this occurs at l. 497: within the defence of Euripides’ treatment of the women delivered by the disguised Mnesilochus (ll. 466-517), the case of Phaedra is evoked to contrast it with all the possible other cases which would shed a bad light on women, and yet were not put on stage by Euripides. Later, at ll. 544-550, the woman who replies to this ‘apologetic’ speech of Mnesilochus, reproaching him for daring to defend Euripides, mentions Phaedra and Melanippe as *exempla* of vile women whom Euripides

<sup>21</sup> LSJ, s.v. κελητίζω. See also Mastromarco-Totaro 2006, 453, n. 26

<sup>22</sup> With reference to the excessive presence of erotic material in Euripides, see also *Frogs* 1045-1048.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 208-226 where hunting and living in the wild, activities usually associated with Hippolytus, are also mentioned.

designedly (ἐπίτηδες) put upon the stage (ll. 546-547a)<sup>24</sup>. And, as she continues, she contrasts both with Penelope (ll. 547b-548), the *non plus ultra* of a virtuous and faithful woman, whom Euripides designedly (she would imply) avoid mentioning. Replying in turn to this remark, Mnesilochus significantly pointed at Phaedra only: among the current women not a single Penelope exists, Mnesilochus observes, but “all without exception are Phaedras” (l. 555). It is on this occasion, I would say, and through this contrast with Penelope, that Aristophanes more than ever stigmatized Phaedra as a paradigmatic case of the bad, unfaithful and immoral woman. Once again, it is Phaedra, in fact, and no one else, who is pointedly singled out.

In the comedy *Frogs* Phaedra appears again and in company with Stheneboea. It happens at l. 1043: within the *agôn* between Aeschylus and Euripides pertaining to the appropriate characters and themes that a poet should put on stage (ll. 1039-1088), blaming Euripides for an excessive presence of ‘questionable’ love<sup>25</sup>, Aristophanes mentions both Phaedra and Stheneboea as an example, labeling them as πόρναι (“whores”).

Interestingly, in another passage of *Frogs*, Phaedra keeps being singled out as *the* paradigm of immoral, ‘bad’ woman, indirectly as well, i.e., through the mention of her nurse. As it is well known<sup>26</sup>, Euripides wrote two versions of the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra. The surviving tragedy is the second version where the nurse’s role is crucial to the dynamics of the story. Not only does she push – so it seems – her mistress to pursue an illicit love, but she also reveals to Hippolytus that love, which was supposed to be kept secret (Eur. *Hipp.* 520). In doing so, her role seems to border on the debased one of a bawd (προαγωγός). A reference to Phaedra’s bawd, and, in consequence, to Phaedra’s scandalous love, is, in fact, in *Frogs* 1078, within a list of the ‘bad’ themes that, to Aristophanes’ eyes, were at the heart of Euripides’ works<sup>27</sup>. Besides the context, Euripides’ *Hipp.* 589 and 651-652

<sup>24</sup> As for Melanippe, Euripides wrote two plays about her story: *Melanippe in Chain* and *Melanippe the Wise*. Daughter of Aeolus, she was raped by Poseidon and gave birth to twins. Both plays are lost; the reconstruction of their plot is very difficult (for a good attempt, see Collard-Cropp-Lee 1995, 240-280). Probably some tensions between daughter and father about the paternity of the twins played some major role. The rape, although by a god, certainly ‘stained’ the woman and ruined her reputation (on this issue, see Lauriola 2013). This might be a reason why she is numbered among the ‘bad’ women.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Questionable’ in that the mentioned women were in love with other people than their legitimate husbands.

<sup>26</sup> For details, see below, pp. 78-82.

<sup>27</sup> The whole passage (*Frogs* 1077-1082) is delivered by Aeschylus during the contest between the two playwrights in Hades. Here Aeschylus is listing all the harms that Euripides has done with his plays, showing “women playing bawds, giving birth in temples, sleeping with their brothers, and claiming that ‘life is not life’.” On these references, see above, p. 73.

give a possible confirmation both of the negative connotation of the bawd-nurse and, if not foremost, of the very likely association that Aristophanes meant to evoke with Euripides' Phaedra. In these passages, Phaedra and Hippolytus respectively refer to the nurse as 'matchmaker' (προμνήστρια, 589), a woman who courts for another, and "[has] come to traffic with me" – as Hippolytus indignantly says – "about the sacred marriage bed of my father" (651-652).

Whether alone or with other 'bad' women, whether directly evoked or hinted at through a character close to her and, more importantly, crucial to her 'tragedy', there is an evident preference for Phaedra when Aristophanes wishes to abuse a specific feature of Euripides' theater pertaining to women and, more broadly, to the degradation of the heroic world.

3. "If only you could say for me what I must say!": Eur. *Hipp.* 345 ~ Ar. *Knights* 16-18.

Why Phaedra? Why this special attention to her within the 'kind' of women she should represent? And what does she have to do with the *Euripideanizing* characterization of Aristophanes?

These are all legitimate questions to which the analysis of that particular jocose allusion to Phaedra in *Knights* 16-18, which I have intentionally excluded from the survey conducted above, might provide an answer.

### 3.1 The two versions of *Hippolytus* by Euripides.

Borrowing the title of a chapter devoted to this tragedy by Micheleni in his book on Euripides, *Hippolytus* is "an exceptional play", and it is so in a varied array of senses<sup>28</sup>. In my opinion, that it is the only play known which has been presented at the City Dionysia as a reworking of an earlier version<sup>29</sup>; that this second attempt was even awarded the first prize, despite all the unpleasant feelings which the recalling of the first version might have caused; and that precisely this play is the only extant one known to have won the prize during the poet's lifetime, all these facts are 'exceptionally' significant. What is even more significant is that all these 'exceptional' features, in the end, center around and depend on the portrayal of Phaedra. In this respect Hippolytus, after whom the tragedy is, however, named, seems not to

<sup>28</sup> Micheleni 1987, 277. The reasons why I would define this tragedy as 'exceptional' – as I explained above – do not coincide necessarily with Micheleni's arguments, which more strictly focus on the inner features of the play (such as, richness of language, intellectual allusiveness and complexity: p. 279), although I agree with them, too.

<sup>29</sup> As noted by Micheleni 1987, 287, Aristophanes' *Clouds* might constitute a case that is quite close to this one.



really contribute to this extraordinariness. Phaedra's moral character is, in fact, the pivot of the uniqueness of this play, and her moral character is, in the end, the pivot of Aristophanes' interest as well. It is the same moral character that provoked the failure of the first version, commonly known as *Hippolytus Veiled*<sup>30</sup>, and that, upon some 'corrections', decreed the success of the second, extant version, i.e., *Hippolytus Crowned*<sup>31</sup>. Yet in both versions Phaedra bears, in the end, the same 'stains': she is, in a way, 'adulterous' in that she was married and fell in love with someone else, as Stheneboea did; moreover, her love is a further unchaste passion in that it was directed to her stepson Hippolytus<sup>32</sup>. This feeling was so reprehensible that it was perceived as an ἄπρητον (Eur. *Hipp.* 602), or a *nefas/nefandum* (Seneca, *Phaedra* 126, 143, 153, 166, 173, 254, 596, 678). But in the first version what most intensifies Phaedra's status, making her even more reproachable, was her direct proposition to Hippolytus. This action was perceived as one of such an indecency that it compelled Hippolytus to cover his head in horror and shame. Hence the epithet *Veiled* became the distinguishing mark of the first, lost version of this tragedy. In the first version, Phaedra's advances toward her stepson were what most upset the audience and, subsequently, urged Euripides to revise the tragedy. So far as we can ascertain, the revision in fact affected mostly the character of Phaedra. In the second version, her *previous* 'speaking too much and directly' – I would say – turned into 'keeping silent the feeling to death, and yet speaking of it *covertly*'<sup>33</sup>. Taking

<sup>30</sup> *Kalyptomenos* is notoriously added to the title to distinguish the first, lost version from the extant one, which in turn is known as *Hippolytus Stephanephoros*, i.e., *Crowned* (see, e.g., Barrett 1964, 10-45; Kannicht 2004, 459-477; Biondi 2008, 196). The epithets characterizing each title should refer, in a different way, to the purity of Hippolytus. *Stephanephoros* refers to the *incipit* of the play (ll. 72-73), where Hippolytus addresses the statue of his beloved goddess, Artemis, while offering her a garland. As I recall above, *Kalyptomenos* refers to the apotropaic act of Hippolytus at the moment of Phaedra's declaration of her love: horrified, he covered himself with his cloak (Mills 2002, 29; Halleran 2004, 271-272). For attempted reconstructions of the plot of the first lost version and the placement of the few extant fragments, see Halleran 1995, 25-37; Hutchinson 2004, 19-23.

<sup>31</sup> The second version is indeed the product of some 'corrections' made by the poet and aimed at 'sanitizing' everything which, in the first version, was perceived as ἀπρεπές ("indecorous") and κατηγορίας ἄξιον ("blameworthy"). This is what Aristophanes of Byzantium declared in the second Hypothesis to Euripides' *Hippolytus*: see McDermott 2000, 239-40; Mills 2002, 29-30.

<sup>32</sup> Above all in Seneca's *Phaedra* this passion was perceived as bordering on an incest (*Phaedra* 171-172). It should be noted, however, that a relationship between Phaedra and Hippolytus could not be incestuous, *stricto sensu*, for they were not related by blood, which weakens the incest taboo: see, Messer 1969, 213-4; 218.

<sup>33</sup> As for Phaedra's struggle to suppress her love by keeping it quiet, see *Hipp.* 291-297. About her speaking covertly, see below, pp. 89-91. In general, on speech and silence in this

over the position that the current social conventions expected from women, i.e., being silent, restrained, and concerned with one's own public reputation<sup>34</sup>, Phaedra, the same one who, however, still has feelings for her stepson, regains some respectability, thus matching the characteristics of the 'good, virtuous woman', a woman to whom the audience could more relate. If one does not take into account Phaedra's final distortion of the truth in which she indulged out of despair<sup>35</sup>, it would be tempting to say that, in the second version, Phaedra acts according to the same sense of decency and accepted standards of respectability as 'the chaste' Hippolytus himself. Both, in fact, do not want even to mention and/or hear 'it'. In doing so, both are concerned with saving their good reputation<sup>36</sup>. Their sense of decency gravitates around a dichotomous 'game' of not wanting to say something and yet feeling compelled to say it, and, vice versa, wanting to say something and being compelled not to say it<sup>37</sup>. Phaedra does not want to tell the cause of her sickness to her nurse, but she is compelled to since her nurse's insistent request takes the form of a supplication (*Hipp.* 325; 330; 335)<sup>38</sup>. Hippolytus, on the contrary, wants to tell Theseus the cause of Phaedra's false accusation, but he is compelled not to, and keeps it silent, because of the oath under which the nurse told the youth what she was supposed not to tell (*Hipp.* 601; 1063)<sup>39</sup>. Something 'that cannot be spoken' (ἄρρητον, *Hipp.* 602) is the fulcrum of this game of not wanting to tell and yet being compelled to speak out. This ἄρρητον is something so horrible that one would like neither to mention it – as is the case of Phaedra (*Hipp.* 349-51) – nor to hear it – as is the case of Hippolytus (*Hipp.* 602 cf. with 653-4). Decorum and shame are what prevent them from telling and from hearing 'it'.

There is a specific action that, in my opinion, significantly contributes to this sort of homologation between the two personages in the extant tragedy, definitely sealing the transformation of Phaedra from a shameless woman

tragedy, see Halleran 1995, 42-43.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., *Hipp.* 400-425; 687-688; 709; 715-721. It should be noted that fifth-century Athens was still a 'shame culture', on which see Cairns 1993, 153-154. On Phaedra's concerns about her good reputation and avoiding shame, see Halleran 2004, 277-279.

<sup>35</sup> I am referring to the false accusation of rape: once she failed to save her reputation with silence, she spoke too much, providing a mystification of the truth, such a mystification that set in motion the events culminating in the tragic end of Hippolytus.

<sup>36</sup> Regarding this, see Longo 1985, 91.

<sup>37</sup> Knox 1952, 16.

<sup>38</sup> The act of supplication plays a major role in ancient Greek culture (see, e.g., Gould 1973). As is known, it establishes a sacred obligation to grant the suppliant her/his request. See Longo 1985, 89-90 with reference to the nurse's supplication to Phaedra.

<sup>39</sup> Concerning this, see Longo 1985, 90. I should also note that, besides relying on the oath, the nurse tries also to supplicate Hippolytus by touching his hands (*Eur. Hipp.* 605).

into a shameful one: the veiling of one's own head. While lamenting her sickness without revealing what is all about, Phaedra asks her nurse to veil her head (*Hipp.* 243-245). As proved by her words, this action is associated with a desire to not meet someone else's eyes because of shame<sup>40</sup>. This act by Phaedra could parallel the corresponding veiling of Hippolytus that occurs in the first version, and very likely the audience would spot an allusion to it. I would thus think that Euripides' revision of the character of Phaedra relies on apparently minor, yet subtle, details that eventually culminate in the most palpable change which has always been pointed out so far, i.e., the absence of Phaedra's direct proposition. As is known, in the extant tragedy it is the nurse who, on her own initiative, in a way 'proposed' to Hippolytus<sup>41</sup>. Despite the explicit request of her mistress to keep silent (e.g., *Hipp.* 312; 520)<sup>42</sup>, she did reveal the 'unutterable thing', very likely hoping that she could induce Hippolytus to let that 'unutterable thing' take its own course. The nurse, in fact, had previously tried a similar approach with Phaedra, inviting her to compromise, to take over a flexible state of mind, and to yield to her passion (e.g., *Hipp.* 462-466; 520-521)<sup>43</sup>. With declaring Phaedra's passion to Hippolytus, the nurse intended to persuade him to the same course of action. As hinted at above, in comedy it is not by accident that the nurse is mocked as a *προαγωγός* (*Frogs* 1078) who favors 'profane marriages' (*Frogs* 850). Keeping silent is, however, the choice of both Hippolytus and Phaedra. As has been seen, Hippolytus refused to hear, thus implicitly imposing an obligation on the nurse to keep quiet. Eventually, once he had heard, he himself agreed to keep quiet, i.e., not to speak, not even in his own defense. Phaedra, too, preferred to keep quiet, refusing to speak as much as she could. Until the very end, in fact, she resisted the

<sup>40</sup> "Alas, how miserable I am." – Phaedra cries – "Nurse, cover my head again, for I am ashamed (αἰδοῦμεθα) of my words. Cover me: the tears stream down from my eyes and my look is turned to shame (ἐπ' αἰσχύνην)". Regarding this meaning of veiling one's head, see also Eur. *Iph. Taur.* 1198-1201.

<sup>41</sup> See, in fact, *Hipp.* 589-590 and 650-652. These lines would allow us to think that the nurse has 'proposed' to Hippolytus a sexual relationship with Phaedra: about this, see Kovacs 1987, 132 and n. 66.

<sup>42</sup> Such insistent requests have not always been seen as sincere: Phaedra would reveal her love to induce the nurse to take action (see, e.g., Roisman 2000). In Phaedra's defense it should be noted that she was, indeed, misled by the way in which the nurse reassured her, i.e., talking of a harmless remedy. Φίλτρα ἔρωτος ("love charms") are, in fact, mentioned by the nurse (*Hipp.* 508-510; cf. 478-479). Not accidentally this prompted Phaedra to ask what kind of remedy she had in mind, whether ointment or a potion (*Hipp.* 516).

<sup>43</sup> One of the arguments that the nurse employed pertains to the power of love, which is universal and invincible: even the gods have often yielded to it (*Hipp.* 439-459). To her eyes, this would free Phaedra from any culpability.

attempts of the nurse who was speaking ‘finely’ and ‘gracefully’ of what was disgraceful and brought shame (*Hipp.* 503-505)<sup>44</sup>.

In light of all of this, I would say that (a), by covering her own head, Phaedra first recalls the behavior of the ‘chaste Hippolytus’, who had covered his own head for the shame he felt upon hearing of his step-mother’s passion directly disclosed to him; (b), by choosing silence (e.g., *Hipp.* 271, 273, 296, 394-395), she then completely conforms not only to the standardized features and social expectations of virtuous women (see, e.g., *Soph., Aias* 293; *Thuc.* 2.46), but also, if not primarily, to the misogynistic manifesto of Hippolytus, who dreamed for a *quasi*-annihilation of women, by denying them exactly, and in particular, a voice, i.e., the ability to speak, address someone, be heard etc. (*Hipp.* 645-648).

If silence is a distinguishing mark of virtue in a woman, once silence cannot be kept and is broken on the condition that what is spoken must be kept silent, a strenuous reluctance to speak would be something closest to that distinctive virtue. In the second version, it thus seems that Euripides, building specifically on these subtle details, has meant to characterize Phaedra as a virtuous woman with a sense of shame and decorum, almost the same one which informs the character of Hippolytus, who was applauded since the first version. Phaedra and Hippolytus, in fact, both share the significant act of veiling oneself, the preference for a decorous silence, and the concerns for their public reputation. By depicting them in this way, Euripides could thus appeal to the ‘taste’ of his audience and gain their favor<sup>45</sup>.

The ‘attentive’ Aristophanes could not but exploit the nuances of Euripides’ remake. It is striking that his very first mockery of Euripides’ *Hippolytus* refers to the second version, while all the others refer to the first one, with Phaedra being presented as an outrageous and indecent woman, and, quite explicitly, as a whore.

### 3.2 Aristophanes’ *Knights* 16-18.

(Servant II): Ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἔνι μοι τὸ θρέττε. Πῶς ἂν οὖν ποτε  
εἴποιμ’ ἂν αὐτὸ δῆτα κομψευρικῶς; -  
«Πῶς ἂν σύ μοι λέξειας ἀμὲ χρῆ λέγειν;»<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Already at ll. 486-487 Phaedra expresses her fear for the “overly fine words” that characterize the nurse’s speech. Indeed, she refers to the dangerous and persuasive manipulation of the language by which the nurse words her arguments (see also ll. 496-501). It might mirror the sophistic-rhetoric ‘trend’ of the time. On the topic see, also, Susanetti 1997, 71.

<sup>45</sup> It thus seems that what made her reproachable, in the second version, was rather the mystification of the truth, i.e., her false accusation against Hippolytus: see above, n. 35.

<sup>46</sup> Regarding the text I have here adopted, see above, n. 17. The italic is mine.

“But I have no courage (to say it). How could I  
say it *with the ingenious subtlety that is worthy of Euripides?* –  
«Oh! If only you could say what I must say»<sup>47</sup>

So far as we can ascertain, the parodic quotation of *Hipp.* 345 in the prologue of *Knights* is Aristophanes' first reference to this Euripidean tragedy within his extant comedies. As is well known, this comedy, performed in 424 BC, embodies the most overt attack of the playwright against the demagogue Cleon<sup>48</sup>. Under the name of Paphlagon, Cleon plays the role of a servant of the Athenian people (Demos), who has been newly purchased. He is a *sui generis* slave: his is only seemingly a service to Demos; all he does are mere, self-serving actions, by which he skillfully manipulates his master<sup>49</sup>. The 'household' is thus suffering from mismanagement; the presence and the conduct of this slave have negatively affected the equilibrium of the house. Therefore a solution must be found to get rid of this 'mess'. This is the initial situation as it transpired through the skirmish in which the two long-term 'employed' servants of Demos engage<sup>50</sup>. As they lament the distress that Paphlagon is causing to them, they tease each other *to speak* of "a way out" from that situation (*Knights* 12). During their push-pull game, one of them confesses not to have the courage to say it, i.e., to speak out of what presumably might save them themselves and might, in consequence, heal the household.

Re-reading the scene with the parodic quotation from *Hippolytus* in mind,

<sup>47</sup> I rather paraphrased the adverbial compound that includes the name of the poet. I shall discuss the crucial shade of meaning of this adverb and, accordingly, provide a further explicit paraphrasis below. LSJ (s.v.) translates "with Euripides-quibbles".

<sup>48</sup> If almost everywhere Aristophanes does not miss any chance to abuse Cleon, whether directly (e.g., *Ach.* 300-301; 377-382; 659-664; *Clouds* 580-586; *Wasps* 62; 1029-1044, 1284-1291; *Peace* 751-760; etc.), or indirectly, i.e., by picking on the subsidiary inner workings of the demagogue's politics (such as the politics 'of compensation' [μισθός], on which see Lauriola 2010, 45-46 and nn. 25, 27-29), undoubtedly *Knights* consists entirely of invectives against Cleon. See, also, below n. 49.

<sup>49</sup> To put it in a very simple and concise way. The events of Pylos and Sphacteria (425 BC, on which Thuc. 4.3.41), whose success was indeed the result of a strategy devised by Demosthenes, and partly by Nicias, constituted the occasion for the composition of *Knights*, where the very basic attack against Cleon-Paphlagon pertains to his deceptive skill of taking/appropriating/robbing for his own interest, while pretending to act for the Athenians' interest and wellbeing. As is well known, he claimed merits for the success over Pylos and Sphacteria (see, e.g., *Knights* 52-57; 280-281; 844-846; 1052-1053). To Aristophanes' eyes, 'making people believe' is the foundation of Cleon's manipulative politics. On *Knights*' portrayal of Cleon's self-serving actions which are dissembled as interest in Athens' wellbeing, see Lauriola 2006a.

<sup>50</sup> The two anonymous slaves have notoriously been identified with the current generals Demosthenes and Nicias: see Sommerstein 1980.

I find particularly striking the two slaves' quick skirmish as it centers on something that is going wrong in the house, something for which both slaves are uneasy and whose solution seems to rest on 'a speaking out'. One of them should say something to find a way out from what is undermining their own and the household's wellbeing. But the one who should speak lacks courage and would prefer to have the other speak on his behalf: Πῶς ἂν σύ μοι λέξειας ἀμὲ χρή λέγειν; (*Knights* 16 = Eur. *Hipp.* 345).

With due caution, I argue that almost the entire initial scene of the prologue of *Knights* might be shaped as a parody of the skirmish that takes place between the nurse and Phaedra in Euripides' *Hipp.* 310-351, a parody that culminates in an explicit reference to Euripides at ll. 17b-18, through the adverbial compound κομπευρικῶς. This word seems to be as much a clear as a clever 'explanatory reference' to the literal quotation of *Hipp.* 345<sup>51</sup>.

That the very initial scene of the prologue of *Knights* might be built on the specific scene of Euripides' *Hippolytus* to which the quoted line belongs, would be consistent with Aristophanes' way of building and advancing the scenes and the plots of his comedies by relying on parodying, mimicking, and mocking his targets<sup>52</sup>. And Euripides' *Hippolytus* is evidently both the hypotext and the target of this initial part of *Knights*, which in turn calls our attention back to Cratinus' criticism.

Let us delve into some details that are specific of this case.

The initial situation of Demos' household, as I described it above, in a way suggests some similarity with Theseus' household at the beginning of the Euripidean tragedy: there is someone who causes distress and undermines the 'safety' and the 'health' of the house (see, e.g., Eur. *Hipp.* 361). Hence some parallels might be spotted between Paphlagon and Hippolytus in that both are the cause of distress in the household – although, as far as Hippolytus is concerned, he is not aware of it<sup>53</sup>. Certainly, both are the one

<sup>51</sup> For the order of the lines in *Knights* 16-18, see, above, n. 17.

<sup>52</sup> A detailed analysis of this poetic mechanism centering on three fundamental components, i.e., parody, *mimesis*, and mockery/abuse, in Aristophanes' whole production is provided by Lauriola 2012.

<sup>53</sup> With reference to a possible parallel between Paphlagon and Hippolytus as mentioned above, without implying a conscious connection by Aristophanes, besides the evocative name of the tragic character, Hippolytus, which is clearly an 'equestrian' name, I found striking that a Paphlagonian tribe, the *Enetoi* ('Enetians': Hom., *Il.* 2. 851-852), was renowned for their horses. Indeed of "taming Enetic horses" Phaedra speaks in her delirious wish to join Hippolytus' beloved activities, thus indirectly expressing her passion for the youth (Eur. *Hipp.* 230-231). According to Livy 1.1 and Strabo 5.1 the Enetians escaped with Antenor from the Trojan war and were driven from Paphlagonia to the furthest part of the Adriatic sea. Here they established a colony and were called 'Veneti'. As for Aristophanes' Paphlagon, besides the fact that it was a common name for slaves, the choice is also based on a connection with

because of whom two persons, who are affectionate to their ‘master’ (Demos’ two servants in Aristophanes, and Phaedra and the nurse, in Euripides), are in distress. What is more, in the tragedy and in the comedy alike these two persons in a way tease each other in the attempt to find a solution. This resemblance suggests that Aristophanes perhaps built on these parallels, slight as they may be, with the specific intention to snipe at exactly the second, successful version of Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. Although the second, ‘correct’ version was performed four years before Aristophanes’ *Knights*, the scandal that *Hippolytus*’ first version had provoked was still vivid in the audience’s memory, as the far later Aristophanic references would still prove. It was typical of Aristophanes to use single lines or passages as cues with the expectation that the audience, even after many years, would remember, recognize them, and react appropriately<sup>54</sup>. The catch phrase is, obviously, the literal quotation of *Hipp.* 345, which is referred to through the adverbial compound κομψευριπτικῶς. As will be seen, this adverb does not simply evoke Euripides; it works, in fact, as a subtle reference to a specific feature of his poetics<sup>55</sup>.

To my knowledge, the line connoting the quotation of *Hipp.* 345 as a way to say something κομψευριπτικῶς, has not been granted much attention. In my opinion this ‘connoting’ reference makes the allusion to Euripides’ *Hippolytus* in *Knights* far special and different from any other allusion to that same tragedy which occurs in Aristophanes’ plays. It might, in fact, contribute to making explicit the reason of Aristophanes’ choice to quote

the verb παφλάζειν (“bluster, splutter”), which fits well the speaking style of the demagogue (see, e.g., *Peace* 313-314; cf. also with *Ach.* 381 and *Knights* 137; for a detailed analysis of this name, see Landfester 1967, 16-18). This means that in Aristophanes it was certainly something more than an ethnic name, as, on the contrary, is Euripides’ adjective ‘Enetic’ for Hippolytus-Phaedra’s horses. With all the caution that the case suggests, the possible coincidence is, however, impressive.

<sup>54</sup> See Michelini 1987, 89. In the end, what Mastromarco 1984, 2006, calls “memoria letteraria del pubblico ateniese” (“the Athenian audience’s memory of the literary works and tradition”) played a pivotal role for Aristophanes’ parody to be effective. On the expertise and theatrical experience of the audience, on which Aristophanes meant to rely, see, e.g., *Knights* 500-501; *Frogs* 1114-1115, on which, Sciarrotta 1995b; Cavalli 1999, 83-86.

<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that this quotation of *Hipp.* 345 in *Knights* is also followed by a line which contains a typical component of Aristophanes’ criticism of Euripides’ poetics, i.e., the reference to his mother as a “seller of vegetables” (see *Ach.* 378; *Thesm.* 387, 456; *Frogs* 840-842). Through the allusion to the low status of his mother, Aristophanes meant to criticize the low and degraded status to which Euripides subjected the traditional heroes and heroines. That low and debased condition would have been inherited by the son and transfused into his plays: Arrighetti 1987, 148-149). On the allusion to Euripides’ mother in *Knights* 19, see, also, Lauriola 2012, 77-78.

*Hipp.* 345 exactly here.

As is known, in Euripides' tragedy *l.* 345 occurs within the strenuous attempts of Phaedra to resist the pressure of the nurse who has been pushing her to reveal the 'source' of her distress. Such a revelation is perceived as necessary for finding a remedy. This ultimate aim would bridge the skirmish between the two slaves in *Knights* and that between the nurse and Phaedra in the extant *Hippolytus*. Here Phaedra is not so bold as to reveal her passion (not even to her trustful nurse); she does not have that courage; she is ashamed. However, as it has been observed above, although she prefers to keep quiet and would die in silence, at the same time it seems that she feels the need to speak out. Phaedra, in fact, wishes that someone else, on her behalf, would say what she 'must/ should' (or 'desires' to) say<sup>56</sup>. As implied by the nurse's reaction (*Hipp.* 346), Phaedra goes on speaking in riddles and prompts (*Hipp.* 350), ultimately causing the nurse to say what she should have said (or, have wished to say). Σοῦ τάδ', οὐκ ἐμοῦ, κλύεις ("From yourself, not from me, you hear this": *Hipp.* 351b), Phaedra says after the nurse mentions the name 'Hippolytus' (*Hipp.* 351a), disclosing, in doing so, the cause her mistress' distress. Phaedra, in a way, confirms her nurse's revelation while distancing herself, at the same time, from any direct confession. Through her subtle wording, Phaedra has her wish fulfilled: it is the nurse, in fact, who mentions the unmentionable, i.e., Phaedra's passion, the source of everyone's distress in Theseus' household. I would thus say that in this second version Euripides subtly rephrases and 'relocates' Phaedra's scandalous confession in the nurse's mouth in order to circumvent the audience's blame. Hippolytus, i.e., her stepson, remains, however, the recipient of the passion of Phaedra, who is still a married woman. The success granted to this version might suggest that, at least to Aristophanes' eyes, the audience overlooked, or did not mind, these apparently minor details. Certainly Euripides was still proposing a 'scandalous', tragic story, but, this time, in a 'covert' way. The poet, in fact, still has Phaedra admit and 'covertly' confess her passion, but he subtly distances her from the responsibility of an open verbalization of the 'unmentionable' truth. This would make the woman 'less impudent', and thus avoid the audience's indignation.

Euripides seems to have made a subtle, 'sanitizing' move which Aristophanes addressed and exploited through the adverbial compound κομψευρητικῶς, newly coined for this occasion, where the first term, κομψός, pointedly connotes the second one, i.e. the name, and thus the person, of

<sup>56</sup> Regarding her feeling the need to speak, it might be interesting to note the presence of χρή, which has the meaning of 'must', 'should', 'it is necessary', and is linked to nouns and verbs indicating obligation, requirement, as well as wish and desire: see, e.g., Beekes 2010, II: 1648-1649.



Euripides. To my eyes, “with an ingeniously subtle scheme in Euripides’ perfect style” would be a rather appropriate paraphrasis of the meaning of this adverb<sup>57</sup>. The first component belongs to a specific semantic category of words dealing with ingenious inventiveness, subtle cleverness, and astute/crafty refinement both of language and action. These are, indeed, the meanings conveyed by the adjective κομψός, and the related nouns and verb, such as κομψεία, κομψεύμα, κομψότης, κομψεύω<sup>58</sup>.

In particular the adjective originally implied a positive connotation referring to the ability to speak with elegance, finesse and ingenuity<sup>59</sup>. But it soon gained a pejorative, negative connotation for its frequent usage by the Sophists in their teaching of the art of speaking persuasively, artfully and cleverly, to enable their pupils to succeed in public life, regardless any ethical principle and any concern for the truth<sup>60</sup>. In other words, κομψός and its cognates soon came to assume a nuance of deception and guile, especially in the use of language. This shade of meaning, in fact, characterizes the occurrences of κομψός in Euripides. Such are the cases of:

- *Hipp.* 986, where it occurs in the negative compound ἄκομψος to significantly connote the candor, i.e., the lack of any tricky ‘ornament/ refinement’, of Hippolytus’ speeches;

- *Suppl.* 426, where Theseus defines the Theban herald, who has just delivered a ‘fine’, yet not quite genuine, speech on ‘monarchy’ vs. ‘democracy’ (ll. 409-425), as κομψός (“a clever fellow”) and παρεργάτης λόγων (“argumentative, too”);

- *Trojan Women* 651, where, speaking of her good habits, which are consistent with the standards of a virtuous woman, Andromache tells how she has always avoided having, in her house, κομψὰ θηλειῶν ἔπη (“female clever/ malicious gossips”)<sup>61</sup>;

- *Iph. at Aulis* 333, where, during his altercation with Menelaus, who has intercepted his second letter to Clytemnestra, Agamemnon comments on Menelaus’ ‘finely-put’ speech about his quick change of mind (l. 332), saying: εὖ κεκόμψευσαι πονηρά (“how well you have cleverly caviled at

<sup>57</sup> See also above, p. 83 and n. 47.

<sup>58</sup> The meanings that I provided above are based on LSJ’s definitions.

<sup>59</sup> Like λεπτός (see above, n. 12), κομψός and κομψότης, too, belonged to the technical terminology of the currently incipient literary criticism. In particular for κομψότης, see Lanata 1963, 180 n. 13.

<sup>60</sup> Aristophanes’ δίκαια κᾶδικα (see *Ach.* 373; *Clouds* 99) clearly exemplifies the essence of the Sophists’ teaching: “They teach you, ..., to win in speaking, no matter whether you are right or not”, as Strepsiades says of the Thinkery’s people, i.e., the Sophists (see *Clouds* 95-99). As for the pejorative connotation that κομψός gained at the Sophists’ ‘school’, see Greene 1938, 447.

<sup>61</sup> On this standard, see, e.g., Eur. *Androm.* 944-953, on which, Susanetti 1997, 82-83.

[your] shameful actions”). He clearly refers to the astute use of language by Menelaus to put Agamemnon on the wrong side, thus covering – i.e., letting it go unobserved – his malicious act of spying on, and interfering with, his brother’s moves;

- *Cyclops* 312-315, where the adjective significantly occurs with reference to Odysseus’ ‘tongue’: should the Cyclops chew on his tongue, he would become κομψὸς καὶ λάλιστος (“a clever orator and very glib”)<sup>62</sup>.

Considering these occurrences and, perhaps even more importantly, the fact that Euripides was the only one of the three tragic playwrights who used these terms<sup>63</sup>, we should not be surprised to see the *ad hoc*-critical use of κομψός and cognates by Aristophanes precisely with reference both to Euripides’ tragedies and to the Sophists in contexts that are clearly aimed at denouncing their deceptive nature.

Two particular occurrences well testify to this<sup>64</sup>.

In *Clouds* 1030-1031 Unjust Argument is significantly greeted by the chorus as κομμοπρεπής. Meaning “ingenious-seeming”, this is the label that connotes the Sophists’ Muse, epitomizing all the negativity of the sophistic teaching which evidently relies on appearance. Unjust Argument, i.e., Sophistic Argument, seems to be ingenious and provides the youth with the tools of seeming as such, thus deceiving the addressees. Ingenuity and finesse serve rather as a disguise. In this context, as well as in *Knights*, Aristophanes’ lexical choice centering on κομψός is certainly not accidental. Very likely Aristophanes perceived it as a catchword of Euripides’ poetic technique.

The other occurrence, i.e., *Thesm.* 93, makes this even more explicit. Mnesilochus is here applauding the plan that Euripides has devised to escape the women’s ‘conviction’ and the ensuing ruinous ‘fate’ (ll. 70-90). He defines that plan as (τὸ) πρᾶγμα κομψὸν καὶ σφόδρ’ ἐκ τοῦ σοῦ τρόπου (“an ingenious, clever scheme very much worthy of your [i.e., of Euripides] style”, l. 93). As is known, Euripides wished to send Agathon to the women’s assembly so that he might speak in his defense. Agathon should go there not φανερώς (“openly visible”, l. 91), but λάθρα (“secretly”, l. 92), i.e.,

<sup>62</sup> Along with a few fragments and *Rhesus* 625 (whose Euripidean authorship is almost surely untenable: see, e.g., Liapis 2013 and Fries 2014), these are the only occurrences of the adjective in the extant tragedies: see *TLG*, s.v. κομψός.

<sup>63</sup> See Prato 2001, 164-165.

<sup>64</sup> Besides the passages I discuss above, and *Knights* 18 (which is under discussion in the current work), the adjective occurs two other times, and specifically in connection with social feastings (συνουσία): *Clouds* 649; *Wasps* 1317. In both cases it has to do with pretending to be a clever person with refined taste. In other words, it still conveys a connotation of deception and distortion of the truth.

in disguise (“in a woman’s clothes”, l. 92), thus relying on deception and guile. It is this scheme that Mnesilochus connotes as κομψός, which in turn is something perfectly in line with Euripides’ usual way (σφόδρ’ ἐκ τοῦ σοῦ τρόπου, l. 93). The ingenuity consists of acting and speaking *covertly*, thus tricking the addressees. That in Aristophanes Euripides’ κομψός becomes, in a way, a synonym of his poetic trickery is in fact confirmed by other specific terms which Mnesilochus uses to comment on the poet’s ingenuity. When asking of the escape-plan, he significantly uses the ambivalent term μηχανή (l. 86)<sup>65</sup>; and when, shortly afterward, he applauds the ‘ingenious scheme/plan’ (τὸ πρᾶγμα κομψόν, l. 93), he figuratively grants Euripides the first prize for τεχνάζειν i.e., for ruse<sup>66</sup>.

To Aristophanes’ eyes a κομψευριπικόν – I would say coining upon the adverb – is indeed the expedient through which Euripides circumvented the moral objections that had caused the failure of his first *Hippolytus*. This circumvention seems to be a subterfuge, a *sophistic* ingenuity “very much in his [sc. Euripides’] style!”. He avoided having Phaedra openly (φανερώς, cf. *Thesm.* 91) declare the ἄρρητον, i.e., her passion, to Hippolytus; but he did have Phaedra *covertly* (λάθρᾳ /κομψόν, cf. *Thesm.* 92-93<sup>67</sup>) say that ἄρρητον, thus admitting the truth of her ‘unutterable’ passion, which, in the very end, was what made her a shameless, indecent woman, a ‘whore’, as Aristophanes put it. As seen, Phaedra avoided merely pronouncing the name of that ‘unutterable thing’, making it possible for the nurse to say it (*Hipp.* 351). Indeed, if the *antilabe* at l. 351 is to be pointedly considered, Phaedra

<sup>65</sup> “Contrivance” is the first and main meaning of the term according to LSJ. It is ambivalent in that it can have both a concrete and a figurative meaning; it occurs with both connotations in Aristophanes’ critical remarks on Euripides’ plays (in general on this topic, see Lauriola 2010, 114 with n. 103; 126-131; 178; 183-184). However, although Aristophanes criticized the excessive use of theatrical machines which, to his eyes, added to the ‘appealing’ and ‘spectacular’ artificiality of Euripides’ works (see, e.g., *Ach.* 408-409; *Peace* 174; *Thesm.* 96), he mainly intended to refer to the scheming/crafty poetic mechanisms which constituted the ‘keystone’ of the plots of Euripides’ tragedies (not by accident there are several references to Euripides’ μηχαναί in *Thesm.*: see Paduano 1996b, 25-27). To Aristophanes’ eyes, those poetic mechanisms were guileful, meant to appeal to the audience: see, e.g., *Ach.* 385-392 (on which, Lauriola 2006b), and *Ach.* 445 (on which, Lauriola 2010, 183-184).

<sup>66</sup> Τεχνάζειν is another catchword of Aristophanes’ criticism pertaining to Euripides’ poetics, for it expresses well the deceitful component of his tragedies. According to LSJ (s.v., A. II.1), it means “use art or cunning, deal subtly, use subterfuges”. With this connotation, and specifically referring to disguising oneself (thus deceiving the others), it occurs in *Ach.* 385 and *Thesm.* 92-94 (above under discussion). Significantly, in *Frogs* 956-957 Euripides himself proudly claims to have taught the people, among other things (all related to deception), how τεχνάζειν.

<sup>67</sup> About this other, significant meaning of the adjective, see Conti Bizzarro 1999, 96-97.

let the nurse complete her own confession. The truth of that illicit passion and the related (mis)conception of the moral character of Phaedra remain, as Euripides claims in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 1052. "Did I make up some story about Phaedra which does not exist?", Euripides says in his defence, meaning that it is not his fault if the myth itself contains something 'wrong', and might 'harm' the people, as Aeschylus has implied<sup>68</sup>. That myth of Phaedra is true, and, in the second version of the same tragedy, that truth is just differently delivered, through a μηχανή that allows Euripides to success in his τεχνάζειν.

I would think that this is one possibly main meaning of Aristophanes' parodic quotation exactly of *Hipp.* 345 in the context of *Knights*' prologue, and *ad hoc* adapted to the situation of that prologue, as described above. This meaning is conveyed through the connotation of that specific line, i.e., the adverb κομπευρικῶς, which describes the poetic mechanism at work. Aristophanes – I would argue – singles out the element that marked the difference between the failed version of Euripides' tragedy and the successful one, i.e., the direct propositioning, and shows how *ingeniously* (and *sophistically*) Euripides, although seemingly skipping it, reintegrated it *covertly* in that Phaedra quasi-explicitly, through the nurse's mouth, admits what was a scandalous and *unladylike* thing.

#### 4. By way of conclusion: *Euripidaristophanizing* in *Knights* 16-18.

The present analysis may lead us to think that to Aristophanes' eyes, Euripides' innovations in the version of the story he put on stage the second time are a mere sophism<sup>69</sup>, one of those λεπτά and κομπά that not simply are among the distinctive marks of Euripides' style, but constitute indeed the

<sup>68</sup> It might be interesting to note that, although in a few earlier lines (*Frogs* 1049) Euripides mentions his *Sthenoboea* and asks what harm that tragedy did to the people, then, when he claims the truth of the myth, he mentions Phaedra only (*Frogs* 1052). Evidently the events related to the performance of that tragedy remained a big deal for Euripides, Aristophanes, and the Athenian people.

<sup>69</sup> Regarding this, the termination in -(ι)κος (-κως in its adverbial form) might be a further clue in that – as Peppler 1910 observed – adjectives ending in -(ι)κος represented a kind of words that the Sophists brought with them. They were much in vogue among the young followers of the Sophists. According to Peppler's analysis, Aristophanes intentionally used those words in parodic contexts targeting the Sophists (see, e.g., *Knights* 1375-1380; *Wasps* 1122- 1264; *Clouds* 335-338). And, as said (above, n. 12), Euripides was under the Sophists' influence. What better way, thus, to take the chance to ridicule and criticize Euripides than coining a term consisting of (1) a word reflecting the style and linguistic feature of the Sophists (κομπ[ός]/κομπευ[μα]), (2) a word clearly evoking the name of Euripides (ευριπι), (3) an ending typical of words that the Sophists brought with them (-(ι)κος)? Concerning the terminology in -(ι)κος, see also Noël 1997.

essence of his tragedies<sup>70</sup>. As is well known, in Aristophanes' opinion Euripides' work relies on the 'sensational', capable of alluring the gullible Athenians through expedients that lead the people to focus on the captivating outward appearances – whether it is a subtle speech or a 'pity-moving' dress<sup>71</sup> – regardless of the lack of substance.

Aristophanes' criticism against any of his typical targets usually goes hand in hand with his criticism against the audience<sup>72</sup>. Taking over seriously the role traditionally granted to the poet, i.e., that of being the teacher of the community, Aristophanes has insistently meant to 'open the people's eyes', i.e., to raise awareness about the possible self-serving and manipulative actions that all kinds of guides, from politicians to poets and paid teachers (the Sophists), would employ at the people's expense. To vividly show what the audience might miss seeing and realizing, Aristophanes mimics his targets by uncovering their 'tricks' on the stage<sup>73</sup>, thus becoming one of them. In the passage of *Knights* under discussion, he indeed becomes κομψός, mimicking Euripides' τρόποι. Aristophanes here adopts, and adapts to the context, a significant Euripidean line, proposing it as an emblem of Euripides' style, his 'speaking' covertly, in disguise, and subtly. His intention is to denounce it, mocking and alerting, at the same time, the audience which, at least to Aristophanes' eyes, seemed to not have realized the μηχανή, to the point that they granted the first prize to a tragedy that had completely failed at its first performance. Aristophanes is here indirectly scolding the audience as well. All of this is consistent with his poetic manifesto as

<sup>70</sup> I have already hinted at λεπτός as another, indeed more frequently used, catchword characterizing Aristophanes' remarks on the essence and style of Euripides' plays (see, above, n. 12). As the one who "makes so subtle/dissects the utterances to 'pulverize' them" (καταλεπτολογήσει) Euripides is presented in *Frogs* 826-828. In *Frogs* Euripides himself boasts to have taught the people "the introduction of subtle rule" (λεπτῶν τε κανόνων εἰσβολάς, *Frogs* 956). And as λεπτά Euripides defines what Dicaeopolis is preparing by adopting the material that belongs to his own tragedies (see *Ach.* 445). For Aristophanes, Euripides' conceptual and linguistic subtlety (λεπτότης) is the same which characterizes the new Intellectuals, i.e., the Sophists (see, e.g., *Clouds* 153, 229-230, 322, 359, 741).

<sup>71</sup> See, e.g., *Ach.* 383-384; 414-431 (esp. 414, 415, 429); *Frogs* 1062-1066 (with a remark on the negative impact of such a 'devise' on the people).

<sup>72</sup> Although Aristophanes acknowledged the theatrical experience and competence of the audience (see above, n. 54), he did not, however, miss any chance to reproach that same audience for being deaf and blind, i.e., for letting themselves be deceived both by poets in the theater and by politicians in real life. The ensuing gullible nature of the audience, which Aristophanes remarked, is significantly connoted through the verb χάσκειν ("gape"): see Taillardat 1965, 264-267; Sciarrotta 1995a, esp. 213 and *passim*.

<sup>73</sup> The best example of this is the all 'revealing spectacle' that Dicaeopolis puts on stage through Euripides' *Telephus* in *Acharnians* (see above, n. 5). With reference to 'uncovering the theatrical tricks on the stage', see in particular Slater 2002, 51-58; Lauriola 2012, 87-88.

it transpired in his response to Cratinus' charges:

Χρῶμαι γὰρ αὐτοῦ τοῦ στόματος τῷ στρογγύλῳ,  
τοὺς νοῦς δ' ἀγοραίους ἦττον ἢ κείνος ποιῶ. (fr. 488 K.-A.)<sup>74</sup>

"I do use his (*sc.* Euripides') well-rounded-tricky words,  
but I make their (*sc.* people's) minds less obtuse than he does."

Interestingly, Aristophanes concurred with his rival's statement *but* (δ'), it seems, only to redirect attention to the purpose and the result of the 'under-fire-mimicking' of Euripides, by making explicit the critical overtone of his mockery. Aristophanes did use Euripides' terse, subtle, captious language and style<sup>75</sup> *but*, in so doing, he made the people less trivial and time-waster (ἀγοραίους) than Euripides did. Disclosing Euripides' 'trade secrets' by way of mimesis, Aristophanes intended to prevent the people from being lured by pretentious and petty talk, subtle quibbles, and fancy phrases, and thus from overlooking the substance, such as – in the case of the second version of *Hippolytus* – the truth that Phaedra's passion was still one that the social conventions of the time would find indecorous and would condemn<sup>76</sup>.

Randolph-Macon College, Ashland (Virginia)

ROSANNA LAURIOLA

<sup>74</sup> This fragment, which constitutes Aristophanes' reply to Cratinus' remark, is recorded in Arethas' scholium as well (see Conte Bizzarro 1999, 92), and belongs to the lost comedy *Women Claiming Tent-Sites* (Σκηναὺς καταλαμβάνουσai), probably performed between 418 and 406 BC: see Gil 2010, 110.

<sup>75</sup> With these words I paraphrased τῷ στρογγύλῳ, i.e., the "well-rounded/terse" language that belongs to Euripides and that Aristophanes adopts by mimicking him. Despite its literal meaning, the adjective seems to imply a negative connotation by referring to a sharp/tricky use of the language: see, e.g., *Ach.* 686 (with *Schol. ad Ach.* 687 (Koster-Holwerda 1975, 90), and Conte Bizzarro 1999, 92).

<sup>76</sup> The designation ἀγοραῖος, which Aristophanes used in this context to indicate the effect of Euripides' style on the audience (and, by comparison, the effects that Aristophanes hoped to achieve to a lesser degree, by mimicking Euripides' style) likely refers to the ἀγορά as the privileged place of the Sophists (see, e.g., Soverini 1998, 17-21), the place where these new, *avant-garde* intellectuals spent their time idling in futile quackery, 'sophistic bubbling' (cf. *Knights* 1373-1380; *Frogs* 1491-1499). As hinted at above, the subtle, refined, sharp speeches of the Sophists were perceived as deceitful, empty chit-chat, to which Aristophanes usually referred through the nouns στωμυλία and λαλιά, and their related verbs, i.e., στωμύλλω and λαλέω (on which, Novo Taragna 1999; Beta 2004, 148-167). Aristophanes' mimetic usage of the same subtle, refined, empty 'chi-chat' style of Euripides was meant to parody that style and, by doing so, to uncover it for what it was, i.e., empty words, appealing – and thus deceitful – for sounding 'very intellectual', so to speak. To Aristophanes' critical mind, by obfuscating their mind through his 'empty-words sounding-intellectual', Euripides would turn the people into Euripidean characters-alike-persons who, learning from the stage how to 'chatter,' 'quibble', and have 'pretentious, fancy and petty talk', would become ἀγοραῖοι, i.e., persons who would lounge in the market-square (ἀγορά) wasting their time in inane pursuits. By disclosing the emptiness of those fancy talks, Aristophanes hoped to diminish the consequences of Euripides' influence on the people (i.e., to make them ἀγοραίους ἦττον).

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ABSTRACT:

The paper proposes a new interpretation of the parodic reference to Euripides' *Hippolytus* 345 present in the opening lines of Aristophanes' *Knights*. It argues that the comic poet singles out exactly that line with the purpose of reminding the 'correction' which Euripides was compelled to make as the first version of his tragedy had 'scandalized' the audience, that same audience which then applauded the new version without realizing – to Aristophanes' eyes – the 'trick' of Euripides' subtle change.

KEYWORDS:

Aristophanes' *Knights*, Euripides' *Hippolytus*, speaking out/keeping quiet, parody, gullible audience.