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Stolen Cloaks in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*

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SUMMARY: I argue that the cloaks that the women steal from their husbands in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* have thematic resonances that extend well beyond their use as part of the women's transvestite disguise. The filching of the cloaks is portrayed as λωποδυσία ("mugging") by Blepyrus at lines 535–38. Once he makes this association, the cloaks come to signify not only gender reversal but also the oikos-polis dialectic and socioeconomic issues that are at the play's core. Praxagora capitalizes on these associations as she presents her agenda to Blepyrus. The stolen cloaks thus link the cross-dressing and economic aspects of the play.

THE CLOAKS THAT THE WOMEN HAVE PILFERED FROM THEIR HUSBANDS may at first seem to be the least remarkable part of the male disguises donned by the women in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, but on further investigation they turn out to be closely interwoven with several of the play's themes.[1] The women's fake beards and other body hair, their suntans and gendered speech, may strike the modern reader as more interesting markers of gender, not to mention as more obvious opportunities for hilarious incongruity. Yet while these other parts of the disguise are discarded and forgotten as soon as the women return from the assembly, the stolen *himatia* have thematic resonances in *Ecclesiazusae* that go far beyond their function as a part of the transvestite disguise.[2] In this paper I posit that the character Blepyrus views the pilfering

[1] The *himatia* have figured, but only in passing, in several recent interpretations of *Ecclesiazusae* that emphasize performance and/or gender: Saïd 1979 and 1987, Taaffe, Slater 1997, and Zeitlin. The use of costume in Greek drama has received recent attention from Bassi 99–143, Worman, Compton-Engle, and Lee.

[2] Sommerstein 1998: 183 observes that "between [lines] 500 and 520 the whole theme of cross-dressing, which has dominated the early part of the play, is rapidly closed down."

of his cloak as an instance of the well-known crime of λωποδυσία, "clothing theft," or more colloquially, "mugging." Seen as such, the women's appropriation of the men's cloaks not only indicates gender role reversal, as does the rest of the disguise, but it also symbolizes all that men stand to lose in the transaction. Furthermore, I argue that when he makes the association between the pilfered cloaks and *lôpodusia,* Blepyrus opens the door for Praxagora (and through her, the poet Aristophanes) to shift the cloaks' function from sex-signifier to symbol of the oikos-polis dialectic at the play's core and of the economic issues that motivate the plot. The stolen *himatia* are thus the one piece of costume that is implicated in all the major themes of the play.

I. *LÔPODUSIA* IN ATHENIAN SOCIETY AND LITERATURE

The theft of cloaks from pedestrians appears to have been a common crime in classical Athens, so much so that there existed a set of special terms, including agent noun (λωποδύτης), abstract noun (λωποδυσία), and verb (λωποδυτέω), to denote the mugger and his crime.[3] In his study of theft in Athenian law, David Cohen cites two factors as constitutive of the specific offense of *lôpodusia*: the stripping of the victim's cloak and the use of physical violence.[4] It is this element of violence, Cohen argues, that makes *lôpodusia* such a serious crime, distinguished from mere "stealthful takings" (κλοπή) from other public or private places.[5] For example, Antiphon 2.2.5, arguing a hypothetical murder case, asserts that it is likely that a man wandering around at night would be murdered for his *himation.* Cloak-stealing is part of the violent assault allegedly perpetrated on Ariston, the speaker of Demosthenes 54 (*Against Conon*). The use of physical force in cases such as this may explain why the death penalty could be prescribed for convicted *lôpodutai.*[6]

While *lôpodusia* can thus be represented as a serious crime involving βία, it is capable of being cast in a more jocular way as well, particularly since it often involves the drunkenness of one or both parties and the humiliation of the stripped victim. A closer look at Demosthenes 54 offers a glimpse into two divergent rhetorical approaches to cloak-stripping and the assault it entails. The plaintiff, Ariston, alleges that as he was walking through the agora

[3] Clothing thieves are frequently included in catalogues of criminal activity in a wide variety of authors, e.g., Ar. *Th.* 817, *Ra.* 772, *Pl.* 165; Diph. fr. 31.14; X. *Mem.* 1.2.62; Pl. *R.* 575b; Arist. *EN* 1122a7, *Ath. Pol.* 52.1; D. 4.47; Aeschin. 1.91.

[4] Cohen 80–81, dismissing the view that *lôpodusia* could also refer to highway robbery more generally.

[5] Cohen 81–82.

[6] On execution as the penalty for *lôpodutai* caught in the act cf. Lys. 13.68.1, X. *Mem.* 1.2.62, Pl. *Lg.* 874c1, Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 52.1; further passages cited at Cohen 80.

one evening, he was assaulted by Conon (a man whose sons had quarreled with Ariston on a previous occasion) and his drunken companions, who stripped him of his cloak and beat him until he was near dead. Ariston claims (1, 24) that he could have prosecuted Conon via *apagôgê* (summary arrest) for *lôpodusia*, but instead has chosen the milder *dikê aikeias* (case for assault). Throughout the speech, Ariston is at pains to stress the severity of the attack: his injuries required the attention of a doctor (10–13); the women of the household wailed as if for a dead man when he was carried home (20); and it was uncertain whether he would live (1, 28). Ariston's presentation of the assault as a matter of utmost gravity is intended as a pre-emptive move against Conon's defense strategy, which will aim to make light of the incident.[7] Repeatedly Ariston warns the jury that Conon will attempt to turn this all into a joke (13 εἰς γέλωτα καὶ σκώμματ' ἐμβαλεῖν πειράσεσθαι; cf. 14 παίζοντες, 20 γελάσαντες, γέλως). Ariston himself mentions outrageous mockery from Conon, most notably the allegation that Conon stood above the stripped and beaten Ariston and flapped his arms like a victorious fighting cock (9).

Conon's portrayal of the incident in comic terms, if indeed he used this strategy in his defense, would have been well grounded, since in fact cloak-stealing is regularly described as a form of humiliation in Aristophanic comedy.[8] The *Acharnians* chorus (1162–73) hopes that the stingy *chorêgos* Antimachus will be knocked down on his way home at night by some Orestes, presumably the same Orestes who is mentioned at *Birds* 712 as a clothing thief and again at *Birds* 1490–93 as one who would strike and strip anyone who happened to meet him after dark.[9] *Frogs* 715–17 evokes the dangers of nighttime strolls in the example of one Cleigenes, who fears that he'll be stripped of his clothes when walking home drunk without his club. The buffoonish Euelpides in *Birds* vividly describes an unpleasant encounter he had with a clothing thief once, when, mistaking a rooster's cry as an indication that it was dawn, he ventured out late at night (*Birds* 496–98):

> κἀγὼ νομίσας ὄρθρον ἐχώρουν Ἁλιμουντάδε, κἄρτι προκύπτω ἔξω
> τείχους καὶ λωποδύτης παίει ῥοπάλῳ με τὸ νῶτον·
> κἀγὼ πίπτω μέλλω τε βοᾶν, ὅ δ' ἀπέβλισε θοἰμάτιόν μου.
>
> And I, thinking it was dawn, was going to Halimous, and I just poke my head outside of the wall, and a clothing-thief strikes me in the back with a club; and I fall and I'm trying to cry out, and he filched my cloak.

[7] On the use of comedy in rhetoric see Harding, Hall 56–57, Halliwell 1991, and Porter.

[8] See Compton-Engle on costume and humiliation in Aristophanes.

[9] For details on this Orestes see Dunbar on *Av.* 712 and 1490–93.

The speaker of Alexis fr. 112, when he sees the chorus of revelers approaching, prays that he may never meet up with such a group late at night, or he won't escape with his *himation*.[10] Opportunistic clothes-snatching, technically *klopê* rather than *lôpodusia*, occurs in Aristophanes as well.[11] For example, early in *Clouds* Strepsiades hears of a *himation* that Socrates filched from the palaestra (177–79); Strepsiades soon stupidly hands over his cloak and shoes to Socrates, who, of course, steals them (*Clouds* 497–500, 856–59, 1498).

Mugging scenarios in comedy thus share a number of features with the accounts given elsewhere: the victim is stripped of his cloak by means of physical violence, almost invariably at night in a public location. These basic elements can nevertheless be represented in quite divergent ways, depending on the speaker's (or author's) purpose and point of view. On the one hand, an author can emphasize the serious and even potentially deadly consequences that *lôpodusia* brings for both parties. The crime can be represented as having arisen from dire economic necessity, as Aristotle suggests in *Politics* when he cites τὰ ἀναγκαῖα as a possible motivation for *lôpodusia*.[12] At the same time, as the comic passages illustrate and the victim himself in Demosthenes 54 admits, cloak-stripping can be associated with mockery and is full of comic possibilities. In *Ecclesiazusae*, the fact that the stolen cloaks at issue are part of the characters' visible costume heightens the potential to exploit all of these various connotations of *lôpodusia*.

II. *LÔPODUSIA* IN *ECCLESIAZUSAE*

From the beginning of *Ecclesiazusae*, emphasis is laid on the fact that the *himatia* worn by the women as part of their male disguise have been stolen from their husbands. As Praxagora awaits the arrival of the other women, she wonders whether it has been difficult for the women to steal (26 κλεψάσαις) their husbands' cloaks unobserved.[13] When one of the women arrives, she explains that all night long her husband was "rowing" her under the covers, so that she was just now able to take his cloak (40 ὥστ' ἄρτι τουτὶ θοἰμάτιον αὐτοῦ 'λαβον).[14] Praxagora concludes her instructions to the women by or-

[10] Cf. also Alexis fr. 78.

[11] Cf. D. 24.114 on theft from gymnasia, Arist. *Pr.* 952a16–35 on pilfering from public places, especially baths.

[12] Arist. *Pol.* 1267a4; cf. Ar. *Ec.* 667–71 (discussed below).

[13] The secrecy and deception of the women's plan, as evidenced by words such as λαθεῖν (26), παρερπύσασα (511), and σιωπῇ (527), are emphasized by Rothwell 47–48 and Taaffe 108.

[14] For λαμβάνω in a cloak-stealing context cf. D. 54.9 οὗτοι δ' ᾤχοντο θοἰμάτιον λαβόντες μου.

dering them to put on "the mens' cloaks, the ones you stole" (275 καὶ θαἰμάτια τἀνδρεῖ', ἅπερ γ' ἐκλέψατε).[15] These early references to the stolen *himatia* suggest theft more generally (*klopê*) rather than *lôpodusia* in particular, but they nevertheless lay the groundwork for a theme that will be developed more explicitly in subsequent scenes.

It is in the confrontation between Praxagora and her husband Blepyrus that the women's actions become associated more closely with actual mugging. Absent his own *himation*, Blepyrus has been forced to wear his wife's yellow garment as he makes a humiliating trip to the outhouse. As scholars have observed, the spectacle of Blepyrus in female attire provides a counterbalance to the women's transvestism in the opening scenes.[16] Blepyrus explains, both to the audience and to a neighbor in the same plight, that he has been unable to find his cloak (313–19, 333–34). When Praxagora returns home and both husband and wife are restored to their normal attire, he asks indignantly where she has been.[17] Not satisfied with her excuse that she was out helping a pregnant neighbor, he demands to know why she took his cloak rather than her own (535–38):

εἶτ' οὐ τὸ σαυτῆς ἱμάτιον ἐχρῆν σ' ἔχειν;
ἀλλ' ἔμ' ἀποδύσασ', ἐπιβαλοῦσα τοὔγκυκλον,
ᾤχου καταλιποῦσ' ὡσπερεὶ προκείμενον,
μόνον οὐ στεφανώσασ' οὐδ' ἐπιθεῖσα λήκυθον.

Then shouldn't you have had your own cloak?
But you stripped me, threw your mantle on me,
and left, abandoning me like a corpse laid out,
all but wreathing me and adding an oil flask.

Apparently Blepyrus was using the *himation* as a blanket while he slept, so he can assert with some exaggeration that Praxagora stripped him and left him

[15] The use of ἅπερ γ' seems oddly emphatic. Ussher ad loc., citing a parallel at E. *El.* 909, suggests that the force of ἅπερ γ' is "the time is now at hand to put them to the use for which you stole them." Sommerstein 1998 ad loc. proposes an alternative explanation: "the implicit contrast with the inner garments, which are the women's own ..., accounts for the slight emphasis given, in the Greek, to the relative pronoun by the particle *ge*." In any case, the words call a bit of extra attention to the pilfered cloaks.

[16] Saïd 1979: 38 and 1987: 234–35, Taaffe 113, and Slater 1997: 107 all note the ridicule brought upon Blepyrus by his female costume. Slater observes, "The sexual inversion of the new state is thus demonstrated even before it is proclaimed."

[17] Olson argues persuasively that Praxagora enters at 504 carrying her disguise and returns it inside the house at 514–16; Blepyrus puts on his cloak and shoes (albeit hastily) by the time he reappears at 520.

lying there like a corpse. These lines evoke three clothing-related actions in quick succession, each one important for the play's themes: first, cloak-stealing; second, transvestism; and third, the placing of a shroud on the deceased as part of the funeral *prothesis*. I will treat each of these in turn, while focusing in the end on *lôpodusia*, which continues to be developed in the ensuing scenes.

By declaring that the cloak was taken from his person (rather than snatched from a chair, for example), and by using a verb (536 ἀποδύσασ') common in descriptions of *lôpodusia*, Blepyrus elevates the seriousness of the theft and casts himself as the victim of a mugging.[18] The dialogue leading up to this scene has set the stage by including repeated references to the time when the clothes were taken—in the dark of night, just as in *lôpodusia*.[19] The corpse simile in lines 537–38 on one level also continues the mugging image by serving as a substitute for the physical violence that accompanies a real mugging and can even lead to death.[20] "You stripped me and left me for dead" is an accusation that one can easily imagine directed at a mugger, and indeed precisely this allegation is made against Conon in Demosthenes 54. Thus three of the common elements in a mugging are present here: nighttime, a stripped cloak, and physical violence. The significance of the location of the mugging will emerge in subsequent lines.

Woven into this scenario in the latter half of line 536 is also a reminder of the feminization of Blepyrus. Praxagora allegedly not only stripped Blepyrus during the night but also, according to Blepyrus, threw on him her own *enkyklon*, a female outer garment. Thus the alleged robbery is also an exchange of gendered clothing. Blepyrus has in fact changed his story slightly since 317–18, when he said simply that he had grabbed his wife's dress when he couldn't find his own; now he says that she threw her mantle on him.[21] The chiastic

[18] Cf. ἀποδύω at Ar. *Av.* 712, *Ra.* 715–16, *Ec.* 667–71 (see below). The orators use ἀποδύω (Lys. 10.10), περιδύω (Antiphon 2.2.5), and ἐκδύω (Antiphon 2.2.5; Lys. 10.10, 11.5; D. 24 passim) when describing muggings.

[19] *Ec.* 312, 314, 321, 375, 526, 528. This repeated reference to the night time-frame is evidence against the possibility (Slater 1997: 98–99) that the pre-dawn setting and the use of the lamp in the prologue were a last-minute addition after Aristophanes learned the order of the play's performance.

[20] Both Antiphon 2.2.5 and D. 54, though tendentious, rest on the assumption that the mugging victim's life could be in danger.

[21] There has also been a change in the type of garment involved. In the previous lines, the female clothing worn by Blepyrus was called ἡμιδιπλοίδιον (318), a κροκωτίδιον (332), and a χιτώνιον (374), all inner garments, while the ἔγκυκλον mentioned here (536) is an outer garment. The reason for this inconsistency is probably pragmatic: the garb

juxtaposition of ἔμ' ἀποδύσασ' and ἐπιβαλοῦσα τοὔγκυκλον in line 536 emphasizes the two parts of this exchange, and also Praxagora's agency in both parts. While the mention of clothing exchange briefly reminds the audience of the transvestism they just recently viewed, the new emphasis on Praxagora as agent matches Blepyrus' current tone of victimization—he is the passive victim, she the perpetrator.

Furthermore, the act of throwing a cloak on a stripped body calls to mind traditional duties that a woman performs over a dead family member. One envisions, for example, the red-figure kylix (Malibu 86.AE.286) on which Tecmessa is depicted covering the naked body of the dead Ajax with a cloth, or her haste to cover his exposed body in Sophocles' play.[22] In the image created by Blepyrus, this covering of the body leads into the *prothesis* simile developed more explicitly in the following two lines (537–38), which refer to the laid out corpse, oil-flask, and wreath. The passage concludes with the key word λήκυθον, which will be developed as a "prime symbol of death" in this play.[23] The words of Blepyrus recall the treatment of *Lysistrata*'s Proboulos, another male character dressed first as a woman and then as a corpse by impudent women (*Lys.* 599–610).[24] As in *Lysistrata*, here too women misapply their traditional duty of caring for the dead to a living man, to his detriment and outrage. The reference to the crime of *lôpodusia* adds to the negative

that Blepyrus wears on stage must be as feminine as possible to heighten the humor, hence the yellow undergarment; but an outer mantle is most appropriate for tossing over a sleeping person, since it is just a rectangular piece of cloth. See Ussher on 535–38. The significance is not the particular garment itself, but the fact that she has taken his male item of clothing and given him her female one instead.

[22] S. *Aj.* 915–16 οὔτοι θεατός· ἀλλά νιν περιπτυχεῖ / φάρει καλύψω τῷδε παμπήδην ("He must not be viewed; but I will cover him entirely with this enfolding shroud").

[23] Sommerstein 1998: 185 notes the continued equation between male disempowerment and death throughout the play. See also Henderson 1972 and Slater 1989 on *lêkythoi*. Interpreters have given various answers to the question of how exactly Blepyrus resembles a corpse. My view is an extension of Ussher's statement (149) that Blepyrus is corpse-like because he "is lying on his back and covered with a garment." I would argue that both the *lôpodusia* motif and the wife's act of covering contribute to the corpse image. The association between stripping and death may be strengthened by the parallels from epic, where defeated warriors are robbed of their armor (Bassi 99–101, 125); ἀποδύω is sometimes the verb employed there, too (e.g., *Il.* 4.532, 18.82–83). Sommerstein 1998: 185 suggests that Blepyrus is like a dead man because Praxagora has been "ignoring his existence as a person." Rothwell 57 plausibly sees an allusion to impotence, paralleled by the experience of the young man at the end of the play.

[24] Saïd 1987: 234 states that "dans la comédie, être transformé en femme ou être transformé en cadavre, c'est tout un." See also Taaffe 187–88 n. 33.

portrayal of Praxagora's actions. Instead of fulfilling her female obligations, she has perpetrated a crime that would normally be committed by a man. In an exaggerated depiction of the deleterious effect on men when their wives usurp both their clothing and their political status, the act of women disguising themselves in their husbands' *himatia* results in the men's feminization, mugging, and even (figurative) death.[25] Such is the view, in any case, presented by Blepyrus.

Although the audience may be laughing at Blepyrus' exaggerated expression of self-pity, Praxagora seizes the opportunity to exploit it. Picking up on her husband's allusion to mugging, she disingenuously claims that she took his shoes and staff to *protect* the cloak from being stolen (544–46).[26] She, of course, interprets her own actions as being for the benefit, not the detriment, of Blepyrus: ultimately to save his cloak, not to steal it. Praxagora continues to promote this positive view of her own intentions as she outlines her agenda, expanding the theme of *lôpodusia* to encompass not just the husbands' *himatia*, but also clothing theft as a widespread social ill. The crime λωποδυτῆσαι (565) appears on Praxagora's list of the problems that will disappear under the newly established system of communally held property. Later she elaborates, claiming that no theft will occur in the remodeled society—or if it does happen, it will not do any real harm, since a person can just go get a new cloak from the common store (667–71):

Βλ. οὐδ' αὖ κλέπτης οὐδεὶς ἔσται;
Πρ. πῶς γὰρ κλέψει, μετὸν αὐτῷ;
Βλ. οὐδ' ἀποδύσουσ' ἄρα τῶν νυκτῶν;
Γε. οὔκ, ἢν οἴκοι γε καθεύδῃς.
Πρ. οὐδ' ἢν γε θύραζ', ὥσπερ πρότερον· βίοτος γὰρ πᾶσιν ὑπάρξει.
ἢν δ' ἀποδύῃ γ', αὐτὸς δώσει· τί γὰρ αὐτῷ πρᾶγμα μάχεσθαι;
ἕτερον γὰρ ἰὼν ἐκ τοῦ κοινοῦ κρεῖττον ἐκείνου κομιεῖται.

Blepyrus: And no one will be a thief?
Praxagora: How will he steal, when he has a share in it?
Blepyrus: And so they won't strip people during the night?

[25] Observed by MacDowell 311: "The first man the audience sees has lost his clothes to his wife; and that, metaphorically, is what the play is about—the men losing their assets to the women."

[26] *Ec.* 544–46 ἵνα θοἰμάτιον σώσαιμι, μεθυπεδησάμην / μιμουμένη σε καὶ κτυποῦσα τοῖν ποδοῖν / καὶ τοὺς λίθους παίουσα τῇ βακτηρίᾳ. It is clear (*pace* Taaffe 121, who seems to interpret ἵνα θοἰμάτιον σώσαιμι as meaning "to keep the cloak clean") that Praxagora refers to actions intended to deter would-be attackers (Ussher and Sommerstein 1998 ad loc.). For a club as anti-theft device cf. *Ra.* 715–17.

> Neighbor: Not if you are sleeping at home, at least!
> Praxagora: Not even if you go outside, as before; for everyone will have a livelihood. And if someone does strip someone, he will give the cloak voluntarily; for what good will it do him to fight? He will go and get another one, better than that one, from the common store.

This exchange further develops the notion that the theft of Blepyrus' cloak constitutes the crime of *lôpodusia*. When Blepyrus asks whether people will be stripped during the night (668), his words can refer either to the common crime or to his own experience of the preceding night. Repeated are the key words κλέπτω, previously used of the women's actions (26, 275), now in both noun and verb forms referring to thievery in general (667); ἀποδύω, used of Praxagora's theft of Blepyrus' cloak at 536 and now of muggers (668, 670); and references to nighttime, found repeatedly in the earlier scene and now again in 668. Most pointed is the neighbor's jesting remark (668) indicating, on the surface, that the streets will still be as dangerous as they were before, but one will be safe in his own home.[27] The second-person singular καθεύδῃς (668) can refer either to an imaginary subject ("one") or more pointedly to Blepyrus himself, since it recalls exactly what Blepyrus has in fact suffered: being stripped of his cloak while he was sleeping in his own home. A similar ambiguity may be present in ἀποδύῃ (670), which could temporarily be understood as a second-person passive ("if you are stripped") until the remainder of the line makes it clear that the form is third-person active, with the thief as understood subject ("if he strips"). Thus even the verb morphology in this passage serves to blend the experience of Blepyrus into the general problem of clothing theft.

These same lines, by juxtaposing οἴκοι (668) and θύραζε (669), focus attention explicitly on the polarity of the household and the public arena. Shortly thereafter, Praxagora states her intention to make the whole city (τὸ ἄστυ) into one οἴκησις (673–74). The characteristics of *lôpodusia* are relevant to this oikos-polis theme, since, as we have seen, muggings typically happen to people who are walking through public places such as the agora or streets of Athens. The contrast between οἴκοι and θύραζε in 668–69 highlights the fact that Blepyrus has suffered a household version of a public crime. From one point of view, then, the mugging of the husbands by their wives in *Ecclesiazusae* can be seen as exemplifying the danger inherent in shattering the boundaries between oikos and polis; just as the women depart from the household to enter the public arena, a public crime enters the home. This

[27] D. 58.65 mentions people who stay inside at night to avoid suffering harm out on the streets.

threatening aspect of the *lôpodusia* is the one played up by Blepyrus in his earlier encounter with Praxagora (535–38). Yet as Helene Foley has argued, the oikos and polis are presented in this play not simply as polar opposites but in a more complex way, often as parallel realms with certain common interests.[28] The intra-oikos mugging is a case in point. As we have seen in lines 667–71, it is the *parallels* between Blepyrus' experience and the wider social problems that receive the emphasis as Praxagora outlines her program. The connection drawn between the stripping of Blepyrus and the public nuisance of *lôpodusia* is a way of bringing the issue home, so to speak. Given Blepyrus' oft-noted tendency to look toward his own interest, this is a shrewd and ultimately effective rhetorical strategy by Praxagora.[29] Under her interpretation, Blepyrus' loss of his cloak becomes less emblematic of inversions of male-female and public-private dichotomies than it is symptomatic of the societal problems plaguing Athens—problems that the women aim to solve.

By virtue of their association with *lôpodusia*, the husbands' cloaks are embedded in the broader socio-economic context depicted in *Ecclesiazusae*, in which poverty causes a host of social problems, from hunger to the lack of proper shelter and adequate clothing.[30] Indeed the absence of proper clothing, whether through poverty or theft, is a recurrent motif in the play. A woman at lines 88–92, for example, says that she has brought some wool-work to do because her children are γυμνά, "naked."[31] Clothing theft, poverty, and nakedness are closely conjoined again at 565–67. The fullest portrayal of poverty-induced cloaklessness comes in Chremes' account of Euaeon's speech in the assembly (408–10):

μετὰ τοῦτον Εὐαίων ὁ δεξιώτατος
παρῆλθε γυμνός, ὡς ἐδόκει τοῖς πλείοσιν·
αὐτός γε μέντοὔφασκεν ἱμάτιον ἔχειν.

After this Euaeon, the really clever guy,
came forward naked, as it seemed to most people:
he himself, at any rate, claimed that he had a cloak.

[28] Foley; see also Saïd 1979 and Rothwell 16–17.

[29] Rothwell 55–60 details Praxagora's persuasive conversion of Blepyrus in the *agôn*.

[30] On poverty in this play see Saïd 1979: 49–50, David 5–20, Sommerstein 1984, Sommerstein 1998: 177. While both Rothwell 12 and MacDowell 313–14 believe that critics have overstated the extent of poverty evidenced in *Ec.*, neither disputes that economic issues are central to Praxagora's agenda.

[31] It should be noted that, as Stone 144–46 has shown, *gymnos* in Aristophanes can indicate either complete nudity or merely the absence of a *himation*.

Euaeon, whose cloak is so thin that he appears naked, proposes that the fullers (who have an excess of cloaks) offer warm clothing to the indigent.[32] When Euaeon's speech is reported by Chremes, Blepyrus himself is standing in his wife's nightie, lacking his own *himation*. In other words, one ill-clad character hears about another; it is no surprise, then, that Blepyrus and the neighbor are sympathetic to Euaeon's proposal.[33] Though the causes and severity of their respective states of undress differ—the saffron-clad Blepyrus is a victim of his wife's pilfering, while Euaeon's described state of undress results from poverty—nevertheless, the parallelism exists for audience members to observe. As the play develops, and Blepyrus' experience is more explicitly linked with *lôpodusia*, Praxagora tries to capitalize on the interlocked interests of Blepyrus and economic sufferers like Euaeon. She promises that clothing theft and nakedness will disappear (565) and that the women will weave clothes for the men (654). Curing the economic problems that ail the city, she argues, would benefit both the poor cloakless Athenians, who will no longer be forced to steal, and the better-off citizens like Blepyrus, who will no longer have their cloaks stolen. By line 710, Blepyrus has been convinced by Praxagora's array of arguments. The stolen cloaks are thus a means of connecting Blepyrus' self-interest to the public interest, and also of linking the hilarity of the play's cross-dressing to a serious economic issue. *Lôpodusia* is a well chosen vehicle for conveying this range of meanings, since as we saw in section I, it is capable of being cast in both a serious and a light-hearted way.

In his treatment of the stolen cloaks in *Ecclesiazusae*, Aristophanes employs comic techniques to raise serious issues, but also displays a characteristically comic resistance to simple resolutions of those matters. As Praxagora's plan is implemented, we hear about piles of garments heaped up on couches, free

[32] We do not know anything about this Euaeon, and it has been suggested (e.g., Ussher ad loc.) that the name was chosen for its irony ("Good Lifetime" for a pathetic beggar). It is tantalizing, however, that the name is attested for a son of Aeschylus (Kirchner, *Prosopographia attica* [henceforth *PA*] 5255, probably the same person as *PA* 5252), who like his brother Euphorion seems to have followed in his father's footsteps as a tragedian. While it is hard to imagine that same Euaeon from the middle of the fifth century still alive in the late 390s or early 380s, our Euaeon could plausibly be a later descendant of the same family, some of whose members were active fourth-century tragedians. (See family tree at Snell 88.) If he were a poet, he would belong to a long literary tradition (discussed by Hays) of poets begging for clothing, from Hipponax to the shivering poet in *Birds*. For lack of evidence, though, this must remain in the realm of pure speculation.

[33] Blepyrus' neighbor states explicitly that the missing *himation* is the only one he had (353); while this doesn't necessarily mean that he's poor (MacDowell 310), it does mean that he currently has no cloak.

for the taking (840). Geron, we are told, has discarded his old shoes and *tribôn*, a poor man's outer garment, and now sports an elegant *chlanis* (848–50).[34] This exchange of clothing is voluntarily rather than violently achieved, and involves a new-for-old rather than the more problematic female-for-male reversal. In other words, Geron experiences a positive outcome in matters of clothing, just as Praxagora had promised. But the sexual inversion of the women's agenda is not allowed to be entirely forgotten, despite Praxagora's success in refocusing Blepyrus' attention on how he stands to gain materially. An old hag comes on stage wearing a *krokôtos* (879) that is just as grotesquely inappropriate on her as it was on Blepyrus several hundred lines earlier. The funereal images, particularly the *lêkythos*, first mentioned by Blepyrus reappear in extended fashion as a series of progressively older and fouler women demand the sexual favors of a young man.[35] Thus while the economic redress reaches a positive resolution, the sexual inversion culminates in a scene that has been best described as "comically nightmarish."[36]

In Geron's exchange of old clothes for new, the cloak motif takes a turn that will be more fully developed in *Wealth*, where changes in clothing represent socioeconomic reversals, though shorn of the gender issues that complicate *Ecclesiazusae*.[37] In *Wealth* as well, poverty is associated with lack of proper clothing. For example, Chremylus says that one of the "benefits" brought by Poverty will be the wearing of rags instead of *himatia* (540). An old hag recalls the good old days when a desperate young man depended on her to give him money for a cloak or shoes (975–86). After Wealth has recovered his sight, a whole scene is devoted to a symbolic exchange of clothing. A Just Man appears wearing a nice *himation* but still carrying his old tattered *tribônion* and shoes in order to dedicate them to the god (842–49). When an informer arrives on the scene, Cario and the Just Man order him to strip off his own *himation* (926); the informer protests the attack (930 οἴμοι τάλας, ἀποδύομαι μεθ' ἡμέραν, "Alas, poor me, I'm being stripped in broad daylight!") but the two men force him to wear the old *tribônion* with the shoes

[34] Stone 162–64 on the *tribôn*, typically worn by poor men, and the *chlanis*, which "was connected with luxury and festivals" (164).

[35] Slater 1989, Henderson 1987: 118–19, Sommerstein 1998: 21–22 and 185.

[36] Henderson 1987: 119. Whether the comic or the nightmarish is more strongly felt in the old hags scene must surely depend on the age and sex of the viewer. For divergent interpretations of this scene see Saïd 1979: 60, Sommerstein 1984, Slater 1997: 119–21, and Halliwell 2002.

[37] Stone 404–7, Groton 19–20.

tacked to his forehead as an added insult.[38] While the treatment of this informer's costume echoes the plight of characters like Blepyrus, the Proboulos in *Lysistrata*, or the Relative in *Thesmophoriazusae*, the gender-centered costume antics of those plays have been replaced in *Wealth* by a use of costume that is centered primarily on more straightforward economic symbolism.[39]

The cloaks in *Ecclesiazusae* thus perform a kind of bridging function, both within the play itself and within the Aristophanic corpus more generally. Within the play, the men's *himatia,* with their specific connection to *lôpodusia,* are the hinge on which the cross-dressing of the play's opening scenes is turned into the redressing of social problems. The cloaks thus enable *Ecclesiazusae* as a whole to interweave the gender issues seen in earlier plays (*Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, and to a lesser extent *Frogs*) with the economic concerns soon to be developed in *Wealth*. Although *Ecclesiazusae* doesn't offer the theatrical dazzle of a play like *Birds* or *Acharnians*, it integrates costume and theme in an effective, economical way by exploiting the multiple associations offered by a set of stolen cloaks.[40] Aristophanes gets a lot of mileage out of a simple piece of costume, one whose lack many audience members may have keenly felt themselves.[41]

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[38] This scene presents a temporal displacement of the cloak-stripping (since it occurs in daylight rather than at night), just as the alleged *lôpodusia* in *Ec.* involves a spatial dislocation (since it takes place in the house rather than on the streets).

[39] In his linguistic study of *Wealth*, Willi 63–65 observes that terms of abuse indicating property violations (τοιχωρύχος, ἱερόσυλος) replace terms indicating violation of social taboo (e.g., ἀναίσχυντος or καταπύγων). Willi takes this lexical shift as evidence for a broader shift in mentality from social to economic.

[40] See English on the more restricted use of stage properties in Aristophanes' later plays.

[41] I presented an earlier version of this paper in April 2003 at the Annual Meeting of CAMWS in Lexington. Many thanks to the audience members there and to the anonymous referees for helpful suggestions.

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