

ARISTOPHANES' *ECCLESIAZUSAΕ* AND THE REMAKING OF THE ΠΑΤΡΙΟΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ*

Ecclesiazusae, the first surviving work of Aristophanes from the fourth century B.C.E., has often been dismissed as an example of Aristophanes' declining powers and categorized as being less directly rooted in politics than its fifth-century predecessors owing to the after-effects of Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War.¹ Arguing against this perception, which was largely based on the absence of ad hominem attacks characterizing Aristophanes' earlier works, this paper explores how *Ecclesiazusae* engages with contemporary post-war Athenian politics in a manner which, while different to his earlier comedies, remained closely rooted in the political and cultural concerns of the 390s. By examining the figure of Praxagora, I will first consider recent suggestions² that

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¹ R.G. Ussher, *Aristophanes Ecclesiazusae* (Oxford, 1973), xiii gives a good summary of the dismissal of *Ecclesiazusae* as an example of a move towards an inferior Middle Comedy and Aristophanes' senility, exemplified by the memorable description by G. Murray, *Aristophanes: A Study* (Oxford, 1933), 197 of the play as 'the literature of fatigue'. The commentaries of Ussher and of A. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes Ecclesiazusae* (Warminster, 1998) have gone some way towards attempting to reverse this perception, although they mainly focus on the play in terms of the *gynaecocracy*'s interaction with Plato's *Republic* and wider philosophical ideas of the early fourth century. Meanwhile, the introduction to M. Vetta, *Le Donne all'Assemblea* (Milan, 1989) examines the play in the context of the development of Attic comedy in the early fourth century. A few studies have swum against this tide, mainly focussing on Praxagora's plans of redistribution and reading the play's language of poverty against a background of the harsh effect of defeat upon the Athenian economy: e.g. E. David, *Aristophanes and Athenian Society of the Early Fourth Century B.C.* (Leiden, 1984). E. Barry, *The Ecclesiazusae as a Political Satire* (Chicago, 1942) examines the play's criticism of the inconsistency of Athenian policy in the 390s, while K. Rothwell, *Politics and Persuasion in Aristophanes' Ecclesiazusae* (Leiden, 1990) reads the play as an endorsement of the democracy and the usefulness of Πειθῶ, embodied by Praxagora, within the democracy. J. Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ, 1998), 122–55 discusses *Ecclesiazusae* within the wider context of a project examining dissenting voices against democracy in Classical Athens, analysing Aristophanes' uses of persuasion, law and legal terminology. The twenty-first century has seen a further turn towards the political context of early fourth-century Athens; A. Scholtz, *Concordia Discors: Eros and Dialogue in Classical Athenian Literature* (Washington D.C., 2007), 71–111 was the first to suggest that Praxagora's plot bore echoes of fifth-century oligarchic coups, while J. Fletcher, 'The women's decree: law and its other in *Ecclesiazusae*', in C.W. Marshall and G. Kovacs (edd.), *No Laughing Matter: Studies in Athenian Comedy* (Bristol, 2012), 127–40 has discussed the legality of Praxagora's decrees in light of the actions of the νομοθέται.

² E.g. Scholtz (n. 1), Fletcher (n. 1).

Ecclesiazusae hints at the possibility of an anti-democratic coup. I will then examine how contemporary discussions of constitutional and legal reforms (including the invocation of ‘founding fathers’ such as Solon and Lycurgus) are incorporated into both Praxagora’s language and the scenes featuring the Selfish Man and Hags that follow the establishment of Praxagora’s regime. Examining these final scenes, I conclude that *Ecclesiazusae* does not suggest that the idea of democratic equality itself is fundamentally flawed,³ but instead argues that Athens needs a suitable leader, well suited to the rough and tumble of assembly rhetoric, in order to successfully function. In the world of *Ecclesiazusae*, the men of Athens have failed too often to inspire any hope, putting their own interest above the state, and the new leader must be someone different. Thus Aristophanes sets up Praxagora as a female Solon to remake the state and lead the democracy. The second half of the play demonstrates this need for a strong leader, as problems arise both from the quarter of critical bystanders (the Selfish Man and Epigenes, the Young Man in the ‘hag scene’) and from over-zealous enforcers (the Old Women).

I – PRAXAGORA’S PLOT

In *Ecclesiazusae* a group dissatisfied with the present state of affairs makes secret plans to pass a motion in the assembly to alter the constitution and to obtain power for their own ends, going on to force citizens to hand over their property to the state. Yet, despite a plot that bears similarities to the oligarchic coups of the late fifth century,⁴ Aristophanes takes care not to stress such elements too strongly. This is not surprising since the rule of the Thirty in 404 proved so divisive and traumatic that an official amnesty, μή μνησικακεῖν, was passed (Andoc. 1.90; Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.43; Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 39.6). As far as one can tell from the limited evidence of the early fourth century, few writers except historiographers and the writers of legal speeches mention the Thirty in the post-war years. Meanwhile, comic poets generally avoided the mention of particularly traumatic events such as the *stasis* or the plague of the 420s, and the same appears true of the events of 404:⁵ for example, jokes in Aristophanes flippantly accusing

³ Pace ‘the ironic readings’ (as labelled by J. Zumbrennen, *Aristophanic Comedy and the Challenge of Democratic Citizenship* [Rochester, NY, 2012], 99–101) of many readings of the play. E.g. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Aristophanes: Lysistrata* (Berlin, 1927), 203–21; S. Saïd, ‘L’Assemblée des femmes’, in J. Bonnamour and H. Delavault (edd.), *Aristophane, Les femmes et la cité* (Fontenay aux Roses, 1979), 33–69; H. Foley, ‘The female intruder reconsidered’, *CPH* 77 (1982), 1–21; L.K. Taaffe, *Aristophanes and Women* (London and New York, 1993), 103–33; T.K. Hubbard, ‘Utopianism and the sophistic city’, in G. Dobrov (ed.), *The City as Comedy: Society and Representation in Athenian Drama* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), 23–50; L. McClure, *Spoken like a Woman* (Princeton, NJ, 1999), 205–59; K. De Luca, *Aristophanes’ Male and Female Revolutions* (Lanham, MD, 2005); Fletcher (n. 1).

⁴ Of particular interest here is Taaffe’s ([n. 3], 182–3) observation of the parallels with Xenophon’s description (in *Hell.* 1.7.8) of the conviction of the generals following Arginousae, where, at the Apatouria, Theramenes arranges for a large group of supporters to infiltrate the assembly dressed as mourning relatives of the war-dead and thereby persuade Callixenus to charge the generals in the council.

⁵ Sommerstein (n. 1), 154. More broadly, S. Halliwell, ‘Comic satire and freedom of speech in Classical Athens’, *JHS* 111 (1991), 48–71, J. Henderson, ‘Attic Old Comedy, frank speech and democracy’, in D. Boedeker and K.A. Raaflaub (edd.), *Democracy, Empire and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 255–73 and A. Sommerstein, ‘Comedy and the unspeakable’, in D.L. Cairns and R.A. Knox (edd.), *Law, Rhetoric and Comedy in Classical Athens* (Swansea, 2004), 205–22 all examine legal restraints on comedy, particularly with regard to the decrees of Morychides and

characters of tyranny, so common in earlier plays, do not exist in *Ecclesiazusae*.⁶ The *Ecclesiazusae* was performed at least ten years after 404,⁷ so, although a reasonable amount of time had allowed the most painful wounds of *stasis* to heal and Athens to recover some external political influence, the disaster of defeat and the upheavals of the Thirty remained a relatively recent memory.

Of course, any perceptions of oligarchy would also be tempered by the fact that the plot of *Ecclesiazusae* was only revealed gradually during the course of the play. Praxagora's original speech only reveals that the women are planning to infiltrate the assembly and the full details of the plan emerge gradually over the next 250 lines of the play. Yet, as the plot is revealed, Aristophanes employs a mixture of language appropriate to democratic discourse in the assembly alongside more sinister phrases hinting at an oligarchic coup.

Praxagora's opening monologue immediately establishes the register of assembly-style speech, remarking that the plan 'was decided by my friends during the Skira', Σκίροις ἔδοξε ταῖς ἐμοῖς φίλαις (*Eccl.* 18).⁸ This use of common formulae from assembly decrees such as ἔδοξε τῷ δήμῳ has echoes elsewhere in Aristophanes, where festivals such as the Skira and the Thesmophoria function as female counterparts to the male assembly.⁹ So far, so democratic, but the reference to Praxagora's φίλαι begins to suggest a certain degree of exclusivity for, while φίλαι is a fairly neutral term, it still denotes a close group of associates rather than the *dēmos* as a whole.¹⁰ Praxagora then goes on to wonder where her ἑταῖραι are (*Eccl.* 23), a word that, as Scholtz points out,¹¹ comes with significantly more sinister overtones than φίλαι.¹² The oligarchic clubs responsible for the coups of 411 and 404 B.C.E. were known as ἑταιρεῖαι, and the term ἑταῖροι is used elsewhere to refer to the oligarchic conspirators of these coups (Thuc. 8.65.2, 8.92.4; Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.46, *Hier.* 3.8; Lys. 12.43).¹³ Thus, Praxagora's use of

Syrankosios. It is safe to suggest that national disasters such as the plague or the Thirty were avoided by comic playwrights either through legal constraints or simply because, unlike personal disasters and misfortune, they were not good sources for comic material.

⁶ E.g. *Eq.* 846–57, *Vesp.* 500–2 for earlier accusations of seizing control of the city through a private army and aiming at tyranny respectively. *Plut.* 948–50 shows one instance of a throwaway charge of tyranny in the fourth century, where the informer tells Wealth that he will accuse him of overthrowing the city. The informer's parasitic nature may license the joke in this instance however.

⁷ Ussher (n. 1), xx–xxv favours 393 B.C.E., while Sommerstein (n. 1), 5–8 prefers a date of 391 B.C.E.

⁸ All Greek texts of Aristophanes are from N.G. Wilson, *Aristophanis Fabulae* (Oxford, 2007).

⁹ Especially prominent in *Thesmophoriazusae*, e.g. *Thesm.* 295–310, 372–9. See further A.M. Bowie, *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy* (Cambridge, 1993), 254–67 on the ritual context of the *Ecclesiazusae* and the Skira.

¹⁰ L.G. Mitchell and P.J. Rhodes, 'Friends and enemies in Athenian politics', *G&R* 43 (1996), 11–30 and W.R. Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth Century Athens* (Princeton, NJ, 1972), 44–9.

¹¹ Scholtz (n. 1), 75–6.

¹² Praxagora also uses the word at 528 and the audience is urged not to act like κακοὶ ἑταῖροι at 1161. Of the nineteen uses of ἑταῖρος/ἑταίρα in Aristophanes, five occur in *Ecclesiazusae* and the usage is especially marked in the play.

¹³ The use in Xenophon's *Hiero*, though not relating to oligarchic coups itself, would seem to be influenced by the word's use at this time, since it discusses a ruler, in this case a tyrant, being murdered by ἑταῖροι. M.H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Norman, OK, 1999), 281–3 argues from later fourth-century orators that ἑταιρεῖαι would have had a broader connotation of a social group of friends and relatives who might support someone in politics. Considering the paucity of surviving texts that could provide evidence for the use of the word in the politics of early fourth-century Athens, an argument *ex silentio* against Hansen would be unwise. Yet, even if ἑταῖροι had a broader meaning beyond oligarchical supporters in the 390s, the word would have retained sinister overtones in the context of a group meeting together in secret in order to force through the assembly a change in Athens' government.

ἐταῖραι in the context of plots and secret meetings seems to cast a degree of doubt over her democratic credentials.

Following this speech, the women then go on to describe their attempts at disguising themselves, making several botched attempts at practising speeches before Praxagora finally speaks and reveals her plan in a trial-run for her speech to the assembly. At this point, Praxagora states that ‘there was a time when we Athenians didn’t call any assemblies’, ἐκκλησίασιν ἦν ὅτ’ οὐκ ἐχρώμεθα | οὐδὲν τὸ παράπαν (*Eccl.* 183–4). The majority of commentators have taken this as a joke about the emptiness of the assembly before the introduction of pay, basing their interpretation on the joke that follows about Agyrrhius, the man responsible for instituting a stipend for assembly attendance.¹⁴ While this reading makes sense in light of the following line, ‘but we knew Agyrrhius was a knave then’, ἀλλὰ τὸν γ’ Ἀγγύρριον | πονηρὸν ἠγούμεσθα (*Eccl.* 184–5), it misses what would be the most immediate instance in recent memory of Athens functioning without an assembly—the two periods of oligarchic rule at the end of the fifth century. Although the mention of Agyrrhius makes the preceding line palatable, Aristophanes’ text claims one meaning for the line while fully aware that another more sinister interpretation would have been the first conclusion the audience reached. As with the earlier references to ἐταῖραι, a more sinister interpretation flickers for a moment before, this time, being quickly explained away by the subsequent joke about Agyrrhius.

Despite these sinister hints, the speeches of Praxagora and her ἐταῖραι reveal a high familiarity with the democratic language of the assembly. Thus, Praxagora asks the assembled women, τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται; (*Eccl.* 130),¹⁵ echoing the appeal of Aeschines’ assembly herald,¹⁶ and also prefaces her own speech with the customary prayer to the gods and a declaration of her own interest in the state, τοῖς θεοῖς μὲν εὐχομαι | τυχεῖν κατορθώσασα τὰ βεβουλευμένα. | ἐμοὶ δ’ ἴσον μὲν τῆσδε τῆς χώρας μέτα | ὅσον περ ὑμῖν (*Eccl.* 171–4).¹⁷ Even her hapless accomplices have enough familiarity with assembly speeches to preface their own attempts with tropes such as the ‘I wish that one of the usual speakers had spoken’ line, ἐβουλόμην μὲν ἕτερον ἂν τῶν ἠθάδων | λέγειν τὰ βέλτισθ’ (*Eccl.* 151–2).¹⁸ Yet, while the other women are needed in order to swing the vote at the assembly, there is also a constant risk that they will reveal their identity and thwart a scheme which is very much Praxagora’s own. Praxagora’s statement that she learnt to speak καλῶς by listening to the orators on the Pnyx when she lived there ἐν ταῖς φυγαῖς marks her out as different to the other women (*Eccl.* 241–4):

¹⁴ Ussher (n. 1), ad loc.; Sommerstein (n. 1), ad loc.

¹⁵ ‘Who wishes to address the assembly?’

¹⁶ Ussher (n. 1), ad loc. Cf. Aeschin. *In Tim.* 23 καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐπερωτᾷ ὁ κῆρυξ· «τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται τῶν ὑπὲρ πεντήκοντα ἔτη γεγονότων».

¹⁷ ‘I pray to the gods to arrange that things are decided correctly. My share in this country is just as much as yours.’ Ussher (n. 1), ad loc. notes various instances of assembly speeches openings with prayers, including most famously at Dem. *De cor.* 1 πρῶτον μὲν, ὁ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τοῖς θεοῖς εὐχομαι πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις. Vetta (n. 1) and Sommerstein (n. 1), ad loc. point out the advice in Arist. [*Rh. Al.*] 1437b13–16, which advises speakers intervening in controversial matters to declare the importance of everyone with an interest in the city’s welfare to give an opinion. τῷ δὲ μὴ εἰθισμένῳ ἐκ τε τοῦ μεγέθους τῶν κινδύνων καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πάντα τινά, ὃ τῆς πόλεως μέτεστιν, ὑπὲρ τῶν νῦν προκειμένων ἀποφραίνεσθαι γνώμην.

¹⁸ Ussher (n. 1), ad loc., Vetta (n. 1), ad loc. and Sommerstein (n. 1), ad loc. draw parallels with Dem. 4.1, Isoc. 6.2 and Thrasym. B 1.

Γυ. β. εὖ γ', ὦ γλυκυτάτη Πραξαγόρα, καὶ δεξιῶς.
 πόθεν, ὦ τάλαινα, ταῦτ' ἔμαθες οὕτω καλῶς;
 Πρ. ἐν ταῖς φυγαῖς μετὰ τάνδρὸς ὄκησ' ἐν Πυκνί.
 ἔπειτ' ἀκούουσ' ἐξέμαθον τῶν ῥητόρων.

Woman: Well said, sweetest Praxagora, and skilfully too.

But where did you learn such fine talk, my dear?

Praxagora: During the displacements I lived with my husband on the Pnyx and learned by listening to the orators.¹⁹

Acknowledging Praxagora's leadership, the other women promise to elect her στρατηγός if the plan succeeds: καὶ σε στρατηγὸν αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτόθεν | αἰρούμεθ', ἦν ταῦθ' ἀπινοεῖς κατεργάση (*Eccl.* 246–7).²⁰ The use of the title στρατηγός combined with the verb αἰρέομαι (often used to signify election to office, for instance Hdt. 1.96, Pl. *Menex.* 90b, Pl. *Ap.* 28e) further orientates Praxagora within the confines of democracy. Since the στρατηγός is one of the few elected offices in Athenian life, it is a perfect fit for Praxagora who needed to be chosen directly for her rhetorical ability and political leadership.²¹ This formalization of Praxagora's role through election (albeit in the parallel assembly of the women) places her in a similar position to earlier democratic leaders. The most famous example of this is Pericles who derived his authority from his elected position by virtue of his exceptional abilities rather than as a potential oligarch.²²

The role of στρατηγός was hardly limited to the military sphere either: Hansen lists several privileges and duties accorded to στρατηγοί including the right to attend and address the βουλή, presiding over the People's Court in cases under military law and disputes between trierarchs, and taking the oath (alongside members of the βουλή) on behalf of the state when signing treaties with other states.²³ It is not surprising then to find that Praxagora's new role clearly encompasses assembly leadership, since, in the lines preceding her report of the assembly's activities, the chorus declare that they can see their στρατηγός coming back from the assembly (*Eccl.* 500–1). While

¹⁹ Trans. J. Henderson, *Aristophanes Frogs, Assemblywomen, Wealth* (Cambridge, MA, 2002) with modifications. Whether Praxagora is referring to a specific historical incident here is unclear. The scholiasts state that this is an allusion to the Thirty but modern commemorators (e.g. Vetta [n. 1], ad loc., Sommerstein [n. 1], ad loc.) generally reject this, since this would have been precisely the time when there were not speeches being made on the Pnyx and large numbers of people were probably leaving Athens at that point. Modern suggestions centre around the various influxes of refugees from the Attic countryside during the Archidamian war and following the Spartan occupation of Deceleia or the aftermath of Aegospotamoi, when Lysander ordered that all Athenians living in the former empire return to Athens. Considering the regularity of these disruptions during the Peloponnesian War, Praxagora's reference is likely to refer more generally to times of disruption under the pre-404 democracy rather than to a specific incident.

²⁰ 'And we women will choose you as general immediately, if you'll achieve what you have in mind.'

²¹ Pace Sommerstein (n. 1), ad loc., who suggests that Praxagora's election as sole general has sinister overtones, invoking Dionysius of Syracuse's election as στρατηγός αὐτοκράτωρ (Diod. Sic. 13.95.1) before making himself tyrant. I see no indication that that the role is being removed from its democratic context and it must have been common that sometimes some στρατηγοί in a year would eclipse others. The use of στρατηγός in combination with αἰρέομαι would ensure a suitably democratic-sounding procedure.

²² Cf. McClure (n. 3), 242: 'like Lysistrata, who appears unmoved by the sexual appetites that weaken the resolve of her peers, Praxagora possesses self-control, which earns her the title of *stratēgos*, general.' Note also *Eccl.* 304–5, where the chorus invoke the example of Myronides ὁ γεννάδας, a mid fifth-century general, as an example of the good old days.

²³ Hansen (n. 13), 268–69.

the tactic of cementing one's domestic leadership in Athens by being elected στρατηγός was not as common in the 390s as it had been amongst the politicians of the fifth century, the practice had not died out completely.²⁴

Thus, when Chremes describes Praxagora's assembly speech he describes how her supporters raised an uproar, ἐθορύβησαν (*Eccl.* 431), and how Praxagora (still in disguise and thus referred to with the masculine article ὁ) held her opponents in check with her shouting, ὁ δὲ κατεῖχε τῆ βοῇ (*Eccl.* 434). Praxagora's ability as a speaker of persuasive arguments has already been demonstrated in the play's opening scenes, but now her skill as a shouter and brawler is revealed as well. This further aligns her with Aristophanic descriptions of assembly leaders from the 420s, paralleling Pericles' thundering or Cleon's loud voice in the 420s.²⁵ Meanwhile, the phrase κατεῖχε τῆ βοῇ also recalls Thucydides' famous description of Pericles' political leadership, describing how Pericles 'easily restrained the masses', κατεῖχε τὸ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρως (Thuc. 2.65.8). Indeed, this passage of Thucydides, with its meditation upon the crisis in leadership in Athens following Pericles' death, bears considerable parallels with the appeal to leadership in *Ecclesiazusae*. Athens needs a leader skilled in assembly speech and able to rise above self-interest. By virtue of her position as στρατηγός (later transformed into the feminine στρατηγίς, *Eccl.* 835, 870), Praxagora's language and rhetorical skill (as well as her very name) portray her not as an oligarch but as the type of popular leader no longer present in post-war Athens, evoking previous Aristophanic protagonists. Her skill with words (albeit with considerably less invective) and her reforming vision position her as a similar character to the Sausage-Seller in *Knights* or to Lysistrata, who states that she learnt rhetoric from her father (*Lys.* 1126–7).²⁶

Further reassurance of Praxagora's democratic credentials is provided by her and Blepypus' social standing. Oligarchs were commonly thought of as wealthy individuals who were eager for a greater share of power than democracy allowed, yet, by contrast, Praxagora and Blepypus seem to be struggling to make ends meet in *Ecclesiazusae*. Throughout the opening half of *Ecclesiazusae*, the language of poverty rather than wealth is used and it is clear that Praxagora's plan arises out of material need rather than a desire for power. Alan Sommerstein has highlighted post-war poverty as one of the central concerns in both *Ecclesiazusae* and *Wealth*,²⁷ and much of Praxagora's

²⁴ Hansen (n. 13), 269–71 argues that this division between general and rhetorician began during the early fourth century rather than earlier during the Peloponnesian War owing to increasing professionalism in both disciplines. Once again, however, the majority of evidence comes from the time of Demosthenes. While some early fourth-century στρατηγοί such as Iphicrates no longer played a role in domestic politics, the case of Thrasybulus (elected general in 395/4 and 394/3 and also prominent in domestic politics, the last major example of this dual leadership) suggests that it was still possible for a στρατηγός to be thought of as taking a leading role in the assembly as well. The divergence of the two roles must still have been in its infancy in the 390s. On Thrasybulus, see R. Develin, *Athenian Officials: 684–321 B.C.* (Oxford, 1989), 207–9, B. Strauss, *Athens after the Peloponnesian War: Class, Faction and Policy 403–386 B.C.* (Ithaca, NY, 1987), 90–4 and R.J. Buck, *Thrasybulus and the Athenian Democracy* (Stuttgart, 1998).

²⁵ For Pericles the thundering Olympian, see *Ach.* 530–1 ἐντεῦθεν ὀργῆ Περικλέης οὐλύμπιος | ἤστραπτ', ἐβρόντα, ξυνεκύκα τὴν Ἑλλάδα. On Cleon, see *Vesp.* 1034 φωνὴν δ' εἶχεν χαράδρος ὄλεθρον τετοκυίας. The latter reference of course is not positive but does illustrate that, in Aristophanic comedy, having a strong-speaking voice was necessary for those who wished to acquire political leadership in the Assembly.

²⁶ See further Rothwell (n. 1), 82–92 for Praxagora's characterization as a ῥήτωρ.

²⁷ A. Sommerstein, 'Aristophanes and the demon poverty', *CQ* 34 (1984), 314–33 discusses the portrayal of poverty in *Ecclesiazusae* and *Wealth*, arguing against the 'ironic interpretation' of the

dissatisfaction with the state can be boiled down to the relative poverty of the ordinary Athenian. Indeed, her plan to hold everything in common seems designed to win favour by eliminating the gap between rich and poor (*Eccl.* 588–94). Thus, one co-conspirator complains that her children are naked through lack of clothes (*Eccl.* 92), while Blepyrus, Praxagora's husband, seems to own only one cloak (*Eccl.* 333–4). Regardless of whether this indicates poverty or not,²⁸ Blepyrus' subsequent actions indicate a man who is not well off; he enthusiastically agrees with Euaeon's speech, anticipating Praxagora's plans by proposing that clothes be shared out equally amongst the citizens, and even adds that Euaeon should have gone further and proposed that grain dealers give food to the poor (*Eccl.* 408–26). In the self-interested Athens of the *Ecclesiazusae*, where people only vote in their own private interest,²⁹ Blepyrus' enthusiasm for Euaeon's suggestions betray his poverty. Although Praxagora herself makes no statements as to her own poverty, her husband's remarks reveal her lack of wealth. Praxagora's subsequent plans for redistribution confirm this reading since they are designed to ensure that everyone is able to eat and drink well rather than to be a property confiscation in the style of the Thirty.³⁰

One factor remains to be considered—the status of women themselves. In a society like Athens where all citizens are male, is the transfer of power to women an inherently anti-democratic act?³¹ While women were not technically citizens, it is noticeable that Praxagora's language and reforms are framed in a way that they are aimed to be beneficial only to Athenians themselves; for instance, Praxagora's sexual reforms forbid slaves and prostitutes from sleeping with citizens (*Eccl.* 721–4). This stands in contrast to *Lysistrata*, where the plans of the women are concocted in unison, alongside the women of other Greek cities.³² Moreover, while women did not enjoy the status of male citizens, they were crucial to the continuing success of the state. Under Pericles' citizenship law, a child was a citizen only if they were the child of both an Athenian mother and an Athenian father.³³ Thus, while Praxagora and her friends do not have voting rights ordinarily, they are a crucial part of the Athenian democratic system. Their

two plays' utopian proposals. Sommerstein is certainly correct that the Peloponnesian War led to a decrease in prosperity amongst the Athenians and that this thus became an extremely relevant topic for Aristophanes. See also Strauss (n. 24), 42–54 for an analysis of post-war Athens' economy and agricultural production.

²⁸ There is some disagreement over whether owning only one cloak is a mark of poverty or not. Sommerstein (n. 1), ad loc.—following D.M. MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens: An Introduction to the Plays* (Oxford, 1995), 310—suggests that even well-to-do Athenians might have only one cloak, merely replacing it more regularly.

²⁹ E.g. *Eccl.* 185–8, discussing the varying reactions to the introduction of assembly-pay, depending on whether or not someone is benefiting from it. On self-interest as a key theme in *Ecclesiazusae*, see Rothwell (n. 1), 10–19.

³⁰ E.g. *Eccl.* 605 'no one will experience poverty', οὐδεὶς οὐδὲν πενίᾳ δράσει. The basic message of the speech at *Eccl.* 588–94 is also to ensure that everyone at least has enough to live on, aiming to establish 'a common livelihood for all', κοινὸν πᾶσιν βίον (*Eccl.* 594).

³¹ As Said (n. 3), 34–6 suggests, characterizing the *gynaecocracy* as the final stage in the corruption of democracy.

³² N. Loraux, *The Children of Athena* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 152–3.

³³ The key evidence for Pericles' citizenship law is Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 26.4, who states that Pericles proposed that someone only became a citizen if both parents were Athenians, ἐξ ἁμφοῖν ἄστοιν. For a recent discussion of Pericles' citizenship law, see J.H. Blok, 'Perikles' citizenship law: a new perspective', *Historia* 58 (2009), 141–70, who provides a thorough overview of all sources referring to the law and argues that the law was not designed to restrict the numbers of an ever-growing citizen body but an attempt to raise the status of the δῆμος. See also C. Patterson, 'Athenian citizenship law', in M. Gagarin and D. Cohen (edd.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Law*

status as daughters, wives and mothers of citizens as well as the citizen-friendly nature of their reforms (it is noticeable that, unlike earlier plays, there is almost no discussion of the world outside Athens in *Ecclesiazusae*) means that, while male citizens are removed from power, the state continues to serve their interest since they are freeborn Athenians.

Moreover, as Ober points out,³⁴ *Ecclesiazusae* engages in considerable blurring of gender roles. Not only do the women imitate male characteristics, both physically and linguistically, but the male members of the assembly are presented with feminine characteristics. Jokes about the links between clever speaking and sexual penetration are particularly common in *Ecclesiazusae* (for example, *Eccl.* 110–4), and Agyrrius is presented as a former woman who is now a successful assembly speaker (*Eccl.* 103–4). Even before Blepyrus appears on stage in his wife's clothes, the division between male and female roles has been blurred in the play. While *Ecclesiazusae* makes considerable hay from the comic potential of what a *gynaecocracy* would look like, imagining how the *polis* would run if women ran it just like the *oikos*,³⁵ the blurring of gender roles from the very start³⁶ and the aggressively pro-citizen/anti-slave tone of Praxagora's reforms mean that the threat posed by Praxagora and her regime is not an anti-democratic one.

II – REMAKING THE ΠΑΤΡΙΟΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ

Rather than representing an oligarch, something that would be almost unpalatable on stage, Praxagora's language aligns her with an alternative form of political change, recalling the refining of the constitution and law-codes³⁷ alongside the accompanying debates over the *πάτριος νόμος* ('ancestral law') and *πάτριος πολιτεία* ('ancestral constitution'). These phrases had been adopted by a variety of political groups (including oligarchs)³⁸ with wildly different interpretations of their meaning. The one constant

(Cambridge, 2005), 267–89, who discusses the use of the specific term *ἀστός* and places Pericles' law in the broader context of Athenian ideas concerning citizenship from Solon to Demosthenes.

³⁴ Ober (n. 1), 136–9. Taaffé (n. 3), 115–23 discusses the physical and linguistic disguises of the women in detail but does not consider the feminized portrayal of the male Athenian citizens.

³⁵ Following Foley (n. 3), 5, who observes that ideas about the *oikos* and communal living were current in political theory at this point (especially in relation to Sparta), using the example of Xen. *Oec.*

³⁶ For further analysis of gender switching (especially in light of *Ecclesiazusae*'s status as a play performed by a cast of male actors), see Taaffé (n. 3).

³⁷ Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 29.2–4 details the establishment of the committee in 411 B.C.E. and 34.3 shows that it was still active in 404 B.C.E. as well. Andoc. 1.82 also demonstrates the process continued after the restoration.

³⁸ E.g. Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 35.2 on the initial actions of the Thirty: 'at first they were moderate towards the citizens and pretended to seek for the ancestral constitution', τὸ μὲν οὖν πρῶτον μέτριοι τοῖς πολίταις ἦσαν καὶ προσεποιούντο διώκειν τὴν πάτριον πολιτείαν. J. Shear, *Polis and Revolution: Responding to Oligarchy in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 2011), 42–3 also presents Thrasym. B 1, a fragmentary speech preserved by Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 3, claiming that the *πάτριος πολιτεία* was causing civic unrest through its frequent innovations despite being perfectly simple. For an extensive analysis of the *πάτριος πολιτεία* theme and constitutional reform, see M.I. Finley, 'The ancestral constitution', in *The Use and Abuse of History* (London, 1975), 34–59 and C. Mossé, 'La thème de la *patrios politeia* dans la pensée Grecque du IV^e siècle', *Eirene* 16 (1978), 81–9. More recently, Shear discusses the *πάτριος πολιτεία* theme in the context of reactions to oligarchy in Athens, while M. Canevaro, 'Making and changing laws in ancient Athens', in M. Canevaro and E.M. Harris (edd.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Law* (Oxford, forthcoming) examines the phrase's role in Athenian law-making. Both Shear and Canevaro see the

was the stress on the pre-Cleisthenic origins of the constitution, as Solon, Draco and even Theseus were all invoked as lawgivers par excellence and arbitrators of ὁ πάτριος in Athenian public memory.³⁹ The cataloguing and revising of laws was accompanied by a review of state sacrifices and the process lasted until 399/8 B.C.E.⁴⁰ At the time of the performance of the *Ecclesiazusae* in the late 390s, therefore, these reforms would have appeared to be just the latest, most stable version of a succession of political revisions and experiments that had occurred over the past twenty years. Some proposals met with more success than others⁴¹ (and the actions of the Thirty had ensured that oligarchy was no longer a viable alternative), but in *Ecclesiazusae*'s depiction of post-war Athens, where the memories of the empire's prosperity are still prominent, there is a clear desire for change in an effort to recapture past glories.

In this context, Praxagora's long speech (*Eccl.* 214–40) about the conservatism of women takes on extra significance. The speech begins by declaring that Praxagora will show that women are superior in habit, the first example being that they dye their wool according to the ancient custom, κατὰ τὸν ἀρχαῖον νόμον (*Eccl.* 216). Unlike the city, which constantly strives for new things, they do things 'just as they always have', ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ. The speech continues with a long list of female comic stereotypes, all of which the women do ὥσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ. This appeal to tradition appears to invoke the πάτριοι νόμοι many Athenian politicians and reformers claimed they wanted to recreate.

Moreover, Chremes' description of why the assembly was so busy when Praxagora spoke, remarking that the assembly was packed since the Athenians were debating their salvation, περὶ σωτηρίας (*Eccl.* 396–7), also evokes an atmosphere of crisis and reform. Peter Rhodes, commenting on *Athenaion Politeia*'s quotation of a decree in the run-up to 411 (Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 29.2, 29.4),⁴² has argued that the phrase περὶ σωτηρίας was a common formula for open debate in times of crisis; such a phrase is suitable therefore for Praxagora's Athens, where politicians like Thrasybulus have denied her anything more than a glimpse at σωτηρία peeking out (*Eccl.* 202–3). Chremes' later comment on the assembly's decision to hand over power to the women adds further weight to this suggestion: 'it seemed that this was the only thing which hadn't been tried' (*Eccl.* 456–7). In other words, having tried and failed with every other form of government, why not hand over power to the women as a last resort? Such an attitude would

invocation of the πάτριος πολιτεία initially as an oligarchic initiative that was then taken up by democrats in their response to the periods of oligarchic rule.

³⁹ Hansen (n. 13), 296–300. On 'founding fathers', see e.g. Dem. 22.30–2 for Solon, and [Dem.] 59.75 for Theseus.

⁴⁰ Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 40.2–3; Andoc. 1.82–3 describes the continual work of the commission to examine the ancestral laws and to formulate new ones. Hansen (n. 13), 161–77 provides an overview of the process along with N. Robertson, 'The laws of Athens, 410–399 B.C.: the evidence for review and publication', *JHS* 110 (1990), 43–75 and P.J. Rhodes, 'The Athenian code of laws, 410–399 B.C.', *JHS* 111 (1991), 87–100. On the review of state sacrifices, see S. Dow, 'The Athenian calendar of sacrifices: the chronology of Nikomakhos' second term', *Historia* 9 (1960), 270–93.

⁴¹ Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 40.1 provides one example of unsuccessful constitutional reform with Thrasybulus' attempt to grant citizenship to slaves and metics who had helped restore the democracy.

⁴² P.J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford, 1981), ad loc. The phrase is quoted from the decree of Pythodorus. Sommerstein (n. 1), ad loc. also supplies Dem. 18.248 for the phrase's use after the defeat at Chaeronea, while Vetta (n. 1), ad loc. discusses the phrase's use in political thought at the time.

only be possible in a situation where debates about what was *πάτριος* in relation to the constitution and the laws was still a recent memory.

The manipulation of *ὁ πάτριος* finds further echoes in the debate between Blepyrus' neighbour and the Selfish Man, where both sides invoke different interpretations of Athenian tradition. The Neighbour supports Praxagora's plans, stating that it is traditional for the Athenians to be open to new ideas: 'You shouldn't fear opening a new vein, for us disregarding the old ways is better than any other form of government', *περὶ μὲν τοῖνυν τοῦ καινοτομεῖν μὴ δέεισιν· τοῦτο γὰρ ἡμῖν | ὄραν ἄντ' ἄλλης ἀρχῆς ἐστίν, τῶν δ' ἀρχαίων ἀμελῆσαι* (*Eccl.* 586–7).⁴³ Meanwhile, the Selfish Man, trying to convince the Neighbour that self-interest will prevent the Athenians from turning in their possessions, says that he will not turn in his property since it is not *πάτριον* to do so: 'Do you think anyone with any sense will hand over their goods? It isn't traditional to do this', *οἴσειν δοκεῖς τιν', ὅστις αὐτῶν νοῦν ἔχει; | οὐ γὰρ πάτριον τοῦτ' ἐστίν* (*Eccl.* 777–8).

The contrariness of these two statements neatly illustrates the problem of invoking *ὁ πάτριος*, since both sides are able to claim that they are the ones who are operating within tradition. The attitude of the Selfish Man displays another major stumbling block to Praxagora's reforms, as the self-interest of some citizens prevents them from fully contributing to the best interests of the state,⁴⁴ a parallel to the self-interest of the male assembly-members who are motivated solely by their daily attendance fee (*Eccl.* 186–8, 192–203, 206–8). By contrast, the ambiguity of the Neighbour's statement that it is in the Athenian character to innovate hints at the non-traditional nature of Praxagora's reforms (as well as perhaps previous systems tried by the Athenians). Even if Praxagora's way of life as a woman is traditional, the reforms, like all other proposed reforms, are not. The line suggests that the Athenians are well aware of the misuse of appeals to tradition by the late 390s. Indeed, the reactions of the male characters, both the Neighbour and the Selfish Man as well as Chremes and Blepyrus in the previous scene, to Praxagora's suggestions reveal a degree of uncertainty and fatigue over the debate surrounding *ὁ πάτριος*. Moreover, their reactions highlight the chief problem Praxagora faces—the self-interest of male citizens.

The eventual fate of the Selfish Man is famously ambiguous in *Ecclesiazusae*, since the scene closes with him claiming that he will be able to sneak into the feast without giving up his property (*Eccl.* 872–6), and he is never seen or heard of again.⁴⁵ Ironic readings of the play have seen the Selfish Man as embodying the inevitable selfish element of human nature that Praxagora's reforms cannot overcome.⁴⁶ However, I would follow Sommerstein and Slater in suggesting that the Selfish Man would likely be unsuccessful in his attempts. Sommerstein remarks that the Selfish Man's failure may have been predicted in the choral interlude which follows the scene and provides

⁴³ Following Henderson (n. 19), I take the manuscript reading of *ἀρχῆς* over Bergk's emendation *ἀρετῆς* used by Wilson (n. 8).

⁴⁴ Following M. Christ, 'Imagining bad citizenship in Classical Athens: Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* 730–876', in I. Sluiter and R.M. Rosen (edd.), *Kakos: Badness and Anti-Value in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden, 2008), 169–83.

⁴⁵ On the other hand, note the intriguing suggestion in S.D. Olson 'The identity of the *δεσπότης* at *Ecclesiazusae* 1128 ff.', *GRBS* 28 (1987), 161–6, at 165 n. 10 that the Selfish Man may reappear as Epigenes, the Young Man in the 'hag scene' (a suggestion which would make his fate clear-cut). This proposal has not met with general acceptance, however.

⁴⁶ E.g. T.K. Hubbard (n. 3), 39, Wilamowitz (n. 3), 215: 'Wir lernen zugleich, daß der Kommunismus schon am Egoismus scheitert.'

several examples of other Aristophanic ἀλαζόνες who leave threatening trouble and are never heard from again (*Nub.* 1254–5; *Vesp.* 1332–4, 1441; *Av.* 1052; *Plut.* 944–50).⁴⁷

Slater also sees the Selfish Man as playing the role of a typical Aristophanic ἀλαζών in this scene. Yet, Slater points out, in contrast to most comedies, the ἀλαζών is not confronted by the protagonist. Since the dismissal of ἀλαζόνες often requires force, it would be unsuitable for Praxagora to play that role, and a substitute is thus needed.⁴⁸ Indeed, the Neighbour is hardly an idealistic pushover in the debate, he holds his ground and, as Rothwell notes, ‘turns the Dissident’s technique of sarcastic interruption against him’ (*Eccl.* 862–5).⁴⁹ Secondly, Slater adds, the goods that the Selfish Man hangs onto would become less and less valuable as more and more citizens handed in their property (*Eccl.* 805–6 suggests that the majority are following Praxagora’s orders).⁵⁰ The Selfish Man thus represents both another example of male self-interest as well as fulfilling the role of a typical ἀλαζών.

Once Praxagora’s reforms are formally approved, two further words relevant to contemporary politics and reform feature prominently, νόμοι and ψηφίσματα. Alongside the cataloguing of laws, the difference between these two terms had also been formally enshrined after 403: νόμοι were now permanent laws, applicable to the whole citizen body and collected and ratified by the νομοθέται, while ψηφίσματα were decrees of the assembly which had a limited duration or scope. In fourth-century Athens, the assembly had no power over the legislating of νόμοι (decrees of the assembly were ψηφίσματα) and were merely able once a year to suggest a review or amendment of a νόμος by the νομοθέται.⁵¹

Given these recently defined concepts, an examination of how *Ecclesiazusae* uses the two terms is revealing of attitudes towards Praxagora’s reforms. νόμος occurs much more frequently in the play compared to ψήφισμα,⁵² yet it is the latter that is used to describe official decisions. Thus, ψήφισμα is used when discussing the assembly’s decision to turn over power to the women (*Eccl.* 649, 812–13), and the law the First Old Woman uses to force the Young Man to sleep with her is likewise a ψήφισμα (*Eccl.* 1013). νόμος, meanwhile, seems unmarked, used to discuss Athenian customs but also to refer more generally to Praxagora’s reforms.

By referring to Praxagora’s reforms as ψηφίσματα, Aristophanes appears to invite questions about the validity of the new regime. Is it legitimate to change the constitution through a ψήφισμα? Opinion among modern scholars is split, depending on their reading of the ‘hag scene’, where many of the uses of νόμος and ψήφισμα occur. On the one hand, Ober argues that the distinction between the two terms was vague and that the resulting confusion provides perfect material for comedy. For Ober, the variant uses of the two terms in the play serve as evidence that Aristophanes jumbled the two

⁴⁷ Sommerstein (n. 1), 21, 213.

⁴⁸ N.W. Slater, *Spectator Politics: Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes* (Philadelphia, 2002), 221–3. Cf. McClure (n. 3), 236–53 for an analysis of how the language of Praxagora and her co-conspirators changes dramatically depending on whom they are talking to. The women are much more lewd when talking among themselves but return (briefly and not without the standard being undermined) to speech more appropriate to their social roles as women when talking to Blegyrus *et al.*

⁴⁹ Rothwell (n. 1), 65.

⁵⁰ Slater (n. 48), 229.

⁵¹ Hansen (n. 13), 162–4.

⁵² The word νόμος occurs thirteen times, *Eccl.* 216, 609, 741, 759, 762, 944, 987, 988, 1022, 1041, 1049, 1056 and 1077. ψήφισμα occurs only four times, *Eccl.* 649, 813, 1013 and 1090.

terms together for comic effect. Praxagora's reforms are thus acceptable, legitimized by 'the public speech act that established women as politically male' and by her appeal to the ἀρχαῖος νόμος (*Eccl.* 214–40).⁵³ Fletcher, meanwhile, argues that Aristophanes' use of the word ψήφισμα shows that the reforms of the women cannot legally carry long-term implications since they are not νόμοι. Moreover, by abolishing the courts (*Eccl.* 655–7), Praxagora has removed the means by which her reforms could be overturned through the use of a γραφή παρανόμων.⁵⁴

The contrary readings of Ober and Fletcher both draw attention to the problematic nature of enacting constitutional change through an assembly that could only pass ψηφίσματα. Yet, Fletcher's argument that the Old Women turn the ψήφισμα into a νόμος by referring to the law as νόμος in the second half of the scene⁵⁵ takes this reading too far. The reference to the reforms as νόμοι is not an indication of constitutional slipperiness but a sign that, within the diction of *Ecclesiazusae*, νόμος is the unmarked term, used to refer to any sort of rule, decree or custom that is not attached to a specific ruling of the assembly. Only assembly rulings are specifically described as ψηφίσματα in *Ecclesiazusae*, everything else remains as a νόμος. The specificity of ψηφίσματα in *Ecclesiazusae* is demonstrated by the fact that there are only four mentions of ψηφίσματα in the play: two instances when Praxagora's decrees are discussed in the middle of the play (*Eccl.* 649, 812–13), a reference to the decree of Cannonus (*Eccl.* 1090), and the instance when the First Old Woman quotes directly from the text of a law (*Eccl.* 1012–20):

Ἐπ. τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τί;
 Γρ. α. ψήφισμα, καθ' ὃ σε δεῖ βαδίζειν ὡς ἐμέ.
 Ἐπ. λέγ' αὐτὸ τί ποτε κᾶστι.
 Γρ. α. καὶ δὴ σοι λέγω.
 'ἔδοξε ταῖς γυναῖξιν, ἦν ἀνὴρ νέος
 νέας ἐπιθυμῆ, μὴ σποδεῖν αὐτὴν πρὶν ἂν
 τὴν γραῦν προκρούσῃ πρῶτον. ἦν δὲ μὴ ἴθελῃ
 πρότερον προκρούειν, ἀλλ' ἐπιθυμῆ τῆς νέας,
 ταῖς πρεσβυτέραις γυναῖξιν ἔστω τὸν νέον
 ἔλκειν ἀνατεῖ λαβομένης τοῦ παττάλου.'

Epigene: What's that?

Old Woman: A decree that says you've got to come to my house.

Epigene: Read out what it actually says.

Old Woman: All right, I shall. 'The women have decreed: if a young man desires a young woman he may not hump her until he bangs an old woman first. Should he in his desire for the young woman refuse to do this preliminary banging, the older women shall be entitled with impunity to drag the young man off by his pecker.'⁵⁶

In the rest of the scene the word ψήφισμα is not used (with the exception of Cannonus' decree, *Eccl.* 1090), and the law is referred to as a νόμος when the characters are arguing over the execution and implications of the ruling rather than the decree itself. For example, the Young Man claims that if the νόμος is enforced then the country will be filled

⁵³ Ober (n. 1), 145–7.

⁵⁴ Fletcher (n. 1), 135.

⁵⁵ Fletcher (n. 1), 134.

⁵⁶ Trans. Henderson (n. 19) with modifications.

with Oedipuses, while the Old Women claim (in very general terms) that it is the νόμος which is responsible for the Young Man's plight (*Eccl.* 1041–2, 1077). This last instance, claiming κατὰ τὸν νόμον, returns us to the language of Praxagora's original appeal to tradition where women carry out their lives κατὰ τὸν ἀρχαῖον νόμον (*Eccl.* 216). More broadly, κατὰ τὸν νόμον commonly appears in Classical Greek historiography and oratory with the sense of 'according to the laws' or 'according to custom' (for instance, *Hdt.* 7.2; *Thuc.* 5.66; *Andoc.* 4.14.6; *Isoc.* 9.33.4), and it is this more general use which is being employed by the Old Women at the end of *Ecclesiazusae*.

Despite disagreeing over the legality of the reforms, both Ober and Fletcher agree that the confused language and the competing appeals to tradition poke fun at the confusion between νόμοι and ψηφίσματα. The combination of Praxagora's claims about the place of women in the ἀρχαῖος νόμος with her reliance upon ψηφίσματα satirizes the use and abuse of ὁ πάτριος. In *Ecclesiazusae* someone who claims to be the ultimate traditionalist relies on ψηφίσματα to force through her reforms, upending the common conception of democracy by allowing women to vote and then make policy. Similarly, are the arguments of the Old Women examined above a final example of the abuse of appeals to ancestral custom or a legitimate argument? There is clearly a tension here and I will return to the discussion of the 'hag scene' at the end of this paper.

III – 'SPARTAN' ELEMENTS IN *ECCLESIAZVSAE*

Praxagora's role as constitutional reformer and νομοθέτης, however far-fetched her claims, sheds further light on the Spartan-sounding aspects of her reforms.⁵⁷ These Laconian elements begin when the women are plotting their takeover of the assembly and Praxagora tells them that they have Spartan boots and staffs, Λακωνικὸς καὶ βακτηρίας, while another woman says that she has brought along a club, σκύταλον (*Eccl.* 74–6), an item often associated with Laconophiles.⁵⁸ Although the first two are common items of clothing in Aristophanes,⁵⁹ the combination of the two items of clothing along with the σκύταλον gives the lines a particularly Laconian feel, prefiguring Praxagora's later redistribution and echoing Lycurgan reforms in Sparta.⁶⁰ Thus Praxagora institutes communal dining (*Eccl.* 681–6, 715), the sharing of land and possessions between all citizens (*Eccl.* 590–4), and holding wives and children in common (*Eccl.* 613–15), descriptions which parallel contemporary accounts of Spartan living standards in Xenophon's *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*.⁶¹ These Lycurgan-style reforms are given a hedonistic twist by Aristophanes, of course; the sharing of wives

⁵⁷ For discussions of *Ecclesiazusae* and Sparta, see David (n. 1), 25–9; S. Perentidis, 'La femme spartiate, sujet de conflit entre Aristophane et les Socratiques', in H. Ménard, P. Sauzeau and J.-F. Thomas, *La Pomme d'Éris: Le conflit et sa représentation dans l'Antiquité* (Montpellier, 2012), 425–44.

⁵⁸ Ussher (n. 1), ad loc. points out that βακτηρίας are typical of either old men or of Laconophiles. Ussher uses Theophr. *Char.* 5.9 as evidence for the association of βακτηρίας with Sparta, while also noting that Aristophanes describes Laconophiles ἐσκυταλιοφόρους at *Av.* 1283.

⁵⁹ E.g. *Thesm.* 142, *Vesp.* 1158 for Spartan boots. Note that the Wasps reference prompts a joke that wearers of Spartan boots would be sympathetic to Sparta, something Philocleon is not. For staffs, see *Ach.* 682.

⁶⁰ David (n. 1), 25–9.

⁶¹ E.g. Xen. *Lac.* 5.2–4 for communal dining (*Hdt.* 1.65 also references this, using σσσίτια to describe the dining), *Lac.* 6.3–4 for sharing of property, and *Lac.* 1.6–9 for sharing of wives.

(and husbands) is not to ensure that stronger children and domestic harmony were produced as in Sparta but merely to satisfy the desires of those who were previously poor in looks as well as in money.

Ephraim David's explanation for this Spartan turn is that the idealization of the Spartan way of life had already emerged in some aristocratic circles in fifth-century Athens and underwent further growth after the restoration of the democracy.⁶² Originally associated with supporters of oligarchy, philo-Laconianism had to be re-evaluated in Athens in the 390s, when the Thirty had ensured that oligarchy was no longer a viable political alternative and instead took on a more theoretical, philosophical approach.⁶³ As in the case of the invocations of ὁ πᾶτριος, Aristophanes places contemporary thought of the time on stage. He takes both ideas to extremes, though in different ways, taking the idea of holding everything in common to a ridiculous conclusion when applied to sex, while suggesting that women, who of course would ordinarily have no say in the assembly, should have rights over ὁ πᾶτριος since they are the most traditional of all the Athenians.

IV – PRAXAGORA AND THE 'FOUNDING FATHERS'

This wholesale reform, along the lines of a famous reformer and using language current to the political climate of the 390s, creates laws and customs for a new constitution, thereby allowing Praxagora to assume leadership while still ensuring that the state remains notionally democratic. We have already noted that Praxagora bears significant similarities to previous Aristophanic protagonists when it comes to speaking in the assembly and leading the people. Yet, her proposals for change are far more radical than anything proposed by previous Aristophanic protagonists such as the Sausage-Seller. In the Athens of *Ecclesiazusae*, further reforms were still needed despite the changes made to the democracy in the aftermath of 403, and there appears to be a greater degree of frustration with the political status quo than previously. It is noteworthy that nowhere else in Aristophanes' extant plays, even in *Birds*, is the possibility raised that the Athenian assembly of male citizens no longer exists. However, the abolition of the law-courts (*Eccl.* 655–60) and the repurposing of the *Stoa Basileus* for communal dining (*Eccl.* 673–86), along with the transfer of power to the women, dismantle the apparatus of the Athenian state, albeit while ensuring that democratic equality remains for the Athenians.

This radical suggestion is justified by tapping into the increasing interest in 'founding father' figures that seems to have arisen in the late fifth and early fourth centuries. Thucydides' critique of the exalted status of Harmodius and Aristogeiton as tyrannicides who ushered in democracy (Thuc. 6.54–9) demonstrates that certain individuals were

⁶² David (n. 1), 25–6.

⁶³ This trend is best exhibited in Xenophon's *Respublica Lacedaemoniorum*, although examples appear elsewhere. E.g. Xen. *Mem.* 3.5.15 provides a striking example of this fourth-century philo-Laconianism from elsewhere in Xenophon's work: 'For when will Athenians show the Spartan reverence for age ... when will they adopt the Spartan system of training ... when will they reach that standard of obedience to their rulers ... or when will they attain that harmony?' (trans. Marchant, rev. Henderson, *Xenophon Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology* [Cambridge, MA, 2013]). These sorts of ideas are also likely the source for some of the ideas about redistribution in Plato's *Republic*, as Ussher (n. 1), xiii–xx, David (n. 1), 20–3 and Sommerstein (n. 1), 13–18 point out.

already being utilized as democratic heroes in the late fifth century. Meanwhile, the figure of a founding father in Sparta had already become prominent by the time of *Ecclesiazusae*; Herodotus credits Lycurgus with the founding of Sparta (Hdt. 1.65-6), while specific unnamed individuals in Sparta are credited with the responsibility for the reforms attributed to Lycurgus and Theopompus in Plato's *Laws* (Pl. *Leg.* 3.691e-692a). The foundation of Sparta was clearly associated with one individual by this time and may go some way to explaining the 'Laconian' elements in Praxagora's own plans. Yet, closer to home, it is the increasing profile of Solon that is of most interest for examining the portrayal of Praxagora.

Although studies of Solon's importance as a political figure in Athens generally focus on the latter half of the fourth century,⁶⁴ it is clear that Solon was already a figure well known to Athenian audiences and, by the 390s, was already beginning to carry the associations he was famous for by the end of the fourth century. There are several instances where Solon appears in fifth-century comedy, and the comic playwrights seem to have employed his character in the role of legislator rather than poet.⁶⁵ Thus in Eupolis' *Demes*, Solon appears as one of four statesmen (alongside Miltiades, Aristides and Pericles) who are summoned to help advise the city in crisis,⁶⁶ while Pheidippides in *Clouds*, displaying his new-found ability to wiggle his way out of law cases, references Solon's role as a legislator by stating that 'old Solon was φιλόδημος in nature' (*Nub.* 1187). Of most interest is the crucial scene in *Birds*, where Peisetaerus outwits Heracles by quoting Solon's law on the inheritance rights of νόθοι ('bastards') (*Av.* 1656-66):

ὁ νόμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔῶ.
 οὗτος ὁ Ποσειδῶν πρῶτος, ὃς ἐπαίρει σε νῦν,
 ἀνθέξεται σου τῶν πατρῶων χρημάτων
 φάσκων ἀδελφὸς αὐτὸς εἶναι γνήσιος.
 ἐρῶ δὲ δὴ καὶ τὸν Σόλωνός σοι νόμον:
 'νόθος δὲ μὴ εἶναι ἀγχιστεῖαν παίδων ὄντων
 γνησίων. εἴαν δὲ παῖδες μὴ ᾧσι γνήσιοι, τοῖς
 ἐγγυτάτῳ γένους μετεῖναι τῶν χρημάτων.'

The law won't let him. Poseidon here, who's now getting your hopes up will be the first to dispute your claim to your father's property, declaring himself the legitimate brother. I'll even quote you the law of Solon: 'A bastard shall not qualify as next of kin, if there are legitimate children; if there are no legitimate children, the next of kin shall share the property.'⁶⁷

⁶⁴ The most notable examples are C. Mossé, 'Comment s'élabore un mythe politique: Solon, « père fondateur » de la démocratie athénienne', *Annales* 34 (1999), 425-37 and M.H. Hansen, 'Solonian democracy in fourth-century Athens', *C&M* 40 (1989), 71-99. The papers in M. Noussia and G. Nagy (edd.), *Solon in the Making: The Early Reception in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries* (Berlin, 2015) shed further light on the development of the persona of Solon in the Archaic and Classical Greek literary tradition.

⁶⁵ R.P. Martin, 'Solon in comedy', in M. Noussia and G. Nagy (edd.), *Solon in the Making: The Early Reception in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries* (Berlin, 2015), 66-85 examines these instances and suggests several further plays where Solon may have appeared, focussing especially on Cratinus' potential use of the character as a counterpart to Pericles. By contrast, Aristophanes' old poet of choice (another setting where we might expect to see Solon appear) seems to be Simonides rather than Solon, e.g. *Nub.* 1355-62, *Vesp.* 1410-11.

⁶⁶ I. Storey, *Eupolis: Poet of Old Comedy* (Oxford, 2003), 114-16 and 130-4.

⁶⁷ Trans. J. Henderson, *Aristophanes Birds, Lysistrata, Women at the Thesmophoria* (Cambridge, MA, 2000).

Already before the events of 411, Solon appears as an authoritative legal voice. Solon's name possesses a certain cachet—for instance, in the passage from *Birds* quoted above, Peisetaerus' assertion that the law is Solon's gives his argument extra legitimacy. However, the crucial step in anointing Solon as founding father came in the aftermath of the two oligarchic revolutions when the cataloguing and reform of the law-codes became intertwined with discussions about the constitution of Athens.

This change occurred in the aftermath of the Sicilian Expedition, when discussions about constitutional reform first emerged. We have already noted how Praxagora's language echoes the invocations of tradition, but it is important to note too that the language of the *πάτριος πολιτεία* quickly became linked to the figure of Solon. The primary method of restoring the *πάτριος πολιτεία* was legal reform and, since the process of cataloguing the laws was either first proposed in good faith by the 400 or begun shortly after the restoration in response to their rhetoric, legal reform (and thus, by extension, Solon) quickly became associated with the rhetoric of the *πάτριος πολιτεία*. The amendment of Cleitophon to Pythodorus' decree in the run up to the coup of 411 (Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*] 29.3), proposing that the newly elected commissioners investigate the *πάτριοι νόμοι* of Cleisthenes in order to get back to a more democratic state of affairs, provides a good illustration of this connection and demonstrates how statesmen of the past became linked with constitutional and legal reform in late fifth-century Athens.

The enshrining of Athenian founding fathers and their links to legal and constitutional reforms became increasingly complex, as both oligarchs and democrats appealed to tradition.⁶⁸ Instances such as the republication of Draco's homicide law (*IG I³.104*), Xenophon's report that the Thirty were appointed to catalogue the ancestral laws with which to govern (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.2, ἔδοξε τῷ δήμῳ τριάκοντα ἄνδρας ἐλέσθαι, οἱ τοὺς πατρίους νόμους συγγράψουσι, καθ' οὓς πολιτεύουσιν), Lysias' statement that the Thirty called the assembly to debate *περὶ τῆς πολιτείας* before seizing power (Lys. 12.72), the claim of Andocides that, in the aftermath of the Thirty, it was decided to use the laws of Solon and Draco while the new law-code was being compiled (Andoc. 1.81), and the opening of Lysias' *Against Nicomachus*, stating that Nicomachus had been appointed to catalogue the laws of Solon under the democracy and alleging that he had usurped Solon as law-giver (Lys. 30.2), demonstrate the connection between legal and constitutional reform and the subsequent appeals to tradition and deployment of founding fathers. Solon's later reputation as founder of the Athenian democracy was undoubtedly forged during this period and, as the opening of *Against Nicomachus* shows, by the 390s, legal and constitutional reforms were intertwined with the figure of Solon.⁶⁹ Regarded as the Athenian legislator par excellence, Solon had thus become associated with the *πάτριος πολιτεία* and cast as founding father of Athenian democracy.⁷⁰ The association between Solon and the founding of the Athenian democracy had

⁶⁸ For a full discussion, see Shear (n. 38), 19–135 on 411, 167–70 on 404, and 227–62 on democratic responses to the Thirty, and Canevaro (n. 38).

⁶⁹ Lys. 30.2: προσταχθὲν γὰρ αὐτῷ τεττάρων μηνῶν ἀναγράψαι τοὺς νόμους τοὺς Σόλωνος, ἀντί μὲν Σόλωνος αὐτὸν νομοθέτην κατέστησεν, ἀντί δὲ τεττάρων μηνῶν ἐξέτη τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐποιήσατο, καθ' ἑκάστην δὲ ἡμέραν ἀργύριον λαμβάνων τοὺς μὲν ἐνέγραφε τοὺς δὲ ἐξήλειπεν.

⁷⁰ I leave aside the decree of Tisamenus, quoted at Andoc. 1.83–4, which contains the phrase *πολιτεύεσθαι Ἀθηναίους κατὰ τὰ πάτρια, νόμοις δὲ χρῆσθαι τοῖς Σόλωνος*. M. Canevaro and E.M. Harris, 'The documents in Andocides' *On the Mysteries*', *CQ* 62 (2012), 98–129 have raised legitimate concerns about the authenticity of the documents in Andocides' *On the Mysteries*.

been clearly established by the time of *Ecclesiazusae*'s production,⁷¹ and it was this, along with a widespread interest in founding fathers elsewhere in the Greek world, that Aristophanes exploited in *Ecclesiazusae*. Praxagora's ideas and reforms cast her as a female lawgiver for the new Athens,⁷² but why should Athens need a female Solon?

V – RETURNING TO POST-WAR ATHENS

One explanation lies in the frustrations expressed by the women with the current political system of Athens: the men behave like drunkards in the assembly, trust only worthless leaders, vote according to their own personal interests rather than consider what is best for the city, and are fickle, changing their mind and policies too often (*Eccl.* 136–43, 186–8, 192–203 and 206–8 respectively). Despite a few references to contemporary politicians such as Agyrrhius (*Eccl.* 102–3, 183–5) and Thrasylbulus (*Eccl.* 202–3, 356), it is the Athenian people themselves who are the chief targets of Aristophanes' criticisms as Praxagora clearly states that 'you, the people, are responsible for these things', ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐστ' ὃ δῆμιε, τούτων αἴτιοι (*Eccl.* 205). Unscrupulous demagogues no longer lead the Athenians astray (as happens to Demos in the *Knights*⁷³ or to the jury-men of the *Wasps*), nor do their problems lie with the infestation of parasitic characters such as the informers and father-beaters of *Birds* or the war-mongering magistrate of *Lysistrata*. The problem in *Ecclesiazusae* is simply that the Athenians are incapable of governing themselves without a leader guiding them in the assembly.⁷⁴ The chorus illustrate this best when they look back to the days of Myronides, the noble one (ὁ γεννάδος), when no one would dare to take money for taking care of the city (*Eccl.* 304–8). A good leader is essential for the city's success, but there are no suitable men left.

By the late 390s, Aristophanes had lived through thirty years of the Peloponnesian War, the rule of the Thirty, and the resumption of war with Sparta just a few years later. The chances of a new virtuous leader arising amongst the citizen body (as the Sausage-Seller did in *Knights*) now seem remoter and, despite the recent reforms and refinements of the constitution, the same old problems remained for Athens. In the Athens of *Ecclesiazusae*, further reforms are still needed and, by using the language of constitutional reform and the recent interest in founding figures like Solon, Aristophanes removes the one constant factor in all the mistakes of the past forty years—the assembly of male citizens.

⁷¹ By the mid fourth century it was extremely common to claim Solon as the founding father, e.g. Isoc. 7.16.

⁷² The fact that Praxagora's reforms overturn the laws attributed to Solon regarding female financial holdings does not affect this comparison. Praxagora is not Solon reborn but a founder figure and lawgiver in the manner of Solon.

⁷³ *Knights* is perhaps the closest Aristophanes previously comes to explicitly criticizing the *demos*. While the play is certainly critical of the *demos* for being duped by leaders such as Cleon, the transformation of the Sausage-Seller and the rebirth of Demos at the end of the play provide an ending whereby the Athenian *demos* remains a body capable of governing itself.

⁷⁴ Cf. W.E. Major, *The Court of Comedy: Aristophanes, Rhetoric and Democracy in Fifth-Century Athens* (Columbus, 2012), 181, who notes that Aristophanes served in the *boulē* in the early fourth century (*JG* II².1740.24) and speculates that 'serving on the Council could have been discouraged and led him to believe deeper structural change was needed, perhaps explaining why in the late plays the Council no longer factors in social reform or provides stability'.

Whether or not this experiment works is subject to considerable debate⁷⁵ with commentators focussing particularly on the inconclusive nature of the debate with the Selfish Man (although, as discussed at the end of section II, his status as ὀλαζών and the fact that the Neighbour is not the only one handing in his property suggest that he is unsuccessful) and the subsequent scene with the Young Man (named as Epigenes in some manuscripts) and the three Old Women. This scene is certainly problematic and raises as many questions about the nature and effects of Praxagora's sexual reforms as it does concerning the use and abuse of written law. By the letter of the new law, the Old Women (except for the second woman who refuses to give up Epigenes) are in the right, while Epigenes is wrong. Those who tend towards the 'ironic' interpretation of the scene see the use of law as a forcing device and the inappropriate age of the women as evidence Aristophanes was passing judgement on the *gynaecocracy*,⁷⁶ exposing the new regime as preposterous and thereby reassuring the watching audience that such a state of affairs could never happen. Yet, this interpretation ignores the play's criticisms of Athenian self-interest and the crisis in leadership that is displayed in the descriptions of the Athenian assembly prior to Praxagora's reforms.

It is important to note that, in a comedy about the reversal of gender roles within the city, the actions of the Old Women are on a par with the ending of plays such as *Acharnians* or *Peace*, where the successful protagonists are rewarded with women who are significantly younger than them (for example, *Ach.* 1198–232, *Pax* 1316–59). The fulfilment of sexual desires (often with multiple women) is closely linked with prosperity and comic endings, and so we should not be surprised to see a reverse of this motif at the end of *Ecclesiazusae* when women are in power.⁷⁷ More generally, Aristophanic comedy often strikes a hostile tone towards young men (for instance, Pheidippides in the *Clouds* or Bdelycleon in the final scenes of *Wasps*),⁷⁸ and the 'hag scene' can be read as a further triumph of old over young. Indeed, *Ecclesiazusae* as a whole seems to focus on the benefits for the older generation of Athenians. There is little discussion of how old Praxagora is (there is no mention that she and Blepyrus have any children either young or old), although Praxagora's leadership role suggests she must be older than some of her co-conspirators (albeit still of child-bearing age, since Blepyrus is concerned that she might be sleeping with another man [*Eccl.* 519–25]). Meanwhile, Blepyrus' physical difficulties in the toilet scene (*Eccl.* 311–71) suggest that he is not a young man.

⁷⁵ See e.g. S. Saïd, *Le monde à l'envers: pouvoir féminin et communauté des femmes en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 2013), Saïd (n. 3), Foley (n. 3), Taaffe (n. 3), 103–33, McClure (n. 3), 236–64, De Luca (n. 3) or Fletcher (n. 1) for a fairly pessimistic view, while Sommerstein (n. 1), Ober (n. 1), Scholtz (n. 1) and Slater (n. 48) are generally positive. Usher (n. 1) tries to strike a balance somewhere between the two.

⁷⁶ E.g. De Luca (n. 3), 99–112, Taaffe (n. 3), 123–9 respectively. Foley (n. 3), 20 sees the scene as representing the 'orgiastic religion and unbridled lust' of comic women.

⁷⁷ Thus Slater (n. 48), 226–7: 'If the image of rejuvenated old men such as Philocleon or Dicaeopolis who win young girls for their pleasure is meant to be a comic celebration, why should we assume that the reverse is satiric.'

⁷⁸ Sommerstein (n. 27), 320–1: '... we will find that Old Comedy, in marked contrast to New, throughout displays a systematic bias in favour of older and against younger men. The rejuvenation of the old is a favourite theme, and in other plays as well as this one sexual success with attractive young women is the almost exclusive prerogative of the older male ... Aristophanes' young men are typically self-confident, cocksure of their ability to get their way, and arrogant in their superiority to other forms of humanity; and it appears to be one of the functions of comedy to take them down a peg.'

Moreover, the sexual reforms instituted by Praxagora clearly favour the old over the young. Praxagora's reforms usher in a *gerontocracy* as much as a *gynaecocracy*.⁷⁹

Does this mean that we should read the 'hag scene' as a vindication of Praxagora's reforms? Several further factors need to be considered. First, as Slater notes,⁸⁰ the Young Woman must be a citizen (all the prostitutes have been put out of business, *Ecll.* 718) and, thus, would have had little contact with the outside world before Praxagora's reforms. In this way, rather than being Menandrian young lovers, the Young Woman and the Young Man are unlikely to have met before. As Slater notes,⁸¹ 'the girl and the First Old Woman are not respectively love and lust personified, but merely inexperienced and experienced lust'. Several scholars have noted that both the Young Woman and the Old Woman act like the now-banished whores, soliciting the Young Man,⁸² while Angus Bowie provides the intriguing suggestion that the solicitation of the Young Man may also have drawn parallels with the Adonia festival.⁸³ This produces a different interpretation, effectively bringing the Adonia festival into the official calendar of Praxagora's new state (whose origins lay in the New-Year festival at the Skira)⁸⁴ and legitimizing the actions and religious rites of the women of Athens.

Second, we must consider the age and societal status of the Old Women. Henderson⁸⁵ argues that older women (i.e. those past child-bearing age) would have enjoyed considerably more freedom in Classical Athens than younger women and, moreover, are portrayed more positively than their younger counterparts by Aristophanes. In support of this point, Henderson notes⁸⁶ a parallel to *Ecclesiazusae*'s 'hag scene' in *Wealth* (*Plut.* 959–1096), where a young man rejects the advances of his former older lover since he no longer needs her financial support. However, in the final scene of *Wealth* (*Plut.* 1197–203) the old woman and her lover are reunited. The positive portrayal of the liaison between young and old in *Wealth* should make us pause before condemning the *Ecclesiazusae* as a 'dark and morbid protest against social change'.⁸⁷

Finally, by resisting the Old Women, however foul they are, the Young Man does end up breaking the law. This is not to excuse the Old Women completely—their actions can certainly be interpreted as the need to protect those on the wrong side of revolution from overzealous enforcing of the law.⁸⁸ Nothing prevents young Epigenes from fulfilling his desires with the Young Woman afterwards (except his own virility

⁷⁹ Following the suggestion of J. McGlew, *Citizens on Stage: Comedy and Political Culture in the Athenian Democracy* (Ann Arbor, 2002), 199.

⁸⁰ Slater (n. 48), 224.

⁸¹ Slater (n. 48), 224.

⁸² McClure (n. 3), 253.

⁸³ Bowie (n. 9), 266–7. Bowie follows the suggestion of E. Fraenkel, 'Dramaturgical problems in the *Ecclesiazusae*', in C. Bailey, C.M. Bowra, E.A. Barber, J.D. Denniston and D.L. Page (edd.), *Greek Poetry and Life: Essays Presented to Gilbert Murray on his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 1936), 264–6 that the women were standing on the roof of the stage-building. 'Lascivious singing and dancing on a roof might well have provoked thoughts of the Adonia in the audience.' Even if Fraenkel's staging suggestion is incorrect (both Sommerstein [n. 1], 214 and D. Mastronade, 'Actors on high: the skene roof, the crane, and the gods in Attic drama' *CIAnt* 9 (1990), 247–94, at 257 place the women at windows), the rowdy solicitation and dramatic setting following the Skira would still recall the Adonia.

⁸⁴ On the Skira and *Ecclesiazusae*, see Bowie (n. 9), 256–8.

⁸⁵ J. Henderson, 'Older women in Attic comedy', *TAPhA* 117 (1987), 105–29, discussing the crucial role played by older women in the plots of *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Ecclesiazusae*.

⁸⁶ Henderson (n. 85), 119.

⁸⁷ Henderson (n. 85), 118 summarizing the position of Saïd (n. 3).

⁸⁸ McClure (n. 3), 256.

or lack thereof), yet he is still unwilling to comply with the law. Aware of the law, the Young Man attempts to evade the law and is subsequently punished.⁸⁹ Like the Selfish Man before him, the Young Man attempts to circumvent the law for his own personal interest. His failure adds further evidence to suggest that the Selfish Man is unsuccessful,⁹⁰ and yet again demonstrates the self-interest of the average male Athenian citizen.

I would suggest that both the episode of the Selfish Man and the 'hag scene' indicate the need for continuing leadership in Praxagora's newly reformed Athens. The two scenes demonstrate the continuing problem of self-interest among male citizens and Athens' need for a lawgiver. However, the subsequent final scene, complete with invitation to the traditional comic feast ensures that *Ecclesiazusae* does end on an optimistic note as the audience are invited to go and share in the feast at their own home (*Eccl.* 1144–50). While this is a common enough joke in comedy,⁹¹ the invitation to go home and share in the feast takes on new relevance for the ending of *Ecclesiazusae*. In an Athens where poverty and hunger are affecting large numbers of the population,⁹² the closing invitations of Blepyrus and the Herald suggest that, in the world of *Ecclesiazusae* at least, the Athenians will no longer be hungry and that Praxagora's remodelling of the constitution has improved their lot. Aristophanes' message is that there is a way out of the present predicament if the audience take responsibility for their actions and look beyond their own self-interest. Much of Praxagora's plan, satirizing ideas of reform current in the early fourth century, obviously could not be implemented beyond the comic stage, but there is a message that clear, long-term thinking and a willingness to act on behalf of public rather than private interest can help the Athenians out of poverty once they leave the theatre. In order to bring about these long-term thoughts and actions, an effective leader is needed to guide the Athenians away from short-sighted self-interest.

Aristophanes thus presents Praxagora as a protagonist in a further round of constitutional experimentation in Athens. This involves a certain amount of playfulness with the ambiguity of appeals to tradition and the sparse attendance of assemblies before the introduction of pay, hinting that Praxagora's plan may perhaps be another oligarchic plot. Yet, ultimately Aristophanes ensures that Praxagora is true to her reported word that women do not try to overthrow the democracy (*Eccl.* 452–3), and her reforms are very consciously designed to be inclusive to all citizens.⁹³ This is in sharp contrast to the plans of a previous female leader, Lysistrata, whose agenda is much more antagonistic and threatens her citizen opponents with violence and death if they fail to acquiesce to her agenda.⁹⁴

While Lysistrata's aims are centred solely around ensuring that she brings about an end to the war, Praxagora's plan is more wide-ranging. At the end of *Lysistrata*, an idealized peacetime status quo is restored (with male citizens in charge), but in

⁸⁹ Slater (n. 48), 225 notes that *Eccl.* 938–41 demonstrates that the Young Man is aware of the law.

⁹⁰ Note here Olson's suggestion (see [n. 45], 165 n. 10) that the Young Man is the Selfish Man, in which case things are much clearer as to the Selfish Man's fate.

⁹¹ Sommerstein (n. 1), 236 gives *Lys.* 1043–71 and 1189–1215 as examples alongside the endings of Plautus' *Rudens* and *Pseudolus* (Plaut. *Rud.* 1418–22, *Pseud.* 1331–4).

⁹² Cf. Sommerstein (n. 27) on poverty as a motif in Aristophanes' final two plays and, more generally, Strauss (n. 24), especially 42–69, on post-war society and economy in Athens.

⁹³ E.g. *Eccl.* 721–4, which explicitly penalizes non-citizens and thereby privileges all members of the citizen body.

⁹⁴ *Lys.* 574–86, following the analysis of S.D. Olson, 'Lysistrata's conspiracy and the politics of 412', in C.W. Marshall and G. Kovacs (edd.), *No Laughing Matter: Studies in Athenian Comedy* (Bristol, 2012), 77–82.

Ecclesiazusae things are very different. Praxagora does not (and cannot after 404 B.C.E.) advocate another violent coup, but her words pick up upon the interest in founder figures, such as Solon and Lycurgus, as well as upon the invocation of tradition as a means to legitimize one's own reforms.

Praxagora's innovations ultimately reveal her as a new lawgiver rather than as someone attempting to revive older traditions. Despite the changes following the Peloponnesian War, *Ecclesiazusae* presents the current Athenian political system and its operators as dysfunctional. This is primarily down to the self-interest of the ordinary (male) citizen and the lack of any viable leadership rather than a criticism of democracy itself. The democracy needs further reform but the final two scenes of the play demonstrate, through the figures of the Selfish Man, Epigenes and the Old Women, that reform itself is not enough. Athens needs leadership, particularly someone who can operate within the speech and politics of the assembly, since, without continual leadership and guidance, the Athenians will lurch back into self-interest, showing little regard for the law. Yet, since men have revealed themselves to be universally governed by self-interest, this leader needs to be a woman. While contemporary politicians claimed to be attempting to return Athens to the old laws of Solon, Aristophanes creates a new female Solon to provide both reform and leadership, giving the state a fresh start.

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