Bearing Razors and Swords: Paracomedy in Euripides' *Orestes*

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Abstract. In this article, I trace a nuanced interchange between Euripides' *Helen*, Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, and Euripides' *Orestes* that contains a previously overlooked example of Aristophanic paratragedy and Euripides' paracomic response. I argue that the escape plot from *Helen*, in which Menelaus and Helen flee with "sword-bearing" men (ξιφηφόρος), was co-opted in *Thesmophoriazusae*, when Aristophanes staged Euripides escaping with a man described as "being a razor-bearer" (ξυροφορέω). Furthermore, I suggest that Euripides re-appropriates this parody by escalating the quantity of sword-bearing men in *Orestes*, suggesting a dynamic poetic rivalry between Aristophanes and Euripides. Additionally, I delineate a methodology for evaluating instances of paracomedy.

PARATRAGEDY, COMEDY'S APPROPRIATION OF LINES, SCENES, AND DRAMATURGY FROM TRAGEDY, constitutes a source of the genre's authority (Foley 1988; Platter 2007), a source of the genre's identity as a literary underdog in comparison to tragedy (Rosen 2005), and a source of its humor either through subverting or ridiculing tragedy (Silk 1993; Robson 2009, 108–13) or through audience detection and identification of quotations (Wright 2012, 145–50).[1] The converse relationship between

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[1] Rau 1967 marks the beginning of serious investigation into paratragedy by analyzing numerous comic scenes that are modeled on tragic ones and providing a database, with hundreds of examples, of tragic lines that Aristophanes parodies. Aristophanic paratragedy is often explicit, bringing tragedians onstage in his comedies (i.e., Agathon at *Thesm.* 95–265; Aeschylus and Euripides at *Ran.* 830–1533; Euripides alone at *Ach.* 394–488 and throughout *Thesm.*), citing tragedies (i.e., Euripides' *Palamedes* at *Thesm.* 770 and 848; Euripides' *Helen* at *Thesm.* 850; and Euripides' *Andromeda* at *Thesm.* 1012), or naming tragic characters (i.e., Oineus, Phoenix, Philoctetes, Bellerophon, Telephus, Thyestes, and Ino at *Ach.* 418–34). At other times, paratragedy targets a general tragic mode, as at *Nub.* 1452–62, on which see Silk 2000, 352–56; Zimmermann 2006, 327–35. While paratragedy was originally viewed as primarily Aristophanic, scholars have subsequently demonstrated that paratragedy occurs in other comic playwrights as well. Miles 2009, 17–117, offers an overview of non-Aristophanic paracomedy with a strong focus on comic fragments. Bakola 2010, 118–79, describes Cratinus' interactions with tragedy, and Telò 2007, 106–21, detects

tragedy and comedy, paracomedy, in which tragedy adopts elements drawn from comedy, has not been equally established as a productive historical phenomenon.[2] By an "element drawn from comedy," I mean a particular word, line, manner of expression, motif, theme, character type, scene, plot, pattern, staging, costuming, or delivery that specifically belongs to comedy.[3] Most scholars of drama entirely ignore paracomedy or simply note its absence, as when Rosen mentions the "strangely unidirectional" literary rivalry between comedy and tragedy (2005, 264), or Pucci notes the "strange and upsetting asymmetrical relation between tragedy and comedy" since "comedy mocks and parodies tragedy, but tragedy can never respond" (2007, 121, n. 47).

    Other scholars treat paracomedy only as a hypothetical possibility. Mastronarde writes, "the more delicate question is whether the influence and rivalry operated in the opposite direction, with tragic poets taking their cue from comedy," concluding that "there is still ample room for disagreement among scholars" and that "Euripides is a precursor in respect to the relevant points of comparison [*sc.* the Western tradition of a comic genre] and not a borrower from a contemporary comic tradition" (2010, 58). In a recent volume, *Greek Comedy and the Discourse of Genres*, which discusses influences within and across dramatic genres, Silk writes: "it makes sense to discuss, for example, Aeschylus' influence on Euripides, or epic influence on tragedy or tragic influence on Aristophanes' *Clouds*, or the question of possible comic influence on tragedy, or Menandrian New Comedy as a convergence of Old Comedy and Euripides' 'romantic melodrama'" (2013, 30). Whereas the other options are presented as

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paratragedy in Eupolis. For the source material on comic quotations of Aeschylus, see Olson 2007, 175; for Sophocles, see Olson 2007, 176; and for Euripides, see Olson 2007, 178–79.

    [2] I take the term "paracomedy" from Scharffenberger 1996, 65–72. This definition of paracomedy differs from Sidwell 1995, 65, who uses "paracomedy" for a comic poet's ventriloquial technique of satirizing other comic poets by "presenting his plays as though by another poet." See Rosen 2000, 36–37, nn. 13, 17; and Storey 2003, 299, for a response to Sidwell's concept of paracomedy.

    [3] Compare the definition of Sommerstein 2002, 153: "a comic figure of language, for this purpose, is a feature that is common in comedy (and/or in other low-register forms of verse, such as iambus) but very rare or unknown in tragedy." This can be extended beyond language to include dramatic and dramaturgic features as well. By "elements drawn from comedy," I do not mean "comic" in the sense of "funny" or "humorous." For the distinction between "comedy elements" and "comic elements," see Seidensticker 1978, 305–6, who rejects investigation into "comedy elements" in favor of "comic elements," whereas I opt for the opposite. For a skeptical view of "comic elements" or humor in tragedy, see Gregory 1999–2000, 59–74.

certainties, the idea of comic influence on tragedy is raised as a theoretical possibility through Silk's use of the words "*the question of possible comic influence on tragedy* [my emphasis]." Even though Silk goes on to suggest that "the kind of example one might choose to argue for specific influence from κωμῳδία would be Pentheus' cross-dressing at *Bacchae* 913–44, in comparison with Aristoph. *Thesm*. 213–68," he describes this in hypothetical terms, concluding that the jury is still out on the matter (2013, 32, n. 62). In the same volume, Wright adds, "Whether the genres [*sc. of tragedy and comedy*] are *interdependent* or whether we should talk in terms of a one-way process (of comedy's dependence on tragedy) is a somewhat separate problem" (2013, 210, n. 22). Such views run contrary to the increasing number of arguments for paracomedy.[4]

In this article, I will trace a nuanced interchange between Euripides' *Helen* (412 B.C.E.) Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (411 B.C.E.) and Euripides' *Orestes* (408 B.C.E.) that contains a previously overlooked example of Aristophanic paratragedy and Euripides' paracomic response. I will argue that the escape plot from *Helen*, in which Menelaus and Helen flee with the assistance of men described as "sword-bearing" (ξιφηφόρος), was co-opted (and inverted) in *Thesmophoriazusae*, when Aristophanes staged Euripides escaping with the assistance of a man described with the verb "be a razor-bearer" (ξυροφορέω). Furthermore, I will suggest that Euripides re-appropriates the parody from *Thesmophoriazusae* by escalating the quantity of sword-bearing men in *Orestes*, and that the metapoetic terms with which Euripides signals his response reveal a dynamic poetic rivalry between Aristophanes and Euripides. Additionally, I will delineate a methodology for scholars to use in evaluating potential instances of paracomedy.

The crux of my argument lies in a joke that Aristophanes makes in *Thesmophoriazusae*. The character Euripides is in trouble, as the women at the Thesmophoria have decided that Euripides should die due to the maltreatment of women in his plays. After Euripides and his Kinsman fail to convince the effeminate playwright Agathon to infiltrate the woman's festival, the hyper-masculine Kinsman is sent instead, and in order for the Kinsman to pass as a woman, Euripides needs to shave him, asking (*Thesm*. 218–20):[5]

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[4]Dover 1972, 148–49; Scharffenberger 1995 and 1996; Marshall 2001a and 2009; Kirkpatrick and Dunn 2002; Sommerstein 2002; Foley 2003, 349–51; 2008; Wright 2006, 36–37; Diamantakou-Agathou 2012.

[5]Translation from Henderson 2000.

EURIPIDES:	Ἀγάθων, σὺ μέντοι ξυροφορεῖς ἑκάστοτε,
	χρῆσόν τί νυν ἡμῖν ξυρόν.
AGATHON:	Αὐτὸς λάμβανε ἐντεῦθεν ἐκ τῆς ξυροδόκης.

EURIPIDES:	Agathon, you've always got razors with you.
	How about lending us one?
AGATHON:	Take one yourself from my razor case.

I propose that the parody lies in the *hapax legomenon* ξυροφορέω, and that the word has a meaning different from standard translations, which tend to render it along the lines of "you have razors." The two elements that comprise the verb ξυροφορέω (ξυρόν "razor" and φέρω "bear") can be productively compounded to create an o-grade denominative adjective ξυροφόρος "razor-bearing," which in turn can be used as a substantive noun, meaning "a razor-bearing man." Along with any nominalization comes the process of typicalization, which Willi describes as the generalization that happens when, for example, a verb that possesses person, number, tense, voice, mood, and aspect loses some or all of these specifications in the process of becoming a noun (2003, 121). Because of this typicalization, the verb ξυροφορέω denotes the quality of typically or habitually bearing razors and is not the equivalent of ξυρὸν φέρω ("I carry a razor") but rather ξυροφόρος εἰμί ("I am a razor-bearer").

I suggest that Aristophanes coined the typicalized word ξυροφορεῖς for a specific effect, especially considering that he could have used the metrically correct ξυρὸν ἔχεις if he desired to mean "you have a razor" without any implication on his razor-bearing habits in general. On one level, the audience may have found it funny when the character Euripides speaks in ostentatious tragic compounds. I submit, however, that the parody expressed by ξυροφορέω goes beyond a general paratragic ambiance; rather, I suggest that Aristophanes parodied a specific Euripidean word, ξιφηφόρος ("sword-bearing"). The word ξιφηφόρος appears only in tragedy, once in Aeschylus and seven times in Euripides.[6] There are no other attestations from the fifth century B.C.E., although the word does reappear in later authors and commentators, who most likely based their usage on the tragedians.[7]

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[6] Attestations of ξιφηφόρος in tragedy: Aeschy. *Cho.* 583–84, Eur. *HF* 728–31, 809–14, *Ion* 980, *Hel.* 1072, *Or.* 1504, *Bacch.* 991–96=1011–16.

[7] The earliest post-fifth-century B.C.E. attestations of ξιφηφόρος appear in fourth-century B.C.E. comic poet Antiphanes fr. 217.19, where it modifies the hands (χερσίν) of a squid, and in the Hellenistic poet Lycophron's *Alexandra* 153, where it is an obscure cult epithet of Demeter. The related verb ξιφηφορέω is late, with the earliest attestation in Philo *On the Unchangeableness of God* 60, dating to the first century C.E.

This connection of ξυροφορεῖς and ξιφηφόρος is a prototypical example of how puns and parodies work in comedy. According to an ancient view expressed in the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, a tenth-century manuscript which analyzes comedy in a manner following Aristotle's *Poetics*, a punning metaphor only works if it draws from the "same species" or the "same sound."[8] Aristophanes' pun works on both levels, since in terms of species, both belong to the category of "metal blades," and in terms of sound, both have a -φορος ending, a disyllabic first element of the compound, and an initial ξ-, which is comparatively rare in word-initial position.

I argue that Aristophanes parodies ξιφηφόρος due to Euripides' innovative treatment of the word, which deviates markedly from the earlier abstract usage of Aeschylus. In Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (468 B.C.E.), Orestes invokes a deity to ensure a favorable outcome in his imminent struggles (583–84):[9]

> τὰ δ' ἄλλα τούτῳ δεῦρ' ἐποπτεῦσαι λέγω,
> ξιφηφόρους ἀγῶνας ὀρθώσαντί μοι.

> I charge this one here [the deity] to watch over the rest
> and see that all goes right in the contest into which I take my sword.

Sommerstein's translation grapples with Aeschylus' abstract phrase, literally, "sword-bearing contests" (ξιφηφόρους ἀγῶνας). What this means precisely is a matter of debate. Contests cannot literally carry swords, and thus translators render it in various ways: "direct the contest of the sword" (Smyth), "guide the actions of my sword" (Lattimore), and "guide my sword through struggle" (Fagles). Aeschylus deliberately uses language that is metaphorical and abstract.

Euripides was well aware of this Aeschylean usage; indeed, he pilfered the entire phrase in *Heracles* (ca. 416 B.C.E.), his first known play that uses the word ξιφηφόρος (809–14):[10]

> κρείσσων μοι τύραννος ἔφυς
> ἢ δυσγένει' ἀνάκτων,
> ἃ νῦν ἐσορῶντι φαίνει
> ξιφηφόρων ἐς ἀγώνων

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[8] *Tractatus Coislinianus* V. 4–6, in Janko 1984, 30–33, 183–86.
[9] Text and translation from Sommerstein 2008.
[10] When not otherwise noted, the Greek text is taken from the OCT and translations are my own.

ἄμιλλαν εἰ τὸ δίκαιον
θεοῖς ἔτ᾽ ἀρέσκει.

You are more kingly to me
than the shameful tyrant,
who now makes clear to one looking at
the struggle of sword-bearing contests
whether justice is still
pleasing to the gods.

Euripides uses the exact same vocabulary as Aeschylus in his phrase
"sword-bearing contests" (ξιφηφόρων ἀγώνων), continuing the tragic
diction inherited from Aeschylus. Euripides' abstract usage of ξιφηφόρος
persists in another passage from *Heracles* (728–31):

ὦ γέροντες, ἐς καλὸν
στείχει, βρόχοισι δ᾽ ἀρκύων κεκλῄσεται
ξιφηφόροισι, τοὺς πέλας δοκῶν κτενεῖν
ὁ παγκάκιστος.

Old men, his going is opportune,
and that wretch who thought that he would kill others
will become entangled in the sword-bearing snares of nets.

In this passage, Euripides' phrase, literally "sword-bearing snares of nets"
(βρόχοισι ἀρκύων ξιφηφόροισι), reflects a similar metaphorical usage to that
of Aeschylus. Not only is the metaphorical usage of ξιφηφόρος the same as
in Aeschylus, but the imagery of swords, snares, and nets is perpetuated
from the *Oresteia* as well. Swords and nets are inextricably linked at the
death of Agamemnon, for example in the passage when Orestes wonders
whether Clytemnestra actually killed Agamemnon (*Cho.* 1010–11):[11]

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[11] There is some scholarly debate whether Agamemnon was killed with a sword or
an axe in Aeschylus' play. Fraenkel 1950, 806–9; Sommerstein 1989; and Prag 1991 favor a
sword; Burkert 1966, 119–20, and Davies 1987 favor an axe. Marshall 2001b believes that
we cannot ascertain the weapon used in the original performance, and argues that the
weapon used in a reperformance of the *Oresteia* was an axe based on various allusions in
Euripides. However, Torrance 2013, 42, detects another Euripidean allusion to *Ag.*: *IT* 621,
"will you kill me yourself with a sword, female sacrificing male?" responding to *Ag.* 1231,
"female murderer of the male," in connection with passages in the trilogy that cite a sword
as the weapon (*Ag.* 1262, 1351, 1529; *Cho.* 1011). It seems that Euripides had the option of
recalling the murder of Agamemnon either by using a sword or by using an axe, and thus
we are no closer to ascertaining the original weapon used by Clytemnestra.

ἔδρασεν ἢ οὐκ ἔδρασε; μαρτυρεῖ δέ μοι
φᾶρος τόδ᾽, ὡς ἔβαψεν Αἰγίσθου ξίφος.

Did she do it or did she not? This robe serves as my witness
to how it was stained by Aegisthus' sword.

Euripides uses ξιφηφόρος for structural purposes in *Heracles*, in that the two passages containing ξιφηφόρος work as a framing device to connect the two halves of the play, much in the same way as the oft-cited example ἐφολκίδες ("towed vessels"), which appears at 631 and again at 1424.[12] At 728–31, ξιφηφόρος marks the conclusion of the first half of the play when Amphitryon sends Lycus off to be killed, whereas ξιφηφόρος at 809–14 serves to introduce the second half of the play, immediately before the arrival of Lyssa and Iris. In *Heracles*, Euripides uses ξιφηφόρος both as a structural device and as a signal that he is aligning himself with the tragic tradition inherited from Aeschylus.

After so clearly and precisely preserving Aeschylean usage in *Heracles*, Euripides diverges from this pattern in *Ion* (ca. 414 B.C.E.), the next extant play that contains ξιφηφόρος. In this passage, Euripides implements two innovations: (1) he concretizes the meaning to modify human agents rather than abstractions, and (2) he presents sword-bearing men as a plot device designating a solution to a character's current crisis.[13] Creusa has just told the Old Man that she had been raped by Apollo in a cave (939–41), and the Old Man urges that she take revenge on someone,

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[12] Mastronarde 2010, 69–71, discusses the links and connections between two halves of the double structure of *Heracles*: the etymological connection between Lycus (< *luk-os) and Lyssa (< *luk-ya), scenic motifs such as the uncovering of one's head (*HF* 562–64, 1214–17), thematic links such as friendship and loyalty (φιλία), and connections in the imagery of a race with two legs (δίαυλος) at *HF* 662 and 1102.

[13] Euripides concretizes and literalizes Aeschylean abstractions often. Torrance 2013, 33, demonstrates how Euripides concretizes Aeschylus' image of justice shining forth in smoke-soiled dwellings (*Ag.* 773–75) into an actual smoke-soiled chamber (*El.* 1139–40) immediately before the murder of Clytemnestra, an allusion intended to legitimize the murder by evoking Aeschylean conceptions of justice. Torrance 2013, 69–75, goes on to explain how *Ag.* 897–98, in which Clytemnestra describes Agamemnon as a "firmly-footed column (στῦλος) that supports a lofty roof" and "a father's only son (μονογενές)," provides the impetus for two Euripidean literalizations. First, Aeschylus' metaphor of a human as a column is concretized at *IT* 50–52, in which Iphigenia dreams of a column (στῦλος), representing Orestes, that grows blond hair and begins to speak. Second, Aeschylus metaphorically applies the adjective μονογενές ("only son") to Agamemnon (though technically incorrect, as he has a brother Menelaus), whereas Euripides' *Cresphontes* fr. 448a, 71 applies μονογενές to Cresphontes according to the word's etymological sense (as Cresphontes is an only child).

suggesting Apollo himself, then her husband Xuthus, then her son Ion (972–78). At this point, the Old Man suggests a plot device to resolve her problem (979–80):

> CREUSA: πῶς; εἰ γὰρ εἴη δυνατόν· ὡς θέλοιμί γ᾽ ἄν.
> OLD MAN: ξιφηφόρους σοὺς ὁπλίσασ᾽ ὀπάονας.
>
> CREUSA: How? May it be possible! How much I wish to!
> OLD MAN: Make your attendants sword-bearing.

The "sword-bearing attendants" (ξιφηφόρους ὀπάονας) represent Euripides' shift to human agents instead of the abstract "sword-bearing contests."[14] Considering that Aeschylus had used ξιφηφόρος in such a way as to resist a literal interpretation, it is significant that Euripides abandons the metaphorical use in favor of a discussion about putting real swords into human hands. Although Creusa rejects the idea and the alternate plan of poison is ultimately accepted, Euripides presents the sword-bearing attendants as a viable plot device.

In *Helen* (412 B.C.E.), produced the year before Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, Euripides offers his most notable plot device involving sword-bearing men. Helen and Menelaus need to escape from the Egyptian king Theoclymenus, and after dismissing Menelaus' proposals to flee on a chariot or to kill the king, Helen hits upon a master escape plan. They will pretend that Menelaus is dead, disguise Menelaus as the messenger reporting his own death, and escape with a ship captured by sword-bearing men (1069–72):

> HELEN: σὲ καὶ παρεῖναι δεῖ μάλιστα τούς τε σοὺς
>   πλωτῆρας οἵπερ ἔφυγον ἐκ ναυαγίας.
> MENELAUS: καὶ μὴν ἐάνπερ ναῦν ἐπ᾽ ἀγκύρας λάβω,
>   ἀνὴρ παρ᾽ ἄνδρα στήσεται ξιφηφόρος.
>
> HELEN: It is most necessary that you be there,
>   and the sailors of yours who escaped from the shipwreck.
> MENELAUS: And besides, if I receive a ship at anchor,
>   my sword-bearing men will stand beside each other.

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[14] Euripides linguistically reinterpreted a number of traditional words. To cite a parallel, Coughanowr 1984, 235–36, demonstrated that Euripides analyzed the word δίστομος as δίσ-τομος, "twice-cutting, double-edged," as opposed to the previous meaning of δί-στομος, "two-mouthed, with two entrances."

The catalyst of the entire escape that Euripides orchestrates is the word ξιφηφόρος, without which the attempt would have failed. Rather than toying with the idea of sword-bearing men as he did in *Ion*, Euripides constructs the escape plot in *Helen* with actual sword-bearing men, deviating even further from Aeschylus' metaphorical usage. In *Helen*, Euripides' literalization of ξιφηφόρος is not only present, but almost flaunted, since sword-bearing men are used as a major escape-plot device to drive the action of the play.

It stands to reason that Aristophanes would have detected the verbal innovations I am attributing to Euripides, as Aristophanes constantly displays an in-depth knowledge of Euripides' linguistic usage and plot constructions, likely due to the fact that he read and re-read Euripides' works. Nieddu concludes that Aristophanes had access to a written script of Euripides' *Helen*, since he was able to contrive an elaborate comic scene involving some lines of *Helen* replicated exactly, other lines replicated but with parodic variations, and further lines composed in a generally Euripidean style (2004, 351). Wright suggests that a culture of "literariness" pervades Old Comedy thanks to the prevalence of allusiveness, intertextuality, and sophisticated literary analysis in the genre (2012, 141–71). Certainly, the ability to re-read a scene from Euripides from a script would further afford Aristophanes the opportunity to notice Euripides' inheritance of and deviation from Aeschylus' abstractions.

Additionally, evidence from *Frogs* suggests that Aristophanes actually recognized Euripides' penchant for initially imitating and subsequently diverging from Aeschylus, particularly with regard to language. Aristophanes describes Euripides as an inheritor of Aeschylus' art (939) who took the language of Aeschylus, which was "bloated with bombast and obese vocabulary" (940), and "put it on a diet and took off the weight with regimen of wordlets and strolls and little white beets" (941–42). I suggest that Aristophanes' description of Euripides the inheritor, slimming down Aeschylus' language, corresponds to my account of Euripides' initial repetition of Aeschylus' abstract "sword-bearing contests" and his later departure to the phrase "sword-bearing men," transparent and literal language that could easily be understood by the audience.

By coining ξυροφορέω in *Thesmophoriazusae*, Aristophanes engages in much more than a simple lexical parody of a unique Euripidean verbal development. Rather, he constructs the plot of the play so that his character Euripides is beset with the same difficulties that Euripides' own characters are plagued with, and, consequently, Aristophanes stages Euripides as a character playing a role in one of his own plays. Because of

Euripides' recent and notable excursus into the realm of escape-tragedies (*Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Andromeda*, and *Helen*), quite naturally, Euripides develops a plot to escape the situation.[15] Aristophanes even uses the terms that tragedy uses for escape plots (μηχανή: "plot, trick, strategy"; τέχνη: "art, craft, contrivance," and their respective cognates) throughout *Thesmophoriazusae*, especially at the beginning of the play when Euripides is developing his plot.[16] When Euripides informs his Kinsman that the women of the Thesmophoria are plotting his destruction, the Kinsman asks what strategy (μηχανή) he has against the women (*Thesm.* 87). After Euripides explains that he will persuade Agathon to infiltrate their festival, the Kinsman exclaims (93–94): "A pretty cute bit, and just your style. We take the cake for craftiness (τοῦ τεχνάζειν)!"

In particular, Aristophanes targets Euripides' *Helen* by replicating the two main escape plots that Euripides used in that play: first, an attempt through supplication (*Hel.* 825, 831, 894, 939), and second, an attempt through sword-bearing men (1072, 1574).[17] Before employing the razor-bearing plotline in *Thesmophoriazusae*, Euripides first attempts to supplicate Agathon using a traditional tragic plot (179–180): "Smitten by fresh misfortune (καινῇ ξυμφορᾷ), I am come a suppliant (ἱκέτης) to thy door." This suppliant speech embraces the tragic register with vocabulary such as καινῇ ξυμφορᾷ, with the meaning of ξυμφορά as "misfortune," as is often the case in tragedy, as opposed to the meaning of "event" in prose. The immediately preceding quotation from Euripides' *Aeolus* (*Thesm.* 177–78 = Eur. *Aeol.* fr. 28) adds to the general tragic coloring of the scene. Yet Agathon is not taken in by Euripides' tricks, saying that he has heard this plot before in Euripides' *Alcestis* (*Thesm.* 194 = *Alc.* 691). Just as Admetus' father Pheres refuses the suppliant's request, so does Agathon, and Euripides' attempt to escape his situation as a tragic suppliant falls apart. Aristophanes even makes Agathon recognize that Euripides is using a tragic plot, using the metapoetic term τέχνασμα ("trick, contrivance"), when Agathon says that it is "just to bear one's difficulties not with contrivances (τεχνάσμασιν) but with a spirit of suffering" (*Thesm.* 198–99).

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[15] Due to extensive structural and thematic parallels, Wright 2005 argues that *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Andromeda*, and *Helen* belong to an escape-tragedy trilogy staged in 412 B.C.E. While the insecurely dated *Iphigenia among the Taurians* may have been performed in the years before 412 B.C.E. (the metrics of Cropp and Fick 1985, 23, date the play between 416–412 B.C.E.), the introduction of escape plots into tragedies was recent and created a new distinctive brand of tragic plot.

[16] For further examples where Euripides uses μηχανή, see Mastronarde 2010, 274.

[17] Euripidean characters often go through numerous ideas before hitting the best option, as in *IT* 1017–28, *Ion* 971–83, and *Hel.* 802–1048.

After portraying the ineffectiveness of the standard tragic suppliant plot, Aristophanes shifts to a comic plot device by using ξυροφορέω instead of ξιφηφόρος, a transformation which flattens the high register of tragedy by substituting a mundane tool for a common tragic weapon and which mocks the effeminacy of Agathon, who does not own a sword but possesses enough razors to need a ξυροδόκη ("razor-rack," *Thesm.* 219), an Aristophanic *hapax legomenon* coined off Odysseus' δουροδόκη ("spear-rack") at *Odyssey* 1.128.[18] Aristophanes' technique of correcting a failed tragic escape attempt with a more successful comic one is paralleled later in the play, when Aristophanes concludes by making Euripides resort to the comic plot device of a naked dancing girl (*Thesm.* 1172–225) after the numerous failed attempts at tragic escape plots (the parody of *Telephus* at *Thesm.* 655–764; the parody of *Palamedes* at 769–84; the parody of *Helen* at 849–928; and the parody of *Andromeda* at 1009–132). One can detect a sustained Aristophanic attack upon the efficacy of Euripidean poetics, culminating in the triumph of comedy.

I propose that Euripides responded to Aristophanes' attack by crafting a paracomic retort in *Orestes* (408 B.C.E.) that reclaimed the plot device of sword-bearing men from *Helen* and asserted that his innovation of sword-bearing men was a successful tragic plot device, in contrast to Aristophanes' claim that it was ineffective. Euripides composes his play in such a way that he recreates the circumstances from *Thesmophoria-zusae* (which in turn adopted the circumstances from *Helen*).[19] In *Orestes*, Orestes, Pylades, and Electra are facing the threat of death (*Or.* 755–58), much like Euripides in *Thesmophoriazusae* (or Menelaus and Helen in *Helen*). Orestes and Pylades develop the same two escape strategies

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[18] A similar Aristophanic substitution of a mundane tool for a heroic weapon occurs at *Ach.* 317–18, "I would be willing to speak with my head on a butcher's block (ἐπίξηνον)," which reprises a metaphor from *Telephus* fr. 706, "if someone holding an axe (πέλεκυς) in his hands should be about to strike my neck." Platter 2007, 153–55, suggests that the exchange of the axe for the butcher's block is "to literalize, and so trivialize, the image used by Telephus in Euripides' play." As for the meaning of ξυροδόκη as "razor-rack," the –δόκη suffix meaning, "carrying case for multiple weapons," is standard in epic, not only attested by δουροδόκη ("spear-rack," *Od.* 1.128), but also later on in Apoll. Rhod. by ὀϊστοδόκη (1.1194) and ἰοδόκη (2.679, 3.156, 3.279), "quiver," a case for multiple arrows. The closest lexical form for swords is ξιφηθήκη, only attested in the lexicographers and the scholiasts, and thus cannot serve as a model for ξυροδόκη.

[19] As there is a strong structural connection between *Helen* and *Orestes*, it is logical to argue that *Orestes* worked as a sequel to *Helen*, as Wright 2006 suggests. I would suggest that the motivation for such a sequel was to respond to Aristophanes' attacks in *Thesmophoriazusae*.

used in *Thesmophoriazusae* (and *Helen*), through supplication of the
assembly (774–76) and through sword-bearing men.[20] Pylades explains
the plan (1119): "We will enter the house as if about to die," launching
the escape plot along the traditional tragic plotlines of a feigned death;
but soon after, he adds the element of sword-bearing men (1125): "We'll
have swords (ἕξομεν ξίφη) hidden in these garments of ours." The plan is
implemented, and Orestes physically appears onstage as a sword-bearing
man (ξιφηφόρος, 1504).

Euripides responds to Aristophanes' criticism of his use of sword-
bearing men in *Helen* by further emphasizing the aspects that Aristo-
phanes had mocked. First, Euripides extends the process of literalizing
the trope of sword-bearing men by actually depicting Orestes onstage as
a sword-bearing man, further concretizing the sword-bearing men from
Helen, who did not physically appear onstage, but were only reported
in a messenger scene. This literalization also poses a direct response to
Aristophanes, who similarly portrayed a razor-bearing man onstage in
Thesmophoriazusae. Second, Euripides escalates the amount of sword
bearing in the play. Euripides uses forms with ξιφ- (the root for "sword")
twenty-three times in *Orestes*, compared to five in *Ion* and twelve in
Helen, the other two Euripidean plays which presented ξιφηφόρος as a plot
device.[21] φάσγανον appears thirteen times, and σιδήρον and its cognates
appear five times in *Orestes*.[22] Almost all of the occurrences of swords
appear in the second half of the play after Orestes, Electra, and Pylades
are sentenced to death and are in need of their escape plot. Euripides
increases the quantity of swords just at the point where he co-opts the
predicament from *Thesmophoriazusae*.

Furthermore, Euripides marks his paracomic response through
specific metapoetic indicators, especially the word καινός ("novel"). Tor-
rance has shown the extent to which Euripides uses the literary criticism
terms καινός and καινότης ("novelty") to mark his own innovations in
plot over previous authors' renditions, drawing examples from *Hecuba*,
Suppliants, *Ion*, *Orestes*, *Medea*, *Heracles*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*,

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[20] *Orestes* portrays the relationship of *philia* ("friendship") as more important than
family, as Pylades proves to be more loyal to Orestes than his relative Menelaus (*Or.*
725–28, 752, 804–6). As such, the close friendship of Orestes and Pylades forges the same
connection as the familial relationship between Euripides and the Kinsman.

[21] ξιφ- in *Or.*: 291, 822, 1036, 1041, 1052, 1125, 1133, 1193, 1235, 1272, 1287, 1369, 1346,
1398, 1457, 1472, 1478, 1504, 1506, 1531, 1575, 1627, 1656.

[22] φάσγανον in *Or.*: 51, 953, 1063, 1101, 1148, 1223, 1305, 1349, 1482, 1519, 1608, 1633,
1653. σιδήρον and its cognates in *Or.*: 864, 966, 1309, 1399, 1518.

Helen, *Alcestis*, *Electra*, *Hippolytus*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Bacchae*, and *Trojan Women* (2013, 222–27).[23] A relevant example occurs at *Helen* 1513, in which the messenger, about to narrate how Helen and Menelaus escaped through their plot involving sword-bearing men, informs Theoclymenus, "So novel (καινός) are the troubles you will soon hear from me." Here, the novelty refers to the particular qualities of the escape plot used, which is to say, the inclusion of sword-bearing men.[24] In the next year, when Aristophanes called Euripides' *Helen* καινή (*Thesm.* 850), he was commenting on this innovation in addition to others: the overturning of expectations about which mythic variants to use, the unusual staging of the play in Egypt, the philosophical themes that pervade the work.[25] This Aristophanic assertion should be contextualized within his broader critique in *Thesmophoriazusae* of Euripidean novelties as ineffective: Euripides' supplication of Agathon failed despite his suffering a "novel misfortune" (179) and Euripides' series of "clever novelties" (1130) fail to affect the Scythian Archer.

I suggest that Euripides responds to these Aristophanic criticisms of his novelty by marking his novel introduction of the sword-bearing Orestes with metapoetic signposts (*Or.* 1503–5):

> καὶ μὴν ἀμείβει καινὸν ἐκ καινῶν τόδε·
> ξιφηφόρον γὰρ εἰσορῶ πρὸ δωμάτων
> βαίνοντ᾽ Ὀρέστην ἐπτοημένωι ποδί.

> But see, this novelty takes the place of other novelties
> I see a sword-bearing man in front of the house
> coming out with agitation in his step, Orestes.

Torrance considers the remark alongside the other metapoetic usages of καινός in *Orestes* (2013, 223–24): the addition of Menelaus to the plot

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[23]Torrance expands upon McDermott 1991, who first detected the double meanings of the word καινός. For novelty in *Or.*, see Arnott 1973, 56–60; 1983, 13–28; and Wright 2008, 115–37.

[24]A similar usage occurs at *IT* 1306, in which the messenger says he is "announcing a cargo of new (καινός) evils" and then reports how the purification ritual was a trick. It is interesting to note that in the messenger's account in *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Orestes and Pylades are described with the phrase, "they didn't have swords in their hands (σίδηρον οὐκ εἶχον χεροῖν, *IT* 1367)," again highlighting the novelty of the inclusion of sword-bearing men in *Helen*.

[25]On innovations in myth in *Helen*, see Wright 2005, 82–113; on the staging of the play in Egypt, see Wright 2005, 163–67; and on the philosophical themes in the play, see Wright 2005, 260–337.

(*Or.* 239) and the trial of Orestes (875), suggesting that the novelty expressed by the phrase ἀμείβει καινὸν ἐκ καινῶν τόδε is the "apparent murder of Helen, which we know to be a mythological novelty."[26] However, I propose that the word καινός points to a different referent, namely, the word ξιφηφόρος, marked in emphatic first position in line 1504, even before the audience realizes the identity of the sword-bearing man rushing onstage. Two syntactical points support this argument: (1) the deictic τόδε (*Or.* 1503) must have a local referent, and ξιφηφόρος is the word immediately following the demonstrative; (2) the γάρ (1504) is causal, explaining the thought expressed in the previous sentence.[27] An additional metapoetic signpost lies in the verb ἀμείβω, which Collins has argued possesses the nuance of "competitive exchange (2004, 174)," signaling successive contributions by two parties that exceed one another. Under this point of view, Euripides and Aristophanes upstaging each other can be seen as a form of poetic capping.[28] For these reasons, I suggest that the metapoetic expression of the line, "this novelty takes the place of other novelties," should be interpreted in the context of the intertextual rivalry between Euripides and Aristophanes, in which the staging of a literal sword-bearing Orestes replaces Euripides' previous plots using reported sword-bearing men.

My proposal is strengthened if we consider a parallel argument made by Wright, who detects a similar Euripidean response in *Orestes* to Aristophanes' characterization of *Helen* as καινός (2006, 36–37).[29] Near the beginning of the play, Electra describes Helen as having long hair, declaring (*Or.* 128–29):

> ἴδετε γὰρ ἄκρας ὡς ἀπέθρισεν τρίχας,
> σῴζουσα κάλλος· ἔστι δ᾽ ἡ πάλαι γυνή.

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[26] McDermott 1991, 131–32; and Wright 2008, 126, suggest that the novelty is not just the apparent murder of Helen but also the entire final hostage-taking scene, which Euripides completely invented.

[27] On the deictic demonstrative ὅδε, ἥδε, τόδε, see Smyth 1984, 307, and on γάρ as a causal and explanatory particle, see Smyth 1984, 638–39.

[28] On poetic capping in Aristocratic comedy, see Hesk 2007, and on capping in general, see Collins 2004.

[29] There are other instances in which Euripides used πάλαι ("old-fashioned") and παλαιότης ("old-fashionedness") as forms of literary criticism opposite καινός ("novel") and καινότης ("novelty"). At *Hel.* 1056, Menelaus rejects Helen's escape plot, which involves her grieving at his feigned death, as "somewhat old-fashioned" (παλαιότης . . . τις), commenting on feigned death plots such as Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (680–87) and Sophocles' *Electra* (670–764). Although Euripides begins *Helen* on a similar path involving a feigned death, he innovates by incorporating sword-bearing men.

> For see how she cut off just the ends of her hair,
> preserving her beauty! She is the same woman as of old.

Wright suggests that this passage recalls the scene in which Helen cut off her hair in feigned mourning for Menelaus' death (*Hel*. 1186–90), and more explicitly, that the phrase ἡ πάλαι γυνή (*Or*. 129) playfully reverses ἡ καινὴ Ἑλένη (*Thesm*. 850), showing that Euripides is engaging in comic techniques by inserting "in-jokes."[30]

If Wright's arguments are considered along with my own, we can see that there are, significantly, two Euripidean responses in *Orestes* to Aristophanes' mockery of his novelty. At the beginning of the play, Euripides is pseudo-apologetic, (mis)interpreting Aristophanes' phrase "novel *Helen*" as referring solely to the physical characteristics of the character Helen's bodily appearance, and thus, the return to the long-haired Helen seems to offer a corrected portrayal of Helen, as if he were taking Aristophanes' accusations seriously. However, by the end of the play, Euripides exchanges the apologetic stance for a clear affirmation of his innovative plots with the phrase, "this novelty takes the place of other novelties," highlighting his notable increase in sword-bearing men.

Furthermore, my argument, entailing intertextuality signaled by metapoetic markers, is consistent with the complex web of dramatic allusions in *Orestes*, some of which are marked with metapoetic words, as when Orestes and Electra discuss footprints at 233–34:

> ἦ κἀπὶ γαίας ἁρμόσαι πόδας θέλεις,
> χρόνιον ἴχνος θείς; μεταβολὴ πάντων γλυκύ.

> Do you want me to put your feet on the ground?
> It's been a while since you made a footprint; a change of all things
>   is sweet.

Much like καινός, Euripides uses the word μεταβολή ("change") meta-poetically to indicate a new direction a plot has taken, and by staging a discussion of footprints on the ground involving the characters of Orestes and Electra, Euripides recalls both Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (205–28) and his own previous response to Aeschylus at *Electra* (518–44).[31] The

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[30]This use of the opposite words καινός and πάλαι to respond to each other parallels my argument for a connection between ξιφηφόρος and ξυροφορέω, which similarly opposes different types of blades.

[31]On μεταβολή as a form of metapoetry, see Torrance 2013, 44–46, who discusses this example among others (*Bacch*. 1266–67, *IT* 719–22, *IA* 500 and 1101, *Tro*. 615, *HF* 735, *Auge*

sheer quantity of allusions in *Orestes* (Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles'
Philoctetes, Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Medea*, *Helen*,
Andromache, *Electra*, *Heracles*) has led Zeitlin to describe the play as
"palimpsestic," whereby "one layer can be deciphered under another;
each one makes its own contribution, but the total effect is one of a
bewildering and cumulative complexity" (2003, 314). It is logical to extend
to paracomedy the same arguments that allow myriad interwoven allu-
sions to tragedy.[32]

As is the case with all examples of intertextuality, some methodology
must be established for assessing the strength of a proposed instance of
paracomedy, and I propose that three criteria must be fulfilled: (1) *distinc-
tive correspondences* between the two elements, (2) the *priority of comic
element*, and (3) a suitable *motivation* for adopting the comic element. By
distinctive correspondences, I mean correspondences between two texts
that are sufficiently strengthened through specific and marked parallels
in language, plots, scenes, and motifs so as to diminish the likelihood of
all explanations other than paracomedy. Stronger parallels will tend to
have an element that is unique, rare, or marked within tragedy which
alludes to an element that is highly-prototypical or prominent within

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fr. 272a). On *Or.* 233–34 as engaging with *Libation Bearers* and *Electra*, see Wright 2008,
121–22. Much ink has been spilt on whether *Electra* is responding to *Libation Bearers* or
not. Fraenkel 1950, 815–26; Bain 1977; Basta Donzelli 1980; West 1980; and Kovacs 1989
have objected to *Electra* 518–44, with some arguing that it is an interpolation, either on
the aesthetic grounds that such parody does not belong in tragedy or on perceived logical
or linguistic inconsistencies within the play. Lloyd-Jones 1961; Bond 1974; Davies 1998;
Gallagher 2003; and Torrance 2011 have made the case that the scene forges thematic and
linguistic connections with the rest of the play and, therefore, should not be excised. In
particular, Davies 1998, 390–91, and Gallagher 2003, 402, n. 8, have refuted the objections
of Kovacs 1989, who questions how the scene fits with its immediate surroundings. Given
the fact that there is no manuscript or linguistic reason for excision, the fact that the scene
is of thematic importance for the play, especially with regard to epistemological concerns,
and the fact that Euripides frequently engages in metapoetics, there seems to be no reason
to suspect the authenticity of the scene.

[32] Revermann 2006, 107–15, demonstrates that the majority of the audience had a
bottom-line theatrical competence, acquired from performing in civic choruses and from
watching a wide array of plays year after year, and as such they had the capacity to rec-
ognize and appreciate theatrical allusions. The Athenians had a great ability to remember
dramas, as evidenced by an anecdote of Plutarch (*Nic.* 29.2–3) that a group of Athenian
prisoners of war sang Euripidean songs from memory during the Peloponnesian War,
which prompted their captors to free them. Torrance 2013, 287–88, suggests that audience
members engaged in post-performance discussion of the drama, "multiplying the number
of people who become aware of a playwright's techniques."

comedy. Kirkpatrick and Dunn illustrate this point in their discussion of the "talking bow" at *Heracles* 1380–81, concluding that the element of a "speaking weapon" is negatively marked in tragedy and positively marked in comedy (2002, 32–35). Conversely, the arguments that Castellani (2010) makes for paracomedy between Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Aristophanes' *Birds* are not distinctive enough to prove the allusions he proposes.[33]

For determining the *priority of the comic element*, the best scenario is when both plays are securely dated, and the comedy precedes the tragedy. This criterion bolsters the arguments of Dover (1972), who argues that Euripides' *Helen* 1107–13 (412 B.C.E.) alludes to Aristophanes' *Birds* 209–16 (414 B.C.E.), but detracts from those of Herington (1963), who suggests that Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (458 B.C.E.) draws upon the plots of Old Comedy, a problematic claim since our earliest attested complete play of Old Comedy, Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, is dated to 425 B.C.E., and we have little evidence of the plots of Old Comedy that precede the *Oresteia*. In a case where the chronology is unclear, one must rely on whether paratragedy or paracomedy makes the most sense in terms of ordering. Marshall offers an example of reasoning through the different orderings of plays involving paratragedy and paracomedy, arguing for the order of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (458 B.C.E.), Aristophanes' *Birds* (414 B.C.E.), and Sophocles' *Chryses* (undated), based on the phrasing of the parallels (2009, 145–49). In other instances, the ordering of the plays may be impossible to ascertain. At all times, we should be aware of the fact that we only have a small fraction of plays from classical Athens, and that any given aspect of a play may allude to something which is no longer extant, or allude to nothing at all.

Third, one should explain the motivation behind the particular instance of paracomedy, something that may be beyond our scholarly

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[33]The correspondences in Castellani 2010, 47–58, are often too vague, eliding the important differences between the two texts, which make it unlikely that the audience would detect the allusion and which would allow for the proposed correspondence to point to another text. For example, Castellani proposes as a parallel the fact that both plays begin with a pair in exile and that both have an unwelcome chorus. Yet there are significant differences that would disallow audience recognition: (1) Peisetairos and Euelpides have voluntarily left Athens, whereas Oedipus and Antigone have been expelled; (2) the chorus of *Birds* actually attacks the pair physically, whereas the chorus of *Oedipus at Colonus* simply does not receive the pair hospitably. Additionally, the proposed correspondences do not exclude other potential targets, as the features "pair in exile" and "unwelcome chorus" could equally point to the *Oresteia*, which has Orestes and Pylades as a pair in exile in *Libation Bearers* and a hostile chorus in *Eumenides*.

means to ascertain in all occurrences.[34] Dover, despite demonstrating distinctive correspondences and the priority of the comic element in his discussion of Aristophanes' *Birds* 209–16 (414 B.C.E.) and Euripides' *Helen* 1107–13 (412 B.C.E.), does not explain the motivation for Euripides' adoption of Aristophanic language. However, other scholars have plausibly argued for various motivations. Sommerstein demonstrates that Aeschylus' use of comic language characterizes the Erinyes as disgusting and horrifying figures, which increases the overall horror of the tragedy (2002, 163). In a similar vein, Seidensticker has argued that when Euripides appropriates comic material in *Bacchae*, the result is to increase the tragic effect of his scenes (1978, 316; 1982, 123–29). Scharffenberger offers a different approach when she argues that Euripides incorporated elements from Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* into his *Phoenician Women* (1995, 315): "it seems entirely credible that Euripides, upon finding something intriguing and important in *Lysistrata*, may have been moved and inspired to appropriate and adapt it, a year or two later, into his *Phoenician Women*," something which "indicates the tragedian's admiration for and appreciation of what the comic poet presents."

   With these methodologies in place, together with a number of secure examples, we can conclude that paracomedy was present, prevalent, and productive in fifth-century B.C.E. tragedy. While a tragedian may wish to incorporate paracomedy for various reasons, a major motivation is its utility as a performative response mechanism to critiques by comedians. As such, one can often detect two phases in the cross-generic dialogue: a paratragic claim in comedy followed by a corrective paracomic retort from tragedy. I have argued that, first, Aristophanes designed the escape plot of *Thesmophoriazusae* to parallel that of *Helen*, replacing the sword-bearing men of *Helen* with a parodic razor-bearing man. Second, Euripides constructed the escape plot of *Orestes* as a response to *Thesmophoriazusae* by increasing the overall quantity of swords as well as physically depicting a sword-bearing man onstage instead of a razor-bearing man. These innovative scenes and plots, which Euripides signaled to the audience using the metapoetic word καινός, served to upstage Aristophanes. Through the examination of paracomedy, scholars may envisage a more

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[34] Compare the wide variety of manifestations of and motivations for paratragedy listed by Foley 2008, 21: "incongruous juxtapositions, ironic inversions, repetition to create critical distance, pointed contradictions and illogicalities, satire and mockery, avoidance of censorship, subversion of hierarchy, more neutral forms of intertextuality, or examinations of the role of imitation and representation." A similar range of positive and negative connotations is plausible for paracomedy.

dynamic picture of Greek drama marked by mutual literary influence and nuanced intertextual dialogue. I hope that the above frameworks for identifying and analyzing instances of paracomedy enable the investigation of genre interactions to advance in its various permutations across tragedy, comedy, and satyr drama.[35]

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