

ASTRATEIA AND LIPOSTRATION ON THE ATTIC COMIC STAGE

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When asked to define what ‘courage’ (ἀνδρεία) is, Laches replies without hesitation: ‘anyone who is willing to stay at his post and face the enemy, and does not run away, you may be sure is courageous’ (ἀνδρεῖος, Pl. *La.* 190e4). The concept of *andreia* in ancient Greece cannot be dissociated from a martial context. As Sluiter and Rosen put it, ‘war is the prototypical scene for manifestations of courage and manliness’.¹ Conversely, one could say that ‘running away in the middle of the battle’ is a sign of ἀνανδρία, a lack of manly qualities. This paper further explores the association between unmanliness and failure to comply with military obligations in tragic and comic dramatizations of draft-dodging (ἀστρατεία) and desertion (λιποστράτιον).²

The gendered conceptualization of *andreia* as a martial virtue or factual consequence of it on the battlefield, as Laches expresses it in Plato’s *Laches*, is crucial to my analysis. Although the term *andreia* is first attested in Aeschylus’ *Seven against Thebes* (52), a play presented in 467,³ the conceptualization of manliness and its connection with fighting prowess is already present in the Homeric poems. Heroes are often called to their duties on the battlefield with the imperative ‘Be men!’ (ἀνέρες ἔστε). The concept of failure to comply with one’s military obligations through draft-dodging or even desertion from the battlefield is also a recurrent theme in Homeric epic that has clear resonances in subsequent literature.

As Sarah Harrell illustrates, ‘*andreia* is a gendered concept that can be opposed to femininity’.⁴ This is apparent in Herodotus to the extent that when the display of *andreia*

¹ Sluiter/Rosen (2003) 8.

² Hamel (1998b) 361–405 deals in detail with ἀστρατεία (‘draft-dodging’), λιποστράτιον (‘desertion from the army’), λιποτάξιον (‘desertion from position during battle’), ῥιψασπία (‘throwing away a shield in battle’), λιπονάυτιον (‘desertion of a ship’), ἀναυμάχιον (‘a trierarch’s withholding of a ship from action’). The use of this terminology in oratory is not clear-cut and uncertainty about the relationship between these offences still remains among scholars. See e.g. Green (2006) 202 n. 75, who includes *rhipsaspia* under the rubric of *lipotaxion*. Hamel (1998b) 261 n. 1, with references, rejects the idea that these offences were ever treated as interchangeable and ascribes the apparent confusion of terminology in oratory to deliberate attempts to exaggerate the gravity of the offences to discredit opponents. For a treatment of military offences see also Harrison (1971) 32; Todd (1995) 106.

³ All dates are BC unless otherwise stated.

⁴ Harrell (2003) 77.

comes from a woman, as in the case of Artemisia, or from an effeminate man, as in the case of Telines, Herodotus draws the reader's attention to these exceptional *exempla* of 'marvelous *andreia*'.⁵ In the account of Artemisia, who wages war against Greece, there is the notion that she somehow appropriates a masculine quality – prowess in war – and hence 'becomes' a man. In turn, those men who fail to show prowess in military contexts and commit *astrateia* become 'women'. As we shall see, ancient Greek drama takes this figural 'metamorphosis' literally. More specifically, tragedy stages scenes of *astrateia* as gender transgressions through transvestism.

Portraying *Astrateia* from Epic to Tragedy

The Trojan War offered fifth-century dramatists a rich source of material for attempts at avoiding conscription or failure to comply with one's military obligations. In the *Iliad*, the opportunity for *astrateia* is at times considered by Agamemnon himself and notably pursued by both Achilles and Paris. The *Cypria* narrates how Odysseus feigned madness to avoid conscription and Telephus ran away when confronted by Achilles on the battlefield.⁶ We do not know whether Odysseus' *astrateia* and Telephus' *lipostration* were presented in the Epic Cycle in a negative light. However, other *astrateutoi* of Homeric epic are presented unfavourably and their failure to comply with their military obligations is ascribed to lack of manly qualities.

In the *Iliad*, Hector rebukes Paris several times for preferring the comfort of the oikos and Helen's alluring attention to the battlefield.⁷ But the characterization of Paris as an *astrateutos* is not developed in extant tragedy. Indeed, both Sophocles' and Euripides' plays entitled *Alexandros* dramatized Paris' return to Troy after he had been exposed and reared on Mount Ida, and the revelation of his identity as one of the princes of Troy, following his victory in the games celebrated in his honour. Although little survives, we can confidently state that both plays emphasized Paris' prowess and nobility rather than his cowardice.⁸ While it is entirely possible that tragedians might have dramatized Paris/Alexandros in the context of the Trojan War or its aftermath, no such work survives. The only play dealing with the Trojan prince's story that survives in any form is a parodic re-enactment of the episode of the Judgment in Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros*.⁹

If Paris at times neglects his military duties and his misconduct requires Hector's prodding, the *astrateutos par excellence* of Homeric epic is undoubtedly Aegisthus. Paris,

⁵ Harrell (2003).

⁶ Odysseus: Proclus 118 Severyns=PEG p.40.30–32. The episode was dramatized in Sophocles' *Odysseus Mainomenos* (for which see below). Telephus: Σ Hom. *Il.* 1.59; [Apollod.] 3.18.

⁷ For Hector's reproaches, see *Il.* 3.38–75; 6.326–31, 523–25; for Helen's, see 3.426–36.

⁸ See Coles (1974); Collard/Cropp (2008) 33–39. We owe much of our knowledge of the tragic plots to Hyg. *Fab.* 91. The story that a dream warned Hecuba, who was pregnant with Paris, that her unborn child would one day cause the destruction of Troy, appears for the first time in Pi. *Pae.* 8a. See also E. *Tr.* 920–22 and Σ Hom. *Il.* 3.325.

⁹ A synopsis of the play is preserved in POxy. 663 (=4.140–41 K-A). Nicomachus of Alexandria wrote an *Alexandros* that has not survived (*TrGF* 1.127 F 1).

Achilles, and Odysseus all withdraw from battle only temporarily. Aegisthus, conversely, was never enrolled in the army in the first place and chose instead to remain in the comfort of his own palace.¹⁰ The chorus of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* labels him an οἰκουρός ('stay-at-home') and addresses him contemptuously as γύναι ('woman', 1625–27). Οἰκουρός is a term often applied to women, who are typically 'guardians of the house'. To use it of men casts doubt on their manliness. Indeed, it is worth noting that the term will later be applied generically to draft-dodgers.¹¹ The rich iconography of the death of Aegisthus portrays him time and again as a hapless victim who is killed while wearing banqueting dress.¹² Aegisthus' *astrateia* and his choice of an indoor life are viewed as a lack of manliness; his *anandria* makes him an unmanly man, a man-woman.

Tragic *Astrateia*

The role that tragedians assign to Aegisthus should not be taken as an indication that tragedy neglects the issue of *astrateia* or that it presents it in an unproblematic way. On the contrary, *astrateia* takes centre stage in Sophocles' *Odysseus Mainomenos* and Euripides' *Scyrioi*. These plays, of which unfortunately little survives, featured the draft-dodging of two instrumental figures of the Trojan War, Odysseus and Achilles.

Sophocles' *Odysseus Mainomenos* concentrated on the episode in which Odysseus feigned madness to avoid conscription.¹³ According to Proclus, Palamedes unmasked Odysseus' deception by threatening to kill his son Telemachus. Odysseus' feigned madness is a means of disguise. Moreover, mental instability is a sign of weakness and is culturally associated with women. Madness is perceived as pertaining to the female sphere and thus is inflicted upon men by female agents.¹⁴ It is not only women like Phaedra or Medea who at times display irrational behaviour. Indeed, Hera afflicts Heracles with madness and Athena punishes Ajax in the same way. To feign mental instability can thus be perceived as the adoption of feminized behaviour – a kind of transvestism without female clothing.

The myth of Achilles' *astrateia* on Scyros emphasizes the connection between refusing to join the army and transvestism. In this story, Peleus placed his son Achilles at the court of

¹⁰ *Od.* 3.262–64. Aegisthus appears as the king of Mycenae (*Od.* 3.304–05). He is held responsible for seducing Clytemnestra and for the murder of Agamemnon at *Od.* 11.405. At *Od.* 24.96–97, however, Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are said to perform the deed together, whereas at *Od.* 24.199–202 Agamemnon is murdered solely by the hand of Clytemnestra.

¹¹ E. *Held.* 700–01; Din. 1.82. At Ar. V. 970 Cleon/Dog is so called. See Sommerstein (1983) *ad loc.*

¹² Gantz (1993) 684–85. For representations of Aegisthus either fleeing or wounded, see *LIMC* 1.1 s.v. 'Aigisthos', Pls 19–35.

¹³ For Sophocles' *Odysseus Mainomenos* see *TrGF* 4 frs 462–467; Lloyd-Jones (1996). A reference to the episode can be found in *Od.* 24.115–19: Agamemnon recalls Odysseus' reluctance to join the expedition to Troy. Hyg. *Fab.* 95 and [Apollod.] 3.7 offer fuller accounts of the story. Presumably Aeschylus', Sophocles', and Euripides' *Palamedes* all referred to Palamedes' unmasking of Odysseus' trick (cf. Gantz [1993] 580). The example of Odysseus in evading service was apparently imitated by the astronomer Meton to avoid participating in the Sicilian expedition (Plut. *Nic.* 13.7–8; *Alc.* 17.5–6).

¹⁴ Zeitlin (1996) 344.

king Lycomedes of Scyros to protect him from a certain death at Troy; Lycomedes disguised him as a maiden and raised him with his daughters.¹⁵ Both Sophocles and Euripides composed dramas entitled *Scyrioi*. Although the plotline of Sophocles' *Scyrioi* is uncertain, there is scholarly agreement that the play centred on the entirely different episode of Neoptolemus' retrieval from Scyros during the second recruitment round (cf. *TrGF* 4 p.418). Conversely, the hypothesis to Euripides' homonymous play, which has been recovered in a fairly well preserved papyrus, indicates that Euripides dramatized the story of Achilles' concealment on Scyros.¹⁶ Unfortunately, the hypothesis is incomplete and we are left without an explanation of how Euripides staged Odysseus' penetration of Achilles' disguise.

Different versions of this episode survive in later sources.¹⁷ According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 13.162–70 (cf. Σ Lyc. *Alex.* 277), Odysseus tricked Achilles by placing weapons 'capable of summoning his manly instinct' (*arma...animum motura virilem*, 165) among a series of feminine goods for the daughters of Lycomedes to choose from. Achilles betrayed himself by picking up the weapons to admire them. A second version, which appears in Pseudo-Apollodorus, mentions that Odysseus unmasked Achilles by means of a trumpet.¹⁸ Statius, whose *Achilleid* contains the longest extant account of this episode,¹⁹ combines the two versions of the story: Odysseus presented Lycomedes' daughters with feminine goods as well as weapons to trick Achilles, and instructed his men to sound a war trumpet. Achilles instinctively responded to the false alarm by taking up the weapons ready to attack, thus revealing his identity.

Although Heslin believes that Statius' own account of the episode in the *Achilleid* relies heavily on Euripides' *Scyrioi*, he argues that neither version of the penetration of disguise, nor the conflated one presented by Statius, could have derived from Euripides' play.²⁰ He remarks that the partly preserved hypothesis to the play suggests that Deidamia is an only child, since king Lycomedes is said to have been raising his (only) orphan daughter and also to be taking Achilles into his care not knowing who he really is (*Hyp.* 17–20=*TrGF* 5.2 *Scyrioi Test.* iia).²¹ Even if Achilles would be easily recognizable to Odysseus, being one

¹⁵ This story is traditionally credited to the *Cypria* (fr. 19 PEG= Σ Hom. *Il.* 19.326). Heslin (2005) 201–07 convincingly argues that Achilles' cross-dressing episode on Scyros was not part of the Epic Cycle. He considers this story a later addition to the myth that served as political propaganda for Cimon's military campaigns on the island. The epic tradition simply told that a storm had drawn Achilles, who was on his way to Troy, to the island of Scyros, and that the Greek hero had conquered the island and raped or married Deidamia, leaving her pregnant with Neoptolemus before he sailed to Troy.

¹⁶ *PSI* 1286 was recovered and first edited by Gallavotti (1933), followed by Austin (1968) 95–96 and, more recently, by Jouan/Van Looy (2002) 72–74. See Gantz (1993) 581–82.

¹⁷ Heslin (2005) 193 summarizes the sparse references to the episode in Latin texts which predate Statius' *Achilleid*.

¹⁸ [Apollod.] 3.13.8 (= *TrGF* 5.2 *Scyrioi Test.* iib).

¹⁹ Stat. *Ach.* 1.750–920. See also Hyg. *Fab.* 96.

²⁰ Heslin (2005) 195–96 notes that the brief appearance of Deidamia's nurse at lines 669–74, which is unnecessary to the plot development, could signal Statius' intention to provide a pointer to Euripides' *Scyrioi* (cf. *TrGF* 5.2 fr. 682).

²¹ Heslin (2005) 197–98 with n. 13 bases his argument largely upon Koerte (1934). The hypothesis to Euripides' *Scyrioi* strongly suggests this view. Conversely, the reference to Deidameia as η παῖς (fr. 682) should

out of only two 'maidens' at the court of Lycomedes, this does not exclude the possibility that Odysseus would trick Achilles into spontaneously revealing his identity.

In Statius' *Achilleid*, Ulysses not only aims to unmask Achilles, but also to shame him into self-recognition. To take Achilles forcibly to the ships and set sail would not be a viable alternative. In order to defeat Troy, Achilles must be driven by his fiery desire for glory and perform on the battlefield with conviction and to the best of his abilities. Indeed, although Ulysses and his companions reach the court of king Lycomedes only at night and his search for Achilles is made difficult by the presence of the numerous daughters of Lycomedes, as well as by dim light, his attention goes immediately to one of the maidens who, unlike the others, does not show signs of 'virginal modesty' (765). Soon after, Ulysses perceives Achilles' eager interest in hearing the account of the war that he gives to Lycomedes.²² When he provocatively remarks that whoever is able to master weapons should join the expedition and win glory, Achilles almost comes forward, but is restrained by Deidamia (803–05). The departure of his targeted audience makes Ulysses rapidly conclude his speech. Although he has not yet succeeded in unmasking Achilles, he certainly has recognized him among the daughters of Lycomedes and knows that the time of his revelation will soon come.

The following morning Lycomedes invites Ulysses and his companions to watch his daughters perform Bacchic rites. Achilles is *praecipue manifestus* ('eminently obvious', 835) by disrupting the dancing choir, thus showing his contempt for female tasks. In Statius' highly dramatized account, Achilles has already started the internal process of self-discovery that will lead to the revelation of his identity. When he is presented with the shield and the spear that lie among the other female gifts, he can no longer restrain himself since *totoque in pectore Troia est* ('Troy is in his whole breast', 857). His own reflection in the bronze shield elicits feelings of astonishment and shame (865–66). Moreover, Achilles' overwhelming feelings are stirred up by Ulysses' persuasive words (*quid haeres? scimus*, 'Why do you hesitate? We know who you are', 867–68). Finally, to obtain a more immediate response, Ulysses orders Agyrtes to sound the war trumpet. It is at this point that Achilles, in a sudden gesture, takes up the arms ready to give battle, while the female garments fall down 'untouched' (878), revealing his manly features.

In Euripides' *Scyrioi*, Odysseus' penetration of Achilles' disguise might likewise have been a complex process that develops into Achilles' final resolution to join the expedition to Troy. Odysseus' words of contempt (*TrGF* 5.2 fr. 683a) to Achilles for carding wool despite being the offspring of a glorious family could then be counted as part of this process. His words could be echoed by Ulysses' brief appeal to Achilles in Statius' *Achilleid* (867–74). Perhaps, as in Statius, in the Euripidean drama Odysseus does not simply rely on his oratorical skills, but plans to elicit a more immediate response through a trumpet blast.²³

not be taken as conclusive evidence. One could well assume that the conversation between the Nurse and Lycomedes has been centred on Deidameia's 'illness' for some time before it comes to the extant lines and that therefore ἡ παῖς would be unmistakably taken by Lycomedes, as well as by the audience, as a reference to the maiden herself.

²² At Stat. *Ach.* 794–95 Achilles listens to Ulysses' account of the war 'with vigilant ears'.

²³ The penetration of Achilles' disguise by means of a trumpet seems to be preferable to the concealment

Similarly, in Sophocles' *Odysseus Mainomenos*, Odysseus abandons his feigned madness when Palamedes has Telemachus at knife-point.

In both Sophocles' *Odysseus Mainomenos* and Euripides' *Scyrioi*, the protagonist appears in disguise at the start of the drama and both plays revolve around the attempt at penetrating the character's disguise. In both cases the characters abandon their disguise in an instinctive response to some threatening situation. At the end of the play, once their ruse has been revealed, they willingly return to fulfil their obligations towards family and society at large.

Comic *Astrateia*

If one considers Attic Old Comedy's inclination to parody epic and tragic scenes, it is surprising to find that Trojan-War episodes of draft-dodging and military desertion are conspicuous by their absence.²⁴ Nevertheless, Athenian comedians cast an eye on contemporary Athens and voice their concerns about draft-dodgers. In Aristophanes' *Wasps* 114–21, the chorus denounces draft-dodgers who conveniently stay at home while others put their lives on the line. Aristophanes' Dicaeopolis disapproves of young men who actively seek election as ambassadors to avoid conscription, while much older men must serve in the army (*Ach.* 598–609). The chorus of the *Peace* denounces irregular procedures in mustering hoplites, accusing taxiarchs of altering the conscription list, deleting names and replacing them with others (1180–81).

Sparse general remarks are complemented by more specific *ad hominem* attacks. An overt charge of *astrateia* is cast repeatedly against Arynias in conjunction with his engagements as an ambassador that allowed him to avoid serving in the army.²⁵ Arynias, probably as a consequence of his *astrateia*, is accused of effeminacy.²⁶ Peisander, on the other hand, is depicted as a coward by both Aristophanes and Eupolis.²⁷ And, finally, Cleonymus is relentlessly accused of throwing away his shield in battle (*rhipsaspia*).²⁸

of arms among feminine gifts, if we are to believe that Deidamia and Achilles in disguise are the only two 'females' at the court of Lycomedes. As Heslin concedes (2005) 198 n. 14, the mention of this version of the myth in [Apollod.] 3.13.8 suggests that it 'may belong' to Euripides' play.

²⁴ Epicharmus' *Odysseus Automolos* (*Odysseus the Deserter*, frs 97–103) is the only attested ancient comedy that deals with the military desertion of a Homeric hero. See Olson (2007) 47–53 for an excellent commentary on the better preserved fragments. For the comic treatment of Odysseus, see Phillips (1959) 58–67.

²⁵ *Ar. Nu.* 684–92; *V.* 1271–74; *Eup. fr.* 222; *Cratin. fr.* 227; *Com. Adesp.* 244. Office-holders were granted exemption from military service. For other opportunities for exemption, see Christ (2004) 37–40.

²⁶ *Ar. Nu.* 691, Socrates, who is teaching Strepsiades the gender of nouns, insists that Arynias is a 'woman'.

²⁷ *Ar. Av.* 1556–58; *Eup. Astrateutoi fr.* 36. In this latter example, Peisander is said to be the worst soldier who ever fought at Spartolus. The text originally presents the reading 'Pactolus' rather than 'Spartolus'. The Pactolus river joined the Hermus near Sardis, a Persian provincial capital that was well inland, and it is unlikely that it could have been the target of an Athenian expedition. It is therefore likely that 'Pactolus' is corrupt, and should be restored as 'Spartolus'. Cf. Hanow (1830) 81; Sommerstein (1987) 301. Storey (2003) 78 prefers the reading 'Pactolus', which suggests immoderate richness and could allude to an imaginary expedition. For the battle of Spartolus, see Th. 2.79.

²⁸ Out of 17 references to Cleonymus (*PA* 8680) in Old Comedy, ten allude to his infamous shield: *Ar. Eq.* 1369–72 (cf. Storey [1989] 251 for scholarly disagreement on referring these lines to the episode of

Draft-dodging (*astrateia*) and desertion (*lipostration*) also appear to be at the core of a series of fragmentary comic plays, such as Eupolis' *Astrateutoi* (*Draft-Dodgers*) and, possibly, *Taxiarchs* (*Infantry Commanders*), Hermippus' *Stratiôtai* (*Soldiers*), and Theopompus' *Stratiôtides* (*Women Soldiers*). Pherecrates' *Automoloi* (*Deserters*) cannot confidently be placed under this rubric since the term *automolos* is not exclusively used to designate a military deserter.²⁹ The few surviving fragments of Pherecrates' play, moreover, do not suggest a military setting. One fragment alludes to someone growing his hair so long that he needs 'close clipping' (fr. 35). This is a sign of effeminacy that could relate to a group of *astrateutoi*, but could also refer to the new generation of rich young men.³⁰ Another fragment, 'always to drink and to get drunk before the agora fills up (i.e. noon)' (fr. 34), indicates a high degree of debauchery, perhaps the sort enjoyed by wealthy wastrels such as Alcibiades, who boasts of inventing the practice of getting drunk before noon in a fragment of Eupolis (fr. 385.3).

Eupolis' *Astrateutoi* seems to have exploited the equivalence between cowardice and effeminacy, as its second title, *Androgynoi* (*Men-Women*), indicates.³¹ Although little has survived of this play, it is plausible to suggest with Storey that the chorus of draft-dodgers appeared onstage in female guise.³² According to a scholion to Aristophanes' *Peace* 347, the general Phormio was mentioned in the play. However, the paucity of the surviving fragments does not allow any secure conclusions about how the chorus dodged the draft or whether Phormio was mentioned in passing or appeared as a character in his own right and had a substantial part in recalling the *astrateutoi* to their duties. Undoubtedly, Phormio would fit this role nicely as the quintessential manly soldier and valiant commander.³³

Phormio certainly played a central role in Eupolis' *Taxiarchs*, which presented Dionysus undertaking military training under his guidance (see Σ Ar. *Pax* 348). The surviving fragments suggest that Dionysus was set to complete military tasks, such as learning the proper use of the shield (fr. 276) or how to mark off a circle for taking a meal (fr. 269). It is therefore reasonable to assume that the play was set, at least in part, in a military camp, where Dionysus adopts military diet, dress, and hygiene. He complains about eating nothing but onions and three salted olives (fr. 275) and longs for accustomed delicacies, such as sweet almonds and wine from Naxos (fr. 271). He laments his filthy head and having to wear a threadbare cloak ($\tau\omicron\iota\beta\omega\nu$) instead of his multi-coloured robe (fr. 280).³⁴ Given the

rhipspasia); Nu. 353–54; V. 15–27, 592, 823; Pax 444–46, 679–80, 1295–1304; Av. 1470–81; Eup. fr. 352. Storey (1989) 260 takes these comic allusions as a more generic accusation of *astrateia*. Contra Olson (1998) 167 with references to earlier scholarship.

²⁹ See e.g. Hdt. 3.156, 9.76; cf. Epicharmus' *Odysseus Automolos*. For the more general meaning of 'slacker' see Ath. 13.579.

³⁰ Cf. Ar. *Eq.* 580, 1121; Nu. 14.

³¹ Suda ϵ 3657 reports the second title, *Androgynoi*. However, the effeminacy of the draft-dodgers is substantiated by a gloss in Photius (=Eup. fr. 46).

³² Storey (2003) 77.

³³ Ar. *Lys.* 801–04. In Eupolis' *Taxiarchs* fr. 268.14–15, Phormio claims to be Ares himself. He is also mentioned at Ar. *Eq.* 562; *Pax* 348; frs 88, 397; Eup. fr. 44; Com. Ades. fr. 957 presents Phormio in a negative light.

³⁴ Cf. for instance Ar. *Ach.* 184, 343 where a $\tau\omicron\iota\beta\omega\nu$ is worn by the Acharnians, who have been impoverished

effeminate nature and cowardice of Dionysus' comic persona, it is not surprising to see him bungle all the tasks assigned by Phormio.³⁵

It is likely that the motif of male inability to serve in the army was at the core of Hermippus' *Stratiôtai* (*Soldiers*).³⁶ In this play, a military commander salutes an army of rather effeminate soldiers:

χαῖρ' ὦ διαπόντιον
στράτευμα, τί πράττομεν;
†τὰ μὲν πρὸς ὄψιν μαλακῶς
ἔχειν ἀπὸ σώματος†
κόμη τε νεανικῇ
σφρίγει τε βραχιόνων.
(B.) ἦσθου τὸν Ἄβυδον ὡς
ἀνὴρ γεγένηται; (fr. 57)

Hail, overseas battalion, how are we doing?
To judge from your appearance you look effeminate in your body,
with your juvenile locks and the plumpness of your arms.

(B.) Did you ever see a man from Abydos who has been born (or 'who has become') a man?

Another fragment suggests that, like Eupolis' *Taxiarchs* (fr. 268.45–55), the play featured a rowing scene as part of the military training:³⁷

(A.) ὥρα τοίνυν μετ' ἐμοῦ χωρεῖν «τὸν» κωπητῆρα λαβόντα
καὶ προσκεφάλαιον, ἵν' ἐς τὴν ναῦν ἐμπηδήσας ῥοθιάζης.
(B.) ἀλλ' οὐ δέομαι πανικτὸν ἔχων τὸν πρωκτὸν. (fr. 54)

(A.) It is time to come with me, taking your leather thong and cushion, so that leaping into the ship, you can ply the dashing oar.

(B.) But I don't need that [*sc.* the cushion?] since I have got a padded (?) arse

Πανικτός is a *hapax legomenon* whose etymology and meaning are unknown. Meineke suggested that it might derive from πῆνος/πᾶνος, a medical term for tumour, and translates it as *podex tuberculis obsitus* ('an anus covered with boils').³⁸ Perhaps the pun is on the size of the character's bottom, which is big enough to serve as a cushion. This would not only indicate that the speaker is unfit, but would also aptly refer to the large padding that comic actors used to wear.

by the prolonged war. The τριβῶν worn by Agesilaus in a military campaign was viewed by Plutarch as a sign of his toughness and austerity (Plut. *Ages.* 14.2); see Geddes (1987) 320.

³⁵ For the depiction of Dionysus' effeminacy both on the tragic and comic stage see Lada-Richards (1999) 23–24, with detailed references. For Dionysus' ambiguous appearance, see Jameson (1993).

³⁶ Teleclides may have authored a play by the same title of which nothing survives (see Teleclid. *Test.* 5.8 K-A, where the title [Στρατιώταις is possible). Later comedies by Antiphanes, Alexis, Diphilus, Philemo, Menander, and Xenarchus, entitled *Stratiôtês* or *Stratiôtai*, focus on the different figure of the *miles gloriosus*.

³⁷ Wilson (1974) 250–52 argued that the scene served as a model for Aristophanes' rowing scene in the *Frogs*.

³⁸ Meineke (1839) 404.

Theopompus' *Stratiôtides* presented the opposite scenario of women who took up warfare, the male task *par excellence*. Matthew Christ suggests that women had to become soldiers because not enough men were available – they had avoided service.³⁹ The role inversion enables women to enjoy earning a wage (fr. 56). Indeed, the women-soldiers may earn better pay than their husbands do by serving as jurors in lawsuits. Yet the 'rigours' of military life may be hard for the women to take. One of the soldiering women seems to be reluctant to drink from a *kôthôn*, a large drinking vessel that is associated with military contexts and heavy drinking (fr. 55).⁴⁰ Although the extant fragments do not present the female soldiers as *astrateutoi*, their discomfort with military life, perhaps exemplified by fr. 55, could potentially lead to an attempt at desertion.

In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, the men's withdrawal from military operations comes as a consequence of the women's abstinence from sex. *Lysistrata* is not set in a military camp, but on the Acropolis, which the women have occupied in an effort to take control of the treasury and force the men to end the war. The arrangements that Lysistrata has put in place, however, depriving men of money as well as of the satisfaction of their physiological needs through a sex strike, can be counted as military operations. The women who day and night guard the Acropolis are like a besieged army. As in Theopompus' *Stratiôtides*, the women are charged with military duties and thereby acquire masculine traits. The recognition of Lysistrata's appropriation of manliness is evident. Twice she is called ἀνδρειοτάτη, 'the most manly' of all women (Ar. *Lys.* 549, 1107). And the lack of *andreia* of her male counterparts is also emphasized; the men are mockingly called *andreioi* for wearing their armour to do their grocery shopping (Ar. *Lys.* 559).⁴¹

Lipostration on the Comic Stage

The comic plays mentioned in the previous section, albeit mostly fragmentary, unequivocally present two common features. First, comic *astrateutoi* are gender marked, being either women (Theopomp.Com. *Stratiôtides*; Ar. *Lys.*) or effeminate men (Eup. *Astrateutoi*; Hermipp. *Stratiôtai*) or, in the case of Eupolis' *Taxiarchs*, an effeminate god. Second, some of these plays present humorous scenes of military training, whereas others stage hapless trainees showing discomfort with military discipline. This scenario could develop in two possible ways: either the trainer gradually loses his patience and dismisses the bungling trainee, or the trainees themselves, unable to sustain the rigid military discipline, could concoct a plan of escape. Given the military setting of these plays, such attempts at fleeing could be classed as comic dramatizations of *lipostration* ('military desertion'). This section attempts an examination of the comic re-enactment of desertion from the army.

The only complete example of a re-enactment of *lipostration* in extant Old Comedy occurs in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Lysistrata laments the difficulty of restraining the women's sexual desire and describes their repeated attempts at desertion to return to their husbands:

³⁹ Christ (2004) 35 with n. 6.

⁴⁰ The word occurs at Ar. *Eq.* 600 and *Pax* 1094. Cf. Sparkes (1975) 128–29.

⁴¹ Cf. Bassi (2003) 44.

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν αὐτὰς ἀποσχεῖν οὐκέτι
 οἶα τ' ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνδρῶν· διαδιδράσκουσι γάρ.
 τὴν μὲν γε πρῶτην διαλέγουσαν τὴν ὀπήν
 κατέλαβον ἢ τοῦ Πανός ἐστι ταύλιον,
 τὴν δ' ἐκ τροχιλείας αὖ κατελυσπωμένην
 τὴν δ' αὐτομολοῦσαν τὴν δ' ἐπὶ στρούθου μίαν
 ἦδη πέτεσθαι διανοουμένην κάτω
 εἰς Ὀρσιλόχου χθῆς τῶν τριχῶν κατέσπασα.
 πάσας τε προφάσεις ὥστ' ἀπελθεῖν οἴκαδε
 ἔλκουσιν.... (718–27)

In fact, I'm no longer capable of keeping them away from the men; they are finding ways to escape. The first one I caught was opening up the hole round where Pan's grotto is; another was wriggling down on a pulley-cable and trying to desert that way. Another one I pulled down by the hair when she was just meaning to fly down on the back of a sparrow to Orsilochus' place. And they're adducing every kind of excuse to go home. (trans. Sommerstein, slightly adapted)

The women's bold attempts at desertion utilize underground, overground, and even aerial routes of escape.⁴² After Lysistrata's tirade, the audience witnesses the attempted escape of three other women under false pretences. The first woman adduces the excuse of having to take some Milesian fleeces inside the house before they are damaged by moths (729–30), while the second claims that she needs to peel her flax off (735–36). The third woman urges Lysistrata to let her go home since she is about to give birth (744).

A gender transgression occurs when the women decide to take up predominantly masculine duties, such as war and decision-making, while neglecting their female roles as wives and mothers. But the women try to evade their manly duties and to return to their female roles, appearing as weak and needy women in the eyes of Lysistrata. Their exaggerated behaviour restores their femininity. The excuses they present to justify their desertion relate to typical female tasks, such as weaving and child bearing.⁴³

In *Lysistrata*, the attempted desertion is concluded by the unmasking of the third woman, who has concealed Athena's helmet under her dress pretending to be pregnant. The staging of the penetration of disguise follows a specific pattern: Lysistrata questions the deserter; she comes up with unconvincing explanations; Lysistrata then lifts the woman's dress to expose the trick. At the end of this scene, Lysistrata urges all the women to stop their false pretences and 'endure the hardship' (προσταλαιπωρεῖν) of their military-like life. The women promptly resume their positions and exhibit masculine traits once again before they confront the approaching men (780). It is only at the very end of the play that gender roles are reinstated and women return to their domestic duties upon the conclusion of a peace treaty.

⁴² As does Philocleon in *Wasps*. Held captive in his own house, he attempts to elude the slaves' surveillance. For an excellent analysis of this farcical scene, see MacDowell (1989) 1–13.

⁴³ Likewise, Achilles confined at Scyros among the daughters of Lycomedes zealously engages in similar activities (E. *Scyrioi* fr. 683a). For the use of spinning and weaving activities in Homeric poems as a means of characterizing female characters see Pantelia (1993) 493–501.

In what follows, I suggest that a scene of attempted *lipostration* featured in Eupolis' *Taxiarchs* as well.⁴⁴ Due to the fragmentary nature of this play only tentative conclusions can be put forward. I have already commented on the hardships that military discipline impose on Dionysus: these may be a sufficient reason for the god to plot to desert. Dionysus' attempt at *lipostration* would need a disguise to alter his identity.⁴⁵ I suggest that Dionysus could conceal himself among the female slaves in the military camp with the intention of deserting. Because of his effeminate appearance, Dionysus might blend in easily with female slaves. The carrying of objects such as a water pitcher could suffice to indicate Dionysus' temporary disguise.⁴⁶ Another possibility is that Dionysus could have concealed himself in a large cloak. A calyx-crater from Messina dated to the second quarter of the fourth century illustrates, among other comic characters, a figure who wears a slave's mask, but whose body is completely enveloped by a woman's robe reaching to the ground. It is obvious that the character represents a male slave in female disguise.⁴⁷ Dionysus could have disguised himself in a similar manner. According to stage conventions Dionysus would still have been recognizable to the audience, most likely by his mask.

Two short fragments corroborate this suggestion: they seem to indicate that the play featured a slave's failed attempt at fleeing. One character threatens another with the words ἐγὼ δέ γε στίζω σε βελόναισιν τρισίν ('I shall tattoo you with three needles', Eup. *Taxiarchs* fr. 277), a punishment inflicted on runaway slaves.⁴⁸ Another fragment indicates that a female slave is about to be auctioned:

οὐ θᾶπτον αὐτὴν δευρό μοι τῶν τοξοτῶν
ἄγων ἀποκηρύξει τις, ὅ τι ἂν ἀλφάνη; (fr. 273)

Won't one of the archers quickly bring her here to sell for whatever profit she can make?

The anonymous speaker (Phormio?) instructs the archers to take a female character, who is not present but called onstage, in order to sell 'her'. The verb ἀποκηρύξει indicates that an auction is taking place.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Cf. Kaibel *apud* Eup. frs 274, 277 K-A, who thought that Dionysus ran away because of hunger.

⁴⁵ In Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros*, Dionysus, after he has faked being Paris to enjoy Helen's favours, turns himself into a ram to avoid being captured.

⁴⁶ In Ar. *Ra.* 46–47, 495–96, Dionysus' impersonation of Heracles is clearly indicated though his wearing of the lion skin and carrying of the club. When, however, he swaps roles with his slave Xanthias, no specific item of clothing is mentioned in this change of status, but only the luggage that Dionysus/Xanthias is now expected to carry (497).

⁴⁷ Green (2002) 115.

⁴⁸ For στίζω in the sense of tattooing runaway slaves, see Ar. *Au.* 760; *Ra.* 1511. Gildersleeve (1908) 112 observed that the 'three needles' mentioned in this passage could represent the three corners of a Δ as indicating the initial letter of the word δραπέτης ('runaway slave'). The word βελόνη ('needle') is used mainly of 'sewing needles' (Poll. *On.* 10.136). Perhaps here the joke lies in the double meaning of the word that indicates at once branding and sewing with needles, the former to tattoo the runaway slave, the latter to stitch together his poor cloak.

⁴⁹ Generals could sometimes sell spoils and prisoners in order to support their troops. Hamel (1998a) 44, 51, 53, suggests that the treatment of prisoners was mostly dictated by the decision of the Boule, although

This fragment could be part of a scene of attempted desertion. Dionysus clad in a large cloak tries to flee the camp. He is captured while fleeing the military camp in disguise. If this was the case, it is likely that the following scene would feature an on-stage strip-off of a resistant Dionysus. This is how the third woman is unmasked by Lysistrata. This scenario certainly has great comic potential, as it would give Eupolis the chance to present Dionysus' frightened reactions to the perilous situation, as well as the amusing revelation of Dionysus' ambiguous nature. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Dionysus' attire consists of the *krokotos*, a typical attribute of the god, worn in conjunction with Heracles' lion skin and club – a cause for great hilarity in Heracles himself (45–47). In *Taxiarchs*, Dionysus has put aside his multi-coloured robe to wear a $\tau\epsilon\lambda\beta\omega\nu$ (fr. 280). It is likely, however, that he would have retained some characteristics of his effeminate appearance. Thus as in *Frogs*, the unmasking of the god would reveal a contradictory appearance that combines the $\tau\epsilon\lambda\beta\omega\nu$, emblem of the rigorous simplicity of military life, and female apparel.⁵⁰

The extant fragments do not give us any clues about how *Taxiarchs* could have ended. Presumably, either Dionysus acknowledged his incompatibility with military life and devoted himself to more suitable activities, or he eventually became a courageous and loyal hoplite.⁵¹

Because of the loss of so much of fifth-century comedy, this brief overview of the comic treatment of *astrateia* and *lipotaxion* can only be partial and incomplete. Nevertheless, it is possible to trace some features common to the Old Comic plays that deal with these military offences. First, Old Comedy takes literally the equivalence of cowardice and effeminacy. Thus, comic deserters are either women who have temporarily taken up military tasks (Ar. *Lys.*; Theopomp.Com. *Stratiôtides*) or men-women who are unable to cope with military discipline (Eup. *Astrateutoi*, *Taxiarchs*; Hermipp. *Stratiôtai*). These comic characters are of hybrid gender. Their sexual ambiguity is displayed both in their physical appearance and in their behaviour. The undertaking of military training makes these characters long for a more comfortable life. In some cases, inability to cope with military life compels characters to desert. Attempts at desertion certainly feature in *Lysistrata* and perhaps, as I have suggested, in Eupolis' *Taxiarchs* as well. In *Lysistrata* and possibly in *Taxiarchs*, deserters who have attempted to be manly soldiers further disguise themselves, reasserting their femininity.

Conclusion

The norms of ancient Greek society regard the failure to comply with military obligations as a denial of one's manliness, which is signified in drama as an exhibition of markedly feminine traits and, in some cases, transvestism. Tragic heroes who refuse to fulfil their

occasionally generals might be given some latitude to make decisions on the spot without prior consultation. For a survey of the treatment of war prisoners, see Ducrey (1968) 262.

⁵⁰ A similar incongruity of male and female attributes is noted by his kinsman when he sees Agathon at Ar. *Th.* 130–45.

⁵¹ As in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where Dionysus progressively becomes a 'civic viewer'; see Lada-Richards (1999) 279–311.

military obligations take up a disguise that radically alters their identity. Thus Achilles, who is the emblem of courage and military prowess, becomes a maiden, while Odysseus, who is known for his resourcefulness and cunning intelligence, feigns madness. Attic Old Comedy turns the tables and presents the opposite scenario in which *astrateutoi* and *lipotaktai* are either women or effeminate men who strive to achieve *andρεία*, but struggle to control their feminine impulses. I have argued that Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and possibly Eupolis' *Taxiarchs* featured attempts at desertion in disguises that underscore the act as female.

In tragedy, the penetration of the disguise occurs by means of persuasion, force, and deception.⁵² The disguised figure voluntarily reveals his identity, an act that leads to his reintegration into his social roles and obligations. In comedy, the disguise is penetrated through its farcical removal. Attempted evasions are unmasked and deserters recalled to their duties, while the subversive society that freely allows such role reversals remains intact.

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Abbreviations

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LIMC Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae. 8 Vols. Zurich, 1981–.
 PA J. Kirchner, *Prosopographia attica*. 2 Vols. Berlin, 1901–1903.
 PEG A. Bernabé ed., *Poetarum Epicorum Graecorum: Testimonia et Fragmenta Pars I*. Leipzig, 1996, 2nd edn.
PSI Papiri greci e latini. Florence, 1912–.
TrGF 4 S. Radt ed., *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta: Sophocles*. Vol. 4. Göttingen, 1999, 2nd edn.
TrGF 5.2 R. Kannicht ed., *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta: Euripides*. Vol. 5.2. Göttingen 2004.

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⁵² Christ (2004) 44.

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