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Gwendolyn Compton-Engle

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HOLDING THE BABY: A PARODY OF EURIPIDES'
AUGE AT PHILYLLIUS FRAGMENT 4

Euripides' *Auge* has long been recognized as a predecessor of the foundling-recognition plots that proliferated in New Comedy.¹ The play involves an infant who was conceived during a drunken rape at a festival, set out to die, then rescued and recognized by its father through a token of recognition. Not only do these plot elements bear a general resemblance to those of New Comedy, but Menander also directly quotes the *Auge* of Euripides in two different places (*Epit.* 1123–24; *Her.* 110).² But approximately a century's worth of plays were produced between Euripides and Menander, and the fragments of fourth-century comedy indicate that the first step in the adaptation of the exposed-child plot to comedy came through the mythological travesties that were popular in the first half of the century.³ Although early comic versions of plots like the *Auge* must have been important transmitters of the foundling plot from tragedy to comedy, their relationship with the Euripidean play has been uncertain. This paper focuses on a hitherto unnoticed parody of a scene in Euripides' *Auge* by the comic poet Philyllius at the outset of the fourth century. I argue that fragment 4 from Philyllius' *Auge*, in which a man holds loaves of bread as though they were a baby, travesties the Euripidean scene in which Heracles holds the infant he has found in the wilderness. The cross-fertilization of all three dramatic genres—tragedy, satyr play, and comedy—in the dramatizations of the *Auge* story provides further evidence both for the role of paratragedy in the transference of plots from Euripides to New Comedy and for the influence of satyr play in the development of early fourth-century mythological comedy.⁴

1. THE *AUGE* OF EURIPIDES

In the last years of his career, Euripides produced a play titled *Auge*, whose plot can be reconstructed on the basis of surviving quotations, a fragmentary papyrus hypothesis, and a very late summary.⁵ The action of the play takes place before the temple of Athena Alea, as the first line of the play announces (frag. 264a = test. iia, hypothesis line 2:

1. E.g., Huys 1995, 116; Collard and Cropp 2008, 262–63.
2. On *Auge* and Men. *Epit.*, see Anderson 1982; Porter 1999–2000. For the quotation of the *Auge* in Men. *Her.*, see Arnott 1996, 37–39.
3. Webster 1970, 84; Arnott 1972, 65, 73–75; Nesselrath 1993.
4. Nesselrath 1993; Shaw 2010, drawing on Nesselrath 1995, 2–3.
5. The play is dated late in Euripides' life on metrical grounds: Cropp and Fick 1985, 70, 77; Collard and Cropp 2008, 262. I follow the numbering, text, and general reconstruction of Collard and Cropp 2008. On aspects of the play's reconstruction, see also Koenen 1969; Anderson 1982; Huys 1990; 1995, *passim*.

Ἀλέας Ἀθάνας ὄδε πολύχρυσος δόμος, “This is the much-gilt hall of Athena Alea”).⁶ The prologue-speaker provides further background details: Auge was the priestess of Athena Alea when she was raped by a drunken Heracles during the festival of Athena Alea, as she washed the robe of the goddess at a spring (test. iia, lines 10–12);⁷ she has given birth to his child Telephus in the temple precinct of Athena. Either before the action of the play begins, or very early in the play, the newborn is hidden in the temple. Conversation with a nurse (frags. 271, 271a, 271b) about her plight provides Auge with the impetus to take some bold action. Athena, outraged at the miasma of childbirth in her temple, sends a plague (frags. 266, 267), which spurs a search for the cause of pollution. When the baby Telephus is discovered, Auge’s father, king Aleus, orders servants to expose the infant on a mountain and condemns Auge to drowning (test. iib, Moses of Chorene).

To this point, the situation is dire indeed: rape of a priestess, temple pollution, divine wrath, plague, and kin-against-kin death sentences. The next scene, however, presents what must have been a surprising turn. Heracles enters with an infant in his arms (frags. 272, 272a)—as it turns out, the very same infant who has been the center of the calamity and who has just been expelled from the city—and reports that he discovered the child being nursed by a deer in the wilderness (frag. 281, test. iib). The two fragments that form our main textual evidence for this baby-holding scene indicate a playful tone strikingly incongruent with the preceding events. Aelian (*VH* 12.15) gives us fragment 272a, attributing it to Heracles παιδίον κατέχων, “while holding a child”:⁸

παίζω· μεταβολὰς γὰρ πόνων ἀεὶ φιλῶ

I am playing; for I always love changes from my labors.

Heracles is probably responding to the shocked question of an interlocutor who asks him something like, “What on earth are you doing bringing that baby back in here?” The naiveté expressed in this line appears also in fragment 272, where, perhaps questioned further about this situationally inappropriate playfulness, Heracles (or someone else) asks rhetorically:

τίς δ’ οὐχὶ χαίρει νηπίοις ἀθύρμασιν;

Who does not delight in childish playthings?

Not only is the playfulness in these fragments of *Auge* incongruous in a tragedy, but also remarkable is the visual impact of the hypermasculine heroic figure suddenly appearing on stage cradling a tender infant in his arms. Later artistic renderings of Heracles holding the infant Telephus attest to the enduring interest of this tableau.⁹

The closest parallel to this baby-holding scenario in Euripides’ day comes from the world of satyrs. Holding and playing with a baby, especially the infant Dionysus, is something that satyrs do regularly in art and in satyr play itself. The satyrs who find the infant

6. See Koenen 1969, 8–9 on this opening line and Collard and Cropp 2008, 268 on the reconstruction. All translations are my own.

7. See Koenen 1969 on the spring and the festival.

8. Fragment 272a was not originally included among the *Auge* fragments by Nauck (1889) (where it was frag. 864 among unknown plays), but it clearly belongs in the context of *Auge*, as was recognized as early as Wilamowitz (1875, 189) and has been accepted by Kannicht in *TrGF* and Collard and Cropp (2008). See Huys 1990, 182–84, with 183 n. 58 providing full bibliography.

9. For the representations in art of Telephus being nursed by the deer and of Heracles holding him (sometimes with the deer nearby), see Bauchhenss-Thürleid 1971, 78–86; *LIMC* VII.1.856–70, VII.2.590–602.

Perseus in Aeschylus' *Dictyoulkoi* engage extensively with the little baby (frag. 47a, lines 786–820). In the Sophoclean satyr play *Dionysiskos* (*Baby Dionysus*), a satyr describes giving food to baby Dionysus, who fondles the satyr's nose and bald head (frag. 171).¹⁰ In a study of images of fatherhood in Greece, Alan Shapiro states, "While the Athenian father is a distracted observer of his own offspring, the satyr father likes to pick up and hold his young son, to play games with him, and, when the boy has misbehaved, to discipline him."¹¹ Artistic representations of Pappasilenos or another satyr holding and sometimes playing with the infant Dionysus begin in the fifth century and continue through the Hellenistic and Roman periods.¹² If the baby-holding scene of Euripides' *Auge* evokes these images of satyrs, the scene would align with other satyric elements of the *Auge*, most notably the drunken rape of Auge by Heracles. Even the scanty remains of the play indicate that the role of alcohol in Heracles' conduct was a major point of emphasis. Line 13 of the hypothesis, at the moment of the rape, contains the word οἰνωμένο[ς, "drunken."¹³ In fragment 272b, Heracles blames wine for his behavior.¹⁴ Drunken sexual assault is a well-known pastime of satyrs, and in Euripides' satyr play *Syleus*, Heracles himself commits a drunken rape. Heracles brings with him into *Auge* this flavor of satyr play, even leading some scholars to suggest that *Auge*, like *Alcestis*, was produced in a pro-satyric position at the Dionysia.¹⁵ These very elements may have made the *Auge* especially appealing to comic poets in the first half of the fourth century.

2. PARODY IN THE *AUGE* OF PHILYLLIUS

Comic poets took notice of *Auge*. Aristophanes' *Frogs* shows that the Euripidean *Auge* had already gained some notoriety for its scandalous plot. At *Frogs* 1080, the character Aeschylus accuses Euripides of presenting τικτούσας ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς, "women giving birth in temples," which the scholion explains as a reference to the birth of Telephus in *Auge*. Just a few years later, Philyllius staged the first known fuller-scale comic adaptation of *Auge*, in the transitional period when mythological plots were beginning to come to the fore. The *Suda* describes Philyllius as a κωμικός τῆς παλαιάς κωμῳδίας ("a comic poet of Old Comedy"), and he won a victory at the Lenaea in 390.¹⁶ He is credited in the *Suda* with ten plays, of which six appear to be mythological: *Aegeus*, *Auge*, *Heracles*, *Washing Women* or *Nausicaa*, *Atalante*, and *Helen*.¹⁷ Since four of these (*Aegeus*, *Auge*,

10. On *Dionysiskos*, see Nesselrath 1995, 2 n. 6; Krumeich et al. 1999.

11. Shapiro 2003, 104–5. See also Pratt 2013, 241–43.

12. See Krumeich et al. 1999, 253–55. See also Beazely 9035948, Attic red-figure calyx-krater, "Papposilenus playing with a child," Eschbach and Schmidt 2016, 26, fig. 1. For sculptures of the infant Dionysus held by a satyr, see *LIMC* VIII.1.480–81 and VIII.2.378–79, to which add the terracotta figurine at Neils and Oakley 2003, 209, cat. 8 (Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum 48.302).

13. The reading of West and Barrett, printed in *TrGF* and Collard and Cropp 2008; Koenen (1969) and Luppe (1983) prefer θῖνωμένο[, "banqueting."

14. Collard and Cropp (2008, 262) follow Wilamowitz in suggesting that frag. adesp. 570, οἶνός μ' ἔπεισε δαμιόνων ὑπέρτατος ("Wine, the highest of gods, persuaded me"), may also have been spoken by Heracles in this play; see *TrGF* on 272b.

15. For the possibility that *Auge* was produced in a pro-satyric position, see Huys 1990, 182, with earlier bibliography.

16. *IG* II² 2325.136, *PCG* test. 3. It is possible that Philyllius is also listed for a victory at the City Dionysia at *IG* II² 2325.64 (*PCG* test. 4), but only the first three letters of the name survive, so other names are possible. Storey (2011, 18) suggests a career from 405–390 BCE for Philyllius.

17. *Atalante* and *Helen* are added at the end of what otherwise is an alphabetical list, prompting some debate about their inclusion (*PCG* on Philyllius test. 1).

Heracles, and *Helen*) coincide with titles of Euripidean plays, some Euripidean influence has been assumed in the *Auge* of Philyllius, but the relationship of the parody to Euripides' original has remained uncertain.¹⁸

Only three fragments of Philyllius' *Auge* survive (frags. 3–5), all derived from Athenaeus and therefore related to food. Fragments 3 and 5 offer only the information that sympotic eating and drinking occurred, and that both women and young men were involved in the revelry. Fragment 4, though, is far more interesting:

αὐτὸς φέρων πάρεμι πωρῶν ἐκγόνους τριμήνων
γαλακτόχρωτας κολλάβους θερμούς

I myself am present, carrying offspring of three-month wheat,
milky-complexioned warm loaves.

The self-important speaker of this fragment claims to be holding loaves, but he mixes vocabulary appropriate to illegitimate babies with the comic language of food. The noun ἔκγονος (“offspring”), rare in comedy but frequent in tragedy and Homer, establishes a pretentious tone.¹⁹ The adjective τρίμηνος (“three-month”) contains a significant double entendre. It is used elsewhere in reference to the growing season of wheat,²⁰ but -μηνος compounds (e.g., “five-month,” “seven-month”) are also commonly used of pregnancies, especially in contexts where the suspiciously short duration of the pregnancy casts doubt on the legitimacy of the child.²¹ Herodotus 6.69 uses the compounds ἑπτάμηνος (“seven-month”) and ἔννεάμηνος (“nine-month”) in the story of the disputed legitimacy of the Spartan king Demaratus, who was rumored to have been fathered by someone other than his mother's husband, king Ariston. Suetonius, referring to the birth of Drusus to Livia shortly after her marriage to Augustus, quotes a fragment of comedy, τοῖς εὐτυχοῦσι καὶ τρίμηνα παιδιά, “the blessed have three-month children” (*PCG* adesp. 926).²² At Menander's *Epitrepontes* 1116, Onesimus uses the phrase πεντάμηνα παιδιά (“five-month children”) to refer to illegitimate births. In sum, these -μηνος words appear in contexts where people are “doing the math” about the legitimacy of suspiciously premature children. Thus the phrase ἐκγόνους τριμήνων has a double meaning in this fragment, referring not only to the wheat crop but also to human illegitimate offspring. The world of infancy is further conjured by the compound adjective γαλακτόχρωτας, “milky-complexioned.” Since the root γαλα- (“milk”) appears in many compound words related to infant suckling, the word γαλακτόχρωτας extends beyond denoting the color or ingredient of bread to evoke the image of a nursing child.²³ All of this is set in humorous verbal juxtaposition with the mundane food-word κολλάβους (“loaves”). Indeed, in these two lines, only πωρῶν (“of wheat”) and κολλάβους are specific to bread.

18. Orth 2015, 143.

19. Orth (2015, 151) notes the pomposity of the speaker. The word ἔκγονος appears only once in Aristophanes (*Eq.* 786) and is used also of bread by Philyllius' contemporary Strattis (frag. 2). Orth offers further parallels for agricultural produce as offspring.

20. See Orth 2015, 151–52 on the parallels for “three-months wheat.”

21. The -μηνος compounds can either refer to gestational period (e.g., Hippoc. *De septimestri partu*; Arist. *Hist. an.* 584, 585; and the passages cited in the text above) or to the age of the infant itself postpartum (Xen. *Cyn.* 7.6; Arist. *Hist. an.* 545, 562, 568).

22. Suet. *Claud.* 1.1. Constantine Manasses (1799) indicates that the phrase had become proverbial.

23. E.g., γαλακτισμός, “suckling”; γαλακτουχέω, “have or suck milk”; γαλαθηνός, “sucking, infant” (LSJ). Orth (2015, 152) cites many parallels for white loaves, but these are all compounds of λευκ-, not γαλα-.

In any other play, these lines could be merely a bit of fun wordplay, exploiting a punning double entendre and a clash between high and low registers. But in a comic *Auge*, this appearance of a man who enters cradling loaves as one would hold a baby clearly parodies the surprising entrance of Heracles holding the infant Telephus in Euripides' *Auge*. The "baby"-holding speaker in Philyllius' play could be Heracles himself, or he could be a slave who has returned from the market with provisions, or a grandiose cook.²⁴ The technique of this parody is similar to that of Aristophanes' repeated travesty of the scene from Euripides' *Telephus* in which the adult Telephus holds the baby Orestes hostage over an altar. Twice Aristophanes restages that scene but with a mundane object substituted for the beloved child (*Ach.* 325–51; *Thesm.* 689–764). Recognition of the *Auge* parody in Philyllius indicates something not previously known about his plays: at least at this moment of the *Auge*, he is drawing directly upon a staged version of Euripides, in a manner similar to that deployed by Aristophanes.

In other respects, the Philyllius "baby"-holding scene is not just a copycat joke stolen from an Old Comic predecessor, but rather it exhibits characteristics of the transitions underway in early fourth-century comedy. Most significantly, unlike the other Telephus parodies, the parody of Euripides in Philyllius' *Auge* is part of an entire play named after a mythological plot previously presented in tragedy.²⁵ Heinz-Günther Nesselrath has already argued that parody was the means by which tragic elements made their way into comedy, to be more fully integrated over time.²⁶ That is precisely the situation suggested by Philyllius fragment 4: a clearly recognizable tragic reference occurs within a mythological plot that has been appropriated on a larger scale into comedy. This appropriation takes an initial step toward the eventual de-mythologization of foundling plots.

The appeal of the Euripidean *Auge* for mythological comedy is clear. As we have seen, Euripides had already incorporated playful elements into his own presentation of the plot. The prominent role of Heracles in the plot, with his drunken rape and his interaction with the baby, was also very conducive to comic adaptation in the early fourth century. Heracles' appetites transfer easily to a comic presentation, and evidence from vase-painting and comic figurines indicates that he was an immensely popular character in early fourth-century comedy.²⁷ The elements of satyr play in Euripides' *Auge* also accord well with adaptation into Middle Comedy. As Carl Shaw has recently argued, satyr play offered one model for comic poets adapting mythological material to humorous effect.²⁸ Furthermore, the focus on infancy in the *Auge* plot shares some features with the subgenre of comedy known as the θεῶν γοναί ("births of the gods") plays.²⁹ Experiencing a brief period of popularity in the very late fifth century and the beginning of the fourth, these plays drew on mythological accounts of the births and infancy of gods. Nesselrath even gives them pride of place in the transmission of foundling plots: "poets of θεῶν γοναί-plays apparently were the first to present on the comic stage the theme of children illegitimately conceived and clandestinely brought into the world."³⁰ Philyllius' *Auge* and the brief

24. The latter two possibilities are suggested by Orth (2015, 151).

25. For an overview of mythological comedy, see Nesselrath 1990, 188–241; Casolari 2003.

26. Nesselrath 1993.

27. For Heracles in fourth-century comedy, see Casolari 2003, 227–95. Green (1994, 70–76) offers statistics on the frequency of various character-types in fourth-century comedy, including Heracles as his own category.

28. Nesselrath 1995, 2–3; Shaw 2010.

29. Nesselrath (1995) offers a full description of these plays.

30. Nesselrath 1995, 11.

surge in θεῶν γοναί-plays both participate in the same zeitgeist, when mythological stories oriented toward domesticity were fodder for comic exploitation.

3. THE NEW YORK TERRACOTTAS: THE CAST OF PHILYLLIUS' *AUGE*?

Further evidence for a comic *Auge* very early in the fourth century comes from a set of terracotta figurines that are believed to represent the cast of a comic *Auge*.³¹ The group of fourteen terracotta figurines now known as the New York Group and owned by the Metropolitan Museum was found in a grave in Athens, and is dated to about 400 BCE.³² Based on the color of their clay, the set of fourteen was divided into two groups of seven, representing the characters of two plays. In the "yellow" group are: an old woman holding a baby wrapped in her himation; a young woman with himation pulled over her head and also held in front of her face; Heracles looking gluttonous with his finger in his mouth; an old man in a conical hat wiping a tear from his eye with his himation; a bearded man carrying a basket; a bearded man holding a jug on his head; and a seated slave.³³

The presence of Heracles, a young woman, an old nurse with a baby, and an old man are consistent with the central characters of an *Auge* play. Indeed, they are, to our knowledge, the four main characters in the Euripidean version as well: Heracles, Auge, her nurse with baby Telephus, and her father Aleus. The weeping of the old man further suggests paratragedy.³⁴ Yet these characters from myth have been adapted into the world of comedy. Their costumes are comic (padding, phallus, mask) and they are accompanied by three other characters of low status, two of whom bring provisions for a feast. The addition of these three servile characters and the important foodstuffs that they carry are typical of the adaptation of mythological material to a comic setting, in which, as T. B. L. Webster puts it, "the tragic story is transferred to the lowest level of contemporary life."³⁵

This set of figurines is consistent with the conclusions we have reached about Philyllius' *Auge*: a close connection to the tragic version of Euripides is indicated by the presence of the four main Euripidean characters, including the weeping figure. At the same time, the three additional characters with their party provisions introduce a demythologized element. It is not certain that these figurines represent Philyllius' *Auge*, but such an attribution is possible, and perhaps even likely. In the turn-of-century period to which the figurines are now dated, a period that coincides with the *floruit* of Philyllius, there are no other known *Auge* plays, or other known plays with a cast that includes Heracles, a nurse, and a baby.³⁶ The unusually large number of copies of this group and the wide dispersal of the copies indicates that it was very popular and influential.³⁷

31. Webster 1950, 22–23 and plates 27–33; Bieber 1961, 45–47, figs. 185–200; Green 1994, 34–37; *MMC*³, 45–60; Shapiro 2010, 122–23.

32. *MMC*³, 3, 45.

33. Bieber 1961, 46, figs. 185–91 (AT 9–15).

34. Bieber (1961, 47) suggests that he weeps because he must foot the bill for hosting Heracles.

35. Webster 1970, 85.

36. Earlier scholars (e.g., Webster 1950; Bieber 1961; Hunter 1983) had suggested Eubulus' *Auge* as a possibility, but the figurines are now dated too early for Eubulus. See Green in *MMC*³, 2–3, 45 on the chronology.

37. Green in *MMC*³, 3: "[T]here can be no doubt that the New York Group set the style for the next generation or more." See *MMC*³, 45–60 for copies and findspots.

4. CONCLUSION

Surviving evidence for the adaptation of the *Auge* plot into comic forms begins with a parody of Euripidean staging by Philyllius at the start of the fourth century. When Philyllius re-creates the surprising entrance of Heracles holding the infant Telephus, transferring it to a mundane setting and substituting food for the baby, he follows a model of tragic parody already established in the time of Aristophanes, but modulates it in a manner characteristic of his era. Furthermore, the Heracles of the Euripidean *Auge*, with his satyr-like drunken rape and his playful interaction with the baby, already contains within him elements of burlesque that were easily adapted to the mythological comedy of the early fourth century. Continued comic interest in the mythological *Auge* in the mid-fourth century is evidenced by a comedy titled *Auge* by Eubulus and by a red-figure calyx-crater in Lentini dated to 340–330 BCE that depicts a comic Heracles accosting a priestess at a shrine, with a nurse and an old man looking on in comic dress.³⁸ But by mid-century and into the second half of the century, non-mythological play titles, such as *The Suppositious Child* (Υποβολιμαῖος, or Ψευδοποβολιμαῖος) by the younger Cratinus, Crobylus, Alexis, Menander, and Philemon, indicate that comic poets have begun detaching foundling plots from their tragic origins. The *Auge* parody by Philyllius at the beginning of the century offers a tantalizing glimpse into his era's transitory confluence of tragedy, comedy, and satyr play.

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John Carroll University

38. Sicilian red-figure calyx crater, Lentini 2B, Museo Archeologico, Manfreda Group, *PhV* 79. From its first publication by Stephani (1844), the scene has been identified as a scene from an *Auge* play, though that identification has been challenged more recently by Hughes (2012, 163–64). For further interpretations of the vase (all very brief), see Bieber 1961, 134 (fig. 488a–b); Trendall and Webster 1971, 136–37 (IV, 24 with plate); Walsh 2009, 85–86. In my view, the scene depicts a parody of the moment when Auge reveals her identity to Heracles.

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CAPITOLIUM VETUS: A NEW STREET IN ROME?

From Julius Pomponius Laetus to Rodolfo Lanciani and Christian Hülsen to Filippo Coarelli, the Capitolium Vetus has attracted the attention of some of the most distinguished specialists in the field of Roman topography. Nevertheless, no consensus has been reached so far over a thing as elementary as the meaning of the toponym itself. Focused on situating the Capitolium Vetus on the map, scholars have paid little heed to philological examination of a crucial passage at Varro *De lingua latina* 5.158.3. Oddly enough, the correct translation of the passage was proposed by Roland G. Kent sixty years ago; for some inscrutable reasons, however, it has never made its way into the topographical

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