

MEMORY AND THE RHETORIC OF  
ΣΩΤΗΡΙΑ IN ARISTOPHANES’  
*ASSEMBLY WOMEN*\*

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*Abstract.* This paper presents a historicising reading of Aristophanes’ *Assembly Women* in the context of Athenian politics in 392/1. Aristophanes’ thematic engagement with memory and the rhetoric of *σωτηρία* (‘safety’, ‘preservation’, ‘salvation’) is a case study of ideological struggle over language in the politics of democratic Athens. The word evokes a long and tumultuous history of revolution in Athens stretching back to 411, when Athenian democracy first voted itself out of existence, as the assembly does in *Assembly Women*. Read from this perspective, *Assembly Women* is hardly less topical than Aristophanes’ fifth-century plays. On the contrary, history, memory, and the past were centrally topical in Athenian politics in late 390s Athens, and all may be illuminated by an integrated study of the contemporary evidence of comedy, oratory, and historiography.

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**1. Introduction**

**I**n *Assembly Women* the assembly that Praxagora persuades to hand over power to the women of Athens is convoked for the purpose of debating the ‘*sôtéria*’ of the city; so too was the assembly summoned to Kolonos in 411, the assembly that gathered after the battle of Elateia in

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339, and that summoned after the defeat at Khaironeia in 338.<sup>1</sup> The ancient Greek word *sôtêria* is usually translated into English as ‘deliverance’ or ‘salvation’, and it would seem justifiable to infer a crisis in the background to *Assembly Women*. After the end of the Social War, Isocrates apologises for addressing the question of the *sôtêria* of the city when Athens is not in any immediate danger (*Areop.* 7.1). Puzzlingly, Aristophanes’ *Assembly Women* does not make clear what emergency the polis is meant to be facing, and critics have complained that no event nor set of circumstances during the Corinthian War, into which historical context the play must somewhere fit, seems to furnish an adequate point of origin for the plot.<sup>2</sup> The difficulties are sharpened by the fact that among Aristophanes’ eleven surviving plays *Assembly Women* alone is without a generally agreed date for its first performance.<sup>3</sup> Arguments have been presented for a range of possibilities from 394 to 389, with the most persuasive favouring the years 392 to 390.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Eccl.* 396–7; cf. 202, 401, 412. Kolonos: *Ath. Pol.* 29.4. Elateia: Dem. 18.170. Khaironeia: Dem. 18.248. It is generally, but not universally, accepted that the assembly which Thucydides describes being held at Kolonos (8.67.2) is to be identified with that in *Ath. Pol.* 29.4–5; see Rhodes (1981) 363–5.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Ober (1998) 130 (cf. 150) writes (his emphasis) ‘Aristophanes never explicitly alludes to a particular problem, to a *proximate* cause ... no *particular* crisis is ever mentioned.’ Cf. Sommerstein (1998) 18; Reinders (2001) 251.

<sup>3</sup> The date of *Thesmophoriazusae* is not absolutely certain, but 411 is almost universally accepted and the only alternative is the following year. Cf. Austin–Olson (2002) xxxv: ‘[t]he evidence ... overwhelmingly supports a date of 411’. For the suggestion that the play might date to 410, see Hall (1989) 53–4; Rhodes (1972) 185–90.

<sup>4</sup> It is clear that *Ecclesiazusae* must antedate *Plutus*, which was performed in the archonship of Antipatros in 389/8 (*Hypoth.* III). In the *Prolegomena on Comedy* (XXVII Koster), *Plutus* is connected, along with the lost *Cocalus*, to the last years of Aristophanes’ career and the beginning of some form of collaboration with his son Araros, whereas *Eccl.* receives no mention in this context. A number of oblique references in *Eccl.* 193–203, 356 are plausibly explained as allusions to political events of the late 390s, but the evidence does not permit a

In this essay, I suggest a new reconstruction of the immediate political background against which Aristophanes wrote *Assembly Women*. My reconstruction accepts the most widely held and current view of the date of *Assembly Women* (spring 392/1),<sup>5</sup> but argues that the evidence of Andokides' third oration, *On the Peace* (earlier in 392/1), has been overlooked in earlier work on Aristophanes' penultimate surviving play. What has hitherto been a puzzlingly inexplicable sense of crisis in *Assembly Women* can be persuasively explained by the political debate surrounding the peace negotiations between Athens and Sparta that Andokides describes. For there was a panic in Athens in the latter part of 392, in the period in which Aristophanes was most probably at work on *Assembly Women*. The panic was created by the fear that history might repeat itself if Athens and Sparta made peace. Significant numbers of Athenians believed, or at least publicly claimed, that if the city made peace with Sparta, it would lead to the dismantling of the democracy and the return of oligarchy to Athens, as had happened at the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404. Andokides sought to counter these fears by urging acceptance of his brokered peace with what amounted to a public lecture on Athenian history (3.3–12), demonstrating that no negotiated peace treaty with Sparta had ever led to the fall of the democracy.

In my view, it is not coincidental that in 411, when the democracy was facing the threat of oligarchic revolution,

conclusive view of the exact year: cf. Funke (1980) 171. *Σ Eccl.* 193 offers a date for the play but the text is corrupt and even after plausible restoration remains inconclusive: see Strauss (1986) 149 n. 85. The latest proposed date of 389 (Judeich (1892) 89 n. 1) is no longer seriously entertained: see Funke (1980) 170–1 with n. 19. Ussher (1973) xx–xxv favours an early date of 393, giving priority to the evidence of *Σ* 193; *contra* Funke (1980) 168 n. 3. For arguments for dates from 392 to 390, see Funke (1980) 168–71 (392 or 391); Seager (1967) 107 n. 110 (391 or 390, narrowly favouring 390); *contra*: Funke (1980) 170 with n. 15; but see Sommerstein (1998) 7 n. 35; Sommerstein (1998) 5–7 (favouring 391).

<sup>5</sup> For the evidence and arguments, see Sommerstein (1998) 5–7; cf. Barry (1942) 4–14 with references to the earlier literature at 13 n. 2; Carrière (1979) 177–82.

Aristophanes wrote his other surviving ‘women plays’.<sup>6</sup> Nor is it a coincidence, in view of the political background furnished by Andokides, that in *Assembly Women* Aristophanes has the democracy vote itself out of existence at an assembly debating the *sôtêria* of the polis, just as the assembly had done at Kolonos in 411.<sup>7</sup> The sense of history and its ideological fashioning that I argue is found in *Assembly Women* had recently been given very public prominence by Andokides in his oration *On the Peace*. This and presumably other now lost discourses circulating around Andokides’ peace proposals, I suggest, may have provoked Aristophanes to reflect on Athenians’ memories of the events of the previous two decades.<sup>8</sup>

*Assembly Women*, then, was written as a comic meditation on the Athenian experience of revolution, which had at the time a history stretching back twenty years to 411.<sup>9</sup> I elucidate the argument by tracing the history of the rhetoric of *sôtêria* at Athens, reconstructed from Thucydides and a handful of other contemporary sources. In anticipation of my conclusions, I will show that *Assembly Women* is a highly political and topical play of the 390s, whereas topicality and political engagement are qualities that have often been

<sup>6</sup> *Lys.* was certainly performed in 412/11 and *Th.* was all but certainly performed in the same year. Date of *Lys.*: *Hypoth.* 1.33–4. Date of *Th.*: above, n. 4. For the gender politics of *Lys.*, *Th.*, and *Eccl.*, see below, n. 38.

<sup>7</sup> *Eccl.* 455–7; cf. Thuc. 8.67, 69.1; *Ath. Pol.* 29.1, 30.1.

<sup>8</sup> Presumably Thucydides is also in the intellectual background somewhere. Andokides 3.2 (χρή γάρ, ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι, τεκμηρίους χρῆσθαι τοῖς πρότερον γενομένοις περὶ τῶν μελλόντων ἔσεσθαι) may echo Thucydides (1.22.4), but caution is advisable: similar phrasing is found at *Lys.* 25.23 and the idea that the past may be used to predict the future is a commonplace: Edwards (1995) 194; cf. Nouhaud (1982) 88–9 (also citing less exact parallels in *Isoc.* 1.34, 2.35). Even on a revisionist down-dating of Thucydides, which I argue for in Tordoff (2014), Aristophanes will have had several years to read and digest the historian’s work before composing *Assembly Women*. For possible scenarios of the circulation of Thucydides’ ideas (e.g. readings at symposia), see Hornblower (1987) 29 n. 65; (2004) 33.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the general picture sketched by Scholtz (2007) 71–109.

found wanting in Aristophanes' late works.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, I will argue that the play is concerned with memory, history, and the past in a new way, one that is exemplified in none of Aristophanes' earlier surviving dramas, but one that does suggest parallels with historiography, especially in the form of Thucydides' project in Athens after the Peloponnesian War. For what was topical and political in late 390s Athens was precisely the ideological struggle over the city's past.

## II. Andokides' Speech *On the Peace*, Athenian History, and Fear of Oligarchy

At some point in the first half of the Athenian archon year of Philokles (392/1), Andokides returned from Sparta to address the Athenian assembly.<sup>11</sup> At Sparta he had

<sup>10</sup> For a collection of negative judgments on *Eccl.*, see David (1984) 1 n. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Philoch. *FGrHist* 328 F 149a dates the peace negotiations at Sparta, which are the subject of Andok. 3, to the archonship of Philokles (392/1). Andokides' speech is usually placed in the fall or winter of 392/1. The internal evidence of the speech agrees with Philochorus: Andokides says (3.20) that the Corinthian War has been being fought for four years, i.e. summer 395–summer 392, but this provides no exact *terminus post quem*. Andokides' words imply a context for the speech at some point after midsummer 392 (for a succinct presentation of the chronological problems, see Ryder (1965) 168–9). A *terminus ante quem* is provided by 3.27, which cannot fit a context later than Agesilaos' invasion of Argos in spring 391 (described by Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.19). The *terminus post quem* emerges from 3.18, where Andokides mentions the capture of Lekhaion by the Spartans, but the dating of this event within the year 392 is uncertain. Cawkwell (1976) 271 n. 13 places it in the spring; Funke (1980) 84 in summer; and Strauss (1986) 147 n. 62 in the fall. Andokides' language in 3.18 refers to Lekhaion and the battles of Nemea and Coronea in the same breath, although Nemea and Coronea were fought two years earlier in 394. His words (τοτὲ μὲν ... αὐθις δ' ... τρίτον δ' ἤνικα Λέχαιον ἔλαβον) 'At one time ... then again ... and for the third time when they captured Lekhaion' fit better if the capture of Lekhaion lies some appreciable time before the speech. In my view the best that can be made of the difficult evidence is that Lekhaion was captured in the spring and that Andokides delivered his speech in the late summer. Albini (1964) 11–12 places Andoc. 3 in spring 392, but the chronology he uses for the Corinthian War is no longer the accepted

negotiated the terms of a peace, which he referred for debate to the sovereign *dēmos*.<sup>12</sup> The strategy of Andokides' speech is highly defensive: he clearly anticipated a hostile and prejudiced audience, many among whom feared, or were inciting the fear, that peace with Sparta would lead to a repeat of the events of 404, with the dissolution of the democracy and the imposition of a Spartan-backed oligarchy.<sup>13</sup> Athenians in 392/1 will no doubt have recalled the desperate times in 405/4 when Theramenes spent months negotiating at Sparta while Athens was brought to its knees by starvation.<sup>14</sup> In the event, Andokides' presentation of the terms of peace failed spectacularly. It is not certain who was behind the opposition, but it has been plausibly suggested that Thrasyboulos championed the rejection of Andokides' peace and the continuation of the

one and he undervalues the evidence of Philochorus, a hazardous approach to fourth-century history.

The chronology of the Corinthian War is a vexed subject. For a survey: Funke (1980) 76 n. 4. My general chronology for 395–391 follows Ryder (1965) 165–9, and my chronology of the year 392 follows most closely that of Cawkwell (1976) 271 n. 13, but the whole edifice is supported by the assumption (cf. Ryder (1965) 165–6) that the second sentence of Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.1 subsumes all the land-campaign events of 393. This assumption is made also by, *inter alios*, Funke (1980) 81–9; Hamilton (1979) 249–51; Strauss (1986) 147 n. 57; Tuplin (1982a) 75. For a different view, see Buckler (2003) 104–9, cf. (1999) 210 n. 1; Pascual (2009) 75–90.

<sup>12</sup> *Hypoth.* Andoc. 3 reports that the authenticity of *On the Peace* was denied in antiquity by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Harpocration notes the possibility that it might be spurious in the three entries in which he quotes it: s.v. Ἐλληνοταμίαι, νεώρια, Πηγαί. Some modern scholars have followed suit: for references, see Jebb (1893) 1.127; but in recent times the speech has generally been accepted as genuine: cf. Edwards (1995) 107–8. Doubts have arisen because of the historical inaccuracies in 3.3–12 and the fact that Aeschines (2.172–6) repeats the same information almost verbatim. For discussion, see Albin (1964) 17–24, esp. 23 for a pithy rejoinder to unwarranted doubts about 3.3–12: 'Andocide non è uno storico.'

<sup>13</sup> For this aspect of the political context of the speech, see Missiou (1992) 61–6; Seager (1967) 105–6.

<sup>14</sup> Lys. 12.68–70, 13.9–14; Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.10–23; Diod. Sic. 13.107.4.

war.<sup>15</sup> What is known is that the ambassadors were prosecuted on a motion moved by Kallistratos.<sup>16</sup> The charges leveled are unclear, but nearly fifty years later Demosthenes refers to disobeying instructions, reporting misleading information to the *boulé*, giving false evidence concerning the allies, and corruption.<sup>17</sup> The accused fled into exile to avoid standing trial on capital charges; presumably they were condemned to death *in absentia*.<sup>18</sup>

Andokides' speech preserves valuable evidence of a panic about oligarchy in Athens in 392. It is clear that he knew of the panic before he sailed to Sparta to negotiate because he returned to Athens to present his case for peace anticipating its arguments. In the very first section of *On the Peace* Andokides adverts to the opposition of speakers who have been claiming that a peace treaty with Sparta will present the very great danger to the *dēmos* of the overthrow of the constitution.<sup>19</sup> The same characterisation of the political mood in Athens forming the background to the peace negotiations at Sparta is restated more emphatically a little later (3.10):

<sup>15</sup> Seager (1967) 107–8; cf. *Eccl.* 202–3, 356–7.

<sup>16</sup> The indictment was probably made by *εἰσαγγελία* to the assembly, though we do not know whether the case was heard by the assembly or by a court: see Hansen (1975) 87–8. For Kallistratos as the mover, see Philoch., *FGrHist* 328 F 149a.

<sup>17</sup> Dem. 19.227–9. On the problem of what 'disobeying instructions' means in the context of an embassy 'with full powers', see Pownall (1995).

<sup>18</sup> Flight into exile: Ps.-Plut. *Moralia* 835A. Capital charge (*θάνατον*): Dem. 19.277, where Demosthenes reports this as the charge against at least one member of the embassy, Epikrates. The latter, Epikrates of Kephisia (*PA* 4859; *PAA* 393945), was a popular democrat and a supporter of renewed Athenian imperialism. If Epikrates was condemned to death, it is reasonable to assume that the other delegates, especially a man like Andokides, whose democratic credentials were far more suspect, suffered the same sentence. It is possible that Epikrates was pardoned and returned to Athens, if *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 6444 is indeed his gravestone (cf. *PAA* 393950).

<sup>19</sup> Andoc. 3.1: λέγουσι γὰρ ὡς ἔστι δεινότατον τῷ δήμῳ, γενομένης εἰρήνης, ἢ νῦν οὐσα πολιτεία μὴ καταλύθῃ.

ἤδη δέ τινων ἤκουσα λεγόντων ὡς ἐκ τῆς τελευταίας εἰρήνης τῆς πρὸς Λακεδαιμονίους οἳ τε τριάκοντα κατέστησαν πολλοί τε Ἀθηναίων κώνειον πίνοντες ἀπέθανον οἱ δὲ φεύγοντες ὄχοντο.

*Before now* I have heard some men saying that as a result of the last peace with the Lacedaemonians we had the Thirty, many Athenians died by drinking hemlock, and others disappeared in exile.

The most important word is the first, the temporal adverb ἤδη ('before now', 'already'): it clearly conveys the pre-existing atmosphere of suspicion and hostility towards the negotiations at Sparta. Evidently, when Andokides and his fellow delegates were sent to Sparta, there was already a panic in Athens about the possibility of 'history' repeating itself with capitulation to Sparta and the removal of democracy, barely more than a decade after the restoration of the constitution in 403. In response to this, Andokides' rhetorical strategy in *On the Peace* is to instruct the *dēmos* on its peace treaties with Sparta since the mid-fifth century.<sup>20</sup> A number of inaccuracies notwithstanding, Andokides demonstrates that Athens has made peace with Sparta three times in the past without the democratic constitution suffering. He also shows, correctly, that the case of the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404 is irrelevant because at that time Athens surrendered to Sparta, whereas in 392 peace could be negotiated on an equal footing.

It is impossible to determine to what extent the opposition to Andokides was fueled by genuine fear of history repeating itself if Athens made peace with Sparta, or to

<sup>20</sup> On Andokides' historical inaccuracies in *De Pace*, see Perlman (1961) 163; cf. Albini (1964) 17–18. For a defence of Andokides and the argument that his information derives from the *Atthis* of Hellanicus, see Thompson (1967). For recent discussion of Andok. 3 and the 'uses of history', see Grethlein (2010) 126–44; cf. Steinbock (2012) 1–99 (esp. 74–5 on *De Pace*) on the oratorical use of history in social memory in a predominantly oral society.



what extent the panic was cynically stoked by Athenians who favoured continuing the war. I suspect, but cannot prove, that it was more a case of the latter;<sup>21</sup> but we must remember that in 391 no Athenian knew that the democracy would survive down to the period of Macedonian hegemony some seventy years later. What is abundantly clear is that oligarchy and the history of Athenians' conduct in 404–403 was a topic of extreme political antagonism in the period of *Assembly Women* and for many years afterwards.

Athens experienced two episodes of murderous oligarchic revolution in the late fifth century, after almost one hundred years of uninterrupted democratic rule since the expulsion of Hippias in 511/10.<sup>22</sup> In 411 the oligarchs murdered a number of their opponents, though 'not many' according to Thucydides (Thuc. 8.65.2, 70.2). The Thirty probably executed 1,500 Athenians, more than the casualties caused by the Peloponnesians in ten years of war, as the herald Kleokritos memorably claimed after the battle of Mounikhia.<sup>23</sup> Social trauma on this scale is not easily forgotten, and the reconciliation of democrats and oligarchs in the famous amnesty was a tremendous achievement.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> These attitudes become a rhetorical topos by the mid fourth century. Isoc. 7.51 (ca. 355 BCE) chides the Athenians for the knee-jerk reaction that men who desire peace are likely oligarchs.

<sup>22</sup> Hdt. 5.55; Thuc. 6.59.4, 8.68.4; *Ath. Pol.* 19.2, 19.6, 32.2.

<sup>23</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.21; cf. *Ath. Pol.* 35.4; Isoc. 4.113, 7.67, 20.11; Aesch. 2.77, 3.235. Σ Aesch. 1.39 reports on the authority of Lysias that 2,500 Athenians died.

<sup>24</sup> The literature on the reconciliation and the amnesty is very large and a full bibliography is impractical in this place. Two ground-breaking studies have appeared recently: Carawan (2013), esp. on the period after 403, the legal dimensions of the amnesty and reconciliation agreement, and trials under the restored democracy; Shear (2011) on the whole period from 411, the archaeology and topography of commemoration, and the inscription of the laws of Athens. For further discussion of the amnesty, reconciliation, and the aftermath of 404, see Loening (1987); Loraux (2002); Wolpert (2002a). On the functioning and success of the amnesty, see Ober (2002); Quillin (2002); Wolpert (2002b). For the legal scope of the amnesty: Carawan (2002), (2006), (2012), cf.

Yet bitterness remained on both sides, as did fear and suspicion: Athenians had long memories.<sup>25</sup> The grave monument of Kritias (location unknown) is said to have remembered the oligarchs as good men who had for a brief time restrained the *hybris* of the accursed *dêmos* of the Athenians; a representation of *Oligarkhia* setting a torch to *Dêmokratia* was carved on the stone.<sup>26</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the return of the democrats, many supporters of the oligarchy had left Athens and established a new community at Eleusis. Eleusis was forcibly and treacherously reincorporated by democrat irredentists in the archonship of Xenainetos (401/0), according to Xenophon following reports that Eleusis was raising a force of mercenaries.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the amnesty and Arkhinos' introduction of a law enabling the use of the *paragraphê* to block trials on matters contravening it (Isoc. 18.1–3), Athenians found ways to settle old scores. For example, Lysias claims that the courts condemned to death an informer called Menestratos after the amnesty (Lys. 13.56). Most famous of all, Socrates drank the hemlock in 399, convicted of corrupting the minds of young men and introducing new gods. There was something like an on-going witch-hunt for oligarchs and their sympathisers in early fourth-century Athens, as is suggested, for example, by the scrutiny of Mantitheus in the late 390s (Lys. 16.6). Naturally, one strategy for avoiding or deflecting suspicion was to trumpet the disloyalty of others as loudly as possible. The prosecutors of Andokides in 400 included Meletos, who had arrested the general Leon of

(2013) 1–42; *contra*: Joyce (2008). For the readmission of former oligarchs into Athenian society and political life, note esp. Lys. 16.8, 26.2.

<sup>25</sup> Note that it was not only the events of 404/3 that were remembered: for example, the speaker of Isoc. 20.10 reminds the jury that democracy was overthrown twice, i.e. in 411 and 404; cf. Lys. 34.1.

<sup>26</sup> Σ Aesch. 1.39 = D–K 88 A 13.

<sup>27</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.43. For the date, see *Ath. Pol.* 40.4.

Salamis on the orders of the Thirty, and Epikhares, who had served on the oligarchic council.<sup>28</sup>

The democracy reserved particular venom for members of the cavalry.<sup>29</sup> They had remained in the city under the Thirty and had been instrumental in fighting against the democrats and in the massacre of the Eleusinians.<sup>30</sup> Soon after the restoration of democracy, Theozotides reduced the polis stipend for cavalry service; he was attacked for it in return, as the fragmentary speech of Lysias *Against Theozotides* shows.<sup>31</sup> In the same year that Socrates was executed, the assembly voted to send 300 cavalrymen to Asia with the Spartans, a move that Xenophon describes as a purge (Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.4). That Athenians of cavalry status were at pains to protest their loyalty to the democratic constitution, or to distance themselves from any slur of former oligarchic sympathies, is made clear by the grave stele of Dexileos son of Lysanias of Thorikos, which extraordinarily records the year of Dexileos' birth (the archonship of Teisandros: i.e. 414/3), placing his innocence of participation in the oligarchies of 411–10 and 404–3 beyond all possible doubt. Similarly, the casualty list of the cavalry at Koroneia in 394 was probably erected to illustrate cavalry loyalty to the democracy, since the fallen were already commemorated on the polis list of casualties.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Meletos (*PA* 9825; *PAA* 639292): Andoc. 1.94; cf. MacDowell (1962) 208–10 on the different men named Meletos in this period (this Meletos may be the same man as *PAA* 639290 and 639340). Epikhares (*PA* 4991; *PAA* 399195): Andoc. 1.95, 99. This man is perhaps Epikhares of Lamptrai (*PAA* 399525; cf. Lys. 12.55).

<sup>29</sup> For more detailed accounts, see Bugh (1988) 129–43; Spence (1993) 216–24, but note that 223 n. 250 is erroneous: Aristophanes does in fact mention the cavalry in *Assembly Women* (see *Eccl.* 846).

<sup>30</sup> Cavalry at Phyle: Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.2–7; at Mounikhia: 2.4.10; around Athens: 2.4.24–6; around Piraeus: 2.4.31–4; massacre at Eleusis: 2.4.8–10.

<sup>31</sup> Lys. F 130 Carey (= *P. Hib.* I.14 F c). Discussion: Stroud (1971), esp. 297–301.

<sup>32</sup> Dexileos (*PA* 3229; *PAA* 303605): *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 6217; *SEG* 37.165. Cavalry casualties: *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 5222; cf. *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 5221 for the polis casualty list. See Bugh (1988) 138–9; Spence (1993) 219.

As late as 382, an Athenian called Euandros, who had presented himself as candidate for the office of eponymous archon, was charged with service on the *boulé* in 404/3 and membership of the cavalry (Lys. 26.10).<sup>33</sup>

This brief sketch of Athenian attitudes to oligarchs and Athenians' memories of oligarchic government should be sufficient to illustrate and contextualise the hostility Andokides faced on his return from Sparta in 392.<sup>34</sup> It was probably not long after Andokides delivered *On the Peace* that Aristophanes turned his hand to writing *Assembly Women*.<sup>35</sup> The comic dramatist took up the theme of the history of oligarchic revolution at Athens and treated it in similar terms to those in which he had anticipated the rise of the Four Hundred in 411 in *Lysistrata* and (probably) in *Women at the Thesmophoria*—through a comic narrative constructed around the fantasy of a conspiracy of the women of Athens.<sup>36</sup> Aristophanes' treatment of the

<sup>33</sup> Euandros (*PA* 5267; *PAA* 426310) passed his *dokimasia* and became eponymous archon for 382/1 (e.g. Dem. 24.138).

<sup>34</sup> For full discussion of the memory of oligarchy and the democracy's response to it, see now Shear (2011). For shorter treatments, see Krentz (1982) 113–24; Strauss (1986) 89–120.

<sup>35</sup> For the slender evidence for the chronology of the granting of choruses and the production of drama at the Lenaia and Dionysia in classical Athens, see Wilson (2000) 51–2, 61–2.

<sup>36</sup> On the date of *Thesm.* see above, n. 4. As far as I am aware, there has never been any exploration of the idea that each of Aristophanes' surviving 'women plays' was written in response to the threat or fear of oligarchic revolution. For example, Taaffe (1993) 129–33 rightly connects the representation of gender in *Eccl.* to the changes the Peloponnesian War must have made to the demographic structure of the polis, but she assigns the play vaguely to 392 or 391 and does not investigate the precise political circumstances in which it was probably first performed; she therefore misses the similarities to the political situation in 412/11. My argument enables a new analysis of the political symbolism of gender on the Aristophanic stage, which I discuss in a forthcoming paper. For a different view of the political background to *Assembly Women*, see Rothwell (1990) 2–7. He takes the play to date to 'around 392' (*ibid.* 2 n. 9) and writes that 'oligarchy ... remained so thoroughly discredited that it would be only an external threat' (*ibid.* 3), and 'the setbacks of late 392 were not those of 404/3' (*ibid.* 5). From the

oligarchic panic in 392/1 deliberately and provocatively recalls his earlier plays plotted around the theme of female conspiracy, both written at a time when Athens did in fact succumb to an oligarchic revolution. In *Assembly Women* Aristophanes reminds the audience of the similarities (and differences) between what happened twenty years earlier and what has just happened in Andokides' peace negotiations with Sparta, alerting them to the long and tangled history of ideological struggle between democracy and its critics and opponents.

### III. The Poetics of Memory in *Assembly Women*

Aristophanes' fifth-century works are highly topical political comedies. Critics too numerous to list have noticed that the late plays do not possess the same degree of topicality as the earlier dramas.<sup>37</sup> As a rule, historical reference in Aristophanes falls into two categories: contemporary and recent references overwhelmingly confined to the decade before the original production of the drama and references to a distant 'golden age', located over a generation (about forty years or more) before the play was first performed.<sup>38</sup> *Assembly Women* is unusual in two respects: first, it makes memory thematically important, an aspect of the play that

long, historical perspective, he is correct, but that is not how matters appeared to Athenians at the time.

<sup>37</sup> For a corrective study of *Plutus*, see Dillon (1987).

<sup>38</sup> Aristophanes' practice reveals remarkable consistency in this regard over a well-documented career of nearly forty years. As I demonstrate in a forthcoming paper, a typical Aristophanic comedy such as *Cavalry* (424 BCE) makes copious reference to historical persons and events; approximately 75% of these are recent or directly contemporary, and approximately 15% date back over forty years. References to points in time more than a decade before the original performance, or fewer than forty years before, are vanishingly rare, approximately 1%. The overwhelming majority of the recent references extend no more than five years before the first performance, with about two thirds of them belonging to the past year. The changes detectable in the late plays probably reflect the long shadow of the events of 404–403 but perhaps also an altered demographic profile of the audience.

has never, to my knowledge, been elucidated; second, the chronological range of its recent historical reference is deeper than most other plays of Aristophanes, including an unusual level of reference to things that happened more than ten years (indeed, more than fifteen years) before the play's original performance. In this section, I demonstrate that *Assembly Women* constructs an implied audience whose historical competence extends to detailed knowledge of Athenian history in the decade before the fall of the Athenian Empire. This feature of *Assembly Women* underwrites the play's engagement with the rhetoric of revolution at Athens discussed below.

The thematic interest in memory in *Assembly Women* begins in Praxagora's prologue speech. After her address to the lamp and a few lines setting the scene, she tells the audience a joke about something someone called Phyromakhos once said (21–3) which cannot on the present state of the evidence be explained. The identity of Phyromakhos and the nature of whatever it was he once said are uncertain,<sup>39</sup> but all that matters for the present

<sup>39</sup> The lines are: ... καταλαβεῖν δ' ἡμᾶς ἔδρας / δεῖ τὰς ἐταίρας κάγκαθιζομένας λαθεῖν, / ὡς Φυρόμαχος ποτ' εἶπεν, εἰ μέμνησθ' ἔτι. Σ *Eccl.* 22 offer two accounts. Either Phyromakhos (*PA* 15054; *PAA* 966780) was a tragic actor, actually called Kleomakhos, who accidentally aspired ἔδρας and was ridiculed for this *kakemphaton* (possible, but this Kleomakhos is otherwise unattested and the notice smacks of scholarly invention); or Phyromakhos was a politician who moved a decree about separate seating for men and women and separate seating for free women and prostitutes; if the forum to which this decree is supposed to have applied is the democratic assembly, it is plainly anachronistic and false, but the note does not actually specify that it refers to the assembly. For discussion, see Sommerstein *ad loc.*; for references to the earlier literature on these lines, see Ussher *ad loc.* It is tempting to speculate that the reference is to the reorganisation of seating in the *bouleuterion* in the archonship of Glaukippos in 410/09 (Philoch. *FGrHist* 328 F 140 = Σ *Ar. Plut.* 972), which must have been a reaction to the overthrow of democracy in 411 (cf. Rhodes (1972) 192). From this time members of the *boule* took their seats by letter (i.e. randomly), presumably to prevent any future conspirators sitting *en bloc*, which is what Praxagora plans to do in the assembly (21–3, cf. 86–7). Phyromakhos will have said something muddled (amusingly, given the first nominal element of his name: φύρα: mix) about the new system, probably shortly after the innovation, which

argument is the fact that the words ‘if you still remember that’ (*ei memnésth’ eti*) are unique in Aristophanes. Nowhere else does the playwright alert the audience to a requirement that they think back to recall something they might have forgotten.<sup>40</sup> Positioned prominently in the prologue speech, this ‘old joke’ must be programmatic: in short, the poetic key to reading *Assembly Women* is that readers must cast their minds back and remember the past.

The poetics of memory are developed in a number of subsequent passages that variously underscore the ideological power of evoking the past, shape the chronological parameters within which the audience is to remember, and jog the audience’s memory. The longest passage in which the ideological value of the past is at issue appears in Praxagora’s rehearsal speech (221–32). These lines are unremarkable for their presentation of the past as a better world, but they are unique in Aristophanes for repeating a slogan (*ὡσπερ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ*: ‘just as in the past’)

would explain why the reference is difficult to remember. What he said probably had to do with the word *hetairoi*, meaning members of a secret political organisation; these had been instrumental in the oligarchic revolutions of 411 and 404 (Thuc. 8.54.4; Lys. 12.43). No Phyromakhos is attested in the late 390s, but several men called Phyromakhos are known from the fifth century. Of the more likely candidates for mention in Aristophanes, one was a *basileus* probably in the last decade of the fifth century (*PA* 15053; *PAA* 966760); *IG* <sup>3</sup> 1384.

<sup>40</sup> The only (weak) parallel in Aristophanes is *Nub.* 924–6, where the mention of Pandeletos is marked as *passé*. Pandeletos is probably the same man found in Cratin. F 260 K–A, and the source of this fragment (*Suda* π 171) reports that in *Chirons* Cratinus made reference to a Pandeletos who was active in the assembly and the courts. Since the *Chirons* most likely dates to the mid-430s and the passage of Aristophanes in question is probably among the revisions made to the play (cf. *Hypoth.* VI), we may infer that the (implied) audience of *Clouds* II (probably *ante* 415) would have felt a reference to a citizen who had been notorious some fifteen or more years earlier to be distinctly ‘old hat’; in the *agôn* of *Clouds* the Better Argument is continually reproached with being out-of-date and it seems most likely that this is one more instance of the same. For different views of the date of *Clouds* II, compare Kopff (1990) and Storey (1993).

nine times.<sup>41</sup> The extraordinary emphasis underlines the thematic importance of memory, history, and the past in *Assembly Women*.

The lost golden age is evoked in a short passage (302–6) condemning assembly pay as a despised innovation.<sup>42</sup> The distant past is characterised as the time of Myronides in the mid fifth century, some seventy years earlier.<sup>43</sup> The strategy here is no different from that found in Aristophanes' earlier plays, but a number of other passages do something more remarkable in recalling the world of Athens before the end of the Peloponnesian War, fifteen or more years before. The first of these is quite general, so general in fact that the time to which it refers is the subject of some dispute. In it Praxagora explains that she learned her rhetorical skills when she lived on the Pnyx as a refugee at some point when the countryside had to be evacuated (243–4). It is not easy to believe that her words are meant to evoke the evacuation of Attica in 431, since she is elsewhere characterised as being fairly young (427–8),<sup>44</sup> but it is not impossible that members of the audience over the age of forty-five would think of the first evacuation of Attica since they would recall this as a distant memory from early childhood. More likely, however, her words will have prompted different members of the audience to recall their experiences in the period

<sup>41</sup> The closest parallel is *Av.* 114–16 where ὄσπερ νό ποτε is repeated three times. For another Old Comic example, see *P. Oxy.* 2806.9–11 in Austin (1973) 49. Neither passage even approximates the demagogic extravagance of *Eccl.* 221–32.

<sup>42</sup> Other disapproving references to the *ekklesiastikon* at 186–8.

<sup>43</sup> Myronides (*PA* 10509; *PAA* 663265 usually identified with *PAA* 663260), son of Kallias, fought at Plataea in 479 (*Plut. Arist.* 20.1) and held military command with distinction in the early to mid-450s: *Thuc.* 1.105.4 (at Megara in 458/7), 108.2–3 (at Oinophyta in 457/6). He is already a representative of the golden age in *Ar. Lys.* 801–3.

<sup>44</sup> She is said to look like Nikias. If this is Nikias (*PA* 10809; *PAA* 712525) the son of Nikeratos (c. 415–345), then Praxagora is youthful indeed. This Nikias was still a boy in 403 when he was placed in supplication on the knees of the Spartan king Pausanias (*Lys.* 18.10–11, 22) after the battle with the Athenian democrats outside Piraeus (cf. *Xen. Hell.* 2.4.30–38).



from 413 when the Peloponnesians occupied Dekeleia down to 405 when Athenians retreated to the protection of the city walls after the defeat at Aigospotamoi. As Ussher explains, ‘any time in the period from 413 to 405 will suit her use of this expression’.<sup>45</sup>

A handful of less obtrusive references complete the picture. In 329–30 the neighbor asks Blepyros if Kinesias has emptied his bowels on him. The incident to which this refers probably belongs to the period before 405, since it was a joke already in *Frogs* (366). There Aristophanes mentions a dithyrambic poet who defecates on offerings made to Hekate and an ancient scholarly notice identifies Kinesias as the culprit.<sup>46</sup> A fragment of Lysias shows that Kinesias’ ‘unspeakable impiety’ was brought up in a prosecution brought against him.<sup>47</sup> Again, the recycling of an old joke which refers to something that had happened at least fifteen years earlier requires the audience to think back further than usual and to remember the period before the end of the Peloponnesian War.

In 183–5 Praxagora declares that once Athens held no assemblies at all, but at least in those days people knew Agyrrhios was good for nothing. It has been suggested that holding no assemblies is not to be taken literally, since the most recent period in which this had happened was under the Thirty.<sup>48</sup> It is indeed impossible to believe that Aristophanes would construct his audience with the first person pronoun ‘we’ as the ‘men of the City’ who had remained in Athens under the Thirty. Athenians who had done so were publically embarrassed at any opportunity, as the oratory of the period shows (e.g. Isoc. 16.43–4; Lys. 16.3, 26.2). But taking Praxagora’s words figuratively, as a reference to the time after 403 when it seems to have been

<sup>45</sup> Ussher (1973) *ad loc.* For a different view, see Sommerstein (1998) *ad loc.* In the end, members of the audience will have understood Praxagora’s words variously, according to their age and memories of their wartime experiences.

<sup>46</sup> Σ *Ran.* 366.

<sup>47</sup> Lysias, F 195 Carey *ap.* Athen. 12.551e–552b.

<sup>48</sup> Sommerstein (1998) *ad loc.*

difficult to achieve quorum in the assembly,<sup>49</sup> is tricky, since the negative adverbial phrase *ouden to parapan* ('not at all') is not very common in Aristophanes: it is emphatic, and its force is absolute.<sup>50</sup> It is best, therefore, to take Praxagora at her word and to recall the other time when Athens really had held no assemblies whatsoever: that is, the roughly four months in 411 when the Four Hundred had been in power (*Ath. Pol.* 33.1). Agyrrhios is known at the earliest from just before 405; an ancient scholarly notice in Aristophanes' *Frogs* cites him as a possible candidate for a proposal to reduce remuneration for comic poets.<sup>51</sup> But he is likely to have been a recognisable figure before then: he was probably born before 440, and this allows enough room for him to be politically known by the end of the 410s when he would have been at least thirty.<sup>52</sup>

In the second half of the play there are two sets of references to historical events and persons from the late fifth century. In 644–7 Blepyros imagines with horror becoming a father figure to three evidently disreputable young men. It has been plausibly argued that the joke here depends on remembering the fathers of the young men in question. The clearest case is that of Leukolophos, whose unusual name identifies him fairly certainly as the son of Adeimantos, who had fallen out of favour with the democracy after the battle of Arginousai. If Epikouros is the son of Pakhes, then the audience's memory may have been drawn all the way back to the 420s when Pakhes committed suicide in court.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Ath. Pol.* 41.3; Andoc. 1.87; Dem. 24.45; [Dem.] 59.89.

<sup>50</sup> The Greek phrase *οὐδὲν τὸ παράπαν* is rare in Aristophanes except in *Plut.* (17, 351, 961, 1183); otherwise it is only found at *Vesp.* 478. For the force of *παράπαν* in negative adverbial phrases, see LSJ s.v. I.2.

<sup>51</sup> Along with Arkhinos (*PA* 2526; *PAA* 213880): Ar. *Ran.* 367 with Σ *ad loc.* = Plato Comicus, F 141 K–A. Agyrrhios (*PA* 179; *PAA* 107660) is otherwise known only from the period of the restored democracy. He is secretary of the *boulé* in 403/2 (*IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 1.41, 2.1, 6) and he introduces and then raises assembly pay between 403 (*Ath. Pol.* 41.3) and the original production of *Assembly Women*.

<sup>52</sup> For Agyrrhios' likely age, see Davies (1971) 278.

<sup>53</sup> See Tuplin (1982b); cf. Sommerstein (1998) *ad loc.* Epikouros (*PAA* 393300), if he is the son of Pakhes (*PA* 11746; *PA* 770400): Plut. *Arist.* 26.5;

The final set of references evoking memories of Athens before the end of the war comes in 815–17, where Khremes' antagonist recalls a decree mandating the issue of bronze coinage. This recalls the year 406/5 when in dire fiscal straits Athens began the extraordinary policy of monetary debasement, a political decision that Aristophanes had famously addressed in the parabasis of *Frogs*.<sup>54</sup>

To complete the picture with firm evidence of thematic ring-composition, Aristophanes returns to the motif of memory in the final episode. The wise among the audience are adjured to remember the clever bits of the play, while the judges are asked to remember both the intellectual content and the laughter, not to break their oaths, and not to behave like *hetairai* who only remember their latest clients (1155, 1159, 1162).<sup>55</sup> The reminder to the judges (1159–60) to remember and not to break their oaths (μειμνημένους / μὴ 'πιορκεῖν) will surely have recalled the Amnesty and the oaths sworn not to rake over the coals of the civil war: a slyly pointed reminder of one of the most fissiparous issues in recent political history.

In summary, the thematic prominence of memory in *Assembly Women* and the numerous references to the last decade of the Peloponnesian War are atypical in Aristophanes and construct an implied audience of Athenians who have been politically active, or at least politically aware, since the time of the disaster in Sicily in 413. The programmatic reference to the old joke about Phylomakhos in the prologue speech lays the foundations

*Nic.* 6.1; cf. Ar. *Vesp.* 522–3. The crimes of which Pakhes was convicted are unclear: see Tuplin (1982b) 328. Leukolophos (*PA* 9061; *PAA* 604860), if he is the son of Adeimantos (*PA* 202, *PAA* 107965): Andoc. 1.16; Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.32; Lys. 14.38; he was prosecuted by Conon in 393 (Dem. 19.191). Aristyllos (*PA* 2126; *PAA* 176565) remains a mystery; it was once thought that this is one of the play's glancing references to Plato: references in Ussher (1973) *ad Eccl.* 646–8.

<sup>54</sup> Athens began to issue bronze coins (Ar. *Ran.* 725–6) in the archonship of Kallias (406/5): Σ *Ran.* 725 = Philoch., *FGH Hist* 328 F 141b.

<sup>55</sup> The only parallel for exhortation like this in Aristophanes is *Ach.* 516, where the audience is asked to remember what has just happened on stage.

for the theme of memory and the extensive network of unusually distant and detailed historical reference in this play.

The following sections explore how *Assembly Women* relies on the audience's knowledge of history and its awareness of the importance of history for understanding the play to evoke a well-known rhetorical slogan, 'the *sôtêria* of the polis', and its political use in the previous twenty years of Athens' history.

#### IV. *Assembly Women* and Σωτηρία in Aristophanes

The abstract noun *σωτηρία* is not uncommon in classical Greek and is conventionally rendered in English as 'salvation' or 'deliverance'.<sup>56</sup> Like the common noun *σωτήρ* ('saviour'), which is a cult title of Zeus, it is a deverbative formation of the epic word *σαῶσαι* ('to keep alive, save'), which presents as *σῶζω* in Ionic-Attic.<sup>57</sup> The Proto-Greek root is found in *σᾰφος* (whence *σῶς*: 'safe, healthy, intact'), which may in turn stem from the Indo-European *\*teuh<sub>2</sub>-* ('be strong').<sup>58</sup> Aristophanes' *Assembly Women* reports a markedly elevated usage of vocabulary in this lexical grouping, which, as mentioned above, has puzzled critics.<sup>59</sup> The thematic deployment of these words in the play may be described as follows.

The assembly at which Praxagora launches her revolutionary plot is summoned for the *sôtêria* of the polis, as we learn from Blepyros' friend Khremes (396–7). So also was the assembly in which the democracy voted for oligarchy twenty years earlier, on the evidence of the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* (29.2, 4), since in the play as in 411 the assembly votes momentarily to abrogate its own democratic sovereignty, it is difficult to believe that

<sup>56</sup> Cf. LSJ s.v.

<sup>57</sup> Beekes (2010) II, s.v. *σῶς*.

<sup>58</sup> Beekes *loc. cit.*; cf. Chantraine (1968) 1084–5, s.v. *σῶς*.

<sup>59</sup> Above, n. 3.

the dramatic situation would not have reminded the audience of the historical one. The thematic presence of *sôtêria* in *Assembly Women* begins somewhat earlier in Praxagora's rehearsal speech with a mention of *sôtêria* having 'peeped out' (202). This reference cannot be explained with certainty on the evidence available, but it is probably a nod to the peace negotiations earlier in 392/1.<sup>60</sup> Soon after, Praxagora presents herself as a speaker with a plan to *save* the city (209), and this is followed by two further uses of the verb *sôzein* ('to save' or 'keep safe') attesting to men's inability to *save* the city (219) and women's skill at keeping their sons *safe* when they are at war (234). In the report of the assembly's business, *sôtêria* is mentioned twice as an item of discussion (401, 412): first, the assembly rails against Neokleides for being too incompetent to address them on a question of such importance as *sôtêria*; then, the clever speaker Euaion ludicrously makes his own poverty the issue in need of *sôtêria* (412). In both cases the verb *sôzein* is also used (402, 414). Furthermore, Zeus Soter is invoked four times (79, 761, 1045, 1103), twice by Epigenes as he is dragged away by the old women, suggesting that perhaps Praxagora's salvation of Athens has turned out to be no salvation at all. It should be abundantly clear, even from this brief survey, that saving, salvation, and safety are thematically central to *Assembly Women*.

Before studying Aristophanes' practice elsewhere, let us sketch a defence to a potential objection. From a certain perspective, there is nothing surprising about the presence of words to do with saving, being saved, and achieving safety in Aristophanic comedy. Many years ago one scholar analysed the structure of the Aristophanic comic plot, finding 'salvation' to be a central element: the typical Aristophanic plot is generated by a problem or threat, the hero (or antihero) responds first by rejecting an ordinary solution, then by inventing an ingenious plan, and finally emerges triumphant from a crisis, while his allies and

<sup>60</sup> Sommerstein (1998) *ad loc.*

adversaries respectively celebrate or suffer.<sup>61</sup> The idea of escape from danger to a place or state of safety is intrinsic to the plot patterning of Aristophanic comedy.

But the formal characteristics of the Aristophanic plot do not of necessity determine or even fully explain the content or themes of individual plays. Instances of *sôtêria* and related vocabulary are significantly more prominent in *Assembly Women* than in most of Aristophanes' plays. They are next most frequently found in *Frogs* and *Lysistrata*, both originally performed at a time when Athens was facing a double crisis: serious military threat from without and revolution from within. By comparison their appearance in the rest of Aristophanes' *oeuvre* is quite muted. *Acharnians*, written when Athens' military position was enormously more confident, has only one instance of any word drawn from the whole lexical array of terms to do with safety and saving. A 'normal' level of usage of this vocabulary in Aristophanic comedy falls between four and seven occurrences in a drama: as found in *Cavalry*, *Clouds*, *Wasps*, *Peace*, *Birds*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, and *Wealth*.<sup>62</sup>

Given the impressively elevated deployment of the language of saving and safety in *Lysistrata*, *Frogs*, and

<sup>61</sup> Frey (1948) argues that *sôtêria* is central to the constitutive pattern of the Aristophanic comic plot, in the sense that the play begins with the hero or heroine facing a crisis which is resolved to the greater good of ordinary Athenian citizens: 'Jede aristophanische Komödie erstrebt und vollzieht die Rettung des zu Beginn unter einer Notlage leidenden Helden' (169). Valid as this observation is, it does not preclude further thematic interest in *sôtêria*, nor for that matter special contemporary political resonance. For more recent contributions to the plot grammar of Aristophanic comedy, see Sifakis (1992); Kloss (2001) 238–85; Lowe (2000); Ruffell (2011), esp. 112–56.

<sup>62</sup> For *σωτηρία* in Ar.: *Eq.* 12; *Vesp.* 369; *Pax* 301, 595; *Av.* 879; *Lys.* 30; *Thesm.* 765, 946; *Ran.* 1436; *Eccl.* 202, 396, 401, 412. *σωτήρ* is found at: *Eq.* 149, 458; *Nub.* 1161; *Pax* 915; *Av.* 545; *Thesm.* 1009; *Ran.* 738, 1127, 1152, 1433; *Eccl.* 79, 761, 1045, 1103; *Plut.* 327, 877, 1175, 1186, 1189. For *σῶς*: *Eq.* 613; *Lys.* 488; *Thesm.* 821; FF 640, 690 K–A. For *σῶζειν*: *Ach.* 71; *Eq.* 1017, 1024, 1042, 1047; *Nub.* 77, 930, 1177; *Vesp.* 393, 1055, 1123; *Pax* 730, 866, 1022, 1035; *Av.* 376, 380, 1062; *Lys.* 41, 46, 497, 498, 499, 501, 525, 1144; *Thesm.* 186, 270 (*συσσώσειν*), 820, 1014; *Ran.* 382, 386, 1419, 1448, 1450, 1458, 1501; *Eccl.* 209, 219, 234, 402, 414, 544; *Plut.* 1180.

*Assembly Women*, it seems intuitively plausible that narratological fashioning might not account fully for their emphatic prominence. The suspicion becomes more insistent on inspection of the incidence of such vocabulary in other contemporary sources. Euripides' plays from around the time of the Sicilian Expedition and the years immediately following also show an elevated lexical and thematic concentration on *sôtêria*.<sup>63</sup>

It is not clear when the festival of Zeus Soter in Piraeus became as important as it had done by the 330s;<sup>64</sup> nor can we say for certain when the shrine of Zeus Soter and Athena Soteira was built there.<sup>65</sup> But it is curious that every reference in Aristophanes to Zeus Soter appears in works dating to 411 or later;<sup>66</sup> and the only direct attestations of Zeus Soter in Euripides are found in the *Heracles*, which probably dates to around the time of the Sicilian Expedition, while the Dioskouroi, Kastor and Polydeukes, the sons of Zeus, appear as *sôtêres* (saviors) in two plays that certainly belong or have been thought to belong to the time of the Sicilian Expedition and its aftermath.<sup>67</sup> According to

<sup>63</sup> For *σωτηρία* in Euripides: *Med.* (431 BCE) 14, 534, 915; *Heracl.* (c. 430 BCE) 12, 452, 1045; *HF* (c. 416 BCE) 54, 81, 85, 304, 1336; *Tr.* (415 BCE) 743, 753; *IT* (c. 414 BCE) 487, 594, 905, 979, 1413; *Hel.* (412 BCE) 1027, 1031, 1034, 1055, 1291; *Ph.* (c. 410 BCE) 890, 893, 898, 910, 918, 975; *Or.* (408 BCE) 678, 724, 778, 1173, 1178, 1188, 1203, 1343, 1348; *IA* (posthumous: i.e. before winter 407/6 BCE) 1018, 1472. On the motif of salvation in Euripides, see Garzya (1962). The word is much less common in Sophocles and I cannot find the same pattern of contemporary echo in it: *Aj.* 1080; *Ant.* 186, 440; *El.* 925; *Ph.* 1396; *OC* 725, 796; but then the evidence of Sophocles is scantier than that of Euripides and Aristophanes.

<sup>64</sup> *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 1496.88–9. For discussion of the cult of Zeus Soter at Athens, see Parker (1996) 238–41; for a succinct presentation of the evidence, see Parker (2005) 466–7.

<sup>65</sup> Garland (1987) 137 suggests a shrine had been there since the first half of the fifth century; but see Parker (1996) 240 n. 80.

<sup>66</sup> As observed by Sommerstein (2001) *ad Plut.* 1175.

<sup>67</sup> Zeus Soter in Euripides: *HF* (c. 416 BCE) 48, 523. The Dioskouroi: *El.* 993; *Hel.* (412 BCE) 1500, 1664. The date of *El.* is controversial. On the basis of a possible allusion in 1347 it has been dated to the time of the expedition to Sicily, but stylistic analysis of the increasing frequency

Diodorus, the Athenians made a public votive to Zeus Soter before the battle of Arginousai in 405.<sup>68</sup> Zeus Soter became the god to whom Athenians made sacrifice for the avoidance of danger, whether about to confront it or having escaped it. Given the importance of Zeus Soter as the god of safe voyages (and therefore victory in sea-battles), it seems plausible to connect the expedition to Sicily with an increased interest in the cult of Zeus Soter and the years of the Ionian War with a heightened concern about *sôtêria*.<sup>69</sup>

The evidence can provide only an impressionistic picture, but it seems reasonable to infer a wave of social anxiety in late fifth-century Athens, caught up by which Athenians felt more than usually exposed to danger and glad to have escaped danger. No doubt that wave of anxiety was given enormous impetus and amplitude by the defeat in Sicily in 413 and the consequent anticipation of future and final destruction (cf. Thuc. 8.1.2).<sup>70</sup> Athenians' fears and relief were expressed by an intensification of interest in *sôtêria* and saving divinities, chief among them Zeus Soter. But this is not all, for the language of safety and saving is to

of Euripides' use of resolution in iambic trimeters places it closer to 420 BCE. Cropp and Fick (1985) 5 find 21.5% resolved trimeters in *El.*, compared to 29.3% in *IT* and 35.5% in *Hel.* For the methodology, see Cropp and Fick (1985) 1–8; Dale (1967) xxiv–xxviii, both with references to the earlier literature. But the uncertainties introduced by interpolation are significant, and even on the analysis of Cropp and Fick (1985) the data fails to show a completely uniform chronological increase in the frequency of resolved trimeters in Euripides.

<sup>68</sup> Diod. 13.102.2.

<sup>69</sup> For the functions of Zeus Soter (esp. protecting travellers, defendants), see Ar. *Plut.* 1179–82. After the victory at Knidos in 394 Konon was voted a statue beside Zeus Soter in the agora: Isoc. 9.57. The statue of Zeus Soter was also known as Zeus Eleutherios (the 'Liberator'): Paus. 1.3.2; further references: Parker (1996) 239 n. 76.

<sup>70</sup> It is into this context that the only pre-403 epigraphic examples of *sôtêria* of which I know fit. These are two restorations in *IG* i<sup>3</sup> 125.1–12, 27, a decree of 405/4 honouring Epikerdes of Cyrene (cf. Dem. 20.41–5), who twice supplied food, or money to purchase it, to the Athenians ἐς σωτηρίαν, once in the aftermath of the Sicilian disaster (for the captured Athenians in the quarries) and again at the end of the war (Dem. 20.42). For further discussion of the inscription, see below n. 111.



be found also in formal political discourse in the aftermath of the Sicilian disaster; Thucydides makes it central to the factional struggles between oligarchs and democrats that began in 412/11, and the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* also attests its public prominence in the revolution of the Four Hundred, as do Aristophanes and Lysias. In what follows, I shall argue that *sôtêria* became a much played rhetorical card in Athenian political discourse from around the time of the Sicilian Expedition, and that it was played particularly strongly in 412/11 at the time of the first oligarchic revolution. In *Assembly Women*, against the background of the oligarchic panic in 392, Aristophanes will have drawn on the word as a sharp reminder of the genuinely fevered discourse of twenty years previously.

The idea that *sôtêria* became an oligarchic or anti-democratic rhetorical tool from around 412 was canvassed some time ago, but it seems to have made little impression on accounts of the history of the uprising of the oligarchs in 411 and their rhetorical and political success.<sup>71</sup> The case is a good one, nevertheless: Thucydides' repeated and insistent use of the term in the eighth book of his *History* suggests that it was an important rhetorical weapon in the hands of Peisandros and his colleagues, one which Athenian democrats on Samos quickly realised they had to wrest away from their ideological adversaries. It is well known that Athenian oligarchs were fond of the terms *sôphrosynê* (literally 'sound mindedness', sometimes translated as 'self-control' or 'moderation') and *sôphrôn* ('sound-minded', 'moderate', or 'self-controlled'), which derive from the same

<sup>71</sup> Bieler (1951); cf. Bertelli (1983) 251–2; David (1984) 23–5; Lévy (1976) 16–24; Faraone (1997) 56–7. The only extensive discussion of *σωτηρία* in Thucydides appears to be Allison (1997) 54–61. There is no interrogation of the term in, for example, the discussions of Athens' *stasis* and Peisandros' rhetoric in Price (2001) 304–29 or Yunis (1996) 114–16 (who translates it as 'survival': *ibid.* 114). Kagan (1987) 132, though he seems to anticipate a point I make below about Peisandros' rhetorical technique in the assembly (Thuc. 8.53), does not investigate the language of *sôtêria* behind it. It is noteworthy that there is no entry for *σωτηρία* in the index of Greek terms in Rengakos and Tsakmakis (2006), nor is there detailed discussion in Hornblower (1991–2008).

root as *sôzein*, *sôtêr*, *sôtêria*.<sup>72</sup> Most tellingly one episode of *Lysistrata* comically reflects overuse of the language of saving and safety in Athenian discourse, and a passage of Andokides makes a quip that is only intelligible if it was widely recognised that the democrats in the fleet on Samos had enthusiastically embraced the usage of the same vocabulary.<sup>73</sup>

### V. Thucydides and Σωτηρία in 411

In Thucydides the word *sôtêria* is found much more frequently in the latter half of the *History* than in the former.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps there is little to find surprising in this. The term first begins to be used insistently in the Melian Dialogue, appearing seven times in twenty-five chapters. Thereafter, it is found repeatedly in the narrative of the Sicilian expedition in the sixth and seventh books. But the book most numerous populated by instances of *sôtêria* is the last. The instances of the term *sôtêria* in Thucydides' eighth book, one exception aside, all appear in the narrative of the oligarchic revolution. Moreover, the word is used with particular emphasis by the oligarchic revolutionary Peisandros, where it appears in the only passage of direct speech in the entire book (8.53.3).<sup>75</sup> Only the most positivistic of historians would claim that Thucydides'

<sup>72</sup> Words on the root *σωφρον-*, especially *σωφροσύνη* ('moderation', 'self-discipline'), not infrequently carry oligarchic/aristocratic overtones: see Rademaker (2005) 76–92; cf. de Vries (1943); North (1966). For *σωφροσύνη* as an oligarchic slogan in Athens (as reported by Thucydides), see Rademaker (2005) 216–18. In Athens the word had Spartan connotations: see Humble (2002).

<sup>73</sup> Ar. *Lys.* 497ff; Andoc. 2.12 (discussed below).

<sup>74</sup> *σωτηρία* in Thucydides: 1.65.1, 136.4; 2.13.5, 60.4, 61.4; 3.20.1; 4.19.1, 62.2, 96.7; 5.87, 88, 91.2, 101, 105.3, 110.1, 111.1; 6.60.3, 69.3 *bis*, 78.3, 83.2, 86.5; 7.8.1, 12.3, 61.1, 70.7, 71.3, 81.3; 8.33.4, 53.3 *bis*, 54.1, 72.1, 75.3, 81.1, 82.1, 86.3. The adjective *σωτήριος* is found at 3.53.3; 6.23.4; 7.64.2.

<sup>75</sup> On this unique feature of Thucydides' eighth book, see Rood (1998) 271 n. 64; cf. Hornblower (2008) 914.

exceptional use of direct speech at this point suggests that these are the very words Peisandros spoke before the assembly in 411, but it seems reasonable to infer that they represent accurately the language of the supporters of the oligarchic uprising, not least because of the appearance of the term elsewhere in the sources for the revolution of 411, but also because of Thucydides' own claim to have combined crafting the kind of speeches that men in the position of his speakers would on balance make with adhering as closely as possible to the full sense of the words that were actually spoken.<sup>76</sup> The high frequency of uses of the term *sôtêria* in the narrative of the oligarchic conspiracy suggests that Thucydides' choice of words here accurately reflects the political discourse of 412/11.

The term *sôtêria* first appears in Thucydides' narrative of the revolution as a word used by Peisandros, who had been sent from the fleet on Samos, where the revolution began, to address the assembly in Athens.<sup>77</sup> Thucydides describes a vehement debate at which numerous speakers spoke in defence of democracy (*antilegontôn ... peri tês démokratias*), the enemies of Alcibiades opposed overriding the laws in order to recall an exile, and the priestly houses of the Eumolpidae and the Kerykes protested against Alcibiades' return, bringing up his profanation of the mysteries and invoking the gods (8.53.2). In the face of this barrage of protest and abuse, Peisandros approached the opposing speakers one by one and asked them what hope the polis had of *sôtêria* in view of the fact that the Peloponnesians now had as many ships as Athens, more allies, and funding from Persia, unless

<sup>76</sup> Thuc. 1.22.1. For discussion of this notoriously difficult sentence: Hornblower (1987) 45–72. See further Bicknell (1990); Badian (1992); Swain (1993).

<sup>77</sup> Peisandros (*PA* 11770; *PAA* 771270) is usually identified as the son of Glauketes of the deme of Akharnai. According to *Ath. Pol.* 32.2 he came from a good family and was distinguished in intelligence and judgement. Recently, in 415, he had played a high-profile role, alongside Kharikles (*PA* 15407; *PAA* 983120), as 'inquisitor' into the mutilation of the herms; the two men had been appointed because they were especially 'well disposed' towards the *dêmos* (Andoc. 1.36). For further discussion, see Olson (1998) 153–4.

the King could be persuaded to switch sides and back Athens (8.53.2). Once each of his adversaries had admitted the point, Peisandros offered them the only plausible course of action: a ‘more moderate’ constitution with office-holding restricted to fewer men, the recall of Alcibiades, and a subordination of all concerns over the constitutional form of the polis to the imperative of *sôtéria* (8.53.3).<sup>78</sup>

The assembly’s reaction was displeasure (8.54.1) at the idea of oligarchy (*oligarkhia*), but accepting that Peisandros had correctly argued that there was no other hope of *sôtéria*, out of fear—and with the expectation that they would later be able to change the constitution back again—the *dêmos* acquiesced. Peisandros was voted leader of a delegation of eleven men with full powers to negotiate with Tissaphernes and Alcibiades.

Over the winter Alcibiades, acting in his own interests, brought about the collapse of Athenian negotiations with Tissaphernes (8.56–57.1). Nevertheless, the revolutionaries on Samos judged that the plot had now advanced to a point at which they had already risked too much to turn back (8.63.4). They decided, therefore, to send Peisandros and five of the envoys back to Athens to settle matters there and to establish oligarchies in the subject cities along the way (8.64.1). By now the conspiracy at Athens was well underway. A proposal for abolishing pay for political office and for a franchise restricted to five thousand citizens had been made publicly (8.65.3). The business of the *boulê* was being shaped by members of the conspiracy, opponents were quietly murdered, and the usual operations of the legal system failed because it relied ultimately on citizen initiative: fear prevented anyone among the *dêmos* from investigating the assassinations or taking any other action (8.66.1–5).<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> ‘More moderate’ translates the ancient Greek *σωφρονέστερον*. For the political implications of words on the root *σωφρον-*, see above, n. 72.

<sup>79</sup> For a reading of Thucydides’ narrative of the revolution emphasising these themes, see Taylor (2002). For criticisms, see Teegarden (2014) 24 n. 21 and, for a different approach but one that still stresses fear and the difficulties of social coordination, *ibid.* 17–25.

Immediately after arriving in Athens, Peisandros summoned the assembly and proposed the imposition of ten *syngrapheis* to draft and bring before the *dēmos* at an appointed time a plan for optimising the organisation of the city (8.67.1). When the time came, the assembly was summoned, unusually, to Kolonos (8.67.2), a site an energetic half hour's walk outside the city walls on the way towards the Academy, to the north-north-west beyond the Keramikos and the Dipylon Gate. The place was a cult site of Poseidon, the hero Kolonos (who may have had an equestrian statue there), and the Athenian cavalry.<sup>80</sup> There, the order of business presented by the committee (the *syngrapheis*) first proposed that with the constitutional safeguards suspended any citizen might present any resolution he wished. Once assent was gained, the new constitution was proposed. The assembly approved all the measures with no voices raised in opposition and the Four Hundred seized control of the Council House on the same day.

Thucydides does not report the language of *sôtēria* in the assembly at Kolonos, but then he offers no detailed account of the proceedings. However, the Aristotelian *Athenian Constitution* does report that the oligarchic revolution explicitly addressed the question of *sôtēria* and strongly implies that it shaped the agenda of the assembly at Kolonos—among the many ways in which the latter document disagrees with Thucydides.<sup>81</sup> The Aristotelian account traces the first steps away from democracy in the decree of Pythodoros, which expanded the existing board of ten *probouloi* into a commission of thirty *syngrapheis*, over forty years of age, whose brief was to draft, on oath, whatever measures they believed best for *sôtēria* (περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας: *Ath. Pol.* 29.2). The second passage mentioning *sôtēria* tells us that it was made compulsory for the *prytaneis* to

<sup>80</sup> Kolonos: Eur. *Ph.* 1707; Soph. *OC* 58–60, 668–9, 707–11. For the temple accounts of Poseidon Hippios at Kolonos: *IG* i<sup>3</sup> 405. Further discussion: Spence (1993) 188–9.

<sup>81</sup> For discussion, see Rhodes (1981) 362–9.

put to the vote all proposals *peri tês sôtêrias*. This confirms the use of the term to describe the goal of the oligarchs' constitutional reforms and strongly suggests that the word was used in the assembly at Kolonos (29.4).<sup>82</sup>

The oligarchs' language of *sôtêria* reappears in Thucydides once the new regime is in place. It is clear that the Four Hundred recognised from the first that the trireme crews on Samos could not be relied upon, an issue on which Peisandros must have been particularly well informed. Immediately upon assuming office (8.72.2), the oligarchs sent a deputation of ten men to Samos to reassure the Athenians there that the oligarchy had not been established to do harm to the polis or its citizens but for the *sôtêria* of the entire Athenian war effort (8.72.1).

It was from this point that supporters of democracy began to contest the revolution's claim to bring *sôtêria* to Athens.<sup>83</sup> When the news of the overthrow of democracy in Athens arrived, Thrasyboulos, son of Lykos, and Thrasyllus

<sup>82</sup> Rhodes (1972) 233 remarks that the repeated use of the phrase in 29.2 and 29.4 'can hardly, I think, be accidental'. Wilamowitz (1893) 1.102 with n. 7 suggested that *sôtêria tês poleôs* (in *Eccl.* 396–7) indicated a technical term for an extraordinary assembly procedure. Rhodes (1981) 374 is more cautious; cf. id. (1972) 231–5. Wilamowitz's argument is not persuasive. Although Thucydides uses *sôtêria* many times elsewhere, the fact that he does not use it in 8.67.2, the one place in which it would be most natural if it were a technical term for a special assembly in the fifth century, is surely decisive. Rhodes (1972) 233 notes that Thucydides characteristically 'eschews technical language', especially in speeches; cf. Hornblower (1987) 71. While it is true that the instances of *sôtêria* in *Ath. Pol.* are suggestive, it is best to abandon the idea that the phrase was a technical term, at least before the later fourth century. In Thucydides the usage of the word is clearly rhetorical and emotive. As I argue below, *Eccl.* 396–7 are an ironic historical reminder of the moment when the city actually faced an oligarchic revolution and convened an assembly about the 'safety of the city'.

<sup>83</sup> My view is thus different from David (1984) 23 n. 99 who thinks that the democracy only began to appropriate the language of *sôtêria* after 403. As Thucydides shows, the democrats on Samos began to reclaim the vocabulary immediately after the fall of democracy in 411. Note also that the democracy contests the oligarchs' claim to the linguistic territory of words on the stem *σωφρον-*: Thuc. 8.48.7 with Rademaker (2005) 218.

threw in their hands with the rowers and formed a counter-revolutionary movement committed to restoring the democratic constitution and continuing the war.<sup>84</sup> They proclaimed that their movement, sealed by oaths taken with each other and the Samians, was the only ‘refuge of *sôtêria*’ (*apostrophê sôtêrias*: 8.75.3). Moreover, Thrasyboulos still clung to the view that *sôtêria* could only be achieved through converting Tissaphernes to the Athenian cause (8.81.1). Therefore, the democrats on Samos elected Alcibiades as general and placed in him their hopes of *sôtêria* and revenge on the Four Hundred (8.82.1). It was in this context, Thucydides reports, that the ten envoys from the Four Hundred arrived on Samos and conveyed the oligarchs’ message that the revolution in Athens had been made not for the destruction of the polis but for its *sôtêria* (8.86.3). There can hardly be any doubt that the rhetoric of *sôtêria* was at the center of the political and ideological struggle in 411.<sup>85</sup>

Yet even before this point in the spring of 411 the language of *sôtêria* had already become so prominent that it was reflected in the following passage of *Lysistrata*, which makes best sense if Peisandros’ favourite word is already in the background.<sup>86</sup> The only use of the noun *sôtêria* in

<sup>84</sup> Thrasyboulos (*PA* 7310; *PAA* 517010) of Steiria, son of Lykos; later, the democratic hero of Phyle: see Buck (1998). Thrasyllus (*PA* 7333; *PAA* 517480), no known patronym or demonym, later among the generals executed after the battle of Arginousai: see McCoy (1977).

<sup>85</sup> In this regard, is it accidental that when the hoplites in Piraeus marched in protest to Athens they assembled in the Anakeion (Thuc. 8.93.1), the shrine of Kastor and Polydeukes, who are known as *sôtêres* or ‘saviours’ (cf. above, n. 69)? On this passage and the Anakeion (probably on the northern slope of the acropolis: Paus. 1.18.1–2), see Hornblower (2008) 1024 *ad* Thuc. 8.93.1.

<sup>86</sup> *Lysistrata* was certainly first performed in 411: *Lys.* Hypoth. 1.33–4. But it is not known to which festival, the Lenaia or the City Dionysia, it belonged. On the basis of comparison with *Thesmophoriazusaie*, which was probably also first performed in 411, and the putative development of political themes, it is usually held that *Lysistrata* belonged to the Lenaia and *Thesmophoriazusaie* to the Dionysia: see Austin and Olson (2004) xli. According to *Ath. Pol.* 32.1, the oligarchs came to power on Thargelion 21. Their embassy to Samos followed soon after. Both events are

*Lysistrata* is found in the prologue scene, where its placement is surely programmatically significant. The plot of *Lysistrata* sees peace and the reconciliation of Athens and Sparta brought about by the collective effort of the women of Greece. The eponymous heroine's programmatic words in the opening lines of the play are: 'the *sôtêria* of the whole of Greece is in the hands of the women'.<sup>87</sup> The importance of *sôtêria* in the prologue of *Lysistrata* is confirmed some ten lines later: the heroine tells Kalonike that together the women of Boeotia, the Peloponnese and Athens will save Greece; and subsequent uses of the same set of vocabulary, which need not detain the argument here, confirm the point.<sup>88</sup> But the thematic importance of 'saving' is most emphatically stated in a short passage of dialogue between Lysistrata and the Proboulos in which the vocabulary under discussion is emphatically presented (*Lys.* 497–501):

therefore more than two months after the Dionysia in Elaphebolion and more than four months after the Lenaia in Gamelion. Ar. *Lys.* 497–501 (discussed below) shows irrefutably that the language of saving was already prominent enough to incur Aristophanes' ridicule; indeed, the whole theme of salvation is programmatic in the play (cf. Ar. *Lys.* 30). I find it impossible to believe, as Avery (1999) 140–6 does, that *Lysistrata* was produced before Peisandros first arrived in Athens, or that he had arrived (cf. Ar. *Lys.* 490–1) but had not yet said anything about revolution, which therefore remained secret: Gomme–Andrewes–Dover (1945–81) V.189; cf. Andrewes (1992) 472; *contra* Avery (1999) 138. The intense thematic focus on the oligarchs' rhetoric of *sôtêria* in Thuc. (and Ar. *Lys.*) makes the first view untenable, while the fact that constitutional change had been made public on Samos (Thuc. 8.48.1–3) makes the second incredible. This has implications for the likely chronology of Aristophanes' plays and the revolution. Wenskus (1998), presumably published too late for Avery (1999) to have read, rightly protests the widely-held assumption that *Lys.* cannot belong to the Dionysia of 411; cf. his chronology of winter 412/11 in Wenskus (1986) and the judicious analysis of Austin and Olson (2002) xxxiii–xliv.

<sup>87</sup> 29–30: ὅλης τῆς Ἑλλάδος / ἐν ταῖς γυναιξίν ἐστιν ἡ σωτηρία.

<sup>88</sup> Ar. *Lys.* 40–1, the last words of which are: κοινῇ σώσομεν τὴν Ἑλλάδα 'together we shall save Hellas'. Cf. 46 where the same verb is used of the instruments of Lysistrata's plan: seductive, female costume and accoutrements; cf. 141 where Lysistrata, pleading with Lampito not to desert her along with the other women, declares that the two of them could yet salvage (ἀνασωσάμεσθ') the whole project.



ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ: ἀλλ' οὐδὲν δεῖ πρῶτον πολεμεῖν.  
 ΠΡΟΒΟΥΛΟΣ: πῶς γὰρ σωθησόμεθ' ἄλλως;  
 ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ: ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς σώσομεν.  
 ΠΡΟΒΟΥΛΟΣ: ὑμεῖς;  
 ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ: ἡμεῖς μέντοι.  
 ΠΡΟΒΟΥΛΟΣ: σκέτλιόν γε.  
 ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ: ὡς σωθήσει κἂν μὴ βούλη.  
 ΠΡΟΒΟΥΛΟΣ: δεινόν <γε> λέγεις.  
 ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ: ἀγανακτεῖς.  
 ἀλλὰ ποιητέα ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ὅμως.  
 ΠΡΟΒΟΥΛΟΣ: νῆ τὴν Δήμητρ' ἄδικόν γε.  
 ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ: σωστέον ὦ τᾶν.

LYSISTRATA: But you don't need to fight the war in the first place.

PROBOULOS: But how else are we going to be **saved**?

LYSISTRATA: We will **save** you.

PROBOULOS: You?

LYSISTRATA: Yes, that's right, us.

PROBOULOS: That's outrageous!

LYSISTRATA: Look, you're going to be **saved** even if you don't want to be.

PROBOULOS: What you're saying is simply monstrous.

LYSISTRATA: I know you're annoyed about it but nevertheless it has to be done.

PROBOULOS: By Demeter, this isn't just!

LYSISTRATA: But, my dear fellow, you *have* to be **saved**.

A little later, in line 525, in a more temperate discussion with the *Proboulos*, Lysistrata returns once more to the use of vocabulary associated with saving and safety, explaining how, after the repeated failures of their husbands to bring peace, the women decided to collaborate to save the entire Greek world:

ΛΥΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΗ: μετὰ ταῦθ' ἡμῶν εὐθὺς ἔδοξεν σῶσαι τὴν  
Ἑλλάδα κοινῇ.

LYSISTRATA: So immediately after that we resolved to  
**save** Greece by working together.

I think it is difficult, having looked at the use of the term *sôtêria* in Thucydides' account of the rise of the Four Hundred, to read these passages from *Lysistrata*, to see the density of the use of words to do with 'saving', and not to feel that Aristophanes must be echoing (and sending up) a contemporary current of Athenian political discourse. If so, the most probable explanation is that the vocabulary in these passages reflects (most proximately) the language of contemporary debate about the future of the polis emanating from Samos, where the oligarchic revolution began.

The other source that directly supports the view that *sôtêria* was highly prominent in the rhetoric of 411 is Andokides' speech *On his Return*, delivered no more than a few years after the restoration of democracy at Athens in 410.<sup>89</sup> At 2.11 Andokides recounts how he supported the democrats on Samos at the time of the Four Hundred, shipping spars from Macedon, as well as corn and bronze. The following chapter emphatically speaks of Andokides' part in saving Athens, using the verb *sôzein* three times (2.12):

<sup>89</sup> The regime of the Four Hundred collapsed in autumn 411, somewhat under three months into the archon year of 411/10, after the revolt of Euboia and after government had passed into the hands of the Five Thousand (Thuc. 8.97.1–2; *Ath. Pol.* 33.1–34.1 *init.*). The democracy was not restored until after the battle of Kyzikos in the spring of 410 and before the beginning of the archonship of Glaukippos, who was archon for 410/09; for the chronology, see Shear (2011) 72–3. The date of Andoc. 2 is uncertain but it must lie somewhere in the period 410–406. For a survey of opinions, see Missiou (1992) 26 n. 35. Recent views have favoured placing the speech in 407, after the return of Alcibiades: Albin (1961) 11; Dover (1968) 75; cf. MacDowell (1962) 4 n. 9.

καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες ἐκεῖνοι ἐκ τούτων παρεσκευασμένοι ἐνίκησαν μετὰ ταῦτα Πελοποννησίους ναυμαχοῦντες, καὶ τὴν πόλιν ταύτην μόνοι ἀνθρώπων ἔσωσαν ἐν τῷ τότε χρόνῳ. εἰ τοίνυν μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν αἴτια ὑμᾶς ἠργάσαντο ἐκεῖνοι, μέρος ἐγὼ οὐκ ἂν ἐλάχιστον δικαίως ταύτης τῆς αἰτίας ἔχομι. εἰ γὰρ τοῖς ἄνδρασιν ἐκείνοις τότε τὰ ἐπιτήδεια μὴ εἰσήχθη, οὐ περὶ τοῦ σῶσαι τὰς Ἀθήνας ὁ κίνδυνος <ἀν> ἦν αὐτοῖς μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ τοῦ μηδ' αὐτοὺς σωθῆναι.

And those men, equipped with these things, subsequently won a victory in a sea battle against the Peloponnesians, and they alone **saved** this city at that time. So if they achieved things that were the cause of much good for you, I might justly have not the smallest part in that being brought about. For if what was needful had not been brought to those men at that time, the danger facing them would not have been so much over **saving** Athens as over not **being saved** themselves.

The density of usage of the verb *sôzein* is striking, but even more impressive is the ironic twist that Andokides gives the last clause: ‘the danger *facing them* [*autois*] would not have been so much over saving Athens [*peri tou sôsai tas Athênas*]. The clever switch of the sense of *kindynos* from the active (i.e. hazarding an attempt to save the city) to the passive (i.e. being at risk of not being saved) (*peri tou mêd' autous sôthênai*) and the force of the pronoun *autois* (i.e., to paraphrase in colloquial English, ‘their *real* problem would have been’, rather than, in more formal language, ‘the risks inherent in the situation would have been’) suggest that Andokides is alluding to the terms in which the democrats on Samos presented their struggle.<sup>90</sup> His ironic play on words only

<sup>90</sup> Cf. 2.8–9 where Andokides places his political disgrace and banishment and Athens’ need for being saved (*σφύζεσθαι*, 9) in the period from his exile down to the oligarchic revolution in mordant counterpoint.

makes sense if his audience knows that the democrats of Samos had loudly proclaimed that the salvation of Athens lay in their hands, not in those of the oligarchs.

## VI. Σωτηρία and the Rhetoric of Revolution of 411

Strabo describes the temple of Zeus Soter that served the three harbours of Piraeus as a building graced by several little colonnades decorated with wall-paintings by famous artists and a courtyard of votive statues.<sup>91</sup> Navigation being inherently risky, even more so in the ancient world than today, any successfully completed voyage could be looked upon as an achievement of *sôtêria*, in the sense of ‘deliverance’ or ‘escape’ from the dangers of the high seas.<sup>92</sup> But this was not the only sense of the word in classical Greece. Though it often connotes exiting an inherently dangerous situation (i.e. ‘escape from danger’), it may also mean enjoying a condition of safety. On the last day of every year, Skirophorion 30, the Athenians made sacrifice to Zeus Soter, presumably marking a safe completion of the old year and praying for safe passage into the new one.<sup>93</sup> No crisis was required or expected. In its strongest sense *sôtêria* is the opposite of death and destruction, as an ancient commentator on Aristophanes observed;<sup>94</sup> but in its less insistent senses, it refers variously to situations in which risk is evaded, forestalled, or just mercifully absent.<sup>95</sup> Hitherto I have largely left the term *sôtêria* untranslated. But to

<sup>91</sup> Strabo 9.1.15. See Garland (1987) 137–8.

<sup>92</sup> Thus LSJ s.v. I.3 offers the meaning ‘safe return’. Cf. Thuc. 7.70.7: the Athenians fight at Syracuse *περὶ τῆς ἐς τὴν πατρίδα σωτηρίας*.

<sup>93</sup> Lys. 26.6.

<sup>94</sup> Σ Ar. *Ach.* 71. Note the rhetorical paradox in Lysias’ *Funeral Oration* (2.68): the Athenians risk their lives for their own *sôtêria* and die for the freedom of their enemies.

<sup>95</sup> Compare Demosthenes’ emotive description of the ‘common voice of the fatherland calling for someone to speak about *sôtêria*’ (Dem. 18.170) with the evocative address to the goddess Peace in Aristophanes, *Pax* 595: ‘To the farmers you were their porridge and *sôtêria*’ (i.e. before the Peloponnesian War broke out).

understand why the oligarchs seized on it in 411 it is now necessary to explore its semantic dimensions.

The use of *sôtêria* in Thucydides, let alone in classical Greek, has never been adequately explicated.<sup>96</sup> In a thoroughgoing recent treatment of the oligarchic revolution of 411, Hefner glosses *sôtêria* as ‘die siegreiche Beendigung des Krieges’.<sup>97</sup> Clearly, at a very general level, Athens’ victorious conclusion of the war would entail salvation and security, but the breadth of this definition obfuscates enormous complexity of meaning. In Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover’s *Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, the meaning of *sôtêria* is only once discussed, in the context of the Melian Dialogue (5.88). The authors translate the word there as ‘safety’ but express doubt in a footnote, remarking that perhaps here ‘survival’ would be ‘more adequate’.<sup>98</sup> The important point, made only implicitly by Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover, is that *sôtêria* is a semantically elastic term: it may convey a vague sense of ‘safety’ but under the right conditions it may also assume the more concrete connotations of ‘material security’ and even ‘survival’.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> To my knowledge, the only extensive treatment of the term in Thucydides is Allison (1997) 54–61. Allison sees a ‘Periclean’ definition of *sôtêria* as ‘common safety’ and the ‘preservation of assets’ collapsing into a desperate hope for ‘survival’ and ‘salvation’ as Athens is defeated in Sicily. As she rightly points out, until Nicias in Book 6 Pericles is the only politician to use the term, and Thucydides distinguishes between the senses ‘escape from danger’ and ‘preservation of what exists’ (59). She also speculates that had Thucydides written more, we might have seen more of *elpis* and *sôtêria* linked in a ‘thematic oxymoron’ (61). However, she does not explore the pragmatic dimensions (uses, effects, social functions) of *sôtêria*, nor does she look beyond the text of Thucydides; contrast my analysis below.

<sup>97</sup> Hefner (2001) 64.

<sup>98</sup> Gomme–Andrewes–Dover (1945–81) IV.160 *ad* Thuc. 5.88. The authors cite the previous chapter (5.87) as an instance in which they say *sôtêria* encompasses ‘material security—crops, homes, lives, all that is endangered by war (without necessarily indicating what was to be the result of this one—total destruction).’

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Henderson (1987) *ad* Ar. *Lys.* 29–30: the word may carry the highly emotional meaning ‘salvation’, but it may also have the ‘milder’ tone of ‘escape from danger’.

The difficulties in understanding the meaning of *sôtêria* may be traced to the entry in LSJ, where the description of the semantic dimensions of the word is incomplete. There is no mention of the important sense of ‘soundness’ or ‘good condition’ in classical Greek, derived from the meaning of the adjective *σῶς* in the sense that Chantraine rightly translates as ‘en bon état’.<sup>100</sup> It seems this lacuna has had serious consequences for the way the word has been understood in Thucydides and in the history of the fifth and fourth centuries.

The most important distinction to be grasped is that the force of *sôtêria* is frequently felt to be very different when applied to individuals as opposed to collectives, institutions, or abstractions like a constitution. This point may be illustrated by examining the use of the word in Aristophanes. In the *Wasps* the monomaniacal juror Philokleon is encouraged, with obvious exaggeration as to the seriousness of his predicament, to gnaw his way through the net restraining him from reaching *sôtêria*.<sup>101</sup> By contrast, in a parody of a prayer at the foundation of the avian city in *Birds*, the audience hears an imprecation for ‘the health and *sôtêria* of the polis’.<sup>102</sup> The important distinction is that when *sôtêria* is used of individuals it more usually implies imminent danger—and frequently danger that is, or is apprehended

<sup>100</sup> For *σωτηρία* meaning bodily health: LSJ s.v. II.5; Beekes (2010) vol. II s.v.; Chantraine (1968) 1084, s.v. The closest that LSJ comes to appreciating the sense of ‘good condition’ is s.v. II.1 where the entry lists the meaning of the ‘maintenance’ of buildings and roads found in Arist. *Pol.* 1321b21. However, as discussed below, ‘good condition’ is clearly the sense that the word has in Thuc. 7.12.3 (the nuance seems to have escaped the attention of the standard commentaries on Thucydides).

<sup>101</sup> Ar. *Vesp.* 369: ταῦτα μὲν πρὸς ἀνδρός ἐστ’ ἄνοντος εἰς σωτηρίαν. / ἀλλ’ ἔπαγε τὴν γνάθον.

<sup>102</sup> Ar. *Av.* 879: διδόναι Νεφελοκοκκυγιεῦσιν ὑγείαν καὶ σωτηρίαν. Similar phrasing (e.g. ἐφ’ ὑγείαι καὶ σωτηρίαι τῆς βουλῆς καὶ τοῦ δήμου τῶν Ἀθηναίων) is found occasionally in Athenian decrees from the second half of the fourth century (e.g. *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 223.B5; 354.44; 410.14; 437.5; 456.B2, etc.), but *Av.* 879 shows that it is significantly older than the epigraphic evidence would suggest. For the only (probably) epigraphic example from the fifth century, see above n. 72.

as, mortal—than it does when it is used of collectives, institutions, or abstract entities, in which cases its semantic range shows significantly greater elasticity and may extend to connotations of ‘security’ and even ‘serviceability’.

In Thucydides *sôtêria* is used in connection with individuals, groups and abstract entities. For an example of the word’s use with reference to an individual, we may turn to Themistocles’ supplication of King Admetos. The Athenian exile informs the king that refusing his supplication would be tantamount to a death sentence, literally ‘depriving him of the *sôtêria* of his soul’: the defining genitive specifies that ‘safety’ here means ‘survival’.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, but without any need for qualification, in the Athenian rout at the battle of Delion, *sôtêria* is applied to the Athenian hoplites distributively, and in that sense it clearly implies escape from mortal danger: ‘they fled wherever they severally had some hope of *sôtêria*’.<sup>104</sup>

When *sôtêria* is used of an entity like a *polis*, the sense of imminent, mortal danger is frequently less acute. In a passage of Pericles’ final speech where the orator describes the asymmetrical relationship of the survival of individual citizens and the civic community, the Athenians are told that while the *polis* can bear the disasters afflicting an individual, no man can withstand a disaster engulfing the city; therefore, citizens should not, when stricken by private sufferings, throw away the *sôtêria* of the collective.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, when in the fourth book of Thucydides Hermokrates uses the word at the congress at Gela, it is difficult to feel (even without the benefit of hindsight) that there is a sense of crisis as strong as that prevailing at the investment of Potidaia, the siege of Plataia, or in the case of the blockade of the Spartan forces on the island of

<sup>103</sup> Thuc. 1.136.4: *σωτηρίας ἂν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀποστερήσαι*.

<sup>104</sup> Thuc. 4.96.7: ‘Some fled towards Delion and the sea, others to Oropos, others to Mount Parnes’ (*οἱ δὲ ὡς ἕκαστοὶ τινα εἶχον ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας*).

<sup>105</sup> 2.60.4: *καὶ μὴ ... τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς σωτηρίας ἀφίεσθε*. Cf. 2.61.4, where the same phrase recurs.

Sphacteria.<sup>106</sup> At Gela there is no blockade or threat of starvation, and Hermokrates' use of *sôtêria* might be thought to carry a meaning closer to 'safety' or 'security' rather than 'escape' from a situation of imminent and grave danger (unless, that is, Hermokrates exaggerates, and ratchets up the rhetoric as Peisandros will later do at Athens). The use of the term by Euphemos at Kamarina is illustrative. Arguing that the real threat to Sicilian security is Syracuse, Euphemos calls the cities of Sicily, in reply to Syracusan propaganda (*antiparakaloumen*), to a more real *sôtêria* and at the same time begs them not to throw away that *sôtêria* which they have from one another (6.86.5).<sup>107</sup> In the latter sense, *sôtêria* is the counterweight to Syracuse's power provided by mutual support and alliance; it clearly means a continuing condition of safety or security, not an escape from immediate danger. Finally, in Nicias' letter sent from Syracuse, the word *sôtêria* is used in a fundamentally different sense in evaluating the deteriorating state of the Athenian fleet, which had once been excellent in regard to both the dryness of the triremes' hulls and the *sôtêria* of the crews.<sup>108</sup> Here, the word means the 'fitness for service' of the crews either in respect of their health or perhaps in regard to having a full complement of personnel.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Thuc. 4.62.2. Cf. Potidaia: 1.65.1; Plataia: 3.20.1; Sphacteria: 4.19.1.

<sup>107</sup> πολὺ δὲ ἐπὶ ἀληθεστέραν γε σωτηρίαν ἡμεῖς ἀντιπαρακαλοῦμεν, δεόμενοι τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν ἀπ' ἀλλήλων ἀμφοτέροις μὴ προδιδόναι ... Cf. 6.83.2. In this sense, *sôtêria* is equivalent to *asphaleia*: see Allison (1997) 58 on this passage.

<sup>108</sup> Thuc. 7.12.3: τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἠκμαζε καὶ τῶν νεῶν τῆ ξηρότητι καὶ τῶν πληρωμάτων τῆ σωτηρία.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *IG* i<sup>3</sup> 125 (above, n. 72): Athenian hostages in Sicily. Pritchett (1991) 272–3 with n. 386 argues that the money provided by Epikerdes of Kyrene was for paying for food for the prisoners in Sicily; *contra* Merritt (1970), who believes the money in Sicily was ransom (but the sums are surely too small for that). If Pritchett's interpretation is right, *sôtêria* in the inscription does not refer to *saving* the men from captivity but to *preserving* them from hunger. Note that LSJ s.v. II.5 misleadingly implies that the meaning 'bodily health' is attested only much later in imperial Greek from the second and third centuries CE.



In Thucydides *sôtêria* is most often used of collectives and it does most often mean ‘survival’, as it does on Melos, with all that that translation implies about the imminence of danger and the existential threat that it poses; but the same word sometimes carries further senses of ‘security’, ‘safety’, and ‘soundness’ that are significantly less insistent on the feeling of crisis. While in the context of a besieged city, or an aged Athenian juror confined to his home with nets, to draw on the examples mentioned above, *sôtêria* carries a claustrophobic sense of being trapped and facing imminent doom (comically exaggerated in *Wasps*, naturally), its wider sense of ‘being safe and sound’, in peacetime or through a defensive alliance, is less threatening.<sup>110</sup> The possibility of equivocation between these meanings makes the word a useful rhetorical tool. Returning to the oligarchic coup of 411, it will become clear that the semantic range of *sôtêria* was instrumental in Peisandros’ rhetoric for just this reason.

When Peisandros addressed the assembly seeking support for his plan to obtain Persian money with a remodelling of the democratic constitution, he was attacked by opposition from various quarters. In response, he questioned his opponents in turn (*ἡρώτα ἕνα ἕκαστον παράγων ἀντιλεγόντων*), asking each what hope he had (*ἤντινα ἐλπίδα ἔχει*) of *sôtêria* for the polis (*σωτηρίας τῆ πόλει*: 8.53.2) in the present circumstances. Imagine for a moment that this is an accurate report of Peisandros’ very words: how would they have struck the assembly and the popular leaders ranged against him? Athens is not in immediate danger, though the city is short of funds: the fleet is operational, the Athenians have control of the Hellespont and Euboea, and the fortifications continue to be proof against the Peloponnesian army at Dekeleia (cf. Thuc. 8.71.1). In this situation, the force of Peisandros’ use of *sôtêria* might well have been heard to equivocate between ‘deliverance’ and mere ‘safety’ or ‘security’. Peisandros’

<sup>110</sup> A similar pattern is found in Xenophon’s *Anabasis*: e.g. individual survival (5.3.6); collective safety (7.8.19); salvation (3.2.8). My thanks to Emily Baragwanath for bringing this to my attention and sharing unpublished work.

words ‘What hope of *sôtéria* ... for the polis?’ will have produced a sense that the civic community was under threat, but not necessarily an imminent or existential threat. But in the mouth of Peisandros, the word *sôtéria* was insidious. When combined with the word ‘hope’ (*elpis*) *sôtéria* would have assumed a tragic resonance. The two words are quite frequently found in combination in Euripides, especially in the plays probably dating to a few years either side of 411.<sup>111</sup> And a yet greater feeling of urgency, brilliantly created by Peisandros, will have emerged from his tactic of cross-questioning his opponents one by one.<sup>112</sup> For each one, confronted with the concept of *sôtéria* individually, the connotations of being trapped, being in mortal danger, and of there being only one way of escape will have come to the fore of cognitive response to the word.

Then, Peisandros tightens the screw: the political system must be more moderate and involve fewer men, so that the King’s trust may be won: ‘let us in the present situation not spend so much time deliberating about the constitution (*politeia*) but rather about *sôtéria*.’ Where *sôtéria* coupled with another abstract noun like *politeia* would normally convey the sense of ‘safety’ or ‘security’ of a group or abstract entity, Peisandros’ insistence that that is exactly what the assembly should not spend time debating encourages his audience to hear the sense of ‘survival’ in his use of *sôtéria*, especially when it is used flatly and without any defining or limiting terms. The result reported by Thucydides is that the *démos* was instructed clearly by Peisandros’ words (*σαφῶς δὲ διδασκόμενος*) that there was no other *sôtéria* (*μὴ εἶναι ἄλλην σωτηρίαν*), only this one. The insistence with the negation of the adjective *allos* (other), that there is only one *sôtéria* and no alternative, places in abeyance the sense of

<sup>111</sup> There are numerous instances in which Euripides construes or connects *sôtéria* with either the noun *elpis* or a denominative adjective: *Heracl.* 452; *HF* 80, 84; *IT* 487, 1413; *Hel.* 1031; *Or.* 1173, 1188 (closely connected to *ἐπίδα* in 1186).

<sup>112</sup> Kagan (1987) 132 notes the effectiveness of this but does not examine how Peisandros’ tactics worked so well. Cf. n. 73 above.

‘security’ or ‘safety’ and emphasises the senses of ‘escape’ and ‘survival’. And so the democrats voted for the end of democracy, provided that it would bring about an alliance with Tissaphernes and save the city (Thuc. 8.54.1).

As we have observed above, after the Four Hundred were imposed upon the polis, word was sent to Samos that the constitutional change had been made not to injure the city and its citizens but for the *sôtêria* of the whole situation (8.72.1: *epi sôtêriai tôn sympantôn pragmatôn*). But even before the embassy arrived, the democrats on Samos had begun to appropriate the rhetoric of *sôtêria*, in the first instance with tragic resonance (8.75.3: *apostrophên sôtêrias*).<sup>113</sup> Subsequently, Thrasybulos persuaded the assembly on Samos to recall Alcibiades because their sole *sôtêria* (*monên sôtêrian*) lay in his persuading Tissaphernes to switch his support from the Peloponnesian to the Athenian fleet (8.81.1). The assembly on Samos quickly elected Alcibiades general and in him placed their hope of *sôtêria* and revenge on the Four Hundred (8.82.1); again, the phrase (*elpida ... tês ... sôtêrias*) probably had a tragic ring. When the envoys from Athens arrived, their pronouncement to the effect that the revolution had been made not for the destruction of the city (*oute epi diaphthorai tês poleôs*) nor for its betrayal to the enemy (*outh' hina tois polemiois paradothei*) but for its *sôtêria* (*all' epi sôtêriai*) fell on deaf ears (8.86.3). The men of the fleet were in no mood to listen to these or any other blandishments (8.86.4). According to Thucydides, if Alcibiades had not restrained them, they would have voted to man their ships and attack the Piraeus (8.86.5).<sup>114</sup>

The reader of the eighth book of Thucydides is confronted by an intricately woven knot of linguistic paradox and political irony of the kind that Thucydides describes in the context of the *stasis* on Corcyra (3.70–83), especially in the excursus in which he elaborates the principle that faction produces reversals of the ordinary

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Eur. *Or.* 724 for the similar sounding phrase *καταφυγή σωτηρίας*.

<sup>114</sup> On this and Thucydides' other counterfactual claims, see Tordoff (2014).

meanings of words for the purpose of self-justification (3.82.4); ‘die Umwertung der Werte’ cashed out as ‘die Umwortung der Worte’, as one scholar neatly encapsulates it.<sup>115</sup> The city, though not in fact in immediate danger, had been persuaded by Peisandros to abandon democracy as though its very survival hung in the balance. The fleet, again in no immediate danger of destruction by the Peloponnesians, and having originally approved the constitutional reshaping of Athens in pursuit of a surer source of pay, now found itself cast into outlawry and rebellion. In response, the *dêmos* on Samos rallied around the slogan of *sôtêria* in a struggle for the defence of democracy and main survival, creating a situation of *stasis* (civil war) that in turn threatened and, Thucydides implies (cf. 8.86.5), came very close to destroying the Athenian empire and its democracy.

Many years later Isocrates (*Areop.* 7.51) would declare that Athenians are concerned about their constitution *and* the *sôtêria* of the city. His words echo a long tradition of rhetoric running back to 411 when Peisandros had offered Athenians the choice between democracy and *sôtêria*, as Thucydides reports (8.53.3)—in the only passage of direct speech in his eighth book, to underline the point one final time. Opponents of Athenian democracy used moments of crisis to offer the polis a choice between democracy and escape from imminent danger; democratic leaders fought hard to resist what they saw as a false dichotomy, stressing the compatibility of democracy and *sôtêria*.

<sup>115</sup> Kraus (1987) 188. This is a much discussed topic: see esp. Loraux (1986), repr. in Rusten (2009) 261–92; Price (2001) 39–50. On the ‘transvaluation’ of language in the *stasis* on Corcyra, see Hogan (1980); Wilson (1982). For further discussion: Allison (1997) 163–82; Cogan (1981) 152–4; Connor (1984) 95–105; Crane (1998) 44, 286; Edmunds (1975); Macleod (1979), repr. in id. (1983) 123–39; Orwin (1994) 175–84, esp. 177–8; Parry (1981) 15–21; White (1984) 59–92, esp. 87 for the structural and thematic importance of the episode to Thucydides’ whole project.

### VII. The Rhetoric of Σωτηρία after 411

After the events of 411, the *sôtêria* of the polis became a rhetorical commonplace to be ardently evoked and ironically subverted. In Lysias (12.74) Lysander may be heard to echo the words of Peisandros as he triumphantly presses home his victory over the democracy, perhaps coached by Theramenes, as Bieler proposes.<sup>116</sup> Plutarch preserves a suggestive anecdote about Theramenes. When Theramenes was negotiating peace with Sparta in 404, a young demagogue called Kleomenes asked him why he was doing the opposite of Themistokles by surrendering to the Spartans the walls Themistokles had built. Theramenes replied that Themistokles built the walls for the *sôtêria* of the citizens; now he, Theramenes, was handing them over to the same end (Plut. *Lys.* 14.8). The story attests to the central rhetorical importance of *sôtêria* in the crisis at the end of the Peloponnesian War and to the semantic malleability of the term. Similarly, soon after the return of the democrats, the speaker of Lysias 34 urges Athenians not to pay any heed to men who go around asking what *sôtêria* there will be without obedience to Sparta (34.6), probably echoing Lysander and before him Peisandros.<sup>117</sup> He adds that risking their lives against Sparta now is the only hope of *sôtêria* (34.9).<sup>118</sup>

The echoes of the rhetoric of *sôtêria* in Aristophanes' *Assembly Women* are not the only ones to be heard in the early fourth century. The vocabulary continued to be contested by radical democrats and their opponents. Shortly before the outbreak of the Corinthian War, Lysias' defence of the sons of Eukrates, brother of Nicias, states that Eukrates chose to die under the Thirty, striving for the Athenians' *sôtêria* (Lys. 18.5). Similarly, in the early 390s

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Lys. 12.68–9; Bieler (1951) 183.

<sup>117</sup> Note the sense of history in 34.1 in the way that the speaker connects this present threat to the two episodes of oligarchy: *πρότερον δὲς ἤδη*.

<sup>118</sup> Similarly, a few years later Andoc. 1.81 speaks of the democrats being more concerned to save the city through reconciliation than to exact vengeance. Cf. Lys. 2.64.

Alcibiades' son ironically describes the civil war as a time of such chaos that neither side had any hope of *sôtéria* (Isoc. 16.16); the illogicality of his words presumably echoes the exaggerated claims of both sides to be able to give their followers salvation. In *On the Peace*, in 392/1 Andokides with a mordant twist of the now standard democratic trope tells his audience that peace means *sôtéria*, while war is what leads to the overthrow of democracy.<sup>119</sup> Roughly contemporaneously, Lysias' speech against Epikrates finds room for the same vocabulary (27.3), and his *Funeral Oration* too deploys the language of *sôtéria*, this time with a different ironic spin: after defeat in the Peloponnesian War it became clear that Athens' power was the security (*sôtéria*) of Greece because the years that followed soon saw the rise of Persian naval power (2.58–9).<sup>120</sup> The same speech draws attention to the rhetoric of *sôtéria* at the time of the return of the democrats (2.66) and the reconciliation agreement (2.64); and it praises the deaths in the cause of *sôtéria* of Athenians fighting at Corinth (2.68). The different shades of meaning are revealing: security from Persian naval activity; rescuing the city from the Thirty; not pursuing vengeance to destructive excesses in 403; and fighting for Athenian *sôtéria* at the Isthmus, in a war in which Attica never suffered a land invasion. A few years later, after the death of Thrasyboulos in Asia, the prosecutor of Ergokles accuses him of throwing away the city's hope of *sôtéria* (Lys. 28.15 *bis*) through corruption and embezzlement. The context in which this allegation is made traces Athens' history from Phyle down to the present (389/8) and compares the effect of Ergokles' actions on the city to that of the actions of the Thirty (Lys. 28.12–15).

Clearly, by 388 the sense of history bound up in the word *sôtéria* was long and well established. In 392/1, it will have evoked, as Andokides understood (3.12), memories of

<sup>119</sup> 3.12: τὴν μὲν εἰρήνην σωτηρίαν εἶναι τῷ δήμῳ καὶ δύνανται, τὸν δὲ πόλεμον δήμου κατάλυσιν γίνεσθαι.

<sup>120</sup> The damning reference is to Konon's victory in 394 at Knidos, where the Spartans were indeed defeated, but by a Persian fleet commanded by an Athenian.

the struggles of 411 and 404–403. For Aristophanes writing *Assembly Women* the ironies of history must have been manifold. The rhetoric of saving the city had been at the forefront of debate both in the revolution of the Four Hundred and at the fall of Athens. But whereas in 404 the city was indeed facing the question of its very survival, as Aristophanes anticipated when producing *Frogs*,<sup>121</sup> in 411 the democracy was overthrown but the city survived and the war against Sparta continued, despite the attempts of the oligarchs to conclude peace with Agis (Thuc. 8.70.2–71.3). The offstage assembly in *Assembly Women* in which myopic and indigent politicians address the assembly about *sôtéria* when the city is not in fact in immediate, existential danger from external military threat and when there was no oligarchic revolution in the offing, only peace with Sparta, is testament to the pernicious exaggerations and distortions of political rhetoric, which had in the past succeeded in subverting the democracy even as its practitioners claimed to be saving the city. *Assembly Women* remembers the rhetorical contortions of Peisandros twenty years earlier in a bitter juxtaposition with the present situation of Athens in the Corinthian War. As the popular joke ran in the Austro-Hungarian Empire over two millennia later, ‘the situation is desperate, but not serious’ (‘Die Lage ist verzweifelt, aber nicht ernst!’). Aristophanes would surely have enjoyed it.

### VIII. Conclusions

In this paper, I have argued that in Aristophanes’ *Assembly Women* the vocabulary of safety, saving, and salvation is neither accidental, nor a function of comic plot structure, nor a specious device by which Aristophanes introduced a play about female conspiracy and revolution without any great relevance to its immediate political circumstances. In fact, the thematic emphasis on *sôtéria* in the play is an historical echo—and it is not the only historical echo in

<sup>121</sup> Ar. *Ran.* 1435–6: ἀλλ’ ἔτι μίαν γνώμην ἑκάτερος εἴπατον / περὶ τῆς πόλεως ἦντιν’ ἔχετον σωτηρίαν.

*Assembly Women*—of the desperate rhetoric of the years after 413, later described by Thucydides, ridiculed at the time by Aristophanes, especially in *Lysistrata*, and all too frequently dredged up by orators under the restored democracy. I have argued that Aristophanes was motivated to revisit themes he had treated twenty years earlier by the explosion of a neuralgic discourse in 392 about revolution and oligarchy and a new and deep concern with Athens' history, and that the cause of this was the peace settlement with Sparta that Andokides and his delegation had negotiated.<sup>122</sup>

Naturally, history and memory had been issues of the highest importance to the returned democracy from the reconciliation of 403 onwards. But reactions to the possibility of peace with Sparta in 392/1 gave history and memory a new and sudden prominence in the immediate deliberative business of the assembly. The result was a bitter contest for control of Athens' past as the means to directing the city's present and future. In those circumstances, Aristophanes conceived a play that remembers the Athenian experience of revolution in 411, then the first in nearly a century, and contrasts ironically the historical moment of *Assembly Women* in 391 with the violent and disastrous events of twenty years before.

Criticism of Aristophanes' *Assembly Women* has focused on a small handful of now fatigued questions, among them the following. How did Aristophanes write, in the late 390s, a drama that bears such a striking resemblance to some aspects of the fifth book of Plato's *Republic*, when the latter almost certainly postdates the former?<sup>123</sup> Is the society imagined in *Assembly Women* really some kind of cipher for Sparta?<sup>124</sup> If not, how is its place as the first literary account

<sup>122</sup> For the suggestion that Aristophanic comedy begins to take a historical turn from around the time of *Lysistrata*, see Henderson (2012).

<sup>123</sup> The best recent account is Nightingale (1995) 172–92; I make some refinements and new arguments in Tordoff (2007).

<sup>124</sup> Most dogmatically, Dettenhofer (1999); cf. Carrière (1979) 97; David (1984) 26–7.



of communism in Western thought to be explained? Perhaps as an aspect of ancient Greek misogyny?<sup>125</sup>

Fresh ground has been broken by reading the play as an exploration of the theoretical limits of Athenian egalitarian democracy.<sup>126</sup> Yet none of the lines of enquiry has yet detected the importance of memory in *Assembly Women*, and consequently the significance of history, especially the history of Athens' constitutional evolution, has been missed. As a gesture in the direction of future research, I suggest that a set of anguished Athenian discourses of the early fourth century may have had considerably more influence on Aristophanes' imagination when he wrote *Assembly Women* than scholarship has yet appreciated. For instance, we might draw attention to the following: the confiscation and recovery of property in 404–403; the new sacrifices, written into the sacred calendar by Nikomakhos, and large-scale public feasts, such as Konon's hecatomb with which the entire city was invited to celebrate the victory at Knidos; polis maintenance of the orphans of fallen democrats in the decree of Theozotides; the codification and inscription of the laws, in a process that had begun at the time of the first oligarchy in 411; the status of written and unwritten law, and of laws and decrees (*psêphismata*) in Athens; and the new institution of pay for assembly participation.<sup>127</sup> But discussion of those topics is the work of another day.

<sup>125</sup> Zeitlin (1999).

<sup>126</sup> Ober (1998) 122–55.

<sup>127</sup> I discuss the issues alluded to here in my forthcoming book on Aristophanes' late plays. The confiscations of property under the oligarchy, the recovery of property, and the issues of public property at Athens (which I also believe to be important in Aristophanes' imaginative vision in *Assembly Women*) are all very complex subjects. Confiscation: Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.1; cf. Lys. 25.22. Recovery: Xen. 2.4.38; Lys. *Against Hippotherses* F 165.34–47 Carey (= *P. Oxy.* 1606, fr. 2); discussion: Carawan (2013) 67–90. Public property: recently, Papazarkadas (2011); Rousset (2013). Nikomakhos and the sacrificial calendar: Lys. 30; recent discussion: Carawan (2013) 233–50. Konon's *hestiasis* in 393: Athen. 1.3d. Theozotides' decree for the orphans: *SEG* 28.46; discussion: Shear (2011) 230, 254–5; Stroud (1971). Codification and inscription of the laws: Carawan (2002), (2010), (2013), esp. 183–93; Clinton (1982); Dow (1960), (1961); Munn (2000) 227–8, 269–73; Ostwald (1986) 405–20, 477–80, 511–

For the present, I hope to have convinced the reader that *Assembly Women* is not disengaged from its political background but is in fact highly topical in the context of the events of 392/1; that it is not a fatigued rehash of Aristophanes' earlier plays about women, or indicative of Aristophanes' declining powers; and that it is innovative above all in its new engagement with a sense of Athens' history, in which regard it represents, in a comic framework, a project analogous, if never directly comparable to, Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War. I hope I have also given readers a case study of the language of politics under Athenian democracy and shown how a close reading of comedy, oratory, and historiography can illuminate the dynamics of ideological struggle over the use and appropriation of words in debate at democratic Athens.

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24; Shear (2011) 70–118, 173–80, 227–62; Rhodes (1991); Robertson (1990). For the prominence of this in *Eccl.* 1012, 1015–20, 1049–51. On assembly pay, an innovation of the restored democracy, see David (1984) 29–32; Hess (1962).

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