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On Some Spatial Uses of ΕΠΙ + Dative in Greek Comedy  
—How to say ‘with his hat on his head’?—

Martin Ciesko

I. Introduction

Greek prepositions in general, and ἐπί in particular, have been a source of continued interest and much research. It may then come as a surprise to many that even seemingly simple questions should still remain without satisfactory and definitive answers. For example, at the end of the century that produced some of the best treatises on Greek grammar, Forman’s dissertation (from 1894) still has to ask the following question: ‘What is the Attic Greek prose for ‘with his hat on his head’? Is it ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς, or ἐπὶ τῆ κεφαλῆ? Or if either, is there any shade of difference in the meaning?’<sup>1</sup>

He surveys scholarly opinion on this problem and finds that even among the greatest grammarians there is not only no *communis opinio*, but also widely differing views. Without access to native speakers who could explain to us once and for all how to use this preposition correctly (and even they would be hard pressed to explain away every single use!), we are left only with the frequently contradictory evidence of texts themselves and their easily corruptible manuscript tradition. In the most general terms, in such phrases as ‘on his head’ the available evidence points to a clear pattern: the use of ἐπί + genitive predominates in Attic, although the dative is sometimes found too. It is, however, troubling that there are also places where both the genitive and the dative are used without any apparent distinction in meaning.

Examining the whole of Attic literature would require a book-length treatment. Here, I propose to look at this particular problem only by focusing on a small slice of the corpus – the texts and fragments of Comedy. Its language may be stylized, but it is not unnatural *when it does not want to be*. For all intents and purposes, it may be a good representation of various layers of colloquial speech. Any aberration from normal everyday speech adds to the humorous effect and is therefore intended: be it parody, pomposity, invocations of high poetry, or general silliness, among other things. Unnatural language that is somehow not intended to be humorous is unthinkable, as its effect would be too disruptive and misleading, even confusing for the spectators. Unintended unnatural language would be like a signpost, a promise of a punchline that actually never comes.

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<sup>1</sup> L. L. Forman, *The Difference between the Genitive and Dative Used with to Denote Superposition*, Baltimore 1894, p. 4.

Intended unnatural language is always functional and, fortunately, it is also relatively easy to detect in Comedy – mostly through the choice of particular metres and vocabulary. Comedy therefore offers a good starting point for analysing the use of the preposition ἐπί in its spatial meaning. If ἐπί + genitive is the normal usage, it will be enough to discuss here all the cases where ἐπί appears with the dative.

## II. An overview of scholarly opinion

For a detailed discussion of earlier treatments of this problem in grammar books, the reader is referred to Forman (1894:5-7). Before quoting his own conclusions, however, I will mention the most categorical statement: that of Rutherford in his commentary on Babrius<sup>2</sup>:

‘The correct Attic usage is very simple, the best writers of prose and comedy limiting ἐπί with the genitive to position or motion upon an object or surface, and ἐπί with the dative to position or motion at or near. Thus a floating body is ἐπί ποταμοῦ, a city ἐπί ποταμῶ. A wounded man may be carried home ἐπί θυρῶν, a beggar sits ἐπί θύραις. In tragedy this distinction is not observed, and ἐπί with the dative is also used to convey the sense which prose writers confine to the genitive. In Thucydides the prose usage has not yet become absolute, and although several deviations from the rule, such as ἀκάτιον ἐπί ἀμάξει κατακομίζειν (4, 67) admit of easy correction, yet the undoubted dative in 2, 80, τοὺς ὀπλίτας ἐπί ναυσι πέμπουσι. 4, 10 ἐπί ταῖς ναυσὶ ῥᾶστοί εἰσιν ἀμύνεσθαι – proves that such emendation is as uncalled for in the immature Attic of Thucydides as it would be in Herodotus or Xenophon. The Ionic and poetical laxity also crops up in the *Symposium*, where Plato allows himself a poet’s licence, and in the same paragraph (212 E) are found the poetical ἐπί τῇ κεφαλῇ ἔχων τὰς ταινίας, and the prosaic ταινίας ἔχοντα ἐπί τῆς κεφαλῆς. In no writer, however, is the genuine prose signification of ἐπί with the dative ever accredited to ἐπί with the genitive, although the meaning, ‘in the direction of,’ sometimes brings ἐπί close to that of ‘near.’” (p. 7-8)

This is an extreme position and Forman hoped to show that the above statements are too categorical and that the evidence of Attic literature is not as clear-cut as Rutherford would have us believe. What, then, is the conclusion that Forman himself proposes instead?:

‘The difference between ἐπί c. gen. and ἐπί c. dat. is a graphic or pictorial difference, not a logical one; appealing to the fancy, not to the reason. It is a difference of accent or of shading, rather than of kind. Both give the place upon which, but ἐπί c. gen. adds no separate item to the picture. It melts into it as a subordinate element, necessary at times, but still subordinate. Its

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<sup>2</sup> W. G. Rutherford, *Babrius, Edited with Introductory Dissertations, Critical Notes, Commentary, and Lexicon*, London 1883.

presence may be felt, its absence noted, but it is a mere enclitic in the thought. Whereas ἐπί c. dat. emphasizes the place of the object or action, presents it not as a background but as a second feature. Nor is the place an indefinite region, anywhere within which the object or action lies (for this is expressed by the gen.), but a definite point. There is no fusion here between the object and its environment. The iota of the original locative suffix –ι was as strongly deictic as the iota of οὔτοσί, pointing to this place here or that place there, and to no other. In the thought-accent the locative claimed an acute, and to this the Greek dat., its successor, fell heir.’ (p. 41–42)

In short, according to Forman, the dative is the picturesque and emphatic means of indicating locality, whereas the genitive the colourless means. He continues:

‘Why, for example, the gen. to express the familiar relations, the natural position? Evidently because no word-painting is aimed at. In the daily prose relations of life, the Greeks expressed plainly the necessities of the case, as we ourselves do, reserving emphatic expression for poetry and passion. Choosing the case therefore which most readily fuses with others, the one of such general affinities as to have no obtrusive individuality of its own, they spoke, e. g. of going ἐφ’ ἵππου with no more thought of the personality of the horse than we when we speak of going ‘on horseback.’ The horse was a mere vehicle, the phrase well on its way to adverbial petrification (cf. ἔφιππος) and stood just as would βραδέως, ταχέως or any other adverb. But compare this with the manner in which Xenophon paints the picture of the exciting moment (*Anab.* 18, 1) when Πατηγύας... προφαίνεται ἐλαύνων ἀνὰ κράτος ἰδροῦντι τῷ ἵππῳ. The horse is no vehicle here. He stands out sharply, comitatively, as part of the picture.’ (p. 42)

One example he gives is illustrative of his hypothesis and his explanation of Plato’s passage differs from Rutherford’s:

‘In Plato’s *Sympos.* 212 e ...stands first a description of Alcibiades standing at the door ταινίας ἔχοντα ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς πάνυ πολλάς, and within the same paragraph he says νῦν δὲ ἦκω ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ ἔχων τὰς ταινίας. "Absolutely no difference," say some. And yet see how delicately and perfectly Jowett has given the difference. Alcibiades "appears at the door... his head flowing with ribands," and then says "I am here to-day carrying on my head these ribands." The change in the order of Greek words points to just this difference in thought-accent, ταινίας claiming attention in the first, ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ in the second passage, as Alcibiades proves by his next clause, ἵνα ἀπὸ τῆς ἐμῆς κεφαλῆς τὴν τοῦ σοφωτάτου καὶ καλλίστου κεφαλῆν ἀναδήσω.’ (p. 52)

Of more modern treatments two works in particular are worth quoting. Ruijgh<sup>3</sup> argues that

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<sup>3</sup> C. J. Ruijgh, ‘La préposition ἐπί. Valeurs sémantiques et choix des cas’ in B. Jaquinod (ed.), *Le double accusatif en grec d’Homère à la fin du Ve siècle avant J.-C.*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters 1989 (pp. 133–148).

ἐπί with the dative expresses contact with lateral orientation, while ἐπί with the genitive occurs where the orientation is vertical. He quotes Herodotus 3.28.10: Ἐχει δὲ ὁ μῶσχος οὗτος ὁ Ἄπις καλούμενος σημήια τοιάδε, ἑὼν μέλας ἐπὶ μὲν τῷ μετώπῳ λευκὸν τι τρίγωνον, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ νότου αἰετὸν εἰκασμένον... [this calf called Apis has these marks: he is black, and has on his forehead a three-cornered white spot, and the likeness of an eagle on his back].

This, in my opinion, is the most concrete explanation and, if it is valid, it would be the greatest contribution to solving the problem. However, it seems that it has not been accepted as an all-encompassing theory: Silvia Luraghi<sup>4</sup> in her recent book on Greek prepositions agrees that Ruijgh's explanation holds good for many examples, but not all:

'Ruijgh's explanation holds for such a passage [i.e. Apis], but cannot explain example ... [Hdt. 5.12.2, which I will quote immediately below] and ... [Hdt. 5.12.4], where it is hard to imagine that a person holds a vessel against her head, without implying vertical orientation. From the occurrences in various authors, it is clear that Ruijgh's interpretation is at least partially correct, because the genitive is in fact limited to cases of vertical orientation. The dative can mean both 'on' (vertical) or 'against' (lateral), and always implies contact.' (p. 309f.) She offers this conclusion:

'In my opinion, the difference between the two cases is that the genitive actually profiles a specific orientation (vertical), while the dative does not profile a specific orientation, but simply contact: the orientation is then understood on the basis of common knowledge about the shape of the concrete entity that occurs as landmark.' (p. 310)

My own conclusion is closer to Ruijgh's, with some modifications. Even though it is early in the discussion, I represent in Fig. 1 what I believe to be the contrast in the distribution of the genitives and datives with this preposition. I think ἐπί with the dative can signify placement (B) on another object which is in an upright position, with two principal extensions: something can be placed on the sides (A) of the upright object, almost enveloping it completely or partially; and (and here it comes somewhat close to the genitive function) it can also signify placement (C) on the rim, on the edge, on top of the upright object:

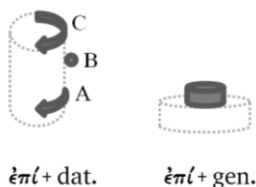


Fig. 1

<sup>4</sup> S. Luraghi, *On the Meaning of Prepositions and Cases: the Expression of Semantic Roles in Ancient Greek*, Amsterdam 2003.

Before looking at examples from Comedy, let us first have a look at the example that Luraghi uses to criticize Ruijgh. It comes from Herodotus.<sup>5</sup>

My task in what follows will be to have a look at the texts and fragments of Comedy and see who is right: Ruijgh or Luraghi (or some modification of either of their positions). I will try to see whether or not all the cases of what Luraghi defines as ‘on’ (vertical) can be somehow re-conceptualized to give prominence to the lateral aspect – to see, in short, if we can force them into the diagram in Fig. 1, positions A, B, or C.

Let us, therefore, begin with the very example that Luraghi herself provides to criticize Ruijgh. On first reading, the two sentences express exactly the same thing, only the case used with the preposition is different. However, if we look more closely, we notice that there is in fact a subtle difference between the two phrases: φέρουσα τὸ ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς means no more than ‘carrying the water on her head’ with water above the head and in contact with it; ‘on the head’ as the regular, unexceptional case of one thing superimposed directly upon another. In such cases the genitive is the norm (see Fig. 1) and I will not discuss any more of such cases below. Let us just

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<sup>5</sup> Ἦν Πίγρης καὶ Μαντύης ἄνδρες Παίονες, οἱ ἐπεῖτε Δαρεῖος διέβη ἐς τὴν Ἀσίην, αὐτοὶ ἐθέλοντες Παϊόνων τυραννεύειν ἀπικνεύονται ἐς Σάρδις, ἅμα ἀγόμενοι ἀδελφεὴν μεγάλην τε καὶ εὐεϊδέα. Φυλάξαντες δὲ Δαρεῖον προκατιζόμενον ἐς τὸ προάστειον τὸ τῶν Λυδῶν ἐποίησαν τοιοῦνδε: σκευάσαντες τὴν ἀδελφεὴν ὡς εἶχον ἄριστα ἐπὶ ὕδωρ ἔτεμπον ἄγγος ἐπὶ τῆ κεφαλῇ ἔχουσαν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ βραχίονος ἵππον ἐπέλκουσαν καὶ κλώθουσαν λίνον. Ὡς δὲ παρεξήη ἡ γυνή, ἐπιμελὲς τῷ Δαρείῳ ἐγένετο· οὔτε γὰρ Περσικὰ ἦν οὔτε Λύδια τὰ ποιούμενα ἐκ τῆς γυναικός, οὔτε πρὸς τῶν ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίης οὐδαμῶν. Ἐπιμελὲς δὲ ὥς οἱ ἐγένετο, τῶν δορυφόρων τινὰς πέμπει κελεύων φυλάξαι ὃ τι χρήσεται τῷ ἵππῳ ἢ γυνή. Οἱ μὲν δὴ ὅπισθε εἶποντο, ἡ δὲ ἐπεῖτε ἀπύκετο ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμόν, ἤρσε τὸν ἵππον, ἄρσασα δὲ καὶ τὸ ἄγγος τοῦ ὕδατος ἐμπλησαμένη τὴν αὐτὴν ὁδὸν παρεξήη, φέρουσα τὸ ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς καὶ ἐπέλκουσα ἐκ τοῦ βραχίονος τὸν ἵππον καὶ στρέφουσα τὸν ἄτρακτον. (5.12.5ff.) [There were two Paeonians, Pigres and Mantyes, who themselves desired to be rulers of their countrymen. When Darius had crossed into Asia, they came to Sardis, bringing with them their sister, a tall and beautiful woman. There, waiting till Darius should be sitting in state in the suburb of the Lydian city, they put on their sister the best adornment they had, and sent her to draw water, **bearing a vessel on her head**, leading a horse by the bridle and spinning flax at the same time. Darius took note of the woman as she passed by him, for what she did was not in the manner of the Persians or Lydians or any of the peoples of Asia. Having taken note of this, he sent some of his guards, bidding them watch what the woman would do with the horse. They, accordingly, followed behind her, and she, coming to the river, watered the horse. When she had done this and had filled her vessel with water, she passed back again by the same way, **bearing the water on her head**, leading the horse on her arm, and plying her distaff.]

assume that this is the standard way of expressing ‘on the head’ and let us rather look at why the dative can sometimes be used instead.

The dative case in the passage from Herodotus is as follows: ἄγγος ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ ἔχουσαν. ‘Having a vessel on her head’ is a good translation but is it really the same as φέρουσα τὸ ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς earlier? With τὸ ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς Herodotus is only talking about water positioned on the head, as opposed to carrying it in some other way. The dative here may suggest that the base of the still empty vessel is pressing against the head. With both hands busy, the vessel was probably fixed on her head with a base resting against all sides of her head, enveloping it, so to speak, like a cap. We may imagine, if we want to, at least some sense of lateral positioning being evoked here. The base of the vessel pressed against the head, all around it (C in Fig. 1).<sup>6</sup>

This awareness of the overall lateral position is all-important for my analysis of all spatial datives discussed below. The theory, especially one as overly subtle as mine, has life only if it can be shown to be valid in most cases mentioned below. Until someone comes up with an even better, equally malleable explanation of the dative use, this theory will remain the closest we have to explaining away the mysteries of the dative usage with ἐπί in Attic.

Of course, I hasten to add, this analysis does not concern the Ionic dialect or poetry where the earlier, independent use of the dative (or, more precisely locative) can still be visible and the preposition ἐπί can be analysed as only strengthening the original locative meaning.

### III. Cases of ἐπί + spatial dative in Comedy<sup>7</sup>

The first group of examples (1-6) are given only for the sake of completeness. They will have to be excluded because the passages in which the dative appears are methodologically difficult to evaluate: the language is flowery, drawing on high poetry for various comic effects. As was mentioned just above, the rules of poetry (and Ionic dialect in general?) were more relaxed and the original free usage of the dative, strengthened with the preposition, may be at play in the following examples.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. number 26 below of sitting on an egg as a similar case where the dative is used.

<sup>7</sup> Greek texts are Wilson’s OCT for Aristophanes, and Kassel-Austin’s PCG for fragments. Translations are from Henderson’s Loeb editions of Aristophanes and for other poets from J. Rusten (ed.) *The Birth of Comedy. Texts, Documents, and Art from Athenian Comic Competitions, 486–280*. John Hopkins 2011. I used my own translations where no workable alternative existed.

(1) Ar. Eq. 403

Εἶ σε μὴ μισῶ, γενοίμην ἐν Κρατίνου κώδιον  
καὶ διδασκοίμην προσάδειν Μορσίμου τραγωδία.

ὦ περὶ πάντ' ἐπὶ πᾶσί τε πράγμασι

δαροδόκοισιν ἐπ' ἄνθεσιν ἴζων,

εἶθε φαύλωσ, ὥσπερ ἠῦρες, ἐκβάλοις τὴν ἔνθεσιν. Ar. Eq. 400ff.

[If I don't hate you, may I turn into a blanket in Cratinus' house and be coached by Morsimus to sing in a tragedy! Oh, you're everywhere, in everyone's business, **lighting on bribery's blossoms**; I hope you throw up your mouthful as easily as you found it.]<sup>8</sup>

(2) Ar. Av. 238

ὅσα τ' ἐν ἄλοκι θαμὰ

βῶλον ἀμφιτιτυβίζεθ' ᾧδε λεπτὸν

ἠδομένα φωνᾶ·

τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ.

ὅσα θ' ὑμῶν κατὰ κήπους ἐπὶ κισσοῦ

**κλάδεσι** νομὸν ἔχει, Ar. Av 234ff.

[and all who oft round the clod / in the furrow twitter delicately / this happy sound, / tio tio tio tio tio tio tio! / And all of you who pasture **on ivy boughs** / in the gardens]. . .

This is also a lyric passage and should be excluded, though this could perhaps be explained by pointing esp. to examples **8-11, 17** and some others, depending on the reader's willingness to see a pattern here.

(3) Ar. fr. 573

στίλβη θ' ἠ κατὰ νύκτα μοι

φλόγ' ἀνασειράζεις ἐπὶ τῶι

**λυχνείῳ**

[and lamp that by night / restrainest the flame / **on my lampstand**]

Blaydes wanted to emend, because Aristophanes uses the genitive in another fragment (fr. 291 KA). But as the metre and the vocabulary show, this is a flowery passage. No need to emend.

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<sup>8</sup> That Aristophanes uses here poetic language (combined with the political message) can be seen for example by comparing it with Homer's extended simile where the movement of the Achaeans to Agamemnon's assembly is likened to the movement of bees gathering honey: βοτρῦδὸν δὲ πέτονται ἐπ' ἄνθεσιν εἰαρινῶϊσιν [they fly in clusters on the spring flowers] Hom. *Il.* 2.89.



(4) Ar. *Vesp.* 678 (anap.)

σοὶ δ', ὦν ἄρχεις, πολλὰ μὲν ἐν γῆ, πολλὰ δ' ἐφ' ὕγρᾳ πιτυλεύσας

[You rule them, having “tirelessly tramped the land and **rowed the waves**”]

This too is a quotation from high poetry.

(5) Hermippus fr. 63.11 (hexam.)

καὶ Κερκυραίους ὁ Ποσειδῶν ἐξολέσειε

**ναυσὶν ἐπὶ γλαφυραῖς**, ὅτι δίχα θυμὸν ἔχουσι.

[and may Poseidon destroy the Corcyreans / **along with** (better ‘on’) **their hollow ships**, since they are of two minds]

There is an echo of the frequent Homeric phrase νηυσὶν ἐπι γλαφυρῆσιν. Cf. also the *Iliad* 9.425 νηυσὶν ἔπι γλαφυρῆς at the beginning of a hexameter. The translator in Rusten’s anthology opts for ‘along with their hollow ships’ but it is better to take it in the sense in which it is also found in Homer.

(6) Menander, fr. 852

οἰκτρότατόν ἐστι πεῖραν ἐπὶ γήρως ὀδῶι

ἀδίκου τύχης δίκαιος εἰληφῶς τρόπος

[A just character, who gets tested by unjust fortune right **on the threshold of old age** (or: between old age and death), is something most pitiable. *my transl.*]

This is a proverb meaning ‘ἐπὶ δυσμαῖς τοῦ βίου’ (Pollux 2.15.4), found also in Hypereides and elsewhere (cf. the discussion of ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῶ in *LSJ*). The use of a poetic word in a fixed phrase also falls outside of our scope as it cannot throw much light on the normal Attic usage.

The following examples (7-18) have something in common: a body part of a (mostly) standing person is used with the dative. With a bit of imagination all these examples nicely follow Ruijgh’s hypothesis and/or my diagram in Fig. 1 and a lateral position can be easily envisaged:

(7) Eubulus fr. 97.7

ἐπὶ τῶι **προσώπῳ** δ' αἱ τρίχες φορούμεναι

εἷξασι πολιαῖς, ἀνάπλεωι ψιμυθίου.

[and the hairs blowing **in front of your face** / start to look white since they’re full of lead]

Eubulus is in this fragment from *Garland-Selling Women* describing a woman with too much make-up. ‘If you go out in the summer, ink is flowing from your eyes and the sweat from your cheeks makes a reddish channel down to your neck.’ The white lead on the face makes the hair that

comes into contact with it look white too. The hair is in/on the face. A look at my Fig. 1 will show why the dative, not the genitive is being used here. We are not interested in talking about something vertically superimposed over the face – in such a case a genitive would be more natural – but rather we are to imagine her flowing hair, getting stuck in an unsavoury mixture of sweat and white lead on her face. It is like two hanging curtains touching each other. In examples such as this one, the dative seems to be unproblematic. The examples below are, I believe, various extensions of the same usage:

(8) Ar. *Lys.* 1026 (lyr.)

κεῖ με μὴ ἄλπτεις, ἐγὼ σου κἄν τόδε τὸ θηρίον

**τοὔπι τῶφθαλμῶ** λαβοῦσ' ἐξεῖλον ἄν, ὃ νῦν ἐνί. 1025f.

[Women's leader. And if you weren't so nasty to me I'd have grabbed that **bug in / your eye** and taken it out; it's still in there now]

This, I think, is not much dissimilar from the example right below (10).

(9/10) Ar. *Ran.* 1246-47

τὸ Ληκύθιον γὰρ τοὔτ' ἐπὶ τοῖς προλόγοισί σου

ᾧσπερ τὰ σῶκ' ἐπὶ τοῖσιν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἔφρυ. Ar. *Ran.* 1246f

[Dionysus. Yes, that oil bottle grows on your prologues like sties on eyes]

Lekythion appendage is growing **on Euripides' prologues like sties on eyes**. As long as we imagine eyes as a part of the face, it is easy to see how the Fig. 1 (position B) is relevant.

(11) Ar. *Eccl.* 903 (lyr.)

Κο. μὴ φθόνει ταῖς νέαισι·

τὸ τρυφερόν γὰρ ἐμπέφυκε

τοῖς ἀπαλοῖσι μηροῖς,

**κἀπὶ τοῖς μήλοις ἐπαν-**

**θεῖ·**

[Girl. Don't despise the girls, / for softness resides / in their tender thighs / and **blossoms on their boobs.**]

Even though this passage is lyrical and could be discarded, I am confident that what we have here is in fact the normal Attic usage. This, too, is an unproblematic concretization of the Fig. 1 (B).

The following extension in no. (12) and (13) should not cause problems either: here lips are also seen in a similar way, as part of a vertically positioned face. If something is perched on the lips,

it is almost the same as being perched on the eye or cheeks full of white-lead, or on the breasts. Presumably, being perched on a small outgrowth of an upright object was tolerated as still being in the domain of the dative. Incidentally, we may perhaps include here the dative use exemplified by number (2) in the lyric passage above: little boughs, too, could be seen as outgrowths of an ivy tree standing tall.

(12) Ar. *Ran.* 679 (lyr.)

φιλοτιμότεραι Κλεοφῶντος, ἐφ' οὗ δὴ χεῖλεσιν ἀμφιλάλοισ

δεινὸν ἐπιβρέμεται

Θρηκία χελιδῶν

[Chorus. Cleophon, **on whose bilingual lips** / some Thracian swallow / roars terribly, / perched on an alien petal]

(13) Eupolis fr. 102.5

πειθῶ τις ἐπεκάρθιζεν ἐπὶ τοῖς χεῖλεσιν

[a kind of Persuasion sat **upon his [Pericles'] lips**]

In both (12) and (13) the preposition is not extraordinary if one is willing to go along with our hypothesis, although one will often find the unproblematic ἐν χεῖλεσιν instead.

(14) Ar. *Vesp.* 1293

Ξα. ἰὼ χελῶναι μακάρια τοῦ δέροματος

{καὶ τρισμακάρια τοῦ 'πὶ ταῖς πλευραῖς} om. Γ, del. Willems

[Oh! tortoises! happy to have so hard a skin!]

The line is incomplete, but while there are problems with the transmitted text and metre, there are no problems understanding why the preposition should take the dative here: tortoises are imagined to have their flanks covered by a hard skin (Fig. 1, A).

(15) Ar. *Ran.* 46

Ηρ. ἀλλ' οὐχ οἴος τ' εἶμ' ἀποσοβῆσαι τὸν γέλων,

ὄρων λεοντῆν ἐπὶ κροκωτῶ κειμένην.

[Heracles. I just can't get rid of this laughter. It's the sight of that **lionskin atop a yellow gown.**]

This is similar to number (14). The lionskin is wrapped around the body on all sides, and on top of the yellow gown. Two hanging things, one on top of another, can be safely described using the dative, see again Fig. 1, position A.

(16) Ar. *Ran.* 9

Ξα. μηδ' ὅτι τοσοῦτον ἄχθος ἐπ' ἐμαυτῶ φέρων,  
εἰ μὴ καθαιρήσει τις, ἀποπαρηδήσομαι; Ar. *Ran.* 9f.

[Xanthias. Can't I even say that **I've got such a load on me**, if someone doesn't relieve me my rump will erupt?]

Xanthias is complaining that he has to carry a heavy load – presumably on a stick pressing against his shoulder or in a bag thrown over his shoulder. This example and the two that follow (17, 18) seem somewhat different, but anything positioned on the limbs of a tall person could probably qualify for inclusion in this category – the genitive could be used if we concentrate on the small flat surface area and an object superimposed upon that area, but if we view the whole person in his or her totality, body upright, then the limbs are just its outgrowths (like boughs in number 2) and the examples could be understood as not much different from those that preceded them.

(17) Ar. *Thesm.* 1182

Το. ὀρκῆσι καὶ μελετῆσι, οὐ κωλύσ' ἐγώ.  
ὡς ἐλαπρός, ὥσπερ ψύλλο κατὰ τὸ κώδιο.  
Ευ. φέρε θοιμάτιον ἄνωθεν, ὦ τέκνον, τοδί  
καθιζομένη δ' ἐπὶ τοῖσ<κ> γόνασι τοῦ Σκύθου  
τῶ πόδε πρότεινον, ἴν' ὑπολύσω.

[Archer. Let her dance and rehearse; I won't stop her. She's pretty nimble, like a bug on a rug.

Euripides. All right, girl, off with your dress, and **sit on the Scythian's lap**. Now stick out your feet so I can take off your shoes.]

(18) Cephisodorus fr. 4.2

σανδάλια δὲ τῶν λεπτοσχιδῶν,  
ἔφ' οἷς τὰ χρυσᾱ ταυτ' ἔπεστιν ἄνθεμα.

[And sandals of the delicately cut kind, with these **golden flowers on them**]

Another interpretation of the example number (17) is that the girl is supposed to sit on the edges of the Scythian's knees (cf. Fig. 1, C), while in (18) the golden flowers are imagined to be on the sloping sides of the sandals, just like a hard skin of a tortoise runs down its sides (Fig. 1, A or B).

If we imagine the scales as a person in an upright position with outstretched arms, the following example nicely fits into the pattern seen in the few preceding examples:

(19) Ar. *Plut.* 185

Κα. κρατοῦσι γοῦν κὰν τοῖς πολέμοις ἐκάστοτε,  
ἐφ' οἷς ἂν οὔτος ἐπικαθέζηται μόνον.

[Cario. In warfare it's certainly true that the side he (Plutus) sits on invariably wins.]

The god is clearly to be imagined as tilting the scales by choosing which side to sit on. The scholiast seems to understand it exactly this way: ἐπικαθέζηται: ἀπὸ μεταφορᾶς τῶν ζυγῶν [metaphorically from the beams of the balance, i.e. the scales]. Here the god is imagined as seating himself on one side of the war, destroying the balance. Another scales-image is found in a fragment of Aristophanes':

(20) Ar. fr 402.10

καὶ μὴ περιμένειν ἐξ ἀγορᾶς ἰχθύδια  
τριταῖα, πολυτίμητα, βεβασανισμένα  
ἐπ' ἰχθυοπώλου χειρὶ παρανομωτάτη.  
10 ἐπ' codd.: ἐν Boissonade: ὑπ' Gaisford

[no hanging around the market waiting for smallfry / days old, overpriced, weighed out for him / by a crooked fishmonger with a thumb on the scales]

Some editors emend. 'In the hand' is usually expressed as ἐν χειρὶ, and Boissonade's idea follows the normal usage. Another possibility is to make the sentence passive as Gaisford does. Kassel-Austin decide to keep the text as it is: and in my opinion it is the best decision since it is also the most comic description: perhaps we are to imagine a crooked fishmonger balancing scales in his hand (having them hang from the edge of his hand) and somehow managing to let one side fall to make the fish seem heavier.

In summary, if we keep in mind the standing person, a tall tree, etc. then even the position on the smaller or larger outgrowths thereof can be apparently described having recourse to the dative. Another possible explanation for the previous examples is that the edge of the bough, hand, knees, etc. is evoked, and the dative describes the state of being perched on the edge or rim of an object (C in Fig. 1).

The following two examples are both anapaests, but because of the *Equites* passage (22) I decided to discuss them and not discard them due to their poetic language. Both concern sitting on the mountaintops or rocks:

(21) Ar. *Nub.* 270 (anap.)

Σω. ἔλθετε δῆτ', ὧ πολυτίμητοι Νεφέλαι, τῶδ' εἰς ἐπίδειξιν·

εἴτ' ἐπ' Ὀλύμπου κορυφαῖς ἱεραῖς χιονοβλήητοισι κάθησθε, *Ar. Nub* 269f.

[Come then, illustrious Clouds, in an exhibition for this man, whether you now sit on Olympus' holy snow-struck peaks...]

Who has seen pictures of Mt. Olympus knows that the mountaintop is not flat like, say, the crater on Mount Fuji. If we refer back to Figs. 1, the use of the dative will probably not seem too unreasonable. We may imagine real clouds enveloping Olympus' peaks from all (or some) sides. The verb 'you sit' need not be taken too literally but if we want we may imagine clouds, like other gods, seated or perched on the sloping mountaintop of Olympus. Another possibility is to imagine the clouds as straddling the peaks. However we imagine the physical presence of clouds over Mt. Olympus, it is clear why the genitive is not being used. In contrast, after a climb up Mt. Fuji, an Athenian would probably have no problem using the genitive to describe the vending machine sitting on top of that mountain.

(22) *Ar. Eq.* 783 (anap.)

σὲ γάρ, ὃς Μήδοισι διεξιφίσω περὶ τῆς χώρας Μαραθῶνι,  
καὶ νυκίσας ἡμῖν μέγਾਲως ἐγγλωττοτυπεῖν παρέδωκας,  
ἐπὶ ταῖσι πέτραις οὐ φροντίζει σκληρῶς σε καθήμενον οὕτως,  
οὐχ ὥσπερ ἐγὼ ῥαψάμενός σοι τουτὶ φέρω. ἀλλ' ἐπαναίρου,  
κάττα καθίζου μαλακῶς, ἵνα μὴ τρίβῃς τὴν ἐν Σαλαμῖνι. *Ar. Eq* 780ff.

[But he doesn't care if you have to sit like that on the hard rocks, unlike me, who bring this cushion I've had made for you. Here, get up a moment; now sit back down comfortably, so you don't chafe what sat to the oar at Salamis.]

This, too, requires some imagination. I do not know if we are to imagine individual rocks on the Pnyx, with Demos sitting uncomfortably on their sharp edges. The Pnyx itself is embarrassingly flat and when the simple activity of sitting on it is described (without mentioning all the discomfort of sitting on the hard rocks), one can say ἐν τῇ πυκνί (Eq. 749) just like ἐν ἄλλῳ χωρίῳ (Eq. 750) – or the genitive is often used, cf. *Ar. Eq.* 754 (ὅταν δ' ἐπὶ ταυτησί καθήται τῆς πέτρας seen as one flat entity), 956 (ἐπὶ πέτρας δημηγορῶν). But here perhaps our attention is drawn to the very fact that sitting on hard rocks is uncomfortable without a cushion. It is therefore perhaps best to take it as 'sitting on the edges of pointy, sharp rocks which function as seats' which could be similar to (17), perhaps it is less likely to take it as sitting on a pointy object (like sitting on an egg, number 26).

Fig. 2



Thus far, without stretching plausibility to a breaking point, I believe I have managed to find a more or less convincing explanation for 22 examples of ἐπί with the dative by visualizing all the preceding cases as positioned in some of the ways described in Fig. 1, of which Fig. 2 is only a slightly modified version. The object on which another object is placed is prominent for its upright position. If there were only these 22 examples, the theory would be solid and quite convincing. However, we still have to deal with another 15 examples and here the problems we encounter are twofold: a) some of the following passages are quite hard to visualize in precise physical terms; b) sitting on the rim (Fig. 1, C) can imperceptibly encroach on the domain of the genitive (sitting on the surface of another object). The question then is: if this working hypothesis is valid, do we push forward and insist on the lateral (re)interpretation of all evidence? Even where it seems as less plausible? Or do we decide outright that the examples that will follow (esp. **31-36**) invalidate the theory in one sixth of the cases, making the theory too inflexible and unworkable? If it cannot suit all cases, then clearly we have either failed in the approach or a new theory (or at least a tweak) must be offered.

This question can be answered only with more research and a detailed look at the rest of the corpus of pure Attic texts (orators come to mind almost immediately). After all, whether we accept the hypothesis or not should not depend on any subjective conviction but rather on hard statistical data taking account of all available evidence.

Let us then proceed and look at the rest of the examples of the spatial dative in Comedy. The following few examples are particularly difficult because I cannot quite visualize what exactly is being described in physical terms:

(23) *Ar. Pax.* 901

τρίτη δὲ μετὰ ταῦθ' ἵπποδρομίαν ἄξετε,  
 ἵνα δὴ κέλης κέλητα παρακελητιῖ,  
**ἄρματα δ' ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισιν ἀνατετραμμένα**  
 φρυσῶντα καὶ πνέοντα προσκινήσεται

[Then on the second day you'll hold the equestrian events, where jockey will outjockey jockey, and chariots will tumble over each other and match thrusts, puffing and panting...]

Are we to imagine chariots piling up, one on top of the side of another? The dative may be used to evoke a sloping pile of chariots, each resting on the side of one underneath. If a perfect pile were meant (think of wooden blocks in a game of Jenga) then the genitive would undoubtedly be a better choice.

(24) Ar. *Thesm.* 886

Ευ. αἰαῖ· τέθνηκε. ποῦ δ' ἐτυμβεύθη τάφω;

Κη. τόδ' ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ σῆμ', ἐφ' ᾧ καθήμεθα.

[Euripides. Alas, he is dead! Where was he duly entombed?

Kinsman. This is his very tomb whereon I sit.]

The Kinsman is using the plural more appropriate in Tragedy so there may be an echo of Tragic use of the preposition here. I do not know whether the Kinsman is to be imagined as sitting at / i.e. next to the tomb (the regular dative of proximity, e.g. ἐπὶ ταῖς θύραις, which does not concern us), or directly on the base of the tomb using lax syntax more typical of Tragedy, or whether it is a colloquial usage and the upright marker of the tomb is prominent and sitting on its base could be conceptualized in similar terms as numbers (2), (17), (21), (22) above. This being a comedy, one cannot exclude even the possibility that the Kinsman is actually sitting on – or at least leaning against – the edge of the pillar (or whatever the stage representation of the tomb marker was).

(25) Ar. *Ach.* 510

ὁ Ποσειδῶν, οὐπὶ Ταινάρω θεός,

[Poseidon, the god at Tainarum]

'I hate the Spartans', says the speaker, 'and may Poseidon, the god at the cape at the SW tip of the Peloponnese send them an earthquake and shake all their houses down on them.' Cape Tainarum (Tenaro or Matapan) is the southernmost tip of mainland Greece. The physical reality of this edge of mainland is important, and Poseidon is probably imagined here as being present (he had a temple there) right there on the edge of the cape.

(26) Cratinus fr. 115.3

Λήδα, σὸν ἔργον δεῖ σ' ὅπως εὐσχίμωνως

ἀλεκτρονόου μηδὲν διοίσει τοὺς τρόπους,

ἐπὶ τῶιδ' ἐπώϊζουσ', ὡς ἂν ἐκλέψῃς καλὸν

ἡμῖν τι καὶ θαυμαστὸν ἐκ τοῦδ' ὄρνεον.

[Leda, the task is yours; you must be / no less adept than a cock / in clucking over this, so you can hatch us / an amazing bird from this one.]

As Bakola notes, the opening words are in the style of Tragedy. Perhaps it is to be viewed in the same way as the following example:



(27) Ar. Pax. 1235

Ο. κ. ἔπειτ' ἐπὶ δεκάμινω χεσεῖ καθήμενος;

[Arms Dealer. So you intend to sit on a ten-mina corslet and shit?]

The arms dealer is shocked at the irreverent use of the expensive corslet as a provisional latrine with the user presumably sitting on the rim as if on a tall chamber pot and going about his business. Could the previous example, sitting on an egg, be conceptualized similarly? Sitting on the top, of course, but more importantly, covering the rim and the sides as well.

(28) Ehippus fr. 5.16 (anapaestic dimeters)

περιπλεῖν δ' ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄμβωσιν ἄνω

πέντε κέλητας πεντασκάλμους,

[And five five-oared speed-yachts / sail about on top of the dish's rim]

Notice that we are to imagine a huge vessel in a Munchhausen-like tall tale where everything is comically large: the caught fish, the cauldron in which the king will boil it, the amount of water: 'They add a lake full of water to the brine and for eight months continuously a hundred wagon-teams bring loads of salt to it. And five five-oared speed-yachts **sail about on top of the dish's rim**, and they give orders: Why aren't you kindling the fire, O Lycian leader? This part is cold. Stop fanning the fire, leader of Macedon. Quench the fire, o Celt, so you don't burn it.' So presumably speed-yachts are to be imagined high up there, on the surface of the fish soup, near the rim, perhaps with sailors shouting over the rim down to those below. The dative then vaguely evokes the high walls of the cauldron, the edge over which the sailors communicate with those kindling fire below. Yachts are sailing on the rim, almost on the (inner) sides of the dish, and then the situation is not too different from my Fig. 1, position C.

(29) Ar. Ran. 1046 (anap.)

Ευ. μὰ Δί', οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης οὐδέν σοι. Αἰ. μηδέ γ' ἐπεὶ γ'

ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τοῖ σοὶ καὶ τοῖς σοῖσιν πολλὴ πολλοῦ 'πικαθήτο,

ὥστε γε καὶ τὸν σε κατ' οὖν ἔβαλεν.

[Euripides. Certainly not, since Aphrodite had absolutely nothing to do with you.

Aeschylus. And I hope she never does! Whereas she plunked herself down plenty hard on you and yours, and yes, even flattened you personally.]

This is the most difficult description to visualize. Euripides claims that Aphrodite is not present (ἔπεστι) in Aeschylus' Tragedy. This leads Aeschylus to what must have been a humorous retort, using the verb ἐπικαθήτο. Where does it come from? Wrestling? Is Aphrodite here described as coming at Euripides and his near and dear ones from the side, kicking him in mid-air so hard that

he falls down? Or does she sit down (like Plutus) on one side of the scales with such force that Euripides falls off? Possible scenarios are numerous and it is a pity that commentators do not go to the trouble of explaining the colloquial (or perhaps technical) use of the verb here. This *locus* seems to hint at some episode from Euripides' life when Aphrodite showed herself and intervened with full force, when his friend Cephisophon is said to have seduced Euripides' wife.

This example is difficult because of my lack of imagination and it is possible that if I knew what exactly was being described, my hypothesis about the use of the preposition would not be invalidated. One could simply find possible scenarios under which my hypothesis could fit Aphrodite's movements.

However, we must now address the last sixth of all the examples and these are in fact the most embarrassing because here the vertical superimposition (i.e. one object lying on top of another) seems to be strongly evoked. In the following examples (30-36, maybe even 37) placement 'on the table' or 'on the cakes' is being described and everything that has been said so far would strongly suggest that the genitive should have been used instead:

(30) Antiphanes fr. 162.3

ὅταν γὰρ ἑκατόμβας τινές  
θύωσιν, ἐπὶ τούτοις ἅπασιν ὕστατος  
.... πάντων καὶ λιβανωτὸς ἐπετέθη,

[whenever people offer / hecatombs, after all these things, the last / of all is offered [lacuna] and incense.]

The lacuna makes it of course difficult to see the full power of the preposition. Was the incense placed directly on something else? Or next to it? Or just 'on top of something else' in the abstract sense of 'in addition to something else'?

(31) Teleclides fr. 1.7

οἱ δ' ἰχθύες οὐκαδ' ἰόντες  
ἐξοπτῶντες σφᾶς αὐτοὺς ἄν παρῆκειντ' ἐπὶ ταῖσι τραπέζαις.

[The fish delivered themselves to your house, broiled themselves up, and lay down on your table.]

(32) Philemo fr. 16.1

ὄλκεϊον εἶδον ἐπὶ τραπέζῃ κείμενον  
πυρῶν τι μεστόν.

[I saw a large bowl lying on the table, full of wheat, *my transl.*]

(33) Ar. Ach. 1158 (lyr.)

ὄν ἔτ' ἐπίδομι τευθίδος  
δεόμενον, ἢ δ' ὠπτημένη  
σίζουσα, πάραλος ἐπὶ τραπέζῃ κειμένη  
ὀκέλλοι· κᾶτα μέλ-  
λοντος λαβεῖν αὐτοῦ κύων  
ἀρπάσασα φεύγοι.

1158 Suda ἐπὶ τραπέζης

[May I yet see him hungry for squid, / and may it lie grilled and sizzling by the shore / and make port safely at his table; / and then, when he's about / to grab it, may a dog snap it up / and run away with it!]

(34) Pherecrates fr. 113.14

σχελίδες δ' ὀλόκνημοι πλησίον τακερώταται  
ἐπὶ πινακίσκοις

[and next to them ribs and joints, tender as can be, / on individual plates]

(35) Pherecrates fr. 113.17

καὶ πλευρὰ δελφάκει' ἐπεξανθισμένα  
χναυρότατα παρέκειτ' ἐπ' ἀμύλοις καθήμενα.

[browned pork-ribs lay / perched daintily on soft cakes]

Pollux has ἐπ' ἀμύλων but Athenaeus and Photius have in Teleclides (36) the dative form, and so editors are right to keep the dative even here.

(36) Teleclides fr. 34 KA

χαίρω λαγώοις ἐπ' ἀμύλωι καθήμενοις.

[I enjoy the hare meat lying on fine cakes, *my transl.*]

Genitives in contexts similar to those in 31 to 36 are easily found: in *Plutus* 996ff. we hear of a 'cake with the sweetmeats you see here on this dish' τὸν πλακοῦντα τουτονὶ / καὶ τᾶλλα τὰπὶ τοῦ πίνακος τραγήματα / ἐπόντα and in *Eq.* 771 we have ἐπὶ ταυτησὶ which is usually taken to mean ἐπὶ τραπέζης. Alexis 261.2-3 has τὴν τράπεζαν ἦκ' ἔχων, / ἐφ' ἧς ἐπέκειτ' οὐ τυρὸς οὐδ' ἐλαῶν γένη. Eubulus fr. 76 likewise has 'in (lit. on) the frying pan' ὡς εὖ νεναυάγηκεν ἐπὶ τοῦ τηγάνου / ὁ θεοῖσιν ἐχθρός.

Oddly enough, outside of Comedy I could find only a few similar datives<sup>9</sup> - of course, I did not take into account those datives which mean '[dine] at the table' or the technical meaning 'at the banker's table/counter.'

I admit I have no good explanation for numbers **31** to **36**. However, two things are noteworthy: firstly, outside of Comedy such datives are only found in a handful of phrases in late authors, and elsewhere the genitive is the norm; and secondly there is an almost formulaic similarity between numbers **32** and **33**. Separate tables for each guest or couch were brought in with food already laid out on them and then taken away. Perhaps if the light wooden tables and *pinakiskoi* were small, dishes could be said to be sitting not just on the surface of the tables, but spilling over, covering also the edges on all sides and that could explain the dative use – though I am the first to admit that this is but a tentative suggestion.

If we now come back to the passage from Plato's *Symposium* 212e, we may offer another explanation, different from those of both Rutherford and Forman: at one place Alcibiades' ribands are visualized as sitting on the top of his head (gen.), at the other they are possibly described like a wreath around his head (Fig. 1, position C). The choice between the dative and genitive is affected by what the speaker wishes to describe, by his viewpoint. If we find a good reason for the datives in examples **31** - **36** we may have to revisit even Rutherford's theory and agree with him that Attic did differentiate clearly between the genitive and dative uses with the preposition ἐπί. In order to overcome that one obstacle, we need to continue with the research and look at other Attic authors to see if the hypothesis presented here can be successfully applied to a larger corpus of texts.

#### IV. Addendum

The last example is a mere addendum – Wilson in his OCT puts in his text Hamaker's correction, finding it preferable to the transmitted reading of the manuscripts:

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<sup>9</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Hist.* 2.23.5 ἐγὼ γοῦν ἐθεασάμην ἐν ἱεραῖς οἰκίαις δειπνα προκειμένα θεοῖς ἐπὶ τραπέζαις ξυλίνας ἀρχαῖκῶς ἐν κήνησι καὶ πινακίσκοις κεραμοεῖς... [I myself have seen in the sacred edifices repasts set before the gods upon ancient wooden tables, in baskets and small earthen plates] Pausanias, *Gr. descr.* 4.13.2 ἔδοξεν ἐξέλθαι οἱ μέλλοντι ἐς μάχην καὶ ὠπλισμένῳ τῶν ἱερείων τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐπὶ τραπέζῃ προκεισθαι [He thought that he was about to go forth armed to battle and the victims' entrails were lying before him on a table] Cf. also 8.31.3 and 4 of carvings made on (into) a table, ἐπὶ τραπέζῃ. 10.4.8 may mean either 'on the table' or 'at the table'. Flavius Josephus *Hist.* 3.182 also has a dative: ἐπὶ τε τῇ τραπέζῃ τοὺς δώδεκα τιθεὶς ἄρτους [having set twelve loaves on the table].

(37) Ar. *Vesp.* 1040 (codd., anap.)

ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἔτι καὶ νυνὶ πολεμεῖ. φησὶν τε μετ' αὐτὸν  
τοῖς ἠπιάλοις ἐπιχειρήσαι πέρουσι καὶ τοῖς πυρετοῖσιν,  
οἱ τοὺς πατέρας τ' ἤγχιον νύκτωρ καὶ τοὺς πάππους ἀπέπνιγον  
κατακλινομένους ἐν ταῖς κοίταις, ἐπὶ τοῖσιν τ' ἀπράγμοσιν ὑμῶν  
ἀντωμοσίας καὶ προσκλήσεις καὶ μαρτυρίας συνεκόλλων,  
ὥστ' ἀναπηδᾶν δειμαίνοντας πολλοὺς ὡς τὸν πολέμαρχον. 1037ff.

1040 κατακλινομένους ἐν ... ἐπὶ τοῖσιν τ' Hamaker: -μενοί τ' ἐπὶ ταῖς κοίταις ἐπὶ τοῖσιν codd.

[On seeing such an apparition, he says, he didn't get cold feet and take bribes to betray you, but fought then as he fights now on your behalf. And he says that along with the monster he came to grips last year with the shivers and fevers that by night choked fathers and strangled grandfathers, that **climbed into the very beds of the peaceable citizens** among you, constructing affidavits, summonses, and depositions, so that many people jumped up in terror and ran to the polemarch.]

The text and its meaning are difficult to understand. Wilson (2009: 92-3) advocates his editorial choice as follows:

'I am not satisfied with the transmitted text. Why are the villains said to lie on beds? MacDowell seems to take the same view as Sommerstein, who translates 'on the beds of the peaceable folk among you'. This picture of cuckoos in the nest seems inappropriate. Mastromarco and Thiery have attempted to reflect more precisely on the articulation of the Greek.

Is lying on a bed a sign of luxury, in this case the result of ill-gotten gains? Or is there meant to be a contrast between their recumbent posture and the terrified activity of their victims? But that only becomes apparent two lines later, which is not satisfactory. Hamaker thought that the people in bed were the unfortunate victims of the crimes named in the preceding line. His proposal κατακλινομένους ἐν followed by ἐπὶ τοῖσιν τ' restores the sense needed.'<sup>10</sup>

If we accept Wilson's (and Hamaker's) argument – and it is easy to see how the scribe's eye could have wandered to ἐπὶ in the second half of the line and made him insert it at an inappropriate place – then of course a difficult case of ἐπὶ disappears and we do not have to discuss it at all.

One may, however, choose to keep the reading of the *codices* and assume that 'shivers and fevers' are like demons or nightmares, who visit soundly sleeping innocent citizens and lie down next to them *on the edge of their beds* – a perfectly nightmarish scenario that would shock any man when he opens his eyes. Such a man would immediately jump up and rush to the *polemarch* scared of the vision haunting him in his sleep and lying next to him in his bed.

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<sup>10</sup> N. G. Wilson, *Aristophanea: Studies on the Text of Aristophanes*. Oxford 2009, p. 92f.