Conflict and Comedy.

Insults, threats, and slapstick in the plays of Aristophanes.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the form and function of insults, threats, and aggressive slapstick in the comedies of Aristophanes. It seeks to fill a gap in our understanding of Aristophanes' dramatic technique by considering how conflict between characters serves as a vehicle for humour.

I begin with a discussion of three different approaches to mimetic conflict. The first considers Aristotle's ideas on pity, the second looks at Bakhtin's theory of grotesque realism, the third compares slapstick and visual gags from early silent cinema.

My own approach is based on an analysis of Aristophanic language and staging. The body of the thesis is divided into three chapters, one dedicated to each of the conflict elements under investigation (insults, threats, slapstick). Technical discussions are combined with broader analyses of how conflict is integrated into the narratives of Aristophanes' plays and exploited for laughs. The chapter on insults includes a discussion of verbal abuse in situations of conflict, four case studies (*Acharnians*, *Frogs*, *Peace*, *Clouds*), and a glossary of Aristophanic insults. The chapter on threats looks at how these generate humour when they elicit unexpected reactions, or when characters make threats that are incommensurate with their situation. A formal analysis concludes the chapter, revealing differences between comic and tragic threat constructions. The chapter on slapstick considers Aristophanes' parabatic comments regarding visual humour, the role of aggressive choruses, and instances of physical contact between individual characters. It transpires that lasting and significant harm is never the outcome of physical attacks in Aristophanes. Gratuitous

slapstick is also generally avoided; attacks are, rather, integrated into the story or employed in conjunction with puns and other jokes.

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Abbreviations

References to Greek and Latin authors follow the abbreviations of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*[4] edited by S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, and E. Eidinow (Oxford, 2012), except:

Soph. = S. (and *Trach*. = *Tr*.)	Arist. *Rh*. = Arist. *Rhet*.
Eur. = E.	Pl. *Ap*. = Pl. *Apol*.
Aesch. = A.	Isoc. = Isocr.
Plato Com. = Plat. com.	Xen. *Eq*. = Xen. *PH*

The author's name has been omitted in the case of Homer's *Iliad* (*Il*.) and *Odyssey* (*Od*.).

References to journals in the field of Classical Studies follow the abbreviations of *L'Année philologique*, except that I use '*AJP*' instead of '*AJPh*', '*CP*' instead of '*CPh*', '*HSCP*' instead of '*HSCPh*', and '*TAPA*' instead of '*TAPhA*'.

Scholia (Σ) to Aristophanes are cited by individual author from the editions published under the direction of W. J. W. Koster & D. Holwerda (Groningen, 1960–2007).

Austin	C. F. L. Austin, *Nova fragmenta Euripidea* (Berlin, 1968).
Carey	C. Carey, *Lysiae orationes cum fragmentis* (Oxford, 2007).
CLGP	G. Bastianini *et al*. (eds.), *Commentaria et lexica Graeca in papyris reperta*, 10 vols. to date (Leipzig, then Berlin and Boston, 2004–).
de Borries	J. von Borries, *Phrynichi sophistae Praeparatio Sophistica* (Leipzig, 1911).
FGrH	F. Jacoby *et al*. (eds.) *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden, 1923–).
Giannantoni	G. Giannantoni (ed.) *Socratis et Socraticorum reliquiae*, 4 vols. (Naples, 1990).
Hansen	P. A. Hansen, *Hesychii Alexandrini lexicon. Volumen III:* Π–Σ (Berlin and New York, 2005).
Hansen/Cunningham	P. A. Hansen & I. C. Cunningham, *Hesychii Alexandrini lexicon. Volumen IV:* Τ–Ω (Berlin and New York, 2009).

IG	*Inscriptiones graecae*.
Jensen	C. C. Jensen, *Hyperidis orationes sex cum ceterarum fragmentis* (Stuttgart, 1917).
K–A	R. Kassel & C. F. L. Austin (eds.) *Poetae comici graeci*, 8 vols. to date (Berlin and New York, 1983–).
Latte	K. Latte, *Hesychii Alexandrini lexicon. Volumen I:* Α–Δ (Copenhagen, 1953).
LIMC	*Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, 8 vols. (Zurich and Munich, 1981–99).
LSJ	H. G. Liddell & R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th edn., rev. H. S. Jones & R. McKenzie, rev. supp. by P. G. W. Glare, Oxford, 1996).
PMG	D. L. Page (ed.) *Poetae melici graeci* (Oxford, 1962).
PSI	Papiri della Società Italiana.
Rose	V. Rose (ed.) *Aristotelis qui ferebantur librorum fragmenta* (Leipzig, 1886).
SEG	J. J. E. Hondius *et al*. (eds.) *Supplementum epigraphicum graecum* (Leiden, 1923–).
Taillardat	J. Taillardat, *Les images d'Aristophane. Etudes de langue et de style* (Paris, 1965).
TiC	*Trends in Classics*.
TrGF	B. Snell, R. Kannicht, & S. Radt (eds.) *Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta*, 5 vols. (Göttingen, 1971–2004).
West	M. L. West (ed.) *Iambi et elegi graeci ante Alexandrum cantati*, 2 vols. (2nd edn., Oxford, 1989–92).
Wilson	N. G. Wilson, *Aristophanis fabulae*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2007).

Shakespeare is cited from S. Wells & G. Taylor (eds.) *William Shakespeare. The Complete Works* (2nd edn., Oxford and New York, 2005).

All films mentioned can, at the time of submission, be viewed on the website YouTube™.

Unless otherwise indicated, the text, line-numbers, and speaker attributions of Aristophanes follow Wilson. Fragment numbering of Aristophanes follows K–A. Translations into English are my own.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

‘Every drama must present conflict. The end may be reconciliation or destruction;
or, as in life itself, there may be no end; but the conflict is indispensable:
no conflict, no drama’.
– G. Bernard Shaw, ‘Preface’, *Plays Pleasant* (1898)

1.1. Opening remarks

This thesis aims to shed light on the form and function of insults, threats, and aggressive slapstick in Aristophanes. The ubiquity in the extant plays of these ‘conflict elements’—an umbrella term that I use to denote all three of the acts studied—suggests they are integral to Aristophanes’ brand of humour and his mode of story-telling. They appear in every comedy spanning his forty-year career, outliving briefer trends such as engagement with politics in the 420s, the exploration of gender roles in the plays of 411, or economic topics in the early fourth century. Conflict elements, which appear repeatedly (though not, as we will see, indiscriminately) in clashes between characters, are thus a more fundamental and enduring aspect of Aristophanes’ comedy, and their study should advance our understanding of his playwriting technique.

Scholars have certainly recognised the importance of conflict and aggression in Old Comedy. Silk (2000: 263), for example, lists conflict as one of the five key stages of Aristophanic drama.[1] Ruffell (2013: 247) counts aggression among the ‘principal attributes of Old Comedy’. Poe (2000: 271) speaks of comedy’s ‘cheerful violence’, while

[1] Silk’s other key stages are dissatisfaction, quest, victory, and celebration.

Kidd (2014: 119–20) imagines the 'immense delight' that Aristophanes' audiences took in 'playful aggression, especially seeing on-stage victims suffer'. These remarks bear out the prominence of inter-personal antagonism in Aristophanic comedy, and it is perhaps surprising that no book-length study of the subject exists. Many valuable and pertinent insights are, to be sure, located in commentaries on the individual plays. These are reflected in my discussions throughout the thesis on precise points of vocabulary and staging. However, while commentaries fruitfully explore and explain details not normally tackled in monographs, the commentary format does not lend itself to arguments about broader dramatic tropes, such as conflict. One of my primary objectives, therefore, is to combine the type of technical observations found in commentaries with a wider treatment of the aesthetics of Old Comedy (focussing on inter-personal conflict). In this way, I hope to fill a gap in our knowledge by demonstrating, in detail, the various ways that Aristophanes exploits insults, threats, and mock violence, but also how these fit more broadly into his comic and dramatic art.

As Shaw insists in the passage reprinted at the top of the previous page, drama depends on conflict. Conflict generates suspense and a concomitant desire for resolution. This draws spectators into the action, creating an emotional investment in the outcome of characters' clashes with either each other or less tangible forces. In Aristophanes, conflict manifests itself both as wide-ranging struggles, such as those for peace (*Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Lysistrata*) or an equitable distribution of resources (*Ecclesiazusae*, *Wealth*), and as individual moments or sparks of conflict between characters. We will see that the two types of conflict are intertwined, though my focus will be on the latter. Conflict also implies that there will be winners and losers. In effect, the conflict elements analysed here are typically employed, within the story-world, to assert dominance over an opponent. Unlike tragedy, however, which tends to frame suffering negatively and elicit pity for its victimised

characters, comedy lets spectators stand back and 'look upon human misfortune from an emotional distance', as one critic puts it, 'sometimes even deriving great pleasure from it'.[2] The primary objective of this thesis is to explore such pleasure and to discuss what Rosen (2007: 3), in his study of ancient satire, has described as the 'comic possibilities inherent in a stance of interpersonal confrontation', that is, how audiences of Old Comedy are encouraged to enjoy aggressive encounters between characters, what this means for our understanding of the genre and its legacy, as well as how the specificities of live drama shape the use and appearance of conflict elements.

1.2. Three approaches to conflict elements in Aristophanes

In what follows, I present three ways of framing and understanding the conflict elements found in Aristophanes. Each paradigm offers a different perspective and asks different questions about how audiences might interpret and respond to acts of aggression in comedy, and especially how these are made to be enjoyable. I conclude with a summary of how my own methodology both draws on, and differs from, these three approaches.

The first approach discussed below centres on Aristotle's description of pity. Aristotle's arguments about how audiences connect emotionally with dramatic characters is relevant to the present discussion since it can explain the pleasure taken in seeing characters suffer. Aristotle lays out the conditions necessary for eliciting an audience's pity. A reversal or diminution of these conditions can, I suggest, anaesthetise spectators to mimetic pain and grief.

[2] Stott 2005: 12.

Aristotle's discussion of pity is a good starting point for thinking about how audiences react to imitations of human suffering, not least because of the cultural proximity that he enjoyed with Aristophanes' orginal audiences. Aristotle's approach does not, however, account for the generic specificities of comedy (the analysis of comedy alluded to in chapter six of the *Poetics* is either lost or was never published) nor does it pay much attention to the extra-dramatic, cultic and festive setting of Athenian theatre performances. The second paradigm discussed below, which does address such issues, is Bakhtin's theory of the carnival and grotesque realism. Bakhtin depicts the medieval carnival as an extraordinary historical moment when social transgressions, such as insults or obscenity, were celebrated. He identifies in this historical phenomenon an anti-hierarchical spirit that can infuse works of fictional literature, exemplified for him by the novels of Rabelais. The comedies of fifth- and fourth-century Athens are simultaneously works of fiction and part of a communal festivity. Although Bakhtin does not focus on this sort of hybrid literary event, his model does offer a template for understanding the eccentric and antisocial behaviour of Aristophanes' characters.

In the final section, I discuss parallels between Aristophanes and American silent film comedy. These are especially relevant to Chapter Four of this thesis, on Aristophanic slapstick. Silent film comedy and Aristophanes have in common the invulnerability of their characters. This has implications for how audiences construe violence, which may be more palatable when its consequences are minimised. Critical discussions of early film comedy have also focussed on the relationship between gags and narrative, that is, how stand-alone visual jokes are incorporated into enacted stories. Parabatic comments in *Clouds* and *Peace* suggest that this was a concern also of Aristophanes; we will see in Chapter Four that Aristophanes acknowledges the popularity of stock gags, which include slapstick moments,

but also criticises these as unoriginal and potentially detrimental to his story-telling technique.

1.2.1. An Aristotelian approach to comic suffering

In his arguments concerning audience reactions in the law-courts and the theatre, Aristotle contemplates how empathy with others and compassion for their suffering (be it real or mimetic) can be encouraged. It is a line of inquiry that informs his discussion of pity as one of the two quintessential tragic emotions. Aristotle argues that experiencing pity for dramatic characters is pleasurable, but that this pleasure is both indirect and proper to tragedy (*Poet*. 1453b11–13). It arises when tragic poets depict characters experiencing undeserved suffering, causing audiences painfully to pity those characters, which in turn produces a pleasurable *katharsis* of the emotion. How might Aristotle's conceptualisation of pity apply to the suffering of comic characters?

Aristotle's most precise definition of pity is found in the *Rhetoric*, where he describes it as 'a sort of pain at a perceived destructive or painful misfortune befalling someone who is undeserving and which he [sc. an observer] might expect to suffer himself or one of his friends to suffer'.[3] Nussbaum (1996: 31) splits this definition into three connected parts: 1) hearing about or witnessing a significant misfortune befalling another, 2) belief that the sufferer does not deserve that misfortune, and 3) identification with the victim and the realisation that one or one's friends could suffer in the same way. A significant misfortune is the prerequisite for any compassionate reaction while removal of either of the last two

[3] ἔστω δὴ ἔλεος λύπη τις ἐπὶ φαινομένῳ κακῷ φθαρτικῷ ἢ λυπηρῷ τοῦ ἀναξίου τυγχάνειν, ὃ κἂν αὐτὸς προσδοκήσειεν ἂν παθεῖν ἢ τῶν αὑτοῦ τινα (*Rhet*. 1385b13–15). For a discussion of this definition and its relationship to other mentions of pity in Aristotle see Konstan 2001: 128–36.

criteria will mitigate or eliminate pity for the injured party.[4] Suffering must, in other words, be substantial from a spectator's point of view for them to feel pity (minor discomforts will not elicit pity; cf. Isocr. 16.48), the sufferer should not appear to be responsible for, or deserving of, their own misfortune (if they do, they deserve blame and reproach; cf. S. *Phil*. 1318–20, Antiph. 1.27, Arist. *EN* 3.1114a25–9), and an empathetic identification with the sufferer will increase the likelihood that a spectator feels pity (cf. S. *Aj*. 121–4). To give an example, Odysseus, in the *Odyssey*, describes witnessing his comrades being seized and devoured by Scylla as 'the most pitiful thing of all to have met my eyes' (οἴκτιστον δὴ κεῖνο ἐμοῖς ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσι / πάντων, 12.258–9). The fate of his comrades is significant, they do not deserve it, and Odysseus can relate to them as a fellow traveller.

Although Aristotle does not state so explicitly, an Aristotelian approach should dictate, through a reversal of the three aforementioned conditions, that pity for stage characters can be reduced by making their suffering insignificant (certainly true, as we will see, when one compares comic with tragic suffering), by assigning blame to the victim, and by discouraging audience identification with them. This is a configuration that we indeed find in Aristophanes, and that can help explain the pleasure, or rather, the lack of pain, that audiences of comedy experience when seeing characters suffer. Heath (1989: 353) offers the

[4] Aristotle adds precisions regarding the nature of the fortune (good or bad) and the nature of the victim (good or bad). We experience pain, for example, when we see people faring well 'undeservedly' (ἀναξίως, *Rhet*. 1386b9–11). Conversely, we feel no pain at seeing bad people suffer deservedly (1386b26–9; cf. *Poet*. 1453a1–2), and so forth. For the different permutations see Sanders 2014: 59–73, and cf. Golden 1987, Ben-Ze'ev 2003. On the Aristotelian concept of ἐπιχαιρεκακία, given as the opposite of φθόνος at *EN* 1108b1–5 (cf. *EE* 1233b19–25 τὸ χαίρειν ταῖς παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν κακοπραγίαις) and defined in the later tradition as pleasure at another's misfortune (e.g. Plut. *De curiositate* 6, Diog. Laert. 7.1.114), see Sanders 2008: 268–70.

Aristophanic Lamachus as an example. At the end of *Acharnians*, Lamachus suffers because of his own misguided actions and, in this way, resembles a tragic figure.[5] He enters limping and crying in pain (ἀτταταῖ ἀτταταῖ, 1190). However, this sight and the character's use of tragic diction (στυγερὸς ἐγώ, 1208; τάλας ἐγὼ ξυμβολῆς βαρείας, 1209) can hardly have elicited emotions normally associated with tragedy. There can be little pity for Lamachus who has already been established as a self-important blocking character, is largely responsible for his own grief and, moreover, embellishes its causes. Although he claims to have been struck by an enemy spear (1194), the audience knows that the general injured himself by falling into a ditch and twisting his ankle on a stake (1178–9), an ignoble and undignified fate.

Not all comic characters who suffer fit the mould of Lamachus. A key difference between Lamachus' discomfiture and the interactions studied in this thesis is that the latter involve an aggressor. This adds a layer of depth to dramatic suffering that often enhances its comic potential, but also complicates moral evaluations of the scenario. When a character attacks another, either verbally or physically, spectators are confronted with questions regarding the grief of the victim as well as the motivations of the aggressor and the justifiability of his or her actions. The proportionality of the attack will be important (though audiences of comedy probably expect and tolerate exaggeration), but so too will the degree to which the aggressor is liked by the audience and, conversely, the victim disliked.[6] Affiliation with characters will be steered by the playwright and, even if spectators bring personal preconceptions to bear upon the staged world, those can be anticipated and

[5] Olson 2002: 357–8 observes that Lamachus 'now takes on the role of the ragged, limping Euripidean hero . . . who is typically carried on stage dead or wounded at the end of the play'. Kornarou 2007 discusses parallels between Lamachus' lamentations and those of tragic characters.

[6] Dubbed 'disposition theory' by Zillmann & Cantor 1976. Cf. Raney 2004.

countered. Thus, an authority figure such as the Proboulos in *Lysistrata* is undermined in the play by his pro-war stance, which goes against the narrative trajectory, as well as by his distasteful and aggressive attitude. Conversely, Lysistrata, whose actions if carried out in real life would undoubtedly meet with opprobrium, is the play's heroine who drives the plot toward its joyous end. When these two characters come together, the Proboulos is unlikely to receive the audience's sympathy for the insults and threats to which he is subjected, especially since these are spoken by a character who enjoys the spectators' support. That being said, Aristophanes' central characters, Lysistrata included, are not stable one-dimensional creations (cf. Silk 2000: 207–55) nor are they ethically equivocal (thus Dicaeopolis, Philocleon, and Strepsiades, among others). A simple partition into categories of liked versus disliked, hero versus villain, or similar, cannot justly account for all aspects of comic characterisation and indeed would demean Aristophanes' artistic accomplishments.[7] The attraction and humour of conflict elements in Aristophanes often reside, moreover, not so much in an audience's affiliation with a given character or disaffiliation with the victim but rather, as we will presently see, in the form of the conflict element itself. This includes tragic parody, the use of poetic or rhetorical tropes, and ingenious visual spectacles, all of which belong to a complex network of meaning, symbolic associations, and joke logic.[8] It would, therefore, be reductive to focus exclusively on how audiences sympathise and identify (or not) with comic characters in order to explain the pleasure afforded by conflict elements.

Aristotle was interested in how people respond emotionally to narrated and enacted stories. In this sense, he anticipates some of the questions posed in this thesis. Aristotle was

[7] Cf. Rosen 2014b, discussing Cedric Whitman's (1964) paradigm of the Aristophanic comic hero.

[8] Cf. Ruffell 2011: 119–20.

also aware, however, that audiences can be 'emotionally moved by a poetic performance at the same time as they are intellectually detached from it and reflective about its form and content' (Rosen 2007: 34). For Aristotle, the contemplation of mimesis, of the relationship between art and reality, is a natural source of delight (τὸ χαίρειν, *Poet*. 1448b8–9, 15–17), while an artist's 'workmanship' (ἀπεργασία, 1448b19) gives 'pleasure' (ἡδονή) to the consumer.[9] In the case of drama, an audience's recognition that what they are viewing is not real, but rather a representation, distances them from the action and invites a more intellectual assessment, further encouraged by the overtly competitive setting in which the plays were produced. It seems probable, to judge by Aristophanes' own parabatic assertions, that audiences were indeed attuned to the aesthetics of Old Comedy beyond questions of emotional response. Aristophanes encourages his audiences not merely to enjoy his comedy, but also to appreciate critically its formal aspects and originality. Thinking about the way spectators connect emotionally with characters can, in sum, help explain the pleasure taken from, or pity felt for, moments of staged suffering. A strict focus on that point would, however, obscure other important factors, such as the historical and performative conditions of the comedies, novelty as a stand-alone objective, and the many different ways that humour is generated. It is to these that I turn in the following sections, where I discuss two modern paradigms for understanding the role of conflict and aggressive behaviour in Old Comedy.

[9] On the relationship between mimesis and pleasure in Aristotle's *Poetics* see further Belfiore 1985, Halliwell 1986: 62–81, 2002b: 177–206.

1.2.2. Old Comedy, Mikhail Bakhtin, and the carnival paradigm

The re-emergence in the 1980s of historicist approaches to literature was accompanied by increased scholarly interest in Mikhail Bakhtin's thoughts on medieval folk humour and the carnivalesque. Although Bakhtin's depiction of the medieval carnival is to a degree romanticised and ahistorical, his ideas provide a fruitful basis for thinking about the special license of Old Comedy.[10]

For Bakhtin (*Rabelais and His World*, Engl. translation 1968), the carnival is a collective, ritual institution epitomised by a 'temporary suspension of hierarchic distinctions and barriers . . . and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life' (p. 15). This presents itself in the form of spectacles, comic verbal compositions, and abuse (p. 5). During the carnival, 'verbal etiquette and discipline are relaxed and indecent words or expressions may be used' (p. 16). Insults, profanity, and curses abound as 'elements of freedom' (p. 187). This takes place within a happy context of feasting, clowning, parody, popular music, mingling bodies, regenerative laughter, role reversals, and collapsed social boundaries, all of which separate the carnival from the 'serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials' that dominated life in early-modern Europe (p. 5). During the carnival, there is a suspension of 'hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions', Bakhtin writes (p. 10). 'Privileged symbols and officially authorized concepts [are brought]

[10] Gurevich 1988: 176–210 offers some criticisms of Bakhtin's theory. Morson & Emerson 1990: 433–70 tackle the specific question of whether Bakhtin 'employ[s] his global concepts primarily to serve his readings, or his readings to probe his global concepts' (p. 445). Studies looking specifically at Old Comedy through the lens of Bakhtin's model include Carrière 1979, Goldhill 1991a: 176–88, Edwards 1993, von Möllendorff 1995, Platter 2007.

into a crudely familiar relationship with common everyday experience.'[11] Along these lines, the carnival spurns the intellectual and the metaphysical, focusing rather on the body and its interactions with the natural world, how solids, liquids, and air pass from the exterior to the interior, and vice versa: 'the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly' (p. 26). By concentrating on these basic aspects of the human experience, the carnival transcends barriers of class and wealth. All this is infused with the spirit and language of the marketplace (*ploshchadnoe slovo*, lit. the 'public-square word'): its vulgar argot, its colourful crowds, its disdain for class society, its entrepreneurship, and its food. 'The world of the marketplace operates according to what is essentially a comic logic, one that runs parallel to official, serious, improving culture, laughing at it, and sometimes violently humiliating it.'[12]

Although Bakhtin mentions Old Comedy only fleetingly, the contours of his carnival dynamic should appear familiar to readers of Aristophanes. The comic stage is not unlike a marketplace with its economic concerns and its busy comings and goings. Dicaeopolis goes so far as to set up his own functioning agora, the Sausage-Seller in *Knights* is intimately connected to the market, and vendor-characters appear in *Wasps*, *Peace*, and *Birds*.[13] Wine and food are omnipresent motifs in the plays, while real snacks were distributed to the audience.[14] Verbal etiquette, as we will see in the chapters on insults and threats, is relaxed.

[11] Bristol 1985: 22.

[12] Stott 2005: 33.

[13] For further references to marketplace denizens in Aristophanes' verses see Wilkins 2000: 164–75. For depictions of the agora as a 'sordid location' in the Greek sources see Halliwell 2008: 231–5.

[14] *Vesp*. 58–9 (κάρυα, 'nuts'), *Plut*. 796–802 (ἰσχάδια καὶ τρωγάλια, 'dried figs and sweets'). Compare also Philochoros *FGrH* 328 F171 (= Athen. 11.464) who writes that τραγήματα (sweet or savoury snacks, including fruit, nuts, and cakes; cf. Arnott 1996: 494) were handed out during the

Aristophanes' characters employ abundant obscenity and offensive language. Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque body that 'transgresses its own limits' (p. 26) also finds echoes in the costumes of Old Comedy. These exaggerate the belly, buttocks, breasts, and phallus of their wearers, hypersexualising them and giving them a low centre of gravity. Aristophanic comedy dismantles conventional hierarchies, with humble characters expelling authorities, establishing utopian societies, and mocking or imitating politicians. Rituals and religious occasions are distorted for laughs; gods are defeated by humans or appear as buffoonish characters. Serious democratic institutions (assemblies, law-courts) are discredited or corrupted, and serious poetic genres (tragedy, epic) are parodied. This is all reminiscent of Bakhtin's vision of the carnival as a temporarily inverted world.

The historical carnival is a spontaneous participatory experience for the proletariat. 'Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it', Bakhtin says (p. 7); the carnival 'does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators'. In this respect, the carnival—as Bakhtin presents it—has limitations as a model for the comedies of ancient Athens. To be sure, spectators of Old Comedy were not passive observers: we hear of audiences making noise (e.g. *Eq*. 546–7, Cratin. fr. 360 K–A), consuming food (Arist. *EN* 1175b11–12), or talking during the performances (*Pax* 43–9). Many spectators would themselves have participated in the choruses (Xen. *Hell*. 2.4.20); hundreds of dancers were required annually, creating a kind of solidarity based on shared experiences.[15] The state festivals of Dionysus, to which theatrical productions belonged, were also large, communal events that included public processions and a suspension of official business ([Xen.] *Ath. Pol*. 3.8, Dem. 21.10, Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 36, 58–68). And yet, for the dramatic

City Dionysia. Philochoros was writing c. 300 BCE. For the distribution of food during public spectacles in Rome see Kyle 1998: 191–4.

[15] Revermann 2006b: 108.

performances at least, the number of places was limited. Recent estimates of the capacity of the fifth-century Theatre of Dionysus range from about four to eight thousand seats, yet Thucydides (2.13.6) gives the number of Athenian hoplites as twenty-nine thousand at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.[16] Although still a large event by today's standards, the figures above suggest it would have been impossible for all citizens to attend the theatre. In addition, the front-row seats (*prohedria*) were reserved for officials, imposing a sort of hierarchy among those citizens who did attend,[17] while the cost of the performances (both actual and in terms of lost income) may well, as Sommerstein suggests, have discouraged the poorer classes, precisely the socio-economic group envisaged by Bakhtin as prototypical carnival-goers.[18]

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[16] That is, thirteen thousand on active duty plus sixteen thousand garrisoned in Attica (cf. *Vesp*. 709, mentioning twenty thousand citizens; *Eccl*. 1132–3 'more than thirty thousand citizens'). Thucydides' figures are accepted as legitimate by Hansen 1981, Hornblower 1991: 255–7, and Lapini 1997 (with some reservations), though estimating the population of Athens at any time in the Classical Period is difficult (Hansen 1982). For the seating capacity of the fifth-century theatre at Athens see Roselli 2011: 64–9. The numbers given here (4000–8000 seats) do not include the possibility of free, improvised seating on the slopes behind or to the side of the cavea.

[17] Compare *Eq*. 703–4, where the Sausage-Seller says to Paphlagon (Cleon) that he will send him from the *prohedria* (where Cleon was sat following his success at Pylos) back to the farthest viewing place in the theatre (ἐκ τῆς προεδρίας ἔσχατον θεώμενον). Other seats seem to have been reserved for the rotating members of the *boulē* (*Av*. 794, Pollux 4.122, Roselli 2011: 80).

[18] Sommerstein 1997b: 66–8. The cost of entry to the theatre in the fourth century seems to have been two obols (Dem. 18.28); there is no solid evidence for a fifth-century entrance fee, though Aristophanes' lost *Phoenician Women* mentions a 'theatre-seller' (θεατροπώλης, fr. 575). On the thorny subject of *theōrika*, cash doles (not securely attested for the fifth century) that allowed poorer citizens to attend festivals, see Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 265–8, Roselli 2009, 2011: 87–105,

More importantly, we must acknowledge that the play-worlds inhabited by Aristophanes' characters remained sealed off to spectators. While audience members may have sympathised or even identified with characters like Dicaeopolis or Chremylus, they could not converse with them on the same ontological plane; could never enjoy the same spatial and temporal freedoms as these characters; did not cease physically to exist at the end of the performance. Spectators did not 'live in' the comedies. Indeed, because the theatre is always, to an extent, a controlled environment with a demarcation between performers and spectators, Bakhtin sees drama (medieval or otherwise) as distinct from carnival and its attendant freedoms.[19] Carnival 'belongs to the borderline between art and life' (p. 7), whereas drama is art alone.[20] The work-around to this participative barrier, as Bakhtin recognised, is to understand the carnival not only as a historical occasion, but also as a literary paradigm (referred to generally in *Rabelais and His World* as 'grotesque realism'). Although the exact relationship that Bakhtin envisages between the historical carnival and its manifestations in literature is not always clear or consistent (cf. von Möllendorff 1995: 84–5), he demonstrates the model through his analysis of Rabelais's novels. These depict self-enclosed fictional worlds, but much like the participative carnival, they too trade in popular culture, celebrating and re-affirming the lives of ordinary people. Bodily pleasures

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P. Wilson 2011: 38–43. On the *prohedria* see Maass 1972, Roselli 2011: 78–81, Austin & Olson 2004: 274. Aristophanes' *Peace* (543–55) does suggest that craftsmen and farmers were present in the audience, as does the countryman Dicaeopolis' monologue at the start of *Acharnians*.

[19] For Bakhtin's views on the relationship between carnival and drama see Cunliffe 1993.

[20] Later in *Rabelais and His World*, however, Bakhtin seems to admit that the two can overlap. This is most apparent in his discussion of Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de la Feuillée* (pp. 257–63), a thirteenth-century satiric comedy that includes citizens of Arras as characters and takes May Day celebrations as its connecting thread (the comedy was performed in Arras on the first of May).

are the most important measures of happiness. Language is coarse and 'unmediated by expectations of formality'.[21] High culture is degraded. Through the example of Rabelais, Bakhtin demonstrates how other event-types and other genres become carnivalesque, a process that occurs even in cultures and times from which the historical carnival is absent.

Although Bakhtin was reluctant to look for grotesque realism in drama, the enacted worlds of the theatre, itself a public gathering place, seem well-suited to the model. In a similar mode to the carnival, drama regularly delivers moments where hierarchical relationships are inverted and social order is relaxed. Much like Bakhtin's presentation of the carnival, Bristol (1985)—in his study of Renaissance English drama—sees theatre as articulating both a negative critique that challenges traditional power structures and also a positive critique that reaffirms the 'collective traditions lived out by ordinary people' (p. 4). 'The time of the performance is a festive time in which play and mimesis replace productive labor' (p. 112).[22] Dramatic texts that embrace the carnival spirit, Bristol writes (p. 58), situate themselves at the 'frontier between elite and popular culture, the zone where reciprocal pressure, contamination, and the diversity of speech types and discursive genres is greatest'. He goes on to define three features typical of such texts, before presenting and discussing examples from Elizabethan and Jacobean drama:

1) they critique privilege via parody and/or a radical reinterpretation of the political and social spheres;
2) they acknowledge social dissonance as a positive feature of productive life;

[21] Stott 2005: 33.

[22] Compare the strand of Athenian 'abundance' comedies, which take as their premise the automatic provision of food without labour (Athen. 6.267e–70a, Wilkins 2000: 110–23).

3) they embrace a festive mood that reflects a desire for enhanced material abundance and freedom from expropriation.[23]

It is precisely such a dynamic that Aristophanes recreates on the stage and through which he exploits conflict elements to entertain his audience. His characters resist the status quo and embrace dissonance, providing ample scope for verbal and physical abuse. And although spectators could not actually share in the freedoms of Aristophanes' characters, they could enjoy watching those characters transgress norms, and do so in a festive and unthreatening context. As in the medieval carnival, where participants were permitted, temporarily and without repercussions, to flout the protocols of respectful human interaction, Aristophanes' audiences were offered a vicarious release from expectations to behave appropriately, to uphold social hierarchies, and to abide by the confines of the law. This manifests itself, among other things, in the presence of insults, threats, and slapstick in the comedies, frequently directed at characters connected to institutions of power or who otherwise attempt to stifle the fantastic and enviable liberties of the plays' heroes.

1.2.3. Early comic cinema and Old Comedy. A comparable aesthetic?

In this section, I would like to consider how the aesthetics of early comic cinema from the United States might inform our understanding of physical aggression in Aristophanes. Under the influence of contemporary theatre practices and in the absence of synchronised speech technology, the first three decades of cinema relied primarily on visual story-telling.[24] This

[23] Bristol 1985: 58.

[24] For a concise timeline of silent film comedy see Bilton 2013: 1–10. The first ever screen fiction was a comedy: *L'arroseur arrosé* (Lumière brothers, 1895) features a young man who steps on a

lent itself to comic forms, and in particular to slapstick (that is, inconsequential imitations of ostensibly harmful physical action). And while there are differences between film and Aristophanic drama, not least the ability to switch rapidly between scenes or to impose vantage points thanks to varying camera angles and shot lengths, many of the underlying humour mechanisms remain comparable. In addition to the exploitation of physical jokes, one might cite an engagement with political themes, protagonists who succeed against the odds, authority figures who are tricked or humbled, and parody of melodrama.

Critics have shown how silent comedy borrowed aspects of its performance style from the vaudeville theatre, travelling shows that included energetic physical skits and whose conventions were replicated on the screen as live performers made the transition to film.[25] Two of the most emblematic actors of early cinematic comedy, Charlie Chaplin (b. 1889, screen debut 1914) and Joseph 'Buster' Keaton (b. 1895, screen debut 1917), both began their careers performing in vaudeville shows.[26] Films that embraced the physical gags

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gardener's hose to stop the flow of water. When the gardener inspects the non-functioning hose, the boy lifts his foot, sending a burst of water splashing into his victim's face. The enraged gardener then chases the trickster, catches him, kicks his backside, and gets revenge by spraying him with the hose. The first feature-length film to exploit both synchronised music and dialogue was *The Jazz Singer* (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1927), although experiments in synchronisation began earlier (Kerr 1975: 6–8, Gomery 1985).

[25] The physical action of the vaudeville stage is explored by R. King 2009: 19–26. On the close relationship between vaudeville and early cinematic productions, particularly overt in e.g. Mack Sennet's *That Ragtime Band* (1913) or Arbuckle and Keaton's *Backstage* (1919), see R. Allen 1980, Jenkins 1992, Gunning 1995 (on Nickelodeon theatres).

[26] Both of Chaplin's parents were vaudeville performers, and Chaplin himself was stage-acting by the age of ten (Robinson 1985: 1–70). Keaton was involved from a young age in slapstick shows

of the vaudeville stage were successful because, *inter alia*, their jokes were familiar and recognisable, the short sketches of the variety theatre were suited to one-reel productions (a single reel of 35mm film projected at sixteen frames per second lasts about fifteen minutes, a similar length to vaudeville skits), and a preference for visual action made such films accessible to the large working-class population (a significant proportion of which lacked a formal education and did not have English as a first language). However, pressure from production companies eager to seduce the middle-class and to capitalise on technological advances that enabled first longer films then sound, eventually entailed a move away from episodic, gag-heavy and vaudeville-inspired productions toward those with more structured stories and developed characters.[27] This shift has spurred critical discussions about the relationship between visual gags and narrative. At one end of the spectrum, gags and narrative have been understood as complementing each other, a process that I discuss further below. At the other end of the spectrum, however, gag and narrative have been viewed as incompatible or competing elements. Gags are ephemeral and self-contained, whereas narrative develops over time as events bring about changes in characters' circumstances or interpersonal relationships. A surplus of gags risks damaging the coherence of a story. Mack Sennett's *Keystone Cops* films, to take an egregious example, although not entirely plot-free, consist essentially of physical jokes connected only by the presence of their incompetent policemen characters. Each of the films' physical jokes (some of which are

with his father and mother (mischievous child plays a trick – father catches and punishes him; see Krämer 2007), often referring to these formative years in later interviews (Sweeney 2007).

[27] We might compare the apparent shift in Old Comedy, in the mid-fifth century and under the influence of Sicilian forms, toward a more story-based approach (Κράτης πρῶτος ἦρξεν ἀφέμενος τῆς ἰαμβικῆς ἰδέας καθόλου ποιεῖν λόγους καὶ μύθους, Arist. *Poet*. 1449b7–9).

quite violent) has an internal micro-narrative, but there is no overarching story.[28] Even when silent comedy does have an identifiable plot, it is generally modest in scope and subordinated to the gags rather than vice versa (e.g. Chaplin's *The Cure* [1917], *Shoulder Arms* [1918], Roscoe Arbuckle's *The Butcher Boy* [1917], Keaton's *Neighbors* [1920], *One Week* [1920]). Jenkins (1992: 106) sums up the effect: 'once the gags develop in sufficient number and demand sufficient interest apart from their consequences, these comic details cease to be servants of the narrative; they instead assume a greater affective charge than the storyline within which they are embedded'. The physical jokes, in other words, take precedence over the narrative (in the conventional sense), with the latter serving merely to prompt further gags.[29]

Film producers initially struggled to combine slapstick with a sustained story. Sennett's *Tillie's Punctured Romance* (1914), the first ever six-reel comedy, has a

[28] On violence in the productions of the Keystone studios, which includes burning, biting, and punching, see Riblet 1995: 172–6.

[29] Although we should not underestimate an audience's competences for extracting narrative from soundless images, the lack of synchronised voice technology in early film also entailed a literal cutting away from the actors to explanatory or dialogic intertitles—typically white script against a black background—reinforcing the separation of the story, in the traditional sense, from the visual action. Contemporary film critics and film-makers debated the use of intertitles, viewing them on the one hand as necessary for narrative legibility, especially as films lengthened, but on the other hand as distractions that 'threatened to disturb the careful creation of verisimilitude a film was meant to sustain' (Keil 2001: 61–4). Keaton himself says that he and his production crew would eliminate intertitles 'as fast as we could, if we could possibly tell it [sc. the story] in action' (Sweeney 2007: 108–9). For evidence that audiences read intertitles aloud, making early film-viewing less of a passive experience than it is today, see Nagels 2012: 373.

discernible plot (Chaplin tries to swindle a country girl out of her inheritance), but the gags prevail. The opening scene shows Tillie being kicked by her father, Chaplin doing tricks with his cane, then being hit by a flying brick, struck in the face, and stomped on the foot. The action continues in this manner for over an hour. The film's debt, as one critic describes it, is 'clearly to the [Mack] Sennett tradition, moment-by-moment activity dominated throughout by violent slapstick routines'.[30] Later feature-length comedies were, however, more successful in their integration of continuous stories. Examples include Chaplin's *The Kid* (the second-highest grossing film of 1921) or Harold Lloyd's output in the 1920s. Lloyd made a conscious effort to produce comedy with character development and plot unity. In his own words: 'when the last reel has been run off, the audience does not remember merely a gag here and there . . . but while laughing at the humor, still retains a clear idea of and a strong sympathy for the character'.[31] Similarly: 'we have noticed . . . that audiences are drawing closer to an appreciation of comedy wherein gags are mingled with story than in [*sic*] just straight gag comedies'.[32] Lloyd indeed managed to balance physical jokes with story-telling and characterisation, most successfully in the films featuring his recognisable bespectacled character (e.g. *Safety Last* [1923], *For Heaven's Sake* [1926], *The*

[30] G. King 2002: 24. Compare Bermel 1982: 139: '[The film's] vaudeville origins stick out like overlong undergarments. The actors stand about in pairs or lined up in threes and fours before the fixed camera and face it while they trade insults. They kick asses, collapse and rise again in double time, keep their eyes goggling and their mouths agape'. On the history of this particular film and the challenges it presented to producers see R. King 2009: 107–39.

[31] Jenkins 1992: 57.

[32] McCaffrey 1976: 38.

Kid Brother [1927]).[33] In this light, some scholars see the gag/narrative dichotomy as distracting, or even counterproductive. Carroll (2009: 172), for example, points out that virtually every gag in Keaton's *The General* (1926) contributes to the narrative ('either by advancing the action or by emphasizing narratively significant character traits'), even though most would work also as stand-alone jokes. Karnick, for her part, recognises that humour frequently arises from incongruous pairings, including the 'unexpected shifts away from narrative logic and continuity' that gags represent.[34] Since no story is inherently comic, it is in fact disruptive and incongruous moments, be these instances of slapstick or puns and other verbal jokes, that make it so. Gags and narrative complement one another to create a humorous mode, a 'comic climate' as Mast (1973: 9–13) calls it, whereby a fluid cause-and-effect plot logic is neither desirable nor expected. 'Humor complicates and frustrates the spectator's inferences about narrative', Karnick sums up, but 'successful humor involves our expectations being thwarted'.[35]

Ruffell reaches a similar conclusion in his study of the absurd and anti-realist aspects of Old Comedy, arguing that the genre resists coherence and codification. Aristophanes' gags 'displace conventional notions of narrative and structure', Ruffell (2011: 114) writes, and comic routines such as repetition or capping (cf. Chapter Three, section 3.2.1 below) can 'supersede . . . causal or realistic imperatives' (p. 119). The mere disruption or distortion of expected/traditional patterns is itself a frequent source of humour. Old Comedy certainly tolerates significant ruptures in the narrative (most overtly the *parabases*, where the chorus

[33] On Lloyd's earlier output (1915–21), for the most part gag-dominated one-reelers, see Kerr 1975: 98–107, Bowers 2001.

[34] Karnick & Jenkins 1995b: 80.

[35] Karnick 1995: 128–9. Similar observations in Krämer 2003, focussing on Keaton's *The Blacksmith* (1922).

steps out of character and speaks on behalf of the playwright), and a strictly narrative-oriented analysis of Old Comedy would, therefore, obscure much of what characterises the genre. In terms of slapstick, and the risks that it poses to the construction of coherent stories, we will see in Chapter Four how Aristophanes judiciously incorporates aggressive physical action into his plays, even if parabatic comments indicate a reticence to employ some jokes of this kind.

Beyond the relationship between gag and narrative, early comic cinema and Aristophanic drama have in common the apparent indestructibility of their characters and a concomitant trivialisation or minimalisation of their pain. In Mack Sennett's productions, bullets target only the buttocks and are never deadly. Keaton's speciality was to endure all manner of fights and falls, only to recover as if nothing had happened. Death turns out to be just a dream (*The Haunted House* [1921]). Chaplin, Keaton, and Lloyd all regularly escape life-threatening situations at the last moment.[36] Victims are immobilised, but seldom permanently. In Keaton's *My Wife's Relations* (1922), for example, the actor strikes one of his antagonists with a brick, but then carefully places this under the victim's head like a pillow (23:20–25), signalling to the audience that the man's incapacity is temporary. In Larry Semon's *Romans and Rascals* (1918), characters are hit with an enormous spiked club, but then tumble away to a soft landing in water (7:40–8:15). Or, in *The Waiter's Ball* (1916), Arbuckle and Al St. John energetically beat each other with brooms, yet even when one of these snaps under the force of a blow, Arbuckle just calmly walks off to fetch a replacement (3:07–31).[37] In a similar vein, Aristophanic comedy eschews any suggestion of serious and

[36] Cf. Huie 2017 on 'near-miss' gags.

[37] There are exceptions, of sorts. The Keystone production *Barney Oldfield's Race for a Life* (1913), for example, ends with a (ridiculous) shootout and a suicide; Keaton's *Convict 13* (1920) contains a prison riot scene (16:15–17:00) in which several characters are shot (but there is no blood); *Cops*

permanent physical harm. Old Comic characters are roughed up, burned with torches, attacked with stones, and one even has a pair of shoes nailed to his forehead (*Plut*. 942–3). As in early comic cinema, however, there is never blood nor any indication that this violence will leave scars, thus avoiding the anxieties that such a spectacle might provoke. Belonging to the broader comic motif of action that has unintended or unexpected outcomes, comedy's physical attacks are playful in their inability to inflict lasting or realistic harm. From this perspective and on the condition that there are no serious consequences, the more extreme the violence, the more absurd (and thus usually the funnier) it is. By eliminating the most fundamental property of violence, namely that it does injury, the comic playwright is free, moreover, to exploit physical attacks to other dramatic and humorous ends. These include parody of more serious genres, the upending of traditional power relationships, or the entertaining misuse of everyday objects as weapons, techniques that I explore further in Chapter Four.

Finally, in addition to the inconsequentiality of violence in early comic cinema, technical and aesthetic choices also highlight its artificiality. These include undercranking to accelerate the frame-rate to unnatural levels, the clearly choreographed nature of aggressive confrontations (usually set to music), exaggerated acting styles, or the use of a dead-pan countenance that suggests no pain is felt. These all distance the cinematic genre's fights and pratfalls from lived reality, making it easier to appreciate its aggressive physicality from a critically aesthetic, as opposed to a moral or sympathetic, point of view. Likewise, in Aristophanes, violence is inflicted upon actors who wear masks with a frozen expression, and it is probable that at least some violent acts were overtly choreographed. (Chapter Four

(1922) ends with a suggestive image of Keaton's tombstone, while *The General* (1926) has soldiers dying, albeit in bloodlessly histrionic or unexpected ways (1:11:00–1:12:00).

discusses possible overlaps between martial dances and the aggressive action of Aristophanes' choruses.) The use of music and outlandish costumes in Old Comedy further distances the stage action from reality, bestowing upon it an unnaturalness that promotes emotional detachment. The more clearly violence belongs to an orchestrated and artificial spectacle, as it does in Aristophanes, the easier it is for viewers of that violence to treat it as a work of art and judge it on its creative merits. Slapstick in Aristophanes, as in silent film comedy, is first and foremost a technique for eliciting laughter. It does so by: a) minimising the effects of physical violence, and b) placing physical violence in an overtly and self-consciously fictional setting that regularly also embraces absurd elements.

The idea of detachment links the three models presented above. For Bakhtin, detachment is born from the distinct setting and characteristics of the carnival whose spirit can be imported into works of literature. For Aristotle, detachment occurs when spectators struggle to empathise with characters. This takes place when the suffering of characters is perceived to be deserved, or in the absence of what Halliwell (1986: 183) has called the 'intelligible conjunction of circumstances' necessary for audiences to connect suffering to a logical (that is, not arbitrary and thus inexplicable) chain of action. In silent film comedy, detachment arises both from technical aspects, such as a fast frame-rate, as well as the unnatural ways that violence is enacted and experienced by screen characters. Funny costumes, unusual settings, and musical accompaniment—all of which are exploited also in Aristophanes—contribute to the distancing effect.

The three models help frame the overarching question of this thesis, namely how aggressive acts perpetrated by one character toward another can be made enjoyable for an audience. To be sure, the models do not supply all the answers to that question, nor is any one of the three necessarily more powerful or well-suited than the others (though the

parallels with silent cinema are most relevant to Chapter Four). Rather, each model complements the others by highlighting different aspects of comic spectacles, audience response, and the laughable. Reference to them will be made throughout the thesis as well as in the conclusion, where I revisit the implications of the analysed data.

My own methodology differs from, and is intended to complement, the approaches described above. It is grounded in a belief that close analysis of the parts can elucidate broader aspects of Aristophanes' dramatic art. Unpacking verbal and visual parody shows how Aristophanes exploits generic stereotypes for humour; looking at which characters employ which forms of speech sheds light on characterisation; identifying grammatical constructions specific to comedy helps define the genre. To this end, my study has affinities with Henderson (1991, orig. 1975) on comic obscenity, C. Anderson (1995) on epithets, Sommerstein (1999) on euphemisms, or Silk (2000), Kloss (2001), and Willi (2003) on comic language in general. We will see, for example, that the vocabulary used in insults and threats gives comedy a distinct flavour, differentiating it from tragedy and other genres. As happens with other forms of speech in comedy, such as laments or lists, Aristophanes' characters regularly exaggerate their insults and threats. This occurs through excessive repetition and accumulation, or the use of grossly inappropriate language, all of which lighten the tone. The chapter on Aristophanic threats, which have never been the object of a sustained study, shows how these speech-acts inject energy into the plays and can generate suspense. The unusual ways that characters react to threats is also a common source of humour. Turning to slapstick, my analysis underscores the importance of visual elements in Aristophanes, furthering the work of Revermann (2006a) on performance issues, or Stone (1980) and Compton-Engle (2015) on costume. Physical aggression is seldom unmotivated (that is, unrelated to plot or character), even if Aristophanes suggests that gratuitous violence was welcomed by audiences (*Lys*. 1217–22). Slapstick is, rather, linked

to characterisation (e.g. an oracle-monger struck with a book roll), contributes to or triggers parody (e.g. Kinsman arrested like the tragic Andromeda), or reflects broader themes of the play (e.g. the *basanos* episode in *Frogs*). Choral violence, for its part, reinforces the magnitude of the protagonist's task by opposing him or her to a large group, while the ingenious ways in which characters avoid altercations with the chorus present several opportunities for humour.

1.3. Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organised around the three conflict elements under investigation. In Chapter Two, I examine the role of insults in Aristophanes. I begin with a discussion of how to define insults and some potential difficulties in the study of these subjective utterances, opting in the end for a broad definition ('intentionally hurtful acts of labelling another person'). The first main section of the chapter looks at the relationship between insults and conflict in Aristophanes, especially in the case of intruder figures. These characters are frequent catalysts for insults, which they are either subjected to or direct at others. In the next section, I discuss four comedies (*Acharnians, Frogs, Peace, Clouds*), each of which exploits insults in a slightly different way. Here we will see how insults a) relate to matters of characterisation, and b) exploit rhetorical tropes such as hyperbole or repetition for humour. Insults can be employed both to undermine a character, or to give them a strong voice. The pattern of characters who declare their imperviousness to insults is also discussed. The chapter concludes with observations on the vocabulary of insults, revealing not only differences between Aristophanic comedy and other genres, but also aspects of language use (particularly gendered language use) within the comedies.

In Chapter Three, I analyse the role of threats in Aristophanic comedy. These speech-acts both inject immediate energy into the plays and generate suspense by suggesting future action. Threats are woven into the fabric of *Knights*, where they highlight similarities between the play's two antagonists and allow Aristophanes to showcase his poetic creativeness in a series of mirrored threat-contests. In *Wasps*, we will see how Philocleon brushes off the threats of legal action issued by his innocent victims, and how this invites questions regarding the effectiveness of his son's programme to reform the old jury-addict. The speech of female characters is the focus of the section on *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. In those plays, threats underscore the women's solidarity and highlight their resistance to the plans of their male adversaries. I then turn to how characters in *Birds* and *Frogs* threaten gods to humorous ends. Dionysus, in *Frogs*, is at the receiving end of several threats which show him to be an amusingly timorous character. In *Birds*, conversely, Peisetairos' threats directed at Zeus and Iris demonstrate the protagonist's transformation into a fantastically powerful ruler whom not even the Olympians can dislodge. The crudeness of his threats may, however, cast doubt over the legitimacy of his utopian project. Chapter Three concludes with a formal analysis, in which I present patterns in the grammatical and linguistic formulation of comic threats. Comparable data for tragedy and satyr play is included.

In Chapter Four, I turn my attention to slapstick in Aristophanes. The chapter opens with a summary and discussion of previous approaches to enacted comic violence. I then analyse Aristophanes' own parabatic comments concerning the value of slapstick and how this relates to the gag/narrative dichotomy discussed above. There follows a discussion of aggressive choral action, a hallmark of Aristophanes' earlier plays. Although choruses often move to attack other characters, in only one secure instance do they actually get that far (*Knights*). It is, rather, the creative ways in which characters escape or stall the chorus that

are entertaining. The next section is divided into three parts: hitting and striking, restraining, and forced stripping and dressing. Here I discuss instances where an individual character physically aggresses another. The analysis begins with a discussion of how, based on a text, we can know when such acts occur. I then analyse moments where one character strikes another, either with their hand or an object. The latter affords Aristophanes opportunities for puns that accompany the action, while the objects employed sometimes have a symbolic meaning that ties into the broader themes of the play. The *basanos* episode from *Frogs* is a special case, since there is no clear aggressor/victim configuration. More than any other scene in Aristophanes, it also relies on pain for its humour. In the sub-section on restraining, I identify instances where a character is held against his or her will. Two particular instances are analysed in detail: that of the informer Nikarchos from *Acharnians*, who is removed from the stage tied upside-down on a pole, and that of Kinsman from *Thesmophoriazusae*, who is bound to a wooden board and left in this position for over two hundred lines. In the final sub-section, on enforced stripping and dressing, I discuss the importance of costume manipulation in Old Comedy and how this can be used to dominate another character. Whereas *Wasps* gets its humour from the difficulties encountered in trying to dress a reluctant Philocleon, in *Wealth*, the forced dressing of the sykophant is more sinister and culminates in one of Aristophanes' most outlandish moments.

After the general conclusion, five appendices round off the thesis, on (i) metaphors for insulting, (ii) short curses in Aristophanes, (iii) the meaning of κοπροφορήσω at *Eq*. 295, (iv) the violent ending of the revised *Clouds*, and (v) a catalogue of all slapstick action in Aristophanes.

CHAPTER 2

Insults

2.1. Opening remarks

In his defence speech *On the Crown* (330 BCE), Demosthenes asserts that it is 'in the nature of all people to enjoy listening to insults and invective'.[1] Demosthenes is making a preemptive rhetorical point, contrasting pleasant insults with the irksome, though he hopes excusable, self-praise that he will shortly be speaking. It is not difficult, however, in light of the plentiful invective that appears in Greek oratory (see e.g. Worman 2008: 213–74, Kamen 2009), to admit Demosthenes' assessment, or indeed to envisage the Athenians of Aristophanes' time reacting to insults in the fashion described by the later orator. In support of that last claim, Aristophanes himself supplies us, in a comedy dating to 421, with an image of the city 'sweetly consuming' (ἥδιστ᾽ ἤσθιεν) any slander thrown its way (ἅττα διαβάλοι τις αὐτῇ, *Pax* 643). The present chapter aims to understand how Aristophanes exploits and encourages the enjoyment of insults, such as it is presented by Demosthenes and appears in the playwright's own evocative description from *Peace*. Is listening to insults intrinsically pleasurable, or must verbal abuse be manipulated to make it so? Do certain conditions promote, in other words, the enjoyment of insults and if so, how is that reflected in Aristophanes' productions?

[1] φύσει πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὑπάρχει τῶν λοιδοριῶν καὶ τῶν κατηγοριῶν ἀκούειν ἡδέως (Dem. 18.3). Compare the assertion in the Demosthenic funeral oration that 'even those who themselves would never utter an insult take pleasure when hearing another do so' (οἱ μηδὲν ἂν εἰπόντες αὐτοὶ βλάσφημον ἄλλου γε λέγοντος χαίρουσιν ἀκούοντες, 60.26).

There are approximately one hundred instances of a character directly insulting another in the extant comedies, suggesting that insults were an important part of Aristophanes' playwriting technique. Unlike Old Comedy's outward-facing mockery of public personalities, however, the insults spoken within Aristophanes' play-worlds have not attracted sustained scholarly attention.[2] This is unfortunate not merely because of the ubiquity of intra-dramatic insults in Aristophanes, but also because those insults—as we will see—are a rich source of verbal creativity and a powerful way for characters to communicate (to the fictional addressee as well as to the audience) their animosity toward others.

Halliwell has suggested that comedy's insults, as a category of transgressive speech, allow spectators vicariously to overstep boundaries of propriety, offering relief from restrictions (be these perceived or real) whose true violation would elicit shame, disapproval, or punishment.[3] Reminiscent of the Bakhtinian carnival and silent film comedy discussed in

[2] Saetta Cottone 2005, a book-length study of comic *loidoria*, considers the relative incidence of insults in the different formal parts of Aristophanic comedy and focusses on how insults spoken by Aristophanes' characters relate to, and undergird, extra-dramatic mockery. Dickey 1996: 165–73 and Dover 2002 have helpful comments on the vocabulary and register of insults (cf. section 2.5 below). Extra-dramatic mockery (*onomasti kōmōdein*), for its part, has received plentiful attention; various approaches to the topic can be found in e.g. Heath 1987b: 21–8, 36–8, Rosen 1988: 59–82, Henderson 1990: 293–307, Edwards 1991: 168–79, Halliwell 1991a, Carey 1994, Sommerstein 1996b, Storey 1998, Ercolani 2002, Fisher 2008: 199–208, Csapo 2012, Rosenbloom 2014: 302–7.

[3] Halliwell 2008: 218–19, 243–63, focussing on *aischrologia* ('shameful speech') and interpreting its presence in comedy as a navigation between the enshrinement of free speech in Athenian democracy and the possibility of causing real offence to others (on which see also Halliwell 2004, Kidd 2014: 87–117, Rosen 2014a).

the Introduction, the conventions that distance and demarcate Old Comedy from real life (masks, costumes, the spatial and temporal confines of the performance, etc.) act as a buffer, Halliwell argues, that shields spectators from any harmful or corrupting effects of the genre's bad language.[4] Those same distancing conventions remind us that Aristophanes' characters, and the worlds that they inhabit, are fictional constructs that have been crafted, and can therefore be analysed, according to dramatic and aesthetic criteria. Along these lines, we might ask whether comic insults are associated with specific character or scene types, or how comedy differs from other genres in its use of insults. Tragedy, to take the most obvious point of comparison, employs fewer insults than comedy, and mostly of a different register. We will see, as well, that insults entertain in Aristophanes when they exploit, or are combined with, literary and rhetorical tropes. Accumulation, hyperbole, repetition, and other devices are employed in association with insults to impress the audience or serve as jokes in their own right. We should, it follows, remain attentive not only to the fact that insults create humour by breaching rules of polite interaction and cultural decorum, but also to the diverse poetic effects that insults exploit.

In this chapter, an initial section on problems and definitions precedes a discussion of the relationship between insults and conflict in Aristophanes, with especial focus on intruder figures. I then turn to the function of insults in four comedies in which insults are particularly prominent (*Acharnians*, *Clouds*, *Peace*, *Frogs*). Here we will see the importance of insults for comic characterisation, as well as some comico-rhetorical tropes employed in conjunction with verbal abuse. In the final section, I discuss the vocabulary of Aristophanic

[4] Halliwell 2008: 246–50. Compare Rosen 2007: 24 'the poeticization of the event assures that it will be comic and that the audience's experience of it will be qualitatively different from how they would experience real acts of interpersonal aggression'.

insults and provide data on which character-types typically employ which terms of abuse, and in which situations.

2.2. Problems and definitions

Comedy distorts language, blends registers, and breaks co-operative principles of communication to achieve its humorous aims. This makes the study of comic speech challenging, but also necessary if we want better to understand the mechanics of the genre. Insults present some particular problems, which I outline in this section.

An analysis of a specific unit or type of speech requires a definition of the object of study. In the case of insults, several difficulties arise. This is because the perlocutionary act of insulting depends not only on the presence of certain words, but also on tone of voice, the context in which the utterance is spoken, and the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Neu cites the modern example of a basketball coach fired for addressing his players with a racial slur, even though—it turned out—the coach had asked them for permission and used the word not insultingly, but rather 'to connote a person who is fearless, mentally strong, and tough'.[5] As expressive labels (as opposed to object names such as 'table' or 'tree'), insults are particularly susceptible to varying use and interpretation. The example of the basketball coach shows that terms conventionally employed as insults can even be used to forge closeness or group cohesion. To take a comparable instance from Greek, one of the addresses most commonly employed as an insult, ὦ μιαρέ ('bastard', *vel*

[5] Neu 2008: 128, citing *Dambrot* v. *Central Michigan University*, 55 F.3d 1177 (6th Cir. 1995). For difficulties encountered in modern attempts to define 'insult' in the US-American legal context see Neu 2008: 143–50, 171–92.

sim.), is spoken warmly and between friends in Plato's dialogues.[6] Addresses that are insulting in one context can be harmless in another, or even take on a different meaning altogether. This is the case, for example, for the Greek address ὦ σχέτλιε ('wretched', *vel sim*.). Philoctetes insults Neoptolemus with ὦ σχέτλιε when the young man treacherously takes his prized bow (S. *Phil*. 930); the chorus of Acharnians insults Dicaeopolis with the same address when the protagonist suggests defending the Spartans (*Ach*. 360). In different contexts, however, ὦ σχέτλιε appears not as an insult, but rather as a troubled reaction to announcements of daring action. So Ismene says ὦ σχέτλιε to her sister Antigone when the latter reveals her intention to defy Creon's edict (S. *Ant*. 47), and Heracles addresses his half-brother Dionysus with ὦ σχέτλιε when the wine-god announces that he will be travelling to the Underworld (*Ran*. 116). In these last two instances, the address conveys a mix of empathy and cautioning absent from the identical, abusive outbursts of Philoctetes and the Acharnian choreuts.

The examples in the previous paragraph show that insults are contextually and culturally dependent utterances rather than static lexico-semantic units. 'Verbal abuse involves evaluative statements grounded in specific cultural systems', as Irvine writes, and 'even with a detailed familiarity with [the] cultural context, there can still be no hard-and-

[6] Such as when Socrates addresses his friend Phaedrus (Pl. *Phdr*. 236e4); see further Halliwell 1995: 113–15. 'Jesting mock insults' (Sommerstein 1995: 74), while not the focus of this study, occur in Aristophanes as well. Examples where conventional insults are exchanged between friend-characters include the house slaves in *Knights* (κρουνοχυτρολήραιον εἶ, 89), Peisetairos and Euelpides in *Birds* (ὦ δειλότατον σὺ θηρίον, 87), and Chremylus and Blepsidemus in *Wealth* (386, 391, 439, 442). Cf. the Aristotelian concept of εὐτραπελία, that is, banter that reinforces bonds of friendship among likeminded individuals (*Rhet.* 1381a33–5; cf. *eleg. adesp.* fr. 27 West, Cullyer 2006: 191–6, Halliwell 2008: 312–13).

fast semantic criterion distinguishing statements that are abusive from statements that are not'.[7] The scripted insults of the theatre are yet more complex, for to understand them requires familiarity not only with socio-cultural, but also literary and dramatic codes. Spectators interpret words spoken in drama not solely on the basis of their own real-world experiences, but also their knowledge and expectations of how language functions in drama, itself divided into different genres each with their own sets of norms ('chronotopes', in Bakhtinian terms). From an audience's perspective, insults in comedy may carry a force that is lesser than or different to that of the same utterances in other genres.

With the above caveats in mind, it is possible to identify words that serve in most cases to provoke, confirm, or accentuate feelings of animosity between a speaker and an addressee. For the Greeks of the classical period, the vocabulary of such words tends to gravitate around certain recurring themes, namely submissive sexual acts, religious pollution, intellectual deficiency, abnormal physical appearance, and criminal deeds. I present the most common of these insulting words, with their nuances both in comedy and other genres, in the section below on vocabulary.[8] On the other hand, no catalogue—as Dickey (1996: 166) points out—can ever cover all possibilities and permutations. Certainly *hapax legomena*, which are not infrequent in Aristophanes, would be missing from any list of standard insults.[9] Too weighted a focus on vocabulary also risks obscuring the importance

[7] Irvine 1992: 109, an anthropological study of verbal abuse in a modern Senegalese village.

[8] Given the nature of the evidence, I will be focussing in this chapter on spoken insults. We cannot, however, exclude the possibility of insulting gestures being employed on the comic stage, such as showing the middle finger (Nelson 2017) or imitating the ears of a donkey (*Plut*. 287 with Sommerstein 2001 *ad loc*.).

[9] Compare the arguments in Lysias 10: it would be an enormous task, the plaintiff says, to list all slanderous expressions (ἅπαντα τὰ ὀνόματα, §7; cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1374a26–33), hence it is not the

of delivery and of para-verbal indications, such as body language, even if those aspects of Aristophanes' productions are obscure given the lack of authorial stage directions.[10] It will, in short, be important to consider context alongside the vocabulary used, as well as how vocabulary and syntax are distorted to humorous or other dramatic ends.

Since I am interested in the aesthetics and humour of interpersonal conflict in Aristophanic comedy, the focus of this chapter will be utterances that, as far as we can tell, are intended within the story-world to offend and aggrieve the addressee and/or demonstrate the speaker's contempt for them. As a serviceable definition, therefore, I take an insult to be an intentionally hurtful act of labelling another person. I concentrate on face-to-face utterances, that is, instances where one character directly addresses another with an insult (as opposed to insulting a by-stander in the third person). In Aristophanes, such addresses manifest themselves either as vocatives (e.g. ὦ μιαρέ, *Eq*. 1224) or second-person predicative constructions (e.g. ἠλίθιος καὶ γάστρις εἶ, *Av*. 1604). I refer to both types throughout as 'direct insults'. There is no obvious difference in the forcefulness of the two constructions.[11]

use of a given word that matters, but rather the 'intention' (διάνοια) or 'force' (δύναμις) behind what has been said.

[10] On the lack of authentic stage directions for ancient drama see Taplin 1977a, Revermann 2006a: 320–5.

[11] Dickey 2002: 166 reaches the same conclusion for vocative vs. predicative insults in Latin.

2.3. Insults and conflict in Aristophanes

Comedy cannot be far from Plato's mind when he cautions against imitations of people 'insulting and mocking one another and swearing'.[12] A good example of such a loidoric configuration is the fracas in the second half of *Ecclesiazusae*. Praxagora's new regime in that comedy instigates, among other things, a novel form of sexual communism that destabilises age and marriage conventions by dispensing with monogamy and obliging Athenian men to sleep with older women before their young girlfriends. This arrangement gives rise to an insult-rich episode (877–1111) that is detached from the main narrative.

An old woman appears at one of the stage-building windows. She has an unattractive snub nose (940; cf. 617, 705) and her face is covered in whitening lead (878, 929). This character has heard about Praxagora's new arrangement in the city and is impatiently awaiting her opportunity to mingle with young men. Another woman appears at the second window. This is a thin girl, probably with attractive (i.e. 'tender', ἁπαλοῖσι) thighs and breasts (901–3). Her opening line terminates with the insult 'O putrid woman!', directed at the elder rival.[13] A singing match between these two characters is followed by the anticipated

[12] κακηγοροῦντάς τε καὶ κωμῳδοῦντας ἀλλήλους καὶ αἰσχρολογοῦντας (Pl. *Resp*. 3.395e8–9), given by Plato as an example of the type of imitations to which the guardians, the 'craftsmen of the freedom of the city' (δημιουργοὺς ἐλευθερίας τῆς πόλεως, 3.395c1), should not be exposed (cf. Arist. *Pol*. 7.1336b20–35, Rosen 2007: 255–62). Dramatic mimesis's lowering of ethical standards in the pursuit of pleasure, and the risk that spectators will adopt the degenerate behaviour of on-stage characters, governs Plato's distrust of comedy also in *Laws* (see Prauscello 2014: 192–222, Folch 2015: 187–205).

[13] ὦ σαπρά (*Eccl*. 884; cf. 926). Aristophanic insults will sometimes refer to a character's advanced age, imputed senility, or old-fashioned mentality via reference to tombs, coffins, or putrefaction (e.g.

arrival of the desirable young man Epigenes and two more hags in succession, each explicitly more disgusting than the one before. The first is compared to the chthonic monster Empousa;[14] the second is likened to an ape (1072) and a toad (1101), and is said to have risen from the dead (ἀνεστηκυῖα παρὰ τῶν πλειόνων, 1073). All four women claim the right to sleep with Epigenes, and they are ready to hurl abuse or resort to violence to get their way. In the commotion, the first old woman insults the girl with ὦ φθίνυλλα σύ ('you starveling', 935) and ὦ παμβδελυρά ('utterly revolting', 1043), the girl addresses her with ὦλεθρε ('plague', 'destruction', 934), while Epigenes insults the second old woman with ὦ κάκιστ᾽ ἀπολουμένη (1052), and both the second and third with ὦ κακῶς ἀπολούμεναι (1076) as they attempt to drag him off in opposite directions. This hectic scene peppered with verbal abuse not only reverses the female solidarity of the play's opening half, but also reveals the failure of Praxagora's plan to eliminate insults (*loidoria*, 567) from the polis.[15]

The insults in the above scene are not atypical of Aristophanic confrontations. Compare, for example, the clash between the chorus and Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians*. The

Nub. 398, 908, *Pax* 698 [γέρων ὢν καὶ σαπρός], *Lys*. 372, fr. 907a–b, specifically ὦ σαπρά at *Eccl*. 884, 926, *Plut*. 1035). Further instances in Taillardat §§56–7, Stevens 1976: 12, Biles & Olson 2015: 95, 477–8.

[14] *Eccl*. 1055–6. Empousa was a monstrous inhabitant of the Underworld and linked to Hecate (Borthwick 1968, Sommerstein 1996a: 180, Andrisano 2002). Demosthenes claims that she provided the nickname for Aeschines' mother (Dem. 18.130).

[15] And incidentally offering support for Aristotle's claim that, in communistic regimes, it is difficult to avoid 'fights and insults' (μάχας καὶ λοιδορίας, *Pol*. 1262a25–7). Both Saïd 1979: 58–60 and McClure 1999: 253–8 (*contra* Konstan & Dillon 1981: 382) interpret the discussed *Ecclesiazusae* scene as a critique of Praxagora's new regime.

chorus leader's first words to Dicaeopolis include the insult ὦ μιαρὰ κεφαλή,[16] swiftly followed by ἀναίσχυντος εἶ καὶ βδελυρός ('you are shameless and revolting', 287) and ὦ πανοῦργε ('you devious bastard', 311). Comparable too is the confrontation between Lysistrata and the Proboulos in *Lysistrata*. The latter's first words to the heroine in that play are: 'is that right you bitch?' (ἄληθες ὦ μιαρὰ σύ, *Lys*. 433), the only instance in Aristophanes of the insult μιαρός being directed at a female citizen character. The Proboulos is also the only Aristophanic character to address a woman, again Lysistrata, with the insult ὦ κατάρατε ('accursed', 530), a reaction to the protagonist's reversal of gender roles in the city. Lysistrata later insults the Proboulos with the intensified ὦ παγκατάρατε (588) when he suggests that women have no share in military matters (her counter-arguments: mothers lose their children in war and war denies wives the pleasure of their husbands).

For both the chorus in *Acharnians* and the Proboulos in *Lysistrata*, insults are bound up with conflict, as they are in the Epigenes scene from *Ecclesiazusae*. It is, as one might expect, the meeting of characters who have competing or incompatible goals that most consistently dictates the presence of verbal abuse in Aristophanes. Since labelling another person signifies authority over the addressee, and insults are labels (and, moreover, negative labels), they are well suited to situations where one character attempts to impose themselves over another. In what follows, I wish to explore this dynamic further, with a focus on Aristophanes' intruding nuisance characters.

Nuisance characters that disrupt the action and challenge or place demands on the protagonist are a recurring feature of Aristophanic comedy. Such characters are also

[16] *Ach*. 285. Cf. Hdt. 3.29.2 (ὦ κακαὶ κεφαλαί), Dem. 19.313 (ὦ κακὴ κεφαλή), 21.135 (ὦ μιαρὰ κεφαλή = 21.195). Elevated poetic κάρα is not used in this way in comedy, but we can compare S. *Tr*. 1024 (ὦ κατάπτυστον κάρα), E. *Hipp*. 651 (ὦ κακὸν κάρα).

frequently subjected to verbal abuse. As an example, take the Arms-Dealers in *Peace*. These characters arrive after the parabasis and after Trygaeus' successful rescue of Peace. They interrupt the protagonist's wedding preparations and come expecting pity for the loss of their livelihood (unashamedly, given that they have been profiting from war). The protagonist addresses the spokesman for the Arms-Dealers with ὦπίτριπτε, one of the more offensive addresses on the scale of Greek insults.[17] While it may feel legitimate that the Arms-Dealers meet with a rude dismissal, foreshadowed as it is by a curse (447–9), it is worth looking more closely at why they and similar characters are insulted.

The Arms-Dealers belong to a category of characters who have: a) learned of the protagonist's project and actively wish to reverse or delay it, b) had their status degraded and arrive to express dissatisfaction, or c) hope to profit from the protagonist's success without having contributed to it.[18] The real-world concerns of these characters are often incompatible with the fantastic plans of Aristophanes' heroes, and not only are their needs ranked below those of comedy's main characters, but their participation in the comic plot is also distanced from the core narrative. Their presence forms part of satellite episodes that

[17] *Pax* 1236. Derived from ἐπιτρίβειν, 'to crush', 'to destroy', 'to wear smooth' (with sexual overtones; Henderson 1991: 176), the insult ἐπίτριπτος appears just once in tragedy (crazed Ajax indirectly of Odysseus, S. *Aj*. 103) in a phrase mimicked by Andocides: ὦ συκοφάντα καὶ ἐπίτριπτον κίναδος (Andoc. 1.99). In comedy, Sannyrion's lost *Io* (late fifth century) contains the following affront: φθείρεσθ' ἐπίτριπτοι ψωμοκόλακες (fr. 11 K–A). In Aristophanes' *Acharnians* the angry chorus insults Dicaeopolis with ὦπίτριπτε καὶ μιαρώτατε (557); in *Wealth* Poverty is described as ἠπίτριπτος (619).

[18] Compare Storey 2003: 364–5, Hartwig 2009: 68–70. A full-scale study of Aristophanes' minor characters, including the sub-category that I identify here, remains a *desideratum*.

are normally post-parabatic and whose deletion would not disrupt the flow of the story.[19] That is not to say that these episodes are meaningless, or that they and their characters are thematically disconnected from the rest of the play. Poverty in *Wealth* is perhaps the clearest instance of a thematically relevant character in a satellite episode (she is insulted with ὦ κάκιστ᾽ ἀπολουμένη and ὦ μιαρωτάτη), but also the Arms-Dealers are intimately linked to Trygaeus' quest and their arrival is anticipated. It simply means that the value of satellite episodes lies not so much in advancing the plot as in reinforcing the protagonist's new position of power and/or casting doubt over the protagonist's actions by introducing different perspectives. Above all, they serve to stall the play's denouement by preventing the hero from fully achieving his or her goal or enjoying the realisation thereof. In Chapter Four, we will see how these characters provide opportunities for rough-and-tumble action, but is there a constant relationship between intruder characters and verbal abuse?

Birds is the comedy with the highest number of satellite nuisance characters and is thus a good test case. Excluding the messenger goddess Iris, nine such characters appear: a Priest, a Poet, an Oracle-Monger, Meton the geometer, an Inspector (Ἐπίσκοπος), a Decree-

[19] On 'satellites' and their opposite, 'kernels' see Chatman 1978: 53–4: kernels are 'nodes or hinges in the structure, branching points which force movement into one of two (or more) possible paths' and 'cannot be deleted without destroying the narrative logic' (cf. Arist. *Poet*. 1451a30–5). Kernels advance the plot and satisfy questions. Satellites, on the other hand, 'can be deleted without disturbing the logic of the plot, though [their] omission will, of course, impoverish the narrative aesthetically'; 'satellites entail no choice, but are solely the workings-out of the choices made at the kernels' and 'they necessarily imply the existence of kernels, but not vice-versa'. Similar reflections in Barthes 1966 and Landfester 1977: 34–5, the latter focussing on Aristophanes.

Seller, a Father-Beater, Kinesias the poet,[20] and a Sykophant. These are all dismissed, yet only the climactic Sykophant is addressed with a direct insult (ὦ κάκιστ᾽ ἀπολούμενος, 1467). On the one hand, this is consistent with the reason given by Peisetairos for abandoning Athens, namely to escape the city's pervasive litigation (40–4), as well as with dismissals of sykophants from other comedies.[21] On the other hand, the singling out of the Sykophant for verbal abuse in *Birds* shows that, although a character's status as a satellite nuisance figure can lead to them being insulted, this is by no means obligatory. The symbolism of the Sykophant in *Birds* may partly explain his bad treatment (he is also whipped), though the self-important Inspector who precedes him and who also symbolises Athenian administration (he arrives with two voting urns, 1032), is not verbally insulted. That being said, the Sykophant in *Birds* is comparable to the Arms-Dealers from *Peace* insofar as the latter's breastplates and trumpets embody the destructiveness of war that Trygaeus bemoans, while the Sykophant embodies the suffocating litigious environment that was exasperating Peisetairos and Euelpides.[22] In both cases, the insulted characters are

[20] This dithyrambic poet was a perennial butt of Old Comic jokes (Lys. fr. 195 Carey) and gave his name to a comedy by Strattis (frr. 14–22 K–A with Orth 2009: 100–29); see further Sommerstein 1996a: 170, Kidd 2014: 90–3, Farmer 2017: 202–3.

[21] Compare *Ach*. 924 (ὦ κάκιστ᾽ ἀπολούμενε), *Plut*. 909 (ὦ τοιχωρύχε), Eup. fr. 99.85 K–A (ὦ πανοῦργε καὶ κυβευτὰ σύ). For sykophants in comedy see Christ 1998: 104–17, Pellegrino 2010, 2017, the last specifically on sykophant intruder figures in Aristophanes.

[22] The Arms-Dealers' wares also contrast explicitly with the *drepanon* of the warmly welcomed Sickle-Maker (1187–1209), a tool used for harvesting and, by extension, a synecdoche for cherished agricultural productivity (551–9, 582–600). The Sickle-Maker is accompanied by a non-speaking maker of κάδοι (all-purpose receptacles that could be used for wine; see Sparkes 1975: 126–7, Olson 1998: 298) whom Trygaeus also invites to his wedding feast.

metonyms for the mundane state of affairs that the protagonists have decried and now strive to transcend.

While we cannot conclude that thematically antagonistic characters like the Sykophant in *Birds* or the Arms-Dealers in *Peace* are always insulted (sometimes they are not), such figures are often targets of abuse and catalysts for offensive language. Indeed, although I have concentrated on the insulting of such characters by protagonists, insults do not flow solely in this direction. The intruding Arms-Dealers also address the protagonist Trygaeus as 'extremely ignorant' (ὦμαθέστατε, *Pax* 1231), for example, and Poverty calls Chremylus and Blepsidemus 'scum' (ὦ καθάρματε, *Plut*. 454). Other instances include the Proboulos insulting Lysistrata, or the Sykophant in *Wealth*, who calls Karion and the Just Man 'utterly foul' (ὦ μιαρωτάτω, 893). Disruptive characters are not only victims, but also perpetrators of verbal abuse, which they use to signal their distaste with, and animosity toward, the protagonists. The insults that punctuate the collisions of protagonists with these minor characters, or even minor characters with other minor characters (*Ecclesiazusae*), belong to a dramatic dynamic that purposely brings antagonists into contact for the pleasure and excitement of the audience as well as to reinforce, or less frequently question, the broader themes and trajectory of the play.

One of the principal aims of this chapter is to consider why comedy's insults are enjoyable for spectators. Since insults in Aristophanes are not, as we have just seen, uni-directional (that is, not aimed solely at intruders, villains, antagonists, and the like), the mere presence of insults seems more significant than an audience's affiliation or disaffiliation with the characters at whom those insults are directed. In line with Bakhtin and Halliwell, I agree that verbal abuse can be enjoyable when it is sufficiently sectioned off from the real world—as it is in Old Comedy—and thus from any negative real-world consequences that such speech might ordinarily entail (breakdown of social relations, legal or physical

reprisals, etc.).[23] From this perspective, comic insults are enjoyable because they afford spectators a pleasurable, though temporary and vicarious, relaxing of the rules that govern normal human interactions, and without any of the associated costs.[24] This model, because it is broad, has the advantage of explaining the pleasure not only of insults, but also the aggressive behaviour discussed in the following two chapters. On the other hand, that same breadth also obscures the variations of vocabulary and individual dramatic circumstances that are so important to Aristophanes' joke-telling technique. I think that it is therefore possible, indeed desirable, to complement the above interpretation with an analysis of the specific dramatic situations in which insults occur and, given the attention that Aristophanes

[23] The risks and dangers of insults are reflected in Athens's legislation against defamation (see Wallace 1994, Phillips 2013: 124–36) and in anecdotes from legal speeches. Demosthenes' client Ariston explains, in a notable anaphora, that the city's defamation law acted as a bulwark against escalations of physical violence (ἐκ μὲν λοιδορίας εἰς πληγάς, ἐκ δὲ πληγῶν εἰς τραύματα, ἐκ δὲ τραυμάτων εἰς θάνατον, 54.19; cf. Epicharm. fr. 146 K–A). The legal measure (κακηγορίας δίκη) allows for verbal injustices to be resolved in a civilised manner, Ariston says, and stops these from being 'decided by the anger or will of just anybody' (τῇ τοῦ προστυχόντος ὀργῇ μηδὲ βουλήσει ταῦτα κρίνεσθαι, §§19–20). Ariston thus detects, or so he claims, an intrinsic danger in insulting speech—it is not only hurtful, but when left unresolved it can, because of the anger it engenders in the victim, trigger more serious forms of retaliatory violence. His conclusion finds support in reported instances of insults preceding blows (Lys. 3.43 [hypothetical], [Dem.] 40.32, 47.36–8), insults leading to a slap in the face leading to serious assault (Hyp. fr. 26 Jensen), insults leading to kidnapping and a severe beating with a whip (Lys. fr. 279 Carey), or insults leading to blows and murder (Dem. 21.71, Pl. *Leg*. 9.866e4–8).

[24] Comic speech may not have been entirely uninhibited. The arguments for and against restrictions or informal limits on comic language are presented e.g. in Halliwell 1991a, Ammendola 2001, Lenfant 2003, Sommerstein 2004a, 2004b, Wallace 2005.

pays to language and its potential to generate humour, also of the form that those insults take. Accordingly, in the section that follows, I present four case studies, focussing in each on how insults influence plot and characterisation and, where relevant, how insults are combined with rhetorical or poetic tropes for emphasis.

2.4. Four case studies: Acharnians, Frogs, Peace, Clouds

In this section, I look at the role of insults in four comedies (*Acharnians*, *Frogs*, *Peace*, *Clouds*). Here, we will see how Aristophanes uses insults to shape his characters' personalities and how insults contribute to humorous interactions between characters.

Verbal abuse is framed positively in the opening scene of *Acharnians*. This sees Dicaeopolis waiting for the start of an assembly, hoping to debate and denounce Athens's war with Sparta. Dicaeopolis tells the spectators, in his opening monologue, that he is prepared to 'shout at, interrupt, and insult the assembly speakers, should anyone talk about something other than peace' (βοᾶν, ὑποκρούειν, λοιδορεῖν τοὺς ῥήτορας / ἐάν τις ἄλλο πλὴν περὶ εἰρήνης λέγῃ, 38–9). Evidence suggests that Dicaeopolis' intended strategy reflects actions of real Athenians listening to political speeches under the democracy.[25] When Theramenes recommended turning the city over to thirty pro-Spartan oligarchs at the end of the Peloponnesian War, for example, vociferous assembly participants interrupted

[25] Even if, by the mid-fourth century, there were sanctions to deter such behaviour. Aeschin. 1.35 mentions a fine of up to fifty drachmas per offence for anyone who, among other things, interrupted or used insults during public meetings (τῶν ῥητόρων ἐάν τις λέγῃ ἐν τῇ βουλῇ ἢ ἐν τῷ δήμῳ . . . ἢ λοιδορῆται ἢ κακῶς ἀγορεύῃ τινά ἢ ὑποκρούῃ . . . οἱ πρόεδροι μέχρι πεντήκοντα δραχμῶν εἰς ἕκαστον ἀδίκημα ἐγγράφειν τοῖς πράκτορσιν; cf. Lys. 9.9).

him by making a loud din.[26] Similarly, Lysias records how during the events following the defeat at Aegospotami in 405, the democrat Kleophon 'started to insult the council' (τὴν βουλὴν ἐλοιδόρει), complaining that its members were 'deliberating in a manner not best for the city'.[27] When Dicaeopolis follows through with his pledge in *Acharnians* by interrupting the process (56–60) and calling the spokesman for the Athenian ambassadors a 'giant fraud' (ἀλαζὼν εἶ μέγας, 109) and Kleisthenes 'you whose hot-tempered arse is shaved' (ὦ θερμόβουλον προωκτὸν ἐξυρημένε, 119) or simply a 'monkey' (ὦ πίθηκε, 120), the transparent disguises and fraudulent behaviour of the targets work to legitimise the verbal abuse.[28] Not only do the insults underscore Dicaeopolis' frustration and solidify his

[26] ἐθορυβεῖτε (Lys. 12.73). Tacon 2001 and R. Thomas 2016 discuss the challenges faced by speakers in the public arena that included heckling, interruptions, *loidoria* (*Eccl*. 243–55, Isocr. 12.13, Dem. 4.44, 24.13, Din. 1.99), jeering, protests, laughter, expulsion, and noise making/*thorubos*.

[27] οὐ τὰ βέλτιστα βουλεύειν τῇ πόλει (Lys. 30.10), probably echoing the bouleutic oath (Andoc. 4.12, Lys. 31.1, [Dem.] 59.4, Sommerstein & Bayliss 2013: 40–2). Interruptions of this sort could be dangerous—Kleophon was arrested for his intervention and speakers who favoured unpopular proposals sometimes wound up as scapegoats—but they did give all citizens the chance to influence policy and were therefore an important part of the democratic debating process both in practice and ideology (Monoson 2000: 54–63). For the scapegoating of speakers see e.g. [Xen.] *Ath. Pol*. 2.17, Xen. *Hell*. 1.7.35, Dem. 1.16. On the Scythian archers charged with arresting or expelling disruptive assembly attendees, called upon in *Acharnians* to expel Amphitheos (54; cf. *Eccl*. 258–60), see Plassart 1913, Jacob 1928: 53–78, V. Hunter 1994: 145–9, Olson 2002: 87, Couvenhes 2012.

[28] The final insult is an apt response to Kleisthenes' dishonesty since monkeys were associated in Greek symbolism with treachery and deceit. Thus, in *Knights*, tricks employed to woo Demos are labelled πιθηκισμοί (887); in *Frogs*, Aeschylus compares citizens who mislead the demos to monkeys (δημοπιθήκων / ἐξαπατώντων τὸν δῆμον ἀεί, 1085–6); a scholiast on *Birds* says that

portrayal as a citizen willing to take risks for peace, but they may also parody lines from Archilochus (fr. 187 West; cf. Rosen 1988: 17–18) and Euripides (*incert. fab*. fr. 858 *TrGF*; cf. Olson 2002: 110), which would chime with the protagonist's depiction as a connoisseur of tragedy and poetry (9–16).

The spotlight in the assembly scene is on the ambassadors' undeserved material gains after a decade of lavish Persian hospitality and Athenian state pay with no discernible benefit to the city.[29] The ambassadors' attempt to fool the assembly into believing that they have returned from Persia with something of value, namely the King's Eye and gold, underscores their duplicitous nature. The protagonist's opening soliloquy, on the other hand, with its focus on his experiences at musical and theatrical contests, has aligned and thus likely ingratiated him with the play's spectators.[30] Against this backdrop, Dicaeopolis' insults come across as a pardonable by-product of his agenda (one which also receives divine

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the politician Panaetius was mocked in Aristophanes' *Islands* [Νῆσοι] as a monkey 'because of his knavery' (διὰ τὸ πανοῦργον, Σ *Av*. 440α/440–441α Holwerda). Demosthenes calls Aeschines an αὐτοτραγικὸς πίθηκος (Dem. 18.242). See further Lilja 1980, Demont 1997, Olson 1998: 272–3. On legal sanctions against deceiving the demos see Hesk 2000a: 51–64, Kremmydas 2013.

[29] A motif that crops up later in the play (*Ach*. 601–17). For discussion of a real Athenian ambassador to Persia and Sparta exploiting his post for private financial gain (Epicrates, early fourth century), and being condemned to death for the crime, see Cecchet 2015: 145–8. Further historical examples in Taylor 2001a.

[30] As argued, for example, by MacDowell 1983: 145, Dicaeopolis is 'identified to the audience as one of themselves, sharing their experiences, before he is given a name or any other characteristics whatsoever'. Also Olson 2002: xli, 'the opening scenes of *Acharnians* thus present Dikaiopolis as the sole voice of reason in a society dominated by fools and villains, and the war as nothing but an excuse for a small group of insiders to fatten and enrich themselves at everyone else's expense'.

support in the play from Amphitheos), that is, the rejection of the city's corrupt representatives in favour of peace and rural/Dionysian values. Dicaeopolis' *loidoria* is justified not so much because it finds echoes in real-life political behaviour, but because it is deployed, within the story of the play, against characters acting objectionably. As the chorus would proclaim the following year in *Knights*, 'there is nothing wrong with insulting (λοιδορῆσαι) bad people'.[31] Later in *Acharnians*, as the personas of Dicaeopolis and Aristophanes fuse, the value of insults is reaffirmed when comic abuse is equated with learning (634–5, 649–650, 656–8) and with 'justice' (τὰ δίκαια, 645, 655), likely an allusion to the protagonist's name.[32] Through the mouth of his chorus, Aristophanes boasts that his own mocking and insulting of the city (631) has taught Athenians no longer to be hoodwinked by the 'words of foreigners' (634), recalling and retrospectively lending support to Dicaeopolis' tactics in the assembly scene. These included insulting his antagonists as he exposed their dishonesty and crude disguises.

The verb used by Dicaeopolis for 'insult', λοιδορεῖν, in the middle voice designates coarse squabbling and/or exchanges of invective. Examples include Strepsiades feuding with his son at the end of *Clouds* (1353) or the defeated Paphlagon in *Knights* who is destined to spend his remaining days drunken and 'petulantly bickering' (λοιδορήσεται, 1400) with prostitutes at the city gates. Praxagora lumps λοιδορεῖσθαι together with cloak-snatching, poverty, debt seizure and other undesirable things she wishes to expel from her refashioned polis (*Eccl*. 565–7), and in *Thesmophoriazusae* (650) it describes what Euripides does to the city's women with his plays. Evoking a range of hostile speech acts that include insults,

[31] λοιδορῆσαι τοὺς πονηροὺς οὐδέν ἐστ' ἐπίφθονον (*Eq*. 1274).

[32] Cf. Dicaeopolis: ἐγὼ δὲ λέξω δεινὰ δίκαια δέ (501). On the interplay between Dicaeopolis' name (revealed to the audience at 405–6) and the play's themes see Sommerstein 1992: 29–30, Kanavou 2011: 25–8.

slander, and threats, λοιδορεῖσθαι (and cognate nouns) is the word that most frequently describes the short self-contained confrontations that enliven Aristophanes' plays as well as the more extended clashes that crescendo into the formal *agōn*.[33] A good example of the latter can be found in *Frogs* where the contest between Euripides and Aeschylus is prefigured as 'a ruckus and shouting and insulting' (θόρυβος καὶ βοὴ / χὠ λοιδορησμός, 757–8).

The arbiter of the protracted contest in *Frogs*, Dionysus, advises Aeschylus on how to proceed. His instructions reject insulting language as unseemly and unproductive:

> σὺ δὲ μὴ πρὸς ὀργήν, Αἰσχύλ', ἀλλὰ πραόνως
> ἔλεγχ', ἐλέγχου· λοιδορεῖσθαι δ' οὐ πρέπει
> ἄνδρας ποιητὰς ὥσπερ ἀρτοπώλιδας.
>
> And you, Aeschylus, confute and be confuted in turn,
> not with recourse to anger, but calmly. It is not proper for
> men who are poets to insult each other (λοιδορεῖσθαι) like female bread-sellers.[34]
>
> Ar. *Ran*. 856–9

[33] Building up to the *agōn*: *Nub*. 934, *Ran*. 758, 857. Describing heated arguments in general: *Lys*. 460, *Thesm*. 571, *Plut*. 456.

[34] Aristophanes' rival Hermippus composed a comedy entitled *Female Bread-Sellers* [Ἀρτοπώλιδες, c. 420], which included at least one insult spoken to a woman (ὦ σαπρὰ καὶ πασιπόρνη καὶ κάπραινα, fr. 9 K–A) and may have exploited a stereotypical penchant for abusive speech current among such retailers (cf. *Lys*. 458–60, Biles & Olson 2015: 163–4). On the other hand, insults do not feature in the idiom of the one bread-seller who appears in extant comedy, at *Wasps* 1388–1414, despite the confrontational nature of her encounter with Philocleon. On comic

The advice, which qualifies *loidoria* as undignified, is directed at Aeschylus because of the tragedian's typhoon-like temperament (843–4, 848). This promises to reveal itself in the form of angry (πρὸς ὀργήν) verbal attacks against his rival.[35] Aeschylus' words are like a hailstorm that risks striking Euripides on the head (851–5).

Dionysus' warning seems justified; Aeschylus has already demonstrated an aptitude for insults when he combines parody of a Euripidean line with allusion to the tragedian's mother as a greengrocer (ὦ παῖ τῆς ἀρουραίας θεοῦ, 840, cf. E. *incert. fab*. fr. 885 *TrGF*) or draws on Euripides' penchant for mendicant-characters and contemptuously reduces the younger poet to a 'maker of beggars and stitcher-together of rags'.[36] 'The tongue is savage', the chorus sings immediately prior to the tragedians' debate (898), predicting that Aeschylus will violently 'fall upon' (ἐμπεσόντα, 904) his opponent's arguments during the contest. The verb associated with Aeschylus' expected verbal assault, ἀνασπᾶν ('to draw up', 902), is the same employed by Tecmessa when she describes Ajax's crazed abuse of the livestock in Sophocles' *Ajax* (301–2). It calls to mind the shooting of arrows, and in Sophocles' tragedy refers to especially violent and unrestrained speech.[37] Here, Dionysus promotes

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depictions of bread-selling and bread-making in general see Ehrenberg 1951: 96, Wilkins 2000: 167–8. For bread-sellers associated with prostitutes see Anacr. 388.4–5 *PMG*.

[35] For insults linked with anger see e.g. *Od*. 17.394–5, S. *Phil*. 374–5, Pl. *Leg*. 934d7–e1.

[36] πτωχοποιὲ καὶ ῥακιοσυρραπτάδη (843, two *hapax legomena*); cf. τὸν χωλοποιόν (846). For the comic tradition of Euripides' mother as a vegetable-hawker see Roselli 2005.

[37] Ajax is reported to have been 'abusing [the livestock] with vile words that a divine being and no man taught him' (κακὰ δεννάζων ῥήμαθ', ἃ δαίμων / κοὐδεὶς ἀνδρῶν ἐδίδαξεν, 243–4). For the link between ἀνασπᾶν and arrows see Pl. *Tht*. 180a (ἀνασπῶντες ἀποτοξεύουσι), also metaphorically of words. For insults or reproofs likened to harmful projectiles compare *Nub*. 943–4 (ῥηματίοισιν καινοῖς αὐτὸν / καὶ διανοίαις κατατοξεύσω), A. *Ag*. 1615–6, *Supp*. 446–8 (with Friis

orderly turn-taking as an alternative. His suggestion is reminiscent of the wine-god's own whipping contest with Xanthias from earlier in the play, but now physical blows will be replaced by alternating, sober interrogations of each tragedian's craft (ἔλεγχ', ἐλέγχου, 857), or so Dionysus hopes.[38] Dionysus expects that Aeschylus and Euripides will engage in rational debate free from verbal attacks, since he esteems this to be proper behaviour for the poets. Part of the humour lies, however, in the fact that neither tragedian refrains from insulting the other (909, 936, 1049, 1058, 1160–1), with each also going so far as to direct abuse at the adjudicating god.[39] These insults undermine Dionysus' authority by ignoring his original instructions to avoid *loidoria*, and thus prolonging his role from the play's opening half as a character comically powerless over the situations in which he finds himself.

Johansen & Whittle 1980(ii) *ad loc*.), [*PV*] 311–12, E. *Ion* 256, or used metaphorically of words exchanged in heated arguments Hdt. 8.64.1 (ἔπεσι ἀκροβολισάμενοι), S. *Ant*. 1033–4 (Teiresias compared to an archer by Creon), E. *Supp*. 456 (ταῦτα μὲν δὴ πρὸς τὰ σὰ ἐξηκόντισα). Pindar adapts the metaphor, comparing arrows to songs of praise (*Ol*. 9.5–10).

[38] For the earlier whipping contest, compare βασανιεῖς . . . / πληγὴν παρὰ πληγὴν ἑκάτερον (642–3). The verb βασανίζειν is repeatedly used for the whipping scene (616, 618, 625, 629, 642), and then for the contest between Euripides and Aeschylus (802, 1121, 1123, 1367). For comparable juxtapositions of λοιδορία and ἔλεγχος in forensic oratory see Dem. 22.22, [57].34, Isae. 6.65, Hesk 2014: 152–8.

[39] Aeschylus to Dionysus: ὦμαθέστατε (933). Euripides to Dionysus: ὦ μιαρώτατ' ἀνθρώπων (1472), ὦ σχέτλιε (1476).

In the first half of the play, Dionysus is addressed with a string of abusive terms when he arrives at Pluto's underworld residence and is received by an anonymous servant.[40] Here, humour lies not only in the juxtaposition of a lowly figure with the god Dionysus, but also in the use of the rude doorkeeper trope (see below), as well as a case of mistaken identity. The doorkeeper opens the door and immediately cries out:

> ὦ βδελυρὲ κἀναίσχυντε καὶ τολμηρὲ σὺ
> καὶ μιαρὲ καὶ παμμίαρε καὶ μιαρώτατε
>
> O revolting and shameless and brash man you,
> and disgusting and totally disgusting and most disgusting!
>
> Ar. *Ran*. 465–6

The second-person pronoun σύ intensifies the verbal abuse, especially given its final position.[41] The next line's climactic superlative has a similar amplifying effect and rounds

[40] On the identity of the speaker, probably a simple house slave rather than 'Aiakos' as designated in some MSS, see Dover 1972: 8–9, 1993: 50–5, Sommerstein 1996a: 198–9.

[41] Compare ὦ βδελυρὲ σύ (*Plut*. 1069), ὦ μιαρὲ καὶ Φρυνῶνδα καὶ πονηρὲ σύ (fr. 26), ὦ πῦρ σὺ καὶ πᾶν δεῖμα καὶ πανουργίας / δεινῆς τέχνημ' ἔχθιστον (S. *Phil*. 927–8), ὦ κάκιστε σύ (E. *Hipp*. 959, Theseus to Hippolytus = *Andr*. 631, part of Peleus' furious tirade against Menelaus), ὦ πανοῦργε σύ (*Hec*. 1257, Polymestor to Hecuba, following the murder of his sons and his blinding). The second-person personal pronoun also reinforces positive addresses, where in Aristophanes it is consistently paired with a superlative, e.g. ὦ φιλτάτη σύ (*Ach*. 885, *Av*. 206, *Lys*. 145), ὦ γλυκύτατον σὺ τεκνίδιον (*Lys*. 889).

off an emphatic rising tricolon.[42] Forceful as they thus are, the insults are not out of place in the mouth of a doorkeeper, dramatic characters that, especially in comedy, are caricatured as rude and obstructive. Other instances are *Nub*. 133 (analysed in Revermann 2006a: 183–5), *Pax* 182–4 (discussed below), E. *Hel*. 437–40, Pl. *Prt*. 314d, Men. *Dys*. 466–7 (Knemon himself), and Plaut. *Amph*. 1021–34. In *Frogs*, the doorkeeper's insults are rendered funny in two ways. First, thanks to a case of mistaken identity: the speaker thinks that he is addressing a despised Heracles and not Dionysus, whom Xanthias has convinced to re-take Heracles' garb and adopt a Heraclean spirit (462–4). With privileged knowledge of the god's real identity, the play's spectators can laugh at the unwelcome consequences of Dionysus' pretence and naïve following of his slave's advice. In this sense, the audience is aligned with Xanthias, who understands the situation better than both his master Dionysus and the doorkeeper.[43] Secondly, the insults are amusing because of the maladroit accumulation of μιαρός forms. These are linked with polysyndeton, a trope that normally lends emphasis by associating discrete items, but here amusingly combines three virtual synonyms: disgusting, totally disgusting, most disgusting. The comic effectiveness of the

[42] On classical rising tricola (increasing syllable length of three successive words or word clusters within a sentence clause) see West 2007: 117–19, Rutherford 2012: 79, Kwapisz 2014; for use of the figure in insults, compare *Eq*. 304, *Nub*. 102–3, *Pax* 182 (discussed below), S. *Phil*. 927–8 (cited in the previous footnote), E. *Med*. 1323–4, Shakespeare *King Lear* 2.2.13: 'a knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats', *The Tempest* 1.1.35–6: 'you bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog'.

[43] Xanthias had already established a rapport with the audience thanks to several asides (51, 87–8, 107, 115, 159–60) and perhaps, as Sommerstein 2009: 146 n. 34 suggests, by being the play's only living human being. Xanthias is also the first character to speak in the play which, at least according to one ancient actor (Theodoros, cited at Arist. *Pol*. 1336b27–31), was a good tactic for ingratiating audiences.

line is suggested by the fact that it has been recycled from *Peace*, produced seventeen years earlier, where the same combination of insults appears also in a door-knocking scene. In the earlier play, the repetition of μιαρός-based insults is taken still further than in the already exaggerated accumulation from *Frogs* and is given additional prominence when it becomes the focus of Trygaeus' tongue-in-cheek responses.

In *Peace*, the doorkeeper is not a nameless servant but rather Hermes, tasked with a job below his divine station.[44] When he opens the door, he is astonished to see the mortal Trygaeus accompanied by a giant dung-beetle. His first reaction is to let fly a barrage of insults directed at the play's protagonist:

> ὦ μιαρὲ καὶ τόλμηρε κἀναίσχυντε σὺ
> καὶ μιαρὲ καὶ παμμίαρε καὶ μιαρώτατε,
> πῶς δεῦρ' ἀνῆλθες, ὦ μιαρῶν μιαρώτατε;
>
> You disgusting and brash and shameless
> and disgusting and totally disgusting and most disgusting,
> how did you get here, you most disgusting of disgustings?
>
> Ar. *Pax* 182–4

[44] Hermes is not named until 365, but costuming would likely have made for easy identification. The Olympian gods could certainly be imagined as living in 'houses' (δώματα, e.g. *Il*. 1.221–2, 11.76–7, Hes. *Theog*. 40–3, A. *Eum*. 827–8), though door-keeping was normally reserved for slaves or lowly figures, thus E. *Tro*. 491–3, [Arist.] *Oec*. 1345a33–5 ('it seems in large estates that someone who is useless for other work can still be a useful doorman'). Hermes is, on the other hand, frequently identified as the gods' servant (S. *Inach.* fr. 269c.21–2 *TrGF*, E. *Ion* 4, A. Bowie 1993: 138–9, Olson 1998: 102, Sommerstein 2001: 213), which would be consistent with his role here and may have been a comic trope (cf. the punchline at *Plut*. 1170).

Here, reliance on the adjective μιαρός is taken to an absurd level, appearing six times in the address. Although morphologically related to μίασμα ('defilement', 'impurity'), μιαρός-based insults are generic and do not normally signify real pollution.[45] Hubbard, to be sure, has argued that Hermes repeats the term because of Trygaeus' association with dung, which makes the protagonist 'impure in the context of intercourse with the gods'.[46] This finds support in the same combination of insults in *Frogs*, where Dionysus too has had contact with faeces (his own, *Ran*. 308). In both instances, the etymology of the insult μιαρέ is potentially activated by the comic scenario, providing an instance of the common joke-type that sees a metaphorical expression employed or interpreted literally, or where a suppressed meaning is awakened (compare the discussion of ἐς κόρακας in Appendix II). On the other hand, it was the slaves and not Trygaeus who had been handling manure during the prologue of *Peace*. If the play's hero has come into contact with dung, then it is only via his touching of the scatophagous beetle. (The beetle is described in the opening scene as μιαρὸν τὸ χρῆμα, 38.)

However literally we take Hermes' insults, in the interrogation that follows, Trygaeus mocks the god's pleonastic outburst:

[Ερ.] τί σοί ποτ' ἔστ' ὄνομ'; οὐκ ἐρεῖς;

[Τρ.] μιαρώτατος.

[45] For μιαρός-based insults see R. Parker 1983: 3–5, Dover 2002: 95–6, and section 2.5 below. For other pollution-based insults compare ὦ καθάρματε (*Plut*. 454), ὦ κάθαρμα (Ar. fr. 686 [with Bagordo 2017 *ad loc*.], Dem. 18.128, 19.198), and the more literal μιαιφόνος at *Il*. 5.31, 455, A. *Eum*. 607, E. *Med*. 1346, *Hec*. 1173 (indirect).

[46] Hubbard 1991: 143. On dung and bad smells in *Peace* see Tordoff 2011 (endorsing Hubbard's argument at pp. 185–6).

[Ερ.] πατὴρ δέ σοι τίς ἐστιν;

[Τρ.] ἐμοί; μιαρώτατος.

[Ερ.] ποδαπὸς τὸ γένος δ᾽ εἶ; φράζε μοι.

[Τρ.] μιαρώτατος.

[Hermes] What's your name then? Speak up!

[Tryg.] Most Disgusting.

[Hermes] And who is your father?

[Tryg.] Mine? Most Disgusting.

[Hermes] Where is your family from then? Tell me that.

[Tryg.] Most Disgusting.

Ar. *Pax* 185–7

A character in Philemon's *Claimant* [Ἐπιδικαζόμενος] states that ignoring an insulter is an elegant and effective defence.[47] Trygaeus goes a step further, hijacking Hermes' original μιαρός-based insults by responding to each of the god's questions with μιαρώτατος ('most disgusting'). The hero's appropriation of the insulting word spotlights the ridiculousness of

[47] 'There is nothing sweeter nor more elegant than to be able to bear being insulted. Since the insulter, if the insulted person does not react, is insulted even though he is the one doing the insulting' (ἥδιον οὐδὲν οὐδὲ μουσικώτερόν / ἐστ᾽ ἢ δύνασθαι λοιδορούμενον φέρειν. / ὁ λοιδορῶν γάρ, ἂν ὁ λοιδορούμενος / μὴ προσποιῆται, λοιδορεῖται λοιδορῶν, Philemon fr. 23 K–A). Comparable sentiments at E. *Andr*. 744–6, Plut. *Peric*. 5.2.

Hermes' tirade, but also generates humour by supplying inappropriate answers to what are straightforward questions.[48]

In addition to flouting normal conversational behaviour and the innate humour of referring to oneself and one's origins as 'most disgusting', the delay in the revelation of the hero's name is engaging given that the audience too is ignorant of it. While it is not unusual for Aristophanes to withhold the names of his main characters, here the stalling seems particularly tantalising from the spectators' perspective and particularly exacerbating from Hermes'.[49] Indeed, the god goes on to threaten Trygaeus with death if he does not correctly identify himself (187–8). This marked aggression makes Hermes' subsequent and very abrupt softening of tone seem all the more ludicrous, an about-face that does not go unnoticed by the protagonist whose concluding remark looks back to the initial abuse (ὡς

[48] Hermes' choice of questions is not extraordinary, requesting the three standard tokens by which a Greek could be identified (Olson 1998: 103–4 and compare e.g. *Od*. 1.170, Ar. *Nub*. 134, E. *Ion* 258–61). A scholiast (Σ *Pax* 185 Holwerda) claims that the *Peace* exchange was inspired by Epicharmus (fr. 123 K–A), from a play in which a character (a basket) responds with Σακίς three times when asked about the identity of its mother, father, and brother (on which see Kerkhof 2001: 144–5, Willi 2015: 137–8). But it is more likely that these are 'two independent uses of a single comic idea' (Olson 1998: 104). Comparable are *Av*. 974–80 (3 x λαβὲ τὸ βυβλίον all in response to questions), *Thesm*. 619–22 (3 x τὸν δεῖνα), *Ran*. 1208–19 (3 x ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν). For the use and humour of repeated speech in Aristophanes in general see H. Miller 1944: 31–2, López Eire 1996: 159–64, Kloss 2001: 204–37. For the cheerful acceptance of insults, compare Plaut. *Pseud*. 357–69.

[49] The roles are reversed when Hermes withholds the location of the gods from Trygaeus (194–9). For the frustrating withholding of one's identity cf. *Av*. 1497–503. On delaying the revelation of protagonists' names in Aristophanes see Olson 1992: 306–9.

οὐκέτ᾽ εἶναί σοι δοκῶ μιαρώτατος; 193). The whole exchange exploits the topos of the unwelcoming doorkeeper, makes light of Hermes by extinguishing his attempts to be intimidating, and vulgarises the god by having him employ coarse language.

Trygaeus' reaction to Hermes' insults ascribes to the play's hero an Odysseus-like cunning that will help him deal adequately with later impeding characters, such as the Arms-Dealers discussed above. His tactic also belongs to a broader schema of declaring or demonstrating one's disdain for verbal abuse found elsewhere in Aristophanes, notably in *Clouds*, the comedy most explicitly concerned with language and distortions thereof. The confrontation between the Stronger Argument and the Weaker Argument in that play contains a nice example of a character refusing to rise to an adversary's insults.[50] The confrontation in antilabe takes place in the scene leading up to the play's second *agōn*:

[Κρ.]	καταπύγων εἶ κἀναίσχυντος.	
[Ητ.]		ῥόδα μ᾽ εἴρηκας.
[Κρ.]	καὶ βωμολόχος.	
[Ητ.]		κρίνεσι στεφανοῖς.
[Κρ.]	καὶ πατραλοίας.	
[Ητ.]		χρυσῷ πάττων μ᾽ οὐ γιγνώσκεις.

[Str. Arg.]	You're a shameless pathic!	
[Weaker Arg.]		You've spoken roses of me.
[Str. Arg.]	And a buffoon!	
[Weaker Arg.]		You're crowning me with lilies.
[Str. Arg.]	And a father-beater!	

[50] Disdain for insults is also found in tragedy (always in the mouth of strong-willed females) at A. *Ag*. 1401–4, S. *El*. 605–7 (cf. 794), 1028, E. *Med*. 451–2, 1358–9, *Hcld*. 978–80.

[Weaker Arg.] You're sprinkling me with gold and you don't even realise it.[51]

Ar. *Nub*. 909–12

Whereas Trygaeus, in his exchange with Hermes, nullifies his assailant's insults by comically absorbing them into his identity (name, patronymic, ethnic), here the Weaker Argument creatively morphs his rival's insults into rewards of increasing value (first roses, then a crown of lilies, then gold). His opponent's insults are a *kosmos*, the Weaker Argument vaunts (914), using a word that denotes both physical adornment as well as a metaphorical mark of honour.[52] In what constitutes an entertaining twist, insults thus no longer do harm; they have become welcome gifts or prizes, as if the character were winning the contest before the *agōn* had even begun. Not only does the Weaker Argument disarm his adversary's verbal attack with this strategy, but his responses are in line with the upending of traditional values that he champions, and which culminates in Pheidippides' justification of physical abuse of one's parents (1437–9). Indeed, the Weaker Argument's welcoming of the insult 'father-beater' (πατραλοίας, 911–12), an affront that counted among Athens's *aporrhēta* liable to indictment with a *dikē kakēgorias* (Lys. 10.8), foreshadows that justification as well as an actual staged assault on Strepsiades. The whole exchange is framed by the Stronger

[51] πάσσειν, translated here as 'sprinkle', is used most often for the seasoning of food (see Olson & Sens 2000: 73, Diggle 2004: 293). Adjectival χρυσόπαστος means 'gilded', e.g. χρυσόπαστα ἔδεθλα (A. *Ag*. 776), τιήρῃ χρυσοπάστῳ (Hdt. 8.120), ξυστίσιν ταῖς χρυσοπάστοις (Eubul. fr. 132 K–A); the Stronger Argument's final words might therefore evoke a more long-lasting adornment, not 'sprinkling', but rather 'adorning' with gold. Cf. *Eccl*. 973 ὦ χρυσοδαίδαλτον ἐμὸν μέλημα (spoken to a lover).

[52] Cf. e.g. Pind. *Ol*. 3.13, *Pyth*. 2.10, Kerschensteiner 1962: 21 n. 2–3.

Argument being labelled a 'puffed-up dotard' (τυφογέρων, 908) and 'ancient' (ἀρχαῖος, 915). Along these lines, his inability to recognise the futility of his verbal attacks (οὐ γιγνώσκεις, 912) reveals that, much like Strepsiades, he is out of touch with the modern trends and innovations incarnated by the Weaker Argument, which include accepting insults as compliments.

In the lead-up to his defence of parent-beating, Pheidippides too is subjected to several insults. This does not destabilise the young man, however, since the tactic employed earlier by the Weaker Argument has, the audience discovers, been a part of the education received in the *phrontistērion*. When Pheidippides returns from his schooling, hitting his father as he comes on stage, he is insulted by the latter with 'you foul thing' (ὦ μιαρέ, 1325) and then 'you foul thing and father-beater and criminal' (ὦ μιαρὲ καὶ πατραλοῖα καὶ τοιχωρύχε, 1327). Pheidippides replies as follows:

> αὖθίς με ταὐτὰ ταῦτα καὶ πλείω λέγε.
> ἆρ' οἶσθ' ὅτι χαίρω πόλλ' ἀκούων καὶ κακά;
>
> Keep on saying the same things to me again, and more!
> Don't you know that I enjoy being repeatedly insulted?
>
> Ar. *Nub*. 1328–9

The young man's defiant tone recalls the shouting match between the two Arguments: his rhetorical question 'don't you know …?' is reminiscent of the Weaker Argument's 'you don't even realise it' (912). Both emphasise the knowledge gap between the older and

younger generation, a comic motif that appears in other comedies from the 420s.[53] When Strepsiades continues his insults with 'you gaping arse',[54] his son's retort, 'keep on sprinkling me with many roses' (πάττε πολλοῖς τοῖς ῥόδοις, 1331), is a recognisable amalgamation of the Weaker Argument's responses from lines 910 and 912, which employed the same imagery of flowers and sprinkling.[55] Pheidippides' responses to his father's insults are just one of several parallels between this and the earlier face-off, suggesting that he has emerged from his education as a replica of the Weaker Argument.[56] They also confirm that—unlike the less nimble Strepsiades—he has successfully absorbed the lessons of the Socratic school. Not only do his responses curtail the offensiveness of his father's insults, clearing the way for the repudiation of inherited *nomoi*, but Pheidippides'

[53] Notably in Aristophanes' own *Wasps* and most likely also his *Banqueters* [Δαιταλῆς] as well as Eupolis' *Goats* [Αἶγες], on which see Storey 2003: 67–74, Olson 2017: 91–153.

[54] 'You gaping arse' = ὦ λακκόπρωκτε (1330), only here in Aristophanes, but appearing also in a fragment of Cephisodorus (fr. 3.4 K–A, apparently a slave addressing his master), and adjectively on a fifth-century graffito from the Athenian agora (Lang 1976: 14, C 23). A λάκκος is a vat or a reservoir (Hdt. 4.195.3), thus by extension any large hole or cavity. The word was one of several sexual *double entendres* with which—in an incident recorded by Aeschines—the speaker Autolycus unintentionally caused assembly attendees to laugh (Aeschin. 1.83–4). On the basis of Eup. fr. 385.3–4 K–A, where λακκοπρωκτία qualifies wine–drinking in the morning, Henderson 1991: 210 argues that λακκόπρωκτος is a general affront and not necessarily a reference to anal penetration. In the Cephisodorus fragment cited above, the insult is a reaction to unusually effeminate behaviour (assuming the first speaker is a man).

[55] Perhaps evoking the practice of *phyllobolia*, namely showering victorious athletes with leaves and flowers, on which see Borthwick 1989, Campagner 2001: 258–9, 331–2.

[56] Dover 1968: 248.

cool demeanour in the face of verbal abuse also contrasts with the traditional form of education that, as some spectators may remember from earlier in the play, instructs boys 'to get fired up' (φλέγεσθαι, 992) whenever someone mocks them. Pheidippides' rejection of traditional morals means that he is not just impervious to insults, however; he now enjoys his father's verbal abuse and demands more. He has mastered a skill that requires one to make no moral distinction between right and wrong. Cheerful acceptance of insults is symptomatic of this development and helps signal the divide between young and old, sophistic and boorish, novel and outmoded that runs through *Clouds* as a connecting thread.

In this section, we have seen how insults and reactions to insults can help shape impressions of a character's personality. Pheidippides' imperviousness in the face of his father's verbal abuse can be attributed to his schooling in the *phrontistērion* and reflects the degradation of morals epitomised by Socrates' teachings. Trygaeus' deflection of Hermes' insults serves a different purpose, characterising the hero as wily and allowing him to overcome the god and continue on his quest to recover Peace. In *Frogs*, insults comically undermine Dionysus' authority, part of that character's ongoing depiction as a well-intentioned yet laughably unimposing deity. Conversely, in the assembly scene from *Acharnians*, insults lend the frustrated Dicaeopolis a bold political voice and help ingratiate him with the play's spectators. In short, these four case studies have shown how insults can be used in ways other than simply to reflect a hostile relationship. In the following section, I will show how the vocabulary of Aristophanes' insults differentiates comedy from other genres, what the nuances of various insults entail, as well as how some insults are spoken exclusively by, and addressed exclusively to, particular types of characters.

2.5. The vocabulary of insults in Aristophanes

Catalogues of Aristophanic insults can be found in Müller 1913, Wendel 1929: 22–4, 108–10 (a basic discussion of some special cases), Opelt 1976 (focussing on Lysias, but listing Aristophanic parallels at pp. 582–4), and Dickey 1996: 165–74 (focussing on register), 287–92 (a list that includes comparative data from tragedy, Menander, and prose). Dover 2002 discusses 'evaluative terms' in Aristophanes with an eye to social and lexical distinctions. Dickey 2002: 163–85 and Lateiner 2013 look at Latin insults, the latter concentrating on gendered insults. My discussion below differs from these predecessors by drawing on a wider range of comparative material, notably graffiti and ostraka (where relevant), and by including information on the identity of speakers and addressees.

Although generic insults are the norm, Aristophanes' characters occasionally tailor their abuse by concentrating on an aspect of the addressee's behaviour. For example, Bdelycleon calls his father a 'senile pussy rubber' (τυφεδανὲ καὶ χοιρόθλιψ, *Vesp*. 1364) as a reaction to the latter's sexual antics following the symposium. Aeschylus calls the stereotypically sophistic Euripides a 'mega-babbler' in *Frogs* (ὦ κατεστωμυλμένε, 1160). Poverty addresses Chremylus and Blepsidemus with 'you who are both complete bleary-brains with Cronus-like bleariness' in response to their failure to understand her arguments.[57] Similarly, the Greedy Man in *Ecclesiazusae* addresses the Co-operative Neighbour with ὦμβρόντητε σύ ('thunder-struck' ≈ 'lunatic' *vel sim*.) for giving up his

[57] ὦ Κρονικαῖς λήμαις ὄντως λημῶντες τὰς φρένας ἄμφω (*Plut*. 581, transl. adapted from Sommerstein 2001). For the association of Cronus with outdated opinions and/or mental deficiency compare e.g. *Nub*. 398 (ὦ μῶρε σὺ καὶ Κρονίων ὄζων καὶ βεκκεσέληνε), 929 (οὐχὶ διδάξεις τοῦτον Κρόνος ὤν), Pl. *Euthd*. 287b2–3, futher Arnott 1996: 190 (on Alexis fr. 63.2 K–A).

property without waiting to see how others act.[58] In *Birds*, Poseidon calls Heracles 'stupid and a glutton' for being too easily swayed by the promise of lunch (ἠλίθιος καὶ γάστρις εἶ, *Av*. 1604; cf. *Pax* 1120), while Euripides' Kinsman insults Agathon in *Thesmophoriazusae* with ὦ κατάπυγον εὐρύπρωκτος εἶ (200), a reference to the tragic poet's notorious femininity and enthusiasm for passive homosexual acts.[59]

Unlike contemporary English usage, proper names or euphemisms for male and female genitalia, although abundant as descriptions or jokes in their own right, are not used as terms of abuse in Aristophanes. The sexual insults καταπύγων, εὐρύπρωκτος, and λαικαστής all denote or imply acts, typically of a passive or enthusiastic male homosexual nature, rather than parts of the body.[60] They are spoken exclusively by male characters in Aristophanes and appear outside of comedy only in graffiti or on ostraka, an indication of their vulgarity. As Dover points out, we should be wary about interpreting such affronts too literally; comparable modern terms of abuse (Dover cites 'wanker' and 'motherfucker') are in most cases generic insults rather than references to specific acts, even if each term enjoys

[58] The same insult occurs at Dem. 18.243 (an amusing, imagined anecdote), Philemon fr. 45 K–A, Men. *Dys*. 441.

[59] On comic depictions of Agathon see Austin & Olson 2004: 61, Wright 2016: 64–70.

[60] On εὐρύπρωκτος ('wide arse-holed') see Dover 2002: 94. On καταπύγων ('pathic', 'debauchee', *vel sim*.) see Henderson 1991: 210, J. N. Davidson 1997: 167–82, Dover 2002: 94–5, and my comments below. On λαικαστής/λαικάζειν ('cock-sucker'/'to give a blow job') see Jocelyn 1980, Bain 1991: 74–7, Henderson 1991: 153, Olson 2002: 96. The feminine version, λαικάστρια, appears at *Ach*. 529, 537 (equated with πόρνη), Pherec. fr. 159.2 K–A, Men. *Pk*. 485. In the last of these, the slave Sosias insults the flute-girl Habrotonon with λαικάστρια, perhaps a more literal use of the word since performing flute-girls could be coerced into sexual acts (Biles & Olson 2015: 439, Goldman 2015).

its own nuances of meaning and contextual (un)suitability.[61] Racial insults too are largely missing from Old Comedy. While Aristophanes gets comic mileage out of non-Greek characters who misspeak, are gullible, behave crudely, or undergo humiliation, neither ethnonyms nor ethnophaulisms are employed as direct insults. The closest one gets is the chorus leader in *Wasps* assailing Bdelycleon with 'O hater of the people and lover of monarchy and mate of Brasidas and wearer of tufts of wool and keeping your facial hair unkempt!', a colourful slur that draws on anti-Spartan stereotypes.[62] The generic adjective used to denote a foreigner disparagingly, βάρβαρος, is not employed as a direct insult in Aristophanes.[63]

More common forms of verbal abuse, that is, those appearing also in tragedy and forensic oratory, can be intensified in comedy by stringing several terms together, by employing superlative forms (cf. Peppler 1918: 181–3), through the presence of qualifying

[61] Dover 1978: 17, 143.

[62] ὦ μισόδημε / καὶ μοναρχίας ἐραστά / καὶ ξυνὼν Βρασίδᾳ καὶ φορῶν / κράσπεδα στεμμάτων τήν θ' ὑπήνην ἄκουρον τρέφων (*Vesp*. 473–7, cf. *Lys*. 275–80, Plat. com. fr. 132 K–A). Biles & Olson 2015: 235–6 unpack the stereotypes embedded within the insult, namely Spartan shaggy beards and hostility toward imperial Athenian democracy. For accusations of conspiracy with Brasidas compare *Pax* 639–40 with Olson 1998 *ad loc.*

[63] Although cf. ἄνθρωπος ἀμαθὴς οὑτοσὶ καὶ βάρβαρος (*Nub*. 492 referring to Strepsiades, who is on-stage), περιορᾷς οὕτω μ' ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν βαρβάρων χειρούμενον (*Vesp*. 439, Philocleon describing the slaves who hold him captive). The Euripidean Hermione addresses Andromache, who is a foreigner, with ὦ βάρβαρον σὺ θρέμμα (E. *Andr*. 261). Prior to the Roman period, we find the vocative βάρβαρε addressed to a Greek only at Men. *Sam*. 519, where it 'implies that [the addressee] Moschion has ignored fundamental principles of behaviour that any Greek ought to observe' (Sommerstein 2013: 263).

superlatives,[64] via alliteration (*Ran*. 837–9), or with the prefix παν-.[65] Other insults stand out by combining multiple elements to coin sesquipedalian neologisms (e.g. κρουνοχυτρολήραιον, *Eq*. 89, στωμυλιοσυλλεκτάδης, *Ran*. 841), or by employing attention-grabbing imagery (e.g. Paphlagon/Cleon insulted as a βορβοροτάραξις at *Eq*. 307). These entertain and impress, showcasing the playwright's creativity.[66]

The most common insults in Aristophanes can be divided into three loose groups, imputing respectively: a) an accursed or polluted state, b) a deviant or distasteful behaviour/attitude, and c) intellectual deficiency.[67] In the following descriptions of these insults, I attempt to identify their register and offensiveness by placing them in context (what

[64] E.g. ὦ δειλότατε θεῶν σὺ κἀνθρώπων (*Ran*. 486), ὦ μιαρώτατε ἀνδρῶν ἁπάντων (*Plut*. 78–9), ὦ δειλότατε πάντων δαιμόνων (*Plut*. 123).

[65] At *Pax* 183 (παμμίαρε), *Lys*. 137 (παγκατάπυγον, indirect), 588 (παγκατάρατε), 969 (παμβδελυρὰ καὶ παμμυσαρά, indirect), *Ran*. 466 (παμμίαρε), *Eccl*. 1043 (παμβδελυρά). Aristophanes does not, however, use independent πᾶς to intensify insults, which seems to be a Sophoclean idiosyncrasy (S. *El*. 301, *Phil*. 927, *Inach*. fr. 269a.24 *TrGF*).

[66] Degani 1987: 38 notes parallels in iambic poetry (e.g. μεσσηγυδορποχέστης, Hipponax fr. 114c West); see also Hawkins 2013: 117–19. Elaborate compounds can be found in other genres too, however, notably dithyramb (see Ford 2013: 320–5), a hallmark of that genre mocked by Aristophanes at *Nub*. 332–8, *Pax* 828–31, *Av*. 1372–409. For Aristophanes' own compound coinages, both insulting and otherwise, see Silk 2000: 126–36, Kidd 2014: 147–51. For elaborate compound insults in Byzantine Greek see Kaldellis 2017: 141–4.

[67] Müller 1913 proposes a different division: a) physical appearance, b) intellectual deficiency, c) the general character of the addressee, d) specific character traits of the addressee, e) the addressee's way of life, f) words denoting bad fortune, e) other specific insults, f) animal names, g) combinations of insults.

is the relationship between the speaker and the addressee? in what situations are the insults spoken?) as well as by noting their presence or absence in other genres (predominantly epic, tragedy, oratory, and graffiti). Presence in tragedy is taken as a sign that the insult is high-register, whereas the appearance of an insult in graffiti or on ostraka is taken as a sign that it is low-register. Legal oratory often switches between high- and low-register diction for rhetorical effect and is thus a less sure indicator. The distinction that Dickey (2002: 179–81) detects for Latin insults between adjective-based terms (predominantly high-register) and noun-based terms (predominantly low-register) does not seem to apply to the insults found in Aristophanes.

Curses and pollution

Insults based on impurity or curses are among the strongest and most common in Aristophanes.

μιαρός ('repulsive', 'foul', 'villainous') is a 'vehemently opprobrious adjective' (Dover 2002: 95) and the most common term of abuse in Aristophanes.[68] Cognate with μίασμα and μιαίνειν, the adjective denotes in its broadest sense 'defiled' or 'polluted'. Typical sources of pollution are contact with a corpse or a murderer (R. Parker 1983: 104–43), but μιαρός embraces much more than those specific situations and is often unconnected to any obvious source of actual pollution. For example, Lysias employs μιαρός to describe Agoratus who dared approach men whom he had previously been instrumental in expelling from the city

[68] This is true even when we exclude the strings of insults in the doorkeepers' outbursts from *Peace* and *Frogs*. For a list of non-Aristophanic instances see Dickey 1996: 171.

(πῶς ἂν γένοιτο ἄνθρωπος μιαρώτερος; 13.77), while Demosthenes uses μιαρός to describe the mercenary sykophant Euctemon (21.103), or Aristogeiton who bit off another man's nose (25.62; cf. ὦ μιαρώτατε πάντων τῶν ὄντων ἀνθρώπων, 25.28). Animals too can be described as μιαρός, such as swine (in the eyes of Egyptians, Hdt. 2.47.1), or the foul-smelling scatophagous beetle from the prologue of Aristophanes' *Peace* (38).

Despite its appearance in forensic oratory and its occasionally cheeky tone (*Lys*. 989, Kinesias to the Spartan Herald who has been concealing a giant erection), the word μιαρός was likely a vulgarism. This is suggested both by its association with the Scythian Archer in *Thesmophoriazusae* (1092, 1096, 1133, 1222; Halliwell 1995: 113–14) as well as its virtual absence from tragedy. In that genre, only the Sophoclean Creon employs the adjective aggressively to address another character (ὦ μιαρὸν ἦθος καὶ γυναικὸς ὕστερον, *Ant*. 746 directed at Haimon), which is indicative of the king's gross fall from dignity. In Aristophanes, μιαρός as an insult is spoken exclusively by male characters and is almost exclusively directed at male characters. The only time it is spoken to a female citizen is the Proboulos to Lysistrata (*Lys*. 433), contributing to the characterisation of the former as an especially unsympathetic opponent. Two minor goddesses are addressed with ὦ μιαρωτάτη: Iris by Peisetairos (*Av*. 1209) and Poverty by Chremylus (*Plut*. 472). In approximately two-thirds of Aristophanic insults employing the adjective μιαρός, the word appears in the superlative. However, this is the case in merely three out of forty-two instances of the word in Demosthenes (only one of which is a direct address: Dem. 25.28 cited above). The other orators eschew the superlative altogether.

ἀπολούμενος ('cursed', 'godforsaken', 'doomed to perish') appears almost exclusively with the modifier κάκιστα (the exception, with κακῶς, is *Eccl*. 1076). As the future participle of ἀπόλλυμι, the adjective denotes impending death at the hands of a god or fate,

but this literal sense is supressed (compare Eng. 'goddamned'). The vocative marker ὦ is obligatory when ἀπολούμενος is used as an insult, as always when a participle replaces a substantive in the vocative (Scott 1904: 81, Moorhouse 1982: 27). Given that it is absent from tragedy in direct address, ὦ κάκιστ᾽ ἀπολούμενε should be added to Dickey's (1996: 171) list of low-register insults.[69]

In Aristophanes, the insult is spoken by and directed at both male and female characters. The tone is generally quite hostile, as in the cases of Dicaeopolis to the informer Nikarchos (*Ach*. 924), Epigenes to the second Old Woman (*Eccl*. 1052), and Chremylus to Poverty (*Plut*. 456).

κατάρατος ('subject to a curse [ἀρά]', 'goddamned') is an intensified form of ἀρατός and a generic swear word (cf. ὑπολύου τὰς καταράτους ἐμβάδας 'take off your damn shoes!', *Vesp*. 1157). It is found in tragedy, although normally more (self-)pitying than offensive in that genre (self-pitying and literal in Aristophanes only at *Thesm*. 1048, a line of tragic parody: ὢ κατάρατος ἐγώ), but is employed offensively in tragedy at E. *Med*. 162

[69] The simplex does appear adjectivally at E. *Hcld*. 874–5 (ἐλεύθεροι δὲ τοῦ κακῶς ὀλουμένου / Εὐρυσθέως ἔσεσθε), *incert. fab*. fr. 915 *TrGF* (νικᾷ δὲ χρεία μ᾽ ἡ κακῶς τ᾽ ὀλουμένη / γαστήρ), and in satyr play at S. *incert. fab*. fr. 764 (x – κακῶς σὺ πρὸς θεῶν ὀλουμένη, ἢ τὰς ἀρύστεις ὧδ᾽ ἔχουσ᾽ ἐκώμασας), E. *Cyc*. 474. Two tragic insults absent from Old Comedy are μῖσος/μίσημα and κάκιστος/παγκάκιστος. For μῖσος see S. *Phil*. 991, E. *Med*. 1323, *Hcld*. 52, 941, *IT* 525. For μίσημα see S. *El*. 289 (reported). For κάκιστος see S. *Tr*. 1137, *OT* 334 (ὦ κακῶν κάκιστε), *Phil*. 974, 984 (ὦ κακῶν κάκιστε), *OC* 866, 1354, 1384 (κακῶν κάκιστε), E. *Med*. 488, *Hipp*. 959, 1316, *Andr*. 590, 631, 719, *Hec*. 577, 1199, *Tro*. 943, *Or*. 718, cf. Men. *Sam*. 492. For παγκάκιστος see S. *Ant*. 742 (quoted in Plut. *De frat. amor*. 483b10 as ὦ παῖ κάκιστε), *Tr*. 1124, E. *Med*. 465, *Supp*. 513, *Stheneb*. fr. 666 *TrGF* (qualified as the strongest reproach one could make), *Cyc*. 689.

(indirect), *Hec*. 716 (ὦ κατάρατ᾽ ἀνδρῶν), 1065 (ὦ κατάρατοι). Demosthenes uses ὦ κατάρατε three times offensively in *On the Crown* (18.209, 244, 290) and twice in *Against Timocrates* (24.107, 198).

In Aristophanes, the simple form is used twice in the vocative (*Pax* 1076a, *Lys*. 530; cf. Pherecr. fr. 76.3 K–A) and once in a predicative construction (*Pax* 1272). It also appears once in the intensified compound ὦ παγκατάρατε (Lysistrata to the Proboulos, *Lys*. 588), the sole instance of that form in classical Greek and the only instance of κατάρατος spoken as an insult by a female character in Aristophanes. Simple κατάρατος is used twice in bastardised forms by the Scythian Archer at the end of *Thesmophoriazusae* (1097, 1109), one of that character's many vulgarisms.

Deviant or distasteful behaviour/attitude

These insults are frequently employed as reactions to inappropriate behaviour. In this sense, they come close to descriptions, albeit belligerent ones that highlight the speaker's anger and are meant to offend the addressee.

ἀναίσχυντος ('shameless') is the second most frequently occurring insult in Aristophanes behind μιαρός and its cognates. Since shame inhibits people from breaking taboos, and comedy often ignores taboos, the prominence of this insult in Aristophanes is unsurprising. It evokes boldness of action and is combined with τολμηρός at *Peace* 362 and *Frogs* 465 (cf. S. *Phil*. 82–3, Antiph. 3.3.1, Pl. *Apol*. 38d7). Kinsman is said to be 'full of *anaischuntia*' in *Thesmophoriazusae* when he snatches Mika's baby (ὡς ἅπαντ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐστὶ τόλμης μεστὰ κἀναισχυντίας, 702), and is insulted with ὦναίσχυντε σύ for his infiltration of the women's festival (638). Similarly, the chorus in *Acharnians* insults Dicaeopolis with

ἀναίσχυντος εἶ καὶ βδελυρός for concluding peace with the Spartans (289), Strepsiades addresses Pheidippides with ὦναίσχυντε when the latter suggests he is right to beat his father (*Nub*. 1380), and Kinsman says to Kleisthenes ἀναίσχυντός τις εἶ when the latter prevents the former from urinating (*Thesm*. 611). Out of the seven instances in Aristophanes, the insult is spoken by a female character only once (Mika to Kinsman, *Thesm.* 744) and it is never directed at a female character even though shamelessness is regularly associated with women in comic and other sources.[70] We do not find the superlative ἀναισχυντότατος in Aristophanes, though the form is attested in prose (e.g. Pl. *Apol*. 17b3, Isocr. 8.38, Dem. 27.18, 43.56).

πανοῦργος ('scoundrel', 'criminal') denotes a person who will stoop to anything or has no scruples about committing outrageous acts. Thus, the chorus leader addresses Dicaeopolis with ὦ πανοῦργε for concluding his private peace treaty (*Ach*. 311), or Paphlagon addresses the Sausage-Seller with ὦ πανοῦργε for using preposterous stories to turn Demos against him (*Eq*. 902). The word also appears as a spontaneous form of abuse (*Ran*. 35, Dionysus to Xanthias). The comic characters most often referred to as πανοῦργοι are Paphlagon in *Knights* and Kinsman in *Thesmophoriazusae*. When used as a direct insult, the speaker is normally male, and addressees are consistently male.[71] Only twice do we find ὦ πανοῦργε in tragedy, once addressed to a woman (Polymestor to Hecuba, E. *Hec*. 1257) and once spoken by a woman (Alcmene to Eurystheus, E. *Hcld*. 947). In oratory,

[70] See Austin & Olson 2004: 209–10, citing Ar. *Lys*. 369, 1014–15, S. *Epigonoi* fr. 189.2–3 *TrGF*, E. *Melanippe/Desmotis* fr. 494.1–2, Alexis fr. 291 K–A.

[71] Male speaker + male addressee at *Ach.* 311, *Eq*. 450, 902, *Pax* 283, *Ran*. 35. Female speakers use πανοῦργος as a direct insult in Aristophanes only at *Thesm*. 858 (πανοῦργος εἶ), 899 (σὺ δ' εἶ πανοῦργος), both times addressed to Kinsman.

Demosthenes scornfully refers to Aeschines as πανοῦργος οὗτος καὶ θεοῖς ἐχθρός (Dem. 19.95), but the term is never used by the orators in direct address.

βδελυρός ('disgusting', 'loathsome', 'nauseating', 'reprobate') does not appear in tragedy.[72] The adjective is used in vituperation five times in Aristophanes and is also quite common in oratory (including one direct address, ὦ βδελυρέ at Dem. 22.66), although it is eschewed by Lysias.[73] Collocations in forensic oratory include ἀσελγὴς καὶ βδελυρός (Dem. 21.98), βδελυρός / πονηρός (Dem. 35.46), and ἀναίσχυντοι καὶ βδελυροί ([Dem.] 43.39; cf. Ar. *Ach*. 287).

Twice the term is used as a direct insult in Aristophanes by a female character (*Eccl*. 1043, *Plut*. 1069), on both occasions an unnamed old woman who is a courtesan or behaving like one. Only once is it directed at a female character, in the intensified form παμβδελυρά (*Eccl*. 1043; cf. *Lys*. 969). In only one of the five Aristophanic instances of the word as a direct insult does it appear in a predicative construction (ἀναίσχυντος εἶ καὶ βδελυρός, *Ach*. 288), and never as superlative βδελυρώτατος. It is a generic term of abuse used in a variety of situations, but sometimes linked particularly to brazenness and a lack of shame, as at *Acharnians* 287–8, *Knights* 304–5, and *Frogs* 465. Aeschines uses βδελυρός to describe Timarchus (1.31) whose drunken and befouled body caused others to look away in shame (1.26); for Theophrastus (*Char*. 11), the βδελυρός man engages in asocial acts (exposing his genitals to free women, belching in public [cf. *Vesp*. 914], etc.); Theopompus (*FGrH* 115 F224) uses the word to describe the behaviour of people attracted to Philip's debauched

[72] Although see Sommerstein 2002: 160–1 on βδελύκτροποι, which describes the Erinyes at A. *Eum*. 52.

[73] For this insult in oratory cf. Konstan 2006: 198–9, Worman 2008: 243–7.

Macedonian court. In Aristophanes, however, βδελυρός is more generic and not automatically indicative of some specific unwholesome behaviour.

σχέτλιος ('miserable', 'wretch') is an exclusively masculine insult in Aristophanes (speaker and addressee), abusive at *Acharnians* 360 (ὦ σχέτλιε, the chorus vituperating Dicaeopolis) and *Frogs* 1049 (ὦ σχέτλι' ἀνδρῶν, Euripides to Aeschylus), 1476 (ὦ σχέτλιε, Euripides to Dionysus). In Homer, σχέτλιος can be positive, meaning 'hardy' or 'unflinching' (e.g. *Il*. 10.164 σχέτλιός ἐσσι γεραιέ· σὺ μὲν πόνου οὔ ποτε λήγεις, *Od*. 12.279–80 σχέτλιός εἰς, Ὀδυσεῦ· περί τοι μένος, οὐδέ τι γυῖα / κάμνεις). Yet it can also be abusive, such as when Aphrodite directs the term at Helen (*Il*. 3.414), or Odysseus three times at the Cyclops (*Od*. 9.351, 478, 494). Similarly, Neoptolemus recalls his reaction when the Atreidae awarded Achilles' arms to Odysseus: ὦ σχέτλι᾽, ἦ ᾽τολμήσατ᾽ ἀντ᾽ ἐμοῦ τινι / δοῦναι τὰ τεύχη τἀμά (S. *Phil*. 369–70). Also in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, the play's namesake protagonist insults Neoptolemus with ὦ σχέτλιε when the latter takes the bow (930). In oratory, too, the term is a strong one, twice paired with ἀναιδής (Dem. 16.6, Isae. 11.6) and frequently occurring in the superlative (e.g. Andoc. 1.124 ὁ πάντων σχετλιώτατος ἀνθρώπων, of Callias who slept with both Ischomachos and her daughter; Lys. 12.26 ὦ σχετλιώτατε πάντων, addressed to Eratosthenes, considered responsible for the death of the speechwriter Lysias' own brother). Somewhat different seems to be the case of Aristophanes' Heracles, who responds with ὦ σχέτλιε (*Ran*. 116) when he learns of Dionysus' intention to visit the Underworld in *Frogs*. This is reminiscent of the word's predominantly tragic use as a reaction to announcements of reckless action (e.g. S. *Ant*. 47, E. *Med*. 873 [to self], *Bacch*. 358) or as an expression of compassion (e.g. E. *Alc*. 824, *Hec*. 783, *IA* 932).

τολμηρός (‘barefaced’, ‘daring’, ‘audacious’) is the prose form of τολμήεις (cf. S. *Phil*. 984 with Schein 2013: 270) and almost exclusively negative. In oratory, Lysias (31.1) attaches the adjective to Philon, accused of fleeing the city when Athens was most in need, and who now brazenly wishes to serve on the Council. Demosthenes couples it with πονηρία and contrasts it with the good morals that allow the city to prosper (25.24; cf. Aeschin. 3.234). In prose, a man who is τολμηρός is equated with a κακοῦργος (Dem. 40.53), does not respect written agreements ([Dem.] 56.19–20), or shamelessly claims credit for acts not of his doing (Dem. 60.21). Aristophanes’ characters provide the only examples of the prosaic word being employed as a direct insult (*Pax* 182, 362, *Ran*. 465—all vocatives), although compare S. *Phil*. 984 ὦ κακῶν κάκιστε καὶ τολμήστατε (Philoctetes to Odysseus). In all Aristophanic occurrences, the term is part of a longer string of abusive words, one of which is consistently a form of μιαρός. Speakers and addressees are also consistently men.

καταπύγων (‘a man who allows himself to be anally penetrated’, ‘debauchee’) is a coarse term, not recorded outside of comedy except in graffiti and on ostraka.[74] It exploits negative stereotypes surrounding not homosexual or anal sex per se, but rather being the passive and/or eager recipient thereof. Dover (1978: 142–3) is right to point out that the word extends also to general charges of inferiority, licentiousness, or shamelessness, and is rarely literal. Pollux 2.184 says that the insult could be communicated by showing the middle finger. Dicaeopolis combines καταπύγων at *Acharnians* 79 with λαικαστής (‘cock-sucker’) to describe Athens’s politicians. Only twice does it appear as a direct insult: the Just Argument to the Unjust Argument (καταπύγων εἶ κἀναίσχυντος, *Nub*. 909) and in

[74] Milne & von Bothmer 1953, Fraenkel 1955: 42–5, Lang 1976: 14–15, Bain 1991: 67, Brenne 2002: 132.

the vulgar bomolochic interjection ὦ κατάπυγον εὐρύπρωκτος εἶ (*Thesm.* 200) addressed to Agathon, who completely ignores the affront. Only twice is καταπύγων spoken by a female character in Aristophanes, though never as a direct insult. The first instance is the chorus of *Clouds* (self-described as παρθένοι at *Nub*. 298), where it is spoken in the parabasis (thus in the poet's name, 529), and probably refers to a character from Aristophanes' earliest comedy *Banqueters* [Δαιταλεῖς], produced in 427 (cf. Σ *Nub*. 529a Koster). The second instance is Lysistrata's emphatic outburst against her own sex (ὦ παγκατάπυγον θἠμέτερον ἅπαν γένος, *Lys*. 137). The amusing comparative καταπυγωνέστερον appears at *Lys*. 776 (also spoken by Lysistrata, though not as a direct insult).

θηρίον ('beast', 'monster') is used as an insult only by men to other men in Aristophanes. It is associated with excessive cowardliness, where it is either spoken by characters on good terms with one another (ὦ δειλότατον σὺ θηρίον, *Av*. 87 = *Plut*. 439, cf. S. *Ichn*. fr. 314.147, 153 *TrGF*), or expresses hostility towards the addressee (ὦ κάκιστον θηρίον, *Vesp*. 448). It does not appear as an insult in tragedy, but pseudo-Demosthenes uses it three times to describe the reviled Aristogeiton ([Dem.] 25.8, 58, 95), and it is found once in direct address against Theocrines ([Dem.] 58.49 ὦ μιαρὸν σὺ θηρίον = Din. 1.50).

μαστιγίας ('someone who deserves a whipping', 'whip-fodder') insinuates that the addressee is servile (cf. Dem 20.131 δοῦλοι καὶ μαστιγίαι) and is thus appropriate vocabulary for satyr play (S. *Kēdaliōn* fr. 329 *TrGF*). Less common in Aristophanes than in later Greek comedy, it occurs as a direct insult only at *Knights* 1228 (μαστιγία, the Sausage-

Seller to Paphlagon) and *Lysistrata* 1240 (ὦ μαστιγίαι), where both times it is spoken by a male character to another male character(s).[75]

τοιχωρύχος (lit. 'someone who digs, breaks, or bores through a wall in order to steal') is a legal term also employed as an insult. Convicted burglars of this sort could be punished with death in Athens, and at *Frogs* 773, *toichōruchoi* occupy the Underworld with cutpurses and father-beaters.[76] Only in comedy does the word appear as a term of direct abuse (*Nub*. 1327, *Plut*. 909, 1141, Amips. fr. 23 K–A ἔρρ' ἐς κόρακας μονοφάγε καὶ τοιχωρύχε [with Orth 2013 *ad loc*.]), always in a vocative construction spoken by one male character to another (in one instance to a god: Karion to Hermes at *Plut*. 1141). In *Wealth* (939), τοιχωρύχος is paired (arguably in hendiadys) with πονηρὸς ἀνήρ. When discussed in prose texts, the τοιχωρύχος is commonly grouped together with the ἱερόσυλος ('temple-robber'/'thief of sacred property'),[77] which itself appears as an insult in Menander (e.g. *Dys*. 640, *Epit*. 1064,

[75] Examples from later comedy include Men. *Dys*. 140, 473, *Epit*. 1113, *Kol*. 125, *Pk*. 324, *Sam*. 324, Philemon fr. 133 K–A, Philippid. fr. 9, Hipparch. fr. 1. Compare Krieter-Spiro 1997: 62 n. 1 for insults typically directed at slaves in Menander, and Kamen 2009 for 'servile invective' (insulting accusations of slave status or slave ancestry) in fourth-century oratory.

[76] For the crime of *toichōruchia* see Xen. *Mem*. 1.2.62, *Apol*. 25, Dem. 35.47, D. Cohen 1983: 72–9. For a literal use of τοιχωρύχος in Aristophanes see *Plut*. 203–6.

[77] Xen. *Mem*. 1.2.62, *Apol*. 25, Pl. *Resp*. 344b3, 575b3, *Leg*. 831e8. See also D. Cohen 1983: 93–115, R. Parker 1983: 170–1, Sommerstein 2001: 136–7, Dover 2002: 95, Beroutsos 2005: 77 (on Men. *Asp*. 227), Sommerstein 2013: 302 (noting that the insult ἱερόσυλε is, in Menander, almost always directed at slaves). Temple robbery was considered on a par with treason (*prodosia*, Xen. *Hell*. 1.7.22), the only two crimes for which perpetrators, after execution, could not be buried in Attic soil. The laws governing the two crimes were, however, distinct (Antiph. 5.10).

Pk. 366, *Sam*. 677, cf. Lys. 30.21) and for which the real-life punishment was also execution (Isocr. 20.6), but which is absent from Aristophanes as a direct insult.[78]

Intellectual deficiency

These insults express the speaker's frustration at an addressee's ineptitude and stupidity. The two characters most often insulted in this way are Strepsiades and Philocleon.

μωρός ('stupid', 'fool') is an adjective directed only at male characters in Aristophanes, where it generally expresses dismay at the target failing to appreciate or understand a message or situation. Chremylus addresses Wealth with ὦ μῶρε (*Plut*. 120) for failing to recognise he is being duped by Zeus. Similar accusations of stupidity occur at *Knights* 350 (ὦ μῶρε τῆς ἀνοίας, Paphlagon to the Sausage-Seller) and *Clouds* 398 (ὦ μῶρε σύ, Socrates to Strepsiades). The address appears in a passage mimicking tragic idiom at *Birds* 1238 (ὦ μῶρε μῶρε, Iris to Peisetairos) and indeed the insult is found several times in tragedy. In Euripides' *Alcestis,* it is directed at Admetus when he invites Heracles into his house, despite his wife having just died (τί μῶρος εἶ; 552); Theseus upbraids Oedipus with ὦ μῶρε for acting stubbornly (S. *OC* 592); Orestes calls the Phrygian slave a 'fool' (μῶρος, E. *Or*. 1527); Antigone implies that Creon is *mōros* (σοὶ δ' εἰ δοκῶ νῦν μῶρα δρῶσα τυγχάνειν / σχεδόν τι μώρῳ μωρίαν ὀφλισκάνω, S. *Ant*. 469–70); and a speaker from Euripides' *Thyestes* offers the following nugget of wisdom: εἰ δ' ἄτερ πόνων / δοκεῖς

[78] It appears once in a descriptive passage, however: ἱερόσυλοι ῥήτορες / καὶ συκοφάνται καὶ πονηροί (*Plut*. 30–1).

ἔσεσθαι, μῶρος εἶ, θνητὸς γεγώς (‘if you think that, as a mortal, you will live without suffering, you are a *mōros*’, fr. 392 *TrGF*).

ἀμαθής (‘ignorant’, ‘boorish’) imputes a lack of education or manners. The four occurrences of this word as an insult in Aristophanes are exclusively masculine (speaker and addressee). The two instances in the vocative (*Pax* 1231, *Ran*. 933) are also the only two superlatives. The term is directly linked to a lack of education at *Birds* 471 and *Clouds* 842 (combined in the latter with παχύς, ‘thick’), but elsewhere merely to general ignorance of social conventions (*Pax* 1231; cf. *Vesp*. 1319–21). At *Eccl*. 201 (not a direct insult), ἀμαθής is contrasted with σοφός.

In tragedy, ἀμαθής is used of Zeus, albeit tentatively, by Amphitryon (E. *Her*. 347). It is rare in oratory, although Lysias qualifies Andocides as πονηρότερος καὶ ἀμαθέστερος Βατράχου (6.45, where Batrachos himself is ὁ πάντων πονηρότατος). In Euripides’ *Andromache*, Hermione charges Andromache with ἀμαθία for sleeping with Neoptolemus (the son of her husband’s murderer). In Plato, ἀμαθία is linked to an absence of grace and harmony in life (*Resp*. 411e) and equated with σκαιότης (‘stupidity’), while at Dem. 40.49 the noun is associated with slandering one’s own dead father.

σκαιός (‘stupid’, ‘simpleminded’, ‘gauche’) is thrice employed as an insult in Aristophanes: ἀγρεῖος εἶ καὶ σκαιός (Socrates to Strepsiades, *Nub*. 655, cf. 790), ὦ σκαιὲ κἀπαίδευτε (*Vesp*. 1183, Bdelycleon to his father), ὦ σκαιότατε (*Plut*. 46, Karion to his master Chremylus). The adjective is related to intellectual and/or social ignorance, as generally in

classical literature.[79] The instance from *Wealth* is the only occurrence of the superlative form used in a direct address in classical Greek.

δυσμαθής ('slow to learn', 'dim') is the opposite of εὐμαθής (Pl. *Resp.* 486c3) and appears in Aristophanes only at *Nub*. 646 (ὡς ἄγροικος εἶ καὶ δυσμαθής, Socrates to Strepsiades).

ἀπαίδευτος ('uneducated') also appears just once in an Aristophanic insult (ὦ σκαιὲ κἀπαίδευτε, *Vesp*. 1183), spoken in frustration by Bdelycleon to his father (although the address is then hastily explained as quoting what Theogenes said to a dung-collector, thus lessening its offensiveness). Elsewhere, ἀπαίδευτος denotes the sort of boorishness or brutishness of the rustic Cyclops (E. *Cyc*. 493; cf. Pl. *Grg*. 510b7–8, *Tht*. 174d–e), and is associated by the Xenophontic Socrates with ἀμαθής to describe children who grow up to become 'most evil and destructive' (Xen. *Mem*. 4.1.4).

ἀνοήτος ('senseless') appears twice in a vocative addressed by one character to another. In *Clouds*, it is addressed by Pheidippides to Strepsiades, who has lost his slippers and is generally acting in a bizarre manner (ὦνόητε σύ, *Nub*. 858). In *Wasps*, the leader of the chorus chides his son with ὦνόητε (252) for ineptly manipulating the lamp wick. The chorus of initiates in *Frogs* also addresses the audience as ὦνόητοι in the parabasis (734). Aristotle uses the adjective to describe the nature of sheep (τὸ τῶν προβάτων ἦθος . . . εὔηθες καὶ

[79] Cf. E. *HF* 282–3 (τῷ δ' ἀναγκαίῳ τρόπῳ / ὃς ἀντιτείνει σκαιὸν ἡγοῦμαι βροτόν), *Temenidai* fr. 736 *TrGF* (ὡς σκαιός ἀνὴρ καὶ ξένοισιν ἄξενος καὶ μνημονεύων οὐδὲν ὧν ἐχρῆν φίλον), *incert. fab*. fr. 1033 (τὸ σκαιὸν εἶναι πρῶτ' ἀμουσίαν ἔχει), Lys. 10.15 (τοῦτον δὲ οὕτω σκαιὸν εἶναι ὥστε οὐ δύνασθαι μαθεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα), Dem. 18.120 (σκαιός paired with ἀναίσθητος), further Bond 1981: 134–5, Wilkins 1993: 109–10, Wirth 2010: 16–18.

ἀνοήτον, Arist. *HA* 610b23). Elsewhere it describes people who have unrealistic expectations about what they can achieve (Ar. *Lys*. 572, Hdt. 8.24, Xen. *Anab*. 2.1.13, *Cyr*. 2.2.15), childishness (Pl. *Grg*. 464d6–7), or ill-informed behaviour (S. *Aj*. 162–3, Lys. 3.9, 13.18, Dem. 4.49; cf. Athen. 7.103.5–7 of octopuses who swim into the hands of people trying to catch them).

2.6. Chapter conclusions

Common to all insults in Aristophanes is the fact that they have been scripted for an audience. The sustained presence of inter-character verbal abuse in the plays suggests that spectators both enjoyed and expected such language. The glossary (section 2.5) has shown how some insulting vocabulary, especially that of a sexual nature, is rarely found outside of comedy. Insults are part of comedy's exploitation of language that might, in other contexts, incur censure or be considered inappropriate, a conclusion that finds echoes in contemporary sources.[80] The glossary has also suggested gender distinctions in the use of insults in Aristophanes: some forms of abuse are exclusively or almost exclusively employed by, and directed at, male characters. That being said, the low incidence of certain terms of abuse coupled with fact that, overall, female characters speak significantly fewer lines than male

[80] Thus a fragment of Lysias reinforces the idea that comedy exposed spectators to language not normally tolerated in other contexts: ἃ τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις αἰσχρόν ἐστι καὶ λέγειν, τῶν κωμῳδοδιδασκάλων ⟨δ'⟩ ἀκούετε καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτόν ('the things that for other people are disgraceful to say, you hear every year from the producers of comedy', fr. 195.10–12 Carey; cf. Isocr. 8.14).

characters, makes drawing firm conclusions on gendered insults difficult.[81] Regarding the form that insults take, creative neologisms (κρουνοχυτρολήραιον, etc.) serve to show off Aristophanes' linguistic inventiveness, and find parallels in dithyrambic and iambic poetry. Repetition and hyperbole, effective comico-poetic tropes in all circumstances, are also employed in several insulting addresses. The piling up of insults by the doorkeepers in *Peace* and *Frogs*, which is a stock joke, are particularly conspicuous examples of these techniques.

The scenarios discussed in sections 2.3 and 2.4 show how insults can convey information about a character's constructed personality and about hierarchical relationships between characters. Conflict is the strongest motivator of insults in Aristophanes and occurs regularly, though not mandatorily, in clashes with intruder figures. Insults reflect and punctuate the struggles of comic characters to impose their will upon or assert dominance over others, contributing to comedy's turbulent atmosphere. The conflict elements discussed in the following two chapters, namely threats and physical slapstick, are a further part of this.

[81] Lines in the extant corpus that contain at least some female speech equate to about 17.5 per cent of the total. For a brief survey of female characters in Aristophanes' lost comedies see Taaffe 1993: 163–4 n. 5.

CHAPTER 3

Threats

3.1. Opening remarks

In the preceding chapter, we saw how Aristophanes uses insults to generate humour, and how insults are linked to characterisation. Here, I turn my attention to threats, that is, where a character communicates their intent to perform, or set in motion, an act that will harm the addressee or someone/something cherished by the addressee.[1]

'One of the most fundamental requirements in all drama', Duckworth writes in his classic study of Roman comedy, 'is that of arousing and maintaining the interest of the audience'.[2] To that end, having a character threaten another is effective since threats produce both immediate energy and, if left unresolved, suspense. Consider the assembly scene from *Acharnians*, where Pseudartabas' garbled speech has exasperated Dicaeopolis. The

[1] Modern discussions of threats tend to focus on their classification as speech acts (e.g. Nicoloff 1989, Fraser 1998, Walton & Macagno 2007) and observe that threats: a) differentiate themselves from warnings by serving the interests of the speaker rather than those of the addressee, and b) that the ability of a threat to influence an addressee's behaviour depends on the perceived level of future harm (the more harmful a threatened action, the more effective the threat will be), as well as on the credibility of the threat (the less likely it seems the threatening person will carry out the threatened action or is able to carry out the threatened action, the less effective the threat will be). These criteria can, as we will see in this chapter, be distorted to humorous ends.

[2] Duckworth 1952: 209.

protagonist resolves to question the foreign visitor himself and his interrogation takes the form of a threat: 'Come on now, tell me clearly on this, or I'll dip you like dyed material from Sardis!' (111–12). Dicaeopolis' words mimic the ambassador's earlier 'Come on now, say what the King has sent you to tell the Athenians' (98–9), but the protagonist adds a promise of physical harm if Pseudartabas does not reply intelligibly. Sardis' reputation for the manufacture of crimson dye inspires the image of 'dipping', that is, of turning Pseudartabas a reddish-purple colour reminiscent of blood and bruising, and Dicaeopolis' 'on this' (πρὸς τουτονί), although obscure in print, most likely refers to his fist.[3] With his fist looming, therefore, the threatened beating is credible, emphasising the protagonist's frustration and heightening the scene's tension, albeit briefly (Dicaeopolis' attention quickly shifts to the disguised ambassadors).

Compare the above interaction with Dicaeopolis' lengthier and more elaborate strategy for overcoming the chorus. Having organised his private peace treaty, the protagonist finds himself confronted by a group of resentful and aggressive Acharnians. They will not listen to his motives for concluding peace, so Dicaeopolis announces he has 'hostages' (327) that he is going to 'kill in return' (ἀνταποκτενῶ, 326) and 'slaughter' (ἀποσφάξω, 327). He steps into the stage building, leaving the choreuts momentarily alone

[3] So Sommerstein 1988: 163, Olson 2002: 107–8, and compare *Pax* 256 (οὑτοσί σοι κόνδυλος). Dover 1987: 290–1 suggests that Dicaeopolis' deictic pronoun refers to a stick (e.g. a σκίπων; cf. *Vesp*. 727). Athenian assembly-attendees did typically carry walking sticks (*Vesp*. 33, *Eccl*. 74, 148–50, 276, Biles & Olson 2015: 92), but these are normally referred to either as a (feminine) βακτηρία or a (neuter) βακτήριον. On the association of crimson dye production with Sardis, inland capital of the Persian Empire's western-most satrapy, see Greenewalt & Majewski 1980, Olson 1998: 291–2. On the imagery of dye ≈ blood compare A. *Pers*. 317, *Ag*. 239, Plaut. *Rud*. 1000 (*fiet tibi puniceum corium, postea atrum denuo*), Garvie 1986: 332–3.

and confused. They recognise that a threat has been made (τί τοῦτ' ἀπειλεῖ τοὔπος; 328), but fail to grasp the situation, asking three questions in succession (328–30). Their ignorance is shared by the play's spectators, who are also unaware of the identity of Dicaeopolis' hostages. When the hero surprisingly emerges with a basket of coals and a sword, he repeats his threat in clearer terms: 'I'll destroy this one!', he says, indicating the basket.[4] The Acharnians now understand and plead with Dicaeopolis to desist: 'Don't do what you are about to do, don't do it, oh don't!' (ἀλλὰ μὴ δράσῃς ὃ μέλλεις, μηδαμῶς, ὦ μηδαμῶς, 334; cf. *Eq.* 19, *Pax* 385). But the implacable protagonist merely restates his threat, for the third time (335), prolonging the suspense as the threatened 'slaughter' becomes more imminent. Distortion of the scene's tragic model, namely Euripides' *Telephus*, dictates much of the humour.[5] Unlike in the source version, the unexpected target is not a human baby, but rather a basket of charred wood, yet the Acharnian demesmen panic as they place disproportionately high value on this humble target. Combining paratragedy with rustic stereotypes and surprise, Aristophanes harnesses Dicaeopolis' threats here to produce a multi-layered and humorously absurd scenario that continues for over twenty lines of text. The scene provokes an important pivot in the story since Dicaeopolis' strategy allows him to disarm the chorus; the tragic parody, for its part, foreshadows the protagonist's visit to Euripides' house and eventual defence speech in the guise of Telephus.

[4] ἐγὼ γὰρ τουτονὶ διαφθερῶ (331). The objects that Dicaeopolis holds are a λάρκος (333), a basket for carrying dry goods (Olson 2002: 164), and a ξίφος (342), a short double-edged sword.

[5] For the multiple references to the Telephus myth throughout *Acharnians*, of which the hostage scene is a prominent instance, see Olson 2002: lvii–lxi. Reconstructions of Euripides' original *Telephus* tragedy (438 BCE) on the basis of the extant fragments and Aristophanes' various parodies can be found in Rau 1967: 19–26, Heath 1987a, Collard, Cropp, & Lee 1995: 17–25, Preiser 2000.

The threats in these two *Acharnians* episodes, the assembly scene and the hostage parody, are part of a matrix of jokes and dramatic techniques that include suspense, characterisation, the interplay of genres, visual humour, foiled expectations, and word games. This chapter sets out to analyse such elements as they appear in encounters featuring threats, as well as how threats are transformed into vehicles for humour. The latter occurs particularly, as we will see, when characters make exaggerated, inappropriate, or unrealistic threats (like the countryman Dicaeopolis threatening the Persian envoy), or when a character's reaction (like that of the Acharnian demesmen) comes across as incommensurate with the tenor or seriousness of a threat to which they have been subjected. It will become apparent too that threats in the comedies are almost never actualised, part of Aristophanes' avoidance of consequential violence that is explored further in the following chapter. Finally, the verbal and rhetorical effects encountered in the previous chapter, such as repetition or hyperbole, are also exploited in exchanges of threats. The study of threats thus complements that of insults and of Aristophanic style in general. Following a contextual analysis of threats in six select comedies, a formal grammatical analysis concludes this chapter, with comparative data from tragedy and satyr play.

3.2. Aristophanic threats in context

In this main section, I consider the role of threats in six comedies: *Knights*, *Wasps*, *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, *Frogs*, and *Birds*. I have selected these plays because they contain threats that inform our understanding of Aristophanic humour and dramaturgy also beyond the immediate concerns of the scenarios in which the threats occur. *Knights* contains a series of amoebean threat contests that not only underscore similarities between the play's two rivals ('Paphlagon is an abusive and unctuous villain; his opponent is an abusive and

unctuous villain', Silk 2000: 336), but also allow Aristophanes to flaunt his poetic skill. Philocleon's disdain for threats of legal action in the final scenes of *Wasps* is one of several undesirable consequences of his transformation from jury-addict into misbehaving socialite. Threats in the mouths of female characters in *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae* help emphasise the women's solidarity as well as their resistance to male antagonists. Lastly, threats are directed at gods in *Frogs* and *Birds*, though the dramatic effect and outcome within the narrative are not the same.

3.2.1. Threat contests in Knights

Knights contains the most threats of any surviving Aristophanic comedy. Most appear in stylised threat contests between the play's two protagonists. These parallel exchanges are important for the characterisation of Paphlagon and the Sausage-Seller, with the latter consistently having the last word and thus emerging victorious.

Not only is the Sausage-Seller able to trump his opponent's threats, as we will see further below, but he also insists upon his imperviousness to them. Thus, when Paphlagon rushes on to the scene like a 'tidal wave' (κολόκυμα, 692) after his defeat in front of the Council, loudly threatening to 'destroy' the Sausage-Seller with lies, the latter responds as follows:

> ἥσθην ἀπειλαῖς, ἐγέλασα ψολοκομπίαις,
> ἀπεπυδάρισα μόθωνα, περιεκόκκυσα
>
> I am delighted at threats, laugh at fuming boasts,
> kick up a *mothōn*, cry 'cock-a-doodle-doo' all around.
>
> Ar. *Eq*. 696–7

Asyndeton compresses the Sausage-Seller's catalogue of surprising reactions and, together with the unusual repetition of instantaneous aorists, accentuates his elation and thus contempt for his rival.[6] Like Pheidippides in *Clouds* who enjoys being insulted, the Sausage-Seller first explains how he is 'delighted' (ἥσθην) by Paphlagon's threats.[7] He then goes on to 'laugh' (ἐγέλασα) in the face of his rival's 'fuming blusters' (ψολοκομπίαις) before breaking out into an animated dance called a *mothōn*. The dance is obscure, but Pollux claims it was vulgar and associated with seafarers; the verb employed by the Sausage-Seller to describe his movements suggests the raising of one's legs, a gesture that could be associated with excessive shamelessness when the kicks were high and revealing.[8] Halliwell

[6] Verbal accumulation can communicate a speaker's joy, e.g. ὡς ἥδομαι καὶ χαίρομαι κεὐφραίνομαι, (*Pax* 291, during masturbation), ὡς ἥδομαι καὶ τέρπομαι καὶ βούλομαι χορεῦσαι (*Plut*. 288, the chorus upon learning Wealth's identity), ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἀνηλάλαξα κἀνωρχησάμην κἄκρουσα χεῖρας (E. *Supp*. 719–20, upon military victory). For multiple aorist indicatives in asyndeton, which is rare, compare *Ach*. 274–5 (participles), S. *El*. 1234–5 ἐμόλετ᾽ ἀρτίως, / ἐφηύρετ᾽, ἤλθετ᾽, εἴδεθ᾽ οὓς ἐχρῄζετε (a line that may be corrupt, however; see Finglass 2007: 472–3), Pl. *Cri*. 51c8–9 (participles).

[7] In his study of the 'tragic aorist', Lloyd 1999: 29–30 emphasises the performative aspect of ἥσθην, suggesting that it is the 'verbal equivalent of laughter rather than a report of it' (cf. *Pax* 1066). The aorist, Lloyd continues, has a distancing effect and thus converts 'amusement pure and simple into derision'. Cf. Halliwell 2008: 446 n. 35, invoking the hendiadys ἥσθη … καὶ ἐπεγέλασεν at [Pl.] *Amat*. 134b3.

[8] Pollux 4.101.2 ὁ δὲ μόθων φορτικὸν ὄρχημα καὶ ναυτικόν. We also hear that the *mothōn* was accompanied by an *aulos* player (Athen. 618c). For leg lifting see LSJ πυδαρίζω A, citing *App*. *Prov*. 4.25 ὄνον ἐπάραντα τὰ σκέλη πυδαρίζειν, and for more details on the dance's possible movements see Lawler 1964: 75–7. For overly revealing leg thrusts compare Hdt. 6.129.3–4 (with Olson 2018), Ar. *Vesp*. 1492–3, *Lys*. 799–800, 823–4, Xen. *Symp*. 2.22–3. On the centrality (and

(2008: 261) accordingly translates the half-line as 'I jiggle my bum with contempt'. Whatever form the *mothōn* took, dancing is a conspicuous expression of joy and, like spontaneous delight and laughter, is a further perverse reaction to Paphlagon's threats and boasts.[9] The Sausage-Seller does not linger on this, however, as the imagery swiftly progresses to the crowning and more aggressive act of imitating a rooster.[10] Doing this in front of one's adversary, the apex of the Sausage-Seller's reactions, is provocative and suggests domination (perhaps with sexual overtones) by exploiting the rooster's reputation for being a proud, pugnacious, and promiscuous bird.[11] We might compare the Aeschylean

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ambiguities) of dance in classical Athenian society and the sensitivity of Athenian citizens to different dance forms see Kowalzig 2004, Wohl 2004, Folch 2015: 215–19, Peponi 2015.

[9] On dancing for joy see e.g. A. *Ag*. 31, E. *Supp*. 719, *El*. 859–61, Ar. *Pax* 324–5, *Plut*. 288–9, LSJ χορεύω A 2, Shisler 1942: 287. For supposed historical instances of dancing in mockery of one's opponent see Hdt. 3.151, Plut. *Sull*. 13.1.

[10] κοκκύζειν, the simplex of the verb used by the Sausage-Seller, represents the call either of the cuckoo (ὁ κόκκυξ; cf. Hes. *WD* 486, Ar. *Av*. 505) or more commonly (although confusingly for later interpreters; see Dunbar 1995: 345, K–A on Cratin. fr. 344), that of the rooster (e.g. *Eccl*. 31, Cratin. fr. 344 K–A, Plat. com. fr. 231, Diph. fr. 66, Arist. *Hist. an.* 631b2–3, 9–10). I reprint the paradosis περιεκόκκυσα (although cf. Ravennas 429: –κκαυσα). On the basis of Photius, Dindorf emended to περιεκόκκασα (adopted by Wilson in his OCT edition), though κοκκάζειν, unlike κοκκύζειν, is not an otherwise attested verb.

[11] For the cock's associations with hyper-masculine virility in classical Greek art and literature see Csapo 1993a: 14–18, Arnott 2007: 10, Popkin 2012: 216–21. Perhaps reflecting popular belief, Aristotle (*Hist. an*. 631b8–11) records how hens who defeat roosters will 'crow [κοκκύζουσι] in imitation of the male bird and try to copulate with their opponent and puff out their feathers and rumps'—we might like to imagine the Sausage-Seller moving in this way (cf. Lawler 1951). On the late fifth-century 'Getty Birds' krater (J. P. Getty Museum [Malibu] 82.AE.83) showing two

Aegisthus who is likened to a bragging cockerel upon his ascension to the throne as Clytemnestra's new husband (ἀλέκτωρ, A. *Ag*. 1671), or the mockery endured by Demosthenes' client Ariston who accuses his assailant of gloatingly 'singing in imitation of a cock' over his badly beaten body (ᾇδε γὰρ τοὺς ἀλεκτρυόνας μιμούμενος, Dem. 54.9). In *Knights*, the reference to 'cock-crowing around' may give the Sausage-Seller's reaction a more belligerent closing touch, setting the tone for the rest of the exchange.

The Sausage-Seller's elaborate series of responses infuriates Paphlagon who resorts to more threats, each also rejected by his rival. In accordance with the play's recurrent motif of corrupt eating and drinking, Paphlagon first responds to his opponent's mockery by making the threatening imprecation (upon himself) that he 'live no longer' should he fail to 'devour [the Sausage-Seller] out of this land'.[12] The Sausage-Seller reciprocates, wishing upon himself to 'burst at the seams' if he fails to 'drink [Paphlagon] out of this land'.[13] In this contest, big mouths and rapacious appetites will carry the day.

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opposing figures disguised as roosters and which is tentatively linked to comedy, see Taplin 1993: 103–4, Revermann 2006a: 217–19. For the iconography of ancient cock-fighting in general see Bruneau 1965. Note that cock-fighting had already been evoked in *Knights* at 495–7, where Demos advises the Sausage-Seller to 'bite, hurl slander, devour his [sc. Paphlagon's] crests and return once you have gnawed off his wattles' (μέμνησό νυν / δάκνειν διαβάλλειν, τοὺς λόφους κατεσθίειν / χὤπως τὰ κάλλαι' ἀποφαγὼν ἥξεις πάλιν).

[12] ἐὰν μή σ' ἐκφάγω / ἐκ τῆσδε τῆς γῆς (698–9). On the important motif of corrupt eating and drinking in *Knights* see Whitman 1964: 92–6, Hubbard 1991: 68–9, Wilkins 2000: 187–92, Worman 2008: 88–92.

[13] ἢν μή σ' ἐκπίω / κἀπεκροφήσας αὐτὸς ἐπιδιαρραγῶ (700–1). On this sort of voluntary self-cursing, which is more frequent in comedy than in tragedy, see Konstantinidou *ap*. Sommerstein & Torrance 2014: 30–7. Konstantinidou notes (p. 35) that these sorts of curses can underlie threatening

The imagery of (out-)consuming one's rival is succeeded by two more pairs of explicit threats, which also echo one another:

[Πα.] ἐξαρπάσομαί σου τοῖς ὄνυξι τἄντερα.

[Ἀλ.] ἀπονυχιῶ σου τὰν πρυτανείῳ σιτία.

[Πα.] ἕλξω σε πρὸς τὸν δῆμον, ἵνα δῷς μοι δίκην.

[Ἀλ.] κἀγὼ δέ σ᾽ ἕλξω καὶ διαβαλῶ πλείονα.

[Paph.] I'll snatch out your guts with my claws.

[Saus.] I'll claw away the meals you get in the Prytaneum.

[Paph.] I'll drag you before Demos to have you punished.

[Saus.] I'll drag you there too and slander you more.

Ar. *Eq*. 708–11

Competitive eating and drinking gives way here to threats of snatching and clawing, before subsiding into less animalistic menaces of legal justice and calumny. The image of 'snatching'—that is, shameless theft (Pl. *Leg*. 941b2 κλοπὴ μὲν χρημάτων ἀνελεύθερον, ἁρπαγὴ δὲ ἀναίσχυντον)—probably alludes to Cleon's alleged, self-interested exploitation of Athens's allies (205, 438–9, 802, 1034) and is not isolated. Earlier, the chorus had labelled Paphlagon a 'Charybdis of snatching' (Χάρυβδιν ἁρπαγῆς, 248), and in the oracle predicting Paphlagon's succession he is described as 'a snatcher screecher' (ἅρπαξ κεκράκτης, 137). This suggests that snatching formed part of Cleon's contemporary popular image, or at least one that Aristophanes wished to promote. We should read this in

statements, citing E. *Or*. 1146–7, Ar. *Eq*. 832–5, *Nub*. 1255. Funny variants, whereby the harm is wished upon others, occur at *Ran*. 586–8, E. *Cyc*. 266–72.

conjunction with the accusations of peculation (κλοπή) that Aristophanes repeatedly levels against Cleon, both in this play and others (*Eq*. 444, 1226, *Nub*. 591, *Vesp*. 759, 1224–7). Paphlagon's reliance on his 'claws' to grab the Sausage-Seller's guts (a reference to the latter's trade) again recalls the oracle where Paphlagon was described, adapting the Homeric epithet 'crooked-beaked' (ἀγκυλοχείλης, *Il*. 16.428, *Od*. 19.538), as a 'crooked-clawed leather-eagle' (βυρσαίετος ἀγκυλοχήλης, *Eq*. 197) who 'snatches with his crooked hands'.[14] The Sausage-Seller, for his part, responds to Paphlagon's gut-snatching threat in kind, coining the prepositional verb ἀπονυχίζειν to imply that he will 'claw away' the meals that Paphlagon (i.e. Cleon) enjoys in the *prytaneion*.[15] Here, the echo of Paphlagon's ὄνυξι ('claws') is embedded in the Sausage-Seller's verb; in the following threat pair, which exploits vocabulary from the legal sphere, the echo is more explicit, with the Sausage-Seller repeating Paphlagon's 'I'll drag' (ἕλξω) verbatim. The final word of the entire exchange, 'more' (πλείονα), encapsulates the dynamic between the two characters: whatever Paphlagon threatens, the Sausage-Seller will reciprocate, but to a greater degree.

This line-for-line shouting match, where each threat directly counters and attempts to outdo the one preceding it, is the third such confrontation in the play. These contests are a key component of *Knights* whose plot centres on the protagonists' attempts to eclipse each

[14] ἀγκύλαις ταῖς χερσὶν ἁρπάζων (205; cf. *Av*. 1111). The eagle comparison is apposite since, like Paphlagon (ἐφορᾷ γὰρ οὗτος πάντα, 75), this high-flying bird sees everything (*Il*. 17.674–5 [πάντοσε παπταίνων ὥς τ' αἰετός, ὅν ῥά τέ φασιν / ὀξύτατον δέρκεσθαι ὑπουρανίων πετεηνῶν], *Hom. Hymn Herm*. 359–60, Arist. *Hist. an*. 620a2, Ael. *NA* 1.42).

[15] It appears that Cleon was rewarded with *sitēsis* (meals at public expense; see Schmitt Pantel 1992: 147–68, Blok & van 't Wout 2018) in the *prytaneion*, most likely after his success at Pylos in 425, although *Knights* provides the only evidence of this (*Eq*. 575–6, 1404–5). For *sitēsis* being awarded to generals compare Aeschin. 2.80, 3.196, Dem. 23.130, 136.

other in terms of *ponēria*, transforming disgusting and antisocial impulses into badges of political merit. The stylised flyting of these exchanges not only exploits an established poetic motif, but also (and perhaps more importantly) reflects the perceived decline in political etiquette that the comedy takes as its premise. Although exaggerated to comic effect, this may well have a grounding in the contemporary climate: Thucydides (2.65.10–12) describes how, following the death of Pericles in 429, multiple successors of more or less equal standing (ἴσοι μᾶλλον αὐτοί) vied for supremacy in the city, creating the impetus for the catastrophic Sicilian expedition with their 'private disputes'.[16] At any rate, despite, or rather in addition to, their poetic richness, the use of parallelism in the threat-exchanges from *Knights* reinforces the idea that, although rivals, Paphlagon and the Sausage-Seller are in fact similar figures (as the play repeatedly and explicitly reminds us). This envisions a grim future for Athens that is only rescued—perhaps—with Demos' miraculous rejuvenation and apparent rediscovered political acumen at the end of the performance. I say 'perhaps', because the conclusion of *Knights*, with its lack of a conventional joyous *exodos*, is not without ambiguity. Demos, although now nominally wise to the flattery of greedy politicians, simply ends up replacing one scoundrel with another. The switch is explicit: Paphlagon will henceforth be selling sausages (1397–8) while the shameless Sausage-Seller will take Paphlagon's place in the *prytaneion*.[17] From this perspective, the threat exchanges

[16] κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας διαβολὰς περὶ τῆς τοῦ δήμου προστασίας (Thuc. 2.65.11). See Balot 2001: 159–72, Harris 2013: 305–44 for analyses of the political situation in Athens at this time, and Rosenbloom 2002 for echoes of it in drama.

[17] On the ending of *Knights*, which is perhaps corrupt or truncated, see Brock 1986, Welsh 1990, 1992, Harder 1997, Hesk 2000a: 255–58, 289–91, Rosenbloom 2002: 327–9, Di Bari 2013: 33–61, Pirrotta 2016: 36–45.

in *Knights* are part of the gloomy political picture offered up by what is one of Aristophanes' most cynical plays.

With their fast pace, creative use of responsion, and element of surprise, the threat exchanges from *Knights* are entertaining and enjoyable. They belong to the broader comic trope of imitating and/or corrupting the speech of one's interlocutor, examples of which include Dicaeopolis mimicking Lamachus' war preparations at the end of *Acharnians* (1118–38), Echo and the Scythian Archer in *Thesmophoriazusae* (1083–9), the discussion between the co-operative neighbour and the greedy man in *Ecclesiazusae* (799–804), or the mocking of the Old Woman in *Wealth* (1031–7).[18] However, the technique is sustained longest in, and is most integral to, the plot of *Knights*. One reason might be that Aristophanes was drawing on Cleon's reputation for threatening his political opponents, although the evidence for this comes primarily from comedy itself.[19] Other possible sources of inspiration for the mirrored exchanges are sympotic games (Collins 2004) or, as Hesk suggests in his

[18] The motif is by no means confined to Aristophanes. The technique of *par pari respondere* is well attested for Plautine comedy (see Thamm 1972: 564, Wallochny 1992: 166–72, Germany 2016: 141–5, Richlin 2017: 151–71); flyting formed the basis of several humorous medieval compositions (e.g. *The Flyting of Dumbar and Kennedie*, Rutebeuf's *La disputaison de Charlot et du Barbier de Melun*); Shakespeare too employs flyting as well as asteismus to comic effect (e.g. Ben.: 'God keep your ladyship still in that mind [sc. not to marry]! So some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face' / Beatr.: 'Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours' / Ben.: 'Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher' / Beatr.: 'A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours', *Much Ado About Nothing* 1.1.98–103), on which see Galway 1935, Joseph 1947: 167–8.

[19] E.g. *Eq*. 922, 927, *Vesp*. 1229–30, *Pax* 753 (ἀπειλὰς βορβοροθύμους), but see also Tsakmakis & Kostopoulos 2011 who detect a threatening tone in Cleon's speeches as recorded by Thucydides.

study of 'combative capping' in Aristophanes, banter from the Athenian agora.[20] The latter would certainly fit with the Sausage-Seller's close association with the market (the character's true name, revealed at 1257, is Agorakritos) and all that place's perceived vices.[21] The first threat-contest in the play occurs already in Paphlagon's initial encounter with the Sausage-Seller, after the prophesied usurper has been coached and convinced of his political potential:

[Πα.] ἀποθανεῖσθον αὐτίκα μάλα.
[Ἀλ.] τριπλάσιον κεκράξομαί σου. 285
[Πα.] καταβοήσομαι βοῶν σε.
[Ἀλ.] κατακεκράξομαί σε κράζων.
[Πα.] διαβαλῶ σ', ἐὰν στρατηγῇς.
[Ἀλ.] κυνοκοπήσω σου τὸ νῶτον.
[Πα.] περιελῶ σ' ἀλαζονείαις. 290
[Ἀλ.] ὑποτεμοῦμαι τὰς ὁδούς σου.
. . .
[Πα.] διαφορήσω σ', εἴ τι γρύξεις.
[Ἀλ.] κοπροφορήσω σ', εἰ λαλήσεις. 295

[Paph.] [*to the Sausage-Seller and the slave*] You're both going to die, right here, right now!

[20] Hesk 2007: 130–50. The parallels that Hesk offers are, however, later than *Knights*, namely fourth- or third-century comic poets and sayings attributed to the lyre-player Stratonicus, whom Hesk situates in the fifth century, but who Gilula 2000: 424–5 has argued was active in the first half of the fourth.

[21] Cf. Ch. 1 n. 13 above.

[Saus.] I'll screech three times as much as you.

[Paph.] I'll shout you down with my shouting.

[Saus.] I'll screech you down with my screeching.

[Paph.] I'll slander you if you serve as general.

[Saus.] I'll bitch-slap your back.[22]

[Paph.] I'll harass you with fake boasts.

[Saus.] I'll cut you off.

. . .

[Paph.] I'll rip you to pieces if you mumble a word.

[Saus.] I'll haul you away like a pile of shit if you blabber.[23]

Ar. *Eq* 284–91, 294–5

A powerful and abrasive voice had earlier been identified as essential for demagogic success (137, 218) and the ability to outshout one's opponent given as a decisive factor in judging the contest between the play's two rivals (274–7). Here, Paphlagon's tautology ('I'll shout you down shouting') performatively draws attention to this and is immediately matched by the Sausage-Seller's own duplicated use of the verb κράζειν, which denotes shrill or

[22] κυνοκοπήσω σου τὸ νῶτον is interpreted in the scholia either as 'I'll beat you like a dog' (τυπτήσω σε καθάπερ κύνα, Σ *Eq*. 289a Jones/Wilson) or a reference to the culinary preparation of a fish called κύων (Σ *Eq*. 289a–b; for the fish see LSJ κύων IV, Olson & Sens 2000: 106). Both seem plausible, but I translate along the lines of the former since Cleon is elsewhere likened to a dog (e.g. *Eq*. 1015–20 [Paphlagon, of himself], *Vesp*. 902–30, *Pax* 313–15).

[23] On the compound κοπροφορήσω, translated here as 'I'll haul you away like a pile of shit', see Appendix III.

unrestrained screaming.[24] Again, this may be drawing on a real-life trait of Cleon's. In *Wasps*, Cleon is referred to as 'the king of screeching' (ὁ κεκραξιδάμας, 596), and elsewhere he is characterised as possessing a loud and shrill voice.[25] The audience is reminded of this at the end of *Knights*, when it is announced that the defeated Paphlagon will be reduced to 'screeching' (διακεκραγέναι) with prostitutes and bathmen.[26]

Paphlagon's follow-up threat to 'slander' his opponent is merely an extension, or rather a confirmation, of his characterisation as a sykophantic arch-slanderer (διαβολώτατον, 45; cf. 63–4), enshrined in his nickname among the other household slaves (ὁ Βάσκανος, 103; cf. Dem. 18.242, 21.209). The threat pair in lines 290–1 draws on terminology from the cavalry, perhaps a nod to the chorus of Knights that stands by; the verb περιελαύνειν, as Hesk points out, can describe a literal encircling by horsemen.[27] In other

[24] Compare S. *Eurypylus* fr. 208.4–6 *TrGF* (the sound of a crow), Ar. *Plut*. 722 (a reaction to having vinegar smeared in one's eyes), Xen. *Cyr*. 1.3.10 (a side-effect of extreme drunkenness; cf. *Vesp*. 1311), and further Rosenbloom 2002: 306, Beta 2004: 62–72, Finglass 2011: 483, LSJ κλάζω. For the repeated verb, compare the intensifying inner accusative κράγον κεκράξεται at *Eq*. 487 (further comic examples of this figure in Willi 2003: 252 n. 104).

[25] *Eq*. 274–5, 311, *Vesp*. 36 (Cleon's voice compared to that of a squealing pig that has been set on fire), 1228, [Arist.] *Ath. Pol*. 28.3, Halliwell 1990: 76, Sommerstein 2009: 165. The name Paphlagon itself puns on παφλάζειν (lit. 'to boil'), a verb used elsewhere metaphorically for 'blustering styles of oratory' (Olson 1998: 134 with exx.).

[26] πόρναισι καὶ βαλανεῦσι διακεκραγέναι (1404). Bathmen are elsewhere associated with bad behaviour (*Ran*. 710, *Plut*. 955–6), and are linked to prostitutes in a drinking song recorded by Athenaeus (πόρνη καὶ βαλανεὺς τωὐτὸν ἔχουσ᾽ ἐμπεδέως ἔθος κτλ., Athen. 15.695e = *PMG* 905).

[27] Hesk 2007: 143 n. 57, citing e.g. Hdt. 1.106.1 (marauding Scythians), Xen. *Hell*. 6.5.14, *Cyr*. 4.2.32, 5.2.4, 7.5.1.

contexts it refers figuratively to political harassment, however (e.g. Dem. 42.32), which is perhaps the more dominant sense here (so *Eq*. 887 οἴμοι τάλας οἵοις πιθηκισμοῖς με περιελαύνεις). At any rate, the Sausage-Seller caps this with another military metaphor ('I'll cut you off'; cf. LSJ ὑποτέμνω II), again signalling that whatever Paphlagon threatens, he can go one better. The final pair of threats promises cruder violence (ripping to pieces, hauling away like manure) as both speakers attempt to bully the other into silence, a frequent means of dominating one's opponent in Old Comedy.[28] Speech again becomes the focus here, with the rivals' respective attempts at intimidation reduced to mere 'mumbling' or 'blabbering'.[29] This ties in not only with the threats of shouting and screeching from a few lines earlier, but also with the play's overarching engagement with the political potency of the voice. The Sausage-Seller's 'smooth talking' (εὐγλωττία) will, the chorus proclaims, transform him into the 'greatest of Greeks'.[30] This topos of the influential voice culminates in the (reported) Council scene where the Sausage-Seller, who had prayed for a 'wily tongue and a shameless voice' (637–8), defeats Paphlagon in front of the city's councillors and reduces his rival's formerly persuasive speech to 'babbling' (φληναφᾶν, 664).

[28] Discussed by Sfyroeras 2001: 52–9.

[29] For the real-life Cleon as a λάλος ('blabberer') see *Pax* 653, Beta 2004: 156–7.

[30] μέγιστος Ἑλλήνων ἔσει (836–7). *Euglōssia* may have been distrusted in democratic Athens and associated with dishonesty, so e.g. *Nub*. 443–51, E. *incert. fab*. fr. 928b *TrGF* ('O Zeus, why do you give this faculty to all base men, that of *euglōssia*, but to those who are good men [you give] an inability to speak?'). See further Ober 1989: 165–70, Rosenbloom 2009: 198–201.

Alongside references to the voice, conspicuous in *Knights* are also the frequent, interwoven allusions to the antagonists' occupations of sausage retailer and tanner.[31] These come to a head when Paphlagon wishes upon himself to be sawn through, cut up (κατατμηθείην), and made into leather straps (767–8) should he be found to hate Demos. The Sausage-Seller surpasses this by wishing upon himself to be cut up (κατατμηθείς) into little pieces and cooked, then grated into a cheese dish and dragged to the Kerameikos by a hook drawn through his testicles should his love for Demos prove false (769–72). Nods to the respective occupations clearly emerge in one of the mirrored threat exchanges too, even if the arrangement of the lines presents some difficulties:

[Ἀλ.] ἐγὼ δὲ βυνήσω γέ σου τὸν πρωκτὸν ἀντὶ φύσκης.

[Πα.] ἐγὼ δέ γ' ἐξέλξω σε τῆς πυγῆς θύραζε κῦβδα. 365

[Οἰκ. α] νὴ τὸν Ποσειδῶ κἀμὲ τἄρ', ἤνπερ γε τοῦτον ἕλκῃς.

[Πα.] οἷόν σε δήσω <'ν> τῷ ξύλῳ.

[Ἀλ.] διώξομαί σε δειλίας.

[Πα.] ἡ βύρσα σου θρανεύσεται.

[Ἀλ.] δερῶ σε θύλακον κλοπῆς. 370

[Πα.] διαπατταλευθήσει χαμαί.

[Ἀλ.] περικόμματ' ἔκ σου σκευάσω.

[Πα.] τὰς βλεφαρίδας σου παρατιλῶ.

[Ἀλ.] τὸν πρηγορεῶνά σου 'κτεμῶ.

[31] Paphlagon is introduced as 'Paphlagon, a hideworker' (βυρσοδέψην Παφλαγόνα, 44 = *Nub*. 581), a clear reference to Cleon's connections to the business of tanning. The Paphlagon/Cleon analogy is explored in detail by Lind 1990.

[Saus.] I'll stuff your arse like a sausage skin.[32]

[Paph.] I'll drag you out the door by the buttocks, doggy-style.[33]

[1st slave] Drag me too, by Poseidon, if you do drag him out.

[Paph.] I look forward to putting you in the stocks![34]

[Saus.] I'll have you indicted for cowardice.[35]

[Paph.] Your hide will be stretched out on a bench.[36]

[Saus.] I'll skin you into a sack for theft.[37]

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[32] The φύσκη, translated here as 'sausage skin', is the large intestine (Hsch. φ 1060 Hansen/Cunningham, Σ *Eq*. 364a Jones/Wilson). I print Jackson's conjecture βυνήσω ('I will stuff'; cf. fr. 733 πυ]γὴ βεβυσμένη) instead of the MSS βινήσω/κινήσω ('I will fuck'), which is more explicit, but eliminates the reference to the Sausage-Seller's product.

[33] κῦβδα, translated here as 'doggy-style' (cf. *Pax* 896a, Austin & Olson 2004: 201), means literally 'bent forward', but with sexual overtones that suit the vulgar tone of this threat pair.

[34] This line is probably directed at the slave, although citizens too could be placed in 'wood' (ξύλον) as a punishment for various crimes (e.g. *Nub*. 592 [of Cleon for embezzlement], *Lys*. 680–1, Andoc. 1.45, Dem. 24.105). Lysias 10.16 demonstrates that the 'wood' euphemism was current; it denoted a variety of devices used to restrict movement of the neck and/or limbs (V. Hunter 1994: 176–81, Halm-Tisserant 2013: 85–91 with illustrations). Paphlagon is later threatened with the same treatment (1048–9).

[35] Athenians found guilty of 'cowardice' (δειλία) could be punished with the loss of citizen rights (Andoc. 1.74, Aeschin. 3.175–6, Olson 2002: 344, Christ 2006: 118–24).

[36] The verb θρανεύειν appears only here but, according to Σ *Eq*. 369a Jones/Wilson, it denotes stretching (ἐκταθήσεται) over a footstool (θρᾶνος = ὑποπόδιον). See further Zacher 1898: 70–2.

[37] A θύλακος, translated here as 'sack', is a bag for dry goods (predominantly barley: *Eccl*. 821, *Plut*. 763, Hdt. 3.46.2, Theophr. *Char*. 16.6, Zacher 1898: 68). Comparable threats of turning someone into an everyday object are found at *Ach*. 300–1 (the chorus threatens Cleon, foreshadowing

[Paph.] You'll be pegged on the ground.

[Saus.] I'll make chunks of meat out of you.[38]

[Paph.] I'll pluck your eyelashes.

[Saus.] I'll cut out your crop.

Ar. *Eq*. 364–74[39]

This threat exchange opens with a reference to stuffing sausages, whereby Paphlagon's 'arse' (*prōktos*) takes the place of to-be-stuffed sausage skins. Paphlagon echoes this with his reference to 'buttocks' (*pugē*) in the following line, whose climactic word κῦβδα ('bent over') is sexually obscene. The threat of having one's 'hide' (βύρσα, 369) stretched out on a bench recalls Cleon's leather trade. The next threat, with its reference to 'skinning' (δέρειν)

Knights), *Eq*. 768, Plat. com. fr. 180 K–A (σὲ μέν, ὦ μοχθηρέ, παλινδορίαν παίσας αὐτοῦ καταθήσω), and see also *Nub*. 440–2 (τουτὶ τοὐμὸν σῶμ᾽ αὐτοῖσιν / παρέχω … / … ἀσκὸν δείρειν). For human skin used to make hand towels see Hdt. 4.64.2, or a seat-cover Hdt. 5.25.1.

[38] περικόμματα are 'chopped up scraps of meat which were often cooked with the main joint or whole animal' (Arnott 1996: 398).

[39] The order of these lines has been a matter of contention among modern editors (Zacher 1898: 65–73, N. Wilson 2007: 47). I reprint Wilson's OCT arrangement with no strong conviction that it represents the original line configuration. The confusion may originate from a time when two cola were written to a line (an example of this can be seen on the recto frontispiece of Jones & Wilson's edition of the *Knights* scholia, with the verso frontispiece showing lines 364–71 in single-cola format), thus:

ἡ βύρσα σου θρανεύσεται.	περικόμματ᾽ ἔκ σου σκευάσω.
δερῶ σε θύλακον κλοπῆς.	τὰς βλεφαρίδας σου παρατιλῶ.
διαπατταλευθήσει χαμαί.	τὸν πρηγορεῶνά σου ᾽κτεμῶ.

The right-hand column could erroneously have been transcribed under the left-hand, rather than as alternating lines, while it is also possible that lines have fallen out (so Sommerstein 2001: 239).

might also appear suited to leatherwork; in another play, Aristophanes uses a prepositional compound of the verb to describe, metaphorically, his treatment at Cleon's hands (ἀπεδειρόμην, *Vesp*. 1286 with Biles & Olson 2015 *ad loc*.). However, the counter-threat makes good sense in the mouth of the Sausage-Seller given the reference to 'embezzlement' (κλοπή) at the end of the line, a charge that, as we saw above, is repeatedly levelled against Cleon in *Knights* and other Aristophanic comedies.[40] Paphlagon's subsequent threat evokes the spreading of animal hides, which would be pegged down as they dried in the sun.[41] Next comes the violent threat of making mincemeat out of the addressee, which belongs to the Sausage-Seller (cf. 770). The counter-threat of plucking eyelashes is probably meant to recall the removal of hairs from animal skins in preparation for their transformation into leather (Σ *Eq*. 373a Jones/Wilson; cf. Ar. fr. 708 K–A with Bagordo 2017 *ad loc*.), though hair-plucking was also a generic punishment (*Nub*. 1083, *Lys*. 1222, *Thesm*. 543, Anacr. 388.8–9 *PMG*). That leaves the final, gruesome proposition of excising Paphlagon's crop (the pouch located above the gizzard of some birds) to the Sausage-Seller, likely a reference to a culinary technique (Σ *Eq*. 374a Jones/Wilson), as well as an effective way of stopping Paphlagon's voice.

This slanging match is the centrepiece for the repeated references to sausage-making and leatherwork that permeate *Knights* and which here include the grisly threats of skinning, mincing, and slicing. The Sausage-Seller's final threat to cut out his rival's crop is

[40] We should probably read the genitive (κλοπῆς) as a genitive of charge (cf. διώξομαί σε δειλίας, 368), rather than in the sense of 'a bag (used) for theft' (cf. the parallels in Poultney 1934: 44). The original audience may, however, have heard both.

[41] Hsch. δ 1204 Latte, Σ *Eq*. 371a Jones/Wilson. More crudely, the threat may allude to anal penetration since *pattalos* ('peg') can denote the penis (*Eccl*. 1020, Henderson 1991: 123, Halliwell 2008: 261).

wholeheartedly endorsed by Demos' house slave, who supplies the contest's coda. There, the suggestion, another allusion to food preparation (μαγειρικῶς), is to peg Paphlagon's mouth open, pull out his tongue, and inspect it for sores.[42] It is no coincidence that mouth and tongue are the focus of this projected treatment, since pegging open the former and grabbing the latter would again curtail Paphlagon's power of speech.[43] The whole exchange, with its grotesque violations of the integrity of the human body (stuffing its orifices, chopping it into pieces, inspecting it from the inside out), is enthusiastically received by the observing chorus of Knights, which goads the Sausage-Seller on to further attacks (384–90).

The recurring threats in *Knights*, surveyed in this section, are an essential if unsettling aspect of the hegemonic struggle between the Sausage-Seller and Paphlagon. By mimicking each other's words and syntax in the lurid threat duels, the two characters demonstrate their virtual equivalence. This is both intriguing and alienating as the audience is encouraged to

[42] καὶ νὴ Δί' ἐμβαλόντες αὐτῷ / πάτταλον μαγειρικῶς / ἐς τὸ στόμ', εἶτα δ' ἔνδοθεν / τὴν γλῶτταν ἐξείραντες αὐτοῦ / σκεψόμεσθ' εὖ κἀνδρικῶς / κεχηνότος / τὸν πρωκτὸν εἰ χαλαζᾷ (Ar. *Eq*. 375–81). Alternatively, one could take τὸν πρωκτόν as the direct object of σκεψόμεσθα ('having pulled out his tongue, we will see if the arse of this gaping man has sores', so e.g. Halliwell 2008: 260), rather than 'having pulled out the tongue of this gaping-arse man [lit. 'gaping with respect to his arse'; cf. *Eq*. 78], we will see if it [sc. the tongue] has sores'. While the former reading is suitably vulgar, the latter is more realistic since tongues (rather than arses) were a convenient place to check for measles (Neil 1909: 60, citing medical treatises).

[43] For putting a peg in someone's mouth to stop them talking compare *Thesm*. 223–4 (ἐμβαλῶ σοι πάτταλον / ἢν μὴ σιωπᾷς), and cf. *Ach*. 926 (ξυλλάμβαν' αὐτοῦ τὸ στόμα), *Plut*. 377–9 (an image of bribery), 1110 (cutting out the speaker's tongue), Cratin. fr. 198 K–A (ἐπιβύσει τις αὐτοῦ τὸ στόμα). Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (235–6) provides a darker variant (reported), with Agamemnon ordering his daughter Iphigeneia's mouth to be shut as she is about to be sacrificed.

root for a decidedly vulgar hero who, it has been announced, is destined to become their 'leader' (163–4). Via the allegory of marketplace vendors as politicians, whereby every amoral aspect of political life finds an equivalent in the unscrupulous dealings and vulgar language of the agora (180–93, 213–19, etc.), Aristophanes paints a picture of the city led by increasingly unrestrained leaders and markedly unlike the 'violet-crowned Athens of long ago' (1323). If the threat exchanges in *Knights* are ambivalent from this perspective, however, they also constitute an especially entertaining spectacle for the play's audience. The promises of elaborate and pun-laden punishments, coupled with the use of repetition and stichomythia, produce an exciting dynamic and show off Aristophanes' poetic dexterity. The loud and violently competitive language-scape of *Knights* lends itself to the representation of political decay, but also results in a linguistically colourful and indulgent comedy.

3.2.2. Brushing off threats in Wasps

A trope identified in the previous chapter was the resistance of certain characters to their opponents' insults. Similar reactions occur in the face of threats. While at times, these can be brushed off with a curt 'nonsense!' (λῆρος, *Plut*. 23) or 'stop with your blabbering!' (παῦε τῶν παφλασμάτων, *Av*. 1243), other reactions are more deeply embedded in their respective plots and more significant in terms of characterisation. This is the case for *Wasps* where, in anticipation of the motif's popularity in later Greek and Latin comedy, Philocleon is repeatedly threatened with arrest and legal proceedings.[44]

[44] For threats of litigation and legal redress in Greek and (especially) Latin New Comedy see Scafuro 1997: 97–114, 430–9. As in Aristophanes, characters in later comedy often react disdainfully towards such threats (e.g. Plaut. *Curc*. 579–80 *ego tua magnufica uerba neque istas tuas magnas minas* / *non*

Toward the end of *Wasps*, Philocleon emerges from the symposium, staggeringly drunk (σφαλλόμενος, 1324) and reportedly 'punching everyone as he makes his way home' (1322–3). He is pursued by a group of angry men whom he insults and threatens to 'turn into fried fish' with the torch he is holding (1330–1). In kind, they threaten that he will be brought to justice 'tomorrow' (ἦ μὴν σὺ δώσεις αὔριον τούτων δίκην, 1332) when they return to summons him officially (ἥξομέν σε προσκαλούμενοι, 1334). Philocleon mocks the speaker and his friends:

ἰηῦ ἰηῦ «καλούμενοι». 1335
ἀρχαῖά γ' ὑμῶν. ἆρά γ' ἴσθ'
ὡς οὐδ' ἀκούων ἀνέχομαι
δικῶν; ἰαιβοῖ αἰβοῖ.
τάδε μ' ἀρέσκει· βάλλε κημούς.
οὐκ ἄπει – ποῦ 'στ' ἠλιαστής; – ἐκποδών; 1340

Ew ew, 'summonsing'.
You're so old-fashioned! You do know
that I can't stand even hearing about
trials? Ha ha ha.[45]

pluris facio quam ancillam meam quae latrinam lauat, *Rud.* 795 *minacias ego flocci non faciam tuas*).

[45] The initial interjection ἰηῦ ἰηῦ ('ew ew', 1335) represents derisive laughter (*Ach.* 1207, *Pax* 195 with Olson 1998 *ad loc*.). The interjection αἰβοῖ, translated here as 'ha ha ha', can signify disgust, dismay, or laughter (Labiano Ilundain 2000: 80–4, 212–14, Biles & Olson 2015: 94, 470, Levine 2016).

I prefer this stuff;[46] screw voting urns![47]

Won't you – do you see a juror? – get out of here?

Ar. *Vesp*. 1335–40

By repeating the spokesman's final word, προσκαλούμενοι, Philocleon makes clear that he is addressing the threatened action.[48] His interjections and rhetorical questions lend the speech a belligerent and dismissive tone, perhaps symptomatic of his inebriation (πολὺ παροινικώτατος, 1300). Philocleon's assertion that hauling him before the courts would be 'old-fashioned' (ἀρχαῖα) is ironic, given that his own decision to distance himself from the city's legal machinery has been very recent. Indeed, whereas earlier, Philocleon had scribbled amatory graffiti addressed to voting urns (κημὸς καλός, 99), he now rudely dimisses these (βάλλε κημούς, 1339).[49] Philocleon also underestimates the repercussions of his delinquency, having slipped into a solipsism of wine and antics. In comic fashion, 'tomorrow' (1332) is of little consequence to the old man. While he may be enjoying a rediscovered youthful vigour, this is frustrating for his innocent and incidental victims, a side-effect that is reinforced by the arrival of two more (see below). Far from swapping his lawcourt zeal for a more cultivated and less harmful lifestyle, as his son Bdelycleon had

[46] I.e. 'the joys and opportunities he is currently enjoying' (Biles & Olson 2015: 471), which include the naked flute-girl currently at his side.

[47] The κημός, which was a funnel placed into the mouth of the voting urn (Σ *Vesp*. 99a Koster, Σ *Eq*. 1150a, e Jones/Wilson), serves *pars pro toto* for the latter.

[48] For examples of 'the contemptuous repetition of another speaker's words' see Biles & Olson 2015: 470–1 (commenting on this passage), who also give examples of a simplex standing in for a compound when a word is repeated by another speaker (as here, and on which see more fully Renehan 1976: 11–22, Diggle 1994: 84).

[49] On the symbolic dismissal of voting urns cf. *Av*. 1053.

hoped, Philocleon proves just as intractable as in the play's opening scenes.[50] The father's response to threats contributes to this on-going characterisation, while both here and in the following encounters, the threats themselves maintain a level of excitement as the comedy moves toward its close.

After the interlude involving a Flute-Girl, a Bread-Seller arrives whose wares have been knocked to the ground and spoiled by Philocleon's drunken gesticulations (1389–91). She has brought a witness (Chaerephon, an associate of Socrates' and regular butt of comic jokes; cf. Biles & Olson 2015: 487–8) and threatens to summon Philocleon before the *agoranomoi* (προσκαλοῦμαί σε . . . πρὸς τοὺς ἀγορανόμους, 1408–9), the officials responsible for maintaining order in the marketplace.[51] Philocleon is indifferent: 'I couldn't care less' (ὀλίγον μοι μέλει, 1411), he retorts, allegedly using a line from the poet Lasos.[52]

[50] Cf. Biles 2016: 134 'Philocleon's interactions with seemingly innocent citizens suggest that indiscriminate violence in the city at large is his new modus operandi, in place of violence through the voting pebble'.

[51] The *agoranomoi* were officials (chosen by lot) charged with collecting market taxes, monitoring the quality of goods, and generally maintaining order in the marketplace (*IG* II^2 1362). They likely had the power to impose fines or initiate court proceedings for serious offences, and may have carried whips for punishing non-citizen offenders (cf. *Ach*. 723–4, Pollux 10.177). See further MacDowell 1971: 313, Rhodes 1981: 575–6 (on [Arist.] *Ath. Pol*. 51.1), Biles & Olson 2015: 487, Bresson 2016: 246–50.

[52] On the 6th-century Lasos of Hermione, an innovative lyric poet linked to Peisistratus' son Hipparchus (Hdt. 7.6.3), see Biles & Olson 2015: 488. In later anthologies, memorable sayings were ascribed to Lasos (Λασίσματα), and Philocleon's quip may be an early reflection of this. Alternatively, the humour may lie in the fact that ὀλίγον μοι μέλει is precisely the sort of lapidary and pedestrian phrase that one would not have associated with Lasos. For the suggestion that the comparable οὐδ' ὁτιοῦν ἐμοὶ μέλει was a 'rather uncouth' (ἀγροικότερον) expression see Pl. *Apol*.

This complements the Aesopic tale via which Philocleon had just compared the Bread-Seller to a dog (1401–5), inappropriately and ineffectively heeding his son's earlier advice about how to defuse tense situations (1257–61). The brief exchange underscores the shortcomings of Bdelycleon's programme to reform his father, who deploys the knowledge imparted by his son in clumsy and unexpected ways.

Including the failure to implement new knowledge appropriately, there are several parallels between *Wasps* and *Clouds*, staged the previous year. These range from the plays' shared motifs of intergenerational conflict and failed transformation to the reworking of specific jokes (compare the 'wick' episode at *Nub*. 56–9 with *Vesp*. 249–53, or the ironic dismissal of another's beliefs as 'old-fashioned' at *Nub*. 821 with *Vesp*. 1336). The post-parabatic scene in *Clouds* (1213–302) with the two intruding creditors is, in particular, reminiscent of Philocleon's heated encounters at the end of *Wasps*. Like Philocleon, Strepsiades pays no heed to his creditors' threats of legal action (1242–4, 1254–5, 1277–8). He responds to these with deriding comments (1237, 1276), distorted knowledge learned from Socrates (1249–51, 1279–81), and violence (1297–1302). We cannot know if these similarities represent a conscious decision to rehash elements from the failed *Clouds*, as opposed to the mere shared use of a popular comic trope, although elsewhere *Wasps* does contain passages that explicitly attempt to salvage or justify the earlier third-placed play (*Vesp*. 1016–17, 1043–50).

Returning to *Wasps*, a third and final character arrives after the abrupt departure of the Bread-Seller. This anonymous man (he too accompanied by a witness) threatens Philocleon with a lawsuit for *hybris* (1417; cf. *Av*. 1046–52). Philocleon, it transpires, had

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32d, although comparable sentiments appear in tragedy (E. *Hec*. 1274, *HF* 595, *Bell*. fr. 287.2 *TrGF*, further Collard 2005: 376). For ὀλίγον μοι μέλει in comedy cf. *Eq*. 1195, *Av*. 1636, *Lys*. 248, 895, *Ran*. 655, Men. *Asp*. 89.

struck and been throwing stones at him (1422). The serious criminal charge of *hybris* is lent additional emphasis here via enjambment and is the pinnacle of the ever more severe legal action faced by the out-of-control Philocleon. While Bdelycleon's concern and offer of compensation are therefore understandable, his anxious reaction serves chiefly as a foil to his father's indifference.[53] Indeed, while Philocleon initially seems to show remorse (1422–5), this is quickly traded for more incendiary quips based on misplaced lines from aphorisms and fables, demonstrating his contempt for the Plaintiff who angrily departs in search of a magistrate (1441). Bdelycleon must remove his father from the scene to avoid further confrontations ('soon there won't be enough summons-witnesses for all the people suing you', 1444–5), carrying the old man into the house as he reels off yet another Aesopic parable.[54] The stage is left momentarily empty, and we are invited to reflect upon Philocleon's transformation. He has been cured of his addiction to jury-serving, but his son's attempt to introduce him to high society must surely be judged a failure. That being said, none of his victims' threats is realised and, for the play's ending, their grievances are cast aside as a choral praise-song (1450–73) segues into a manic dance competition and meta-theatrical references that supply closure. Philocleon's insouciance in these final scenes is enviable, even if it may also awaken anxieties surrounding self-interested behaviour and, in

[53] Bdelycleon begs the potential plaintiff: μὴ μὴ καλέσῃ πρὸς τῶν θεῶν (1418). On repeated μή in emotional pleas compare S. *OC* 210 (μὴ μὴ μή μ᾽ ἀνέρῃ τίς εἰμι), Finglass 2011: 198 (on S. *Aj*. 191/2). Aristophanic parallels include *Ach*. 334, *Eq*. 19, *Pax* 385. For πρὸς θεῶν in negative entreaties compare e.g. S. *Aj*. 1332, *OT*, 1165, *El*. 1206, E. *El*. 1165, *Hcld*. 271, *Aiolos* fr. 22.1 *TrGF*, and in general see Barrett 1964: 202 (on E. *Hipp*. 219), Finglass 2018: 276–7 (on S. *OT* 326–7). Note, in addition, that the definite article never appears in tragic instances of πρὸς θεῶν; Aristophanes, however, includes it in twenty-eight instances of the expression (versus only five times without).

[54] On the implications of which see Hall 2013: 292–3, Biles & Olson 2015: 494–5.

particular, the dangers posed by excessive sympotic drinking (foretold by Philocleon at 1253–5 and thus διὰ τὸν σὸν οἶνον, 1393).[55] At any rate, the threats made against Philocleon in his encounters with various citizens help to establish an agonistic mood, one which carries over into the final scene that sees the old man competing in an energetic dance-off against the sons of the tragic poet Carcinus.

3.2.3. Women and threats in Lysistrata *and* Thesmophoriazusae

In *Lysistrata*, the play's protagonist asserts her immunity to threats, but for quite different reasons to those of the drunken Philocleon in *Wasps*. Once Lysistrata's plan for ending the war between Athens and Sparta has been defined, Kalonike asks the female protagonist if she thinks the city's men will attack them for occupying the Acropolis (247–8). Lysistrata responds:

> ὀλίγον αὐτῶν μοι μέλει.
> οὐ γὰρ τοσαύτας οὔτ' ἀπειλὰς οὔτε πῦρ
> ἥξουσ' ἔχοντες ὥστ' ἀνοῖξαι τὰς πύλας
> ταύτας, ἐὰν μὴ 'φ' οἷσιν ἡμεῖς εἴπομεν
>
> I couldn't care less about them.
> There are no threats, no fire
> that they can bring against us strong enough
> to open these gates, except on our terms.
>
> Ar. *Lys*. 248–51[56]

[55] On the dangers of excessive sympotic drinking see further Pütz 2003: 213–14, Halliwell 2008: 109 n. 22, Biles & Olson 2015: 110–11, Rosen 2016 (specifically on *Wasps*).

[56] Translation adapted from Sommerstein 1990.

The repeated sibilants in line 250 may give the impression that Lysistrata is angrily hissing her words, while the triple negative (οὐ . . . οὔτ᾽ . . . οὔτε) underscores her resolve.[57] Lysistrata's anticipated immunity to both threats and fire not only generates tension by suggesting that the eventual confrontation between the sexes will be a violent one—as indeed it is—but it also solidifies her status as a resolute comic hero comparable with those from Aristophanes' earlier peace plays.

As the action progresses, Lysistrata indeed refuses to be intimidated and does not surrender despite the male semi-chorus directing 'most formidable threats' at her and her allies.[58] When the members of the female semi-chorus confront their male counterparts, the latter decide to use the kindling they carry as batons (357). The women, in response, put down their pitchers in anticipation of a physical contest (358–9). In the ensuing argument, they counter and outdo the men's threats. The women happily receive the suggestion that their jaws will be at the receiving end of their opponent's blows, but warn testicles will be their preferred target (362–3). As the dialogue switches from two- to one-line stichomythia, the men threaten a beating with their fists (364/366). This is capped, however, by the threat of devouring the men's lungs and scraping out their entrails (367), reminiscent of the gory

[57] Cf. Eup. fr. 175 K–A (οὐ πῦρ οὐδὲ σίδηρος οὐδὲ χαλκὸς ἀπείργει μὴ φοιτᾶν ἐπὶ δεῖπνον). For the alliteration of sibilants in angry or vituperative utterances, compare S. *OT* 425 ἃ σ᾽ ἐξισώσει σοί τε καὶ τοῖς σοῖς τέκνοις (a troublesome passage; see Finglass 2018 *ad loc*.), E. *Med*. 476–7 ἔσωσά σ᾽, ὡς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι / ταὐτὸν συνεισέβησαν Ἀργῷον σκάφος, *Ion* 386 ὃς οὔτ᾽ ἔσωσας τὸν σὸν ὃν σῶσαί σ᾽ ἐχρῆν. Rutherford 2012: 117 rightly points out, however, that sibilant-heavy lines (in tragedy) are not restricted to angry speakers.

[58] δεινότατ᾽ ἀπειλοῦντας ἐπῶν (338). For the construction compare S. *Aj*. 312 τὰ δείν᾽ ἐπηπείλησ᾽ ἔπη, E. *Supp*. 542 δείν᾽ ἀπειλήσων ἔπη.

menaces from *Knights*. The tension rises a notch as the women retake their pitchers (370), vocabulary and syntax are echoed (371–5), there is an acceleration to hemi-stichomythia (378–81), and finally the men threaten to torch the women's hair (381). The face-off ends with the women dousing their aggressors, leaving these shivering (385) and drenched 'as if having pissed themselves' (402). The men's threats come to nothing, which underscores their impotence and sets them up for eventual capitulation.

No sooner have the old men been neutralised than the Proboulos enters accompanied by two archers and two slaves.[59] He had wished to extract money from the Acropolis to purchase oars for the fleet, but the women have shut him out (423); he therefore returns with reinforcements. The Proboulos ignores the female semi-chorus and, together with his slaves, attempts to jimmy open the central door that represents the Propylaia. His efforts prove unnecessary, however, when Lysistrata emerges of her own volition (αὐτομάτη), which

[59] The Proboulos identifies himself (ὢν ἐγὼ πρόβουλος, 421). After the failed Sicilian Expedition, at the end of the summer of 413, *probouloi* were established as elected advisors on state affairs (Thuc. 8.1.3 ἀρχήν τινα πρεσβυτέρων ἀνδρῶν ἑλέσθαι, οἵτινες περὶ τῶν παρόντων ὡς ἂν καιρὸς ᾖ προβουλεύσουσιν). They were (at least partly, it seems) responsible for drafting the constitution that restricted political power to five thousand of Athens's wealthiest citizens (Thuc. 8.67.1–3, [Arist.] *Ath. Pol*. 29.2–5 with Rhodes 1981 *ad loc*.). As such, *probouloi* may have been associated with citizen disenfranchisement, although this is not mentioned in *Lysistrata*. Indeed, the Proboulos in *Lysistrata* may simply stand as a generic authority figure (cf. *Ach*. 755–6, *Thesm*. 929–52) interested in prolonging the war. Either way, Henderson (1987a: 117–18) is right to say that the Proboulos' behaviour can have elicited little sympathy from the audience. (On the Theban *probouloi* who seem to enter with the Herald at the probably interpolated end of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, who would be the only other *proboulos* characters to appear in extant Greek drama, see Taplin 1977b: 186–7.)

demonstrates her control over the situation.[60] This is the heroine's first public appearance in the play. The Proboulos immediately insults her (ὦ μιαρὰ σύ, 433), and his order for Lysistrata to be arrested (434) leads to a series of retaliatory threats made by the protagonist's supporters who stand up for their leader and each other:

[Λυ.] εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν τὴν χεῖρά μοι 435
ἄκραν προσοίσει, δημόσιος ὢν κλαύσεται.
[Πρ.] ἔδεισας, οὗτος; οὐ ξυναρπάσει μέσην
καὶ σὺ μετὰ τούτου χἀνύσαντε δήσετον;
[Γυ. α] εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Πάνδροσον ταύτῃ μόνον
τὴν χεῖρ' ἐπιβαλεῖς, ἐπιχεσεῖ πατούμενος. 440
[Πρ.] ἰδού γ' ἐπιχεσεῖ. ποῦ 'στιν ἕτερος τοξότης;
ταύτην προτέραν ξύνδησον, ὁτιὴ καὶ λαλεῖ.
[Γυ. β] εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Φωσφόρον τὴν χεῖρ' ἄκραν
ταύτῃ προσοίσεις, κύαθον αἰτήσεις τάχα.
[Πρ.] τουτὶ τί ἦν; ποῦ τοξότης; ταύτης ἔχου. 445
παύσω τιν' ὑμῶν τῆσδ' ἐγὼ τῆς ἐξόδου.
[Λυ.] εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Ταυροπόλον ταύτῃ πρόσει,
ἐγὼ 'κποκιῶ σου τὰς στενοκωκύτους τρίχας.

[Lys.] By Artemis, public servant or not, if he lays
even the tip of his hand on me, he'll be sorry.
[Prob.] [*to first archer*] Hey, are you scared? Grab her around the waist and

[60] Thus Sommerstein 1990: 176, who notes that Lysistrata's three subsequent entrances from the stage building are all also unsummoned (706, 1106, 1273). See Taplin 1977b: 299–300 for a similar effect with Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

[*to second archer*] you help him, and both of you hurry, put her in binds.

[1st woman] By Pandrosos, if you so much as lay a
hand on her, you'll crap yourself as I beat you.

[Prob.] Ha! Crap yourself you say. Where's the second archer?
Tie this one up first, because she's talking trash as well.

[2nd woman] By Phosphoros, if you lay even the tip of your hand on
her, you'll soon be asking for a cupping glass.

[Prob.] What was that? Archer! Hold onto this woman!
I'll stop one of you from getting away.

[Lys.] By Tauropolos, if you approach her
I'll pluck out the hairs that make you shriek.

Ar. *Lys*. 435–48

The identity and number of participants in this exchange has elicited debate.[61] I have adopted MacDowell's (1994: 331–2) configuration, which gives the last lines to Lysistrata and thus limits the number of speaking parts to four. It is, however, conceivable that a third woman speaks the two final lines (bringing the number of speakers to five) or, less likely, that the lines are spoken by the leader of the women's chorus (who would not count toward a quota of four actors). At any rate, the archers seem never to get as far as touching the women (hence the conditional phrases), or at least cannot hold more than one of the women for longer than a moment. The Proboulos is confounded by the successive appearance and intervention of Lysistrata's allies, whose threats effectively stay the aggressors.

[61] Compare Dover 1972: 155–6, Henderson 1987a: xlii–xliii, MacDowell 1994: 331–2, Marshall 1997: 83–4, all discussing this passage in relation to the contested number of speaking parts permitted in comedy.

The Proboulos' commands are comparable to tragic episodes where an authority figure relies on subordinates to carry out violent action. Thus, Aegisthus sets his armed guard upon the chorus in *Agamemnon* (A. *Ag*. 1650), Creon orders Antigone to be dragged from her father (S. *OC* 826–7) or arrested by guards (E. *Phoen*. 1660), Theseus tells his house-slaves to arrest Hippolytus who, like the women in *Lysistrata*, responds with a threat of his own (κλαίων τις αὐτῶν ἆρ᾽ ἐμοῦ γε θίξεται, E. *Hipp*. 1086), and Agamemnon has his servants violently remove Polymestor in the final scene of Euripides' *Hecuba*.[62] Aristophanes' take on this episode-type draws its humour from repetition, vulgarity ('crapping oneself', 440–1), as well as the Proboulos' amusing shortage of archers—he possesses only two archers to control the three (or four) women who arrive successively out of the stage building.

The echoed phrasing of the threats in *Lysistrata* (εἰ τἄρα νὴ κτλ.), which all invoke a typically feminine deity, underscores the women's unanimity. By using the same formula for each threat, Aristophanes shows that in action as in speech, the women operate as a harmonious body. They are also ready to employ violence: the first woman promises to 'beat the shit' out of one of the archers (cf. *Eq*. 69–70), the second woman's mention of cupping glasses recalls a remedy for heavy bruising or black eyes,[63] and references to howling in pain

[62] οὐχ ἕλξετ᾽ αὐτόν, δμῶες, ἐκποδὼν βίᾳ; (*Hec*. 1282). Further examples at S. *OT* 1429–31, E. *Hcld*. 1050–1, *Andr*. 425, *Ion* 1403, *Phoen*. 1660, *Bacch*. 503, *Cretans* fr. 472e.46 *TrGF*. Similar too is the face-off between the Herald and the Egyptian Wives in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*, although there, the Herald takes a more active role. Taplin 1977b: 216–18 discusses whether the Herald, who threatens to drag the women off by their hair (884, 909–10) and rip their garments (902–3), appears alone or is accompanied by henchmen.

[63] E. *Eurysth. satyr*. fr. 374 *TrGF* (ἢ κύαθον ἢ χαλκήλατον / ἡθμὸν προσίσχων τοῖσδε τοῖς ὑπωπίοις), Arist. *Prob*. 890b7–18 (ὁ κύαθος τὰ ὑπώπια παύει), Olson 1998: 188. Henderson

(κλαύσεται, 436; στενοκωκύτους, 448) frame the face-off. These threats all look forward to the physical tussle that eventually erupts, in which Lysistrata is aided by several further allies (imposingly described as 'four companies of fully-armed fighting women', 453–4), whom she summons from the stage building (ὦ ξύμμαχοι γυναῖκες ἐκθεῖτ᾽ ἔνδοθεν, 456). These nameless characters fight and rapidly overcome the archers. The Proboulos, left with no further options, is forced to abandon his menacing tone and, grudgingly encouraged by the male semi-chorus, interrogates Lysistrata about her motives for the occupation.

The male semi-chorus in *Lysistrata* had hoped to force surrender by setting the Acropolis and its female occupiers ablaze (266–70, 310–11), a plan that comically miscarries when the aggressors end up with painful smoke in their eyes (295, 305, 312). Although assaults with fire and torches could be classified as vulgar gags by Aristophanes, burning appears in several comic threats.[64] These are particularly prominent in the extended confrontation between Euripides' Kinsman and the female chorus in *Thesmophoriazusae*, produced just a few months after *Lysistrata*. Having already undergone painful singeing of his pubic hair in preparation for his cross-dressing mission (236–46), once exposed,

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1987a: 125 suggests that the second woman's oath by Phosphoros (i.e. Hekate; cf. Ar. fr. 608, Austin & Olson 2004: 281) 'may have been chosen as a humorous allusion to φωσφόρος = eye [cf. E. *Cyc*. 611, Pl. *Tim*. 45b3] . . . to set up the following threat' that refers to a cupping glass. There is an additional threat of giving a black eye at *Lys*. 472.

[64] For burning as a vulgar gag see *Nub*. 543, *Lys*. 1216–18, and Chapter Four, section 4.2. For threats of burning see *Vesp*. 1330–1, *Lys*. 376, *Thesm*. 729, 748, 916–17, tragic parallels at E. *Andr*. 257–60, *HF* 240–4. Menander's *Perinthia* contained a more extensive fire threat episode, in which a slave Daos (who has sought sanctuary at an altar) has firewood heaped around him while his master Laches brings a lit torch on stage with the intention of setting the altar alight (δᾷδ᾽ αὐτὸς ἡμμένην ἔχων, 9).

Kinsman finds himself confronted not only with the possibility of further singeing or plucking (537–40, 567–8), but also with the more serious prospect of being burned alive.

With Euripides' Kinsman in their custody, the women set off with torches to search for other infiltrators (656). Their departure allows the detainee to snatch Mika's baby (688–91), thus initiating Aristophanes' second extended parody of Euripides' *Telephus*. Like Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians*, Kinsman wields a blade (μάχαιρα, 694) and issues threats directed at his hostage, here luridly suggesting that the infant's 'bleeding veins' (φοινίας φλέβας) will 'bloody the altar' over which he is standing (694–5). After some confusion and discussion about what to do, the riled chorus-leader announces that she and her fellow choreuts should have burned Kinsman when they had the opportunity (726–7), a regret that inspires Mika to threaten: 'I'll turn you into charcoal this very day!' (κἀγώ σ' ἀποδείξω θυμάλωπα τήμερον, 729). As with the insults he receives, however, Kinsman is defiant.[65] He flatly orders Mika to proceed: 'light the fire and burn [me]'.[66] And when Mika's helper Mania is ordered to heap up 'much brushwood' around him (739), Kinsman stubbornly restates his order (740). Finally, when Mika indicates that the women are ready to set him on fire (ἐμπρήσομεν τοίνυν σε, 748), Kinsman replies with 'burn away!' (πάνυ γ' ἐμπίμπρατε, 749) before adding his own threat in retaliation: 'this one [sc. the baby/wineskin] will be slaughtered right here on the spot'.[67] That last proposition induces

[65] Kinsman is impervious to Kritylla's insults, responding to these with 'keep on barking at me and pelting me with invective!' (βαύζε τοὐμὸν σῶμα βάλλουσα ψόγῳ, 895) and 'keep on saying whatever you want!' (ὁπόσα τοι βούλει λέγε, 900).

[66] ὕφαπτε καὶ κάταιθε (730). For a similar response, in tragedy, compare Andromache's reply when Hermione threatens to set her on fire: σὺ δ' οὖν κάταιθε (E. *Andr*. 258).

[67] αὕτη δ' ἀποσφαγήσεται μάλ' αὐτίκα (750). For μάλ' αὐτίκα in threats see Austin & Olson 2004: 255, citing *Eq*. 284, 475, *Pax* 237, 367, Plat. com. fr. 136.2 K–A.

Mika to yield, though this does not prevent Kinsman from playing a cruel joke on her: he proposes pouring the wine into Mika's cup as a 'favour' (χαριοῦμαι γὰρ ἔν γε τοῦτό σοι, 756), but her response shows that he does not carry through with the offer, probably 'allowing most of the wine to spill over the altar and on to the ground or by avidly drinking some of it himself'.[68]

In *Thesmophoriazusae,* Aristophanes adapts elements from his tragic model to construct an entertaining and humorous scenario, much like he had done in *Acharnians* fourteen years prior. This is no carbon-copy of the earlier parody, however, and key differences lend the scene a freshness that ensures its success.[69] Aristophanes hints at a renewed engagement with *Telephus* already in the prologue of *Thesmophoriazusae* (76–7 ≈ E. *Tel*. fr. 144 Austin). When the parody finally arrives, it is overt: Kinsman's disguised infiltration of an antagonistic camp mirrors the original tragic scenario, Mika's wine-skin is several times referred to as a baby and is snatched directly from its mother's arms (like Orestes), red wine stands in for blood (cf. *Lys*. 205), while paratragic diction is abundant.[70] Kinsman's delayed discovery that the hostage is not an infant, but in fact a wineskin (forty-five lines after the original snatching) is funny if this had been obvious to the audience all along, or surprising if it had not. Whereas the Acharnian demesmen are excessively devoted to charcoal, Mika's strong attachment to an alcoholic drink exploits the reputation that—in

[68] Austin & Olson 2004: 256. Mika responds: κακῶς ἀπόλοι᾽, ὡς φθονερὸς εἶ καὶ δυσμενής ('damn and blast you, what a spiteful and malicious man you are', 757, transl. Sommerstein 1994).

[69] Farmer 2017: 167–72 discusses the main differences between the two *Telephus* parodies.

[70] On the latter see Rau 1967: 48–50.

comedy, at least—women had for drinking.[71] Her insatiable desire for wine has led her to smuggle a goatskin of the drink into the all-female festival, ironically confirming Euripides' alleged portrayal of all women as dipsomaniacs (393). Mika's distress at the threats directed toward this domestic and inanimate target are laughable, while the relatively long duration of the stand-off generates suspense. The whole parody seems to have enjoyed enduring and widespread success, as attested by its depiction on a well-known Apulian krater produced several decades after the original performance.[72] In this rare instance of a comic threat being carried through to fruition, the action is trivialised by replacing the baby with a wineskin. As we will see in the following chapter and as paralleled in the silent film comedy discussed in the Introduction, serious and lasting physical harm is normally avoided in comedy, and killings are eschewed altogether. The hostage scene from *Thesmophoriazusae* is a good example of how extreme violence, in this case infanticide, is distorted to suit the comic setting.

[71] For examples of this stereotype see E. Bowie 1995: 117–19, Arnott 1996: 504 (on Alexis fr. 172.1–2 K–A), Austin & Olson 2004: 231 (on Ar. *Thesm*. 630), Sommerstein 2013: 195 (on Men. *Sam*. 302–3).

[72] For the South Italian red-figure krater showing the Kinsman atop an altar holding the wineskin and a sword (Würzburg H5697), probably dating to the 370s, see Csapo 1986, Austin & Olson 2004: lxxv–lxxvii (with a gloss, colour reproduction of the vase as frontispiece).

3.2.4. Threatening the gods in Frogs *and* Birds

Frogs has often been understood as exploring themes of identity and the construction of selfhood, albeit in a humorous and playful manner.[73] This revolves around the developing identity of the character Dionysus, whose on-stage presence bridges the play's disparate pre- and post-parabatic action. In the first half of the play, Aristophanes brings the identity theme to the fore in two interconnected ways: by blurring the slave/free distinction, and through a series of costume changes that invites the audience to think about authentic versus affected personalities.

Dionysus first appears wearing a Heraclean lionskin and carrying a club, a costume that he will swap no fewer than three times with his bag-carrier Xanthias as he alternates between the adopted personas of hero and slave, neither of which represents his true self. Change of appearance is a stock feature of Aristophanic comedy and forms the core of several longer episodes.[74] Unique to *Frogs*, however, is the number of costume switches and

[73] C. Segal 1961, followed by e.g. Whitman 1964: 236–58, Moorton Jr. 1989 (on van Gennep's rites of passage and *Frogs*), Konstan 1995: 61–74, Lada-Richards 1999: 45–122 (on liminality and initiation rites), 159–76 (on role-playing and costume changes), Jay-Robert 2000, Habash 2002. For some criticisms of this approach see Edmonds 2003. More broadly, Dionysus' character in *Frogs* is consistent with other comic depictions of the god, in which he is amusingly taken out of his element or embarks on outrageous missions (as in Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros* or Eupolis' *Taxiarchoi*; see further Sommerstein 1996a: 11, Storey 2003: 251–2).

[74] Stone 1980: 398–438 catalogues all Aristophanic costume changes. The motif is not exclusively comic: Euripides' *Telephus*, *Helen*, *Bacchae*, as well as the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus* all contain extended disguise scenes. It is the amusing motives for, and the unexpected yet ultimately harmless

the subsequent jokes reliant on mistaken identity, prefiguring that motif's popularity in later comedy.[75] We saw in the previous chapter how Dionysus is greeted with insults when received by Pluto's cantankerous doorkeeper. These segue into a web of threats depicting horrible punishments to which Dionysus, believed to be Heracles, will be subjected:

τοία Στυγός σε μελανοκάρδιος πέτρα
Ἀχερόντιός τε σκόπελος αἱματοσταγὴς
φρουροῦσι, Κωκυτοῦ τε περίδρομοι κύνες,
ἔχιδνά θ' ἑκατογκέφαλος, ἥ τὰ σπλάγχνα σου
διασπαράξει· πλευμόνων τ' ἀνθάψεται
Ταρτησσία μύραινα, τὼ νεφρὼ δέ σου
αὐτοῖσιν ἐντέροισιν ἡματωμένω
διασπάσονται Γοργόνες Τειθράσιαι.

How the black-hearted rock of the river Styx
and the headland of Acheron dripping with blood
can guard you, and the circling dogs of Cocytus,
and hundred-headed Echnida, who will

consequences of, comedy's costume changes that make these funny. Enforced costume change is discussed in the following chapter.

[75] For mistaken identity in Menander see Traill 2008. For threats addressed at a god mistaken for a slave, compare Plaut. *Amph*. 1029–34 (Amphitruo threatening Mercury believed to be the slave Sosias).

dissect your entrails, and the Tartesian eel[76]
will latch on to your lungs, while your bloodied kidneys,
together with your entrails,
will be ripped apart by Gorgons from Teithras.[77]

Ar. *Ran*. 470–7

In the prologue, the real Heracles had warned Dionysus that he would meet 'countless terrible snakes and beasts' in the Underworld (142–3, cf. 278). The doorkeeper's menacing predictions reinforce that earlier warning. Dionysus will be set upon by an assortment of chthonic monsters whose primary objective is the destruction of his internal organs. Two virtual synonyms, διασπαράσσειν and διασπᾶν ('to tear apart', 'to tear asunder'), reinforce the promised violence.[78] The humour of these gruesome threats (ἀπειλάς, 493) lies in the

[76] Tartessus lay on the southern coast of the Iberian peninsula, beyond the Pillars of Heracles, and thus at the edge of the known world for the Athenians (Hdt. 1.163.1, 4.152.2). The salt-water Mediterranean moray (*Muraena helena*) is sometimes confused with the fresh-water lamprey eel (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) in Roman sources (Thompson 1947: 162–5). Both have painful bites. Vedius Pollio (1st cent. BCE) infamously cultivated the latter, to which he would supposedly feed his slaves alive (Sen. *Clem*. 1.18, Plin. *HN* 9.39, Cass. Dio 54.23).

[77] τὼ νεφρώ (475), here translated literally as 'kidneys', is also a euphemism for the testicles (Athen. 9.384e, K–A on Philippides fr. 5). Either option is a frightening prospect. Teithras was a deme that lay to the east of Athens (*SEG* XXI 520, 524; XXVI 151–3) and was perhaps known for fig production (Theopomp. fr. 12 K–A); it is unclear why the Gorgons should be called Teithrasian here, but since the adjective is the last word in the description of the monsters, we are likely dealing with a *para prosdokian* joke (compare *Vesp*. 1137 ἐγὼ δὲ σισύραν ὠόμην Θυμαιτίδα).

[78] For the first verb cf. E. *Bacch*. 1220 (διασπαρακτόν, of Pentheus), but also the comic scene at the end of *Ecclesiazusae* where the Young Man fears being 'torn apart' by the three old hags (1076); for

mistaken identity of the addressee as well as in the divergent reactions of Dionysus and his slave companion. Dionysus had earlier bragged of his boldness (μάχιμον ὄντα, 281) and has been encouraged here to adopt 'the appearance and the spirit' of Heracles when knocking at the door, announcing himself as 'Heracles the strong' (464). But the threats of monstrous violence rapidly cause any strength that he might possess to fade, highlighting the mismatch between appearance (masculine, fearless) and spirit (effeminate, cowardly) that the wine-god had hoped to overcome. Whereas Dionysus soils himself in fright (ἐγκέχοδα, 479), Xanthias claims not to have been anxious at all (οὐ μὰ Δί᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἐφρόντισα, 493), a boast that leads to the two characters' first costume swap and Xanthias' transformation into the comic Ἡρακλειοξανθίας.[79] The doorkeeper's threats have been the catalyst for this.

A second costume switch is soon effectuated when it transpires that Xanthias (now disguised as Heracles) will be welcomed with loaves of freshly-baked bread, roast ox meat, sweet wine, cakes, and dancing girls (503–21). Hearing this seductive proposition, Dionysus convinces Xanthias that he had merely been 'playing' (παίζων, 523) when he relinquished Heracles' lionskin. Moreover, no one would believe that a slave like Xanthias was the son of Alcmene, Dionysus contends.[80] The costume is reluctantly returned. This switch backfires, however, when the pair are met not by dancing girls or a hostess bearing delicacies, but rather two particularly unreceptive women (innkeepers, foreshadowed at 114) who violently threaten Dionysus, once again believed to be Heracles:

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the second verb cf. Hdt. 3.13.2 (τοὺς ἄνδρας κρεουργηδὸν διασπάσαντες), E. *Hec*. 1126 (what Polymestor wishes to do to Hecuba after she has had him blinded), *Bacch*. 339 (of Acteon).

[79] *Ran*. 499. Sommerstein 1996a: 201 notes titles of comedies with similar amusing compounds: Aristophanes' *Aeolosicon*, Timocles' *Orestautocleides*, Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros*.

[80] *Ran*. 530–1, cf. 582–3. The claim is ironic given that the Heraclean tradition includes the story of his enslavement (e.g. A. *Ag*. 1040–1, S. *Tr*. 248–53, 267).

[Γυ. α] ὡς ἡδέως ἄν σου λίθῳ τοὺς γομφίους
κόπτοιμ᾽ ἄν, οἷς μου κατέφαγες τὰ φορτία.
[Γυ. β] ἐγὼ δέ γ᾽ εἰς τὸ βάραθρον ἐμβάλοιμί σε.
[Γυ. α] ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν λάρυγγ᾽ ἂν ἐκτέμοιμί σου
δρέπανον λαβοῦσ᾽, ᾧ τὰς χόλικας κατέσπασας.

[1st woman] How I'd love to smash your jaws with a rock,
the jaws with which you ate up all my supplies.
[2nd woman] And I to throw you into the pit.[81]
[1st woman] And I to take a scythe and cut out your
throat, the throat with which you scoffed down my tripe.

Ar. *Ran*. 572–6

The encounter is linked to the preceding one via the motif of eating and guest friendship. The earlier invitation evoked a generous offer of sumptuous goods; here we learn that Heracles had raided the innkeepers' stocks uninvited during his visit to the Underworld. The violence of that raid is underscored by the repeated κατα-prefixed verbs, which emphasise Heracles' lack of restraint.[82] The women's threats, a reaction to the earlier episode (a rare example of an external analepsis in Aristophanes), exploit the stereotypes of the feisty and

[81] On the capital punishment of throwing people into a pit (the *barathron*) see Halm-Tisserant 2013: 154–8. The *barathron* is alluded to in other Aristophanic threats at *Eq*. 1362, *Nub*. 1447–51, *Plut*. 1107–9.

[82] κατέφαγε (551), κατήσθιεν (560), κατέφαγες (573), κατέσπασας (576), as noted by Lada-Richards 1999: 195 n. 114.

vulgar innkeeper (cf. *Lys*. 458, *Plut*. 426–8), as well as that of the hungry Heracles.[83] The extremity of the punishments in relation to comparatively mild offences is amusing, and the more horrendous the proposed violence, the more we can assume Dionysus regrets having changed back into the Heraclean garb. Again, threats are crucial to the humour. The innkeepers eventually depart in search of Cleon and Hyperbolus. Dionysus capitalises on this moment to switch costumes with Xanthias one last time, setting the pair up for the *basanos* episode, which I analyse in the following chapter.

The threats aimed at a god are made funny in *Frogs* thanks to Dionysus' timorous reactions and his mistaken identity. The dynamic is different in *Birds*, where the protagonist Peisetairos issues more or less direct threats against both Zeus and his divine messenger, the goddess Iris.[84] With the aid of Tereus/Hoopoe, Peisetairos has convinced the birds to construct a city in the sky. It does not take long for news to arrive that the walls of this miraculous settlement have been breached. The gravity of the situation is underscored as the intrusion is decried as a 'terrible and heinous act' (δεινὸν ἔργον καὶ σχέτλιον εἰργασμένος, 1175). Thousands of raptorial birds have been sent to find the intruder (1178–83), initially assumed to be male (αὐτόν, 1178; τοῦ θεοῦ, 1183). The long build-up to Iris' arrival serves both a dramatic and a practical purpose. On the one hand, it creates suspense (as well as

[83] For the hungry Heracles stereotype, rejected as a comic cliché at *Pax* 741 and Cratin. fr. 346 K–A, see Galinsky 1972: 81–100, Olson 1998: 219, Lada-Richards 1999: 195–9, Wilkins 2000: 90–7, Biles & Olson 2015: 104.

[84] Iris is the goddess of rainbows (*Il*. 11.27–8, 17.547–8) and one of Zeus's or Hera's messengers (*Il*. 8.397–424, 11.121–40, *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 314–23; further references and iconography in Gantz 1993: 17–18, *LIMC* s.v. Iris). Iris is a disagreeable character in Euripides' *Hercules* (822–73), where she probably arrives via the stage crane (πεδαίρουσα, 872), and which may well have inspired her appearance in *Birds*. (Cropp & Fick 1985: 23 date *Hercules* to between 420 and 416.)

surprise, when the intruder is revealed to be female; cf. *Thesm*. 571–3, Kleisthenes announced as a woman). On the other hand, it was likely necessary for organising the goddess's entry via the stage-crane.[85]

In the initial conversation with Iris, it becomes apparent that the Olympians are ignorant of Peisetairos' plans, despite the hero having sent a herald (843). The protagonist therefore announces that birds are the new rulers and, in place of the traditional gods, will henceforth receive all sacrifices made by humans. This elicits the following angry reaction from Iris:

> ὦ μῶρε μῶρε, μὴ θεῶν κίνει φρένας
> δεινάς, ὅπως μή σου γένος πανώλεθρον
> Διὸς μακέλλῃ πᾶν ἀναστρέψει Δίκη,
> λιγνὺς δὲ σῶμα καὶ δόμων περιπτυχὰς
> καταιθαλώσῃ σου Λικυμνίαις βολαῖς.
>
> O fool, fool, do not stir up the terrible mind
> of gods lest Dikē, armed with Zeus's pick-axe,[86]
> overturn the entirety of your utterly wretched race,
> and a smoky flame would burn both your body to a crisp and the folding
> embraces of your house with Likymnian bolts.
>
> Ar. *Av*. 1238–42

[85] Dunbar 1995: 612 presents the strong arguments in favour of Iris' arrival from the air, not least the numerous references to the goddess as 'flying' (1173, 1197–8, 1217–19, 1230, 1260). For divine entrances in tragedy that probably used the stage crane see Taplin 1977b: 443–7, Mastronarde 1990: 272–80, 286–7.

[86] Zeus's proverbial pick-axe appears also at A. *Ag*. 525–6 and S. *Chryses* fr. 727 *TrGF*.

With this 'cento of consistently bombastic tragic phrases' (Dunbar 1995: 624), the exchange shifts from one of miscommunication to one of confrontation.[87] In addition to the seriousness of the threatened action (burning Peisetairos' body and house to a crisp), the menacing tone is underscored by Iris' physical elevation vis-à-vis the protagonist as well as the extension of the threat to the entire human race, thus including the play's audience. Iris' outburst may end on a bathetic note however if, as Sommerstein has suggested, Likymnian bolts were proverbial for something that missed its intended mark.[88] Either way, Peisetairos—now armed with a sling (σφενδόνην, 1187)—asserts his unwillingness to be intimidated (1243–5) and counters with threats of his own:

ἆρ' οἶσθ' ὅτι Ζεὺς εἴ με λυπήσει πέρα,
μέλαθρα μὲν αὐτοῦ καὶ δόμους Ἀμφίονος
καταιθαλώσω πυρφόροισιν αἰετοῖς,
πέμψω δὲ πορφυρίωνας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν
ὄρνις ἐπ' αὐτὸν παρδαλᾶς ἐνημμένους 1250
πλεῖν ἑξακοσίους τὸν ἀριθμόν; καὶ δή ποτε
εἷς Πορφυρίων αὐτῷ παρέσχε πράγματα.

[87] Aristophanes pokes fun at tragic anadiplosis (setting the tone for the rest of the address here with ὦ μῶρε μῶρε) at *Ran*. 1352a–5, where it is presented as typical of Euripides' style. Examples include ἔσται τάδ' ἔσται (*Alc*. 328), οἴκτιρον οἴκτιρον (*Med*. 711), ὦ τέκνα τέκνα (*Med*. 1020), σοφὴ σοφὴ σύ (*Andr*. 245), and see further Denniston 1952: 90, Mastronarde 2002: 96, Austin & Olson 2004: 104–5 (on Agathon's ὦ πρέσβυ πρέσβυ, *Thesm*. 146).

[88] Sommerstein 1987: 281. Cf. *Nub*. 398–402. Likymnios was Heracles' maternal uncle (*Il*. 2.661–3, Pind. *Ol*. 7.20–31). Euripides (fr. 473–9 *TrGF*) and Xenocles (33 F 2 *TrGF*) both wrote tragedies entitled *Likymnios*, but the plots of those plays and any possible connection to the reference in *Birds* are unknowable. See further Dunbar 1995: 625–6.

σὺ δ’ εἴ με λυπήσεις τι, τῆς διακόνου
πρώτης ἀνατείνας τὼ σκέλει διαμηριῶ
τὴν Ἶριν αὐτήν, ὥστε θαυμάζειν ὅπως
οὕτω γέρων ὢν στύομαι τριέμβολον.

Don’t you know that if Zeus gives me any more grief
I shall, together with my fire-bearing [πυρφόροισιν] eagles, burn to a crisp
his halls as well as the house of Amphion,
and against him I shall send to the sky
swamp-hens [πορφυρίωνας] fitted with leopard skins,
more than six hundred in number. Earlier,
just one Porphyrion [Πορφυρίων] gave him trouble.[89]
As for you, if you give me any grief,
first raising both the servant’s legs,[90] I’ll penetrate the thighs of
Iris herself, such that one is astounded at how,
although so old, I get erections good enough for a triple ramming.

Ar. *Av*. 1246–56

[89] Porphyrion was one of the giants who participated in the Gigantomachy, perhaps as their leader (Pind. *Pyth*. 8.12–19, Apollod. *Bibl*. 1.6.1–2, *LIMC* s.v. Porphyrion, Dunbar 1995: 375). There is a pun on πορφυρίωνας (‘swamp-hens’, 1249; Arnott 2007: 197–9), which itself may recall πυρφόροισιν (‘fire-bearing’) from the previous line.

[90] The word διάκονος—the same term used for Tereus/Hoopoe’s doorkeeper in the play’s prologue, a character who introduces himself as a δοῦλος (70–4)—seems disparaging in the context, though it can mean simply ‘messenger’ (e.g. S. *Phil*. 497). For διάκονος used as an affront compare [A.] *PV* 941–2, as well as its use in the context of slavish satyrs in satyr play (S. *Ichn*. fr. 314.149–50 *TrGF* ἄνευρα κἀκόμιστα κἀγελεύθρα διακονοῦντες, E. *Cyc*. 32).

The original suggestion of burning the 'folding embraces' of Peisetairos' house is echoed here in the threat to incinerate Zeus's halls, and capped with the addition of Amphion's house.[91] By recycling Iris' verb καταιθαλοῦν ('to incinerate', 1242/1248), Peisetairos continues the paratragic diction (note also the weighty three-word trimeter) and makes clear that he wishes to outdo the original threat.[92] The sombre tone abruptly recedes at the end of the address, however, when Peisetairos turns his attention away from Zeus and toward Iris herself, issuing a surprising and for comedy unparalleled threat of raping the goddess. The explicit acts of 'raising legs' and 'penetrating thighs' culminate with the image of a 'triple ramming' (τριέμβολον), which is equally crude and finds echoes in the vocabulary of naval warfare: Athenian triremes were fitted with bronze-covered rams (ἔμβολοι) for smashing into enemy ships.[93] This is the last of several references to ships in the exchange with Iris, whose arrival with beating wings and a flowing dress may have recalled the beating of oars and the flowing of sails (τὼ πτέρυγε ποῖ ναυστολεῖς; 1229; cf. A. *Ag*. 52, E. *Med*. 1–2,

[91] A parody of A. *Niobe* fr. 160 *TrGF* (x – μέλαθρα καὶ δόμους Ἀμφίονος / καταιθαλώσω πυρφόροισιν αἰετοῖς). Amphion was the son of Zeus and Antiope. He is said to have constructed the walls of Thebes (E. *Phoen*. 824), and accordingly, in Sophocles' *Antigone*, the messenger addresses the Thebans as Κάδμου πάροικοι καὶ δόμων Ἀμφίονος (1155). Since Thebes was ranged against Athens during the Peloponnesian War, the joke in *Birds* may have a political slant.

[92] Aside from A. *Niobe* fr. 160 *TrGF*, which is being parodied here (see previous footnote), the verb καταιθαλοῦν appears at E. *Supp*. 640, *Ion* 215, but nowhere else in comedy. Compare Austin & Olson 2004: 251 on predominantly tragic καταίθειν.

[93] Casson 1994: 85, Dunbar 1995: 629–30. The use of naval rams was perhaps remembered as instrumental in Athens's victory at the Battle of Salamis (A. *Pers*. 395–432). At Ar. fr. 334 K–A, ἔμβολος ('battering ram') almost certainly denotes an erect penis. For other instances of nautical terminology denoting sexual acts see Henderson 1991: 161–6.

Hel. 147–8). Peisetairos had accordingly begun by asking Iris if she is a ship (ὄνομα δέ σοι τί ἐστι; πλοῖον ἢ κυνῆ; 1203) and continues with references to two of Athens's state triremes, the Paralos and the Salaminia.[94] Iris is thus reminiscent of the busy imperial city that Peisetairos had been fleeing (cf. 109, 145–7 [explicitly mentioning the Salaminia]), perhaps providing additional motivation for his strong threat. While the fantasy of an older man reborn as a sexually potent misfit is found in Aristophanes (e.g. Dicaeopolis, Trygaeus, Philocleon), there is no hint that Peisetairos' threat is motivated here by sexual desire.[95] His intentions are hostile and assert his power by suggesting a reversal of the gods' sexual adventures with human women (Alcmene, Alope, Semele, mentioned earlier in the play, 556–9). It is difficult to gauge how the original audience might have reacted to Peisetairos' threat of rape.[96] We can only note that it goes unpunished. Far from the disoriented and frustrated figure of the play's prologue, Peisetairos now exudes self-confidence to the point where he feels able to threaten a goddess. The lack of punishment for this, then later the fantastic rewards that the protagonist enjoys at the end of the comedy, would seem to legitimise his behaviour.

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[94] *Av*. 1204. For the ships see B. Jordan 1975: 166–76. The Salaminia had been used to recall Alcibiades from Sicily the year before *Birds* (Thuc. 6.52, 61). 'Iris', for its part, is attested as a trireme name in the fourth century (*IG* II^2 1611.123).

[95] Contrast Euelpides' excited reaction to Procne where the same, rare verb denoting thigh-penetration appears (ἐγὼ διαμηρίζοιμ' ἂν αὐτὴν ἡδέως, 669).

[96] For a discussion of other moral ambiguities and contradictions in Peisetairos' plan, of which the rape threat may be one, see Konstan 1997. For attidudes toward (human) rape in contemporary Athens see Cole 1984, Harris 1990, Carey 1995, Harris 2004a.

3.3. A formal analysis of Aristophanic threats

Having looked at how threats are incorporated into Aristophanes' plots and inform interpersonal relationships between his characters, I analyse in this section the grammar of Aristophanic threats and discuss how various constructions inform threat exchanges in the comedies. Comparable data from tragedy and satyr play are presented at the end of the section, revealing differences between the dramatic genres.

Threats without a condition: these are the most common types of threats in Aristophanes. In their basic form, a harmful action is promised either as a first-person singular/plural future indicative (e.g. ἀπολῶ σε), or as a second-person singular/plural (or dual) future indicative (e.g. οἰμώξει μακρά). Whereas the former emphasise what is to be undertaken, the latter focus on the addressee(s) and on how (s)he is, or they are, about to suffer.

First-person threats without a condition:

Ach.	κατά σε χώσομεν τοῖς λίθοις (295) τιμωρήσομαι (304) δήξομἄρ' ὑμᾶς ἐγώ (325)
Eq.	ἐγὼ δέ γ' ἐξέλξω σε τῆς πυγῆς θύραζε κῦβδα (365) οἷόν σε δήσω <'ν> τῷ ξύλῳ (367) διώξομαί σε δειλίας (368) δερῶ σε θύλακον κλοπῆς (370) περικόμματ' ἔκ σου σκευάσω (372) ἐγώ σε νὴ τὸν Ἡρακλέα παραστορῶ (481) ἀπολῶ σε (702) ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ δήσω σε νὴ τὸν οὐρανόν (705)
Nub.	ἐξελῶ σ' ἐς κόρακας ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας (121–3; cf. 801–2) πολὺ γὰρ μᾶλλόν σ' / ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖσι λέγων ἀπολῶ (891–2) ἀπολῶ σε κακῶς (899)
Vesp.	καὶ σέ γ' αὐτοῖς ἐξολοῦμεν (422)

Av.	πικροὺς ἐγὼ σοι τήμερον δείξω νόμους (1045)[97] ἀπολῶ σε καὶ γράψω σε μυρίας δραχμάς (1052)
Lys.	σχήσω σ᾽ ἐγὼ τῆς νῦν βοῆς (380)
Thesm.	τὸν σησαμοῦνθ᾽ ὃν κατέφαγες, τοῦτον χεσεῖν ποήσω (570)[98] κἀγώ σ᾽ ἀποδείξω θυμάλωπα τήμερον (729)[99] ἐμπρήσομεν τοίνυν σε (749) μαστιγῶ σ᾽ ἄρα (1126) τὸ κεπαλή σ᾽ ἄρα / τὸ ξιπομάκαιραν ἀποκεκόψι τουτοϊ (1126–7)
Eccl.	ἀλλ᾽ ἐγώ σε τιμωρήσομαι (1044)
Plut.	ἀλλά σοι παρέξω πράγματα (20) ἀπό σ᾽ ὀλῶ κακὸν κακῶς (65) ἐγὼ γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἐξολῶ κακοὺς κακῶς (418) σφὼ ποιήσω τήμερον δοῦναι δίκην (433)

Table 3.1: First-person threats without a condition

[97] Peisetairos is responding to the Decree-Seller, who has come with new laws for Nephelokokkugia. For threat formulas with initial prediative πικρός see Dunbar 1995: 572 (citing *Od*. 17.448, Ar. *Av*. 1468, *Thesm*. 853, E. *Med*. 399–400 [x 2], *Bacch*. 357).

[98] For πο(ι)ήσω + infinitive in comic threats see K–A on Hermipp. fr. 74, Biles & Olson 2015: 286 (citing *Nub*. 1491–2, *Av*. 1465, *Lys*. 684–5, *Plut*. 433, 947). See also *Vesp*. 643 (ἦ μὴν ἐγώ σε τήμερον σκύτη βλέπειν ποιήσω). Comparable are threats with καθίημι + participle: Cratin. fr. 309 K–A (τὴν χεῖρα μὴ ᾽πίβαλλε, μὴ κλάων καθῇ), Eup. fr. 99.110 (ναὶ μὰ Δία κλάοντα καθέσω σε).

[99] For τήμερον used to intensify threats see Hermipp. fr. 74 K–A (ἐγώ σου τήμερον τύπτων τὸ πρόσωπον ⟨ νὴ Δί᾽ ⟩ αἱμορρυγχιᾶν ποιήσω), Austin & Olson 2004: 251 (citing *Eq*. 68 [reported], *Nub*. 1307, *Vesp*. 643, *Pax* 243, *Av*. 1045, *Lys*. 684–5), Biles & Olson 2015: 286 (adding Ar. fr. 614, Cratin. fr. 129 K–A). The only tragic instance is [E.] *Rhes*. 683. Comparable is Latin *iam* in threats (e.g. Plaut. *Cas*. 643–4 *hoc* / *iam tibi istuc cerebrum dispercutiam*, *Curc*. 576 *iam ego te faciam ut hinc formicae frustillatim different*, *Rud*. 763 *iam hercle tibi fiet in ore messis mergis pugneis*, 1007 *iam in cerebro colaphos apstrudam tuo*).

Second-person threats without a condition, frequently employing a verb of howling or wailing (sc. in pain):

Ach.	ἀπολεῖ (295) κλάων μεγαριεῖς (822)
Eq.	ἀπολεῖσθον ἀποθανεῖσθον ὦ μιαρωτάτω (239) ἀποθανεῖσθον αὐτίκα μάλα (284)
Nub.	νὴ Δί᾽ οἰμώξεσθ᾽ ἄρα (217) ἦ μὴν σὺ τούτων τῷ χρόνῳ δώσεις δίκην (1242)
Vesp.	τούτων μὲν τάχ᾽ ἡμῖν δώσετον καλὴν δίκην (453)[100] ἦ μὴν σὺ δώσεις αὖριον τούτων δίκην (1332)
Pax	κλαύσει μακρά (255) πληγὰς λήψεσθ᾽ ὦργεῖοι (493) κλαύσει νὴ τὸν Διόνυσον / οἰμωγὰς ἅδων, καὶ ταύτας ὀμφαλοέσσας (1277–8)
Av.	ἀπολεῖσθον (64) οἰμώξει μακρά (1207; cf. Eup. fr. 328 K–A, Men. *Epit*. 160, 1068) πικρὰν τάχ᾽ ὄψει στρεψοδικοπανουργίαν (1468)
Lys.	κλαύσει τοίνυν πολὺ μᾶλλον (505)
Thesm.	λήψει δὲ κακόν (713)[101] κλαύσετ᾽ ἄρα νὴ τὼ θεὼ / ὅστις σ᾽ ἀπάξει τυπτόμενος τῇ Λαμπάδι (916–17) κλαῦσ᾽ ἄρα (1087 = 1088)
Plut.	ἀπολώλατον (421) ἀτὰρ οὐχ ἧττόν γ᾽ οὐδὲν κλαύσει (572) οἰμώξἄρα σύ (876)

Table 3.2: Second-person threats without a condition

[100] For τάχα (‘soon’, ‘forthwith’) in threats cf. *Od*. 12.387–8, 18.10, 389–91, Ar. *Ach*. 564–5, *Av*. 1042, 1468, *Lys*. 443–4, *Thesm*. 718–20, S. *OC* 820, E. *IA* 311. Similar is the expression οὐκ εἰς μακράν (e.g. A. *Supp*. 925 κλάοις ἄν, εἰ ψαύσειας, οὐ μάλ᾽ ἐς μακράν, Men. *Sam*. 718 ἤδη σε δήσω, μειράκιον, οὐκ εἰς μακράν).

[101] Parallels for this primarily prosaic expression in Austin & Olson 2004: 248.

Further variations on threats without a condition include those directed at a beloved secondary target,[102] or at part of an opponent's body, including threats of plucking hairs, ripping/slicing out internal organs, and kicking shins.[103]

The idea of 'you won't get away with this' is expressed in two different ways. First with οὐ χαίρειν (lit. 'you will not rejoice [doing this]'), either alone or, less often, followed by a verb in the future:

Ach.	ἀλλ᾽ οὔτι χαίρων ταῦτα τολμήσει λέγειν (563)
Eq.	οὗτοι μὰ τοὺς δώδεκα θεοὺς χαιρήσετον (235) οὐ χαιρήσεις (828)
Vesp.	μὰ τὸν Δί᾽ οὔτι χαιρήσων γε σύ (186)
Thesm.	ἀλλ᾽ οὐ μὰ τὼ θεὼ τάχ᾽ οὐ / χαίρων ἴσως ἐνυβριεῖς / λόγους τε λέξεις ἀνοσίους (718–20) οὐ καιρήσεις[104] (1094)
Ran.	ἀλλ᾽ οὔ τι χαίρων αὖτ᾽ ἐρεῖς (843, a warning)

[102] ἀνταποκτενῶ γὰρ ὑμῶν τῶν φίλων τοὺς φιλτάτους (*Ach.* 326–7, referring to the coals), ἐγὼ γὰρ τουτονὶ διαφθερῶ (*Ach.* 331, referring to the basket of coals), ἐγὼ δὲ σοῦ γε τὼ κάδω διασκεδῶ (*Av.* 1053), καθαιματώσει βωμόν (*Thesm.* 694, referring to the kidnapped baby/wineskin).

[103] κυνοκοπήσω σου τὸ νῶτον (*Eq.* 289), ἐγὼ δὲ κινήσω γέ σου τὸν πρωκτὸν ἀντὶ φύσκης (*Eq.* 364), τὰς βλεφαρίδας σου παρατιλῶ (*Eq.* 373), τὸν πρηγορεῶνά σου ᾽κτεμῶ (*Eq.* 374), ἐξαρπάσομαί σου τοῖς ὄνυξι τἄντερα (*Eq.* 708), βρύκουσά σου τοὺς πλεύμονας καὶ τἄντερ᾽ ἐξαμήσω (*Lys.* 367), κωκύσεσθε τὰς τρίχας μακρά (*Lys.* 1222), ἐκποκιῶ σου τὰς ποκάδας (*Thesm.* 577). And compare κατάξω τὴν κεφαλήν . . . σου (Men. *Sam.* 388, *Epit.* 1062).

[104] The Scythian Archer's attempt at οὐ χαιρήσεις. One of this character's speech idiosyncrasies is that he does not use aspirates (Willi 2003: 203–4, Austin & Olson 2004: 308, Hall 2006: 230).

Plut.	οὔτοι μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα χαιρήσεις ἔτι (64)

Table 3.3: 'You won't get away with this' with οὐ χαίρειν[105]

The second is formed with οὔτοι + invocation (μά) + καταπροίξεσθαι + participle. This construction is typically employed at a change of speaker.[106] It is found neither in tragedy nor fourth-century prose.[107] Absence from other genres suggests that it is a low-register or colloquial formulation.

Eq.	οὔτοι μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα καταπροίξει τάλαντα πολλὰ / κλέψας Ἀθηναίων (435–6)
Nub.	οὔτοι μὰ τὸν Δία τὸν μέγαν καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς / ἐμοῦ καταπροίξει (1239–40, no participle)
Vesp.	οὔτοι καταπροίξει μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω τοῦτο δρῶν (1366) οὔτοι μὰ τὼ θεὼ καταπροίξει Μυρτίας / τῆς Ἀγκυλίωνος θυγατέρος καὶ Σωστράτης / οὕτω διαφθείρας ἐμοῦ τὰ φορτία[108] (1396–8)

[105] Cf. Eup. fr. 106 K–A: οὐ γὰρ μὰ τὴν Μαραθῶνι τὴν ἐμὴν μάχην / χαίρων τις αὐτῶν τοὐμὸν ἀλγυνεῖ (≈ E. *Med*. 395/8), S. *Ant*. 758–9, *OT* 363 (with Finglass 2018 *ad loc*.), *Phil*. 1299, E. *Or*. 1593, Hdt. 3.29.2, Pl. *Grg*. 510d, further Barrett 1964: 411–12 (on E. *Hipp*. 1416–22), Moorhouse 1982: 255, Collard 2005: 366–7. Schein 2013: 317 (on S. *Phil*. 1299) notes that for the οὐ χαίρειν construction, 'the threat is stronger when the verb must be understood . . . from the previous speaker's words [e.g. *Eq*. 828] . . . than when the verb is expressed by the one making the threat [e.g. *Ach*. 563]'. For the comparable construction using κλαίειν and a future verb, implying 'the imminence of a blow', see Wilkins 1993: 85 (on E. *Hcld*. 270).

[106] The exception is *Vesp*. 1366, which Rusten 1977: 159 adduces as an argument for attributing the two preceding lines to Philocleon.

[107] Although it is found, without an invocation, at Hdt. 3.156.3, 5.105.1, 7.17.2.

[108] Printing the MSS θυγατέρος for Richards's conjecture γενομένης adopted in Wilson's OCT (cf. Biles & Olson 2015: 485).

Thesm.	οὗτοι μὰ τὼ θεὼ σὺ καταπροίξει λέγουσα ταυτί (566)

Table 3.4: 'You won't get away with . . . ' with οὗτοι + invocation (μά) + καταπροίξεσθαι + participle

Relatively rare are threats formulated with ἴσθι (*vel sim.*, although unstated in most instances) + (exclamatory) ὡς + future:[109]

Ach. 325	ὡς τεθνήξων ἴσθι νυνί ('know that you will now die!')
Ach. 335	ὡς ἀποκτενῶ
Ach. 564–5	ὡς εἰ θενεῖς / τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον, αὐτὸς ἀρθήσει τάχα
Ach. 590	οἴμ' ὡς τεθνήξεις

The forceful, double-negative construction οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως οὐ + future indicative appears twice in a threat:[110]

Vesp. 654	οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως οὐχὶ τεθνήξεις ('there is no way that you will not die!', Philocleon to his own son; 'a ridiculously theatrical threat' so Biles & Olson 2015: 289)
Pax 188	οὗτοι μὰ τὴν Γῆν ἔσθ' ὅπως οὐκ ἀποθανεῖ

Threats can also be strengthened with the particle combination ἦ μήν, consistently in the front position and generally paired with a future indicative.[111] The combination may lend the

[109] For further examples of this construction in drama see Diggle 1981: 88, López Eire 1994: 138–40. Its repeated use by Polemos in *Peace* (236–7, 243, 246–7, 250) suggests that it was appropriate in the mouth of hyperbolically angry speakers.

[110] This double negative construction is not restricted to threats, nor is it exclusively comic (compare e.g. *Ach*. 116, *Eq*. 238, 426, *Nub*. 802, 1307–8, *Vesp*. 260–1, *Av*. 52, *Lys*. 1092, *Thesm*. 404, 847, 882, *Ran*. 640, *Plut*. 871, S. *El*. 1479, *OT* 1058–9, *OC* 97–8, E. *IT* 684, *Erechth.* fr. 360.52 *TrGF*).

[111] For ἦ μήν being explicitly connected to threatening speech see Thuc. 8.33.1 (πολλὰ ἀπειλήσας τοῖς Χίοις ἦ μὴν μὴ ἐπιβοηθήσειν, ἤν τι δέωνται). The combination ἦ μήν is also used in predictions

threat something of the aura of an oath since the two particles are regularly used to introduce acts of swearing, particularly in *oratio obliqua*.[112] From this perspective, possible translations would be 'I swear' or 'by god':

Vesp. 643	ἦ μὴν ἐγώ σε τήμερον σκύτη βλέπειν ποιήσω ('By god, I'll make sure you see the whip immediately')
Vesp. 1332–3	ἦ μὴν σὺ δώσεις αὖριον τούτων δίκην / ἡμῖν ἅπασιν
Av. 1259	ἦ μήν σε παύσει τῆς ὕβρεως οὑμὸς πατήρ

There are a few examples of threats formed with a verb in the imperative + μή + subjunctive, or an imperative + ἵνα (μή) + subjunctive:[113]

Ach. 111–12	ἄγε δὴ σὺ φράσον ἐμοὶ σαφῶς πρὸς τουτονί / ἵνα μή σε βάψω βάμμα Σαρδιανικόν
Nub. 58	δεῦρ' ἔλθ' ἵνα κλάῃς ('Come here so that you might weep!')
Vesp. 1386	τηροῦ μὴ λάβῃς ὑπώπια
Lys. 503	λέγε δὴ ταχέως ἵνα μὴ κλάῃς

of a negative outcome for the addressee (which often come across as veiled threats, where the distinction between these and outright threats can be slight) at *Nub*. 1242, *Plut*. 608, and for tragedy compare [A.] *PV* 907–10, S. *OC* 815–16, E. *Alc*. 64, and further Wakker 1997.

[112] E.g. S. *Tr*. 255–6, 1185–7, E. *IA* 475, Thuc. 4.88.1, 5.38.1, 5.50.1, Lys. 4.12, Andoc. 1.127, Dem. 19.292, 32.31, 39.3, 54.41, Xen. *Anab*. 2.3.26, *Hell*. 2.4.43, 3.4.6.

[113] I find only one threat in tragedy that employs a comparable construction: καί σοι προφωνῶ τόνδε μὴ θάπτειν, ὅπως / μὴ τόνδε θάπτων αὐτὸς ἐς ταφὰς πέσῃς (S. *Aj*. 1089–90, 'a buffoonish jibe': Finglass 2011 *ad loc*.).

Threats can also be uttered in the form of a (rhetorical) question, either direct or indirect, which may add a sense of desperation or frustration to the utterance. This occurs at:

Av. 1121–3	ἆρά γ᾽ οἶσθα τοῦθ᾽ ὅτι / δικαιότατ᾽ ἂν ληφθεῖσα πασῶν ἰρίδων / ἀπέθανες, εἰ τῆς ἀξίας ἐτύγχανες; (Cf. *Av*. 1246–8)
Av. 1627	ὁ Τριβαλλός, οἰμώζειν δοκεῖ σοι;
Lys. 356–7	ὦ Φαιδρία, ταύτας λαλεῖν ἐάσομεν τοσαυτί; / οὐ περικατᾶξαι τὸ ξύλον τύπτοντ᾽ ἐχρῆν τιν᾽ αὐταῖς;
Lys. 366	τί δ᾽ ἦν σποδῶ τοῖς κονδύλοις; τί μ᾽ ἐργάσει τὸ δεινόν;
Lys. 376	οὐκ οἶδά σ᾽ εἰ τῇδ᾽ ὡς ἔχω τῇ λαμπάδι σταθεύσω
Lys. 821	τὴν γνάθον βούλει θένω;
Lys. 823	ἀλλὰ κρούσω τῷ σκέλει;
Thesm. 1135	ἔτι γὰρ σὺ τὴ μάστιγαν ἐπιτυμεῖς λαβεῖν;
Plut. 271–2	μῶν ἀξιοῖς φενακίσας ἔπειτ᾽ ἀπαλλαγῆναι / ἀζήμιος;

Threats with a condition: these are less common in Aristophanes than threats without a condition. The most common construction is εἰ (μή) + future indicative in the protasis with future indicative in the apodosis. This formulation is by no means restricted to minatory utterances, but the indicative conveys a logical and immutable consequence, and when employed in threats the tone is thus forceful and assured.[114]

Ach.	[sc. ἴσθι] ὡς εἰ θενεῖς / τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον, αὐτὸς ἀρθήσει τάχα (564–5) κλάων γε σύ / εἰ μὴ ᾽τέρωσε συκοφαντήσεις τρέχων (827–8)
Eq.	εἰ μή μ᾽ ἀναπείσετ᾽, ἀποθανεῖσθε τήμερον (68, reported) διαφορήσω σ᾽, εἴ τι γρύξεις (294) κοπροφορήσω σ᾽ εἰ λακήσει (295) εἰ μή μ᾽ ἐάσεις ἐπιτροπεύειν, ἕτερος αὖ / ἐμοῦ πανουργότερός τις ἀναφανήσεται (949–50)
Vesp.	εἰ μή μ᾽ ἐάσεθ᾽ ἥσυχον, μαχούμεθα (190)

[114] Or ‘stern, minatory, [and] prophetic’, as Gildersleeve 1876: 9 put it. See also Goodwin 1889: §§ 444, 447, Moorhouse 1982: 277, Wakker 1994: 167–76, 188.

	εἰ νὴ Δί’ αὖθις κονδύλοις νουθετήσεθ’ ἡμᾶς / ἀποσβέσαντες τοὺς λύχνους ἄπιμεν οἴκαδ’ αὐτοί (254–5) εἰ δὲ μὴ τοῦτον μεθήσεις, ἔν τί σοι παγήσεται (437) εἰ μὴ ’ρρήσεθ’, ὑμᾶς, / ὦ πόνηροι, ταυτῃὶ τῇ / δᾳδὶ φρυκτοὺς σκευάσω (1329–31)
Av.	ἄρ’ οἶσθ’ ὅτι Ζεὺς εἴ με λυπήσει πέρα / μέλαθρα μὲν αὐτοῦ καὶ δόμους Ἀμφίονος / καταιθαλώσω (1246–8) σὺ δ’ εἴ με λυπήσεις τι, τῆς διακόνου / πρώτης ἀνατείνας τὼ σκέλει διαμηριῶ / τὴν ἶριν αὐτήν (1253–5)
Lys.	εἰ μὴ σιωπήσει, θενῶν σου ’κκοκκιῶ τὸ γῆρας (364) εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν τὴν χεῖρά μοι / ἄκραν προσοίσει, δημόσιος ὢν κλαύσεται (435–6) εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Πάνδροσον ταύτῃ μόνον / τὴν χεῖρ’ ἐπιβαλεῖς, ἐπιχεσεῖ πατούμενος (439–40) εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Φωσφόρον τὴν χεῖρ’ ἄκραν / ταύτῃ προσοίσεις, κύαθον αἰτήσεις τάχα (443–4) εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Ταυροπόλον ταύτῃ πρόσει / ἐγὼ ’κποκιῶ σου τὰς στενοκωκύτους τρίχας (447–8) εἰ δὲ λυπήσεις τί με / τῷδέ σ’ ἀψήκτῳ πατάξω τῷ κοθόρνῳ τὴν γνάθον (656–7) εἰ νὴ τὼ θεώ με ζωπυρήσεις λύσω / τὴν ἐμαυτῆς ὗν ἐγὼ δή, καὶ ποιήσω / τήμερον τοὺς δημότας βωστρεῖν σ’ ἐγὼ πεκτούμενον (682–5)
Plut.	εἰ μὴ φράσεις γάρ, ἀπό σ’ ὀλῶ κακὸν κακῶς (65)

Table 3.5: Conditional threats with εἰ (μή) + future indicative + future indicative

Conditional threats formed with ἐάν/ἤν + subjunctive in the protasis with a future indicative in the apodosis are less common than threats with εἰ (μή) + future indicative:

Ach.	ἢν δ’ ἀπολιγαίνῃ, τοὺς ἀγορανόμους καλῶ (968)
Eq.	διαβαλῶ σ’, ἐὰν στρατηγῇς (288)
Nub.	κλαύσει, τὴν χεῖρ’ ἢν ἐπιβάλλῃς (933)
Vesp.	ὡς ἐγὼ τοῦτόν γ’, ἐὰν γρύξῃ / τι, ποιήσω δακεῖν τὴν / καρδίαν καὶ τὸν περὶ ψυχῆς / δρόμον δραμεῖν (374–7)
Lys.	ἐὰν δὲ τοῦτο δρᾷς, κυλοιδιᾶν ἀνάγκη (472)
Thesm.	ἐμβαλῶ σοι πάτταλον / ἢν μὴ σιωπᾷς (222–3)

	τοῦτο δ᾽ οὐδέποτε σὺ ψωμιεῖς / ἢν μή μ᾽ ἀφῇτ᾽ (692–3)
Plut.	ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔσθ᾽ ὅπως σιγήσομαι / ἢν μὴ φράσῃς ὅ τι τῷδ᾽ ἀκολουθοῦμέν ποτε (19–20) μὰ Δί᾽ ἀλλ᾽ ἀφελὼν τὸν στέφανον, ἢν λυπῇς τί με / [sc. τυπτήσω σ᾽] ἵνα μᾶλλον ἀλγῇς (22–3)

Table 3.6: Conditional threats with ἤν/ἐάν + subjunctive + future indicative

A variant of conditional threats are constructions employing an imperative followed by εἰ δὲ μὴ κτλ. (‘Do this! Otherwise . . .’):

Nub. 1433	πρὸς ταῦτα μὴ τύπτ᾽. εἰ δὲ μή, σαυτόν ποτ᾽ αἰτιάσει (‘And stop hitting me! Otherwise, you’ll only have yourself to blame [sc. for my reaction]’)
Vesp. 428–9	ἀλλ᾽ ἀφίει τὸν ἄνδρ᾽· εἰ δὲ μή, φήμ᾽ ἐγὼ / τὰς χελώνας μακαριεῖν σε τοῦ δέρματος
Vesp. 434–5	λάβεσθε τουτουὶ καὶ μὴ μεθῆσθε μηδενί· / εἰ δὲ μή, ᾽ν πέδαις παχείαις οὐδὲν ἀριστήσετε

Threats both with and without a condition receive added strength and are bestowed with divine authority when accompanied by an invocation. The reasons determining which god is invoked are not always discernible and are dictated to a certain extent by the metre. At times, however, the invoked god is connected to the speaker’s character (e.g. the Megarian trader swearing by Diocles in *Acharnians*, Trygaeus swearing by Dionysus) or conforms to more general curse patterns.[115]

[115] E.g. oaths with Γῆ are always negative (Olson 1988: 104–5) and spoken exclusively by male characters; swearing by Artemis is reserved for female characters or cross-dressing men (Austin & Olson 2004: 207–8) as is swearing by the ‘two goddesses’ Demeter and Kore (*Eccl*. 156–9, Austin & Olson 2004: 176), though male characters do swear by Demeter alone. For ‘informal oaths’ in general see Dover 1985: 328–32 (with comparanda from Greek oratory), Dillon 1995, Sommerstein & Torrance 2014: 315–26 (with fuller information on gender differences as well as

The following threats include invocations:

Ach.	πάλιν τυ ἀποισῶ ναὶ τὸν Ἑρμᾶν οἴκαδις (779)
Eq.	οὗτοι μὰ τοὺς δώδεκα θεοὺς χαιρήσετον (235) οὗτοι μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα καταπροίξει τάλαντα πολλὰ / κλέψας Ἀθηναίων (435–6) ἐγώ σε νὴ τὸν Ἡρακλέα παραστορῶ (481) ἀπολῶ σε νὴ τὴν προεδρίαν τὴν ἐκ Πύλου (702) ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ δήσω σε νὴ τὸν οὐρανόν (705) καί σ᾽ ἐπιδείξω / νὴ τὴν Δήμητρ᾽ (832–3)
Nub.	οὐκ ἄρα μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα . . . (121) νὴ Δί᾽ οἰμώξεσθ᾽ ἄρα (217) οὗτοι μὰ τὸν Δία τὸν μέγαν καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς / ἐμοῦ καταπροίξει (1239–40)
Vesp.	μὰ τὸν Δί᾽ οὔτι χαιρήσων γε σύ (186) εἰ νὴ Δί᾽ αὖθις κονδύλοις νουθετήσεθ᾽ ἡμᾶς / ἀποσβέσαντες τοὺς λύχνους ἄπιμεν οἴκαδ᾽ αὐτοί (254–5) οὗτοι καταπροίξει μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω τοῦτο δρῶν (1366) οὗτοι μὰ τὼ θεὼ καταπροίξει . . . (1396)
Av.	νὴ τὸν Δί᾽ ἦ ᾽γώ σου καταπαύσω τὰς πνοάς (1397)
Pax	οὗτοι μὰ τὴν Γῆν ἔσθ᾽ ὅπως οὐκ ἀποθανεῖ (188) κλαύσει νὴ τὸν Διόνυσον / οἰμωγὰς ᾄδων (1277–8)
Lys.	εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν . . . (435) εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Πάνδροσον . . . (439) εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Φωσφόρον . . . (443) εἰ τἄρα νὴ τὴν Ταυροπόλον . . . (447) εἰ νὴ τὼ θεώ . . . (682)
Thesm.	οὗτοι μὰ τὼ θεὼ σὺ καταπροίξει λέγουσα ταυτί (566) κἀγώ σε νὴ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν . . . / τὸν σησαμοῦνθ᾽ ὃν κατέφαγες, τοῦτον χεσεῖν ποιήσω (569–70) ἀλλ᾽ οὐ μὰ τὼ θεὼ τάχ᾽ οὐ / χαίρων ἴσως ἐνυβριεῖς / λόγους τε λέξεις ἀνοσίους (718–20) κλαύσετ᾽ ἄρα νὴ τὼ θεὼ (916)

diachronic changes). Such informal oaths are rare in tragedy. Sommerstein & Torrance 2014: 82–3 count just thirteen instances versus 589 for Aristophanes (*eid*. p. 316). For informal oaths in Latin comedy see J. Adams 1984: 47–54.

Plut.	οὔ τοι μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα χαιρήσεις ἔτι (64)

Table 3.7: Aristophanic threats with invocations

Finally, we can identify some differences between comic and tragic forms. The construction οὐ χαίρειν in direct threats is rare in tragedy (S. *Ant.* 758–9, *OT* 363, *Phil*. 1299, E. *Or*. 1593), while οὕτοι + καταπροίξεσθαι + participle is not found at all. The intensifying particle combination ἦ μήν occurs just once in an unambiguous threat (S. *OC* 815–16), but compare its use in the 'veiled threats' listed in footnote 111 above. Threats with ἴσθι ὡς *vel sim*. are also infrequent: I note only A. *Ag*. 1670, S. *Ant*. 758–9, and [E.] *Rhes*. 816–18.

Conditional threats are relatively uncommon in tragedy (e.g. A. *Supp*. 903–4, 925, S. *Aj*. 1314–15, *Ant*. 93–4, 306–09, *OT* 1166, *Phil*. 1299, E. *IA* 306), but tragedy has a threat construction not found in Aristophanes, namely an imperatival expression + ἤ ('do this . . . or else . . . ', S. *Phil*. 983, E. *Phoen*. 593, *Or*. 1567–9). Threats formed with an imperatival construction followed by, or supplemented with, εἰ δὲ μὴ κτλ. occur only at S. *Tr*. 1200–2, 1204–5, and E. *Or*. 1516 (ὄμοσον—εἰ δὲ μή, κτενῶ σε—μὴ λέγειν ἐμὴν χάριν).

Direct threats in tragedy are evenly distributed between first-person and second-person forms (see below). Overall, they are less numerous than in Aristophanes, which may contribute to the impression of comedy as the more spontaneous genre.

First-person threats without a condition in tragedy and satyr play:

S. *OC*	τὴν δ᾽ ἄξω τάχα (820)
E. *Andr*.	πῦρ σοι προσοίσω (257) σὲ δὲ κτενῶ (440)
E. *Phoen*.	καὶ κατακτενῶ [sc. σε] (611)
E. *Or*.	μέλλω κτενεῖν σου θυγατέρα (1578) πυρὶ δ᾽ ἀνάψομεν δόμους (1594)
E. *IA*	σκήπτρῳ τάχ᾽ ἄρα σὸν καθαιμάξω κάρα (311; cf. *Andr*. 588)

E. *Cyc*.	τάχα τις ὑμῶν τῷ ξύλῳ / δάκρυα μεθήσει (210–11) ἐπεί σε τῆσδ᾽ ἀπορρήξας πέτρας / αὐτοῖσι συνναύταισι συντρίψω βαλών (704–5)

Table 3.8: First-person threats without a condition in tragedy (and satyr play)

Second-person threats without a condition in tragedy and satyr play:

A. *Ag*.	καὶ ταῦτα τἄπη κλαυμάτων ἀρχηγενῆ (1628)
A. *Theoroi/Isthm*.	ταῦτ᾽ οὖν δακρύσεις οὐ καπνῷ (78c.41 *TrGF*)
S. *Ant*.	κλαίων φρενώσεις, ὢν φρενῶν αὐτὸς κενός (754)
S. *OT*	σὺ πρὸς χάριν μὲν οὐκ ἐρεῖς, κλαίων δ᾽ ἐρεῖς (1152)
S. *Ichn*.	κλαίοντες αὐτῇ δειλίᾳ ψοφή[σ]ετε (168; cf. Antonopoulos 2014)
E. *Hcld*.	κλαίων ἄρ᾽ ἅψῃ τῶνδε κοὐκ ἐς ἀμβολάς (270)
E. *HF*	ὑμεῖς δέ, πρέσβεις, ταῖς ἐμαῖς ἐναντίοι / γνώμαισιν ὄντες, οὐ μόνον στενάξετε / τοὺς Ἡρακλείους παῖδας, ἀλλὰ καὶ δόμου / τύχας, ὅταν πάσχῃ τι, μεμνήσεσθε δὲ / δοῦλοι γεγῶτες τῆς ἐμῆς τυραννίδος (247–51)
[E.] *Rhes*.	θανῇ γὰρ σήμερον δράσας κακῶς (683)

Table 3.9: Second-person threats without a condition in tragedy (and satyr play)

3.4. Chapter conclusions

Threats in Aristophanes exploit the vocabulary of pain and destruction, but never imply a real risk of death. That being said, a character issuing a threat does demonstrate that he or she is ready to transform hostility into action (or, at least, wants to give that impression). As such, threats contribute to, and indeed often raise, the tension of Aristophanic face-offs. The

formal survey in section 3.3 has revealed that threats are also more prominent in comedy than in tragedy, contributing to the liveliness of the former genre.

Threats can elicit laughter thanks to their disgusting or unabashedly sexual nature, paratragic elements, mixed registers, or the perceived inappropriateness of the utterance given the relationship between speaker and addressee. In certain configurations, threats aggravate addressees, who respond with threats of their own (*Knights*, *Lysistrata*). In other cases, we are encouraged to laugh at characters who issue ridiculous threats or, conversely, overreact in the face of minor ones (*Acharnians*, *Thesmophoriazusae*). Female characters hold their own in *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, and *Frogs* (the innkeepers), directing violent threats at male addressees. The threats in the *Telephus* parodies from *Acharnians* and *Thesmophoriazusae* force spectators to wait for an outcome and are thus suspenseful, but the conclusion in both cases is surprising and bathetic, which deflates any tension. *Frogs* exploits Dionysus' attempts to pass himself off as Heracles by having various characters, firm in the belief that the protagonist is the son of Alcmene, threaten and mistreat him. The mirrored threats in *Knights* highlight arguably uncomfortable similarities between the play's rivals, but also allow Aristophanes to display his poetic craftsmanship. Resistance to threats demonstrates a character's resilience, self-confidence, or comic foolhardiness. Kinsman's disdain for the women's threats of burning in *Thesmophoriazusae* is funny given the precarious situation in which he finds himself. This combined with his quick thinking in the face of danger is, however, typical of the audacity exhibited by many of Aristophanes' characters. Philocleon's reactions to threats in *Wasps*, on the other hand, invite questions about the success of his son's plan to reform the old man. Finally, and unlike tragedy where threats are primarily aimed at vulnerable or marginalised figures, part of comedy's allure is that it empowers low-status characters to challenge conventional authorities and, in the case

of *Birds*, even gods. Aristophanes gives his spectators the opportunity to experience such gratifying power reversals, of which threats are an important constituent.

CHAPTER 4

The comic body under attack. Slapstick in Aristophanes

4.1. Opening remarks and previous approaches to Aristophanic slapstick

In addition to words and music, theatre conveys meaning via the arrangement of bodies, props, costume, scenic decoration, lighting, and space. The optic and physical properties of the theatre present playwrights with opportunities as well as challenges that have been discussed in a number of studies of Greek comedy, although rarely with a focus on the aesthetics of conflict.

An exception is Kaimio's article 'Comic violence in Aristophanes' (1990), which takes a formalistic approach to staged physical aggression. Although Kaimio admits the heterogeneity of violent acts in Aristophanic comedy, she identifies two main categories of comic violence: a) that which belongs 'organically to certain parts of comedy' (p. 53), by which she means violence in the build-up to the *agōn* and in post-parabatic scenes, and b) violence that is a function of the victim's status. The first type revolves around either intruders or the chorus. The expulsion of intruders represents a 'culmination of [the] deep conflicts . . . presented in the first part of the comedy' (p. 60) and occurs after the poet has secured sympathy for the protagonist; choral violence, for its part, leads to battle scenes either between two opposing semi-choruses or in which individual characters face off against a group. Belonging to Kaimio's second category are hostile encounters that 'can

occur in different phases of the dramatic structure' (p. 62), such as the father-beating episode toward the end of *Clouds* or various interventions by Scythian archers. Here, Kaimio does not construct an overarching account, but suggests that these clashes are symptomatic of the comic upending of orthodox hierarchies. Victims are typically authority figures who are mocked or treated in ways scarcely imaginable in the real world. This leads Kaimio to conclude that, whereas in tragedy violence is inflicted on oppressed or vulnerable characters, in comedy, violence primarily involves 'pulling down the authorities of real life' (p. 72).

Kaimio focusses on the agents and victims of violence in Aristophanes, rather than the acts themselves. It therefore falls outside of her scope to discuss problems of staging and spectacle (one of the central aims of this chapter) or questions concerning morality and limits. The latter seem essential when we consider that Aristophanes does not allow unadulterated violence, such as the rape of citizen women or murder (cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1453a35–9), to inform his plays.[1] Unlike in tragedy, where such crimes spur characters into

[1] One might see Tereus in *Birds* as an exception, but his violent background is not long dwelt upon (though cf. *Av*. 209–14) nor does it influence the comic plot beyond explaining how he comes to be an intermediary between humans and birds. On the possible tensions generated by this comic suppression of Tereus' past see Dobrov 1993. On rape in Aristophanes, which does appear in threats and fantasies, see Sommerstein 1998, Riess 2012: 279–85, Robson 2015. See Henderson 2000 and Pöhlmann 2011 on the comedy *Cheiron* by Pherecrates (authorship disputed), which apparently showed a personified Music having been raped and appearing on stage 'thoroughly mistreated with respect to her body' (ὅλην κατηκισμένην τὸ σῶμα, [Plut.] *De mus.* 1141c), a metaphor for the musical innovations of the late fifth century (on which see Csapo 2004). On rape in Menander see Lape 2001, Omitowoju 2002, James 2014, Glazebrook 2015.

action, they are absent from Aristophanes as plot devices.[2] I suggest two reasons for this. First, Old Comedy's tendency to exploit unintended outcomes and jumps in logic for humour means that characters can hardly be held accountable for their actions. A crime as violent and irreversible as, for example, murder compels one to think about motives, consequences, and indeed retribution, however, and thus fits poorly into a framework where logical causation bears little scrutiny. Secondly, the more isolated a behaviour is from the ethically tolerable, the more difficult it is to make it serve joyous ends. Were Trygaeus to kill the Arms-Dealers to stop them selling their wares, we could reasonably ask if the means had

[2] There is a difference between tragedy's exploitation of rape and murder for its plots and showing these on stage. Tragedy never shows rape, in the modern sense of the word, but focusses rather on its aftermath (e.g. Phaedra, Procne, Iole, Canace, and on which see further Sommerstein 2006, Rabinowitz 2011, Finglass (forthcoming)). Tragedy also relegates killing and sacrifice—though not the bloody outcomes of these—to spoken reports or off-stage cries (Hamilton 1987, Henrichs 2000, Seidensticker 2006, Sommerstein 2004d, Zeppezauer 2011); Sophocles seems to play with this convention at *El*. 1493–4 when Aegisthus taunts Orestes for not killing him in the open. In two instances, tragic characters tantalisingly reach for their swords, but do not draw them (S. *Phil*. 1254–5, E. *Phoen*. 596), though in one extreme case, Orestes places his blade (φάσγανον) at the neck of the Phrygian slave and threatens to kill him (E. *Or*. 1516–26). Similarly, Philoctetes moves to shoot his bow at Odysseus, but Neoptolemus prevents this (S. *Phil*. 1299–300). For violence enacted in tragedy, typically arrests or forced removals, see Kaimio 1988: 62–78, Sommerstein 2004d: 44 n. 8. For possible iconographic representations of tragic violence see Cassimatis 2005. Pollux 4.141 claims that Sophocles' *Tyro Keiromene* had the female protagonist emerge wearing a special mask showing 'bruised cheeks' after her beating by her stepmother (πελιδνὴ τὰς παρειάς), discussed by Clark 2003. The Suda is the only source for the fifth-century tragedian Neophron having introduced 'the torture of teacher- and house-slaves' to the Athenian stage (πρῶτος εἰσήγαγε παιδαγωγοὺς καὶ οἰκετῶν βάσανον, Suda ν 218).

been justified by the joyous end (i.e. a more peaceful world). To make an abhorrent act such as murder funny or pleasant (as opposed to frightening or unsettling, which are different aesthetic aims), one needs either to place the deed in an outlandish context (thus cartoon violence or the wacky worlds of silent film comedy), or so fundamentally to distort the act itself that it can no longer be considered a true and consequential occurrence of violence.[3]

Along these lines, Andò (2013) notes that while skirmishes occur frequently in comedy, gruesome violence such as that threatened in *Knights* or *Lysistrata*, although talked about, is never actualised (p. 88–90). By having characters promise luridly violent attacks, but not having these eventuate, Aristophanes lets his spectators experience a world at one remove from substantial pain and suffering (p. 108). The distortion of tragic violence in comedy's parodic scenes spotlights distinctions between comedy and tragedy; more ambitiously, the transformation or 'restructuring' (*destrutturazione*, p. 109) of violence into trivial forms is an attempt, Andò proposes, to demonstrate the futility of violence in the real world.

Extreme violence is indeed rare in Old Comedy, though not altogether absent. In a play by Aristophanes' rival Hermippus (fr. 51 K–A), a character has his ear bitten off, for example, while the final scene of the rewritten (although never performed) *Clouds* sees the *phrontistērion* torched with its inhabitants still inside (see Appendix IV). Mostly, however, comic characters are indeed subjected to less consequential forms of violence. Characters are dressed and stripped against their will, choruses briefly confront individuals (or, in the case of semi-choruses, each other), and hitting or restraining appear as non-fatal tactics for asserting one's superiority. Observing the regularity of such acts in Aristophanes,

[3] Compare Halliwell 1986: 272 'comedy must stay within the bounds of the morally and emotionally unthreatening in order to elicit our laughter, and laughter is incompatible with serious ethical or other failings, and with their consequences'.

Revermann (2006a) argues that they constitute a distinct marker of Old Comedy, and compares this to tragedy 'where physical contact is the significant exception' (p. 132). Unlike tragedy, comedy is a genre in which antagonisms unfold 'before the spectators' eyes', Revermann writes, in an atmosphere of 'open dispute and hostility' (p. 211). For Revermann, the ubiquity of aggressive physical contact in Aristophanes is one aspect of comedy's busyness, that is, the genre's tendency to crowd the stage with objects, people, and movement.[4] So whereas Andò focusses on how comedy relegates extreme violence to the margins of the audience's experience, Revermann emphasises comedy's profusion of violence, albeit in non-serious forms.

This chapter sets out to expand upon the observations of Kaimio, Andò, and Revermann. I begin with a discussion of Aristophanes' parabatic comments on slapstick humour before turning to the role of aggressive choruses, then some common tropes of physical contact in the plays (striking, restraining, forced dressing and stripping). The chapter is supplemented by a catalogue of physically aggressive acts in Aristophanes (Appendix V).

4.2. Aristophanes on slapstick

Aristophanes' assertions about the merits of his own comedy must be situated within the competitive context for which he was writing. Self-aggrandisement and the denigration of rivals belong to a half-serious, half-playful dynamic of one-upmanship that characterised the relationship between competing comic playwrights.[5] Aristophanes' classification of certain

[4] On which see also Poe 2000.

[5] Sommerstein 2009: 116–35, Biles 2011, Wright 2012.

jokes as stale or vulgar is an element of this, although it can (and should) be read also as a genuine response to the aesthetic tastes and expectations of the audience, as well as an attempt to shape these in the playwright's favour. The fact that rejected or criticised forms of humour appear in the comedies, sometimes repeatedly, suggests that Aristophanes was navigating a narrow path between satisfying his audience's fondness for such humour and the need to project himself as—and indeed be—a clever and innovative playwright (*Vesp*. 55–66, *Ran*. 12–16, *Eccl*. 1155–7). With this in mind, let us turn to Aristophanes' comments on how boisterous physical contact between actors can increase or detract from the quality and appeal of his comedy. Alongside other allegedly unsuitable or unoriginal jokes, Aristophanes rejects forms of knockabout humour in two parabatic passages. First:

> ὡς δὲ σώφρων ἐστὶ φύσει σκέψασθ'· ἥτις πρῶτα μὲν
> οὐδὲν ἦλθε ῥαψαμένη σκυτίνον καθειμένον
> ἐρυθρὸν ἐξ ἄκρου, παχύ, τοῖς παιδίοις ἵν' ᾖ γέλως·
> οὐδ' ἔσκωψεν τοὺς φαλακροὺς οὐδὲ κόρδαχ' εἵλκυσεν, 540
> οὐδὲ πρεσβύτης ὁ λέγων τἄπη τῇ βακτηρίᾳ
> τύπτει τὸν παρόντ', ἀφανίζων πονηρὰ σκώμματα,
> οὐδ' εἰσῆξε δᾷδας ἔχουσ' οὐδ' ἰοὺ ἰοὺ βοᾷ,
> ἀλλ' αὑτῇ καὶ τοῖς ἔπεσιν πιστεύουσ' ἐλήλυθεν.
>
> Consider how, by nature, she [sc. my comedy] is modest. Firstly, she
> hasn't come with a stitched piece of leather, hanging,
> red-tipped and thick, to be funny for the children.
> Nor has she mocked bald men or danced a *kordax*.
> Nor does the old man who speaks the lines strike
> whoever is present with a staff, concealing poor jokes,

nor has she darted in with torches, nor does she shout '*iou iou*',

but she has arrived trusting in herself and her verses.

Ar. *Nub*. 537–44

This excerpt comes from the rewritten parabasis of *Clouds* and may refer partly, if not wholly, to jokes added during the play's revision.[6] The rejected gags—which include old men striking others—are said to be incompatible with comedy that is *sōphrōn*, a word that evokes modesty, introspection, soundness of mind, and wisdom. It suggests a level of maturity not evident in jokes that make 'children' laugh (τοῖς παιδίοις ἵν' ᾖ γέλως). For Aristophanes, the rejected slapstick is a way of concealing inferior humour, which is why he has no need for it (he disingenuously implies, since the rejected jokes do in fact appear in the revised version of *Clouds*). In place of such uninspired gags, Aristophanes' comedy relies on its 'verses' to impress and entertain.[7] The visual joke of characters hitting others

[6] For the arguments see Hubbard 1991: 96–101. On the revision itself see Dover 1968: lxxx–xcviii, Biles 2011: 167–210, Appendix IV below.

[7] For ἔπος (translated here as 'verse') as a semi-technical word see Dover 1993: 240, Hollmann 2000: 209 n. 9, Willi 2003: 58. Aristophanes uses the word of his own comic playwrighting also at *Eq*. 39, 508, *Vesp*. 1047 (cf. Cratin. fr. 198 K–A), and repeatedly in *Frogs* for the verses of Euripides and Aeschylus (802, 1198, 1395, 1407, 1410; cf. *Av*. 938 of Pindar, *Thesm*. 52–7 of Agathon [ὁ καλλιεπὴς Ἀγάθων, 49] with multiple crafting metaphors). While ἔπος can simply distinguish between words spoken in metre as opposed to prosaic speech (*Nub*. 638), it is likely that, in Aristophanes' time, ἔπος also had an archaic and/or grandiose ring to it (Dunbar 1995: 190). It is ubiquitous in tragedy and is the standard term for 'spoken word' in Homer, where it appears over 150 times (λόγος appears just twice: *Il*. 15.393, *Od*. 1.56). Yet in Thucydides, for example, ἔπος appears only in reference to Homer's compositions (1.3.3, 2.41.4, 3.104.4), ominous words

with sticks might get laughs, but Aristophanes prefers to rely on crafted words, his chorus asserts. The slapstick and other jokes listed in the passage are unworthy because they are not *sōphrōn*, because they are unoriginal, and because they require little intellectual effort on the playwright's behalf.

Compare the following parabatic passage from *Peace*:

εἰ δ' οὖν εἰκός τινα τιμῆσαι, θύγατερ Διός, ὅστις ἄριστος
κωμῳδοδιδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων καὶ κλεινότατος γεγένηται,
ἄξιος εἶναί φησ' εὐλογίας μεγάλης ὁ διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν.
πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ τοὺς ἀντιπάλους μόνος ἀνθρώπων κατέπαυσεν
ἐς τὰ ῥάκια σκώπτοντας ἀεὶ καὶ τοῖς φθειρσὶν πολεμοῦντας, 740
τούς θ' Ἡρακλέας τοὺς μάττοντας καὶ τοὺς πεινῶντας ἐκείνους 741
ἐξήλασ' ἀτιμώσας πρῶτος, καὶ τοὺς δούλους παρέλυσεν 743
τοὺς φεύγοντας κἀξαπατῶντας καὶ τυπτομένους ἐπίτηδες 742
οὓς ἐξῆγον κλάοντας ἀεί, καὶ τούτους οὕνεκα τουδί,
ἵν' ὁ σύνδουλος σκώψας αὐτοῦ τὰς πληγὰς εἶτ' ἀνέροιτο, 745
«ὦ κακόδαιμον τί τὸ δέρμ' ἔπαθες; μῶν ὑστριχὶς εἰσέβαλέν σοι
ἐς τὰς πλευρὰς πολλῇ στρατιᾷ κἀδενδροτόμησε τὸ νῶτον;»
τοιαῦτ' ἀφελὼν κακὰ καὶ φόρτον καὶ βωμολοχεύματ' ἀγεννῆ
ἐποίησε τέχνην μεγάλην ἡμῖν κἀπύργωσ' οἰκοδομήσας
ἔπεσιν μεγάλοις καὶ διανοίαις καὶ σκώμμασιν οὐκ ἀγοραίοις. 750

And if in fact it is reasonable to honour, O daughter of Zeus, whoever has been the best

spoken long ago (πάλαι, 2.54.2; cf. S. *OT* 290 κωφὰ καὶ παλαί' ἔπη, though conversely A. *Ag.* 750 παλαίφατος δ' ἐν βροτοῖς γέρων λόγος, S. *Tr.* 1 λόγος μέν ἐστ' ἀρχαῖος κτλ.), or, in one instance, deceptively ornate speech (3.76.6).

comic producer of them all and the most famous,
our producer says that he is worthy of great praise.
For firstly, he alone stopped his rivals from
constantly mocking rags and waging war against lice,
and as for those kneading and starving Heracleses,[8]
he was the first to drive them away, treating them as unworthy, and he dismissed the slaves
who run away and deceive and get hit deliberately [cf. *Ran*. 747–8],
whom they [sc. Aristophanes' rivals] always brought on crying for the following reason,
so that a fellow slave might joke about the other's blows and then ask:
'O wretch, what has happened to your skin? Has a bristle-whip attacked
your ribs and ravaged your back with its army?'.
Having removed such bad things and burdensome vulgarity and ignoble buffooneries
he has created a great art for us and, having constructed this, raised it to a towering height
with great verses and ideas and jokes that are not commonplace.[9]

Ar. *Pax* 736–50[10]

[8] For Heracles as a cook and bread-maker in comedy see Degani 1995.

[9] 'Not commonplace' (οὐκ ἀγοραίοις) is literally 'not of the marketplace', an area of the city associated with vulgarity (see Wilkins 2000: 156–75). Here Aristophanes distances himself from the marketplace ethos discussed in the Introduction with regard to Bakhtin (Chapter 1, section 1.2.2).

[10] Lines 742–4, preserved on a second/third-century CE papyrus (PSI VI 720), have provoked discussion for their unusual syntax (Sommerstein 1985: 167–8, Olson 1998: 219). I reproduce Wilson's OCT line order, which (following Bergk) transposes 742 and 743. The paradosis has the 'kneading and starving Heracleses' as those who 'run away and deceive and get hit', but τυπτομένους most likely looks forward to τὰς πληγάς (745), which concerns slaves (ὁ σύνδουλος κτλ.). To what does the adverb 'deliberately'/'with the ulterior motive that' (ἐπίτηδες, 742) refer? Accepting the line arrangement printed above, there are several possibilities: a) slaves who deliberately run away, deceive, and get hit; b) slaves who run away, deceive, and deliberately get

In this passage, slaves being struck (τυπτομένους) is given as an example of a poor and vulgar stage trick, unsuited to Aristophanes' 'great art' and his towered house of 'great verses and ideas'.[11] Aristophanes' comedy is a honed skill (τέχνη). His plays are buildings constructed not of bricks or stone, but rather the playwright's 'designs' (διανοίαις) and original jokes. Reminiscent of Pindar's 'skilled craftsmen' (τέκτονες σοφοί, *Pyth*. 3.113–15) whom few can emulate, or Aeschylus who 'raised revered words like towers' (πυργώσας ῥήματα σεμνά, *Ran*. 1004; cf. Pherecr. fr. 100 K–A, Bond 1981: 125–6), Aristophanes aggrandises his comedy with ideas and speech. Tiresome or 'ignoble' (ἀγεννῆ) jokes relying on physical violence against slaves do not fit into this schema.

The rejection of routine jokes dependent on slave violence differentiates Aristophanes, the playwright says, from his rivals. By disowning gags staged by others, Aristophanes pleads the novelty and uniqueness of his own productions and elevates these

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hit; c) Aristophanes, who dismissed such slaves deliberately; d) such slaves, whom Aristophanes' rivals deliberately brought on stage (although ἐπίτηδες occupying first position in a relative clause is unattested; Hamaker thus proposed deleting line 744); e) slaves who deliberately get hit so that (ἵνα, 745) another slave can ask them about their wound (for ἐπίτηδες as an 'anticipatory reinforcement of a purpose clause', which would support this last reading, see Biles & Olson 2015: 213 citing *inter alia Eq*. 893, 896, *Pax* 932, Hdt. 7.168.3, Lys. 1.11, Xen. *Cyr*. 1.6.2). Whichever interpretation one prefers, it is clear that Aristophanes is criticising a commonplace gag that involved slaves being struck on-stage.

[11] Aristophanes has at least one instance of a human slave being struck on stage by his master, although it is for being slow and clumsy rather than dishonest (*Av*. 1325–36; cf. the gratuitous beating of Kudoimos at *Pax* 255–6). At *Wasps* 1292, Xanthias appears on stage crying ἰώ and complaining of having been beaten by Philocleon with a stick (βακτηρίᾳ), but the physical abuse is reported there, not shown.

above the allegedly trite routines of his competitors.[12] Aristophanes does not want to be another Phrynichus, Lycis or Ameipsias (three contemporary comic playwrights), as he jokingly says elsewhere, but rather the 'best and most famous comic playwright of them all'.[13] He will not 'deceive' (ἐξαπατᾶν) his spectators by presenting the same thing two or three times over,[14] but 'consistently' (ἀεί) introduces 'new ideas' (*Nub*. 546–7).

Aristophanes frames his novel creations as a source of pride as well as a mark of respect for his audience. On the other hand, the repetition of jokes or of joke types establishes these as stock elements, more easily digested as belonging to the aesthetic framework of the genre (as opposed to something radical and potentially repugnant). In effect, the negative reception of *Clouds* suggests that spectators could be repelled by excessive subtlety or innovation. Aristophanes blames the last-place finish of *Clouds* on his audience's failure to appreciate its 'most novel concepts'.[15] Conversely, Aristophanes must admit that burning characters with a torch is clichéd but still 'pleases' (χαρίζεσθαι, *Lys*. 1220) spectators; distributing nuts is hackneyed, but gets laughs (*Plut*. 799; cf. *Vesp*. 58–9), as do large hanging phalluses (*Nub*. 538–9) and the 'usual' (τῶν εἰωθότων) one-liners occasioned by

[12] On the importance placed on novelty in Aristophanes' productions see Konstantakos 2003/4: 13–21, Wright 2012: 70–8, Biles 2016: 120–1. For rivals boasting of novelty compare Pherecr. fr. 84 K–A, Lysippos fr. 4, Metagenes fr. 15. For novelty as a self-conscious hallmark of both Aristophanes' and Euripides' productions see Torrance 2013: 292–4.

[13] *Ran*. 12–14. One of the poets mentioned, Phrynichus, was competing against Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

[14] Precisely what he would, ironically, have been doing if *Clouds II* had ever been staged (Sommerstein 2009: 120). Murray 1987 and Dobrov 1988: 17–26 discuss further instances of Aristophanes ironically using rejected jokes, especially prominent in the prologue of *Frogs*.

[15] καινοτάταις διανοίαις (*Vesp*. 1044). On Aristophanes' authorial remarks about the third-place finish of *Clouds* see Hubbard 1991: 94–102, Platter 2007: 84–107, Biles 2016: 118–21.

porters laden with luggage (*Ran*. 1–14). These gags are valuable because spectators like them, but if exploited repeatedly by different dramatists, they reduce distinctions between the competing playwrights. Moreover, since such gags typically rely on their own internal joke logic, they risk disturbing a play's unity and dissuading audiences from experiencing the narrative as a coherent whole, a dynamic discussed in the Introduction (section 1.2.3). Although it would be mistaken to think of Aristophanes' plots as dependably tight and logic-bound stories, the extant plays do all have an underlying narrative with a causal beginning, an intricate and not wholly random middle, as well as a final, if at times abrupt denouement.[16] Aristophanes seems to recognise that gratuitous slapstick can disrupt the narrative when, in *Lysistrata*, he includes a slave-burning episode expressly to gratify his spectators, but relegates it to the fringes of the story:

[Αθ.^{α}] ὑμεῖς τί κάθησθε; μῶν ἐγὼ τῇ λαμπάδι
ὑμᾶς κατακαύσω; φορτικὸν τὸ χωρίον.
οὐκ ἂν ποιήσαιμ᾽. εἰ δὲ πάνυ δεῖ τοῦτο δρᾶν,
ὑμῖν χαρίζεσθαι, προσταλαιπωρήσομεν. 1220

[Αθ.^{β}] χἠμεῖς γε μετὰ σοῦ ξυνταλαιπωρήσομεν.
οὐκ ἄπιτε; κωκύσεσθε τὰς τρίχας μακρά.

[Ath.^{α}] Why are you sitting? Should I
burn you with this torch? It's a vulgar trope.
I couldn't; but if we absolutely must do it
to please you [sc. the spectators], I'll persist.

[Ath.^{β}] And I'll persist along with you.

[16] See further Silk 2000: 256–300 on 'causal sequences' and narrative patterns, Ruffell 2011: 114–20 on causation, time, and characterisation in comic plots.

[To the slaves] Be gone! You'll be screeching about your hair!

Ar. *Lys*. 1217–22

Here, the abused slaves play no role in the development of the story, and the slapstick is thus separated from the rest of the narrative, included merely to gratify the audience, as one of the perpetrators explicitly says. In most other instances, however, Aristophanes circumvents the potentially disruptive nature of slapstick gags as well as any hint of staleness (as his rivals likely did too) not by isolating the gags from the main plot, as in the *Lysistrata* episode, but rather by employing them economically, integrating them into his stories, and marrying them to his characters' constructed personalities. In this way, as we will see, Aristophanes is rewarded with the laughs that knockabout humour elicits without neglecting the lyric or intellectual aspects of his art.

4.3. Hostile choruses

This section explores how hostile choruses interact physically with other characters, a hallmark of Aristophanes' earlier plays. The hostility of comic choruses sets them apart from their more passive tragic counterparts, yet despite their intentions, we will see that choreuts in Aristophanes rarely, if ever, touch another character aggressively. The ingenious ways that Aristophanes has his characters avoid fights with the chorus are amusing, however, and often connected to the chorus members' characterisation.

Especially in the early plays, the comic chorus opposes the protagonist, though it can also support them against a common adversary (*Knights*) or adopt a more neutral stance (*Clouds*). Clashes with choruses are always fleeting, but by no means uniform in execution. Sometimes the chorus will attack shortly after entry, but more often, violence is the climax

of developing tension or is triggered by a revelation. Thus, in *Wasps*, the jurymen are initially ignorant and violence erupts only when they discover Philocleon's plight, while in *Acharnians*, the chorus's assault is stalled by Dicaeopolis' celebration of the Rural Dionysia and the audience must wait for the expected confrontation. Unusually, *Knights* has a chorus that attacks immediately and supports the play's hero. *Lysistrata* is unique in extant Aristophanes for its prolonged exploitation of opposing semi-choruses, part of a trend toward more diverse choral roles.

One of Aristophanes' most memorable creations is the stubborn chorus of Acharnian demesmen. Amphitheos primes the audience for the entrance of these 'old Marathon fighters, hard-as-oak, hard-as-maple' (180–1; cf. *Vesp*. 383) by reporting that they are in pursuit and have gathered stones (184–5; cf. Men. *Dys*. 81–5). When they arrive, the acting space is empty—Dicaeopolis has departed to prepare for his celebration. The chorus members therefore monopolise the audience's attention as they spread into the orchestra. The metre suggests haste and excitement;[17] the hunting motif generates suspense.[18] At one point, the chorus leader turns to the auditorium and asks the spectators where the peace-maker has gone.[19] The determination of this angry mob is offset, however, by its diminishing vigour; the men's limbs are stiff (219), they complain, as they curse old age. There is thus a funny incongruence between the lively metre of the choreuts' recitatives and their slow or

[17] Initial trochaic tetrameters (the 'running metre', Arist. *Rhet*. 1409a1), then accelerated to paeano-cretics (a 'most energetic' [συντονώτατος] rhythm, Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 149.18–20). See further Zimmermann 1984/85(i): 36–8, Olson 2002: 134.

[18] On hunting, searching, and eavesdropping in Greek drama see Fraenkel 1962: 22–6, Pöhlmann 1995: 117–31, Zagagi 1999: 190–200, Bierl 2001: 201–13, Austin & Olson 2004: 64.

[19] *Ach*. 206–9. For the suggestion of a similar appeal in Sophocles' satyr play *Ichneutae* (Silenus asking if anyone has seen or heard the stolen cattle, fr. 314.79–98 *TrGF*) see Zagagi 1999: 187–8.

slowing movements. Old men behaving in ways beyond what their frail bodies allow is a humorous trope.[20] In *Acharnians*, it casts doubt over the chorus's ability to launch an effective attack.

Although it is difficult for a group of twenty-four dancers to hide, the Acharnians retreat out of sight (ἐκποδών, 240) as Dicaeopolis emerges from the stage building.[21] Characters hide out of sight to spy on others in both comedy and tragedy (see Fraenkel 1962: 22–6 [to which add *Eccl*. 28–9], Taplin 1977b: 334–6), but *Acharnians* provides the only surviving example of a chorus doing so. The protagonist, for his part, is jubilant. His procession and hymn to Phales (247–79), with its references to wine, food, sex, and rural life, represent the rewards of his newly concluded, private peace treaty.[22] But Dicaeopolis cannot see what the audience can, namely the stone-wielding chorus members waiting to the side. Their sudden re-entry disrupts not only the happy atmosphere of Dicaeopolis' celebration, but also its orderliness. The protagonist had orchestrated his procession with an

[20] Compare *Vesp*. 230–48, *Plut*. 257–83, E. *Hcld*. 680–739, *Bacch*. 187–90.

[21] The number of twenty-four choreuts derives from counting the different birds in *Birds* (Σ *Av*. 297 Holwerda; cf. Pollux 4.109) and is assumed to apply to all productions of Old Comedy (see further Sansone 2016: 237–8). The number works well if we accept that Callias' comedy *Alphabet Tragedy* [Γραμματικὴ τραγῳδία] had a chorus representing the twenty-four characters of the Ionic alphabet (see Pöhlmann 1971, Rosen 1999, Ruijgh 2001, Gagné 2013), though if one accepts that satyr plays had the same size choruses as tragedies (Seidensticker 2003: 104–5, M. Griffith 2010: 49–50), then Sophocles' *Amphiaraus* demonstrates that an alphabet could be imitated also with fewer choreuts (S. fr. 121 *TrGF*).

[22] On historical phallic processions, exemplified here by Dicaeopolis and from which Aristotle suggests the genre of comedy sprung (*Poet*. 1449a9–13), see Pickard-Cambridge 1962: 133–47, Csapo 1997: 265–79, Bierl 2001: 300–61, Halliwell 2008: 181–3, Csapo 2013, 2016: 124–37.

eye to detail: he carefully dictates the sequence of the participants (241–4, 261), his daughter should carry the basket 'elegantly' (καλῶς, 253–4), slaves must hold the giant phallus 'upright' (ὀρθὸς ἐκτέος, 259), and there is concern for the ritual equipment (284). The chorus's furious re-entry is visually juxtaposed with this orderly, single-file parade:

> οὗτος αὐτός ἐστιν, οὗτος.
> βάλλε βάλλε βάλλε βάλλε,
> παῖε παῖε τὸν μιαρόν.
> οὐ βαλεῖς; οὐ βαλεῖς;
>
> It's him—that's the one!
> Attack, attack, attack, attack,
> hit, hit the bastard!
> Attack, attack!
>
> Ar. *Ach*. 280–3[23]

The chorus rushes in and showers Dicaeopolis with stones, imperilling the protagonist as well as the ritual cooking pot that has been carried in the procession. The choice of stones as a weapon is unusual for Old Comedy.[24] On the other hand, various sources associate

[23] The closest dramatic parallel is [E.] *Rhes*. 675 βάλε βάλε βάλε· θένε θένε < θένε > where the chorus rushes in via one of the *eisodoi* and attacks Odysseus. Liapis 2012: 256 entertains the possibility of a comic influence on the pseudo-Euripidean scene. In a historical example, Xenophon records numerous men ambushing his camp with stones and yelling παῖε παῖε, βάλλε βάλλε (*An*. 5.7.21).

[24] Appearing elsewhere at *Wasps* 221–2, where Xanthias suggests throwing stones at the approaching chorus. (The suggestion is not taken up.) Peisetairos also asks for a sling when Iris arrives (*Av*. 1187),

lapidation with angry mobs (E. *Andr*. 1127–9, *IA* 1350, Thuc. 5.60.6, Xen. *An*. 5.7.19–23) and with punishing traitors (Dicaeopolis is a 'betrayer of the fatherland', 290), making it a not unsuitable mode of attack here.[25] The primitiveness of the weapon also contributes to the choreuts' characterisation as rustic and poor Athenians. I have suggested elsewhere that when the chorus emerges, Dicaeopolis' phallic procession has led him to the edge of the orchestra, near the audience.[26] As the Acharnians begin launching their 'stones', perhaps bundles of soft cloth or leather, the spectators thus find themselves in the firing line.[27] This would add an element of interaction to the scene. The processionists admittedly need unobstructed access to the house (except for Dicaeopolis, all disappear when the chorus re-enters from its hiding position), but since the chorus approaches from the side, there should

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but never uses it. Threats of stoning appear regularly in tragedy (A. *Sept*. 198–9, *Ag*. 1616, *Myrmid*. fr. 132c.1–2 *TrGF*, S. *Aj*. 727–8, *Ant*. 35–6, E. *Hcld*. 59–60, *Tro*. 1039–41, *Ion* 1111–12, *Or*. 49–50, 442, 536, 564–5, 625, 914, *Bacch*. 355–7), but with the exception of E. *Andr*. 1127–9 (a reported attack) these are not carried out, let alone staged.

[25] For stoning and treason see Rosivach 1987. Stone-throwers were deployed in formal battles (e.g. Thuc. 6.69.2, Xen. *Hell*. 2.4.12, further Pritchett 1991: 1–67), but stones were also simply free and abundant weapons, hence their appearance in spontaneous, apolitical street fights (Onesimos red-figure cup showing brawling komasts, State Hermitage Museum St. Petersburg 651 [reprinted in Sutton 2000: 195], Ar. *Vesp*. 1253–5, 1422, Lys. 3.8, 18, Dem. 54.18, Eub. fr. 93.10 K–A, Olson 2002: 352).

[26] Donelan 2015: 521–3. The procession passes 'in the crowd' (κἀν τῷχλῳ, *Ach*. 257), which could be the audience or an imagined throng. Compare Olson 1998: 295–6, who suggests that the mass of wedding guests in *Peace* (1192) refers to the audience.

[27] For the suggestion that the stones are represented by bundles of cloth see Olson 2002: 153. Xenophon mentions mock battles that replaced swords with sticks, and missiles with clods of earth (*Cyr*. 2.3.17–18).

be time for the processionists to return from the edge of the orchestra to the *skēnē*. (The hero too must eventually get close to the stage building, whence he fetches the basket of coals.) Whatever stage configuration we envisage, the chorus's attack is disruptive and energetic. Strong insults (285, 287), tmesis (295), and the graphic exhortation to 'tear this man into a red cloak' reinforce the assault's virulence.[28] This is only halted when Dicaeopolis produces his surprise hostages, which forces the Acharnians to drop their remaining stones and thus ends the lively interaction (341–2).

Unlike the old Acharnian demesmen, the choreuts in *Knights* are young (731) and sympathetic toward their play's hero. In his contest with Paphlagon for control of the city, 'a thousand noble men of the cavalry class' (225) will be the Sausage-Seller's allies, together with all good citizens and 'any smart member of the audience'.[29] The Knights' loathing for Paphlagon will bind them in an improbable alliance with the grubby newcomer. The reason for the Knights' enmity toward Paphlagon—they 'hate him' (226)—is left unstated, but should be seen against the backdrop of the historically taut relationship between the cavalry

[28] εἰπέ μοι τί φειδόμεσθα τῶν λίθων ὦ δημόται / μὴ οὐ καταξαίνειν τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον ἐς φοινικίδα; (319–20). The imagery is that of ripping or combing (ξαίνειν) wool into strips for spinning; the verb καταξαίνειν is used elsewhere of lapidation (A. *Myrmid*. fr. 132c.2 *TrGF*, S. *Aj*. 728 [with Finglass 2011 *ad loc*.], E. *Phoen*. 1145, *Supp*. 503) or whipping (Dem. 19.197), and refers to a metaphorical wasting of the body (E. *Hipp*. 274 [with Barrett 1964 *ad loc*.]: the effects of not eating for three days, *HF* 285: the effect of fire on the body). A φοινικίς is a reddish-purple garment (Olson 1998: 291). For imagery that combines lapidation and clothing, compare *Il*. 3.57 ('you would have donned a stone cloak [λάϊνον χιτῶνα]', Hector to Paris), Lycoph. *Alex*. 333.

[29] τῶν θεατῶν ὅστις ἐστὶ δεξιός (228). Thuc. 2.13.8 and Andoc. 3.7 both give the number of Athenian knights at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, including mounted bowmen, as 1,200. For various other figures see Bugh 1988: 39–40.

class and the populist politician Cleon, which likely saw representatives of the former defeating the latter in court.[30] At any rate, barely does Paphlagon appear on stage than one of the house-slaves summons the Knights who make up the chorus.[31] The same slave directs the stage action as the choreuts make their way into the orchestra. He orders the Sausage-Seller, who is fleeing (240), to turn back and defend himself. He orders the Knights to 'drive toward the right wing' (οὐκ ἐλᾶτε πρὸς τὸ δεξιὸν κέρας; 243, cf. *Av*. 353), which suggests that they enter in military formation.

We can only guess at the choreuts' appearance in *Knights*. Arrival on real horses should probably be discounted for reasons of space, though one character in extant Greek drama does arrive on horseback (Ismene, at S. *OC* 311–13). For the *Knights* chorus, Stone (1980: 378–9) prefers twelve actors 'riding' atop twelve more crudely disguised as horses, though this would doubtless be tiring for the latter. Sommerstein (1981: 4) suspects that the choreuts were not mounted in any fashion, noting that where a chorus's appearance or appurtenances are unusual, this is normally remarked upon (not the case in *Knights*). Compton-Engle (2015: 125–6) finds it 'difficult to fathom that the playwright-producer would not take full advantage of the opportunity to include animal costumes', but concedes that the text of *Knights* has left us few clues. Even the evidence for the accoutrements of real Greek *hippeis* is obscure, though it seems that they could be equipped with a cuirass (Dem.

[30] Alluded to at *Ach*. 6–8. See further Connor 1968: 50–9, Bugh 1988: 107–14, Carawan 1990.

[31] ἄνδρες ἱππῆς παραγένεσθε· νῦν ὁ καιρός (242). Two of the choreuts are named (Simon and Panaitios, 242–3). Individual choreuts have names elsewhere (*Vesp*. 230–4, *Lys*. 254, 259, 266, 304, 356, *Eccl*. 293–4 [adopting fake masculine names]), though it is rare for a non-chorus member to address choreuts by name. The only instance other than *Knights* is Praxagora welcoming the chorus of women in *Ecclesiazusae* (41–53, following Wilson's line attributions).

21.133, Xen. *PH* 12.1–2), helmets (Xen. *Hell*. 7.5.20, *PH* 12.3), arm- and thigh-guards, boots, javelins, spears, and/or short swords.[32]

If Aristophanes' chorus of Knights had armour or weaponry, its entry and subsequent confrontation with Paphlagon (see below) might have recalled the Greek mimetic combat tradition. Although comparisons between warfare and dance go back to Homer (*Il*. 16.617), the richest source for actual dances that imitated combat is Xenophon's *Anabasis*, in a passage where the historian recalls a meeting with Paphlagonian ambassadors. These had approached his camp offering peace, which the Greeks accept and celebrate with sacrifices (6.1.4). That evening, the ambassadors are invited to an improvised dinner at which armed dances are performed (6.1.5–13). Xenophon presents these as a Greek custom that impresses and surprises the Eastern dignitaries. One of the dances features a fully-armed dancer 'striking' (παίει) his performance partner, who falls to the ground and feigns death. A Mysian man performs an acrobatic dance with light shields (πέλται), in which he confronts two opponents (6.1.9). Another, more elaborate, dance interprets the story of a man 'fighting' (μάχεται) with a cattle-rustler (6.1.8–9). The culmination of the spectacle is a *pyrrhikhē*, an energetic war-dance familiar to Athenians from the Panathenaia (*Nub*. 988–9, Lys. 21.1). According to Plato, the *pyrrhikhē* imitated armed fighting, with shield-bearing dancers avoiding each other's blows by 'ducking and retreating' (ἐκνεύσεσι καὶ ὑπείξει; cf. *Eq*. 272 ἢν δ᾽ ὑπεκκλίνῃ), and pretending to shoot arrows, throw javelins, and land punches (*Leg*. 7.815a; cf. E. *Andr*. 1129–36 with Borthwick 1967). The *pyrrhikhē* and the mimetic performances of Xenophon's Greeks choreographically imitate physical struggles.[33] If such

[32] Xen. *PH* 12.11–12. Further references in Spence 1993: 49–65, with iconography.

[33] More generally, Aristotle says that dancers could imitate 'character traits and emotions and deeds' via rhythmic movements (διὰ τῶν σχηματιζομένων ῥυθμῶν μιμοῦνται καὶ ἤθη καὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις, *Poet*. 1447a27–8), on which see Peponi 2017. Athenaeus 14.629c–31e lists numerous

routines influenced comic choral movements, then those of Aristophanes' chorus of Knights would be a good candidate.

Returning to the comedy, the chorus leader exhorts his fellow choreuts to attack (παῖε παῖε τὸν πανοῦργον, 247), and then encourages the Sausage-Seller to join in with a series of imperatives (παῖε καὶ δίωκε καὶ τάραττε καὶ κύκα / καὶ βδελύττου, 251–2). Paphlagon is struck (τύπτομαι, 257). The Knights then block him on either side, threatening that if he turns one way he will be hit again (πεπλήξεται, 271), the other way he will be kicked (τὸ σκέλος κυρηβάσει, 272). He is then hit in the belly.[34] This animated confrontation confirms the support that the hitherto sceptical Sausage-Seller will enjoy. Accordingly, when the Knights step back, the emboldened newcomer takes centre stage (after fifty lines of silence) to begin his first threat-contest with Paphlagon. The choreuts, for their part, continue intermittently to intervene with commentary, insults directed at

mimetic dances, including those that imitated the movements of drunks and lunatics. For general discussions on Greek mimetic dance with further references see Lawler 1964, Borthwick 1967 (on the *pyrrhikhē*), Poursat 1968 (iconography of the *pyrrhikhē*), Henrichs 1994/5, Ceccarelli, 1998, 2004 (on the *pyrrhikhē*), Steinhart 2004 (on iconography), 2007, Gianvittorio 2017b. An ancient commentary on Eupolis' *Goats* [Αἶγες] suggests that dancing the *pyrrhikhē* could also be directly integrated into a comic narrative and performed on-stage (Eup. fr. 18 K–A), and cf. O. Thomas (forthcoming), arguing that Aeschylus' satyr play *Theoroi*/*Isthmiastai* included a *pyrrhikhē*.

[34] ὑφ' οἵων θηρίων γαστρίζομαι, (*Eq*. 273). The rare verb 'to strike in the belly' later appears as an active imperative (γάστριζε, 454), when either the chorus or one of the house slaves encourages the Sausage-Seller to whack Paphlagon with his sausages (καὶ τοῖς ἐντέροις καὶ τοῖς κόλοις). Aristophanes seems to refer to this memorable act of slapstick in the parabasis of *Clouds* (Κλέων' ἔπαισ' ἐς τὴν γαστέρα, 549). Slapping one's own belly is an attested dance move (*Vesp*. 1528–9, Roos 1951: 101–5).

Paphlagon, or support for the Sausage-Seller, but they are essentially absent from the remaining action. To conclude, *Knights* is the only comedy in which the chorus aggressively touches one of the play's main characters, though this is not incommensurate with what is Aristophanes' most verbally violent production, as we saw in the chapter on threats. There can be little sympathy for the victim Paphlagon, whose depiction in the prologue has been wholly negative.

After the experiment of *Clouds* (423 BCE), Aristophanes returns to a more conservative (i.e. antagonistic) chorus in *Wasps*.[35] Before they are seen by the audience, Bdelycleon warns his slave that, if stirred to anger, the jurymen choreuts resemble a wasps' nest (224) and 'attack like sparks from a fire' (βάλλουσιν ὥσπερ φέψαλοι, 227). Any expectation of an immediate clash is disappointed, however, as the emerging chorus falls far short of Philocleon's sinister description. The men move slowly. Some lag (234–5). The chorus's first line contains the highest number of long syllables permitted by the metre, underscoring their heavy movements.[36] Exhortations to be quick (ἐγκονῶμεν 240, σπεύσωμεν 245) ironically draw attention to the men's sluggish movements. They almost certainly have walking sticks (Biles & Olson 2015: 314) and, like their counterpart from *Acharnians*, are old (223–4). Their dependence on lamp-bearing boys (their sons) reflects this fragility, even if a punch threatened (and possibly delivered) to one of the lads provides a first glimpse of their famed anger (254).

[35] The mysterious (and non-violent) chorus in *Clouds* has provoked scholarly discussion: see e.g. Dover 1968: lxvi–lxx, C. Segal 1969, Köhnken 1980, Ambrosino 1983, Revermann 2006a: 197–203, Donelan 2015: 526–8.

[36] MacDowell 1971: 162. Zimmermann 1996: 188–93 discusses further metrical aspects that seem to characterise the jurymen as both slow-moving and old-fashioned.

Only when Bdelycleon moves to thwart his father's new escape plan (climbing out the window and down the face of the house) do the choreuts become enraged. This occurs some 170 lines after their entry and has been preceded by dialogue and song. The jurymen remove their *himatia* (large, woollen outer garments, 408), a gesture elsewhere associated with readying oneself to fight.[37] This reveals their stingers (κέντρα, 420), which are attached to their rumps (1075) and which they brandish menacingly and threaten to 'stick into' Bdelycleon (ἔν τί σοι παγήσεται, 437). The metre switches to trochaic, and the chorus leader exhorts the jurymen to sting Bdelycleon 'in the arse, around the eyes, and the fingers' (431-2) as they perhaps split into two groups (οἱ μέν … οἱ δέ). Repetition (νῦν ἐκεῖνο νῦν ἐκεῖνο, 405) and multiple mentions of the chorus's 'anger' (403, 404, 406, 424) contribute to the excitement. Xanthias' reaction when he sees the stingers is the same as Dicaeopolis' to the angry Acharnians: 'By Heracles!', he cries, using an expression of shock.[38] He predicts that the upcoming fight will be 'terrible' (δεινόν, 426). The chorus moves into formation as its language becomes militaristic (ἐπίστρεφε, ξυσταλείς, εὔτακτος). Meanwhile, Bdelycleon has ordered slaves to restrain his father, who has been escorted out of the house (433–5). When the choreuts finally move to attack, Bdelycleon directs Xanthias (wielding a stick) and another house-slave (wielding a smoking device) into the orchestra to confront them. These two characters battle with the Jurymen, quickly and 'easily' routing them (ῥᾳδίως, 460–2). The tension of the long build-up is thus deflated after just a few seconds of frenzied action and Bdelycleon is spared any physical contact with the chorus. The Jurymen's anger is not placated, however, until Philocleon is released (522) and they

[37] Hippon. fr. 121 West, Ar. *Thesm*. 568, *Lys*. 615, 662–3, 686–7. Cf. also *Lys*. 1023, where the man says he took off his shirt 'in anger' (ὑπ' ὀργῆς).

[38] Biles & Olson 2015: 221 cite as parallels *Ach*. 284, *Nub*. 184, Xen. *Mem*. 1.3.12, Pl. *Symp*. 213b8.

are enlisted as the judges of the father-son debate. Like the choreuts from *Knights*, they then withdraw and, apart from snippets of commentary and the parabasis, play no major role in the subsequent action.

Birds (414 BCE) was produced at a time when Athens's imperial ambitions had turned toward Sicily and the Peace of Nicias was no longer in tangible effect. The comedy sees the return of a hostile chorus that must be won over by the protagonist. The entrance of the chorus is preceded by the appearance of four non-speaking extras in avian costumes.[39] Peisetairos and Euelpides comment on the magnificent (272) and atypical (276) appearance of these figures. The attention of the Athenian travellers quickly turns, however, to the 'cloud' (νέφους, 295) of Birds gathering by one of the *eisodoi*. Peisetairos ominously interprets this as something 'bad' (οὐχ ὁρᾷς ὅσον συνείλεκται κακὸν ὀρνέων; 294). The Birds 'peep' (πιππίζουσι) and screech as they 'run' (τρέχουσι) into the acting space, behaviour which Peisetairos finds threatening (307). At first, the chorus does not see Peisetairos and Euelpides (326), though it apparently looks in their direction (308–9). However, upon learning from Tereus-Hoopoe that two humans are present, the chorus indeed prepares to attack:

> ἔπαγ', ἔπιθ', ἐπίφερε πολέμιον
> ὁρμὰν φονίαν, πτέρυγά τε παντᾷ
> ἐπίβαλε περί τε κύκλωσαι·
> ὡς δεῖ τώδ' οἰμώζειν ἄμφω
> καὶ δοῦναι ῥύγχει φορβάν.

[39] Mastronarde 1990: 284 and Dunbar 1995: 241 tentatively suggest that these appeared on the roof of the *skēnē*, which would distract the characters (and the audience) as the chorus gathered at one of the wings.

Lead on, charge, bring on a bloody
warlike assault and attack everywhere with
your wings and surround them;
this pair must wail
and provide fodder for my beak.

Ar. *Av*. 344–8

The martial vocabulary of the Birds' call to attack is more pronounced than that of the jurymen from *Wasps*, and suits the chorus's arrival in military formation (after the skirmish discussed below, the Birds are told to 'return to formation' [ἄναγ' ἐς τάξιν πάλιν], 400). The triple alliteration of ἐπι- compounds, all of which have military overtones, combines with reference to a 'squadron commander' (ταξίαρχος) and advancing the 'right wing', amusingly transposing human behaviour on to the Birds.[40] Later in the play, this sort of military organisation will aid Peisetairos in his struggle against the gods, with the chorus as his allies. For now, the Birds position themselves to block the two human characters who desperately search for an escape route.

Peisetairos convinces Euelpides that defence is better than flight. To that end, the equipment originally brought for a sacrifice (43) will serve as armour and weapons. Since there is probably only one of each item, Dunbar (1995: 270–2) suggests that Euelpides acts as a stooge, taking orders from Peisetairos who stands behind his companion in relative

[40] For ἐπάγειν in a military context cf. e.g. Hdt. 1.63.1 (ἐπῆγε τὴν στρατιήν), Thuc. 6.69.1 (ἐπῆγε τὸ στρατόπεδον), Aeschin. 1.83 (ἐπάγοντες Ἄρηα, from the base of a herm in the Stoa of the Hermae); for ἐπιέναι cf. e.g. Thuc. 1.86.5 (ἐπίωμεν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀδικοῦντας), 4.129.4 (στρατοπέδῳ ἐπιών), Lys. 2.21 (τοὺς ἐπιόντας ἀμύνασθαι, of the Persians); for ἐπιφέρειν cf. e.g. Hdt. 5.81.2 (πόλεμον ἀκήρυκτον Ἀθηναίοισι ἐπέφερον), Thuc. 1.141.3 (ἐπ' ἀλλήλους . . . ἐπιφέρειν).

safety (hence Peisetairos' second-person singular imperatives at 359–61). Euelpides will use the earthenware cooking pot (χύτρα) as a helmet or shield, a roasting spit (ὀβελίσκος) as a spear, and a cup or a bowl (ὀξύβαφον/τρύβλιον, 360–1) as protection for his eyes.[41] Although we can only speculate, the cup or bowl would have been especially funny if, while offering protection from the Birds' beaks, they also obscured Euelpides' vision so that he defends himself fully or partially blinded.[42] Humour also lies in the semantic shift of the stage properties, an enduring comic trope. Compare, for example, Dicaeopolis using Lamachus' helmet-feather to induce vomiting (*Ach*. 584–7), Philocleon using his chamber-pot as a judicial water-clock (*Vesp*. 858), or Trygaeus' repurposing of the Arms-Dealers' wares as utensils for his upcoming feast.[43] In addition to the humour of such object

[41] An ὀξύβαφον is a drinking cup (Athen. 11.494b–e); a τρύβλιον is a small shallow bowl for serving and consuming liquid or semi-liquid dishes/medicines (Arnott 1996: 432–3, Olson 2002: 152). For Peisetairos' idea, compare Aen. Tact. 40.4: when Sinope was under siege, the city's women were given jars and other bronze utensils in place of weapons and helmets (ἀντὶ ὅπλων καὶ περικαφαλαίων τούς τε κάδους καὶ τὰ ὁμότροπα τούτοις δόντες χαλκώματα), then stationed on the walls to look like men.

[42] The humour of not being able to see is nowhere else exploited in Aristophanes, but cf. Euripides' *Cyclops* where the blinded Polyphemus is steered by the chorus toward an overhanging rock upon which he cracks his head (τὸ κρανίον / παίσας κατέαγα, 683–4).

[43] Cf. Bakhtin 1968: 411 on the logic of carnival objects: 'they are, so to speak, turned inside out, utilized in the wrong way . . . household objects are turned into arms, kitchen utensils and dishes become musical instruments'. Antiphanes' *Knights* (fourth century) has cavalrymen discussing how they will use their saddle-cloths as blankets, helmets as wine-coolers, and javelins as lampstands (frr. 108–9 K–A). The *commedia dell'arte* of the 17th and 18th centuries included gags based on the repurposing of common tools, such as combing hair with a garden rake, using a ladder as stilts, or urinating into hats (Gordon 1983). Carroll 1991: 30–3, 36–7 and Bilton 2013: 80–2 discuss

repurposing, Euelpides' get-up in *Birds* is also reminiscent of scenes where one character dresses another in preparation for an ordeal. Examples include Philocleon being prepared for the symposium in *Wasps*, or Kinsman being prepared for infiltration of the Thesmophoria in *Thesmophoriazusae*. Here, the sacrificial accessories seem particularly ill-suited to a battle against twenty-four enraged birds, however, and we can laugh at Euelpides' enthusiasm for this inadequate strategy (ὑπερακοντίζεις σύ γ᾽ ἤδη Νικίαν ταῖς μηχαναῖς, 362–3).

The text indicates a lively choral advance as the Birds let out a war-cry (ἐλελελεῦ) and lower their beaks to attack.[44] With a succession of imperatives, the chorus leader cries out 'grab, pluck, hit, flay, break the pot first!' (ἕλκε, τίλλε, παῖε, δεῖρε, κόπτε πρώτην τὴν χύτραν, 365, cf. 352) as he and the other Birds move toward the human protagonists.[45] It has been suggested that the Birds imitate here a children's game called χυτρίνδα, in which a child who is designated 'the pot' (χύτρα) would run in circles around a real vase while other children, also running around, scratched, pinched, and struck him.[46] Whether or not we see an echo of this game here (the sources are all late), it is unlikely that the choreuts get as far as touching Euelpides. Tereus-Hoopoe intervenes just in time, taking advantage of his sway among the Birds and pointing out that the visiting humans have done no wrong. He

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comparable jokes in the films of Chaplin. Keaton's *The Scarecrow* (1920) is an extreme variant (virtually every item in the house from the opening scene serves a surprise double purpose).

[44] ἐλελελεῦ χώρει κάθες τὸ ῥύγχος ('*Eleleleu*! Lower your beaks and advance!', *Av*. 364). Cf. Xen. *An*. 6.5.27 ἠλάλαζον καὶ ἅμα τὰ δόρατα καθίεσαν ('they were crying *alala* as they lowered their spears').

[45] Cf. Cratin. fr. 341 K–A σφάττε δαῖρε κόπτε.

[46] οἱ δὲ τίλλουσιν ἢ περικνίζουσιν ἢ καὶ παίουσιν αὐτὸν περιθέοντες (Poll. 9.113). See further Dunbar 1995: 277.

halts the choreuts and deflates any expectation of actual physical contact (366–8). Euelpides eventually puts down the equipment that he had been holding as weapons and armour (386–92), and the Birds retreat. There will be a provisional truce (461) while Peisetairos outlines his plan to establish a city in the sky, which the chorus then concedes is worthy of implementation (539–49).

Although in *Acharnians*, the chorus temporarily splits following Dicaeopolis' speech, with one half threatening to hit (θείνειν) the protagonist and the other moving to defend him (563–5), *Lysistrata* is the only surviving comedy with semi-choruses that remain divided and opposed for a significant portion of the play.[47] The choruses consist of twelve

[47] Cratinus' *Archilochoi* (c. 435–422 BCE) may have had a chorus of Archilochus-supporters and a chorus of Homer/Hesiod-supporters (Bakola 2010: 70–9). Eupolis' *Marikas* seems to have featured opposing choruses of rich and poor men, although we cannot say how long this arrangement lasted in the play nor how the two groups interacted. The main evidence for the split in *Marikas* comes from a 2nd/3rd cent. CE commentary on the play (*P. Oxy.* 2741) that twice mentions a ἡμιχόριον (fr. 192.121, 186–7 K–A). Other papyri identifications of ἡμιχόρια are not, however, motivated by discernible choral divisions (Renner 1981: 6–7), a trend that continues in the MSS (White 1906: 106 n. 6, Dunbar 1995: 750–1). Divided choruses are rare in tragedy, occurring at A. *Sept*. 1054–78 (the sole instance of antagonistic tragic semi-choruses, but a scene whose authenticity has been debated; see e.g. Lloyd-Jones 1959, Fraenkel 1964b, Dawe 1967), S. *Aj*. 814/866 where the choreuts exit and then re-enter half via one *eisodos* and half via the other (the division is thus almost entirely off-stage), E. *Tro*. 153/76 where the chorus enters in two parts (by 197, however, the two groups are whole), and E. *Or*. 1258–95 where the chorus splits to guard both *eisodoi* (but cf. Willink 1986 *ad loc*. who is sceptical). See further Kaimio 1970: 103–12, Taplin 1977b: 189–91. The chorus of satyrs in Euripides' *Cyclops* may also divide briefly into two or even three groups as they try to avoid entering Polyphemus' cave (635–42, with Seaford 1984 *ad loc*.). On supplementary choruses that sing brief and simple songs see Barrett 1964: 167–8, 368, McCall 1976, Bednarowski 2011,

old Athenian men and twelve Athenian women. The latter are friends of the old women tasked by Lysistrata with seizing the Acropolis (*Lys*. 176–9). Success in that matter is signalled by an off-stage cry of jubilation (240), upon which Lysistrata and the other Greek wives exit through the stage door (except Lampito, who departs for Sparta via one of the *eisodoi*). This leaves the stage momentarily empty for the entrance of the male semi-chorus and a change of scene to the Acropolis.

Like the jurymen from *Wasps* and the demesmen from *Acharnians*, the men in *Lysistrata* are exaggeratedly, indeed impossibly old. They refer to events from the Persian Wars, Kleomenes' intervention of 508 BCE (273–80; Hdt. 5.72), and the defence of Attica at Leipsydrion that took place a century before the production of *Lysistrata* (664–71; cf. Hdt. 5.62–5). On their shoulders, the men carry logs, torches, and charcoal for smoking the women out of the Acropolis, and they struggle on the steep path, under the weight of the equipment, and due to smoke stinging their eyes (254–5, 286–90, 296–305). Whatever difficulties they encounter, their intentions are hostile (esp. 266–70, where the idea is to incinerate the women occupying the Acropolis). However, the men are interrupted in their mission by the female semi-chorus, which has heard of their plans (335–40) and hurriedly arrives (σπευστέον ἐστὶ θᾶττον, 320) not out of the stage building, but via one of the side entrances.[48] The women are returning from a spring; they carry jugs of water which they

Sommerstein (forthcoming) on A. *Supp*. 825–910, 1034–51 (the last three specifically on the question of multiple choruses in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*).

[48] Arrival of the chorus via the stage door was probably avoided for practical reasons, especially when haste was required, but there is one sure instance: at E. *Hel*. 385 the chorus exits via the door with Helen and later returns from the same place (515). Further, less secure instances (all tragic and thus involving a smaller chorus) are A. *Cho*. 22 (ἰαλτὸς ἐκ δόμων ἔβαν), *Eum*. 140 (the Furies exiting the Temple of Apollo), and E. *IT* 123 (the chorus of maidens leaves the house). These are

intend to use for extinguishing the men's fire. They exchange insults and threats with the male semi-chorus. Repeated references to the water (358–9, 370–1, 374–5, 378–9) build tension in the lead-up to the dousing. There is a period of added suspense as the women put down the pitchers in order to fight with their hands (358), although it never actually comes to this. (No female character, choreut or otherwise, is ever struck in Aristophanes.) When the dousing finally takes place, it leaves the old men shrivelled and shivering, and concludes the confrontation.[49] After this, the two groups separate and retreat (but remain on-stage), making way for the unannounced entrance of the Proboulos with his archers, discussed in the previous chapter. The two choruses ultimately unite at 1042 (κοινῇ συσταλέντες), where they perform a collective song and dance.

The semi-chorus in *Lysistrata* reflects a move for Aristophanes away from earlier choral forms. *Lysistrata* is the first extant Aristophanic comedy not to include a proper parabasis (though already *Birds* has a parabasis where the chorus remains in character), a trend that continues in the subsequent plays that also see their choruses adopting more varied

discussed by Taplin 1977b: 336–7, 369–74, Scullion 1994: 71–4, L. Parker 2016: 82–3. In *Peace*, some individual choreuts may briefly enter and then exit again the stage building (εἰσιόντες ὡς τάχιστα τοὺς λίθους ἀφέλκετε, 427). For cancelled choral exits via the stage door see Pöhlmann 1995: 63–71; the *locus classicus* is A. *Ag*. 1348–71 where the chorus debates entering the house to confirm Agamemnon's death, but ends up not doing so.

[49] Water appears rarely on the comic stage, but is almost certainly splashed over Philocleon who faints when Labes is acquitted in the mock-trial (*Vesp*. 994–6; cf. Men. *Sik*. 364) and is perhaps sprinkled on the chorus (and the audience?) at *Peace* 968–9 as part of Trygaeus' preparation for sacrifice. On the sort of ritual cleansing with water enacted in *Peace* see Moulinier 1952: 71–3, R. Parker 1983: 19–20, Henderson 1987a: 198.

roles, including perhaps the use of two distinct, full choruses in *Frogs*.[50] Although *Wealth*, the last extant comedy by Aristophanes, hints at a return to the older formula with a short-tempered chorus of old men, the choreuts in that play are 'allies' of Chremylus (ξύμμαχοι, 218) who profit from, rather than oppose, the new state of affairs.[51]

Aggressive choruses are a prominent, though not indispensable (cf. *Clouds*, *Peace*) feature of Aristophanes' earlier comedies. They allow for exciting choreographed interaction between dancers and actors. Yet despite their violent aims, it is rare for a chorus to lay hands on another character. In *Acharnians*, the choreuts throw stones at Dicaeopolis, but from a distance; in *Birds*, the chorus's assault is stayed at the last minute by Tereus-Hoopoe; in *Lysistrata*, the women throw water over the men and thus avoid fisticuffs; in *Wasps*, the ferocious jurymen are held at bay with sticks and smoke. Only in *Knights*—the sole comedy in which the chorus unwaveringly supports the protagonist—do the chorus

[50] That is, one chorus of frogs and another of initiates, although doubts surround whether the former appeared on-stage. See Allison 1983, Zimmermann 1984/85(i): 23–4, Dover 1993: 55–69, Marshall 1996. The absence of a proper parabasis in *Lysistrata* allows the semi-choruses to remain divided until their unification at 1042 (a parabasis would unite them too early in the narrative). Sommerstein 2000a: 9–10 notes that, in the absence of a true parabasis, *Lys*. 614–705 nonetheless exhibits features associated with that formal comic element, especially an epirrhematic structure. The parabasis of *Thesmophoriazusae*, performed just a few months after *Lysistrata*, displays its own oddities (lack of lyric sections, stage not emptied of other characters; cf. Austin & Olson 2004: 262–3).

[51] *Plut*. 221–6, 262–3. On the chorus in *Wealth* see further Revermann 2006a: 271–4. On the comic chorus in the fourth century in general see R. Hunter 1979 and Rothwell Jr. 1992. Lape 2006 discusses Menander's boisterous (and anonymous) *kōmos* choruses that disrupt the action, but do not influence the plot beyond provoking an intermission (*Asp*. 246–9, *Dys*. 230–2, *Epitr*. 169–71, *Pk*. 261–6; cf. Alexis fr. 112 K–A with Arnott 1996 *ad loc*., Orth 2013: 249–51).

members seem to strike a character (Paphlagon at 247 and 273). Usually the violent intentions of choruses are frustrated; the resourceful ways in which this occurs (producing a basket of coals, dousing with cold water, employing a smoking device, etc.) are often amusing and surprising, however, and relate to the characterisation of the choreuts.

4.4. Three types of comic violence

Having looked at choral aggression, I turn now to physical violence between individual characters. The analysis covers three types of violence: hitting, restraining, and forced costume manipulation.

4.4.1.1. Inferring instances of striking from the text

Comic characters use their hands or objects to strike others. Before looking at why this is humorous and how it is incorporated into Aristophanes' plots, we should ask how one identifies when hitting occurs, in the absence of explicit stage directions.[52] The modern reader, working from a text, is alerted in several ways:

a) The presence of verbs that denote hitting, striking, beating. For example, Paphlagon says 'I'm being hit' (τύπτομαι, 257, 266) and 'I'm being struck in the belly' (γάστριζομαι, 273); Strepsiades runs on stage as his son 'hits' him (τυπτομένῳ, *Nub.*

[52] For the relationship between text and stage action see Taplin 1977b: 28–39 (on tragedy) and Revermann 2006a: 46–65 (on comedy). I accept, with Revermann (p. 48), that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, when a character says that he or she is doing something or having something done to them, this accurately reflects what is happening on stage.

1322–5); Peisetairos ‘hits’ the pesky Decree-Seller (τυπτόμενος, *Av*. 1031), and later demonstrates to the chorus how to ‘hit’ the slave Manes (τύπτων γε τοῦτον ὠδί, *Av*. 1327); Xanthias ‘hits’ the men who are arresting him (τύπτειν, *Ran*. 610).

b) The interjections *iou iou* and *oimoi* that can denote, among other things, bodily pain.[53] Strepsiades not only says that he is being hit by his son, but also cries ἰοὺ ἰού (*Nub*. 1321); Paphlagon uses the same interjection when struck ‘vigorously’ (ἀνδρικῶς) by the Sausage-Seller (*Eq*. 451). Meton cries οἴμοι κακοδαίμων (*Av*. 1019) when he receives anticipated blows (cf. πληγαί, 1014); the Sykophant in *Wealth* cries οἴμοι (930, 934, 935) as he is assaulted and stripped by Karion; and Kudoimos exclaims οἴμοι μοι τάλας when his master Polemos strikes him (*Pax* 256), specifying that the punch was ‘piercing’ (ὡς δριμύς).

[53] These interjections alone do not, however, suffice to show that a character has been struck, or even that they are experiencing physical pain. ἰοὺ ἰού expresses a range of emotions, including joy, surprise, enthusiasm (mocked at Dem. 19.209), and physical pain/discomfort (the last at *Eq*. 451, *Nub*. 1321, *Lys*. 295, *Ran*. 653, *Plut*. 275–6), and can also be a call for attention or assistance (e.g. *Pax* 110, *Lys*. 829–32, E. *Hipp*. 776); see further Dunbar 1995: 199, Labiano Ilundain 2000: 215–27, Biraud 2010: 65–7, 137–8, Finglass 2011: 355–6. Aristophanes gets comic mileage out of the interjection’s multiple connotations when Dionysus passes off a pained cry of ἰοὺ ἰού for excitement at seeing horsemen (*Ran*. 653). The interjection οἴμοι can indicate physical pain (*Av*. 1019, *Pax* 256, *Plut*. 935, E. *Hipp*. 1350), but also fear, shock, or self-pity; see Stevens 1976: 17, Labiano Ilundain 2000: 251–70, Biles & Olson 2015: 89. Already a second- or third-century CE commentary (*CLGP* I.1.4 28.18–19 frr. C+D+E, col.1 = Ar. fr. 591.66–7 K–A) recognises the significance of οἴμοι for identifying moments of slapstick («οἴμοι τοῦ χείλους» τὸν γέρ[οντ]α ἐπ’ ἀληθείας τύπτουσιν).

c) Characters appeal for witnesses.[54] Strepsiades outlines the process in *Clouds* when he describes his usual reaction if assaulted (τί δρᾷς ἤν τις σε τύπτῃ;):

> ἔπειτ᾽ ἐπισχὼν ὀλίγον ἐπιμαρτύρομαι,
> εἶτ᾽ αὖθις ἀκαρῆ διαλιπὼν δικάζομαι
>
> I hold off a moment before calling for witnesses;
> then, after waiting a smidgen longer, I initiate court proceedings.
>
> Ar. *Nub*. 495–6

A call for witnesses implies legal retribution, as Strepsiades makes clear.[55] Incidences of witness-calling in Aristophanes have been catalogued by Spatharas (2008), who shows that not only hitting (with or without a weapon), but also stripping (*Ran*. 528, *Plut*. 932) and

[54] This finds parallels in tragedy (e.g. S. *Ant*. 940–2, E. *Hec*. 1091–3), although unlike in comedy, the vocabulary employed is non-legalistic. See further Taplin 1977b: 218–21 (drawing on Schulze 1918), Scafuro 1997: 102 n. 106 (examples from Menander).

[55] For a real instance of bystanders being called to witness a violent crime see Lys. 3.15 (οὗτοι δὲ συνεισπεσόντες ἦγον αὐτὸν βίᾳ, βοῶντα καὶ κεκραγότα καὶ μαρτυρόμενον). [Dem.] 46.6 cites a law regarding eyewitness testimony, while [Dem.] 47.36–8 attests the importance of eyewitnesses when pursuing charges for assault. Victims of assault had recourse to several types of legal retribution: a *dikē aikeiās* for assault (*Eccl*. 663, Dem. 54, Isocr. 20), a *graphē traumatos ek pronoiās* for intentional wounding (Lys. 3, Aeschin. 2.93, further Phillips 2007, Canevaro 2013: 40–3), a *graphē hybreōs* for wanton violence ([Dem.] 53.16, further MacDowell 1990a: 263–5, Fisher 1992: 36–82, Harris *ap*. Canevaro 2013: 224–31), or having the perpetrator arrested and imprisoned for cloak-snatching (λωποδυσία), a crime punishable by death (Xen. *Mem*. 1.2.62, Arist. *Ath. Pol*. 52.1, D. Cohen 1983: 79–83, Austin & Olson 2004: 270–1).

restraining (*Ach*. 926) can provoke these. The comic effect lies partly, as Spatharas observes, in the 'victim's legal consciousness, even in the midst of receiving blows, and their quickness to shout μαρτύρομαι . . . rather than attempting to defend themselves'.[56] Witness-calling is most often employed by intruder figures as they are beaten away by protagonists. Examples include the Second Creditor as he is poked with a goad by Strepsiades (ταῦτ᾽ ἐγὼ μαρτύρομαι, *Nub*. 1297), Hierocles as he is struck by Trygaeus' slave (μαρτύρομαι, *Pax* 1119), and the Inspector in *Birds* when hit by Peisetairos (μαρτύρομαι τυπτόμενος ὢν ἐπίσκοπος, 1031). The pattern suits Philocleon's dismissal of the Plaintiff in *Wasps* too (ταῦτ᾽ ἐγὼ μαρτύρομαι, 1436), though it is uncertain if physical contact occurs there.[57] Characters who cry μαρτύρομαι typically have no on-stage supporters.[58] Their appeals for witnesses are directed to the world at large: not only the gods (cf. Men. *Sam*. 474), but also the play's spectators who are thus drawn into the action and, by not assisting, tacitly side with the aggressor.

Before turning to instances where a character is struck with an object, it is worth noting that the reasons for hitting another character are quite varied. These include self-defence (Xanthias lashing out in *Frogs*), punishment (Polemos striking Kudoimos in *Peace*),

[56] Spatharas 2008: 188–9. A cry for witnesses is, however, very much in character for sykophants (thus *Ach*. 926, Eup. fr. 99.103 K–A; cf. Pellegrino 2010: 208–9).

[57] Philocleon does tell a story involving the verb καταγνύναι ('to shatter', 1435–6), which refers elsewhere, as it did in Philocleon's earlier tale (1427–8), to head injuries (e.g. *Ach*. 1180, fr. 605, Lys. 3.14, Dem. 54.35); it is possible that Philocleon re-enacts his story, hitting the Plaintiff on the head.

[58] Spatharas 2008: 185. The exception is the Plaintiff in *Wasps*, who is accompanied by a summons-witness. The Sykophant in *Wealth* also brings a witness, but the character runs away before he can be of any use (933–4).

incentivisation (Peisetairos hitting Manes in *Birds*), or a lack of moral compass (Pheidippides assaulting his father in *Clouds*). What is consistent is the absence of lasting harm caused by such attacks. No character is ever knocked unconscious or seriously injured. In addition, female characters are never victims of hitting, though they are probably aggressors if punches are thrown during the brawl between the women and the archers in *Lysistrata* (456–61). Much like the violence of early silent cinema discussed in the Introduction, physical attacks in Aristophanes can immobilise or scare away an adversary, but are never fatal.

4.4.1.2. Hitting and striking with objects

We have already encountered the Acharnian demesmen pelting Dicaeopolis with stones, the choreuts in *Wasps* brandishing their stingers, and the female semi-chorus from *Lysistrata* dousing its male equivalent with water. Individual characters too employ weapons. These are particularly funny when, as often the case, they are non-conventional.[59] Consider the Sausage-Seller in *Knights* beating Paphlagon with his sausages, literally with 'guts and intestines'.[60] As well as its sheer visual humour, this attack also sets up a pun on κόλοις ('intestines') and κολᾷ ('punish', 455). In *Wasps*, Bdelycleon orders a slave to 'strike' (παῖε, 398) Philocleon with laurel branches as the old man climbs out the window and down the stage-building.[61] The weapons are εἰρεσιῶναι (399), 'branches of olive or laurel trees

[59] For weapons in screen comedy see Carpenter 2001: 223–40.

[60] καὶ τοῖς ἐντέροις / καὶ τοῖς κόλοις, 454–5. On intestines used to make sausages see Frost 1999: 246–9, Biles & Olson 2015: 420.

[61] Thus breaking the same taboo of parent-beating as Pheidippides in *Clouds*. For the enshrinement of respect for one's parents in the Athenian moral and legal code see Lys. 13.91, Xen. *Mem*. 4.4.20

… decorated with figs, bread, small vessels full of oil or honey, and the like; carried in a procession in honour of Apollo during the Pyanopsia festival [in October/November] … then hung beside the house door'.[62] Again, the weapon sets up a pun, this time taken from the vocabulary of naval warfare: Bdelycleon hopes that his father will 'turn his ship astern' (πρύμνην ἀνακρούσηται, i.e. retreat back into the house) under the 'blows of the branches' (πληγεὶς ταῖς εἰρεσιώναις), as if the last word were derived from εἰρεσία ('rowing').[63] The spontaneous choice of the weapon, a sacred ritual object, contributes to the scene's chaos, which has seen Philocleon make multiple attempts to escape via various apertures of the house.

In *Clouds*, Strepsiades asks for a 'goad' (κέντρον) and uses this to expel the Second Creditor by prodding him in the 'arse' (πρωκτός, 1301). Targeting the man's backside accentuates the phallic associations of the *kentron* (any pointed rod for jabbing), made most explicit in *Wasps* the following year. Generally, a *kentron* can be employed for punishment or torture, often in association with whipping (Hdt. 3.130.2, Xen. *Hell*. 3.3.11, Pl. *Leg*. 777a4–6). More commonly, it refers to an object used to control equids or beasts of burden (e.g. A. *Eum*. 156–9, S. *El*. 716, E. *Hipp*. 1194, *HF* 880–2, 949, Pl. *Phdr*. 254a3). The two functions—punishment and controlling animals—merge in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, where Laius (travelling in a mule-drawn wagon) is reported to have struck Oedipus with

(οὐκοῦν καὶ γονέας τιμᾶν πανταχοῦ νομίζεται), Aeschin. 1.28 (parent beaters debarred from speaking in the assembly), Arist. *Ath. Pol*. 56.6 with Rhodes 1981 *ad loc*., Dunbar 1995: 469–70, Liddel 2007: 215–18 (on burial and funerary rites).

[62] Biles & Olson 2015: 215, drawing on MacDowell 1971: 187, both with further references.

[63] Biles & Olson 2015: 216.

'double goads' (διπλοῖς κέντροισι, 809) at the three-way road.[64] Similarly in *Clouds*, Strepsiades treats the Creditor like a horse when he pokes the intruder with the *kentron*. As he does this, he addresses the man with ὦ σαμφόρα (1298), the name given to horses branded with the letter *san*.[65] This is a fitting expulsion for a man obsessed with chariots (1303), as well as a form of surrogate revenge against Strepsiades' own, horse-addicted son (cf. 122). In this way, the prodding is not just a fun piece of slapstick, but also ties in with the characterisation of the Creditor, as well as with the underlying story of the play.[66]

In *Peace*, Trygaeus orders his slave to restrain the bothersome Oracle-Monger and hit him with a piece of wood.[67] In *Birds* too, an Oracle-Monger (Χρησμολόγος) presumptuously hopes to partake in the protagonist's sacrifice. Oracle-mongers may have

[64] Finglass 2018: 417 translates διπλοῖς κέντροισι as 'double whip', pointing to a sixth-century amphora that shows the driver of a mule-wagon holding a whip with one handle and two lashes (= M. Griffith 2006a: 217, fig. 11b). Compare S. *Aj*. 242, where Ajax's διπλῆ μάστιγι refers to a horse rein (ἱπποδέτην ῥυτῆρα, 241; also *Il*. 23.362–3 *mastix* = *himas*, Dem. 19.197 *rhyter* = *himas*).

[65] Cf. *Eq*. 603. For the depiction on a fifth-century Attic vase of a horse branded with a letter, see J. Anderson 1961: plate 24.

[66] Comparable is the scene from Chaplin's *Shoulder Arms* (1918) in which the protagonist's helper (an unnamed girl played by Edna Purviance) is captured and handed over to an enemy general. The general's defining characteristic is his cigarette smoking, and Chaplin ends up prodding him in the backside with a smoking poker.

[67] παῖ' αὐτὸν ἐπέχων τῷ ξύλῳ (*Pax* 1121). *Xulon* is generic for 'wood', and by extension any object fashioned from wood. It denotes weapons at Hdt. 2.63.1–2 (ξύλα = κορύναι ξύλων; cf. E. *Supp*. 715–17), Ar. *Vesp*. 458, *Lys*. 356–7 (firewood as a potential weapon), fr. 620 (ἵνα μὴ καταγῇς τὸ σκάφιον πληγεὶς ξύλῳ), Lys. 1.27, Men. *Sam*. 440. In the *Peace* instance, it may refer to Trygaeus' walking stick (Henderson 1987a: 113).

been conspicuous in Athens at this historical time of uncertainty and almost certainly in the build-up to the Sicilian Expedition (anger at the failure of which was initially directed at them, Thuc. 8.1.1). At any rate, the intruder in *Birds* carries a 'book roll' (βυβλίον) that purportedly contains auspicious prophecies and instructs Peisetairos to give him food and clothing.[68] After four such dubious revelations, Peisetairos loses patience and produces a book roll of his own, which contains an Apolline oracle (981–2). The object would have been a rolled-up piece of papyrus. To judge by iconographic representations, these measured approximately forty centimetres from top to bottom, though the one in *Birds* may have been longer for audience visibility and/or comic exaggeration.[69] Peisetairos reads his oracle aloud:

> αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν ἄκλητος ἰὼν ἄνθρωπος ἀλαζὼν
> λυπῇ θύοντας καὶ σπλαγχνεύειν ἐπιθυμῇ,
> δὴ τότε χρὴ τύπτειν αὐτὸν πλευρῶν τὸ μεταξύ.
>
> But should a fraudulent man arrive uninvited and
> annoy those who preside over a sacrifice, and wish to share the innards,

[68] For a similar joke, cf. *Eccl*. 1011–20, where the Old Woman produces the 'decree' (ψήφισμα) ordaining that the city's young men must now sleep with old women before young ones.

[69] For actual papyrus rolls see Glazebrook 2005 (with visual representations). For outsized props in comedy see the discussion in Revermann 2006a: 244–6, who concludes, however, that these were 'the exception rather than the rule' (p. 245). Revermann proposes the sacrificial wine bowl in *Lysistrata* as an example (κύλικα μεγάλην, 195; ὁ κεραμεὼν ὅσος, 200), though a large bowl may well have been appropriate for such a situation (cf. Hdt. 4.70 ἐς κύλικα μεγάλην κεραμίνην οἶνον ἐγχέαντες). One almost certain instance of an oversize comic prop is the giant mortar carried by Polemos in *Peace* (ὦναξ Ἄπολλον τῆς θυείας τοῦ πλάτους, 238).

then verily you must hit him between the ribs!

Ar. *Av*. 983–5

Unlike the earlier oracles, Peisetairos heeds these words and twice hits the intruder's flank (οἴμοι, 990), each time exclaiming 'take the book!' (λαβὲ τὸ βυβλίον, 986, 989). The exclamation indicates that he uses the *byblion* and mockingly echoes the Oracle-Monger's offer to show Peisetairos his prophecies (λαβὲ τὸ βυβλίον, 974, 976, 980). Hitting the man with a *byblion* chimes with the spirit of the Apolline instructions too, which ironically turn the Oracle-Monger's own trade against him.[70] The nature of the object ensures, however, that no lasting injury is caused.

If hitting the Oracle-Monger with his own papyrus roll is an ironic, albeit innocuous act of slapstick, Peisetairos is more audacious when he whips the intruding Sykophant. This character falls into a trap of his own laying. He demands wings to speed from island to island like a 'spinning top' (βέμβιξ). But Greek tops could be spun with whips, as depicted on a mid-fifth-century lekythos.[71] Peisetairos accordingly produces a pair of 'Corcyrean wings', that is a large, double-thonged whip (οἴμοι τάλας μάστιγ' ἔχεις, 1464) associated with the island of Corcyra (Phryn. com. fr. 47 K–A, Arist. fr. 513 Rose, Σ *Av*. 1463a Holwerda) and uses this to make the Sykophant 'spin like a top' (βεμβικιᾶν, 1465). The man cries *oimoi*

[70] Note especially the postponed, emphatic position of τὸ μεταξύ at 985 that echoes the Oracle-Monger's τὸ μεταξύ from 967. For the joke of an oracle pronounced to one's own advantage compare *Eq*. 121–4.

[71] On whips and spinning tops in general see Richter 1907: 420–2 (with an image of the mid-fifth-century, red-figure squat lekythos, New York MMA 75.2.9; colour reproduction in Neils & Oakley 2003: 270), Levaniouk 2007: 176–9, Biles & Olson 2015: 510, and cf. Callim. *Epigr*. 1.9–10: ὑπὸ πληγῇσι θοὰς βέμβικας ἔχοντες ἔστρεφον.

talās as Peisetairos insults him and lashes him off the stage.[72] In Athenian society, whipping a citizen could be expected to attract public opprobrium, since it signified treating the victim as a slave.[73] In *Birds*, however, nothing suggests that Peisetairos' behaviour was intended to provoke a negative reaction from the audience. On the contrary, the comic hero asserts his authority and shames the intruder, and the play's spectators are encouraged to cheer this on.

Like *Birds*, *Frogs* too features whipping, though the dynamic is different, drawing inspiration from the historical process of judicial slave torture. After the angry innkeepers depart, Xanthias re-takes the Heracles costume (*Ran*. 589). This sartorial switch backfires, however, when a Servant appears out of the stage door and orders three henchmen to arrest 'the dog thief' (605), namely Xanthias wearing Heracles' lion-skin.[74] Xanthias resists, then denies the charge and, pointing at Dionysus who now carries the luggage (502), invites the Servant to 'take my slave here and torture him' (βασάνιζε γὰρ τὸν παῖδα τουτονὶ λαβών, 616). The assumption is that the 'slave' Dionysus will, even under the pressure of torture, testify that Xanthias is no thief.[75] The humour lies, once again, in the unintended

[72] Compare Eup. fr. 83 K–A, where a character calls someone who has whipped him (or her) a 'spinning-top' (ὦ ῥύμβε μαστίξας ἐμέ).

[73] Compare Lys. fr. 279.24–35 Carey, Aeschin. 1.59, Dem. 19.196–8, 21.180 (Ctesicles sentenced to death for whipping a citizen during a festival), Finglass 2018: 417. For legal distinctions between punishments meted out to slaves vs. citizens (= corporal punishment vs. monetary fines) see e.g. Dem. 24.167 and the 375/4 BCE coinage law discussed by Stroud 1974.

[74] The speaker's servile status is confirmed by reference to his 'master' (δεσπότης, 670), though he clearly enjoys some authority in the house since he commands the henchmen and carries out the *basanos*. See further Dover 1993: 50–1.

[75] Thür 1977 is the fundamental study of judicial slave torture (*basanos*). See also Harrison 1968/71(ii): 147–50, V. Hunter 1994: 89–94, Gagarin 1996, Mirhady 1996, Thür 1996,

consequences of Dionysus pretending to be Heracles, as well as Xanthias' artful handling of the situation.

Xanthias proposes tying Dionysus to the rack, flagellating him with a bristle-whip (ὑστριχίδι μαστιγῶν), pouring vinegar up his nostrils, skinning him alive, or crushing him under a pile of bricks (618–21). He also declines financial sureties, should Dionysus be injured during the ordeal: 'unnecessary as far as I'm concerned; just take him away and perform a *basanos*', he says, confidently adopting the role of master (μὴ δῆτ' ἔμοιγ'. οὕτω δὲ βασάνιζ' ἀπαγαγών, 625). If these words imply that the torture will take place off-stage, the anonymous Servant confirms that it will in fact occur before the spectators' eyes (κατ' ὀφθαλμούς, 626). At this moment, and with the torture imminent, Dionysus interjects to protest that not he, but rather Xanthias is the true slave. This creates an impasse and the judicial *basanos* consequently morphs into a question of mortal versus immortal status, which will be resolved by whipping both characters to determine who feels pain (gods are supposedly insensitive to pain, 634–9). Throughout the following thirty lines, Xanthias and Dionysus are thus alternately whipped. There are six blows in total. The prop used is not

Sternberg 2006: 146–73, Wohl 2010: 82–9. The rationale for the torture of slaves was a belief that it ensured truth (Dem. 30.37, Isae. 8.12), though the weakness of that premise was apparent even to contemporary orators: slaves will say anything to stop the pain, the counter-argument runs, or they will lie either to protect their master or through fear of punishment for having incriminated him (Antiph. 1.31–2, Lys. 4.16, Isocr. 17.55). As forms of torture employed in judicial interrogations of slaves, the primary sources mention whipping (Isocr. 17.15) and racking on the wheel (Antiph. 5.40, Dem. 29.40; cf. Ar. *Pax* 452 with Olson 1998 *ad loc.*, *Plut*. 875).

specified, unless the Servant takes up Xanthias' suggestion of a 'bristle-whip'.[76] Slaves could, however, be lashed with a simple leather strap (e.g. Anacr. 388.8 *PMG*, Ar. *Vesp.* 643, Dem. 21.180), which would be an economical solution for the stage and easily manipulated (i.e. by tempering the force of the blows) to give the impression of whipping without causing injury to the actors.

The *basanos* episode in *Frogs* is an unusual instance of Aristophanic slapstick in two respects. First, there is no aggressor who clearly enjoys the spectators' support and no victim clearly denied their sympathy. The character who performs the violence is anonymous, while the episode itself does little to advance the plot. The violence therefore appears gratuitous, 'stuck on for its own sake' as Gould puts it.[77] Secondly, and more than any other Aristophanic scene, the *Frogs* episode foregrounds pain.[78] Pain and bodily suffering belong to the tragic aesthetic, as Budelmann (2006) has shown. Prominent examples are Heracles in the poisoned garb at the end of *Trachiniae* (971–1111), or Philoctetes in his eponymous Sophoclean play (730–826). How does Aristophanes turn physical pain into a comic spectacle? The jokes in *Frogs* all rely on the same mechanism: the characters are hurt, but pretend not to have felt anything, transforming their cries of pain into exclamations of joy, an inexplicable desire to quote lyric poetry, or reactions to ridiculous trifles (tears caused by

[76] *Ran*. 619 (cf. *Pax* 746). Σ *Ran*. 619 Chantry: 'a *hustrikhis* is a whip with hairs from a pig's hide' («ὑστριχίς» ἐστιν ἡ ἐκ δέρματος ὑείου μετ' αὐτῶν τῶν τριχῶν μάστιξ); Σ *Pax* 746a Holwerda: 'the whip made from hairs of pigs' (ἡ ἐξ ὑείων τριχῶν μάστιξ).

[77] T. Gould 1991: 1.

[78] The only other scene to get as much mileage from pain is the end of *Acharnians*, where Dicaeopolis mocks the injured Lamachus (who has twisted his ankle on a stake and broken his head on a stone, 1178–80). There, the pain is self-caused, however, and should be seen as come-uppance for Lamachus' earlier braggadocio.

'onions', an *oimoi* provoked by a chance thorn in the foot). There is comic repetition as the Servant moves between the two whipped characters and speaks essentially the same line (δεῦρο πάλιν βαδιστέον *vel sim.* at 652, 656, 658). Timing too informs the jokes when Xanthias pretends to be awaiting the first blow, after already having been struck (644–5), or when Dionysus' cry of 'Poseidon!' (664) seems to decide the contest, only for it to become the first word in a line from Sophocles' *Laocoōn* (fr. 371 *TrGF*). These jokes help convert the scene's pain into a vehicle for laughter. Instead of focussing on the characters' suffering, the audience can enjoy the creative, if laughably unpersuasive, ways in which Dionysus and Xanthias conceal the pain that they experience.[79] The frivolity, as well as the gratuitousness, of the whole episode is underscored by its conclusion: the Servant finds the exercise to have been fruitless since he still cannot discern which of the characters is a god (668–9). His solution is to consult with Pluto and Pherrephatta (= Persephone) who, as gods themselves, are sure to recognise Dionysus. As the characters consequently move toward the stage building, Dionysus adds an ironic closing remark: 'if only you had thought of that earlier', he quips, 'before I took the beating!' (ἐβουλόμην δ' ἂν τοῦτό σε / πρότερον νοῆσαι, πρὶν ἐμὲ τὰς πληγὰς λαβεῖν, 672–3).

The examples discussed in this section suggest that striking characters, either with parts of one's own body or with objects, was part of the Old Comic aesthetic, but to what end? In general, watching a character hit another necessitates little interpretive effort from the audience. This is the anti-intellectual, childish appeal of physical gags criticised by Aristophanes (*Nub.* 539, discussed above in section 4.2). Such action may be gratifying when the victims are authority figures, thus allowing the audience to experience a vicarious

[79] For examples of this type of joke in silent film comedy see Carpenter 2001: 85–7, who presents the *Frogs* episode as a model (the 'Xanthias Routine').

victory over those who, in real life, would be protected by their status. Physical attacks also serve to humble characters who profess undue authority. As for the anti-intellectual aspect of hitting, Aristophanes counters this, in part, when he has his characters employ objects; these can add a semantic layer to the action by creating visual/verbal puns (e.g. the 'guts and intestines' in *Knights*, the 'Corcyrean wings' in *Birds*) or irony (the horse-goad in *Knights*, the book roll in *Birds*). The *basanos* episode in *Frogs* is a special case since there is no obvious aggressor/victim configuration, but it is a successful and funny set piece for the reasons outlined above. Common to all instances of hitting in Aristophanes is the fact that there are never any serious consequences. Like the cinematic slapstick discussed in the Introduction, characters that are struck, though they may cry out in pain, are always allowed to exit alive and uninjured.

4.4.2. Restraining

Like hitting, restraining can be used to establish, confirm, or reverse hierarchical relationships between characters. A character shows their dominance by restricting another's ability to move. The *locus classicus* for this on the Greek stage is the tragic *Prometheus Bound*, in which Zeus has Prometheus pinned to a rock. While nothing quite so violent occurs in comedy, several characters are nonetheless arrested in Aristophanes, in four instances by slaves (adding indignity to the bad treatment), and on two occasions with an interesting twist. The difficulty in holding a character captive for an extended period of time can inspire sub-narratives to develop around the act of restraining, which in turn have an effect on plot and characterisation.

Characters are forcibly albeit briefly restrained in *Peace*, when Trygaeus orders his slave to hold Hierocles and hit him with a piece of wood (1121), and *Wealth*, when

Chremylus and Karion grab Wealth and lift him off the ground (63–71). These acts of restraining last just a few seconds. Philocleon in *Wasps*, on the other hand, must be held for over one hundred lines (415–522), contributing to his characterisation as an unruly figure. Following Philocleon's failed attempts to escape the house, Bdelycleon escorts his father outside and orders three mute slaves not to surrender him to the chorus (λάβεσθε τουτουὶ καὶ μὴ μεθῆσθε μηδενί, 434). Two of the slaves seize Philocleon (457, 459) close to the stage door where he is already being detained by his son.[80] The third will help fight the chorus alongside Bdelycleon and Xanthias, who momentarily re-enter the house (436). Philocleon's arrest by slaves of his own household not only underscores the father's loss of authority (442), but it also leads to a surprising, if ultimately unsuccessful, tactic for getting the slaves to free him: whereas the chorus begs the slaves to release Philocleon by invoking his past acts of generosity toward them (442–7), the old man prefers insults and threats. He addresses one of the slaves as 'a horrific beast' (ὦ κάκιστον θηρίον, 448), then recalls how he tied him to a tree and 'vigorously flayed' him (ἐξέδειρ᾽ εὖ κἀνδρικῶς, 450), suggesting that a similar punishment awaits. The slaves remain unpersuaded, however, holding on to Philocleon for a further sixty-five lines until he is finally released in anticipation of the mock-trial (ἄφετέ νυν ἅπαντες αὐτόν, 522). This prolonged arrest, the last of several measures taken to prevent Philocleon leaving the house, provides the impetus for the chorus's attack and generates suspense about what the man will do once freed. As the play progresses, Bdelycleon's efforts to convert his father begin to backfire, eventually culminating in him picking up Philocleon (ἀράμενος, 1443–4) and transporting him back to

[80] Biles & Olson 2015: 223 discuss whether both Bdelycleon and Xanthias hold Philocleon prior to the handover.

the house that had been the focus of the play's opening, and the location of the original arrest.

More elaborate than the arrest of Philocleon is the restraining of the informer Nikarchos in *Acharnians*. After Dicaeopolis' exchange with the impoverished Megarian (729–817), the chorus sings a song of mockery (836–59) before a second visitor, a Boeotian man, arrives with a selection of wares. The most coveted of these are his Copaic eels, which Dicaeopolis enthusiastically praises. In exchange for an eel, the Boeotian wants not anchovies or ceramics (901–2), but rather something that is missing in Thebes and plentiful in Athens (ὅ τι πὰρ ἁμῖν μή 'στι, τᾖδε δ' αὖ πολύ, 903). Dicaeopolis suggests a sykophant, 'tied up like ceramic ware' (ὥσπερ κέραμον ἐνδησάμενος, 904). As if on cue, the informer Nikarchos arrives to denounce the Boeotian trader. His short stature (μικκός γα μᾶκος οὗτος, 909) will facilitate the special manner of his upcoming treatment. From the text, we can deduce that:

1) Dicaeopolis orders Nikarchos' mouth to be closed (ξυλλάμβαν' αὐτοῦ τὸ στόμα, 926). Material is perhaps stuffed into the aperture of the mask. After this point, the informer no longer speaks, though he may emit muffled cries (942);

2) Dicaeopolis asks for packing material (φορυτόν, 927) to avoid breakage 'like ceramic ware' (ὥσπερ κέραμον, 928);

3) Dicaeopolis suggests hanging the informer 'from his feet, head downwards' (ἐκ ποδῶν κατωκάρα κρέμαιτο, 945);

4) Dicaeopolis complains that tying up the informer has been difficult (μόλις γ' ἐνέδησα, 951);

5) Dicaeopolis invites the Boeotian man to 'lift' the informer (αἴρου λαβών, 952);

6) the Boeotian man orders his slave Ismenios to 'lower his shoulder' (ὑπόκυπτε τὰν τύλαν, 954);

7) the Boeotian man and Ismenios transport the informer off-stage, probably tied upside down to a pole balanced on their shoulders (compare 860–1, where the two characters share the task of carrying).

Olson identifies in this scene a visual allusion to the mythical Kerkopes, dwarfish malefactors whom Heracles captured and suspended from a pole carried on his shoulder.[81] Certainly the Boeotian man is connected to Heracles by birthplace, and he invokes the mythical hero in his opening words;[82] the sykophant is also explicitly short, like the Kerkopes and is probably carried away on a pole (hence the two mentions of 'shoulder', 860, 954), which is one of the distinctive elements of this Heracles episode. If we accept that the encounter with Nikarchos draws on the Heracles story, then the parody is primarily visual, a technique familiar from scenes of paratragedy, though more rarely inspired by non-dramatic episodes.[83] The comic scene draws humour from the juxtaposition of Dicaeopolis' efforts to 'avoid breakage' (step 2 above) with the doubtless rough treatment of the victim,

[81] Olson 2002: lxii–lxiii, 304. Sources for the myth in Gantz 1993: 441–2, iconography in Mitchell 2009: 123–4, *LIMC* s.v. Kerkopes. For further representations of the Kerkopes story in comedy see Fitzpatrick & Dunn 2002: 36 (overlooking the *Acharnians* episode), Rosen 2007: 57–66. The story seems to have been a popular motif, with plays entitled *Kerkopes* recorded for Hermippus, Plato comicus, and Eubulus.

[82] ἴττω Ἡρακλῆς (860); cf. νεὶ τὸν Ἰόλαον (867). For Heracles born in Thebes see e.g. *Il*. 14.323–4, 19.98–9, Hes. *Theog*. 526–31.

[83] Another example of the technique that draws on a non-dramatic source is the Odysseus escape episode in *Wasps* (179–85).

as well as the ironic transformation of the informer into a vendible object. Nikarchos becomes 'merchandise' (τὴν ἐμπολήν, 929) and a 'vessel' (ἄγγος, 936), and is handled accordingly. With the Kerkopes story as a likely backdrop, the humour lies primarily in witnessing a human treated like an object.[84] Like Buster Keaton's father who, on the vaudeville stage, would hold his son's ankles and sweep the floor as if the boy were a mop (Mast 1973: 125), or Charlie Chaplin who flips a man upside down in *Those Love Pangs* (9:10–28) and sits on the man as if he were a chair, the humour of a human-to-object transformation finds one of its first recorded manifestations here in *Acharnians*. Nikarchos had wanted to denounce the Boeotian man's wares (909–23), only to be packed up and turned into one himself. This is not merely a funny spectacle for the sake of it; rather, the treatment of Nikarchos responds to his attempts to control commerce via bullying and threats. Yet instead of hindering international trade, as he had wanted, he now unintendedly facilitates it. The ambiguity of whether the Boeotian visitor, for his part, has been treated fairly (he seems content with the exchange) or rather has been tricked by Dicaeopolis (into accepting an informer) is consistent with the protagonist's earlier, equivocal dealings with the Megarian.

Unlike Nikarchos in *Acharnians*, who is swiftly packed up and transported off-stage, Kinsman in *Thesmophoriazusae* is arrested, bound to a plank, and left in this position—in full view of the audience—for two hundred lines. This treatment, as we will see, collapses the multiple roles that Kinsman adopts over the course of the comedy.

[84] Compare *LIMC* s.v. Herakles §1324, a red-figure pelike (Fogg 1925.30.34) that depicts Herakles in an identical position to images of him carrying the Kerkopes, but with two amphorae in the place of the dwarves. For carrying-poles (ἀνάφορα) on the Aristophanic stage cf. *Ran*. 8, *Eccl*. 833, fr. 571 (καὶ τὸν ἱμάντα μου ἔχουσι καὶ τἀνάφορον).

Thesmophoriazusae is one of Aristophanes' most lively productions. The play's physicality gravitates around the character of Kinsman whose pubic hair is aggressively singed by Euripides (236–46), who almost gets into a fight with Mika (566–70), is forcibly stripped (636), snatches Mika's baby (688), and is finally arrested by a Prytanis and a Scythian Archer. The arrival of the Prytanis is foreshadowed at 654 (cf. also 753–4), when Kleisthenes departs in search of one. This magistrate does not enter until 923, however, while the Archer who accompanies him, and who is armed with a whip and sword (1125–6), is unexpected. The latter is instructed to lead Kinsman inside and 'bind him on the *sanis*' (δῆσον αὐτὸν εἰσάγων / ὦ τοξότ' ἐν τῇ σανίδι, 930–1). These two characters then enter the stage building (946), re-emerging several lines later (1001) with Kinsman appropriately shackled.[85] A *sanis* is a flat wooden board; the word can designate a door (E. *Or*. 1221), a ship's gang-plank (E. *Hel*. 1556), panels on which public notices were written (*Vesp*. 349, Andoc. 1.83, Lys. 26.10) or, as here in *Thesmophoriazusae* (and probably euphemistically), a restraining device for criminals. Kinsman is attached to the plank around

[85] This allows the part of the (hitherto silent) Archer to be taken over by the tritagonist, who presently plays Kritylla and exits around 944 (Austin & Olson 2004: lxix, 295). Binding a character to a *sanis* may have been staged earlier by Cratinus (Σ *Thesm*. 940 Regtuit = Cratin. fr. 366 K–A). Both N. Wilson 2007: 160 and Hartwig 2009: 73 suggest that, once bound, Kinsman is wheeled out on the *ekkyklēma*; Sommerstein 1994: 221 (implicitly supported by Austin & Olson 2004: 309) is sceptical, however, arguing that the *ekkyklēma* would have blocked the stage door through which the Archer must repeatedly pass. The fact that the *ekkyklēma* typically signals indoor space (caveats in Rehm 1988: 295–6) also speaks against its use here because the audience is meant to think of the bound Kinsman as being outside: there is mention of passers-by (τοῖς παριοῦσι, 932–3; cf. Dem. 24.114), Kinsman thinks he will become fodder for crows (1027/8/9), and the episode parodies an outdoor scene from Euripides' *Andromeda*.

the neck (1054) and likely also his wrists and ankles.[86] The upright *sanis* supposedly lifts his feet off the ground so that he is 'hanging' (1027/8/9, 1053, 1110). At least one 'pin' (ἧλος, 1003) holds Kinsman's head in place; the Archer painfully tightens it (1004). Kinsman remains locked in the *sanis* for over two hundred lines, forty of which have him singing a monody from this precarious position (1015–55). Eventually he is freed by Euripides (who has distracted the Archer with a dancing-girl),[87] and promptly exits via one of the *eisodoi* (1205–9).

In her essay 'Travesties of gender and genre' (1981), Zeitlin discusses how, more than any other Aristophanic comedy, *Thesmophoriazusae* blends multiple levels of fiction.[88] This is particularly apparent in the restraining episode. Kinsman's arrest and implied death-sentence are consequences of his infiltration of the Thesmophoria.[89] They also reflect a real-life judicial procedure, the *ephēgēsis*, whereby an Athenian magistrate could perform an arrest on a citizen's behalf.[90] Conversely, the stereotyped Archer with his over-the-top idiolect belongs firmly to the world of comedy,[91] while parody of Euripidean tragedy

[86] See Sommerstein 2001: 170, Austin & Olson 2004: 294–5. V. Hunter 1994: 242 n. 47 cites, as historical examples of the punishment, Hdt. 7.33 (the Persian governor Artayctes executed by the Athenian general Xanthippus for defiling the Temple of Protesilaus at Elaeus), 9.120.4 (the same story of Artayctes, but with the citizens of Elaeus executing the Persian governor), Lys. 13.56 (Menestratus executed for murder), 65–6 (Phaenippides executed for cloak-snatching).

[87] On such erotic dancing girls in Greek culture see Olsen 2017.

[88] Zeitlin 1996: 375–416. See also Bobrick 1997, Bierl 2001: 251–76.

[89] Kinsman believes that he is going to die (1051–5).

[90] The details of this process are shadowy, but its existence is confirmed by Dem. 22.26. See further Hansen 1976: 24–6, V. Hunter 1994: 136–7, Austin & Olson 2004: 294.

[91] Zeitlin 1996: 396. Cf. Hall 2006: 225–54.

imports a further layer of meaning. Staged the year before *Thesmophoriazusae*, Euripides' *Andromeda* told the story of Andromeda's rescue by Perseus, after she had been bound atop a cliff.[92] By adopting the persona of Andromeda ('Perseus ran out and gave me a sign that I must become Andromeda', 1010–12), Kinsman undergoes not so much a physical transformation—he is already half-disguised as a woman—as a change in personality. He no longer endorses, as he did in his earlier speech (466–519), the lecherous and deceitful women embodied by Euripides' Phaedras or Stheneboeas (tragic characters linked also at *Ran*. 1043), but has become, or at least pretended to become, a virginal and sympathetic victim.[93] His fastening to the *sanis*, which as well as being a real judicial punishment now also replays Andromeda's binding on the cliff-face, converges Kinsman's many roles: the cross-dressing spy, Euripides' stooge and failed saviour, the criminal condemned to death, a citizen with a wife and children, and the parodied tragic maiden. All these 'scattered identities' are connected, in different ways, to Kinsman's current fate attached to the board.[94] His song, in particular (1015–55), blends the multiple roles: switching between masculine and feminine forms to describe himself, Kinsman asks how he might escape the Scythian Archer (1015–17), despairs of seeing his own wife (1020–1), refers to himself as the unwed maiden Andromeda (1029–32), and appeals to Euripides ('the one who shaved my arse') as he remembers the original cross-dressing mission (1043–6). Euripides' subsequent re-entry and freeing of Kinsman concludes the play's intrigue by reuniting the two characters with which it had begun (the characters exit together at 1209), as well as prompting reconciliation with the city's women (1160–3). In this sense, the binding of Kinsman is, even more so than

[92] For synopses of the tragedy see Austin & Olson 2004: lxii–lxiii, 311, Collard, Cropp, & Gibert 2004: 133–43. For the fragments and testimonia see Klimek-Winter 1993: 55–310.

[93] Zeitlin 1996: 395.

[94] I borrow the phrase 'scattered identities' from Stehle 2002: 393.

the packing up of Nikarchos before him, no mere spectacle for its sake, but rather very much integrated into the plot and the characterisation of the victim.

To conclude, restraining implies immobility and does not, therefore, lend itself to the creation of exciting of spectacles. It is perhaps for this reason that Aristophanes seldom has his characters restrain others. When he does so, the restraining is either short-lived (*Peace*, *Wealth*), enlivened via parody of well-known myths (*Acharnians*, *Thesmophoriazusae*), or linked to some aspect of the victim's characterisation (*Wasps*).

4.4.3. Forced stripping and dressing

Stone (1980) and Compton-Engle (2015) have demonstrated the importance of costume and costume manipulation in Aristophanes. The costumes of Old Comedy not only reflect 'cultural assumptions about power, the body, status, and mimesis' (Compton-Engle 2015: 1), but also generate humour when they distort or debase such assumptions. Disguise, which is used in both tragedy and comedy, allows a character to adopt two identities at once—Dicaeopolis dons the Telephus costume to 'be who I am, but appear not so' (*Ach*. 441). Aristophanes exploits such dualities for irony and humour. We saw above how Kinsman, bound to the *sanis*, fluctuates between being himself and Andromeda; Bdelycleon tries to civilise his father by dressing him in expensive new clothes (*Vesp*. 1122–64), but these cannot suppress the old man's boorish nature; Dionysus adopts the 'appearance' (σχῆμα) of Heracles but, much to the amusement of Xanthias, fails to appropriate the hero's 'spirit' (λῆμα, *Ran*. 460–3). There is potential for humour when characters are oblivious to incongruities between their outer appearance and inner identity, or when those incongruities arise unintentionally. Thus, Heracles cannot contain his laughter (3 x γελᾶν) when he sees Dionysus with a masculine lion-skin draped over a feminine *krokōtos* (saffron robe) and

delicate *kothornoi* boots alongside a sturdy club (*Ran*. 42–7); Peisetairos and Euelpides mock Tereus whom the gods have transformed into a hybrid man-bird with a beak and moulting plumage (*Av*. 93–106); the naked husbands in *Lysistrata* appear 'ridiculous' (καταγέλαστος, 1020); Blepyrus, through no design of his own, is ludicrously forced to wear his wife's blouse and slippers (*Eccl*. 311–16).

If appearance can be funny, then manipulating someone's appearance can make them into an object of laughter. To take an example from tragedy, Dionysus dresses Pentheus as a woman in Euripides' *Bacchae* so that he will appear 'ridiculous' in front of the Thebans (χρήζω δέ νιν γέλωτα Θηβαίοις ὀφλεῖν / γυναικόμορφον, 854–5; cf. *Thesm*. 939–44, *Eccl*. 121–7). In this section, I focus on Aristophanic instances where a character is forcibly dressed or undressed by another. Compton-Engle rightly concludes that controlling another's clothing is a sign of dominance and that 'when one comic character strips another, by either physical force or verbal commands, the stripped character is marked as having lower social status'.[95] Thus, when Strepsiades is told to remove his cloak in *Clouds* (497), he assumes, wrongly it turns out, that this is a punishment. The motif stretches back at least as far as Homer, where Odysseus threatens to strip Thersites and 'reveal his genitals' as punishment for upbraiding Agamemnon (τά τ᾽ αἰδῶ ἀμφικαλύπτει, *Il*. 2.262). There are three instances of unceremonious, hostile stripping in Aristophanes (versus none in tragedy). The victims are men in all cases. In *Peace*, Trygaeus' slave strips Hierocles of his animal fleeces (κῳδίων, 1122–4); in *Thesmophoriazusae*, the women force Kinsman to remove his breastband (στρόφιον, 638); and in *Wealth*, Karion strips the Sykophant of his *himation*

[95] Compton-Engle 2015: 10. Aeschines 1.183 cites a Solonian law according to which women who committed adultery could be stripped (and beaten), the aim being to 'dishonour such a woman' (ἀτιμῶν τὴν τοιαύτην γυναῖκα). For an instance of stripping as a prelude to a hubristic beating see Dem. 54.8–9.

(926–30). The first of these stripped characters is an *alazōn*, someone who lays claim to more authority than they legitimately should.[96] The Slave says that he will strip Hierocles (whom Trygaeus calls an *alazōn*, 1121) of the animal skins 'that he has been obtaining through deceit' (ἀλάμβαν᾽ αὐτὸς ἐξαπατῶν, 1123). The imperfect of (ἐ)λάμβαν(ε) implies that Hierocles has adopted profit-by-trickery as a regular occupation (cf. ἆρα φενακίζων ποτ᾽ Ἀθηναίους ἔτι παύσει; 1087). Stripping him, as Olson (1998: 282) observes, puts a symbolic end to that behaviour. Removing Kinsman's breastband in *Thesmophoriazusae* serves a different purpose: it confirms his identity as a man. Although his stripping does not, as Austin & Olson (2004: 232) point out, advance the story, since Kinsman has already been outed as an impostor, it does allow for the funny action of Kinsman trying to conceal his now exposed phallos by swinging it back and forward between his legs.[97] Finally, the Sykophant in *Wealth* has his cloak replaced by an inferior one, a live enactment of the redistribution of resources triggered by the return of Wealth's sight, discussed in more detail below.

With regard to forced dressing, Compton-Engle observes that 'to have a new costume forced on one is [also] degrading'.[98] The motif can again be traced back to Homer,

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[96] Arist. *EN* 1127a20–2 δοκεῖ δὴ ὁ … ἀλαζὼν προσποιητικὸς τῶν ἐνδόξων εἶναι καὶ μὴ ὑπαρχόντων καὶ μειζόνων ἢ ὑπάρχει. See further MacDowell 1990b, who concludes that 'an ἀλαζών in Old Comedy is a man who holds an official position or professes expertise which, he claims, makes him superior to other men; he exploits it, normally in speech, to obtain profit, power, or reputation; but what he says is actually false or useless' (p. 289).

[97] Cf. fr. 664, where an unidentifiable, male character has his στρόφιον loosened, exposing his genitals (τὰ κάρυά μου ᾽ξέπιπτεν).

[98] Compton-Engle 2015: 12. Not all comic instances of dressing another character are hostile. The Sausage-Seller places a celebratory green coat on the rejuvenated Demos at the end of *Knights*

where Odysseus drags the defeated Irus outdoors and dresses him with a staff and shabby wallet (*Od*. 18.104–112). There are two clear instances of a character being degraded in Aristophanes via a forced costume change (the Proboulos in *Lysistrata* and the Sykophant in *Wealth*), though the dressing of Philocleon in *Wasps* also provides several opportunities for humour. In *Wasps*, humour stems from Philocleon's reluctance to be dressed by his son and the disproportionate energy expended on what should be a simple task. Philocleon is unenthusiastic about removing his *tribōn* (a modest outer garment), which he claims to have worn when stationed against the Persians, and which is therefore an important part of his identity.[99] His first words (the first spoken by any character) after the second parabasis are: 'I will never take this [*tribōn*] off as long as I am alive' (1122), priming the audience for the ensuing struggle. Bdelycleon wants his father to swap the item for a *chlaina*, a costly (ὑφαίνεται πολλαῖς δαπάναις, 1146) and exotic woollen mantle.[100] The implication is that the old man, by changing his appearance, will trade his old ways for a more sophisticated lifestyle. It takes over thirty lines for Bdelycleon to get the *chlaina* on his father, who shifts

(1406), for example, while the female chorus leader in *Lysistrata* dresses her male counterpart as a gesture of reconciliation (1021) before giving him a kiss (1036).

[99] *Vesp*. 1123–4. Compare 236–9, where the chorus reminisces over Philocleon's exploits during the Persian Wars, as well as the choral song extolling Athenian accomplishments against Persians (1071–101), which comes just before the dressing scene. For the τρίβων associated with poverty or asceticism (worn by Socrates at Pl. *Prt*. 335d1, *Symp*. 219b6–7) see *Lys*. 278, *Plut*. 714–15, Lys. 32.16, Dem. 54.34, Isae. 5.11, Stone 1980: 162–3.

[100] On the χλαῖνα, a predominantly male garment (*Thesm*. 142), see Stone 1980: 160–2, Davies 1991: 152, Dunbar 1995: 337–8, M. Miller 1997: 152–5. The warmth of the garment is several times remarked upon (*Vesp*. 1134, 1150–1, 1155–6; cf. Hippon. fr. 34 West), as is its Persian origin (1137, 1143).

about to avoid this ('keep still!', 1149). Once the mantle is finally on, Bdelycleon turns his attention to the man's shoes ('Now, take off your damned shoes and quickly put on these Laconian ones', 1157–8). Like the *tribōn* (115–17), the father's shoes (ἐμβάδες) are linked to his jury-service habit (103, 275). And again, the idea seems to be to swap a pedestrian item of clothing with something more luxurious.[101] Repetition of the word 'quickly' (1158, 1162, 1168) ironically underscores how laborious the shoeing is, while Philocleon's focus on the new shoes as being 'of the enemy' (i.e. Spartan, 1160–3) provides a funny excuse for not co-operating.[102] It takes a dozen more lines to get both shoes on, bringing the total number of lines for the dressing episode to almost fifty.[103] Although he had seemingly convinced his father to abandon jury service in favour of dining, symposia, and festivals

[101] This is inferred, since neither here nor elsewhere are λακωνικαί explicitly said to be fine or especially fancy shoes (cf. Stone 1980: 226–7), although they are supposed to help Philocleon walk 'like a wealthy person' (πλουσίως, 1168). In *Ecclesiazusae* (73–5, 268–9), λακωνικαί are part of the women's simple disguise for imitating assembly-going men, which suggests the footwear was not especially unusual. In *Thesmophoriazusae* (142), χλαῖνα and λακωνικαί appear together as typically masculine apparel. For shoes named after a region, compare ἀμυκλᾶιδες, named after Amyklai near Sparta (fr. 769 with Bagordo 2017 *ad loc*.), and further Pollux 7.85–96.

[102] The agreement of a one-year truce between Athens and Sparta in 423 (Thuc. 4.117.1) had coincided with the revolt, incited by Brasidas, of tribute-paying Scione (cf. *Vesp*. 210 with Biles & Olson 2015 *ad loc*., Hornblower 1996: 375–90). Conflict between Athens and Sparta therefore re-ignited almost immediately and was ongoing at the time of *Wasps*.

[103] Compare Keaton's *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* (1928), where Keaton's father tries to find an appropriate hat for his son, hoping that that this will transform the young man from an awkward, beret-sporting academic into a hard-working seaman (15:30–18:30).

(1003–8), this scene demonstrates that Bdelycleon's struggle to reform Philocleon is not yet over.

Unlike Bdelycleon, who at least has good intentions, the dressing of the Proboulos in *Lysistrata*, and the stripping and dressing of the Sykophant in *Wealth* are hostile. Mid-way through the agon between Lysistrata and the Proboulos, the former dresses the latter as a woman, covering his head with a veil. Lysistrata's helper also gives him a wool basket (καλαθίσκος, 535).[104] This is a visual manifestation of the wider gender reversal initiated by Lysistrata: the veils worn by women (530–1) will now be worn by the Proboulos, who will 'weave' and 'munch on beans' (536–7), while the city's women will henceforth be responsible for war and the Athenian treasury (538). At the end of the *agōn*, the Proboulos is given further accoutrements, this time two garlands to make him resemble a corpse (599–604; cf. fr. 508, Blech 1982: 81–9, Kovacs 2018: 308). The action again reflects gender distinctions. Marriageable girls presently grow old alone, Lysistrata explains (594–7), because the eligible men are away at war. Now the Proboulos too will grow old (to the point of death), garlanded and hurried off toward the boat of Charon (607; cf. *Plut*. 278).

The dressing of the Proboulos reflects Lysistrata's challenging of traditional gender roles. The altercation with the Sykophant in *Wealth* also ties into its play's main theme, and provides us with one of Aristophanes' most cartoon-like moments, namely the nailing of a pair of shoes to a character's face. The Sykophant arrives wearing a thin coat (τριβώνιον, 897). The slave Karion quickly tires of the visitor's complaints and claim to be a 'patriotic and useful' citizen (φιλόπολις καὶ χρηστός, 901). 'Drop your cloak', Karion orders, 'then untie [your shoes]' (ἔπειθ᾽ ὑπόλυσαι, 927). The pugnacious Sykophant responds by goading

[104] For wool-working as a female activity see *Eccl*. 88–94, Brock 1994: 338, Lewis 2002: 62–5 (with iconography), Austin & Olson 2004: 272.

his two adversaries, Karion and the Honest Man, into stepping closer. Accordingly, Karion approaches, then grabs and starts stripping the man ('Help! I'm being stripped in broad daylight!', 930). Karion's actions fit the definition of the crime of *lopodusia*, that is, the violent theft of a citizen's clothing, but his aim is not to get the Sykophant's cloak for himself. Rather, with the Sykophant subdued, Karion takes the Honest Man's exceptionally shabby, thirteen-year old coat (846) and places it on the intruder, enacting the impoverishment of dishonest citizens set in motion by the restoration of Wealth's sight. The surprise climax of the episode occurs when the Honest Man's old shoes (ἐμβάδια, 847) which, like the thirteen-year old coat, he has also brought as a dedication to Wealth, are nailed to the Sykophant's forehead 'as if to a wild olive tree' (ταῦτα πρὸς τὸ μέτωπον αὐτίκα δὴ μάλα / ὥσπερ κοτίνῳ προσπατταλεύσω τουτῳί, 942–3).[105] The theatrical mask would have allowed this to be done with no harm to the actor, though as Sommerstein (2001: 197) notes, 'this is the only place in surviving Greek drama [other than the transfixing of Prometheus] where a character is subjected to treatment that in real life would (almost) certainly kill him'. The Sykophant, by his own admission defeated (944–5), exits wearing the Honest Man's threadbare coat and with the shoes still attached to his face. Victory is signalled as the Honest Man refers to the attached clothing as a 'panoply' (951), recalling the dedication of defeated enemies' arms.[106] That the whole ordeal has been inflicted upon the Sykophant by a slave only adds to the indignity. Finally, if we accept, with Sommerstein, that the Sykophant has also been stripped of his shoes, then he departs barefoot, 'a mark of

[105] Perhaps echoing a now obscure dedicatory ritual; cf. Verg. *Aen*. 12.766–9, Ov. *Met*. 746–8, De Cazanove 1989, Sommerstein 2001: 197. For the ἐμβάς as the shoe of poor men see *Plut*. 757–9, Isae. 5.11, Biles & Olson 2015: 120.

[106] On which see A. Jackson 1991.

extreme deprivation' that suits the play's reversal-of-fortunes theme.[107] In sum, the stripping and re-dressing of the Sykophant in *Wealth* is more than just slapstick for laughs; it demonstrates and justifies the new order established thanks to Chremylus and Karion's efforts.

To conclude this section, we can note that, much like instances of hitting and restraining, Aristophanes incorporates stripping and forced dressing into his narratives. Stripping is not just an excuse for a visual spectacle, but typically serves other purposes too (e.g. exposing Kinsman as a man, removing the items that Hierocles has fraudulently acquired). Forcibly dressing another character is more elaborate than stripping and also reflects wider themes of plot and characterisation (Bdelycleon's struggle to reform his father, impoverishing dishonest citizens in *Wealth*). Both acts are a means of degrading an adversary and are particularly suited to the visual medium of performed drama.

4.5. Chapter conclusions

The analysis of slapstick in this chapter has confirmed several features of Aristophanes' stagecraft and humour. First, physical aggression is inconsequential in the plays. Lasting and significant harm is never the outcome of attacks which are often (though not exclusively) directed at minor characters. Victims emerge unscathed even from potentially life-threatening punishments, such as repeat whippings or having shoes nailed to one's forehead. Humiliation is privileged over harm. Secondly, violence is rarely allowed to 'overpower the context in which it is seen', as one scholar puts it.[108] For the most part, physical abuse is

[107] Sommerstein 2001: 197. For going barefoot as a sign of deprivation cf. Lys. 31.16.

[108] Cusack *ap*. Nevitt 2013: 10.

carefully woven into the narrative of the play, not as mere reactions to affronts and misdeeds, but often also linked to some aspect of the victim's personality. In the one instance where the violence is wholly gratuitous, it is clearly detached from the plot (*Lys*. 1217–22). Thirdly, comic choruses are often aggressive, especially in the earlier plays, but their hostile designs, when directed at likeable heroes, are always thwarted in amusing and creative ways. Only the choreuts from *Knights* are allowed to strike another character, although in that case, there can be little sympathy for the victim Paphlagon. Lastly, parabatic comments on slapstick reveal a reluctance to exploit physical humour indiscriminately, since that would risk undermining Aristophanes' desire to be seen as an innovative playwright. On the other hand, the popular appeal of physical and visual gags compels him to include these in his productions, hence the large assortment of slapstick moments surveyed here.

CHAPTER 5

Thesis conclusion

This thesis began with a quotation from Shaw regarding the indispensability of conflict for drama ('no conflict, no drama'). Shaw was thinking about characters' confrontations with abstract or political forces rather than the type of conflict elements studied here.[1] Nevertheless, the focus on three discrete elements of interpersonal conflict, namely insults, threats, and physical slapstick, has shown how conflict in comedy engages and entertains also in ways that extend beyond ideological struggles.

If we accept that comedy 'trades upon the surprising, the improper, the unlikely, and the transgressive in order to make us laugh', as Neale and Krutnik (1990: 3) put it in their study of screen comedy, then insults and threats—as violations of proper and polite verbal behaviour—are well-suited to that purpose. This is especially the case when the speaker and addressee are separated by a substantial status or power gap, though can also exploit negative stereotypes about the speech habits of lowly figures (market retailers, innkeepers, etc.). We have seen, furthermore, that Aristophanes frequently combines insults with puns and exaggerated rhetorical-poetic tropes (particularly repetition), while his characters' unnatural reactions to verbal abuse, such as those of Pheidippides in *Clouds* or Trygaeus in *Peace*, offer extra scope for humour. Similar effects are observable for threats which, in addition,

[1] After the quotation, Shaw gives the example of 'Christian Socialism' versus 'vulgar Unsocialism', a theme in his *Widowers' Houses* (1892). He goes on to say that 'obvious conflicts', such as that of unmistakable good with unmistakable evil, are simplistic and should be avoided in drama.

draw appeal from tragic parody and stichomythia, the former notably in *Acharnians* and *Thesmophoriazusae*, the latter in *Knights* and *Lysistrata*. Physical violence, for its part, plays an important role in Aristophanes, though one markedly different to that of the violence found in Greek tragedy. Unlike in tragedy, comic violence never results in lasting harm and is distorted through the use of unusual props or outlandish contexts. Following the Aristotelian approach outlined in the Introduction (section 1.2.1), this down-playing in comedy of the consequences of physical violence may help discourage pity for its victims, since pity depends on witnessing harm that is considered to be significant.

The spontaneous and often anti-authoritarian nature of verbal and physical aggression in comedy arguably satisfies a desire for radical individual action without adverse repercussions. To be sure, the ambitious projects of Aristophanes' protagonists, which inevitably meet with resistance, do not represent a 'coherently articulated alternative to the status quo', let alone a viable one, but they are entertaining, perhaps for this very reason.[2] Any damage or disruption (either intended or collateral) is contained within the fictional setting, which itself is part of a temporary Dionysian festival. Eco therefore labels the antisocial acts of comic characters 'authorized transgressions', explicitly comparing comedy to the license of the Bakhtinian carnival.[3] Comedy allows audiences temporarily to experience a world where the social costs of living in a rule-bound democracy can be bypassed (obedience to the law, respect for others and their property, rejection of tyrannical tendencies, etc.).[4] And yet, while comedy glorifies and celebrates the freedoms of the individual, including the selfish freedom to offend or assault others, it also champions the

[2] Jenkins 1992: 217, on 'anarchistic' comedy.

[3] Eco 1984: 6.

[4] For arguments in the Attic orators that excessive personal freedom jeopardised the democracy see Liddel 2007: 22–4.

community by attacking those who actually do place private profit over the well-being of the group, such as corrupt politicians, sykophants, parasites and so forth, who regularly show up as intruders. Characters of that mould appear on stage and are subjected to verbal and physical abuse, with the result that Old Comedy, with its fantastic and utopian plots, strives against the establishment at the same time as it upholds traditional civic values.

Conflict elements risk interrupting the progression of goal-oriented narratives. Physical gags in particular, but also repetition and capping routines (such as those studied in Chapter Three), can sit uneasily with the construction of a coherent story since they typically rely on a joke-logic that is external to the cause-and-effect relationships that drive plots. Comparison in the Introduction (section 1.2.3) with the gags of early silent cinema has helped to extricate such issues. That being said, illogicality and frame violations are part of what defines comedy. Conflict in Aristophanes, as Ruffell (2011: 119) remarks, is not always realistically, logically, or indeed narratively motivated, nor does Aristophanes necessarily strive for narrative wholeness. Aristophanes' insistence on novelty also means that he searches for ways to surprise his spectators, doing things that have not been done before (*Vesp*. 1536–7, *Eccl*. 578–9), and thereby purposefully thwarting expectations. Although the Nikarchos/Kerkopes scene in *Acharnians* could be excised without altering the play's main story-line, for example, the episode's clever adaptation of an established myth and the resultant visual humour compensate amply for any disruption of the narrative.

Aristophanes also recognises that certain recurring, physically aggressive jokes are popular with spectators (Chapter Four, section 4.2), though he rarely succumbs to scripting gratuitous or excessive slapstick. Physical violence is, rather, inevitably tied to some aspect of the victim's characterisation or to broader motifs of the play. The prodding of the Creditor in *Clouds* reflects the character's association with horse debts, to take one example, while the extended whipping episode in *Frogs* belongs to a wider exploration of slave status in

that comedy. Physical gags are, for the most part, integrated into the stories and/or married to the thematic issues of their respective plays. Finally, the lack of serious consequences of the violence in Aristophanes gives it a playful and childish feel, but by combining it with themes such as sexual identity, status and power, societal change, politics, or resistance to conformity, Aristophanes ensures its appeal to mature audiences.[5]

Comparisons with tragedy, satyr play, and prose texts have revealed several comic idiosyncrasies with regard to vocabulary. The glossary of insults at the end of Chapter Two demonstrates how comic characters employ words and speech registers not typically found in other genres, while the analysis of threat forms (Chapter Three, section 3.3) has revealed further linguistic differences between comedy and tragedy. Comedy employs threats more frequently and more casually than tragedy, and also exhibits constructions not found in the sister genre (e.g. οὗτοι + καταπροίξεσθαι + participle). These observations complement findings of other scholars on the language of Aristophanes, not only confirming the abundance of verbal conflict elements in Aristophanes, but also showing how comedy employs a unique range of vocabulary that helps to define the genre.

Although it has lain outside the scope of this thesis, extending the study of insults and threats to Menander and other poets of Greek New Comedy could help bolster arguments about continuity or change in fourth-century dramatic tastes. Are the clearly discernible differences with later Greek comedy (absence of an integrated chorus, preference for domestic plot-lines, etc.) accompanied also by the presence of more or fewer conflict elements in the plays? Moving forward in time, Plautine drama represents an especially promising corpus for the study of verbal and physical conflict in comedy, and indeed some

[5] Compare the comments of Tex Avery, co-creator of the Looney Tunes series, on how he attempted to make his cartoons appeal also to adult viewers (Wells 1998: 140).

scholarship already points in that direction.[6] A study of Plautus dedicated to that aspect of his work would help shed light on the universality (or not) of conflict as a source of humour. Finally, and to return to the fifth century, even if the fragments of Old Comedy pose substantial interpretive difficulties, a more focussed analysis of conflict elements in what remains of the plays of Aristophanes' rivals might corroborate his claims to originality or, conversely, more clearly situate his use of insults, threats, and slapstick in an established literary and performative tradition.

By opening this study with three different approaches to comic conflict (Aristotle, Bakhtin, silent film comedy), I have suggested first, that there is no single way of looking at the topic, and secondly that shifting the viewpoint can reveal new issues as well as new ways of understanding how conflict is received by audiences. My own methodology, which relies on a close analysis of the texts and staging of Aristophanes, adds a further perspective, showing how Aristophanes weaves conflict elements into his comedies, not only as moments of excitement, but also as examples of his poetic and dramatic craftsmanship worthy of critical attention. Interpersonal conflict, which manifests itself as insults, threats, and physical abuse, is not only an enduring aspect of Aristophanic comedy but also, as we have seen, a particularly fruitful source of jokes and entertainment.

[6] E.g. Miniconi 1958, Lilja 1965, Candiard 2018 on insults, H. Parker 1989 on threats of torture, Beacham 1991 on threats and slapstick in *Casina*, Konstan & Raval 2018 on slapstick.

Appendix I

Washing and besmirching (metaphors for insults)

In this section, I outline the most common metaphors employed for insulting, which Aristophanes shares with other contemporary and near-contemporary writers. The two most conspicuous images are that of besmirching/mudslinging and, conversely, that of washing.

Properly used for the washing of clothing (*Il*. 22.155, Pl. *Chrm*. 161e11–12, Theophr. *Char*. 22.8) or sheepskins (Ar. *Plut*. 166), metaphorical πλύνειν compares the target to dirty laundry. Hesychius (5th–6th cent. CE) identifies the figure of speech as Attic (Ἀττικοὶ ἐπὶ τῶν λοιδοριῶν λέγουσι, π 2631 Hansen), perhaps having found it in a collection of Atticisms. The second-century CE grammarian Phrynichus has the following entry that explains the metaphor:

> πλύνον πλύνεσθαι· σημαίνει μὲν τὴν ὕβριν, μετενήνεκται <δὲ> ἀπὸ τῶν πλυνομένων ἱματίων καὶ πατουμένων. καὶ γὰρ οὔροις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ταῦτα ῥύπτεται, καὶ πλυνόμενα περιυβρίζεται καὶ πατούμενα.
>
> *washing, to be washed*: signifies outrageous treatment [*hybris*] and is a metaphor from clothing being washed and trampled. Because clothing is cleaned with urine and other materials, and insulted egregiously as it is washed and trampled on.[1]
>
> Phrynichus *Praep. Soph*. s.v. πλύνον de Borries p. 101

[1] In this light, Sommerstein 2001: 206 compares πλύνειν to the image of 'trampling' (πατεῖν), used elsewhere as a metaphor for treating something or someone without due regard (e.g. A. *Ag*. 372, S. *Aj*. 1335, *Ant*. 745, Ar. *Vesp*. 376–8; further Taillardat §632).

In the autobiographical excursus from *Acharnians*, Aristophanes—speaking through his character Dicaeopolis—employs the metaphor of washing (πλύνειν, 381) to describe how Cleon had 'slandered' (διέβαλλε, 380) him the previous year. Similarly, the Old Woman in *Wealth* uses 'treating me like washing' (πλύνον με ποιῶν, 1060–1) to describe the pitiless mocking of her wrinkles and lack of teeth. In the latter example, Aristophanes draws attention to the image by having Chremylus and the Young Man then use the word in its literal sense, suggesting that the Old Woman 'wash off' her excessive make-up. A pun on the double meaning of πλύνειν appears also in Aristophanes' earliest comedy *Banqueters*, where a speaker combines the image of cleaning a fish with that of verbal abuse (οὐκ αἰσχυνοῦμαι τὸν τάριχον τουτονὶ / πλύνων ἅπασιν ὅσα σύνοιδ' αὑτῷ κακά, fr. 207; cf. Diocl. fr. 2 K–A). Menander has a character make the following threat:

> ἂν γὰρ κακῶς τὴν γυναῖχ' οὕτω λέγῃς,
> τὸν πατέρα καὶ σὲ τούς τε σοὺς ἐγὼ πλυνῶ.
>
> For if you continue to speak badly about my wife in this way,
> I will abuse (πλυνῶ) your father and you and your family.
>
> Men. fr. 433 K–A

Outside of comedy, the speaker (probably Dionysus) in the satyr play *Theoroi*/*Isthmiastai* uses πλύνειν to describe how he was insulted as an 'impotent girl' (γύννις δ' ἄναλκις, A. fr. 78a.68 *TrGF*). Demosthenes employs πλύνειν for aggressive denunciations in the courts where it is associated with 'animosities and insults' (ἔχθρας καὶ βλασφημίας, 39.11). And in another context, 'washing' is linked to exchanges of unspeakable affronts (λοιδορουμένους καὶ πλύνοντας αὑτοὺς τἀπόρρητα, [Dem.] 58.40).

Moving on from the metaphor of washing, the idea of mudslinging or besmirching is common in the fifth- and fourth-century sources. Like its English equivalent, the Greek metaphor implies insults or remarks that have a lasting, negative effect on a person's reputation. So in Aristophanes, the character Mika from *Thesmophoriazusae* uses the image of covering someone with mud (προπηλακιζομένας, 386) to describe the effect of Euripides' tragedies on women, or Aristophanes himself, ventriloquising through Dicaeopolis, coins a verb (μολυνοπραγμονούμενος, *Ach*. 382) based on μολύνειν ('to befoul', 'to defile'; cf. ἑαυτοὺς τῷ πηλῷ, Arist. *HA* 571b18) to depict Cleon's public attack on him after *Babylonians*. This accords with Cleon's depiction elsewhere as someone who stirs up muck and filth.[2] The verb μολύνειν is directly linked to *loidoria* in Isocrates' *Letter to Philip* (μολύνεσθαι καὶ λοιδορεῖσθαι, 5.81), while the figurative use of muddying and befouling to describe insulting was a favourite of Demosthenes (18.12 [λοιδορίαν καὶ προπηλακισμόν], 18.256, 21.7, 72, 24.124, etc.). The metaphor is found in a range of other authors too, across a variety of genres.[3] For a comic instance (reported) of a character actually throwing mud at someone while verbally insulting him, see Men. *Dys*. 365–6.

[2] Olson 2002: 174, citing *Eq*. 308–10, 864–7, *Pax* 753.

[3] E.g. Thuc. 6.54.4, S. *OT* 427 (the only tragic instance), Lys. 9.4, 15.6, Pl. *Grg*. 527c7, *Leg*. 866e4, Aeschin. 2.44, Arist. *EN* 1131a9, and the fourth-century lead letter from the Athenian agora discussed by D. Jordan 2000, Harris 2004b (μαστιγόμενος ἀπόλλυμι· δέδεμαι· προπηλακίζομαι, Agora inv. IL 1702). Compare the image of insults as projectiles (Ch. 2 n. 37 above), and that of 'throwing' or 'hurling' abuse at e.g. *Il*. 2.275 (Thersites as ἐπεσβόλος), S. *Aj*. 1244, 1323, E. *Alc*. 679–80, *El*. 902, *Tro*. 734, Ar. *Thesm*. 895, *Ran*. 824–5. Sophocles alone among the fifth-century dramatists employs the metaphor of 'smiting' someone with insults (ἀράσσειν, *Aj*. 725, *Phil*. 374).

Appendix II

Short curses in Aristophanes

By ‘short curses’ I mean compressed and spontaneous imprecations of the sort ἐξόλοιο, φθείρου, or ἐς κόρακας. There is overlap with insults and threats, both in terms of vocabulary (e.g. ἀπολούμενος / ἀπόλοιο) and the intent to injure verbally. Like insults, short curses also reflect and/or express a speaker’s angry frustration. While there is generally an addressee, they rarely provoke a response; indeed, they are as much attempts to injure an adversary as they are expressions of discontent with the situation in which the speaker finds himself. Fewer variants means that short curses are more limited in their use when compared with insults, but Aristophanes nevertheless finds opportunities to play creatively with such utterances and employs them in several punning jokes.

I noted in the chapter on insults the forcefulness of the insult ἐπίτριπτος (Ch. 2 n. 17 above). Compare the short curse **ἐπιτριβείης** (‘may you be crushed!’), occurring in Aristophanes only once, when it is addressed by Mika to Euripides’ Kinsman in *Thesmophoriazusae*.[1] This strong execration is uttered in response to Kinsman’s suggestion—part of his ongoing catalogue of female misdeeds—that women covertly siphon their husbands’ wine. Similarly, when Kinsman implies that all women plot against their

[1] *Thesm*. 557. The one-word curse appears only here in Aristophanes, although *Av*. 1530 (an absurd etymology for τοὐπιτριβείης) suggests that it was commonplace. Cf. adesp. com. fr. 1112.51 K–A ἐπιτριβ[είης. For (ἐπι)τρίβειν in longer curses compare καὶ μὴν ἐπιτέτριψαί γε (*Pax* 369), ὁ Ζεύς σέ γ’ ἐπιτρίψειεν (*Eccl*. 776), Ζεύς σε γεννήτωρ ἐμὸς / πρόρριζον ἐκτρίψειεν οὐτάσας πυρί (E. *Hipp*. 683–4, Phaedra to her nurse).

husbands, Mika rebuffs him with the short curse **ἐξόλοιο** ('may you be utterly wiped out!', 562). Long-form curses using the verb ἐξόλλυσθαι are not uncommon in prose, where they frequently extend to a malefactor's house and family,[2] yet like ἐπιτριβείης, the condensed short curse ἐξόλοιο is confined to comic dialogue.[3] In the case of *Thesmophoriazusae*, both ἐπιτριβείης and ἐξόλοιο are hostile utterances, underscoring the speaker's anger (and perhaps her vulgarity), but drawing humour from the fact that Kinsman had been persuaded to infiltrate the women's festival and now comes under heavy abuse.

The more frequently attested **ἀπόλοιο** appears six times in Aristophanes. As with the affiliated insult ἀπολούμενος, the short curse is almost always modified by κακῶς or a similar adverb. So, for example, Trygaeus curses Hierocles with ἐξώλης ἀπόλοιο in *Peace* (1072; cf. Men. *Sam*. 367), Mika curses Euripides' Kinsman with κακῶς ἀπόλοιο after he has sliced open her wineskin (*Thesm*. 757), and in *Birds*, Peisetairos yells κακῶς σύ γ' ἀπόλοιο to Tereus' uncooperative doorkeeper.[4] With the exception of Mika, both speakers

[2] Austin & Olson 2004: 166–7, citing Andoc. 1.126, Antiph. 5.11, Dem. 23.67, [47].70, Aeschin. 3.111.

[3] Instances at *Thesm*. 562, 887 (κάκιστ' ἄρ' ἐξόλοιο), *Ran*. 226 (Dionysus to the bothersome chorus of frogs), and compare also the extended form ἀλλὰ σέ γ' ὁ Ζεὺς ἐξολέσειεν (*Plut*. 592) spoken by Chremylus to Poverty. The prepositional verb does appear in tragedy, but it is never used in that genre to swear at another; its use in tragedy is restricted rather to comments on how one's own life has been, or will be, 'destroyed' (S. *Tr*. 84, E. *Hipp*. 725, 1341, *HF* 1392). The only non-comic instance of the short curse is directed at Odysseus by Silenus in Euripides' *Cyclops* (κακῶς γ' ἄρ' ἐξόλοι', 261).

[4] Ar. *Av*. 85. Further instances: *Nub*. 1236 (ἀπόλοιο), *Pax* 1288 (κάκιστ' ἀπόλοιο), *Av*. 64 (ἀπολεῖσθον), *Thesm*. 1006 (κακῶς ἀπόλοιο). The construction is also used in self-curses of the sort κάκιστ' ἀπολοίμην (e.g. *Ach*. 151, 476, *Vesp*. 630, *Ran*. 579, Men. *Epit*. 1063, Olson 2002:

and addressees of ἀπόλοιο are always male characters. Much like ἐξόλλυσθαι, the verb ἀπόλλυσθαι is not used to curse others in tragedy, either as a short curse or in longer formulations. The simplex ὄλοιο, on the other hand, appears several times in tragedy but, conversely, not in Aristophanes.[5]

The short curse **διαρραγείης** (< διαρρήγνυσθαι, 'to burst') is common in Aristophanes but absent from tragedy and all other contemporary genres, suggesting that it is low register. As with ἀπόλοιο, addressees are always male. Among other instances, διαρραγείης is Iris' reaction to Peisetairos' rape threat (*Av*. 1257), is spoken by the cooperative Neighbour to the Selfish Man in *Ecclesiazusae* (803), and is addressed to the Sykophant in *Wealth*.[6] It is not unusual for Aristophanes to exploit a curse's more literal meaning for humour (see below on ἐς κόρακας). In the case of διαρραγείης, we might compare *Peace* 31–2, where Trygaeus' slave encourages the repulsive and greedy dung-beetle to overeat until it 'bursts' (διαρραγείς), and *Wealth* 891–2, where the Sykophant is

119). See Renehan 1976: 114–16, Finglass 2018: 253 on the collocation κακὸς κακῶς + ἀπόλλυμι (e.g. *Eq*. 2–3, *Plut*. 65 with tmesis), a popular combination in Menandrean curses: *Dys*. 138–40 (κακὸν δὲ σὲ / κακῶς ἅπαντες ἀπολέσειαν οἱ θεοί / μαστιγία), 220–1 (ἀλλά σ', ὦ Κνήμων, κακὸν / κακῶς ἅπαντες ἀπολέσειαν οἱ θεοί), 442 (κακοὶ κακῶς ἀπόλοισθε), 926–7 (κακὸν δὲ / κακῶς <σ'> ἅπαντες ἀπολέσειαν οἱ θεοί); Menander ensures that the addressee is off-stage whenever this is a citizen (*Dys*. 220–1, 442).

[5] For the simplex in tragic short curses see e.g. A. *Supp*. 867, fr. 78c col I *TrGF* (from the satyr play *Theoroi*/*Isthmiastai*), S. *El*. 291 (reported), *Phil*. 961, 1019, 1035 (κακῶς ὄλοισθ'· ὀλεῖσθε κτλ.), 1285, E. *Med*. 1329, *Hcld*. 52, *Hipp*. 693, *Andr*. 453.

[6] *Plut*. 892. Further instances at *Av*. 2 (Peisetairos to the uncooperative bird he is holding), *Plut*. 279 (the chorus to Karion).

told to 'burst' (διαρραγείης) even though—Karion adds—he is 'full of nothing' (μηδενός γ᾽ ἐμπλήμενος).

The verb οἰμώζειν (lit. 'to cry οἴμοι') appears a few times in threats in the future tense (see Table 3.2 above). The present imperative short curse **οἴμωζε** is less literal and exclusively comic.[7] It might best be translated as 'damn you!' *vel sim.*, and is often employed in situations of exasperation. It is spoken only by and to male characters: Paphlagon to the Sausage-Seller (*Eq*. 891), Peisetairos to the Oracle-Monger upon learning the man's identity (*Av*. 960), Peisetairos to Prometheus (*Av*. 1503), Poseidon to Triballos (*Av*. 1572), Dionysus to the chorus of frogs (*Ran*. 257), or the cooperative Neighbour to the Selfish Man (*Eccl*. 809). At times, οἴμωζε is jocular in tone (*Av*. 846, *Thesm*. 1081), and there is a more literal instance at *Ach*. 1035 where Dicaeopolis says to Dercetes ἀπιὼν οἴμωζέ ποι ('go cry somewhere else!')—not only had Dercetes' first words been οἴμοι τάλας (1018), but he also responds to Dicaeopolis' curse with οἴμοι κακοδαίμων (1036).

In drama, **φθείρου** expresses a strong desire for the addressee to depart, and is perhaps best translated as 'get the hell out of here!', 'get lost!', or a similar expression.[8] It appears three times in Aristophanes: Euripides to Dicaeopolis (*Ach*. 460) and, twice, Chremylus to Poverty (*Plut*. 598, 610). In tragedy, this short curse is found only in Euripides (*Andr*. 715, *Hcld*. 284, *Peliades* fr. 610 *TrGF*), which perhaps explains why the character

[7] Found outside Aristophanes only at Alcaeus com. fr. 28 K–A (ἀλλ᾽ οἴμωζε σαυτὸν περιθέων), Men. *Epit*. 376, *Sam*. 294, *Sicyon*. 167.

[8] Prepositional ἀποφθείρου appears first in Menander (*Sam*. 373), although compare what Heracles imagines people will say if he returns to Argos having killed his own children: οὐ γῆς τῆσδ' ἀποφθαρήσεται (E. *HF* 1290). And cf. E. *Andr*. 708: εἰ μὴ φθερῇ τῆσδ᾽ ὡς τάχιστ᾽ ἀπὸ στέγης (Peleus to Menelaus). Dover 2002: 86 discusses other variants.

Euripides uses it in *Acharnians*. The paucity of attestations makes it difficult, however, to draw firm conclusions.

Almost exclusively comic is the expression **ἐς κόρακας** (lit. 'to the ravens!' ≈ 'screw you', 'go to hell', *vel sim*.). This short curse belongs to a wider group of elliptic utterances that employ the preposition ἐς/εἰς followed by a noun implying death and, in the case of ἐς κόρακας, specifically a dishonourable one.[9] We might compare the euphemistic ἄπαγ᾽ ἐς μακαρίαν, addressed to the Sausage-Seller in *Knights* (1151), or the imprecation ἐς κεφαλὴν σοί, which implies the intervention of a god/fate.[10] Non-Aristophanic examples include ἄπαγ᾽ ἐς τὸν φθόρον (Epicharm. fr. 154 K–A), a short curse which, in tragedy, always accentuates a speaker's anger,[11] and ἄπαγ᾽ εἰς τὸ βάραθρον, which occurs first in Menander (*Dys*. 394, 575). Biles and Olson 2015: 99–100 give the following description of the most common of these types of curses, namely ἐς κόρακας:

[9] Regarding orthography, εἰς was originally the pre-vocalic preposition, while ἐς was pre-consonantal. Although εἰς was the variant adopted into classical Attic for both pre-vocalic and pre-consonantal use, ἐς persevered as a high-poetic form (see Threatte 1980: 178, Willi 2003: 234–5, Finglass 2009: 212–15). In general, Aristophanes thus privileges εἰς (excepting paratragic passages) but ἐς κόρακας was, by the fifth century, a fossilised idiom and is the preferred variant.

[10] ἄπαγ᾽ ἐς μακαρίαν appears also at Antiphanes fr. 239.1 K–A, Pl. *Hp. mai*. 293a2, Men. *Epit*. 614 (dubious). For ἐς κεφαλὴν σοί compare Ar. *Pax* 1063, *Plut*. 526, Chadwick 1996: 179.

[11] Cassandra to her garb: ἴτ᾽ ἐς φθόρον (A. *Ag*. 1267 with Fraenkel 1950 *ad loc*.), Eteocles to the chorus: οὐκ ἐς φθόρον σιγῶσ᾽ ἀνασχήσῃ τάδε; (A. *Sept*. 252), and compare the insult ὦ φθόρε at *Eq*. 1151. Cf. also Oedipus to Teiresias: οὐκ εἰς ὄλεθρον; (S. *OT* 430, also 1146), and ὦ ὄλεθρε (*Thesm*. 860, *Eccl*. 934).

> [this] prepositional phrase can stand alone as a general exclamation . . . or as a curse wishing someone—not necessarily in earnest—a bitter, dishonourable death, based on the raven's reputation for feeding on corpses left exposed.

Exposure of human corpses to scavenging animals (primarily dogs and birds, but also fish) appears in literature from Homer onwards,[12] but the specification of ravens is essentially comic (*Thesm*. 942, 1028).[13] The short curse ἐς κόρακας combines the wish for a rival's death with that shameful fate, although as an idiomatic expression, the literal meaning is probably partially, if not wholly, suppressed. Whether we take the short curse literally or not, in the few occurrences outside of comedy, its appearance emphasises a speaker's audacity (Lys. 13.80–1) or distasteful behaviour (Theophr. *Char*. 25.6), which suggests the expression is low register. Of the eighteen Aristophanic instances where there is a clear addressee, all but one are spoken by a male character to another male character, arguably additional evidence for the curse's crudity.[14] The exception is Chremylus to the goddess

[12] E.g. *Il*. 1.4–5, 11.452–4, 21.120–35, 22.335–54, A. *Supp*. 800–1, S. *Aj*. 830 (with Finglass 2011 *ad loc*.), *Ant*. 29–30, E. *Hcld*. 1050–1 (with Allan 2001 *ad loc*.), *Hec*. 1077–8, *Supp*. 47, *HF* 566–8, *Phoen*. 1650, Hdt. 1.140.1 (a supposed Persian custom), C. Segal 1971: 37–41, Griffin 1980: 44–9, 115–17. On the seriousness of not receiving a proper burial see Thuc. 4.97.2–99, E. *Supp*. 1–86, R. Parker 1983: 43–8.

[13] Though cf. A. *Ag*. 1472–3, comparing Clytemnestra to a raven as she stands over the body of her murdered husband. For ravens attacking (and eating) the eyes of vulnerable creatures see *Ach*. 92–3 (with Olson 2002 *ad loc*.), *Av*. 582–4, Arist. *Hist. an*. 609b5–7, Arnott 2007: 110.

[14] *Ach*. 864, *Nub*. 133, 646, 789, 871, *Vesp*. 458, 835 (directed offstage), *Pax* 19 (jocular), 500, 1221, *Av*. 889 (an interjection), 990, *Thesm*. 1079 (x 2), *Ran*. 607, *Plut*. 394 (between friends), 604, 782 (directed offstage). I leave aside the fragments (frr. 462, 584), *Thesm*. 1079 (unclear if Echo is

Poverty (ἔρρ᾽ ἐς κόρακας θᾶττον ἀφ᾽ ἡμῶν, 604), who has already been cursed twice for extolling the merits of financial hardship (592, 598). As in this instance from *Wealth*, the verb of movement normally implicit in ἐς κόρακας can be openly expressed. This occurs in about a third of the cases.[15] Common too is the negated interrogative construction οὐκ ἐς κόρακας (ἀποφθερεῖ), which appears seven times in Aristophanes.[16] Finally, we should note (with Biles and Olson, cited above) that ἐς κόρακας is a flexible phrase that, in addition to cursing an addressee, can also express frustration with the world at large

Euripides in disguise or an independent female character—see Hartwig 2009: 61–70), and the textually challenging *Thesm*. 1226 (on which see J. Jackson 1955: 82–3). Further comic examples include Pherecr. fr. 76.5 K–A (spoken to a girl by her mother), Amips. fr. 23 (ἔρρ᾽ ἐς κόρακας μονοφάγε καὶ τοιχωρύχε), Men. *Pk*. 396 (ἄπαγ᾽ ἐς κόρακας). In Menander, Demeas curses Chrysis (a hetaira) with ἄπιθι . . . ἐς κόρακας ἤδη (*Sam*. 369–70), and Smicrines curses Habrotonon (a slave girl harpist) with οὐκ ἐς κόρακας (*Epit*. 161); neither of these women is a free citizen.

[15] ἔρρειν at *Pax* 500, *Plut*. 604; βάλλειν at *Nub*. 133, *Vesp*. 835, *Thesm*. 1079, *Plut*. 782, fr. 477. The related, elliptical curse ἔρρε/ἄπερρε (‘Scram!’, ‘Get lost!’, ‘Go to hell!’, *vel sim*.) appears already in Homer (*Il*. 8.164 ἔρρε κακὴ γλήνη, Hector to Diomedes) and in both tragedy and comedy: S. *OC* 1383, E. *Hcld*. 67, *Hipp*. 973 (ἔξερρε, in a more literal sense, since Theseus is expelling the addressee Hippolytus), *El*. 952 (Electra to the corpse of Aegisthus), Ar. *Nub* 783, *Pax* 1294, *Lys*. 1240, *Eccl*. 169 (milder in tone), Plat. com. fr. 182 K–A, Biles & Olson 2015: 133.

[16] *Eq*. 892, *Nub*. 789, 871, *Vesp*. 458, *Pax* 500, *Ran*. 607, *Plut*. 394; cf. Eup. fr. 359 K–A (οὐκ ἐς κόρακας, ἀνθρωπάριον, ἀποφθερῇ), Men. *Epitr*. 160.

(e.g. *Vesp*. 852, 982, Men. *Dys*. 112, *Her*. 70), incredulousness (*Plut*. 394), or function as an accentuating interjection.[17]

The short curse's reference to a familiar bird offers Aristophanes material for several tortured jokes and puns. In the prologue of *Wasps*, two slaves compare dreams. One recalls seeing Theoros, a frequently disparaged associate of Cleon,[18] sitting at an assembly 'with the head of a raven' (τὴν κεφαλὴν κόρακος ἔχων, 43). Playing on Alcibiades' speech disorder, this first becomes 'with the head of a self-serving flatterer' (τὴν κεφαλὴν κόλακος ἔχει, 45), before the second slave interprets the dream, concluding—predictably—that it portends Theoros will 'go to the ravens' (ἐς κόρακας οἰχήσεται, 51).[19] In *Peace*, Trygaeus is preparing to fly to the gods on the back of a giant dung beetle. His daughter enters and asks if he really is, 'along with the birds', about to abandon her. With its opening anadiplosis, poetic vocabulary (φάτις, προλιπών) and use of plural for singular, the daughter's short address displays mock-tragic emotion.[20] This sets up a vulgar punchline when she asks: 'are you going to the ravens?' (ἐς κόρακας βαδιεῖ, 117; cf. *Ran*. 185–9), which abruptly deflates the tone and is perhaps particularly unexpected in the mouth of a young girl addressing her

[17] For the last see e.g. *Birth of Aphrodite* [Ἀφροδίτης γοναί] by the comic poet Nicophon, a contemporary of Aristophanes: οὐκ ἐς κόρακας τὼ χεῖρ' ἀποίσεις ἐκποδὼν / ἀπὸ τοῦ σκυταλίου ('Get your damn hands away from my staff', fr. 2 K–A).

[18] On the historical figure of Theoros see Biles & Olson 2015: 96.

[19] A similar play on εἰς κόρακας/εἰς κόλακας appears in an apophthegm attributed to Socrates' pupil Antisthenes (fr. 131B Giannantoni; cf. Athen. 6.254c).

[20] The speech is perhaps also a loose adaptation of a passage from Euripides' *Aiolos* (E. fr. 17 *TrGF*); see Olson 1998: 90.

father.[21] Finally, in *Birds*, Peisetairos and Euelpides set off to find Tereus with the aid of a jackdaw and a crow. After much aimless wandering (3) and being pecked (19, 26), Euelpides begins to despair: despite their effort and preparation, the two characters cannot even find their way 'to the ravens' (ἐς κόρακας, 28) he quips, lamely punning on the comedy's avian theme. Such light-hearted exploitation of the short curse ἐς κόρακας reflects Aristophanes' faculty for integrating nominally aggressive or vulgar language into palatable and funny exchanges, a technique that finds echoes in his use of insults and threats.

[21] Robson 2014 discusses the casual and/or unexpected introduction of obscene words or phrases as an Aristophanic technique.

Appendix III

κοπροφορέω and other noun-initial φορεῖν-compounds in Aristophanes

The *hapax* κοπροφορήσω (*Eq*. 295) is inadequately interpreted in the scholia vetera (Σ *Eq*. 295a [I-II] Jones) as 'I'll fill you with dung' (κόπρου σε πληρώσω) or 'I'll remove your dung as I beat you' (τὴν κόπρον σου ἐκφορήσομαι τύπτων σε; cf. *Eq*. 69–70, *Lys*. 440). In addition to the flexibility of -έω compounds, which include also verb-initial (e.g. στρεψοδικέω) and Bahuvrihi (e.g. σεμνοπροσωπέω) variants,[1] the difficulty in understanding the Sausage-Seller's threat lies chiefly in its forcing of an accusative object (σε) on to what would seem to be an intransitive verb. The language is stretched in this way to mimic Paphlagon's threat from the preceding line (διαφορήσω σε).

There are two defendable, and not mutually exclusive, interpretations of the verb κοπροφορεῖν in the *Knights* passage. The comparable compound verb κοπραγωγεῖν (also a *hapax*) implies anal intercourse at *Lys*. 1174. There, κοπραγωγῆν (the Doric form of κοπραγωγεῖν) is the culmination of a series of jokes implying that Spartans have a penchant for anal sex (cf. 1157, 1163). If we take κοπροφορεῖν also in this sense, then the Sausage-Seller would be threatening Paphlagon with anal rape. This is the interpretation that Henderson proposed in *The Maculate Muse* (1991: 69, 193), although he later adopted a more literal rendering for his Loeb translation (viz. 'I'll cart you off like a load of dung!'). There is another threat of rape at *Eq*. 364, where the Sausage-Seller promises to stuff Paphlagon's 'arse' (πρωκτός) like a sausage. Taking κοπροφορεῖν as a rape threat would

[1] See Willi 2003: 122–6.

not, therefore, be out of character for the Sausage-Seller, though it does require the audience to unpack a metaphorical image.

The literal translation of κοπροφορεῖν is 'I carry dung' (κόπρος + φορεῖν), with an internal accusative. Comparable φορεῖν-compounds in Aristophanes with internal objects are, in alphabetical order, ἀμφορεαφορεῖν (fr. 310), ἀστραπηφορεῖν (*Pax* 722), διφροφορεῖν (*Av*. 1552), κροκωτοφορεῖν (*Lys*. 219), λυχνοφορεῖν (*Lys*. 1003), μιτροφορεῖν (*Thesm*. 163), ξυροφορεῖν (*Thesm*. 218), πηλοφορεῖν (*Av*. 1142, *Eccl*. 310), and πλινθοφορεῖν (*Av*. 1139, 1149).

Occasionally, Aristophanic φορεῖν-compounds take an object, however, which provides additional detail. So we find 'they take jars as gifts' (δωροφοροῦσιν ὕρχας, *Vesp.* 675) or 'taking three drachmas as pay' (μισθοφοροῦντας τρεῖς δραχμάς, *Ach*. 602), 'taking barley as pay' (μισθοφοροῦντες ἄλφιτα, *Pax* 477), and 'taking money as pay' (μισθοφοροῦντες χρήματα, *Eccl*. 206). Following this schema, the threat in *Knights* would mean 'I will carry you as dung' (cf. Wilkins 2000: 193 'I'll carry you out on a shit shovel'), thus likening Paphlagon to manure and, secondarily, the Sausage-Seller to a dung-collector. Compound -έω verbs do frequently denote professional activities (always as noun + verb compounds), of which dung collecting was an instance.[2] According to Pollux (7.134.1–10 = Ar. fr. 741 K–A), dung-collectors (called variously κοπρολόγοι, κοπροφόροι, κοπραγωγοί) were frequent butts of jokes in Old Comedy.[3] Since the Lenaia and City

[2] For compound -έω verbs denoting professional activities compare e.g. στεφανηπλοκεῖν ('to be a garland-weaver', *Thesm*. 448), σκυτοτομεῖν ('to be a shoe-maker', *Plut*. 162), πλινθουργεῖν ('to be a brick-maker', *Plut*. 514); further examples in Willi 2003: 124. For professional dung-collecting see Jacob 1928: 13–19, Owens 1983, Alcock, Cherry & Davis 1994, Olson 1998: 69, Bagordo 2017: 18–20 (on Ar. fr. 680).

[3] Dung-collectors are mentioned in Aristophanes at *Vesp*. 1184, *Pax* 9, *Eccl*. 317 (indirectly).

Dionysia festivals, at which the comedies were performed, coincided roughly with the sowing season, dung-collectors may have been especially visible at that time of year (cf. Xen. *Oec*. 16.12 with Pomeroy 1994 *ad loc*.). At any rate, it would be of no concern to the Sausage-Seller that dung-collecting was considered a lowly profession (Biles & Olson 2015: 429), because depravity and shamelessness (ἀναίδεια, *Eq*. 277) are his greatest political assets. Finally, given that dung-collectors would transport their product outside of the city's limits (*Od*. 17.297–9, [Arist.] *Ath*. *Pol*. 50.2, and cf. the Dung Gate of Jerusalem at Neh. 2:13; both a sanitary measure and a matter of bringing dung to the farms where it was needed), we might, if we take κοπροφορήσω in *Knights* literally, see in the Sausage-Seller's threat a foreshadowing of Paphlagon's expulsion at the end of the play where he is pushed to the fringes of the city.

Appendix IV

The violent ending of the revised *Clouds*

Aristophanes' *Clouds* was performed at the City Dionysia in 423, competing against Cratinus' *Pytinē* and Ameipsias' *Konnos* (hyp. V Wilson). *Clouds* came last and Aristophanes re-wrote the play as a reaction to that disappointing result. It is the revised comedy that survives.[1] Hypothesis VI (Wilson), whose anonymous author seems to have had access to both versions of the play (or was relying on someone who did), outlines the differences, which include the violent final scene:

τοῦτο ταὐτόν ἐστι τῷ προτέρῳ, διεσκεύασται δὲ ἐπὶ μέρους, ὡς ἄν δὴ ἀναδιδάξαι μὲν αὐτὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ προθυμηθέντος, οὐκέτι δὲ τοῦτο δι' ἥν ποτε αἰτίαν ποιήσαντος. καθόλου μὲν οὖν σχεδὸν παρὰ πᾶν μέρος γεγενημένη ⟨ ἡ ⟩ διόρθωσις ... τὰ μὲν γὰρ περιῄρηται, τὰ δὲ παραπέπλεκται καὶ ἐν τῇ τάξει καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν προσώπων διαλλαγῇ μετεσχημάτισται, ἃ δὲ ὁλοσχερῆ τῆς διασκευῆς τοιαῦτα ὄντα τετύχηκεν. αὐτίκα ἡ μὲν παράβασις τοῦ χοροῦ ἤμειπται, καὶ ὅπου ὁ δίκαιος λόγος πρὸς τὸν ἄδικον λαλεῖ, καὶ τελευταῖον ὅπου καίεται ἡ διατριβὴ Σωκράτους.

This is the same as the first [play], but it has been revised in parts, indeed as if the poet wanted to produce it again, but for whatever reason did not get round to doing so. As a whole, correction has taken place in almost every part … some elements have been removed, whereas some have been

[1] The revision probably occurred sometime between 420 and 417 (Dover 1968: lxxx, Storey 1993, Casanova 2000: 23–6). Fragments attributed to the original version are collected as Ar. frr. 391–402 K–A.

woven on and refashioned in terms of their organisation and the interchange of characters, and those elements that stem entirely from the revision are such: to begin with, the parabasis of the chorus has been replaced, and where the Just Argument speaks to the Unjust Argument, and finally, where the school of Socrates is burned.

Ar. *Nub*. hyp. VI (Wilson)

There are signs that the revision remains incomplete.[2] Some scholars have suggested (against the hypothesis) that Aristophanes never planned to stage the second version.[3] Whatever Aristophanes' intentions, the revised finale presents a uniquely destructive instance of comic violence: Strepsiades wants to raze the *phrontistērion* by collapsing its roof with a mattock (σμινύη, 1485–9, 1500) and setting fire to the school with a torch (δᾴς,

[2] Notably the lack of an expected choral ode after 888 (see Revermann 2006a: 213–17), and the parabatic invitation to indict Cleon who died in 422, before the assumed revision date (see previous footnote).

[3] Partially advocated by Dover 1968: xcviii, Rosen 1997: 404–5. An envisaged staging is, however, supported by appeals to judges and spectators (e.g. *Nub*. 1113–30 with Biles 2011: 187–99). Revermann 2006a: 224–5 rightly dismisses the spectacular and (for comedy) unparalleled ending of *Clouds* as an argument against its performability; Euripides' *Trojan Women* ends with the burning of Troy (1260–4, 1295–6), and *Orestes* features the hero giving orders to burn down the Atreid house as he stands on its roof with torches (1621–4). Moreover, while no comic parallels exist, the finale of *Wasps* does show that Aristophanes took pride in innovative endings, doing something that 'no-one before has ever done' (1536–7). The claim that *Clouds II* was actually performed in 422 (hyp. V Wilson) is too early for the reference to Eupolis' *Marikas* (*Nub*. 553), a comedy conventionally dated to 421 (see Storey 2003: 197–8).

1494).[4] He climbs atop the stage-building with his slave Xanthias to do this. When one of the students excitedly complains 'you're going to kill us, you're going to kill us' (ἀπολεῖς, ἀπολεῖς, 1499), Strepsiades replies that this is precisely his intention (τοῦτ᾽ αὐτὸ γὰρ καὶ βούλομαι). The play seems to end with Socrates and his students not burning or choking to death, but rather being chased and beaten away as they flee the school (δίωκε, παῖε, βάλλε, 1508).

The extraordinary ending of *Clouds* has elicited various critical responses. Silk points to its moralising tone and lack of comic exuberance. The whole play 'evokes the world of tragedy' with its focus on suffering, responsibility, learning, deception, recognition, and not least the violent climax.[5] A pun (*dokos*/*doxa*, 1496), a named slave, and a euphemistic *double entendre* (1507) ensure, however, that the ending does not slip fully into the tragic mode.[6] Ruffell (2013: 252) suggests that the violence of the final episode reinforces Strepsiades' 'idiotic crudeness'. The choice of a mattock for destroying the roof certainly reminds us of the protagonist's rustic origins (cf. Pl. *Resp*. 2.370c–d), which are elsewhere linked to his naivety and boorishness (*Nub*. 43–5, 628–31, 1457), although may also recall Zeus's destructive pick-axe/agricultural fork (Ch. 3 n. 86 above). For Revermann (2006a: 229–35), the ending of *Clouds* re-asserts the dominance of the religious order threatened by Socrates' teaching. Accordingly, it is Hermes who advises Strepsiades to burn the *phrontistērion* rather than pursue legal action against Socrates (1477–85). Strepsiades

[4] Dem. 23.22 reports that arson (πυρκαιά) was a crime tried by the council of the Areopagus, and thus particularly serious.

[5] Silk 2000: 354–65. See also Zimmermann 2006. Certainly the closest parallel for the *Clouds* finale comes from tragedy, namely the end of Euripides' *Orestes* (1621–4).

[6] On named slaves as a comic phenomenon see Lascu 1969. The exception is Cilissa in Aeschylus' *Choephori*. For the euphemism ἕδρα ('seat') = 'backside' see Henderson 1991: 199.

himself explains that Socrates and his students must be punished 'above all because they dishonoured the gods' (μάλιστα δ' εἰδὼς τοὺς θεοὺς ὡς ἠδίκουν, 1509).[7] Finally, Biles (2011: 210) sees the re-written ending as a direct response to the failure of *Clouds I*. The new finale is a way of 'dispelling the impression … that Aristophanes was himself a keen advocate of the lessons taught [in the *phrontistērion*]', and thus heals the rift between playwright and audience that the original production had engendered. This view is supported by the presence of torches and cries of *iou iou* in the added scene, popular elements apparently missing from the unsuccessful, earlier version (Σ *Nub*. 543a Holwerda). With the destruction of the *phrontistērion* and the expulsion of its inhabitants, Aristophanes takes revenge, so to speak, on the characters who failed him in the original version of the play.

Less attention has been paid to the specificities of Strepsiades' destructive act, though an article by Connor (1985) points in that direction. Connor surveys historical instances of vengeful demolition (*kataskaphē*) in ancient Greek culture, a practice of much relevance to *Clouds*, but which has not yet been integrated into analyses of the final scene. Connor shows that *kataskaphē* is a punishment for major offences such as tyranny or treason, and typically accompanies other penalties like exile or the denial of a proper burial. The politically troubled year of 411/0 BCE provides us with several Athenian examples, including the condemnation of Antiphon and Archeptolemus for treason, which led to their execution, a confiscation of their property, and the razing of their houses (τὼ οἰκία κατασκάψαι αὐτῶν, Craterus *FGrH* 342 F 5).

[7] Revermann (p. 229) also suggests, following Sommerstein 1982: 231, that the burning of the *phrontistērion* may allude to the destruction by fire of the Pythagorean 'meeting place' (συνέδριον) at Croton in the mid-fifth century, although the details of that historical incident are hazy (Burkert 1972: 115–17).

In *Clouds*, Strepsiades orders his slave Xanthias to destroy the roof of the *phrontistērion* (τὸ τέγος κατάσκαπτε, 1488) and to bring down the 'house' of the philosophers (οἰκία, 1489, 1497). This is the only instance of the verb *kataskaptein* in Aristophanes. It emphasises the finality of the destruction, as it does in Connor's historical examples as well as several instances from tragedy.[8] In the latter, the verb usually refers to the destruction of entire cities, but in one of the most violent instances, it is applied to a private household: Heracles, having returned to Thebes and learned of Lycus' attempt to murder his family, plans to raze Lycus' house (κατασκάψω δόμους, E. *HF* 566), then decapitate the tyrant and feed his head to the dogs.

The target of Strepsiades' violence is the *phrontistērion* and everything that it represents. This is no revenge, however, for the physical abuse that Strepsiades has suffered at the hands of his son. Rather, of the 'many reasons' (πολλῶν οὕνεκα, 1508) for the violent punishment, the most important (μάλιστα), Strepsiades says, is Socrates' dishonouring of the gods, that is, his assault on the traditional beliefs of the community.[9] This assertion accords with the historical instances of *kataskaphē*, where it is typically a punishment for sweeping, non-personal crimes. That being said, it is difficult to envisage Strepsiades advocating communal interests when, up to this point, his motivation has been personal (avoiding debts, 239–46). Strepsiades is by no means a blameless figure, for it is he who

[8] E.g. S. *Phil*. 998 (the destruction of Troy; cf. A. *Ag*. 525, E. *Hec*. 22, *Tro*. 1262–3, *IA* 64), *OC* 1318–19 (Capaneus boasts that he will burn down Thebes; cf. Akras son of Atalanta at E. *Phoen*. 1153–5). For discussion of the historical examples see also Steinbock 2013: 280–341.

[9] So too, in *Thesmophoriazusae*, must Euripides be punished 'for many reasons' (πολλῶν οὕνεκα, 454), including 'persuading men that the gods do not exist' (τοὺς ἄνδρας ἀναπέπεικεν οὐκ εἶναι θεούς, 451), although Kritylla's focus is very much on the personal consequences of this (*viz*. she now sells half as many wreaths as before, and thus struggles to provide for her family).

first ‘turned’ (στρέψας, 1455) to ‘bad deeds’ (πονηρὰ πράγματα), the chorus reminds us, and he suffers so that he might ‘learn to fear the gods’ (ὅπως ἂν εἰδῇ τοὺς θεοὺς δεδοικέναι, 1461). ‘You yourself are the cause of these things’, the choreuts chide (αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν σαυτῷ σὺ τούτων αἴτιος, 1454). Here, *Clouds* is most explicitly moralising, but contradictions arise when Strepsiades himself adopts this tone, saying that he is punishing Socrates and his students for their *hybris* against the gods (τοὺς θεοὺς ὑβρίζετε, 1506); such moral lessons ring hollow in the mouth of Strepsiades who had earlier enlisted the services of the *phrontistērion* for his own profit and indeed repudiated the traditional deities (425–6). Although Strepsiades does appear to repent at the last moment (ὡς ἐμαινόμην ἄρα / ὅτ᾽ ἐξέβαλλον τοὺς θεοὺς διὰ Σωκράτη, 1476–7), this is surely ironic and continues to lay the blame on Socrates. The extremity of the final punishing act, accentuated by use of the un-comic verb *kataskaptein*, underscores this irony (others must suffer for Strepsiades’ own misguided actions), yet also strains the boundaries of the comic mode since it implies total and permanent destruction.

Appendix V

Catalogue of violent acts in Aristophanes

References in square brackets indicate that an act has been threatened but was not carried out or staged.

Striking with the hand/fist:[1]

[*Ach*. 111–12]	Dicaeopolis threatens Pseudartabas with his fist (πρὸς τουτονί).
[*Ach*. 564–5]	Half the chorus move to strike (θένω) Dicaeopolis.
Eq. 257/66/73	Paphlagon is beaten (τύπτομαι) and struck in the belly (γαστρίζομαι).
Nub. 1321–6	Strepsiades emerges from the house being beaten (τύπτειν) by his son.
[*Vesp*. 253]	The chorus leader threatens to strike the young boy with his fist for wasting lamp oil, and perhaps does so.
Vesp. 1383–7	Philocleon punches, or moves to punch, Bdelycleon.
Vesp. 1435–6	Philocleon perhaps strikes the plaintiff (see Biles & Olson 2015 *ad loc*.).
Pax 256	Polemos strikes Kudoimos with his fist (οὑτοσί σοι κόνδυλος).
Av. 1017–19	Peisetairos hits Meton in accordance with the agreement to 'pound all braggarts' (ὁμοθυμαδὸν / σποδεῖν ἅπαντας τοὺς ἀλαζόνας δοκεῖ, 1015–16).[2]
Av. 1029–31	Peisetairos hits the Inspector (μαρτύρομαι τυπτόμενος).
Av. 1043–5	Peisetairos probably hits the Decree-Seller (see Dunbar 1995 *ad loc*.).

[1] Compare the list in Poe 2000: 271 n. 53.

[2] Dunbar 1995: 561 suggests that Meton is hit with one of his own κανόνες ('measuring rulers'), though one can only speculate.

Striking with the hand/fist (cont.):

Av. 1327–36	Peisetairos hurries his slave Manes by hitting him (τύπτων).
[*Lys*. 366]	The men move to 'pound' the women with their fists (σποδῶ τοῖς κονδύλοις).
[*Lys*. 503–4]	The Proboulos moves to hit Lysistrata with his hands.
[*Thesm*. 568]	Kinsman and Mika prepare to fight.
Ran. 610	Xanthias resists arrest by hitting (τύπτειν) the three slaves who are trying to detain him.
[*Plut*. 18–23]	Chremylus moves to hit Karion, who is protected because wearing a crown.
Plut. 935	The Sykophant receives blows as he is stripped.

Striking with objects/weapons:

Ach. 280–3	The chorus throws stones at Dicaeopolis.
Eq. 451–6	Paphlagon is 'vehemently' (ἀνδρικῶς / ἀνδρειότατα) beaten by the Sausage-Seller with 'guts and intestines' (i.e. sausages).
Nub. 1296–1301	Strepsiades pokes the second creditor in the backside with a prod (κέντρον).
[*Vesp*. 221–2]	Xanthias suggests throwing stones at the chorus.
Vesp. 398–9	Bdelycleon orders Xanthias to strike his father (who is attempting to escape the house via the window) with laurel branches (ταῖς εἰρεσιώναις).
[*Vesp*. 405–14]	The chorus advance and move to attack with their stingers (κέντρα); cf. 430–2.
Vesp. 458–60	Bdelycleon orders Xanthias to strike the chorus with a piece of wood (τῷ ξύλῳ) and another slave to continue 'smoking' them (ἐντύφειν).
Pax 1119–21	Trygaeus orders a slave to beat Hierocles with a piece of wood (τῷ ξύλῳ).
Av. 989–90	Peisetairos hits the Oracle-Monger with a book-roll (βυβλίον).
Av. 1461–4	Peisetairos uses a whip (μάστιξ) on the Sykophant; cf. *Thesm*. 1125.
Lys. 381	The women douse the men with water.
Ran. 632–73	Extended whipping/*basanos* episode.

Pushing/shoving/dragging:

Ach. 40–2	The arrival of the *prytaneis* is unruly, each man pushing for a place.
Ach. 824–5	Dicaeopolis orders his *agorānomoi* to eject the sykophant(s) who are harassing the Megarian.[3]
Lys. 456–61	A brawl erupts between the female semi-chorus and the Proboulos' archers. The latter are quickly defeated.
Thesm. 618	Kleisthenes drags Kinsman back toward him.
Eccl. 1037–1111	Epigenes is pushed and pulled in all directions by the older women.

Restraining:

Ach. 926–32	Nikarchos is bound (ἐνδήσας) and packed up 'like ceramic ware'. Cf. Eup. fr. 99.103–5 K–A, where a sykophant is arrested (συνδεῖς/ξυνέδησα), Plat. com. fr. 22 (λαβὼν οὖν τὸν σκύλακα τὸν τοῦ προξένου κἄπειτα δῆσον αὐτόν).
Vesp. 433–4	Bdelycleon orders three slaves to detain Philocleon (λάβεσθε τουτουὶ καὶ μὴ μεθῆσθε μηδενί; cf. 452 ἀλλ᾽ ἄνες με καὶ σὺ καὶ σύ). He is released at 522 (ἄφετέ νυν ἅπαντες αὐτόν).
Vesp. 1443–4	Bdelycleon picks up his father and carries him into the house.
Pax 1121–4	Trygaeus orders his slave to restrain Hierocles.
[*Av*. 1205]	Peisetairos gives the order to arrest Iris.
[*Lys*. 433–46]	The Proboulos gives repeated orders for his archers to arrest Lysistrata and her allies.
Thesm. 1001	Kinsman is escorted out of the stage building in/on a σανίς, a wooden plank for restricting the movement of prisoners. He is released at 1208.

[3] The text refers to sykophants in the plural (τοὺς συκοφάντας οὐ θύραζ᾽ ἐξείρξετε; 825), but only one speaks. Perhaps the plural shows that the order refers to all sykophants, and not just this particular occasion.

Restraining (cont.):

[*Ran*. 605–6]	The Servant orders Xanthias to be 'tied up' (ξυνδεῖτε).
Plut. 63	Chremylus and Karion grab Wealth (cf. 74 μέθεσθέ νύν μου).
Plut. 71	Wealth is lifted off the ground. He is released (μεθίεμεν, 75) when he agrees to identify himself.

Forced stripping/dressing:

Nub. 497–500	Strepsiades is required to remove his cloak before entering the *phrontistērion*. He reluctantly obliges.
Vesp. 1122–64	Bdelycleon dresses his father with much difficulty.
Pax 1122–4	Hierocles is stripped of his animal skins by Trygaeus' slave.
Av. 933–948	Peisetairos orders his slave to take off his leather vest (σπολάς) and coat (χιτών), and give these to the poor Poet.
Lys. 531–8	The Proboulos is given a veil (κάλυμμα) and a small basket (καλαθίσκον) containing wool-working paraphernalia to make him look like a woman, anticipating Lysistrata's extended simile of the city as a tangled and dirty lump of wool (Moulton 1981: 48–81, Henderson 1987a: 129–30, 141–2).
Lys. 599–613	The Proboulos is given two wreaths to make him look like a corpse.
Thesm. 213–15	Euripides convinces Kinsman to strip so that he can be shaved.
Thesm. 253–65	Kinsman is co-operative as he is dressed up like a woman.
Thesm. 636–8	The women strip Kinsman of his breastband.
Thesm. 1181–3	The dancing girl Elaphion is obliged to remove her *himation* and shoes to seduce the Scythian Archer. (Euripides instructs her to put the *himation* back on at 1190.)
Ran. 641	An underworld servant orders Dionysus and Xanthias to be stripped in preparation for the *basanos* episode.
Plut. 926–32	Karion strips the Sykophant of his *himation*.
Plut. 935–6	Karion forces the Sykophant to wear a threadbare cloak (τριβώνιον) and nails an old pair of shoes to his forehead (942–3).

Burning:

Nub. 1504–9	Strepsiades orders his slave Xanthias to destroy the roof of the *phrontistērion* with a mattock (1485–9). Strepsiades also takes the/a mattock to the roof (1500–01) and sets fire to the building with a torch (1494).
[*Lys*. 381]	The men move to burn the women's hair (but are doused with water before they are able to).
Lys. 1219–24	Anonymous slaves are chased off the stage with torches to please the audience.
Thesm. 236–46	Euripides' Kinsman painfully has his pubic hairs singed. He jokingly calls for water (ὕδωρ ὕδωρ ὦ γείτονες, 241), but is left with a burnt backside (αἰθὸς γεγένημαι πάντα τὰ περὶ τὴν τράμιν, 246).

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