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Comic Violence in Aristophanes

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Everybody knows that violence is funny – that is, if it happens to someone else, if it does not really hurt, and if it is part of a show. Violence has been a characteristic of comic acting throughout the ages, especially in the type of comic show nowadays called farce.[1] Farcical scenes containing violence such as hitting, beating, kicking, pushing and pulling were apparently common in the Athenian Old Comedy, too, although Aristophanes himself sometimes takes a critical attitude towards such vulgar slapstick[2] and although – perhaps partly following his lead, partly because

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[1] Concerning the use and effect of violence in farce, see A. Bermel, Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen, New York 1962, 22ff., E. Bentley, The Life of the Drama, London 1965, 219ff.

[2] Nub. 537ff., Pax 739ff. Farcical elements in Aristophanes have been studied recently by C.T. Murphy, Popular Comedy in Aristophanes, AJPh 93 (1972) 169-89, D.M. MacDowell, Clowning and Slapstick in Aristophanes, in Themes in Drama Vol. 10: Farce, Cambridge 1988, 1-13, and G. Dobrov, The Dawn of Farce: Aristophanes, ibid. 15-31.

of our own different cultural environment – it has often been difficult for modern commentators to admit domiciliary rights to this kind of humour in his creation.[3]

We hope in this paper to elucidate the comic violence in Aristophanes mainly from three points of view: how much violence was acted out on the comic stage, what was the audience's reaction to it, and how these scenes of violence were integrated into the comedy in question. As a result we also hope to make clearer the differences in the use of violence on the comic and the tragic stage.

The problems of staging and performing of Greek drama have been much discussed lately.[4] Mostly the discussion has been centred on the interpretation of Greek tragedy. N.J. Lowe has recently called attention to the great differences between the stagecraft of tragedy and comedy.[5] It seems that most scholars agree at least in accepting that the Old Comedy allowed all kinds of gesture and movement to the actor,[6] and that these are often reflected in the text, not only by actors describing what they are doing – this does not unequivocally mean that they really do it, see below p. 58 – but by the reactions of the supporting actor, who often uses such expressions typical of comedy as οὗτος, τί ποιεῖς; or μαρτύρομαι or

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[3] Murphy (see n. 2) speaks of popular entertainments "from which he (sc. Aristophanes) borrowed material to season, so to speak, his literary comedies and make them more acceptable to the 'groundlings' in his audience" and continues: "The possibility, however, cannot be ruled out that he used this type of material because he himself enjoyed it and thought it funny" (169). Dobrov (see n. 2) feels there is a clash between "the rebellious Dionysian *pharmakos* of farce" (29) and *logos*, the synthetic myth of comedy, which is the creative product of an individual poet (27ff.). Even MacDowell (see n. 2), who is positive about the power of such scenes to amuse an audience, admits that these scenes when read or discussed in a lecture-room sometimes seem unfunny or even coarse (7ff.).

[4] See e.g. D. Wiles, Reading Greek Performance, G&R 34 (1987) 136-51, who, starting from the views proposed by O. Taplin, The Stagecraft of Aeschylus, Oxford 1977, and S. Goldhill, Reading Greek Tragedy, Cambridge 1986, tries to find a way which "will allow new approaches to language and new approaches to stagecraft to converge" (137), and the reply by S. Goldhill, Reading Performance Criticism, G&R 36 (1989) 172-82. See also M. Kaimio, Physical Contact in Greek Tragedy: A Study of Stage Conventions, Helsinki 1988, 5-11 with references to more literature.

[5] N.J. Lowe, Greek Stagecraft and Aristophanes, in Themes in Drama Vol. 10 (see n. 2), 33-52. See also O. Taplin, Fifth-century Tragedy and Comedy: A Syncrisis, JHS 106 (1986) 163-74.

[6] See A.W. Pickard-Cambridge, The Dramatic Festivals of Athens, 2nd ed. Oxford 1968, 176.

abundant deictic expressions, as in Ach. 111 ἄγε δὴ σὺ φράσον ἐμοὶ σαφῶς πρὸς τουτονί.[7] When discussing the use of violence in Aristophanes we have tried to establish in each case as far as possible what is actually happening on the stage, and our main concern is such scenes where real physical violence takes place. These are generally held to be very frequent in Aristophanes and one has the impression that that is why they have not received the attention they deserve.[8]

A generally held view is also that the audience's reaction to such farcical violence has been more or less the same throughout the centuries[9] – as incidentally the typical gags of comic violence seem to be.[10] One must, however, take into account that although the natural reaction to laugh at seeing somebody – preferable someone superior to oneself – suffering violence and humiliation is probably universal in

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[7] The general agreement in the interpretation of such passages is apparent in the modern commentaries and translations of Aristophanes. Naturally, in more complicated cases there may be different interpretations, but the principle that the words reflect gestures actually seen on stage is clear. This attitude is also seen in many remarks of the scholia bearing on gestures on stage; sometimes such remarks are apparently correct (e.g. schol. vet. Ach. 926a), sometimes not (e.g. schol. vet. Tr. Ach. 111, vet. Equ. 453a).

[8] "Beating scenes in Aristophanes (especially in driving off 'intruders' or pests) are so frequent that they need no listing" (Murphy 172), "The commonest and most basic type of clowning in Aristophanes is hitting" (MacDowell 7), "Beating scenes are almost too numerous in Aristophanes to cite" (Dobrov 22; see n.2). It is to be noted, however, that the two examples which Dobrov cites here are both from scenes where beating is *not* seen on stage. In the beginning of Equ., the slaves complain that they *have been beaten* by their master, and in the lines Equ. 364-70 the Sausage-seller and the Paphlagonian are hideously threatening each other, but certainly not doing exactly what they say (e.g. making a thief's purse from the other's skin), see below p. 58.

[9] Cf. e.g. MacDowell (see n. 2) 12: "In this matter I see no reason to suppose that there was any great difference between an ancient audience and a modern one, and I believe that we can attempt to answer the question by observation of modern audiences, including ourselves when we go to see a farce."

[10] It is amusing to note many parallel scenes – *mutatis mutandis* – in e.g. Aristophanes and Charlie Chaplin's films. In addition to the common beating and custard-pie scenes (as Ar. Lys. 381ff.) cf. e.g. the barbering scenes in Ar. Thesm. 215ff. and Chaplin's *Sunnyside* (1919; this scene, with Albert Austin as the man shaved, was not included in the final version) and *The Great Dictator* (1940), and the final scene with a house falling to pieces on somebody's head in Ar. Nub. 1485ff. and Chaplin's *Behind the Screen* (1916).

human beings,[11] there are cultural features which may have conditioned the Athenian audience to react in different ways from our own. Two questions are briefly taken up here: the possible influence of comedy's ritual prehistory, and the Athenians' way of confronting and controlling violence in their society.

It has been customary from Aristotle (Poet. 1449a10-13) onwards to link the development of Attic comedy with certain ritual or folklore origins. In our century, the most influential proponents of this view have come from the so-called Cambridge school of anthropologists. Their views and the criticism which they have received have recently been discussed in an illuminating essay by Rainer Friedrich.[12] Certainly there existed in several parts of the Greek world many folk traditions, most of them probably originally connected with ritual, which included verbal or physical violence,[13] and they may have been the germs of – or parallels of – dramatic comic performances. However, with regard to the reactions of Aristophanes' audience, the main point is whether these ritual origins or parallels were in any sense relevant to them. Contests of comedy had, after all, been organized at the Dionysia from 486 BC, at the Lenaia from about 442, and plays had probably been performed at private cost earlier than that.[14] There was accordingly a tradition of about sixty years of organized comic performances before Aristophanes began to write comedies, and probably the forms and conventions created during that time counted for more in the forming of the audience's expectations than any remote ritual origins.[15]

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[11] This is the basic assumption in many theories of humour; see V. Raskin, Semantic Mechanisms of Humor, Dordrecht, Boston and Lancaster 1985, 21f., 36f. Cf. Bentley 229, MacDowell 7ff.

[12] R. Friedrich, Drama and Ritual, in Themes in Drama Vol. 5: Drama and Religion, Cambridge 1983, 159-223. See especially F. Cornford, The Origins of Attic Comedy, London 1914, and the literature given by Friedrich 212 n. 2.

[13] See F.R. Adrados, Festival, Comedy and Tragedy: The Greek Origins of Theatre, Leiden 1975 (original edition in Spanish 1972), 68ff., 278ff., K. Reckford, Aristophanes' Old-and-New Comedy Vol. 1, Chapel Hill and London 1987, 441ff.

[14] See Pickard-Cambridge (see n. 6) 82.

[15] Cf. the discussion of Aristophanic satire by S. Halliwell in The Yearbook of English Studies Vol. 14: Satire Special Number (1984) 6-20, esp. 7f.

On the other hand, in some cases the violent scenes of Aristophanes have a direct reference to contemporary Athenian ritual practices. Vulgar, obscene and insulting speech formed a part of the traditional elements in several Athenian festivals, especially in those connected with Dionysus and Demeter.[16] In Thesmophoria, the women may have hit each other with knotted whips.[17] During Thargelia, two φάρμακοι were beaten with branches of fig and squill and driven out of the city.[18] But even existing rituals could have lost their significance for the common Athenian – Aristophanes, for instance, makes fun of the odd ritual customs of Dipolieia in Nub. 984f. In any case, the carnival spirit of the Dionysiac festival gave occasion to licens mockery, obscenity and violence in comedy.[19]

To understand the nature of violence in Aristophanes and the reaction of his Athenian audience to the comic scenes involving violence, it is necessary to examine the social and legal aspects of violence in the society of classical Athens. This enables us to avoid, at least to a certain extent, anachronistic conclusions made on the basis of our own, potentially different view of violence. The legal aspects of violence are often used by Aristophanes to characterize violent scenes and the persons involved in them. One has only to consider the many passages where a person under threat of violence asks the bystanders to bear witness to the insolence in view of later evidence in court.[20] The main difference between Athens and our modern society in attitudes towards violence lies in the nature and extent of acceptable self-help. In Athenian society, the individual had to rely on self-help and the forces he could muster himself in order to execute many acts which are now done for him by the state.[21] Self-defence was given ample scope in Athenian

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[16] This is so in Anthesteria, Thesmophoria, Haloa, the Eleusinian Mysteries, see H.W. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, 86, 98, 109, W. Burkert, Greek Religion, Cambridge, Mass. 1985 (original edition in German 1977), 238, 244f., 287.

[17] See Hesych. s.v. μόροττον.

[18] See L. Deubner, Attische Feste, Berlin 1932, 179ff., Parke (see n. 16) 146f., Burkert (see n. 16) 82ff.

[19] Cf. K.J. Dover, Aristophanic Comedy, 31ff., Halliwell (see n. 15) 8, 15f.

[20] E.g. Nub. 1297, Vesp. 1436, Av. 1031, 1047f., Ran.525ff.; other references to legal processes e.g. in Ach. 566ff., Equ. 255ff., Nub. 1322f., Vesp. 42ff.

[21] See A. Lintott, Violence, Civil Strife and Evolution in the Classical City 750-330 BC, London and Canberra 1982, 26.

law, which placed the responsibility on the one who had started the violence.[22] This way of thinking about self-help might justify even such scenes of comic violence which a modern observer would consider at least morally suspect, if not altogether criminal.

In provisions against criminal violence Athenian law and custom emphasized different factors from modern legal thought and social practice. An assault case, δίκη αἰκείας, consisted principally of finding out who was the first to hit rather than of estimating what damage was done in the assault.[23] Occasionally what we would consider an excusable misdeed or harmless slapping ended up in court with severe penalties inflicted for the deed. This is in part explained by the absence of many extenuating circumstances which are nowadays taken into account, such as anger or even insanity.[24] The intention to commit violence was also of significance. This could be established on the basis of e.g. known enmity between the parties concerned and could lead to an indictment for attempted murder even if the injuries suffered were not very serious.[25]

Some forms of violence were held to concern the community as a whole although violence was done to a private person. Ἀγραφή procedure could be invoked against ὕβρις and κάκωσις. Here any Athenian was allowed to bring a charge against the suspect and refer the matter to the court of θεσμοθέται. The public character of these charges is also indicated by the fact that the indemnities were payable to the state whereas in δίκη αἰκείας it was the plaintiff who was compensated. The nature of ὕβρις has been much discussed, but its socially most important feature seems

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[22] This is illustrated e.g. by Lys. 3, especially 3,39, where it is argued that the plaintiff did not sue at once, but only after four years, because he had himself started using violence. In fact, Lysias' speech tries to show that the defendant resorted to violence only to protect his friend whom Simon tried to drag away. Cf. Dem. 23,50.

[23] On αἰκεία see Lintott (see n. 21) 174, J.H. Lipsius, Das attische Recht und Rechtsverfahren, Leipzig 1905, 645.

[24] Cf. K.J. Dover, Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle, Oxford 1974, 147f. Cf. Lys. 10,30, where verbal slander is the issue.

[25] On this charge, called τραῦμα ἐκ προνοίας, see Lysias' speech on the subject (4) and Aristot. Ath.Pol. 57,3; cf. Pl. Leg. 9.877a-b, L. Gernet, Recherches sur le développement de la pensée juridique et morale en Grèce, Paris 1917, 359.

to be that it humiliates and dishonours its object.[26] This might be understood as a threat to the social order and public morality of the city – if a citizen's social standing and reputation were challenged, the established structures of the community might eventually be in danger. A charge of κάκωσις could be occasioned by abuse of parents by their children or protégés by their guardians, and the morally dubious character of the offence is clear from its definition.[27] A person guilty of κάκωσις undermined the basis of some of the most important social relationships and deserved to be punished accordingly.

The class-consciousness of the Athenian society is reflected also in the legal treatment of violence. Equality before the law existed only between citizens; metics and slaves were in a far weaker position in conflicts with a citizen, and slaves were subjected to institutionalized forms of violence which citizens were exempted from. These included e.g. torture in court and violent coercion by the the slave's master.[28]

The scenes in Aristophanes where violence occurs are rather heterogeneous. There appear, however, clear types of scenes, which can be roughly divided into two groups: scenes which belong organically to certain formal parts of comedy, and those which can appear in different parts of the play where the common factor lies more in the type of person subjected to violence. The first group comprises scenes of violence in the parodos and agon as well as the expulsion episodes in the second part of the comedy after the parabasis; in the second group one can include the maltreatment of officials and other authorities, beatings of slaves and scenes of violence parodying tragedy. We shall discuss the types of scene in this order.

In four of the extant plays of Aristophanes, namely in Ach., Equ., Vesp. and Av., there is a battle scene in the parodos in which a conflict is built up between an actor/actors and the chorus or between two actors, one of whom the chorus supports. In the battle scene the chorus attacks its opponent. The chorus is thus an active participant in the action, its purpose being to punish an actor for a deed already

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[26] From the relevant literature may be mentioned D.M. MacDowell, *Hybris* in Athens, G&R 23 (1976) 14-31, N.R.E. Fisher, *Hybris* and Dishonour i-ii, G&R 23 (1976) 177-93 and G&R 26 (1979) 32-47. See also Dover (see n. 24) 54, 147.

[27] Different types of κάκωσις are listed by Aristotle in Ath.Pol. 56,6.

[28] See Lipsius (see n. 23) 888ff., D.M. MacDowell, The Law in Classical Athens, London 1978, 245ff.

done or to prevent an actor from doing something that is not to its liking. As soon as the actor manages to persuade the chorus to listen to his arguments, the chorus loses the initiative in the situation and is put into the background for the rest of the play.[29] The pursuing of the hero may have its origins in the ritual hunting of a fleeing victim or in expelling a scapegoat, but the type of scene has obviously long before Aristophanes found its stylized form in the comic tradition of a heated parodos followed by a formal speaking contest, the agon.[30] This scheme is treated in a variety of ways by Aristophanes, both with regard to the degree and the type of violence used.

In Ach., the chorus enters the empty stage on its own initiative in pursuit of its opponent (204). The old men are in a very ferocious mood, but doomed to failure, as is implied by their own complaints of their lost youth and vigour.[31] The pursuit is interrupted by a surprise element as the chorus steps aside into "hiding" at 239f., when Dicaeopolis appears with his small cortège of Rural Dionysia. After this interlude, the chorus' sudden renewed attack must come as an expected, but yet pleasurably surprising effect for the audience. The chorus uses second person imperatives βάλλε, παῖε (281f.), apparently common in military attacks.[32] It is impossible to know for sure whether the chorus actually stoned Dicaeopolis on the stage, but he certainly acts as if it did, as he complains of the damage caused to his pot (284), which he may have used to protect himself, thus adding a comic touch to this threatening situation. The threats become more urgent (319f., 325) until Dicaeopolis takes refuge in the counter-attack with the parody of the altar scene from Euripides' Telephus (see below p. 68). After that, the chorus surrenders and lays down its arms, i.e. the stones, dancing to a little song in a way that humorously combines quick movements and the rolling of stones (344ff.).

In the parodos of Equ. one of the actors calls the chorus to help, and it is immediately involved in a very lively action. There seems to be a sudden general

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[29] Cf. B. Zimmermann, The Parodoi of Aristophanic Comedy, SIFC ser. 3: 2 (1984) 15.

[30] Cf. Reckford (see n. 30) 239f., 489ff.

[31] See M. Silk, Pathos in Aristophanes, BICS 34 (1987) 78-111 for the frequent pathetic descriptions of old men; on Ach., p. 89f.

[32] Cf. Xen. Anab. 5, 7, 21 and 28. On the use of such imperatives in Greek drama, see M. Kaimio, The Chorus of Greek Drama within the Light of the Person and Number Used, Helsinki 1970, 129ff.

confused chase going on on the stage. The Paphlagonian appears at the door and at first intimidates the Sausage-seller into flight, which, however, is reversed when first the slave, then the chorus incite the latter to attack.[33] The Paphlagonian may have run before his pursuers to the outer edge of the orchestra, as he complains to the audience that he is being hit by conspirators (255ff.).[34] The conflict seems, however, to remain mostly on the verbal level until at ll. 271ff. there may be some comic scuffle, since the speaker[35] threatens to strike the Paphlagonian if he tries to break through on one side, and to put his leg in the way if he tries the other side, and the Paphlagonian shouts (273) ὦ πόλις καὶ δῆμ', ὑφ' οἵων θηρίων γαστρίζομαι. However, the physical encounter is quickly turned into a shouting and insulting contest between the Paphlagonian and the Sausage-seller (284ff.), and the chorus' part in the conflict is over.

In Vesp., the chorus has no hostile intentions when it enters, but reveals its waspish nature only when appealed to by Philocleon (400ff.) and provoked to anger by the sight of Bdelycleon and his slaves keeping Philocleon tightly in their grip (451ff.). Much humour is derived in this scene from the verbal play of blending together military commands and expressions referring to real wasps (422ff., 430ff.) and also from the costumes of wasps contrasting with the masks of old men. The chorus seems to get the upper hand with its threats, as Bdelycleon calls some more slaves to hold Philocleon and retires into his house – the audience cannot know what he is up to. When he emerges again armed with a stick and a smoking-pot (456),[36] he makes a quick and effective attack with his slaves, and the chorus is routed (460).

In Av. the chorus enters the stage (294ff.) without knowing what is going on, only gradually finds out, and then proceeds to act according to its own natural impulses. The battle array, military language and mixing of human and animal features, which Aristophanes had already made use of in Vesp., is here built up to be the main source of comic effect both on the verbal level and in the movements

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[33] The imperatives of the chorus in 247 seem to be ambiguous, since they are typical attack cries (see n. 32), but in 251f. they are clearly addressed to the Sausage-seller.

[34] Cf. C.W. Dearden, The Stage of Aristophanes, London 1976, 149, W. Kraus, Aristophanes politische Komödien, Wien 1985, 130.

[35] The lines 271-2 are given to the chorus in the MSS., to the Sausage-Seller by Willems.

[36] Columella, De re rust. 9, 15, 5-6 describes a smoking-pot used against bees; cf. A. Sommerstein in his commentary on Wasps (Warminster 1983) ad loc.

(343ff., 352f., 364f.). On the side of the humans, the use of domestic utensils for military purposes, already seen in passing in Ach., is similarly comically elaborated (357ff.). In the midst of these amusing battle arrangements, the battle itself is stopped before it has really begun. As soon as the birds start to attack, the Hoopoe intervenes (366) and gradually pacifies the birds, getting both sides to put down their arms, again with much verbal humour derived from the oddity of their weapons (386ff., 400ff.).

We can see how Aristophanes in these parodos scenes varies the traditional elements of pursuit and violence and reduces the actual battle mainly to quick movements and threatenings full of verbal humour. The violence of the chorus does not solve the conflict, but the solution depends on the rhetoric of the hero following these battle scenes. The purpose of the chorus' violence is, in view of the structure of the scene, to force the hero to defend his stand, and in view of the comic effect, to give extra flavour to the scene.

Violence between semichoruses is presented in two of the plays. In Ach. the first semichorus, outraged by Dicaeopolis' speech, threatens him and tries to attack him, but is stopped by the second semichorus (563f.). The words ἀρθήσει (565) and ἔχομαι μέσος (571) are wrestling terms and may indicate real physical contact imitating wrestling between the members of the semichoruses (or their leaders), although the latter idiom is often used metaphorically, too.[37] The first semichorus' reaction – calling General Lamachus for help – shows in any case that they consider themselves to be in danger of violence. With this appeal, the entrance of Lamachus is integrated into the plot.

In Lys. the male and female semichoruses play a more important role, because their confrontations offer a handy way to dramatize the conflict between the sexes, a central feature of this play which is realized both in the orchestra, in the parts of the chorus, and on the stage proper between the actors. The first conflict flares up in the parodos and thus corresponds to the scenes discussed above. The men are presented as acting under false assumptions and as inadequately prepared, being easily surprised and humiliated by the righteous and strategically superior women.[38]

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[37] E.g. in Nub. 1047.

[38] See the analysis of this parodos in the commentary of J. Henderson, Aristophanes' Lysistrata, Oxford 1987, 98f. at ll. 254-386.

The semichoruses exchange insults and threats, and their movements probably included many threatening gestures, which were sometimes emphasized by the use of the objects brought onto the stage, such as wood (357) and torches (376). This threatening scene consists of two phases: at first, the choruses use very violent language, but their bark is worse than their bite (360ff.); then, from 370 onwards, where the women again raise their pitchers from the ground, the words become full of real intention. The violent action culminates in 381ff., where the men attempt to singe the hair of the women with their torches and the women answer by dousing the men with the water contained in their pitchers.[39] Aristophanes prepares this moment with a series of hints and jokes (375, 377, 378), so that the audience waits in delighted suspense whether the women really will do what they threaten. And they do. The lines give a clear picture of what happens on stage: σὸν ἔργον, ὤχελῷε (381) and ἄρδω σ' (384) describe the dousing, and the victims react with exclamations like οἴμοι τάλας (382) and οὐ παύσει; (383). Verbal mockery also plays a part in the humiliation. The women show ironic concern: μῶν θέρμον ἦν; (382) and hint that the old men are looking withered: ὅπως ἀμβλαστάνῃς (384).

The conflict of men and women is continued in the parabasis, which is nearly an agon itself. Each epirrhematic part of the parabasis ends with a threat (634f., 656f., 680f., 704f.). The semichoruses use in turn threatening gestures but hardly come to grips with each other – probably the men's threat of putting the women's necks through a hole in a plank is, in spite of the deictic τουτονὶ τὸν αὐχένα (681), as imaginary as the women's more ferocious countermove (704f.). A very similar sequence of mutual threats is found in the choral interlude 781ff., which is a kind of miniature second parabasis.[40] Here slapstick is combined with bawdry when the men perform a kick (799), which lifts their garments and reveals their pubic hair to the women (800), who in turn ask if they should kick the men (823). The men remind them of what they might expose (824). Both assert the excellent condition of their genitals as a sign of valour (801ff.) and youthfulness (825ff.). In

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[39] Henderson (see n. 38) suggests that for practical reasons the pitchers probably contained just enough water to douse the men, but were not completely filled (107 at ll. 319-49, 116 at l. 381). The dousing may be an old slapstick trick, as he says, but Pax 969-72 is not really a parallel to this hilarious piece of custard-pie comedy, since there the audience is sprinkled with lustral water, but probably not made soaking wet, which certainly is the effect aimed at here, however much real water might be used in the process.

[40] Henderson (see n. 38) 189 at ll. 781-828.

the reconciliation scene these violent encounters are balanced by more tender physical contact, when the women put the cloaks back on the men's shoulders (1021; both parties had stripped for the battle, cf. 615, 637, 662), pretend to extract a gnat from their eyes (1030f.), wipe away their tears and kiss them (1035f.) in spite of their mild protests. Thus the physical encounters starting with violence form a coherent, logical and in its strict parallelism a very formally organized whole throughout this drama and at the same time reflect the similar encounters going on between the actors (see below pp. 62, 65).

As we remarked above, the violent attack of the chorus in the parodos generally soon gives way to a formal agon or speech by the actor, in which the skills of persuasion are what counts. However heated the argument in a comic agon is, we rarely meet physical violence there. An exception is the agon between the Sausage-seller and the Paphlagonian in Equ. This is in line with the systematic use of invective attacks and threatenings with violence seen in this comedy.[41] The common opinion of Aristophanes' motives in writing Equ. in 424 BC is that it is a protracted personal attack upon the Athenian demagogue Cleon and his policies, and this makes it rather a serious comedy.[42] There is, however, another view, which links Equ. not with Aristophanes' personal animosity but with the old iambic tradition and its conventions.[43] In this tradition, invective was clearly regarded as the outstanding feature of the genre,[44] which also contained obscenities and picaresque tales and had in Athens clear connections with the cults of Dionysos and Demeter.[45] It is clear that most of the hair-raising threats uttered throughout the play belong to this tradition and do not presuppose the realisation of the words on stage any more than e.g. Hipponax's violent utterances, which are very similar.[46] Of course, as Equ. is a dramatic work, such words were probably accompanied with

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[41] On the vindictive violence of Equ. see e.g. C.H. Whitman, Aristophanes and the Comic Hero, Cambridge 1964, 80f.

[42] See e.g. R.G. Ussher, Aristophanes, Oxford 1979, 15.

[43] See e.g. R.M. Rosen, Old Comedy and Iambographic Tradition, Atlanta 1988, 2f., 59ff.

[44] M.L. West, Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus, Berlin 1974, 22.

[45] See Rosen (see n. 43) 3ff., West (see n. 44) 32ff., Reckford (see n. 13) 461ff., and above p. 51.

[46] For parallel threats of physical violence in Hipponax, see Rosen (see n. 43) 70.

fierce gesturing. However, in this play the agon exceptionally culminates in physical, not merely verbal violence. The insults and threats of the opponents are twice raised to the pitch of a quickened altercation (284ff., 367ff.) and at the end of the agon this happens for the third time (443ff.). At the point when this dialogue becomes even more hectic with the use of *antilabai* (450), the First Slave tells the Sausage-seller to hit the Paphlagonian (451) and the latter reacts by wailing ἰοὺ ἰού, τύπτουσί μ' οἱ ξυνωμόται (451f.). Then the Sausage-seller is again told to beat, punch and punish him with guts and colons (453ff.), which he apparently has with him as props suitable to his métier. It should be noted that the coarse physical fight which apparently takes place on the stage is accompanied with a subtle if not refined verbal play between κόλον and κολάζω. Violent action is thus the decisive factor in bringing victory to the Sausage-seller in this agon, and this makes the chorus' congratulations sound somewhat ironic: (459) ὡς εὖ τὸν ἄνδρα ποικίλως τ' ἐπῆλθες ἐν λόγοισιν.

After the parabasis, a type of short scene very commonly used by Aristophanes is the expulsion of a disturbing or irritating person by the hero. The hero has acquired his fantastic goal, and now the *alazones* appear.[47] Very often they are expelled from the stage by the use of violence.

The persons thus rejected are types which the audience probably liked to see humiliated. Sycophants are favourite victims.[48] They were generally disliked because of their way of earning a living at the cost of their fellow-men, and by showing them treated violently and by condemning the institution of sycophancy Aristophanes was likely to have the sympathies of his audience on his side. Another common type of victim is a person who in real life has authority over the common man – either because of his official position, his intellectual ability or religious sanction.[49] Here the inverted world of the carnival licence of comedy is clearly

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[47] See K. McLeish, The Theatre of Aristophanes, London 1980, 75.

[48] Ach. 824ff., 925ff., Av. 1464ff. Cf. also the treatment of a sycophant by Aristides in Eupolis' Demoi (PCG frg. 99, 102ff.).

[49] E.g. the inspector Av. 1010ff., the dealer of decrees Av. 1035, the creditors Nub. 1214ff., the wronged persons Vesp. 1388ff.; the astronomer Meton Av. 992ff., the poet Cinesias Av. 1373ff.; the priest Hierocles Pax 1052ff., the soothsayer Av. 959ff., the goddess Iris Av. 1202ff.

seen. But it is not a mere Punch and Judy show. Such scenes represent the culmination of deep conflicts in attitudes and interests presented in the first part of the comedy, as in Ach. Dicaeopolis' frustration with the war politics with all its unpleasant consequences or in Av. Pisthetairos' disgust at the Athenian society.

It is to be noted that many of these insulted persons really do have good legal claims on the hero, such as the creditors of Strepsiades in Nub. 1214ff. and the persons wronged by Philocleon in Vesp. 1388ff., and often when they are treated violently by the hero, they make a quite legal claim concerning their bad treatment, like the inspector in Av. 1031 μαρτύρομαι τυπτόμενος ὢν ἐπίσκοπος. In the world of comedy, however, such legal claims count for nothing, and the light-hearted violence of the hero triumphs.

The violent ending of many of these scenes is clearly seen in the text. Often the hero gives straightforward orders to his assistants, as in Ach. 926 ξυλλάμβαν' αὐτοῦ τὸ στόμα or Pax 1119 ὦ παῖε παῖε τὸν Βάκιν. The reactions of the victim often show that violence has been done to him – he expresses his disagreement e.g. with the stereotypic μαρτύρομαι or with cries of pain.[50] Strong imperative expressions, like Nub. 1299 ὕπαγε or Av. 1258 οὐκ ἀποσοβήσεις; οὐ ταχέως; εὐράξ, πατάξ, are often used by the hero in the end.

As the pattern of these scenes is necessarily very similar, Aristophanes takes every opportunity to offer variation. Thus the audience has the double pleasure of the expectation of a sure climax and surprise in the manner of presentation. This is especially important in Av., where there are three series of expulsion scenes.[51] From our point of view, we can note that Aristophanes sometimes heightens the humorous effect of violence with the use of unusual weapons instead of the habitual sticks, thus creating visual humour relevant to the situation. E.g. in Av. 1397ff. Pisthetairos drives Cinesias off, hustling him with a pair of wings, wings being just what Cinesias had come to ask in order to sing like a nightingale and fly after the airy dithyrambs, and in Ach. 824ff. Dicaeopolis turns the sycophant out with the help of his ἀγορανόμοι, real leather strips which were brought on stage as props to be ready in case the peace of the market should be disturbed (723ff.). Often

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[50] Nub. 1297, Vesp. 1436, Pax 1119, Av. 990, 1019, 1031, 1466.

[51] See T. Gelzer, Some Aspects of Aristophanes' Dramatic Art in the *Birds*, BICS 23 (1976) 9ff., who analyses the many types of variation used by Aristophanes including the methods used by the hero, the types of the intruders, the style and diction, the length and grouping of the scenes, the tempo of the whole series.

Aristophanes carefully prepares the joke of the expulsion. In Av. 981 Pisthetairos answers to the Oraclemonger by inventing an oracle of his own, where a beating is promised to any ἀλαζών (985), and proceeds to hustle him with a papyrus roll in imitation of his own words λαβὲ τὸ βίβλιον (986, 989) – the Oraclemonger's wails (990) show that he is subjected to unpleasant measures. In the following scene, Meton is given the "friendly" advice that there is much trouble afoot in the city (1010ff.) as well as the danger of getting beaten (1014). He begins his retreat, but too late – he gets beaten: 1017 νὴ Δί', ὡς οὐκ οἶδ' ἂν εἰ φθαίης ἄν· ἐπίκεινται γὰρ ἐγγὺς αὐταί. – οἴμοι κακοδαίμων. – οὐκ ἔλεγον ἐγὼ πάλαι; Really elaborate jokes in connection with violence are those used by the drunken Philocleon. He makes fun of the lessons of civilized conversation given to him by his son (Vesp. 1186ff., 1190ff., 1258ff.) and tells the story of the victorious old pancratiast while punching his son to the ground (1381ff.),[52] and a Sybaritan story of the breaking of a vase (1436ff.) when smashing the man calling him to court (note the victim's reaction 1436 ταῦτ' ἐγὼ μαρτύρομαι).

The expulsion of the sycophant is made a special show in Ach. 927ff.[53] In a way typical of Aristophanes, metaphor is given a visual form on stage, when Nicarchus, that κρατὴρ κακῶν, τριπτὴρ δικῶν (937), is wrapped up as a vase.[54] The moment of violence is carefully prepared by hinting at what will happen to him already before he comes to stage (904f.). At 925, the pace of stage action quickens. Dicaeopolis is outraged by Nicarchus' insolence, Nicarchus calls witnesses, and next Dicaeopolis orders somebody – probably his slave – to gag him. During the little song that follows, the sycophant is bound with some padding like a fragile earthenware vase, and many verbal and practical jokes are made from this metaphor, apparently including some rough knocking, which causes him to mumble through his gag like a broken vase when sounded (932ff.). At the corresponding lines of the antistrophe, the wrapped sycophant is thrown upside down (943ff.) and finally loaded on the Theban slave's back (954).

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[52] It seems plausible that he attacks Bdelycleon at 1385 ὁ πρεσβύτερος κατέβαλε τὸν νεώτερον, as Bdelycleon at 1387 admits that he had learned the lesson thoroughly.

[53] Cf. the dressing up of the sycophant in Pl. 926ff., see p. 65.

[54] See J. Taillardat, Les images d'Aristophane, Paris 1962, 412f., P. Thiercy, Aristophane: Fiction et dramaturgie, Paris 1986, 104ff.

We now turn to those instances of violence which do not have such a clear connection with certain traditional parts of the comedy, but which can occur in different phases of the dramatic structure. A type of scene related to the expulsion scenes of intruders is such where authorities, especially the representatives of legal force, are treated badly. These are not, however, limited to the expulsion episodes, but may occur in any part of the comedy.

In Athens, the executive police force was in the hands of Scythian archers, who were slaves owned by the state and directed by public officials. They were a favourite target of comedy, both because they represented a legal violence which was not very well accepted by the citizens, and because they were barbarians.[55] They were normally used as mute extras. They appear in Ach. 54 at the order of the herald to drag off Amphitheos from the speaker's platform. Amphitheos cries for help – not from fellow-citizens, but from fellow-gods – and Dicaeopolis blames the *prytaneis* for wronging the assembly. The archers are here seen doing their well-known duty,[56] and it is difficult to say if the audience saw anything amusing in that; the funniness of the scene may have lain mainly in the divinity of Amphitheos, his pedigree and divine helpers.

In the other archer scenes of Aristophanes, the situation is different. There they are presented as funny because they fail to do their duty. In Lys. 387ff. the *Proboulos* comes with the archers to arrest Lysistrata, and when he tells the four archers one by one to seize her, each is put to flight by a woman appearing to support the attacked one, as is made clear by the impatient orders of the *Proboulos* (437, 441, 445, 449). The climax comes when he orders the full troop to charge at the same time[57] and to tie the women (451f., 455), and Lysistrata summons a host of market women from the Acropolis to her aid. Together they easily rout the archers – the battle is over in three lines (459-61). The scene is made funny by the rapid succession of beaten archers and threatening women and by the final tumult, which, though short, was probably quite a violent encounter.

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[55] See E.M. Hall, The Archer Scene in Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazusae, Philol. 133 (1989) 47.

[56] Which is referred to by Aristophanes also in Eccl. 258f.

[57] It is not necessary to think that he orders additional archers to the four who have been rebuffed, as Henderson (see n. 38) at ll. 449-52a suggests. The market women are necessary because the archers are now charging all together – Lysistrata and her three helpers have succeeded in rebuffing them one by one.

In Thesm., the archer's first appearance is in the traditional mute role, and he silently obeys when the *Prytanis* commands him to take Euripides' relative away, tie him to a plank and watch him carefully with a whip (930ff.). The orders are given in a harsh tone and lead us to understand that the archer is a dull, lazy boor. But when he appears again on stage with the Relative (1001ff.), Aristophanes provides a surprise: the archer now has a speaking part, and a very funny speaking part, too, with his broken Attic accent. At first, the archer shows some brutality in tightening the Relative's bonds on purpose (1004ff.), but soon he is ridiculed in every way so heavily that the roles are again turned upside down, as in Lys. It is to be noted that the legal forces – the heralds, the *prytaneis*, the *probouloi*, the archers – are never on the same side as the heroes of the comedy: they are always the losers, the ridiculed ones.[58] There are also scenes where other normal relationships of authority are violently overturned. One is the rather prolongated scene of Eccl., where a young man is subjected to the love-making of three old hags (976-1111). Here the existing order of the society has already been overturned in the comedy and the old women act legally when they coerce the young man, as they repeatedly confirm (1015ff., 1049ff., 1077f.). Thus it is logical that they win their way. The poet again and again makes fun of the poor man who is literally dragged by the old women, generally in two directions at once (1037, 1049f., 1054ff., 1065f., 1074ff., 1083ff., 1093f.).

The most remarkable scenes involving the violent overturning of authorities occur at the end of Nub., where Strepsiades is beaten by his son and Socrates' house is burnt. The two scenes are dramatically linked together, as the iniquity suffered in the former provides the motive for the latter deed.

As mentioned above, physical violence against one's parents could lead to a γραφὴ κακώσεως. It is probable that Aristophanes did not show the beating on stage. Strepsiades rushes out from the house, where he has been celebrating the graduation of Pheidippides from Socrates' school, and wails on account of the beating he has received. This entrance with its cries ἰοὺ ἰού (1321ff.) much resembles the apparently stock-in-trade entrances of beaten slaves (as in Vesp.

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[58] Cf. Michail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, Cambridge, Mass. 1968, 90: "The serious aspects of class culture are official and authoritarian; they are combined with violence, prohibition, limitations and always contain an element of fear and of intimidation. - - - Laughter, on the contrary, overcomes fear, for it knows no inhibitions, no limitations. Its idiom is never used by violence and authority."

1292); this underlines the outrageous treatment suffered by Strepsiades. In the following dialogue of the father and the son, the beatings are referred to either in the past tense (1332, 1375f., 1387) or in the present tense, which could well refer to the act generally and not to any special bursts of violence that have just occurred (1325f., 1331). Also the tone of Pheidippides' replies is more nonchalant than violent.

The scene is at one and the same time very funny and very serious. As K. Reckford says, "Aristophanes' father-beating scene skates over dangerous waters, deep human anxieties about sex, family and life."[59] But there is worse to come. The last straw for Strepsiades is when Pheidippides promises to beat his mother, too, and prove that it is right to do so. There is no evidence that maltreatment of the mother was legally a more serious crime than that of the father, but Strepsiades seems to feel that morally it is so. Perhaps this was because of the weaker and dependent social position of women. Anyway, this totally unmoral suggestion causes Strepsiades first to turn to the Clouds, then to Hermes and on his advice, to burn the house of Socrates.

The arson scene has recently been discussed by E.Chr. Kopff and F.O. Harvey.[60] The stage action is clear in so far as Strepsiades tells his slave to bring a ladder and a mattock, climb to the roof and tear it to pieces (1485ff.), and follows himself with a torch (1494, 1496, 1502f.). What is in doubt are the final movements of these persons. Does Socrates with his pupils remain in the house and perish with them, as Kopff suggests, or do they erupt from the house and flee, with Strepsiades at their heels, as Harvey thinks? The verbs ἀποπνιγήσομαι and κατακαυθήσομαι (1504f.) certainly speak for the former alternative, but on the other hand the imperatives δίωκε, βάλλε, παῖε (1508) would more naturally point to the latter, although they could be taken in the general sense of lynching cries, shouted by an angry crowd, as Kopff remarks.[61] But it is not very credible that these cries should be given to the chorus,[62] who would thus suddenly have a single rejoinder in this

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[59] K. Reckford, Father-beating in Aristophanes' Clouds, in The Conflict of Generations in Ancient Greece and Rome, Amsterdam 1976, 95. Cf. the other references to father-beating in Aristophanes in the dream-world of Av. 757, 1347ff. and the inverted world of Eccl. 638ff.

[60] E.Chr. Kopff, GRBS 18 (1977) 113-22, F.D. Harvey, GRBS 22 (1981) 339-343; both papers bear the title *Nubes* 1493ff.: Was Socrates Murdered?

[61] Kopff (see n. 60) 118, 119.

[62] Kopff (see n. 60) 119; Harvey (see n. 60) 341 gives l. 1508 to Strepsiades.

dialogue just before its official closing remark. Similarly, the concluding words in 1509, giving the motive for the arson, are much better in the mouth of Strepsiades. Neither is Kopff's stage direction of the exit of Strepsiades convincing: according to him, Strepsiades stays with his slave on the roof until they exit down the ladder at the back of the *skene*.[63] In that case, it would not be clear to the spectators that they themselves were not burnt with the house. Strepsiades' and Socrates' fate must be clearly differentiated in the end. The imperatives at l. 1508 may be quite sufficient to show that Socrates and his pupils rushed out of the house, and the traditional exhortation of the chorus 1510 ἡγεῖσθ' ἔξω suggests that Strepsiades and Xanthias are again on the stage and moving off.

Certainly the scene is a powerful and sombre attack on Socrates. For once, the hero seems to have "right" on his side, as the only thing that prevents him from raising a γραφή[64] is the conviction that Socrates with his immoral rhetoric would triumph in any court (1481ff.). On the other hand, it is doubtful if Aristophanes and the audience would consider this degree of self-help as possible and justifiable. But it is perhaps not right to force Aristophanes to take a definite stand in the trial of Socrates, which happened several years after his comedy had been presented or reshaped.[65]

An authority or a disgusting person is often humiliated in comedy by being forced into strange clothes. This kind of jesting is more a form of mental than of physical cruelty, but it is often accompanied by violent measures. In Lys., the *Proboulos* is finally forced to retreat, after he has in two parallel scenes been showered with humiliating attributes by the women: first he is covered with a woman's veil and given a woman's handwork basket (521ff.) and then he is showered with funeral ribbons and wreaths like a corpse (599ff.). In both scenes, there is a great deal of verbal play connected with the dressing up. Similarly, the friends of Plutus get rid of the sycophant by undressing him violently (Plut. 926ff.) and then redressing him with Plutus' old beggar clothes (935ff.); he apparently just escapes before Plutus' worn-out sandals are nailed upon his forehead (942ff.). Transvestism and other

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[63] Kopff (see n. 60) 118.

[64] Several kinds of γραφαί have been suggested as possible in this situation, see Kopff (see n. 60) 114 n. 11.

[65] Hypothesis I and schol. Vesp. 543 say that this ending was not found in the first version of Nub.; cf. K.J. Dover, Aristophanes' Clouds, Oxford 1968, xciiiff.

kinds of strange dressing up are a well-known feature in cult practices, especially in initiation rites,[66] but these should not be brought in to explain such scenes in comedy, where the function of the dressing up is purely to humiliate the victims and amuse the doers (and the spectators). Nor do the victims go through any reintroduction into society after their "liminal" experience.

There are other scenes where clothes are changed in which the purpose is not to humiliate the person being dressed up nor to oppress him with violence, instead the humorous effect of the scene derives largely from the fact that the victim is unwilling and protests in vain. So Bdelycleon must rely on force when he dresses his protesting father in fashionable party clothes in Vesp. 1122ff., and when the Relative is dressed up as a woman in Thesm. 213ff., he is, in spite of his willingness in theory, often during the process terrified in practice, fearing especially the shaving and depilating (Thesm. 220ff., 236ff.).

A clear group of scenes involving violence is formed by the beatings of slaves. Aristophanes dissociates himself from such vulgar scenes in the parabasis of Pax 743, which does not hinder him from using them in his plays. Apparently hitting and bullying one's slaves were slapstick routines common in Greek comedy.[67] What was funny about them? Beating one's slaves was quite normal and, as we saw above, legal in Athenian society. In comedy, it could not have the delicious effect on the audience which the beating of superior authorities gives. Was it merely the brutal joy of showing one's own superiority over helpless victims? If so, it is no wonder that Aristophanes takes a critical position. In fact, there are several scenes in Aristophanes where the masters of the slaves behave in just that way – but in these cases, Aristophanes uses these beatings to characterize the said masters as brutes. So in the beginning of Equ. we hear the slaves complaining of the beatings they have received (1ff., 27, 64ff.) and when the Paphlagonian appears, he hideously threatens his fellow-slaves, posing as their master in the name of Demos

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[66] See A. Brelich, *Paides* e *parthenoi*, Roma 1969, 31 with n. 60 on p. 72, 164 n. 156, 443 n. 2.

[67] Cf. such scenes on vase painting as "punishment of slave" in the Lucanian calyx-crater Berlin F 3043 = A.D. Trendall–T.B.L. Webster, Illustrations of Greek Drama, London 1971, iv, 15, and "punishment of thief" in the Apulian calyx-crater New York 24.97.104 = Trendall –Webster iv, 13.

(239). But this is, of course, in order to characterize the Paphlagonian. Similarly, Polemos boxes his slave's ears in Pax 255f., and Philocleon's drunken behaviour is described in Vesp. 1292ff. and his appearance in 1331 thus anticipated. Also in Nub. 58 the threat to the slave is well motivated by the dramatist. Behind it lies the personal frustration and dissatisfaction of Strepsiades, who has just gone over his troubles in his mind and is suddenly recalled to harsh reality by the light of the lamp dying out. What is more natural than to blame somebody else, preferable one's slave, who is always handy? It may be noted that in all these beatings or threatenings of slaves the language is very simple, of the type κλαύσει μακρά, without any pretensions to jokes.

There are very few beatings of slaves where the beating seems to be there only for the sake of slapstick. Such is perhaps the scene in Lys. 1216ff., where somebody coming out of the Acropolis' gate hustles another person out of his way with a torch – probably a scene of everyday realism. Another occurs in Av. 1323ff., where the chorus and Pisthetairos join in bullying the slave Manes, who is fetching wings for the would-be citizens from the house. We cannot be quite sure what is the gist of the comic scene here. Is it that Manes, who is repeatedly accused of slowness and threatened with beatings (1323, 1326ff., 1329, 1335f.), is actually scurrying in and out in great speed? Pisthetairos' bullying may be meant by Aristophanes to show his self-importance as the new master of Cloud-cuckoo-land, but the interlude mainly gives the impression of pure slapstick.[68]

There is one scene of beating a slave which stands out for its elaboration and originality: the beating trial of Dionysus and Xanthias in Ran. 605ff. There is much violence in the scene: first, Aeacus' henchmen grab Xanthias, who is supposed to be Heracles, and take away his club (605, 608ff.) and then Xanthias offers his "slave" for torture to prove his innocence, revelling in the thought of the various tortures in store for his master Dionysus (616ff.). Aristophanes derives much humour out of the legal procedure of torturing slaves by letting Xanthias decline the customary compensation due to the master in the case of a slave being permanently injured by the process.[69] As Dionysus now discloses his divine

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[68] These beatings of slaves seem to have a counterpart in satyr plays, where the chorus of satyrs is sometimes threatened or beaten (e.g. Aesch. Theoroi TrGF frg. 78c, 41, Soph. Ichn. TrGF frg. 314, 168, Eur. Cycl. 210f.) and their habitual cowardice is thus emphasized. Cf. Seaford in his commentary on Eur. Cyclops, who at l. 210 points out that Heracles clubbing the satyrs seems to have been an early theme of satyric drama.

[69] Cf. Lipsius (see n. 23) 891, MacDowell (see n. 28) 246 with n. 558.

identity, Xanthias, who is one of those witty and intelligent slaves typical of later comedy, comes up with a new variation of the torturing process: they should see which of them cries first and thus discloses who is a man and who is a god.There follows the trial with due beatings in turn, and much verbal humour is developed out of the attempts of the victims to disguise their cries of pain (644ff.). Thiercy probably goes too far when he sees in this scene an initiation of Dionysus by torture – the starting point is in any case the normal legal procedure used for acquiring evidence from slaves.[70] But the idea of subjecting the disguised god of theatre to a humiliating torture reserved for slaves is certainly startling. However, this is not a usual case of the world turned upside down, either. Here god and man, master and slave are placed on the same level, without distinction, instead of completely reversing their positions.

Finally, there are some scenes in Aristophanes where scenes of violence from tragic plays are parodied. The altar scene from Euripides' Telephus is used in two plays, Ach. and Thesm. The conventional view has been that the seizing of Orestes was not shown on stage in Euripides' play, but only related by a messenger.[71] This view has been criticized on the basis of the very great frequency of this scene in vase-paintings and of the existence of comic parodies.[72] It could well have been acted on stage, as threatenings with arms as well as flights to the altar belong to the conventions of the tragic stage.[73] In Ach. the parody begins when the situation becomes so urgent that the chorus threatens to kill Dicaeopolis (325). He adopts the stratagem of Telephus and fetches his hostage, a hamper full of charcoal, from his house. Threatening to kill this "baby" with his sword he soon gains a hearing (331ff.). The episode is short and gains its comic effect more from the incongruity of the stage prop with the baby it is supposed to represent than from close parody

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[70] See Thiercy (see n. 54) 317 and criticism opposing this view by MacDowell, CR 37 (1987) 153.

[71] See e.g. T.B.L. Webster, The Tragedies of Euripides, London 1967, 47.

[72] See P. Rau, Paratragodia: Untersuchung einer komischen Form des Aristophanes, Munich 1967, 25 n. 21, A. Kossatz-Deissmann, Telephus travestitus, in Tainia: Festschrift für Roland Hampe (1980) 288, O. Taplin, Phallology, *Phlyakes*, Iconography and Aristophanes, PCPhS 33 (1987) 96-104.

[73] Cf. Kaimio (see n. 4) 65ff.

of the original scene.[74] In addition to the comic effect, the scene prepares the ground for the larger exploitation of Telephus beginning at 383.

In Thesm. the capturing scene (689ff.) apparently resembles the original more closely. Euripides' relative suddenly seizes the First Woman's baby and takes refuge at the altar, threatening the baby with his sword (694f.).[75] The women react with tragic wailings (699ff.). Here the tragic agitation of the seizing scene in Telephus is obviously parodied.[76] After the Relative's threatenings in high tragic vein (730ff.) the dramatic scene is resolved in a ridiculous fashion; parody changes to travesty as the baby turns out to be a sack of wine (733). Departing from the original, the Relative slaughters the victim by piercing the wine-skin with his sword while the First Woman holds a crater (a mock σφαγεῖον) underneath to save the drops of wine. This is a brilliant piece of comic violence, made harmless by the ridiculous props used.[77]

Another passage parodying tragic violence is in Thesm. 1001ff. The tragedy parodied in the following scene is Euripides' Andromeda (produced 412, i.e. shortly before Thesm.), but the entrance of the Scythian archer with Euripides' relative tied to a plank cannot be directly borrowed from this tragedy, as it apparently began with Andromeda already tied up on the stage wailing and singing a duet with the echo. On the other hand, in Sophocles' Andromeda the heroine was led onto the stage by two negro attendants and tied to the posts there.[78] A similar scene also opened Prometheus Vinctus, to which there is some similarity in the Archer's malicious tightening of the ropes (1003ff., cf. PV 58f.). Thus, the violent opening of the scene is clearly related to tragic stage effects,[79] but at the same time made ridiculous by the figure of the archer and the plank, which both clearly belong to the everyday world of contemporary Athens.

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[74] See Rau (see n. 72) 28.

[75] The nearest parallel in the extant tragedies is Eur. Or. 1567ff., where Orestes stands on the roof keeping his sword at Hermione's throat, see Kaimio (see n. 4) 75f.

[76] Cf. Rau (see n. 72) 48.

[77] There is also an iconographic parody of this parody scene in the Würzburg Telephus -vase (Würzburg, Martin-von-Wagner Museum H5697) as Taplin (see n. 72) 96ff. shows.

[78] See Webster (see n. 71) 193.

[79] Hall (see n. 55) 41ff. suggests that the scene is "a travesty of a type of dramatic plot, the category of escape-drama especially associated with Euripides."

A special case of parody, this time not of tragedy but of mythology, is seen in the comic treatment of Heracles. This hero with his enormous appetite was a favourite target apparently both in satyr plays and in comedy, and Aristophanes himself claims to have put an end to the presentations of the voracious Heracles, so well loved by his rivals (Pax 741f.). Because of his well-known club, Heracles must also have been a favourite figure in scenes involving violence.[80] Aristophanes presents him as both a greedy and a violent brute in the scene of the embassy of the gods in Av. 1565ff., where he gives a fine specimen of violence used in diplomacy in Av. 1628, frightening Triballos with his club.

In conclusion, it is obvious from the text of Aristophanes that a fair amount of violence is acted out on his stage. It is, however, impossible to know whether there was more violence going on on stage than is reflected in the text. In tragedy, we may have some support for the argument that all significant stage action was reflected in the text,[81] but in comedy with its different dramatic conventions the issue may be different. We may, however, postulate that the violent actions which the author especially hoped to have a humorous effect on the spectators were realized both in actions on stage and in words, which we now have as our text.

Aristophanes is not contemptuous of such a good source of humour as violence. His violent scenes are not something plastered upon the texture of the comedy in order to flatter the low tastes of the mass of people, but they are well integrated into the formal structure and the mental world of comedy. Often they appear in the fixed formal elements of comic tradition, such as parodos, agon, strings of short episodes, which in turn reflect long traditions of e.g. iambic abuse and ritual pursuit. Confronted with such scenes, the audience at a comic performance knew to expect some kind of violence. To secure the comic effect, it was essential to present the traditional violence with some novelty. Therefore Aristophanes displays great variety in apparently similar situations of violence – it may be a new twist in the handling of the motif, a witty verbal comment, use of special props etc. The scenes of violence are also an essential part of the carnival spirit of comedy. They overturn and ridicule the hierarchies of normal society, for instance bureaucratic authorities,

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[80] For Heracles using his club in satyr plays see n. 68.

[81] Cf. Q. Taplin, Significant Actions in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, GRBS 12 (1971) 30f., 39, Kaimio (see n. 4) 6ff.

priests, and different groups of superior social standing, age and sex. The amount of violence used in self-defence is often grotesquely exaggerated, the raging hero going without punishment, while the legal claims of opponents fall flat.

In the parabasis of Nub. and Pax Aristophanes talks disdainfully of the vulgar tricks used by other playwrights to court their public. Violent slapstick is one of the things he dissociates himself from: he does not let an old man hit those present with a stick in order to cover his bad jokes (Nub. 541f.) and he does not use slaves who run out of the house wailing at the beating they have received (Pax 743ff.). It is of course easy to cite examples from Aristophanes to show that this cannot be taken literally, and we have so little left of the works of the other comedians that we cannot say whether Aristophanes' criticism was justified that they used more violence and in a coarser form than he. But there may be some truth in Aristophanes' jeering statements. We have seen that he has very few scenes involving violence which are mere slapstick, but that he usually elaborates these scenes with witticisms and variation – although it may be a matter of taste whether his jokes connected with violence are πονηρὰ σκώμματα or not. But let us take two examples of the kind of violence he says he abhors and see what he has made of it himself. What an exhilarating personality he has created in Philocleon, the type of the old man who lashes out with his stick. Take, for example, the scene where Philocleon returns from the party and routs everybody who complains about his violent actions by applying more violence, at the same time telling some jolly good stories (Vesp. 1326ff.). Note, too, the manifold variations on the beaten slave theme: in the beginning of Equ., the traditional motif is introduced immediately and used extensively, not simply to amuse the spectators, but to characterize the rule of the Paphlagonian over Demos; in Nub. 1321, it is not a slave who rushes to the stage wailing because of the beating he has had, but the old father beaten by his son; in Ran. 637ff., the slave and his master, the god Dionysus, are both beaten on equal terms.

It follows from the nature of the violent scenes of comedy, rooted in the formal and spiritual traditions of the genre, that they are for the most part totally different from the scenes involving violence acted on the tragic stage.[82] In tragedy, the most frequent form of violence is the entrance or exit of an actor under arrest, usually held fast or guarded by mutes. This convention is not used in the extant comedies

[82] For violent physical contact in tragedy, see Kaimio (see n. 4) 62-78.

of Aristophanes, except in a passage parodying tragedy (Thesm. 1001ff.).[83] In tragedy, threatening with violence is common – sticks are raised, swords drawn – but generally the persons involved stop short of actually using violence. In comedy, the threatening takes much more drastic forms: the choruses are involved in lively action against the actors they are threatening, even if they stop before taking ultimate steps against them, and the actors often actually come to grips with each other – not to speak of the somewhat peculiar ways in which this often happens (e.g. in Ach. 926ff. and Equ. 451ff.).

Of course, some scenes can be found which show a superficial resemblance between the use of violence in comedy and tragedy – e.g. the scene in Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus (OT 1154ff.) where Oedipus interrogates the Old Man and, when he is reluctant to answer, orders his hands to be bound prior to torture, and the scene in Aristophanes' Plutus (56ff.), where Carion and Chremylus extract from Plutus the truth of his identity by taking hold of him on both sides. We can also note in some tragedies, especially from the end of the fifth century, a tendency to freer use of physical contact than earlier. This seems to point to a new manner of gesticulation gaining ground in acting, which may be influenced by the apparently much more lively acting seen in comedy. E.g. the doorkeeper scene in Eur. Hel. 445ff., where Menelaus is turned out by an angry old woman, is more reminiscent of comic scenes than of tragic conventions,[84] and the scene of the Phrygian slave pursued by Orestes with his sword (Eur. Or. 1369ff.) may call to mind the lamenting slaves of comedy. The scene, however, is at the same time in accordance with tragic conventions as it functions as a messenger scene.

In general, however, it is clear that both tragedy and comedy have their own and different conventions with regard to violence shown on stage. The spirit of such scenes is different as well; in tragedy, the threatening and violence is mainly directed against the oppressed, the helpless or at least temporarily weak persons (as Philoctetes and the blind Oedipus), whereas comedy delights in pulling down the authorities of real life.

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[83] Cf. the parody of this tragic stage convention on the Apulian bell-crater (St. Agata dei Goti, former Rainone coll. 1 = Trendall – Webster (see n. 67) iv, 33), where a guard escorts "Antigone" with violent gestures to Creon.

[84] See Kaimio (see n. 4) 73.