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Aristophanes and the generation gap[1]

Acharnians 620ff: Lamachos, the champion of Athenian militarism, says he will fight the men of the Peloponnese, all of them, on all fronts, for all time, and will confound them, by land and sea, with all available force. Dikaiopolis proclaims publicly to the men of the Peloponnese, every one of them, and to the Megarians and to the Boeotians: sell to me, deal with me, not with Lamachos.

The first stage of the brilliant enterprise of the *Acharnians* is achieved: its entrepreneur Dikaiopolis has made his personal peace-treaty with Sparta. The actors go their opposite ways off the stage: one to set up a campaign, the other to set up a market; one representing a living contemporary, the other a fictional creation. The chorus now comes into action. With a brief comment on Dikaiopolis' success, the performers take off their cloaks, and move into the routine of the parabasis, their traditional and expected address to the audience...expected just how far? Given my title, it is at least no surprise here that I shall want at some point to turn to one of the topics they raise: namely, Old versus Young in the law-courts. If we begin with what might seem like a distraction, it is for two reasons. First, these few lines can be used to remind us of the constant interplay in Aristophanes between reality and fantasy, convention and innovation, verbal and visual, which preoccupies commentators so much, and can never safely be set aside; second, because before we do go any further, it is worth considering what kind of people this chorus is supposed to represent.

[1] An earlier version of this paper was given to a meeting of the Classical Association of Scotland in Edinburgh on 9 November 1985, and I am grateful to those present for their welcome and for the discussion which followed, as well as to the discussion on the present occasion, from which points are acknowledged below.

The men of Acharnai are elderly, but vigorous: or so it seems we are to think. When we first hear of them, they are described as tough old men, hard as the holm-oak or maple they burn for charcoal, fighters at Marathon: ... πρεσβῦταί τινες / Ἀχαρνικοί, στιπτοὶ γέροντες, πρίνινοι, / ἀτεράμονες, Μαραθωνομάχαι, σφενδάμνινοι[2]. Marathon was sixty-five years ago. Anyone who fought there would by now, in 425 B.C., be into his eighties at least. Marathon was part of the world of Aristophanes' grandfather.

II

It has not, of course, escaped notice that the Marathon-men of *Acharnians* are not alone. Demos, the personified People of *Knights,* is a Marathon-man (who better?), and his victory there, says the Sausage Seller, has given public speakers a licence to coin fine phrases; but he is also, a moment later, a Salamis-man, with a behind lastingly tender from the rowing (781-5). The chorus of *Wasps* are Marathon-men; or rather, like Demos, they are Persian wars men, given that their exploits include driving the Persians back into the sea, as at Marathon, and enduring the invasion and burning of Attica, as after Thermopylae (that was where the Persian arrows were said to shade the sun), as well as enduring a battle that went on all day, like Salamis (1075-90); when we first see them (230ff), they are recalling an action at Byzantium in the year we should call 478 B.C. MacDowell (1971) and Sommerstein (1983) both document the matter effectively. If the Wasp-chorus is thought of simply in the character of very old men, we can say, as Sommerstein does, that 'after more than half a century the old men's reminiscences of the Persian Wars seem to have become a little blurred'. That offers a naturalistic justification for a piece of image-making which has interesting analogies elsewhere, with elements put together that are consonant but of different origins, in some ways like a composite photograph. We might think, for instance, of the image of Euripides, *Helen* given by the parody at *Thesmophoriazusae* 855ff, in which characters and incidents from different parts of the play are compounded and fused, much in the way that vase-paintings of well-liked tragedies make a compendium of one or more striking incidents augmented with figures that are not present, or not present simultaneously; A.D.Trendall perceptively compares the art of a poster advertising a play or films[3].

It still seems rather easier to accept that images of plays can be a compound than to accept that images of people can be. Yet that happens manifestly in Aristophanes, and it is a point that will arise again. For now, we can perhaps take it that the Wasp-men and the character Demos are, in their different ways, a compound of features recognizable in contemporary people (and therefore acceptable with a literal value) together with features whose value is not — or not only — literal, but figurative: Demos as a kind of John Bull figure, with attributes that represent a collective portrait of the people in assembly, and not simply an individual; Wasps as archetypal inhabitants of Attica (1076) with symbolic values to their stings: these creations are therefore capable of carrying the 'Persian wars' image somewhat more easily, it may be, than the Acharnians would do if we took them wholly literally. One knows, fifty years after some of the earlier incidents of World War II, how images formed among the intense experiences of wartime can persist across the generations. Just as the Acharnians recall the time 'when we were at Marathon' (698), the old men in the chorus of *Lysistrata* can refer to the monument there as 'my trophy' (285); and they look back beyond the occupation of the Acropolis by Kleomenes in 508 B.C. to refer to their part in the battle at Leipsydrion more than a century before the play, which was perhaps best remembered by Aristophanes and his contemporaries from its appearance in a traditional drinking song[4].

[2] *Ach.* 179-91: adjectives appropriate to hard wood (or its product in charcoal) give images of the old men's nature derived from the materials of their typical local industry: see Taillardat 1965: 203, 205f; and Sommerstein 1980a, ad loc. Likewise, Menander's Knemon is presented as a typical tough Attic farmer in terms of the stony ground he farms at Phyle (*Dysk.* 603ff).

[3] *Helen* and *Thesmophoriazusae:* the relationship is thought of here along the lines set out in Handley and Rea 1957: 23f; and in detail by Rau 1967:53-65. Trendall: as in Trendall and Webster 1971:11.

[4] Kleomenes, *Lys.* 273ff; Leipsydrion, *Lys.* 667-9 with the skolion, Page, *PMG* 907 = *Lyr.Gr.Selecta* 461: see the notes in Henderson 1987. The old men recall Artemisia at

These would be old warriors indeed; but we are concerned with image-making, not personal portraiture.

Fine phrases about Marathon were familiar currency in 425 B.C., as we have heard already from the Sausage-seller of *Knights;* the way they go on through the fifth and fourth centuries is the subject of a special study in a well-known work by Nicole Loraux (1981a)[5]. Typical of the latter end of the story is Demosthenes' famous oath in the *Crown* by the men of Marathon and Plataea and Salamis and Artemision (18.208). Land and sea battles come together here, as they do in our passages of *Knights* and *Wasps,* without a suggestion of the factional split between army and navy which is sometimes found elsewhere[6]. The battle-memorial for Marathon referred to in the *Lysistrata* is named three times in the earlier plays, as it is recurrently in public orations[7]. Comedy, however, has its own special ways to keep memories alive, and when Eupolis resurrected Miltiades among statesmen of the past, he apparently had him swear by 'Marathon, my battle', as students of Demosthenes' *de corona* were reminded in Antiquity[8]. Comedy also visits the dead in the Underworld. Aeschylus, who really was a Marathon-man, can be asked in the *Frogs* if he got his lyrics that sounded like rope-makers' work-songs from Marathon or somewhere (1296f); but the image of heroic virtue which he is made to present in his debate with Euripides comes from *Persae, Septem* and other tragedies with war and warriors in them, rather than in any primary way from the Persian wars themselves. So, when Dionysus in the *Frogs* calls

Salamis (675), but are accused by the women of squandering 'grandfather's bounty', τὸν ἔρανον τὸν λεγόμενον παππῷον ἐκ τῶν Μηδικῶν (654): you men! The image of a Marathon-woman flashes briefly into view at *Thes.* 806.

[5] I refer here to the English edition, Loraux 1986: esp. 155-71.

[6] Loraux 1986: 161 ff. It is perhaps worth noting here that Aristophanes' portrait of the young cavalrymen in *Knights* makes a prominent feature of a recent combined operation in which they travelled by sea, and gives Poseidon his two attributes of Lord of the Sea and Lord of the Horse (595-610, 551-64; and cf.567).

[7] *Knights* 1334, *Wasps* 711, *Holkades* 413K/429K-A (I refer first to Kock 1880- then to Kassel and Austin 1983-).

[8] Eupolis, *Demoi* 90K/106 K-A, recalled specifically from Eupolis, but without context, by Longinus, *de subl.* 16.3.

himself ἀκαλαμίνιος (204), it is just one way of saying he is no oarsman; when one of the women in *Ecclesiazusae* says her husband is a Salaminian the idea is not that he is old or heroic but that he has been going 'in-out' in bed all night (38-9): *sic transit ...*[9].

III

We are not yet quite done with Marathon-men, for against this background we have to come to the point that Right in the *Clouds* claims that his system of education produces them (986). But a question has been forming itself on our way: why are so many comic choruses and so many comic heroes so old? One might say from a comparative study of the remains of Old Comedy that there has to be a strong element of comic tradition in this; but to go further one would need to dig deep indeed. Somewhere to be evaluated is the special position of the old in ancient Greek and similar societies — in some ways prominent, because valued for their experience and spared some physical activities, especially front-line fighting; in other ways inferior because enfeebled. So far as Marathon-men are concerned, we have seen that being one of them is part of the make-up of being a tough old boy, even if for comic purposes the tough old boy is shown in some ways to be past it. He has to have some go in him, or he would be boring; he has not to have too much, or he would be threatening. For our sense of comfort and relaxation in enjoying a comedy, we need, as Aristotle recognized in the *Poetics* (1448a 17) to feel in some sense superior; and yet to satisfy those wilder dreams to which Aristophanic comedy appeals so strongly, it has to be allowed that the old can reverse the natural order of things and become super-effective, super-young.

If this conception is not too gross an oversimplification of the truth, it might help us to appreciate why it is that Aristophanes' images of the old are so full of vivid contrast and paradox. The old men of Acharnai, from whom we began, arrive angry and excited, as

[9] One can wonder, as Professor MacDowell remarked in discussion, whether any echo of the battle is felt at all; or indeed whether *Frogs* and *Ecclesiazusae* should be quoted in the same breath in this way: see the commentators on these passages, especially Stanford 1963 and Ussher 1973.

comic choruses are liable to do; we have to add the effects of music and spectacle to the verbal picture they give of men feeling their years as they try to conduct a hot pursuit (204ff). The old men of *Lysistrata* are puffed with carrying up to the Acropolis their loads of wood, accompanied by a burning brazier, with which they propose to smoke out the women who are in occupation; music and movement must be imagined to enhance the contrast with the entry of the balancing half-chorus of women (254ff; 319ff).

The chorus of *Wasps* arrive stumbling along in the dark by lamplight, trying to dodge the pools of muddy water in the road, and swapping backchat with the boy with the lamp (230ff). The disabilities of age can be portrayed in a way which blends understanding with amusement, if one thinks of the fuss that is made of Philokleon in setting him up for the trial scene of the *Wasps*, with various domestic comforts at hand, including a chamber pot hung on a peg, in case he needs it in session, 'convenient for an old man', as he says[10]. Of course when Demos in the *Knights* is characterized as 'an old man with a bit of a temper, just a shade deaf', the word-portrait has the added appeal of figuring characteristics of the Democracy that Demos personifies (42f). The image of age can be traditional, patriotic, picturesque, by turns sympathetic and satirical, and in all these aspects it can be heightened by the variety of resources of comic production. What happens when the image has more of a message to carry?

IV

Acharnians 676ff: the Chorus, as expected, have delivered their anapaestic address on behalf of 'Our Master' (628)[11]; in a miniature lyric hymn they invoke the Muse of Acharnai; they then move on to

[10] *Wasps* 805ff: I wonder if many in the audience thought of the bard Demodokos in Homer (*Od.* 8.65ff), with his chair and his refreshments, and his lyre on a peg where he could reach it?

[11] *Acharnians* is recorded as having been produced by Kallistratos, not Aristophanes himself, and the resulting ambiguities continue to receive discussion, e.g. Handley 1985:374; and since then (among others) Slater 1989:67-82; and Goldhill 1991:188-96 — both with further references; for more still, see n. 21 below.

protest vigorously at the disadvantages suffered in the law-courts by men of their own generation, Marathon-men, when confronted by an opposition which calls in clever, fast-talking young men with oratorical training. It may have lent extra force to the topic that it pours on through the lyric which balances their hymn and fills the rest of the four-part structure which is conventional to this part of the choral parabasis[12]. The passage is a good illustration of the point that a theme which is major in one comedy can occur as a minor one in one form or another elsewhere. Young men full of the modern jargon of rhetoric appear briefly in *Knights* (1377ff), where one of the reforms of the New Era which is being inaugurated is that all beardless men will be banned from the Agora. This will eliminate, among others, the young men in the perfume-shops, who sit around chatting about Phaiax — Phaiax, who so cleverly talked aside the death-penalty by being (as Alan Sommerstein makes them say) 'cohesive and penetrative, productive of original phrases, clear and incisive, and most excellently repressive of the vociferative[13]'. The joke against oratory as a science is akin to the more extended and subtler satire which Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates in the famous parade of experts at *Phaedrus* 266b-267d. Plato, we may recall, was still a baby in arms when Aristophanes produced his first play, the lost *Daitales* ('Banqueters') of 427 B.C., the year in which, it so happens, Gorgias paid his memorable visit to Athens as a member of a delegation from his native Leontinoi[14]. Aristophanes' play featured a father with two sons, one brought up on a diet of modern education in the science of public speaking, and hence, like the young men in the *Knights*, full of 'buzz words' which he can be accused of borrowing from Alcibiades or one of the professors; the other son, being traditionally educated, has been brought up on the poets, not least Homer, who has proved to be (if one can be forgiven

[12] Sifakis 1971: 45ff; see also Handley 1982: 110ff (on a fragment which may be part of Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros*); and (on *Ach.* specifically) A.M. Bowie 1982.

[13] Sommerstein 1981. The string of adjectives in -ικός have an effect not unlike that of the nouns in -cις at *Clouds* 317-9, where κροῦcις and κατάληψις correspond formally to κρουcτικός and καταληπτικός here. On Phaiax, see further Ostwald 1986:233; he refers *inter alia* to Davies (1971), no. 13921.

[14] Cassio 1977 studies the fragments of *Daitales/Banqueters* in detail.

for saying so) a veritable storehouse of lexical peculiarities[15]. It is not chance which makes Aristophanes refer to this play in writing the parabasis for the revised version of *Clouds* (528ff), a play in which he made such a great feature of the educational debate between Old and New, as represented by his two Logoi, Right and Wrong.

This set of passages offers a framework for considering the parabasis of *Acharnians.* Let us recall that the old men are arguing for a system of prosecution by one's peers, beginning from the position that it is unfair for the old, worthy Marathon-men, to be outsmarted and browbeaten by expert young advocates brought in to stiffen the case. They describe vividly a man in the situation they deplore; they move to a real example from the case of Thucydides, son of Melesias, who had been exiled by ostracism for ten years in 443 B.C. At some time between his return and the production of Acharnians in 425, by then elderly, he had faced a prosecution during which he broke down. The incident is referred to in the mock-trial of *Wasps* when the defendant Dog is tongue-tied, and is said, like Thucydides, to have suffered a sudden paralysis of the jaws, ἀπόπληκτος ἐξαίφνης ἐγένετο τὰς γνάθους[16]. To someone of Aristophanes' age, presumably in his twenties at the time of *Acharnians,* Thucydides son of Melesias must have seemed very much a figure of the past; and yet the incident (or what he was told of it) made a lasting impression, enough to prompt an interesting touch of colour in the portrait of the fictional defendant who holds our attention before we are diverted to Thucydides. As we all do on occasions, the man thinks of his best remark after the argument is over, as he says to his friends 'I leave this trial with a fine of the sum I should spend on a shroud' (691). To be too poor to pay for a funeral is something felt to be dreadful in ancient as well as in modern times; burial clubs are formed to protect against the disgrace; and the expression itself appears in Aristophanes in proverbial form in two passages in the fourth-century plays (*Eccl.* 592, *Plut.* 556). Thrasymachos of Chalcedon is one of the professors of rhetoric mentioned in the *Banqueters,* which has just been cited; he it was, according to Plato's

[15] *Daitales* 198K/205 K-A; 222-3K/233, 235 K-A.

[16] *Wasps* 944-7, where see MacDowell 1971.

account in the *Phaedrus,* who specialized in the pathetic exploitation of age and poverty[17]. He was not alone, of course: Lysias 24, at section 7, gives us a powerful example devised by a professional speech-writer for his disabled client. We need not push the matter to the point of claiming to be on the track of a fragment of Thrasymachos; but there are two other things to notice: it is not at all untypical of Aristophanes to show expertise in activities he professes to deplore; nor is it untypical of him to give what might be a simple one-sided presentation an unexpected twist[18]. It is a twist of that kind that that seems to deserve emphasis as we turn to look briefly at Right and Wrong in *Clouds.*

Right claims in *Clouds* that the elements in his system of education which strike Wrong as ancient and primitive in fact were the making of Marathonomachs (985f). Modern discussion, above all by Sir Kenneth Dover (1968), has made it plain that, so far from being a straight antithesis, this debate has its paradoxes and its ironies. The aggressive Right is not wholly our man from the start. He surrenders at the end to the educational and sexual ethics of the modern world of Wrong; and we should not neglect the point that his account of an ideal education for young boys registers his own physical attraction to them. Wrong is a rogue; but there is probably a way in which we all admire a rogue. Right and Wrong are on either side of the generation gap, but the fission between them is complicated, and Aristophanes' own viewpoint, in so far as we dare to discern it, is hardly one of black and white.

[17] *Banqueters,* see n.14; *Phaedrus* 267c, τῶν γε μὴν οἰκτρογόων ἐπὶ γῆρας καὶ πενίαν ἑλκομένων λόγων κεκρατηκέναι τέχνῃ μοι φαίνεται τὸ τοῦ Χαλκηδονίου σθένος: see further Radermacher 1951:70ff (under B IX); and Kennedy 1963:68ff. All the man needed was to start his one-liner with οὔκουν δεινόν, εἴπερ ...

[18] Ancient and modern commentators on *Clouds* 518-62 produce examples of Aristophanes practising the kind of low comedy that he there denies himself. I have wondered elsewhere whether it is not a divided mind that gives a basic impulse to satire: Handley 1985: 391.

V

'An Athenian generation gap' is the title of a paper by W.G.Forrest (1975) which reflected some thoughts on the student disturbances of the late 1960's; more recently, in his book *From Popular Sovereignty to the Sovereignty of Law,* Martin Ostwald, taking off from Forrest, writes of 'The Generation Gap and the Sophists' in the context of discussing the different polarizations of Athenian society in the 420's (1986: 229-250). It is a problem, which he makes clear, that Comedy has its own polarizations (not only old/young, but town/country, rich/poor and so on) and that their presentation is affected by the poet's individual operations within the traditions and potentialities of his medium: thus (p.235) 'Both in the *Clouds* and in the *Wasps* father and son affect allegiance to different social classes. Whether this reflects a common situation in Athens or whether it is merely a comic device to highlight the generation gap we cannot tell'[19]. The treatment of the inherited image of the Marathon-man and the portrayal of aspects of the impact of rhetoric and the new education are perhaps two areas in which we can hope to respond to what Aristophanes, as an innovative writer in a medium with a strong sense of tradition, is trying to show to his public. There are other fields in which the divide between Old and New must have been peculiarly clear, and not necessarily in ways which are now graspable: one of them must be music, to judge by no more than what is done with the subject of modern and traditional tragic lyric in the *Frogs*. One image of the Generation Gap which has gone echoing down the centuries is not part of the public world with which so much Aristophanic comedy is preoccupied, but of the private world of families which, as we know with our hindsight, effectively takes over the genre; and for this Strepsiades and son in *Clouds,* helped on the way by Terence's brothers Micio and Demea in the *Adelphoe,*

[19] Somewhat similarly Hubbard 1989: 104; having found much of interest in the prominent part played by old men in the extant plays of 425-21, he concludes that: 'It is difficult to extract from Aristophanes' dramatic characterization of old men any precise sociological information about their status in Athenian society, or even a firm and coherent view of old age on Aristophanes' part'. I had not seen this when I gave the paper, and I am grateful to Dr Simon Goldhill for the reference.

with the two boys they bring up on different principles (and indeed by others, known and unknown) — these are two characters with an interesting responsibility thrust on them. As part of a recent collection of studies of *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature,* edited by Christopher Pelling, Michael Silk (1990: 150-73) contributes a study of 'The people of Aristophanes' in which he sets up and explores the notion of an imagist mode of representation, of which Aristophanes characters 'most (perhaps all)' partake, as opposed to the realist tradition, which he finds well exemplified in Strepsiades, the father with a teenage son whose life-style he cannot support. The existence of such composites as we have seen in Demos of the *Knights* and the choruses with their compound Marathonesque identities is a pointer to show how helpfully, on a larger scale, this distinction can be operated.

VI

It is part of what we live with in Aristophanic studies that the relation between the word of realism and the world of image is not constant throughout a play, or indeed throughout a presentation of a character. So much was well demonstrated apropos of *Knights* by H.-J. Newiger (1957: esp. 11-23) in remarking on the successive advance and withdrawal of the domestic world from which the play begins in relation to the political world into which it leads; Dikaiopolis begins in *Acharnians* as a man something like ourselves in the audience, waiting for something to happen (though he is an odder character than we are[20]); before very long he is actor, producer or author[21], his own dramatic self and Euripides' Telephus all at once[22].

This capacity for transformation makes it possible to accommodate exchanges of role across the generation gap in a way which more realistic comedy finds it harder to manage. Strepsiades

[20] See on his language Dover 1987b.

[21] Or another author, namely Eupolis, as is argued by E.L. Bowie 1988? I doubt it; see L.P.E. Parker 1991, and Storey, this volume.

[22] See n.11 above, and for particular consideration of the literary complexities of the amalgam Foley 1988, citing among others Muecke 1977.

tries to send his son to school with Socrates, but finds himself taking on the role of a pupil; when after all the son has learnt something, he reverses his filial role and is prepared to beat his father and defend the action, or indeed his mother too (1443ff). The *Wasps* brings in another reversal, in which old Philokleon, once reformed of his obsession for jury service, is coached in the behaviour appropriate to someone young, urban and wealthy, instead of old, rustic and poor[23]. He turns out to behave like the wildest of the wild, overcome by — indeed revelling in — drink, sex and dancing. This long sequence, beginning at 1122, allows us to emphasize three points: the way in which the reversal, by its very paradox, points up the contrast between the pair; the way in which that reversal is deliberately (and very wittily) underlined (1359 'I'm the only father he has' and context); and the way in which the characteristically young man's behaviour of associating with girls is brought in and accentuated by being transferred to the father[24]. We remember, by way of contrast, that young Pheidippides' passion in *Clouds* was all for horses, as he himself recalls at 1401; and we can note the difference from Dikaiopolis' revel at the end of *Acharnians,* where he is not acting young, but just an old man having a ball; the force of the contrast is between everything good for him in his mood of victory and everything bad for Lamachos in the depths of his defeat (1190ff).

It has been argued, in my view persuasively, that the reversal of roles between father and son in regard to a love-affair suggests that young men in love were a feature of social comedy in the fifth century to a greater extent than the remains of Aristophanes would lead us to believe; and there are fragments with father and son as rivals for a woman which go with more circumstantial evidence to bear this out[25]. It took comedy a long time to close in to the domestic world as seen in Menander[26]. Sometimes it seems to have broken out on the way.

[23] See Ostwald 1986:236.

[24] Handley 1985: 391ff.

[25] Wehrli 1948:24; and see Handley 1985:391ff (as cited above).

[26] See Blume 1990:esp. 22ff; he explores the concept of later Greek comedy as a *geschlossenes Kunstwerk.*

VII

One of the rules of the New Republic, as set up by the women in *Ecclesiazusae,* is that property shall be communal; another is that love shall be free, but with the provision that the oldest and ugliest are to be served first. It is perhaps a sign of the times, even at this date early in the fourth century, that we now have a scene in which two old men, two characters within the same generation, are presented in contrast, apparently for the first time in comedy, as was noted by T.B.L. Webster (1970:13). The first man calls out the slaves with his household goods, the domestic world coming outside in a manner akin to the setting up of Philocleon for his mock-trial in *Wasps*. The second man sternly and sceptically refuses (ἐγὼ καταθήςω τἀμά; 746), but is keen enough to go and take part when he hears that there is to be a free feast (οὐκοῦν βαδιοῦμαι δῆτα, 853). But the comedy is on the way to the remarkable sequence in which a young man serenades a girl he wants, only to be set on by a succession of three progressively more hideous hags. The contrast of generations is broad comedy, the romantic tone of the songs is so unlike anything we have earlier that the question of Aristophanes borrowing from some other humbler form of popular entertainment can be raised: δεῦρο δή, δεῦρο δή, / φίλον ἐμόν, δεῦρό μοι / πρόςελθε καὶ ξύνευνος / τὴν εὐφρόνην ὅπως ἔςει (952). The song, with pattern and words echoed in a responding stanza, recalls the solo serenade of Plautus, *Curculio* 147ff, and not only in metrical pattern: *pessuli, heus pessuli, uos saluto lubens, / uos amo, uos uolo, uos peto atque obsecro...* But this is a turn which, as far as we know, Greek comedy did not take. The romantic interest went on, and the dreams and wishes of the real world were tamer and more domestic than ambitions to ride to heaven on a dung beetle or even to take over the state and reshape it; lovers and their affairs moved into the foreground of plots, and were not simply an entertaining sequence, as in *Ecclesiazusae.* The music however, is another story, and not one for a day which began with Marathon-men[27]. It seems to

[27] There is a scrap of evidence for music in New Comedy published and discussed in Handley and Hurst 1990:138ff, 162ff; cf. also 154. In *Curculio* as well as in *Ecclesiazusae* — and indeed elsewhere in later comedy — old age is a foil to young love; the contrast is one which the musical elements of the two scenes may well have accentuated.

have been left to Plautus to re-invent the wheel, and for the modern world to invent musical comedy all over again, in which the old and the young are still with us.

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Aristophanes' *Lysistrata:* Women and the Body Politic

«Meanings of all kinds flow through the figures of women, and they often do not include who she is herself»[1].

I begin with a passage from Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors,* the relevance of which to the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes will immediately be apparent. The scene is the city of Ephesus, where one of the twins called Antipholus resides; the other, from Syracuse, has been mistaken for his brother and admitted to his house by his wife. The wife's maid, Luce or Nell, is enamored of the servant, Dromio; he too has a twin, who happens to be in the service of the Syracusan Antipholus. Luce, then, makes the same mistake as her mistress and pursues the wrong Dromio. When this Dromio is reunited with his master, he jokes coarsely about Luce's girth:

Antipholus S.: Then she bears some breadth?
Dromio S.: No longer from head to foot than from hip to hip. She is spherical, like a globe; I could find out countries in her.
Ant. S.: In what part of her body stands Ireland?
Dro. S.: Marry, sir, in her buttocks. I found it out by the bogs.
Ant. S.: Where Scotland?
Dro. S.: I found it by the barrenness; hard in the palm of her hand.
Ant. S.: Where France?
Dro. S.: In her forehead, armed and reverted, making war against her heir.
Ant. S.: Where England?
Dro. S. : I looked for the chalky cliffs, but I could find no

[1] Warner 1987: 331.

Cover picture:
Paestan bell-crater. Museo Provinciale, Salerno.

TRAGEDY, COMEDY AND THE POLIS

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