Disguise and change of clothes in Aristophanic comedy

The object of this paper is to draw attention to a little-noticed phenomenon which is so ubiquitous in Aristophanic comedy that it arguably deserves to be considered one of the constitutive elements of the genre.

I must first define the phenomenon in question, which I will designate by the generic term reclothing. This I will take to mean the attiring of a character, or of the chorus, in body clothing different from, or additional to, that which he, she or they last wore. I thus exclude the mere removal of clothing, even where, as most notably in Wasps (408), this has the effect of revealing a spectacular inner costume; and I also exclude the redonning of clothing previously removed, unless (as happens repeatedly in Frogs) the character has been wearing other clothing in the meantime. I do not for a moment wish to deny that these are sometimes important phenomena in Aristophanes. In Lysistrata, for example, the removal and redonning of clothing – by the choruses over an extended period (614-1023) and by the two peace delegations when they first meet (1074-96) – is a major design feature of the second half of the play, with strong links to its language and imagery. But in this paper I wish to focus on one well-defined area.

A special subcategory of reclothing is disguise, which is reclothing performed for the purpose of deceiving others. Usually the deception consists in the assuming of a false identity, but not always. When Dicaeopolis in Acharnians clothes himself in rags borrowed from Euripides, he does indeed say that while the audience will know who he is, the chorus will not (440-4); in fact, however, the chorus know perfectly well that he is the man who enraged them by making a private peace with the Spartans and had later staked his head on his ability to persuade them that he was right to do so, and his objective in donning the rags is partly to arouse pity (384, cf. 413), partly to imbue himself with the persuasive power of their original wearer, the Euripidean Telephus (447, cf. 484 “having swallowed some Euripides”).

Reclothing is, of course, widely exploited in other Greek literary genres, starting right from Homer with the disguised deities of both epics, the taking of Achilles’ armour by Patroclus and then by Hector, the new armour made for Achilles himself, the many disguises and reclothings of Odysseus, down to the moment when he is clothed as himself again (Odyssey 23.153-163) and Penelope, instead of rushing to his arms, says coolly “I know very well what you looked like when you sailed away” and proceeds to test him by giving Eurycleia an impossible order about his bed (173-180). There is an important reclothing in our oldest tragedy, Aeschylus’ Persians, when the Persian Queen, having entered for the first time in a

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1 Stone 1981:000-000 has a lengthy discussion of costume change, but makes little attempt to generalize, except in regard to disguise.
3 Compare Ach. 492 (“offering your neck to the city”) with 318, 355, 358, 366.
4 On the thematics of Odysseus’ clothings and reclothings in the Odyssey, see Block 1985. I am indebted to Irene de Jong for this reference.
carriage in imperial state (155ff), enters for the second time alone, on foot, and plainly
dressed (598ff; see Taplin 1977:75-80, 98-100); and an equally important non-reclothing,
when the Queen is instructed to meet her son Xerxes on his return with new raiment (832-6)
and fails to do so, with the result that he re-enters his city and palace in rags (see Garvie
2009:318-320, 338-9). In the first play of the Oresteia, Agamemnon, who entered his palace
as a victorious (if barefooted) monarch, is brought out again at 1372 wearing the richly
ornamented robe that was actually his death-trap; in the second play, Orestes returns home
in disguise (but presumably appears at the end in his true identity), and Clytaemestra’s clothing
in the climactic scene may well be considerably less soigné than when we saw her
previously; and the third play famously ends with the reclothing of the Erinnyes, now the
Semnai Theai, in the purple robes (Eum. 1028) worn by metics in the Panathenaic procession
(see e.g. Bowie 1993:27-31). In Euripides the most striking instances are perhaps Telephus,
which inspired two Aristophanic disguise scenes, and Bacchae, where Dionysus remains in
disguise almost throughout the play, Cadmus and Teiresias appear in bacchic fawnskins, and
later the god who is disguised as a man induces the king of Thebes to disguise himself as a
woman. But in tragedy, reclothing remains an occasional resource; in the seven surviving
plays of Sophocles, there is only one clear instance – the ploy involving the so-called False
Merchant in Philoctetes. In the eleven surviving plays of Aristophanes, the number of
recloutings is, depending on the precise criteria applied, something between twenty-eight and
thirty-four (see the Appendix). And with one exception (to which we will come), in every
play the central character is reclothed at least once.

Let us examine the instances, leaving one difficult case to the end. It has been well shown by
Olson (2002:lxvii-lxviii) that the himation taken by Dicaeopolis when he goes to the party at
the end of Acharnians (1139) is a very different garment from the one he wore early in the
play; we have already noted the earlier scene in which Dicaeopolis disguised himself as a
Euripidean beggar. The Sausage-seller in Knights will certainly have new clothing in the
final scene (1316ff), appropriate to the trusted guide and mentor of the rejuvenated Demos
(himself now reclothed in “antique style”, 1331-2), since his old gear and equipment will be
dumped on Paphlagon when the latter is carried off to sell sausages at the city gates and
“have shouting matches with prostitutes and bathmen” (1395-1403). Philocleon in Wasps is
dressed by his son, much against his will, in an expensive Lydian mantle (1122-56).

5We have been given the impression that she is asleep (Cho. 881-2; see Sommerstein 1992:5-6 =
2010:150-4). Two vase paintings, both usually dated slightly earlier than the Oresteia (Bologna,
Museo Civico, by the Aegisthus Painter; Boston, Mus. of Fine Arts 91.227a and 226b, by the Berlin
Painter; see Prag 1985:140, 141-2 nos. C19, C22) suggest that the idea of Clytaemestra being roused
from sleep by the raising of the alarm when Orestes attacks Aegisthus was not originated by
Aeschylus: in these paintings Clytaemestra is shown with her hair disordered, or else done up in a
hurry with one lock hanging loose.

6It is possible that Creon wears royal robes in the closing scene of OT (1416ff), but there is no
indication anywhere in the text that Oedipus has removed his or had them stripped from him; the
reversal of their status will be sufficiently indicated by Oedipus’ blindness, Creon’s authoritative
speech, and the actors’ body-language (“the upright, vindicated Kreon and the cowed, condemned
Trygaeus in *Peace*, like Peisetaerus in *Birds*, will make his final appearance arrayed as a bridegroom; in Peisetaerus’ case it is his second reclothing, since he has already been magically supplied with a (very inadequate) suit of feathers (648-655, 801-8). The disguises of Euripides’ kinsman in *Thesmophoriazusae*, of Dionysus in *Frogs*, of Praxagora (and the other women) in *Ecclesiazusae*, are well known; while in *Wealth* Chremylus’ clothing, like everything else in his house (802-818), will have been transformed when Wealth entered the house after being healed.

That leaves Lysistrata. There is nothing directly in the text to signal any kind of costume change for her at any point; but there is reason to believe that there may have been one, and of a particularly spectacular nature. As Lewis (1955) was the first to show, Lysistrata’s name and her association with the Acropolis link her strongly to Lysimache, the incumbent priestess of Athena Polias – especially after Lysimache has been mentioned by name (554). The priestess, we are told by the *Suda* (αι60), would pay visits to newly married couples wearing the aegis of Athena, as if directly conferring the goddess’s blessing on the pair. Lysistrata, at the end of her play, is presiding over a mass renewal of marriage. Is she, perhaps, wearing that aegis? The proposal, first made in the PhD thesis of my student Eleanor Sibley (1995:61-62), gains plausibility from a curious fact about the hymn to all, or almost all, the gods that is sung in lines 1279-90. In this hymn various divinities are summoned to join in celebrating the newly-made peace – the Graces, Artemis, Apollo, Dionysus, Zeus, Hera – and Aphrodite is credited with having brought the peace about; but nothing whatever is said of Athena, who has been the most prominent divine presence almost throughout the play. That, so Sibley and I would say, is because Athena does not need to be summoned: she is already there⁷, represented by Lysistrata who thus, like Peisetaerus, is exalted to divine status.

I shall come back later to the question what may be the significance of this rule (as we may fairly call it) that the central character always gets reclothed, and of the one exception to it. At present I want to broaden my survey to cover the whole range of Aristophanic reclothings, not just those involving central characters.

Most of the reclothings we have considered so far are either disguises as previously defined, or else they serve to signalize and glorify the success of the hero’s plan: the odd one out here is Philocleon, who is an unusual kind of central character in that he is the object, rather than the agent, of the scheme for rescue from distress which is basic to all Aristophanic plots, and even more unusual in that he doesn’t actually want to be rescued – he would be more than happy to carry on judging, provided he could continue to do it his way, always voting guilty and always voting for the maximum penalty.

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⁷Logically the effect should have been produced earlier – as soon as Wealth entered Chremylus’ house at 252 – but this clearly did not in fact happen: when Carion accompanied his master and Wealth to the sanctuary of Asclepius, he was still wearing a garment full of holes (715).

⁸Cf. Ar. fr. 348 where a chorus decide not to summon the Muses or the Graces to join their dance “because they are right here, so our producer says”. 
Reclothing for glorification may be applied not only to the comic hero but also to other characters closely associated with him. When the Sausage-seller is transfigured, so too, even more spectacularly, is his master and pupil, Demos; the Sausage-seller, incidentally, had earlier on (*Knights* 881-3) ingratiated himself with Demos by giving him a two-shouldered chitōn (though it is not clear whether Demos actually puts it on). When Trygaeus appears as a bridegroom, the goddess-personification Opora (last heard of being given a bath, *Peace* 842-868) appears as his bride. And when Chremylus in *Wealth* is enriched, so too is his slave Carion; while Wealth himself, who appeared first as a squalid blind man, will look very different when he reappears (briefly at 626, and then again in 771ff) in the all-white garb that was obligatory (Aristeides 48.31) for those seeking healing at a sanctuary of Asclepius.

On one or two occasions a reclothing that was designed to be honorific, or at least beneficial, goes a little wrong, as it does in the case of Philocleon. We have briefly noted the transformation of Peisetaerus and Euelpides into what they themselves consider (*Birds* 801-8) to be cheap caricatures of birds – though it is striking that none of the many other characters who see them in this state (nor the chorus, who presumably know what a proper bird should look like) says anything disparaging about their appearance. Euelpides soon vanishes from the play; Peisetaerus, ridiculous though he may look, just goes on acquiring greater and greater power.

One reclothing, in *Knights*, unequivocally misfires, to the detriment of its instigator. After the Sausage-seller has won the favour of Demos by giving him a chitōn, Paphlagon tries to trump him by offering, presumably, a himation (890-1) – and rather than just hand it over (cf. 883 δίδωμι), he tries to drape it on Demos with his own hands. But Demos thrusts it away because it “has a ghastly smell of leather” (referring, of course, to Cleon’s alleged connection with the tanning trade), and the Sausage-seller tells him that Paphlagon was making a deliberate attempt to asphyxiate him (893).

If the hero and his associates can be reclothed for exaltation, the hero’s opponents can be reclothed for degradation, and this occurs in several plays. In the two earliest, *Acharnians* and *Knights*, these reclothings are coupled in contrast. While Dicaeopolis puts on a fine himation for the priest’s party, Lamachus is putting on his armour (*Ach.* 1118-34) for his expedition against Boeotian raiders on the northern frontier; there is, of course, nothing disparaging about hoplite armour as such, but Lamachus is far from pleased with his orders (not because of the danger but because of the cold – 1075, 1141 – and because he will miss the festival, 1079) and is a truly sorry sight when he returns wounded, to be mercilessly mocked by Dicaeopolis. In *Knights*, as already noted, the exaltation of the ex-Sausage-seller and of Demos is matched by the degradation of Paphlagon to become, literally⁹, a hot-dog salesman. At the other end of Aristophanes’ career, in *Wealth*, a Sykophant, who threatens to prosecute Wealth and all those he has benefited, is stripped of his expensive clothes (926-932) and dressed instead (935-6) in the threadbare garments formerly worn by the Honest

⁹For he is going to sell dogs’ and asses’ meat (*Knights* 1399).
Man (who had been intending to dedicate them to Wealth, 842-9, 937). One can hardly avoid also including the proboulos in Lysistrata, even though strictly speaking he does not meet our definition since he is never given new body-clothing but only accessories, first to make him look like a woman (a veil and a work-basket, 530-8) and then to make him look like a corpse (various head-adornments, apparently, 602-4).

One character who is not an enemy of the heroine, but whom she certainly causes to look a fool, is Blepyrus, the husband of Praxagora in Ecclesiazusae. The women take their husbands’ clothes, not from any hostility to them, but in order to make it possible for them to attend the Assembly (and difficult for the men to do so) and thus to facilitate their plan to take control of the city. But the men are then left with no clothes to put on except those of their wives; and Blepyrus is before our eyes in woman’s garb for 167 lines (311-477). He is to some extent rehabilitated (metaphorically as well as literally) later in the play, when he can pride himself on being “the General’s husband” (727) – but he may end up being the only man in Athens who, on the first day of the new regime, goes without a dinner (1133, 1177-8)!

One other character makes himself look a fool: Agathon in Thesmophoriazusae. Strictly speaking, his is not a case of reclothing, since we only ever see him in one outfit, that of a woman; he tells us, however (148-152), that he has put this on temporarily as an aid to composition. It certainly, in the eyes of the audience as well as in those of Euripides’ old kinsman, makes him look ridiculous, but he did it of his own volition for his own benefit.

One further scene does not quite fit into either of our categories of exaltation and degradation. This is the scene with the first Poet in Birds (904-953). He arrives wearing a thin, and torn, summer himation (a ληδάριον, 915). In words adapted from Pindar he cadges for a gift (926-930); Peisetaerus either guesses, or gathers from his gestures, that he wants warm clothing. Peisetaerus strips an unlucky slave attendant of his outer garment (σπολάς) and gives it to the poet; the latter makes it clear that he wants a chiton as well (936-945) and so the slave loses that too. Probably the Poet puts the two garments on once he has got them both; at any rate Peisetaerus remarks that now he has them, he has “already escaped” from the icy conditions of which he is still singing (954-5).

True disguise, with the aim of deception, occurs in four plays only – and in three of them (Acharnians, Thesmophoriazusae and Frogs) it has a connection, direct or indirect, with tragedy and specifically with Euripides. Euripides clearly had a reputation as a dramatist of intrigue and deception (cf. Thesm. 927 αἱ μυρίαι ... μηχαναί). So, for one thing, if he himself were to get into trouble (as he does in Thesmophoriazusae) he would probably try to devise some deceptive scheme; for another, a passionate admirer of his, like Dionysus at the beginning of Frogs, might well do likewise; and for a third, if an ordinary common man (or at any rate an ordinary comic hero), like Dicaeopolis, wanted to devise such a scheme, Euripides would be an obvious person to whom to turn for assistance. That not very ordinary woman, Praxagora, apparently needs no Euripidean input; but then after all, according to
Euripides\textsuperscript{10} (and indeed according to Praxagora herself, \textit{Eccl.} 237-8) women are the great deceivers anyway.

All of the disguises cross important boundaries of nature or society. Those in \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} and \textit{Ecclesiazusae} cross the boundary of gender; in \textit{Frogs} both Dionysus the god, and Xanthias the slave, take on the role of Heracles, who at the time when he went down to the underworld was neither a slave nor (yet) a god; in \textit{Acharnians}, if Dicaeopolis is masquerading as any person in particular it is Telephus, specifically the Telephus of Euripides, who is, depending on your point of view, either a hero or a fictional creation (so too in \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} when Euripides himself masquerades as Menelaus and then as Perseus). Interestingly, the same applies to both the known disguises in the lost Old Comedy about which we have most relevant information, Cratinus’ \textit{Dionysalexandros}, where Dionysus disguises himself first as a man (Paris) and then as an animal (a ram)\textsuperscript{11}.

In \textit{Acharnians} and \textit{Ecclesiazusae} there is only one act of disguise (though in the later play it involves a large number of persons), and it achieves the object for which it was designed. In \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} and \textit{Frogs} – and also in \textit{Dionysalexandros} – the disguise-plan keeps having to be changed, and it succeeds, if at all, only in a very qualified sense.

In \textit{Thesmophoriazusae} the original plan was a simple one: Agathon was to infiltrate the Thesmophoria, disguised as a woman (for him a very easy role to play), and speak in Euripides’ defence (90-91, 184-6). When Agathon refuses, Euripides’ old kinsman offers to step into the breach, and his offer is accepted. The kinsman’s speech, however, fails to persuade, and meanwhile somehow the secret leaks out and comes to the ears of Cleisthenes, who informs the women (574ff). Now the kinsman finds himself in mortal danger, and he is the one who needs help: Euripides tries to rescue him by impersonating his own characters, first Menelaus and then Perseus (with the kinsman as Helen and then Andromeda – but no reclothing is required, or possible, for him), but both times he fails, and in the end (1160ff) he has to cross-gender himself as well and become the old bawd Artemisia. Even then, while he succeeds in rescuing his kinsman, he fails in his original plan: he secures immunity from punishment by the women only by promising never to speak ill of them again (1160-7) – which, at least according to his comic stereotype, will rob him of most of his plot material!

In \textit{Frogs}, Dionysus’ original plan was also simple: to go down to Hades, disguised as Heracles, and bring up Euripides. It is never explained why Dionysus had to go in disguise. One might perhaps suppose that he hopes either to acquire Heracles’ prowess along with his costume (the case of Dicaeopolis would be analogous) or to frighten Pluto and his court into releasing Euripides; but the best explanation is that this is just what the comic Dionysus is like. He is certainly, in \textit{Frogs}, terrified by the mere mention of his real name (300) and gives many other indications of cowardice (285-308, 479-491). At any rate, once he and Xanthias arrive in the underworld, the plan gets into difficulties: every time there is danger, Dionysus

\textsuperscript{10}e.g. \textit{Med.} 422, \textit{Hipp.} 480-1, \textit{Andr.} 85, 911, \textit{Hec.} 884, \textit{IT} 1032.

\textsuperscript{11}For the second disguise, see \textit{POxy} 663 (\textit{Dionysalexandros} text. i K-A), lines 31-33.
asks Xanthias to take over the role of Heracles, and every time pleasure is in prospect he takes it back. To take over the role of Heracles means to put on his lionskin and take his club; to relinquish it means to hand these items over and take on the role of a slave by picking up the luggage which Xanthias had been carrying on his shoulder\textsuperscript{12}. Not counting Dionysus’ assumption of the Heracles costume before the start of the play, there are three changeovers, at 494-502, 522-533, and 580-9. Then when Xanthias, the Heracles of the moment, is arrested for stealing a dog, he turns the tables by offering his “slave” for examination under torture (615ff). Dionysus, who had all along been wearing his own regular costume under that of Heracles (cf. 45-47), tries to avoid this by declaring his true identity, but is not believed; so the net result of the cunning plan is that Dionysus gets a flogging (so does Xanthias, but he is used to it and, blow for blow, will suffer less). And it was all unnecessary: when Pluto and Persephone find they have Dionysus as a guest, they at once set him to judging the contest for the Throne of Tragedy, and we eventually learn (1414-6) that Pluto is happy, and apparently had always been happy, for Dionysus to take the winner back to earth if he wanted to. In \textit{Dionysalexandros} things are considerably worse for Dionysus as Paris unmasks him and sends him off to the Greeks – while keeping Helen for himself, so that Dionysus loses the reward that Aphrodite had promised him and ends up with nothing (except the loyalty of the satyrs, for what that is worth)\textsuperscript{13}.

Why do two of the plans succeed while the other two (or three, counting \textit{Dionysalexandros}) come to grief? I am inclined to think that the difference lies in the nature of their objectives. Euripides, and both the Dionysus characters, are out to get something for themselves. Euripides wants to avoid punishment for an offence against women of which he admits himself guilty (\textit{Thesm.} 85, 1166-7). The Dionysus of Cratinus’ play presumably wants to judge the contest of the three goddesses in order to get whichever is the best bribe he is offered. And the Dionysus of \textit{Frogs} wants to get back his beloved Euripides (it is not till line 1419 that he first says anything about safeguarding the future of Athens). Praxagora, by contrast, is genuinely concerned for the well-being of the city (\textit{Eccl.} 105-9, 173-208), and similarly Dicaeopolis is trying to persuade the Acharnians that Athens ought never to have gone to war (or ought never to have passed the Megarian decree, which he argues made war inevitable\textsuperscript{14}) and therefore ought now to end it.

Having now considered all the cases of reclothing in ten plays, I will return to the two questions that I left aside. \textit{Why} is reclothing so important in Old Comedy? We have seen two main patterns. On the one hand, reclothing is used to reward and honour the comic hero, and to degrade and disparage his or her enemies; on the other hand, it is used to further schemes of deception, and is perhaps particularly likely to be so used when the deceiver is (or, like Euripides, has a close connection with) Dionysus. The two patterns do not usually co-occur in the same play, but they do appear together in our earliest surviving comedy,

\textsuperscript{12}Thus it is only the person taking on the Heracles role who, according to our definition, can be said to reclothe.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{POxy} 663, lines 33-44.

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ach.} 530-9.
Acharnians. I would suggest that they both come down from the early days of the genre. The reward-and-punishment pattern looks like a folktale motif, the poor boy (in comedy it is more usually a poor old man) making good, winning riches and the hand of a princess (in Old Comedy it tends instead to be either a goddess\textsuperscript{15} or a pair of pornai\textsuperscript{16}), and turning the tables on those who had oppressed or obstructed him. The disguise pattern probably derives from myths about Dionysus, such as that which we find in the seventh Homeric Hymn (1-6, 42-53) where he takes the form of a young man and then of a lion, or those of his encounters with enemies such as Lycurgus or Pentheus; it probably strengthened its position as comedy came increasingly under the influence of tragedy, in which disguise and other forms of deception were prominent features from an early date. And by the late fifth century, almost no comedy was complete without one or the other variety of reclothing.

Almost no comedy – but not quite. The time has come to bring in the exception: Clouds. And the exception may help us to understand the rule: to understand not just where it came from, but also why it retained its vigour when its origins had probably been forgotten.

It is not clear whether there is any reclothing at all in Clouds. At least two characters remove garments. Strepsiades is told to take off his himation before entering Socrates’ school (497) and, after some protests, he does so. And at the end of the agon (1101-4) the defeated Better Argument throws away his himation like “a hoplite’s slave ... deserting in the field” (Dover 1968:228); we do not, for our present purpose, need to worry about who he is throwing it to, who he is deserting to, or how he makes his exit, but can merely note that he is not seen again.

Strepsiades, of course, is seen again, and at 856 (despite having returned briefly to his own house, 804-813) he is still without his himation. Nor is there any sign that he ever puts another one on; indeed when he is setting fire to the school, and someone asks who is doing this and he replies “that man whose himation you lot took away” (1498), he will be making his point much more forcibly if he is still wearing only his chiton – as is likely anyway since he is at this point engaged in very energetic activity and will shortly have to get down from the roof and chase Socrates and company away (1508-9).

There is also Pheidippides to consider. As a young man of affluent lifestyle (too affluent for the family budget), one would expect him to be wearing a himation when about to enter Socrates’ school; and one would expect him, like Strepsiades, to emerge from the school without it, just as he emerges with the pallid face characteristic of the school’s other inmates (1171). Strepsiades makes no comment on his clothing, but since he is pleased with his son’s weedy look, we may infer that at this moment all that concerns him is that Pheidippides has indeed lost his himation, once again there is no sign that he ever puts on

\textsuperscript{15}Opora in Peace, Basileia in Birds.

\textsuperscript{16}Ach. 1198-1221, Knights 1388-95, Eccl. 1138.
another; indeed Strepsiades’ statement (1465-6) that Chaerephon and Socrates “have cheated both you and me” will gain force if both of them have visibly had clothes stolen.\footnote{It may be significant that the contrasting ambitions of Pheidippides’ parents for their son are described in \textit{Clouds} 68-73 in terms of clothing. His mother’s wish is for him to drive a chariot to the Acropolis (probably as a homecoming victor in one of the great Games) wearing the fine robe called a \textit{xystis}; his father imagines him driving home a flock of goats, wearing a leather smock (\textit{diphtheria}). In the event, apparently, having beaten up his father and then tried to appease him by offering to beat up his mother too (1440-6), he will end up not wearing any outer garment at all.}

So it looks as though there is no reclothing for Strepsiades or Pheidippides, just as there is no real upturn in their fortunes, particularly in those of the older man who has undoubtedly been the central character of the play, never offstage for longer than the duration of a choral performance. Strepsiades ends the play worse off than any other Aristophanic protagonist. He has suffered the indignity of being beaten up by his only son, who is now estranged from him (and who has also deliberately made himself an enemy of the gods, 1469-71); he has put his creditors to flight, but he is as much in debt to them as he ever was, and has given them additional cause to hate him and seek revenge upon him; and in the process he has committed an act of blatant perjury (1227-36). In other words, as has long been seen, this is a very untypical and in some ways uncomic comedy, and the particular comic convention with which we are concerned would be quite inappropriate for it.

And that is the thing. In Aristophanic comedy (Dover 1968:liii) “the normal man ... takes as much as he can of song, dance, food, drink, sex, sleep, and good company” – the seven comic happinesses, as one might call them. And we can add two more to the list. One is honour, recognition, reputation, whatever you want to call it, and the other is the material good things of life – for nobody ends a comedy rejoicing in being poor (similarly in Menander the normal rule is that if you get a bride, you also get an outsize dowry: Schaps 1979:99). Of these material good things, clothing is the only one that everyone, almost all the time, carries around with them, and it is thus a very convenient theatrical shorthand for general affluence. So the successful protagonist is typically a well-clad protagonist – and better clad than he or she was to start with. And this is the case with all Aristophanes’ truly successful protagonists except for Dionysus (who, as a god, lives by entirely different rules) and Praxagora (whom we never see in the second half of her play, though we do get told that among the happy people of Athens she is the happiest of all, \textit{Eccl.} 1112-3). This and its converse, the degradation of the protagonist’s enemies, are the dominant functions of reclothing in Aristophanic comedy. The other theme, disguise, serves more to connect comedy with its patron god and with its sister genre. But both alike serve to reinforce the comic ethic, which is, as I have put it elsewhere (Sommerstein 1996:63 = 2009:201), that of seeking enjoyment for oneself and others, as inclusively as possible. Those who follow this ethic are likely to maximize their own enjoyment of the nine happinesses, and their apparel will proclaim the fact; not so those who seek enjoyment for themselves at others’ expense (like Strepsiades and Pheidippides, in their different ways), or who (like Socrates) reject enjoyment for themselves and try to deprive others of it as well.
And so, whenever Old Comedy truly is comic, it seems to involve reclothing, in one or more of the varieties that we have studied. The subject will repay further study, as will the closely related topic of clothes-removal; but I hope to have convinced readers that in Aristophanes, and probably in his comic contemporaries too, reclothing is something that matters.

**APPENDIX: table of Aristophanic reclothings**

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<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ach. 430ff</td>
<td><strong>Dicaeopolis</strong></td>
<td>Telephus costume</td>
<td>disguise</td>
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<td>Ach. 1118ff</td>
<td>Lamachus</td>
<td>armour</td>
<td>degradation</td>
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<td><strong>Dicaeopolis</strong></td>
<td>himation</td>
<td>exaltation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knights 881-6 (?)</td>
<td>Demos</td>
<td>two-shouldered chiton</td>
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<td>Knights 890-2</td>
<td>Demos</td>
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<td>Knights 1316</td>
<td>Agoranitus</td>
<td>(no details)</td>
<td>exaltation</td>
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<td>Knights 1331</td>
<td>Demos</td>
<td>“resplendent in antique get-up”</td>
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<td>Knights 1408</td>
<td>Paphlagon</td>
<td>Sausage-seller’s gear</td>
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<td>Wasps 1122ff</td>
<td><strong>Philocleon</strong></td>
<td>kaunakes (accepted under protest)</td>
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<td>Trygaeus</td>
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<td>Peace 1329</td>
<td>Opora</td>
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<td>Birds 270 (?)</td>
<td>Tereus</td>
<td>military dress (see Dunbar 1995 ad loc.)</td>
<td>exaltation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birds 801</td>
<td>Peisetaerus and Euelpides</td>
<td>feathers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birds 933ff</td>
<td>Poet</td>
<td>himation and chiton</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td>Birds 1693ff</td>
<td><strong>Peisetaerus</strong></td>
<td>bridegroom’s apparel</td>
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<td>(Lys. 532ff)</td>
<td>Proboulos</td>
<td>feminine accessories</td>
<td>degradation</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Lys. 602ff)</td>
<td>Proboulos</td>
<td>funeral accessories</td>
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<td>Lysistrata</td>
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<td>Agathon</td>
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<td>degradation</td>
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<td>Thesm. 249ff</td>
<td>Kinsman</td>
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<td>Euripides</td>
<td>Menelaus costume</td>
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<td>Euripides</td>
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<td>disguise</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Frogs 1ff)</td>
<td>Dionysus</td>
<td>Heracles costume (lionskin)</td>
<td>disguise</td>
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18. This paper was originally presented to the 20th anniversary symposium of the *Collegium Classicum Amstelodamense, cui nomen pulchra Laverna*, on 18 January 2013. I am most grateful to Laverna for inviting me to give it, and to all who helped me with their comments and suggestions.

19. Protagonists are shown in bold.

20. It is not clear whether the garment is actually put on.

21. This and the next are marginal cases, since the Proboulos gets no clothing but only accessories (though *multiple* accessories, each time).

22. When Agathon appears for the first time, he is already wearing the garments.

23. When Dionysus appears for the first time, he is already wearing the costume.
Frogs 494ff  Xanthias  Heracles costume (lionskin)  disguise
Frogs 524ff  Dionysus  Heracles costume (lionskin)  disguise
Frogs 589  Xanthias  Heracles costume (lionskin)  disguise
Eccl. 275ff  Praxagora and all other women present  men’s apparel  disguise
Eccl. 311ff  Blepyrus  woman’s krokōtos  –
Eccl. 520  Blepyrus  his own clothes  –
Wealth 625-6  Wealth  white clothes (as Asclepius pilgrim)  exaltation
Wealth 802ff  Carion  new, more expensive clothes  exaltation
Wealth 935ff  Sykophant  the Honest Man’s old clothes  degradation
Wealth 959ff  Chremylus  new, more expensive clothes  exaltation

References