

## SHORTER NOTES

A NOTE ON ARISTOPHANES, *KNIGHTS* 295\*

## ABSTRACT

*This note discusses the meaning of the word κοπροφορεῖν at Aristophanes, Knights (= Eq.) 295 and proposes a translation.*

**Keywords:** Aristophanes; *Knights*; comedy; dung; hapax legomenon; compound verbs

[Πα.] διαφορήσω σ', εἴ τι γρύξει.  
[Αλ.] κοπροφορήσω σ', εἰ λαλήσεις.

[Paph.] One peep from you and I'll rip you apart!  
[Saus.] Any blather from you and I'll cart you off like a load of dung!  
Ar. Eq. 294–5 (transl. J. Henderson)

Henderson's translation of κοπροφορήσω, in his Loeb edition of *Knights*, stands at odds with the conclusion he had earlier reached in his survey of comic obscenity. Whereas Henderson initially saw in the word an allusion to forced anal sex ('a threat by the Sausage-Seller to bugger Cleon'), his later rendering is literal.<sup>1</sup> In this note, I review the merits of the two interpretations.

The scholia vetera (Σ Eq. 295a [I–II], 295c Jones) explain κοπροφορήσω, a hapax legomenon, as 'I'll fill you with dung' (κόπρου σε πληρώσω) or 'I'll carry away your dung as I beat you' (τὴν κόπρον σου ἐκφορήσομαι τύπτων σε [that is, 'I'll beat the shit out of you'; cf. Eq. 69–70, *Lys.* 440]) or as a reference to tanners treating hides with dung (ὡς βυρσοδέψη, ὅτι κόπρω τὰς βύρσας ἐθεράπευον) or as a reference to cooks cleaning faeces from entrails (οἱ μάγειροι γὰρ τὰ ἔγκατα πλύνοντες τῆς ἀπ' αὐτῶν πληροῦνται κόπρου). None of these suggestions is wholly convincing and the commentators' lack of consensus reflects the tricky nature of the word they are trying to clarify. In addition to the fact that κοπροφορήσω appears only at Eq. 295 as well as the general plasticity of -έω compounds (of which Aristophanes takes advantage to coin several poetic and humorous words), the difficulty in understanding the Sausage-Seller's threat stems from the pairing of an accusative (σε) with a verb that

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<sup>1</sup> For the word as an allusion to forced anal sex, see J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse. Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (New Haven, 1991<sup>2</sup>), 193. Compare the translations of J. van Leeuwen, *Aristophanes Equites* (Leiden, 1900), 57 ('in sterquilinum tanquam merdam te detrudam'), A.H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes Knights* (Warminster, 1981), 39 ('I'll fling you on the dung-heap'), J. Wilkins, *The Boastful Chef. The Discourse of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy* (Oxford, 2000), 193 ('I'll carry you out on a shit shovel'), S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter. A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge, 2008), 258 ('I'll drag you through the shit').

already has an internal object, namely κόπρος.<sup>2</sup> The language is stretched in this way to mimic Paphlagon's threat from the preceding line (διαφορήσω σε).

The comparable compound verb κοπραγωγεῖν—also a hapax legomenon—is suggestive of anal intercourse at *Lys.* 1174. There, κοπραγωγῆν (the Doric form of κοπραγωγεῖν) appears in a series of jokes implying that the Spartans have a predilection for anal sex (*Lys.* 1148, 1162–4) and where the mention of dung is therefore apposite although crude. This interpretation is consistent with other agricultural imagery in Aristophanes that symbolizes sexual intercourse and/or physical assault.<sup>3</sup> If we take κοπροφορεῖν in this sense, as Henderson did in *The Maculate Muse*, then the Sausage-Seller would be threatening Paphlagon with rape. In further support of this reading, there is a thinly veiled threat of sexual violation at *Eq.* 364, where the Sausage-Seller promises to stuff Paphlagon's 'arse' (πρωκτός) like a sausage. Understanding κοπροφορήσω σε as a threat of rape would thus not only agree with the figurative meaning of the similar verb κοπραγωγῆν from *Lysistrata*, but would also be in tune with the Sausage-Seller's later arse-stuffing threat as well as the overall sexual tenor of the main contest of *Knights*.<sup>4</sup> That said, it would require Aristophanes' spectators to identify and unpack an image for which (unlike in *Lysistrata*, where the line prior to that containing κοπραγωγῆν has an anticipatory agricultural/sexual double entendre) they have not been primed.

The literal translation of κοπροφορεῖν is 'to carry dung', with an internal object.<sup>5</sup> Comparable verbal φορεῖν derivatives in Aristophanes with internal objects are, in alphabetical order: ἀμφορεαφορεῖν (fr. 310 K.–A.), ἀστραπηφορεῖν (*Pax* 722), διφροφορεῖν (*Av.* 1552), θυλακοφορεῖν (fr. 830 K.–A.), κροκωτοφορεῖν (*Lys.* 44, 219), κωδωνοφορεῖν (*Av.* 842, 1160), λυχνοφορεῖν (*Lys.* 1003), μιτροφορεῖν (*Thesm.* 163), ξυροφορεῖν (*Thesm.* 218), πηλοφορεῖν (*Av.* 1142, *Eccl.* 310) and πλινθοφορεῖν (*Av.* 1139, 1149). All these words rely on the initial-noun element of the compound to communicate what is being carried, transported or transferred. In several instances, the meaning of the verb extends to something like 'to act in an official/ritual capacity as the wearer/bearer of x'. These verbs do not take an additional object, although in one instance the internal object is repeated (τὸν δίφρον γε διφροφόρει τονδὶ λαβῶν, *Av.* 1552). Occasionally in Aristophanes, however, verbal φορεῖν-derivatives with internal accusatives also take a supplementary direct object. Thus we find 'they bring jars etc. as gifts' (δωροφοροῦσιν ὕρχας κτλ., *Vesp.* 675–6) or 'getting three drachmas as pay' (μισθοφοροῦντας τρεῖς δραχμάς, *Ach.* 602), 'getting barley groats as pay' (μισθοφοροῦντες ἄλφριτα, *Pax* 477) and 'getting money as pay' (μισθοφοροῦντες χρήματα, *Eccl.* 206). Following that schema, the threat in *Knights* would mean 'I

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of -έω compounds in Aristophanes, see A. Willi, *The Languages of Aristophanes. Aspects of Linguistic Variation in Classical Attic Greek* (Oxford, 2003), 122–6. For the formation of -έω compounds in early Greek, see E.F. Tucker, *The Creation of Morphological Regularity. Early Greek Verbs in -έω, -άω, -όω, -ύω and -ίω* (Göttingen, 1990), 150–80. And for -έω compounds in classical Greek, see A. Pompei and N. Grandi, 'Complex -έω verbs in ancient Greek. A case study at the interface between derivation and compounding', *Morphology* 22 (2012), 399–416.

<sup>3</sup> For agricultural images denoting sexual or violent acts in Aristophanes, see J. Taillardat, *Les images d'Aristophane. Études de langue et de style* (Paris, 1965), 351–2.

<sup>4</sup> For the 'male-on-male orientation of the play's sexual humour', see J. Robson, 'Whoring, gaping and hiding meat: the humour of male-on-male sexual insults in Aristophanes' *Knights*', *Archimède* 5 (2018), 24–34.

<sup>5</sup> The noun κοπροφορά denotes the result of the carrying action, namely a pile or mound of dung (*IG* XII 7.62). The verbal form is most likely denominative; see Tucker (n. 2), 155.

will carry you as [if you were] dung', likening Paphlagon in this way to manure (cf. ἄνθρωπος Κόπρειος, 'man from [the Attic deme of] Kopros' ≈ 'dung man', *Eq.* 899) and, secondarily, the Sausage-Seller to a dung-collector. In effect, compound -έω verbs often denote frequentative professional activities, of which dung collecting was an instance.<sup>6</sup> According to Pollux (*Onom.* 7.134.1–10), moreover, these professional dung-collectors (called varyingly κοπρολόγοι, κοπροφόροι, κοπραγωγοί) were commonly joked about in Old Comedy, so a reference in *Knights* would not be out of place.<sup>7</sup> Finally, given that dung-collectors would transport their product outside of the city's limits ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 50.2, both a sanitary measure and a matter of bringing the nutrient-rich manure closer to farms [Hom. *Od.* 17.297–9]), we might just see in the Sausage-Seller's threat a foreshadowing of Paphlagon's expulsion at the end of the play (*Eq.* 1395–401), where the antagonist is pushed out to the fringes of the city.<sup>8</sup> These are the arguments in favour of a more literal understanding of κοπροφορήσω which, on balance, I feel is the more plausible of the two main interpretations discussed here.

For the original spectators of *Knights*, an appropriate gesture would likely have illustrated what exactly the Sausage-Seller was threatening. Modern readers, however, are left either to pick between the interpretations of κοπροφορήσω presented above or attempt a translation that combines them:

[Paph.] I'll rip you apart if you so much as mumble a word!  
 [Saus.] I'll screw you from here to the dung heap if you keep blabbering!

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## NEGLECTED EVIDENCE FOR ARISTOTLE, *HISTORIA ANIMALIVM* 7(8) IN THE WORKS OF ANCIENT HOMERIC SCHOLARS

### ABSTRACT

*This brief article aims to supplement Stefan Schnieders's presentation of the evidence for Historia animalium 7(8)—that is, Book 7 according to the manuscript tradition, Book 8*

<sup>6</sup> For compound -έω verbs denoting professional activities, compare e.g. στεφανηπλοκεῖν ('to be a garland-weaver', *Thesm.* 448), σκυτοτομεῖν ('to be a shoe-maker', *Plut.* 162), πλινθουργεῖν ('to be a brick-maker', *Plut.* 514); further examples in Willi (n. 2), 124. For professional dung-collecting, see O. Jacob, *Les esclaves publics à Athènes* (Liège and Paris, 1928), 13–19, E.J. Owens, 'The koprologoi at Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.', *CQ* 33 (1983), 44–50, S.E. Alcock, J.F. Cherry and J.L. Davis, 'Intensive survey, agricultural practice and the classical landscape of Greece', in I. Morris (ed.), *Classical Greece. Ancient Histories and Modern Archaeologies* (Cambridge, 1994), 137–70, S.D. Olson, *Aristophanes Peace* (Oxford, 1998), 69, A. Bagordo, *Fragmenta comica Aristophanes fr. 675–820. Incertarum fabularum fragmenta. Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Heidelberg, 2017), 18–20.

<sup>7</sup> Dung-collectors are explicitly mentioned in Ar. *Vesp.* 1184 and *Pax* 9.

<sup>8</sup> Compare the insult κάθαρμα that likens an addressee to the waste-product cast aside after religious purification, and thus by extension to an outcast: Ar. *Plut.* 454, Dem. 18.128, 21.185 (with D.M. MacDowell, *Demosthenes Against Meidias* [Oxford, 1990], ad loc.), Din. 1.16, Men. *Sam.* 481 (with A.H. Sommerstein, *Menander Samia* [Cambridge, 2013], ad loc.).