

Aristophanic Audiences; participants, collaborators, witnesses

By

Alexandra Payne

**Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Humanities with Classical Studies
X0550250**

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Abstract:

In this dissertation I will argue that Aristophanes used particular devices and techniques to develop the poet-audience relationship, looking at language in the texts of the plays, dramaturgy and stagecraft, and how he was able to tie these elements in to the audiences' experience, both in the theatre and out of it. Consideration is given to the time during which the plays were performed and in what context, in particular the Dionysiac Festivals, the Peloponnesian War and the democracy.

In the first Chapter the context and space within which the performances occurred and how this developed or hindered the poet-audience relationship will be investigated. In particular, how and why the audience were there, how the space was organised and who did the audience comprise of. This lays the foundations of the argument so that the audience as 'people' can be better understood. Chapter Two drills down into the audience to look at individuals and how Aristophanes used particular techniques to keep his mass audience engaged whilst caricaturing these people. The audience was highly stratified but also formed distinct groups, which will be the focus of Chapter Three, where I will look at how Aristophanes considered each of these groups whilst maintaining a cohesive relationship with his audience as a whole. Finally, Chapter Four looks at how Aristophanes managed the relationship using stagecraft and how audiences were drawn into the physical performance itself.

I expect to find that Aristophanes was creating very specific relationships between himself and the audience, and also between various factions within audience, and that he did so by using his skill as a comic playwright so that his productions would stand the greatest chance of winning first prize in the dramatic festivals. He was creating a relationship based on mutual need of himself and his audience, not only in terms of the plays themselves but also as a man of his own time, in touch with his comic art and real life itself.

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INTRODUCTION

The key theme of this dissertation is about the relationship between Aristophanes and his audience, and how and why they reacted to one another, either as individuals or as a group. I aim to show that Aristophanes was acutely aware of the importance of this relationship to his particular genre, and so to elicit the responses most useful to him, he used certain devices to create different levels of participation and experiences for his multi-layered audience, whether as individuals or as a spectator group.

As the Athenian experience can only be vicariously imagined by anyone other than those present at the original performances, I am using the surviving translations of the plays, testimony by others and physical artefacts and archaeology, to piece together the evidence that we are given directly or indirectly of what was said or took place at the festivals and theatre in order to give a sense of the relationship and how it was experienced by both sides.

I will use key themes, discussed in more detail in the following chapter synopsis, to evaluate Aristophanes' methods to show that he was often manipulating the relationship in very specific ways to elicit very specific responses and levels of participation from his audience. The role of the audience will be evaluated in terms of what they may have expected of Aristophanes. The audience's role could switch from witness, collaborator and informer to judge, official or unofficial. I will hope to show that Aristophanes carefully manipulated the audience into whichever role best suited his purposes at specific times.

This investigation will not be an attempt to try and establish Aristophanes' own political views and values, but instead how he utilised and drew in contemporary political and

social issues to obtain his audiences support (after all this was a competition). As Wiles states, there appeared to be an ‘unusually close relationship’¹ between Greek playwrights and their audience and the broader context of the plays, their surroundings and most importantly the words and actions of the plays themselves may hold the key to this.

My approach will involve a detailed analysis of four of Aristophanes’ plays, looking in particular for any techniques employed that involve the audience or material of significance to the ‘audience experience’. The selected plays are *Knights*, performed at the Lenaea in 424BCE achieving first place; *Wasps* from the Lenaea of 422BCE; *Peace* from the City Dionysia of 421BCE and finally *Birds* after a seven-year gap performed at the City Dionysia of 414BCE, the three latter plays achieving second place². These four plays also occurred over a ten-year period, midway through the Peloponnesian War, that saw Athens’ fortunes range from victory, defeat and attempts at peace, and also when there appeared to be larger-than-life characters on the scene. My analysis should also highlight any outstanding features of the plays, such as striking costumes, noise and use of space that will add to the audience spectacle. The wonderful thing about Aristophanes’ work is that we can tie up specific dramatic occurrences and dialogue with real life events and people that are reported independently and through different genres, which makes the use of near and contemporary primary sources invaluable and saves supposition and tenuous links between poetry and real life. These primary sources range from other works of Aristophanes, scholia, fragments, other literary, historical and philosophical works, which often provide first-hand experience of the festivals and theatre-going in general at that time. Archaeological evidence will be used where

¹ David Wiles, *Greek Theatre Performance: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.173.

² Hornblower S and Spawforth A (eds), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.164.

available to see if the visual art matches what is being described via the texts.

Aristophanes was writing during a time of great literary output that has survived for us today, although we must be careful with these sources too. Each piece of primary evidence comes with its own constraints; the author's own spin and vision of reality (particularly in a time of social and political upheaval and uncertainty) so this must be taken into consideration. Non-contemporary ancient authors also pose a problem inasmuch as their evidence and sources may be subject to the same principles and problems that we face today, so just because they are old they may not be correct. The original texts themselves, whether translated or not, present difficulties as they do not contain separate and clear stage direction, or any exposition of obscure jokes, people and places, some of which have been lost along with other cultural and contemporary knowledge relevant to the time. The translations used are subject to the translators own interpretations and a certain amount of corruption and omissions during the original copying, which the addition of scholia may help or detrimentally influence renderings.

The subject of audience in modern scholarship is fragmented and often forms part of larger discussions on other topics that deal with 5th Century Athenian drama and theatre. Therefore the range and varied nature of the modern scholarship will be quite large so that I can sift out the relevant information. There is a wealth of material to choose from as there have been some in-depth studies into the stagecraft, language, dramaturgy, political and cultural influences of Aristophanes in the past thirty years, not neglecting some older works that still hold relevance today. However, each of these are subject to the trends and values of their own time, so caution must be taken to not transfer these values to Aristophanes' time.

To begin Chapter One will look at the overall context of the Aristophanic theatrical experience, and will address the place of comedy in its festival context, looking at such details as the composition of the audience and their seating arrangements, to see if Aristophanes' work makes it apparent who and what these people were, how important they were to him and vice-versa. This brief analysis will be based on various arguments that have already been produced on the subject and any hints gained from the original texts to see if audience composition elicited any specific responses or use of theatrical devices by Aristophanes. This is particularly relevant in the argument as to whether women attended the comic performances, especially as the four plays I am concentrating on do not contain female characters of any importance. This begs the question if Aristophanes played to his female audience at all, if there was indeed one. Other relevant questions will be asked; which festival was the play being performed at, what time of year was this, the position and time of the comic performance in relation to other performances, and how would any of these affected the audience. This chapter will also make use of the many and varied primary sources, including Aristophanes himself, plus the collections of Csapo and Slater, and Rusten's valuable truncated translation of the *Poetae Comici Graeci*.

Chapter Two specifically looks at Aristophanes' treatment of individuals and how this shaped his relationship with them and the rest of the audience. I aim to show that the democracy plays a very important role in Aristophanes' use and interpretation of freedom of speech in shaping his relationship with the audience. I will see if political changes outside of the theatre could have an influence on the relationship inside it, and if Aristophanes had any influence away from the world of the festival. The 'us and them'

relational aspect will also be investigated to show how the mocking of certain individuals could create a collaborative relationship between poet and the mass audience, creating a *Schadenfreude* effect that did not appear to venture any further than the boundaries of theatre.

The third chapter will look at the audience as a group and how this affected Aristophanes' methods of communication and manipulation. The level of audience intelligence is key to identifying which devices Aristophanes was employing at specific times. The spectator role of the judges will be assessed to see if Aristophanes treated them any differently from the mass audience – the unofficial judges. Particular dramatic devices such as metatheatre and paratragedy will be analysed to see what role they played in shaping the poet-audience relationship. I aim to show that Aristophanes was a master craftsman in catering for his entire audience in sometimes subtle and other times, blatant ways to manipulate a response.

Chapter Four will be a limited study on the more physical aspects of the performance and how this affected the relationship. I will look at how Aristophanes used various mediums to communicate and shape the relationship through noise, costuming and staging. There is not enough scope to do an in-depth study here, so I have concentrated on four areas in particular to give a very cursory sense of how these elements were used in conjunction with the vocal performance of the play; noise, phallic costumes, portrait-masks and theatrical space, on and off the stage.

In conclusion I expect to find clear indications of Aristophanes' craftsmanship in evidence and that he did employ various techniques to not only draw in his audience but also as a means of winning their laughter and their support. Without other 5th Century BCE works of comedy to compare with, it is difficult to see if his style was as edgy and subversive as

it sometimes appears against the democratic and war-sensitive backdrop of his productions. I aim to show that comedy was a two-sided, participatory experience between the playwright, the actors and performer on stage, the judges and the general spectators of the audience. This much we can extract from the available evidence, and although we cannot assume from this a full understanding of the comic experience of the ancient Athenians, we can appreciate it for its art-form, the techniques used to create it and the pleasure it still brings us now. I will ask how aware Aristophanes was of these factors and did they form part of his dramatic and comic plan in the same way that his dramatic and theatrical techniques appeared to. If ‘...we aim to understand Aristophanic comedy as a fifty-century discourse, then it will follow that our interpretation needs to embrace questions about Aristophanes’ fifth-century audience as well.’³ My investigation will turn this statement around so that instead we hopefully learn what the comedic discourse tells us about the audience and their relationship to the playwright.

³ Malcolm Heath, 'Aristophanes and the Discourse of Politics', in *The City as Comedy*, ed. by Gregory W. Dobrov (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 230-249, p.243.

CHAPTER ONE

FESTIVAL, SPACE AND COMPOSITION

In this chapter I will show that the overall experience of attending an Aristophanic performance was something that the poet gave great consideration to. The evidence reveals that Aristophanes was very aware of external factors, such as the spectacle of the festival, the theatrical space and who was actually watching his plays, the things that made the experience complete for the audience. By looking for these in Aristophanes' texts and other primary source evidence, the context in which the relationship between the two parties exists becomes clearer. Modern scholarship provides useful debate in the areas where the primary sources are unclear or uncertain.

It is significant to understand how important attending the festivals were to the Greeks. A statement in Xenophon's Socratic dialogue between the philosopher and Critobulus, gives us a glimpse of what lengths some members of a comic audience would go to and the appeal that comedy had in order to draw such dedication from its spectators.

I will bear you witness that if it is to go and see a party of players performing in a comedy, you will get up at cock-crow, and come trudging a long way, and ply me volubly with reasons why I should accompany you to see the play.⁴

If the Old Oligarch is to be believed then Athenian festivals represented a time for Athenian inhabitants and beyond, to kick back and step away from their normal responsibilities.⁵ We only need to look at the number of festivals held during the Athenian calendar to give a sense of their importance and diversity which Cartledge describes as occasions that were democratic as well as religious and allowed all citizens

⁴ Xenophon, *The Economist*, e-book edn, trans. by H. G. Dakyns (online at www.gutenberg.org: Project Gutenberg, 1998), <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1173/1173-h/1173-h.htm>>. 2.6.

⁵ Pseudo-Xenophon (Old Oligarch), *Constitution of the Athenians* E. C. Marchant, Ed., *Pseudo-Xenophon (Old Oligarch), Constitution of the Athenians*, (1984), , in *Perseus Digital Library* <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0158>> [accessed 06/04/2014]. 2. 18.

the chance to ‘...participate equally on these relaxing and renovating holy-days’.⁶ This was particularly true of comedy, even within the religious context of the festivals it not only had a special relationship with Dionysus (which is discussed further in Chapter Four) but as Halliwell states, there seemed to be a ‘...special relation, in the festive context, between the poets of old comedy and their public’⁷ which revolved around the fact that the poets could speak openly and politically to their audience, and opens up discussion about the high audience participatory role in comic performances.

The demographic of Athens at this time would have made for an interesting and dynamic crowd. Thucydides states that most of the Attic population moved into the city walls⁸ during the initial years of the Peloponnesian War, ‘...sadly and reluctantly...[preparing]...to change their whole way of life...’⁹ creating a diverse audience who were more able to get to the Theatre of Dionysus than was usual in peace time. The farmers like Dikaiopolis and Trygaeus whom Aristophanes appeared to champion, would have been free to attend, cooped up in the city walls instead of tending their land. The terrible effects of the plague that wiped out so many living there just a few years before the production of the *Knights* would have reduced the normal viewing audience as would the war itself, taking its toll on the number of fighting-age male citizens. Rusten does suggest however that the Athenian victory at Pylos in 425BCE meant that the demographic may have started to shift back to the countryside as early as 424BCE¹⁰. This diaspora may have been the reason for victory for the *Knights* in the same year with

⁶ Paul Cartledge, *Aristophanes and His Theatre of the Absurd* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1990), p.6.

⁷ Stephen Halliwell, 'Aristophanic Satire', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 14 (1984), 6-20
<<http://www.jstor.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/stable/3508299>>, p.20.

⁸ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Trans. Warner, Rex edn (London: Penguin Group, 1954), 2.14.

⁹ Thucydides, 2.16.

¹⁰ *The Birth of Comedy: Texts, Documents, and Art from Athenian Comic Competitions, 486-280*, ed. by Jeffrey Rusten, trans. by Jeffrey Henderson, David Konstan, Ralph Rosen, Jeffrey Rusten and Niall W. Slater (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2011), p.293.

Aristophanes still playing to a packed audience including the rural citizens, happy that they could soon go home. The fluidity and instability of the audience make-up during this time must have had an impact on the relationship between them and the poet. This can be seen in the earlier of the plays where plots were dealing with domestic issues, including real-life occupations that would have represented the audience-body of that time. Aristophanes had his comic heroes representing farmers such as Dikaiopolis and Trygaeus, old men like Philocleon who attended the Law Courts and food merchants like the Sausage-seller. These were all representative of the citizen body that was in Athens at this time and not away fighting in the war. Aristophanes was giving them a familiar world on-stage and aligning himself with them away from it.

The two festivals themselves threw up variations in the type of audience that attended. The Lenaea, performed in January and believed to be held in the Theatre of Dionysus by Aristophanes' time¹¹ was only open to local Athenians, as Aristophanes was to testify in his *Acharnians* of 425 BCE;

This time Cleon will not accuse me of defaming the city in the presence of foreigners;
for we are by ourselves; it's the Lenaeon competition, and no foreigners are here yet...(502-6)

A 'locals only' festival made sense, as travel would have been difficult at this time of year, Aristophanes having told us that the foreigners were not there *yet* but presumably would as soon as they were able, and it also helps us to understand the differences noted between the four plays used in this investigation. We can sense the more local relevance of *Knights* and *Wasps* because of their subject matter, the Athenian assembly and law courts respectively, neither of which may have had any relative comic value or interest to outsiders but would have been pertinent to the local community. Comedy appeared to

¹¹ Edith Hall, *The Theatrical Cast of Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.29.

take a more parochial approach to the festivals than tragedy, which Green suggests helped to ‘...reinforce the bonds within the community through this sense of sharing the occasion, through sharing laughter at and about people one knew...’¹² This perhaps explains why there was more comedy performed at the Lenaea than at the City Dionysia, along with the colder weather which must have made comedy more appealing than long, drawn out tragedies. McLeish’s analysis of the ratios between comedy and tragedy at the different festivals leads him to an alternative argument that the colder winter Lenaea resulted in less dense or complex stories which ‘...would make the audiences’ response to the comedy far different...’¹³ Although he acknowledges the differences, his argument fails to address the fierce satirical nature of the local plays which surely made them as complex as the more fantastical plays of the Dionysia.¹⁴

Thucydides states that the City Dionysia was held ‘...at the very end of winter and the beginning of spring...’¹⁵ and on a much grander scale than the Lenaea, because of the addition of foreigners. This is pointed out in *Peace* by the slaves making dung-cakes, who discuss an Ionian in the audience (45) and when Trygaeus points out that he can see foreigners before him (297)¹⁶. With the admission of outsiders, this festival must have been a spectacle to impress and reinforce Athenian superiority. The City Dionysia promoted more tragic performances than the Lenaea and we also know about the pre and post celebrations of the festivals but we cannot be sure how the comedy fitted into the festival programme. The audience experience would be greatly affected by this; did they doggedly sit through three tragedies, one satyr and then be presented with a

¹² J. R. Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.11.

¹³ Kenneth McLeish, *The Theatre of Aristophanes* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), pp.26-7.

¹⁴ Kenneth McLeish, p.35.

¹⁵ Thucydides, 5.19.

¹⁶ Aristophanes, *Peace*, trans. by A. H. Sommerstein (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1985).

comedy late each day as Hall¹⁷ suggests, or were the comedies performed on day two of the festival, following the processions of the first day and preceding the tragedies on day three as Wiles proposes.¹⁸ For example, in *Birds* we are told the benefits of being a bird...

...if one of you spectators were winged, and if he was hungry and bored with the tragic performances, he could have flown out of here, gone home, had lunch, and then when he'd filled himself up, flown back here again to see us. (786-90)¹⁹

This suggests that Hall's option is correct. However it does still raise the question of whether the same audience attended each day's proceedings and indeed if all the audience stayed all day. I can suggest two prohibitive factors, the first being cost. Unfortunately, none of the primary sources tell us how much entry to the theatre was during Aristophanes' time and only hints if the '*theorikon*', a fund that provided for all citizens to attend the theatre, was available at that time. Scholia on Demosthenes' *Philippics* 1.1 claims that Pericles had created this fund, taking its value so seriously that '...the death penalty for anyone who attempted to remake the spectators' fund into military funds.'²⁰ We are told by Ulpian²¹, writing in the Third Century CE, that the *theorika* was available when the Theatre of Dionysus has still not been built in stone, i.e. that of Aristophanes' day. Unfortunately neither of these sources is contemporary so we cannot say for sure if price was an issue, which also makes it difficult to understand if the audience were forced to choose between performances due to price constraint. This could have provided valuable insight on the influence of class over audience and performance programme structure, although Heath's²² rather narrow view suggests that the paying audience would have been identical to that of the Athenian assembly, which begs the question: *which* audience was Aristophanes playing to? His high level of satirical

¹⁷ Edith Hall, p.338.

¹⁸ David Wiles, p.33.

¹⁹ Aristophanes, *Birds*, trans. by A. H. Sommerstein (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1987).

²⁰ Jeffrey Rusten, p.406.

²¹ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., *The Context of Ancient Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p.295.

²² Malcolm Heath, *Political Comedy in Aristophanes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), p.13.

wit juxtaposed by low, bawdy slapstick humour, suggests that he was catering for a broader audience and whoever this audience were, they still had to sit on uncomfortable seats, for hours at a time in the open air, and according to Athenaeus²³ being plied with drink. Therefore the polemical and crude elements of Aristophanes may have suited a more boisterous and restless crowd near the end of the day.

The second consideration was space and seating capacity. As previously mentioned, the large stone-built Theatre of Dionysus had not yet been constructed when Aristophanes' plays were produced, so viewing space may have been at a premium if the previous structures were much smaller as the evidence discussed further on in this chapter suggests. Whether this dictated how much theatre-going a person could experience over the course of a festival is hard to say, but as this was a civic and democratic occasion it was likely that as many people as possible, albeit mainly citizens, should be given a fair chance. Some may have come only to soak up the festive atmosphere which leads us to the location and size of the theatre itself. The ancient sources are ambiguous here; *Wasps*' chorus speaks of '...you countless thousand...' (1011) in the audience whilst Plato is more specific when he remarks on a recent tragic victory '...in the presence of more than thirty thousand Greeks'²⁴. Writing approximately six hundred years later, referring to an Aristophanic performance of 423BCE, Aelian states in his *Varia Historia* (2.13) 'Since it was the Dionysia, an enormous crowd of Greeks arrived [in Athens] for the sake of the spectacle'²⁵. Many scholars such as Rusten²⁶ reject Plato's estimate but although an impossible number for the theatre, his thirty-thousand may have represented the large numbers gathered to celebrate the festival and theatre peripherally. Roselli presents an

²³ Jeffrey Rusten, p.410.

²⁴ Plato, *Symposium and Phaedrus*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), 175e.

²⁵ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., pp.290-1.

²⁶ Jeffrey Rusten, p.404.

interesting study on the size and shape of the theatre at this time²⁷. Its location on the south-side of the Acropolis immediately limited capacity due to the geology of the space with the uneven rock face defining the seating area as quite small. Coupled with some fragmentary remains of stone blocks used for honorary seating at the front rows, Roselli concludes that this theatre was most likely to have been rectangular in shape but the surrounding hillside created ‘free and apparently unregulated’²⁸ spectator seating, further extending the total capacity of the theatre itself. It is hard to say if Aristophanes was playing to this ‘unofficial’ audience as well. It was unlikely they heard any dialogue at that distance but may explain other dramatic techniques employed by Aristophanes such as costuming, music, dancing and scenery, discussed further in Chapter Four. Limited seating was further compounded by the various ranks of reserved or honorary seating. The ten judges, whose relationship to the poet and the rest of the audience is discussed further in Chapter Three, were presumably seated separately in the theatre near the front whilst other privileged seating, the ‘*Prohedria*’, a prestigious space awarded to those who had distinguished themselves for Athens, taking up more seats. Scholia on *Knights* 573-77²⁹ tells us ‘...this is a manner of distinction. It was permitted to those who attained this honour to oust anyone already occupying a seat, no matter who they were, and take their place...’ For anyone seated further back this must have been a comic spectacle in itself, the audience involved in pre-performance and direct participation in the creation of the festive atmosphere. Sommerstein³⁰ notes that five hundred seats were reserved for the council whilst elsewhere the remainder of the audience must have been tightly packed, and in the daylight been aware of each other, physically and emotionally, potentially

²⁷ D. K. Roselli, *Theater of the People: Spectators and Society in Ancient Athens*, ebook edn (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), <<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=CahT5TbOhIAC>>. p.65.

²⁸ D. K. Roselli, p.63.

²⁹ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., p.299.

³⁰ Aristophanes, *Knights*, trans. by A. H. Sommerstein (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1981), p.249.

having an effect as the collective body of the audience. Aristophanes would surely have used this 'collective' response, as well as singling out individuals for 'special' treatment to his advantage. These issues will be discussed in Chapter's Two and Three.

The ancient sources tell us that the audience composition was very mixed. The implications of this on the poet-audience relationship are discussed in detail in Chapter Three but in terms of the context of the composition we can see Aristophanes making direct links to members of the audience, making them part of the performance. In *Knights* we are told that the 'assembled host' (162-3) is a representation of '...the market, the harbours, and the Pnyx...' (164-5) with the character Demos being representative of the rural contingent itself, currently ousted from the 'Peaceful life on the farm' (805). In *Peace*, Trygaeus is even more descriptive of the social groups in attendance speaking to the '...peasants and merchants and carpenters and craftsmen and immigrants and foreigners and islanders...' (295-99) reeling them off as if casting a roving eye across the audience before him. More generically, Aristotle states that the theatre consisted of two social 'types' of audience; 'educated free men' and 'common persons'³¹. We can see further grouping of the audience, again from *Peace* when a slave begins the plot exposition 'I'm going to explain the plot to the children and the striplings and the men and the men of high position and ...those proud supermen there.' (50-55). Slater describes this as a divisive strategy '...to knit all the people in the audience back together...to be drawn as one into the work of the play and its fictions.'³² A fragment from the comic Eupolis suggests the presence of children;

³¹ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., p.363.

³² Niall W. Slater, 'Making the Aristophanic Audience', *The American Journal of Philology*, 120 (1999), 351-368
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1562116>>, p.361.

By Hercules, that's really a sick, Megarian joke, it's really lame!
Lame; you see, it's the kids that are laughing!³³

The context of the joke may be lost but Eupolis still thinks its appeal lies with younger audience members. This passage provides an example of translation problems as I would suggest that the 'children' mentioned here are more to do with the infantile humour than the actual presence of children, and the levels of audience intelligence are discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three. Aristotle on the other hand warns against the harmful effects of comedy on younger boys and to keep them out of the audience³⁴. Plato is less dogmatic, suggesting that 'older boys' enjoy comedy when discussing audience performance preferences³⁵.

All this evidence highlights the hugely stratified audience, who are united in this one space in their role as spectators. The male-centric nature of Aristophanes' addresses to the audience also raises the question of the presence of women. There is a large amount of academic debate on this subject, which this essay does not have the scope for, however a brief look at two very distinct and contrasting sides of the argument may help to improve our understanding of women's experience if they had been present. With what little we know of women in Fifth-century Athens, we cannot even be sure that they would have wanted to attend the fundamentally male plays between 424 and 414BCE. Equally, with space at such a premium, there may not have been room for them. Henderson³⁶ argues for the presence of women due to their customary role in religious festivals and suggests that Aristophanes only addresses a male audience in a notional sense, and as noted by Csapo and Slater, represented the '...conceptual invisibility of

³³ Jeffrey Rusten, p.410.

³⁴ Ibid, p.410.

³⁵ Ibid, p.408.

³⁶ Jeffrey Henderson, 'Women and the Athenian Dramatic Festivals', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-), 121 (1991), 133-147 <<http://www.istor.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/stable/284448>>, p.133.

women in the theatre, not their actual exclusion.³⁷ Looking specifically at the indecency issues related to Aristophanic comedy, he claims that women would most likely to have faced similar imagery every day, and that we are projecting current Christian values on to a non-Christian society. He looks to the much quoted lines in Aristophanes that mention women in the context of the audience (*Peace* 963-66 and *Birds* 795-67) and states that women's exclusion would be so unique as to be worthy of mention, which it is not. The other side of the argument is addressed by Haley³⁸ in an article written one hundred years before Henderson's. Using the same passages as Henderson he argues that the passage in *Birds* – '...and he sees the lady's husband in the Councillor's seats...' (795-67) that women were not present, whereas Henderson takes the view that it shows the non-attendance of only *some* women. Similarly the passage from *Peace* when Trygaeus asks if all the audience have had some barley seeds he is told 'The women haven't had any' (963-66), Haley argues that women are only mentioned for the following line's sexual pun to work, whilst Henderson argues it shows that women may have been sat at the back and unreachable. Whereas Henderson doubts any female sensitivity to Aristophanic humour, Haley uses Pericles' funeral speech's plea for women to retain their normal decorum and silence to suggest that Aristophanes' comedy would be too vulgar. Haley further comments that Aristophanic parabases had a distinct political content, thus making women an unsuitable audience as they were '...carefully excluded from the participation in, and even from knowledge of, public affairs...' ³⁹, which if true would also have excluded them as participants in the comic performance. This is taking rather too much for granted as we do not know what women knew or were interested in at this time

³⁷ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., p.287.

³⁸ Herman W. Haley, 'The Social and Domestic Position of Women in Aristophanes', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 1 (1890), 159-186 <<http://www.jstor.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/stable/310464>>.

³⁹ Herman W. Haley, p.172.

and indicates that these two opposing arguments probably say more about our own times, one written before women's rights were taken seriously; the other a more modern perspective. I would suggest that whether women were present or not, they were not part of Aristophanes' intended target in fostering a participatory relationship with his audience, and thus may have had a completely different and unknown experience of the theatre if they were present.

Turning to the many individually named audience members, two specific 'celebrities' appear to be singled out for special attention by Aristophanes. Firstly, Cleon features prominently in *Knights* in which the main protagonist, Paphlagon, is apparently modelled on the man himself. The caricaturing and personal attacks on Cleon are discussed further in Chapter Two, but here we have an instance of stage direction within the dialogue of one character stating 'Well, the 'eagle of leather' is Paphlagon here' (201), probably pointing to Cleon in the audience, as Paphlagon himself does not arrive on stage until line 235. Aelian's recounting of how Socrates once stood through an entire performance of *Clouds* in 423BCE '...knowing that the comedians would ridicule him...' ⁴⁰ thus making it easier for all the foreigners to see who was at the butt of the jokes. We can only imagine how irritating this would have been for the spectators sat directly behind him. The reasons behind Aristophanes' personal attacks and how this fits in the participatory element of the audience is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

So it appears that a relaxed and receptive audience were aware of the larger context in which they were participating, perhaps having sat in silence through long tragic plays and looking forward to the freedom of expression and fun that comedy would bring. It is clear that the highly mixed audience had an effect on the way Aristophanes composed his

⁴⁰ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., pp.290-1.

plays, and that he worked this audience diversity to maximum effect in the way he dealt with them as individuals or as a group, which are discussed in the next two chapters respectively.

CHAPTER TWO

KOMODOUMENOI – US AND THEM

The main thrust of this inquiry is to ascertain if Aristophanes was using particular techniques to produce a participatory experience between himself in the triple role as the poet, stage and performance, and his audience (including the judges). One way he did this was by personal attacks to varying degrees on well-known, real-life contemporary public figures. A close analysis of Aristophanes' texts themselves and other primary sources should help to enhance our understanding of this technique, looking in particular at the reputation of the targeted individuals in and out of the theatre, and if Aristophanes' techniques had any consequences on his relationship with them and to the audience at large.

The two individuals in focus here are Cleon and Cleonymus, both high-profile political statesmen in fifth-century BC Athens and who were likely to have been well-known, either by sight to the audience who were also members of the Assembly, or by reputation to the rest of the audience. Evidence of them can be found in other primary sources and they appear to be the most significant in terms of what they did or did not achieve in their public roles, which will be discussed later in this chapter. These individuals therefore give us a fighting chance to understand the 'joke' as it were, given that we know some of, but by no means all, the information referred to by Aristophanes. As Halliwell states, most Athenians were probably unaware of the minutia of everyone else's day-to-day business, and in order to appreciate the extent of Aristophanes' satirical references, would need to have been '...extensively familiar not only with most of their fellow-citizens' identities, but also with numerous personal details too – facial

appearance, family background, sexual habits, and so forth.’⁴¹ Therefore we need to look at the most ‘famous’ of these citizens, who would have had the most publicity and thus be recorded for posterity. Where individual traits and habits were so conspicuous and well-known to the masses so as to be ridiculous not to include them, Aristophanes takes full advantage, using his shared knowledge in a collaborative sense between himself and the audience.

A key theme running through this chapter is the democracy and the laws surrounding freedom of speech, which may help to show if these factors helped or hindered Aristophanes. The extent of personal abuse levelled at these particular individuals suggests that Aristophanes had an extraordinary licence in his relationship to freely ‘abuse’ his audience in the context of the festival atmosphere, whilst at the same time using the principles of *isegoria* and *parrhesia*, equal freedom of speech and freespokeness.⁴² Van Steen sees this as a comic form of ‘democratic public speaking’ where Aristophanes, the crowd pleaser, would often ‘...court the danger of castigating or alienating ...’ his audience.⁴³ Although I agree with Van Steen’s argument about comic theatre and the festivals being a form of cathartic release for the audience from the pressures of everyday life, I suggest that she assumes too much of the audiences’ political bent outside the world of Aristophanes’ plays. Thucydides tells us that Cleon was ‘... remarkable among the Athenians for the violence of his character, and at this time [427BC] he exercised the greatest influence over the people’ (3.36) with the apparent

⁴¹ Stephen Halliwell, ‘Comedy and Publicity in the Society of the Polis’, in *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis*, ed. by A. H. Sommerstein and others (1993), pp. 321.

⁴² H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888).

⁴³ Gonda Van Steen, ‘Politics and Aristophanes: Watchword ‘Caution!’’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*, ed. by Marianne McDonald and Michael Walton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 108-123, in *RWCambridgeUPressDB* <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521834568.007>> [accessed 19/01/2014; 19/01/2014]. pp.13-15.

ability of 'attractive' speech (3.44).⁴⁴ Although a contemporary source, Thucydides may well have had his own spin on things as a pro-Periclean supporter, so would thus be disinclined to write anything positive about Cleon, but he does tell us that Cleon was popular with the people. In the following century, Aristotle tells us that 'Cleon, the leader of the populace and a man of cruel and violent nature, spurred on the people...' giving us the same impression, but as we cannot be certain what sources he was using, this piece of evidence is only good to show how Cleon was received through different periods.⁴⁵ Politically it seems that Cleon was favoured despite any attacks on him by Aristophanes. Following the victorious production of *Knights*, Cleon was still elected a general and as Heath states the '...audience of comedy relished the abuse of leaders whom they nevertheless continued to support in real political life.'⁴⁶ In this sense, the comic performances were a leveller, in which the real-life power of the individual was transferred to Aristophanes and the audience for a brief, theatrical moment.

This comic 'licence' does not always appear to be intact if we look at the consequences of some of Aristophanes' attacks on individuals, in particular Cleon, with the participatory element of the Aristophanes-audience relationship being taken to the level of the individual being the 'audience'. It is important to remember that they would most likely have been sitting in the audience themselves, as Cleon appeared to be, having won the accolade of the *Prohedria*, through his success at Pylos in 425BC, which Aristophanes uses to full comic advantage in *Knights* to poke fun at him, through Paphlagon, in his spat with the Sausage-seller:

⁴⁴ Thucydides.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0086.tlg038.perseus-eng1:2.2> edn, trans. by J. H. Freese, 2014 vols (London: Harvard University Press,), p. 1, in *Perseus* [accessed 05/05/2014], 12.55.

⁴⁶ Malcolm Heath, p.6.

Paphlagon: I'll destroy you, I swear it by the privileged seating that Pylos won for me!

Sausage-Seller: Privileged seating, ha! How I look forward to seeing you *out* of that privileged seating, in the back row of the audience! (702-704)

In Sommerstein's study of the *komodoumenoi* he concludes that of the 159 male Athenian individuals, most of them must have been known to the Athenian audience in order for the jokes about them to be funny or have any relevance.⁴⁷ I would suggest that this is even funnier if these individuals are actually sitting in the audience and visible to the rest of the crowd, so that their joint responses to each other would be watched over by Aristophanes, the puppet master himself, who had effectively manipulated this situation into a participatory experience for the audience, practically forcing them to react with each other under his stage direction.

Cleon is the individual who comes under the most fire, particularly in *Knights*. Although this play is as much about the democracy as it is about the individual, what it does shout loudest is how differently individuals were treated between the Lenaea and the City Dionysia. These differences lay in the topicality of the jokes or satirical caricature levelled at certain individuals at the more local Lenaea, even though this continued through to the City Dionysia at a more general level. Rosenbloom states that the 'Comic ridicule at named Athenians was fierce and slanderous even at the City Dionysia where foreigners were present; it was superlatively obscene, personal, and topical at the Lenaea...' highlighting the topicality element particular to the Lenaea.⁴⁸ This level of local topicality is clearly expressed in *Knights* where Cleon is never explicitly named as the slave

⁴⁷ Alan H. Sommerstein, 'How to Avoid being a Komodoumenos', *The Classical Quarterly*, 46 (1996), 327-356 <<http://www.jstor.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/stable/639791>>. p.328.

⁴⁸ David Rosenbloom, 'Staging Rhetoric in Athens', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, ed. by Erik Gunderson, 1st edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 194-211 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521860543.013>> [accessed 19/01/2014; 19/01/2014]., pp.196-7.

Paphlagon. But Paphlagon, through his words, actions and descriptions by other characters, is clearly a parody of Cleon with direct references to his family's tannery trade and his recent victory in Pylos where he rode in at the last minute and 'stole' victory, described here as...

...a tanner, a first-class rogue and slanderer...grabs anything that one of us has prepared, and makes a present of it to master. Yes, and the other day, when I'd kneaded a Laconian barley-cake at Pylos, he quite brazenly ran past me, snatched up the cake, and served it up himself – the one I had kneaded! (44-58)

This link is taken further as mentioned in Chapter One, where at Line 202 it appears that Cleon is pointed out in the audience as the 'eagle of leather'. Even after his death in battle in 422BC⁴⁹ these references continue in *Peace* but at a more generic, almost apologetic level, on behalf of the Athenians to the other Greek nations, for the multi-national audience of the Dionysia:

The Athenians have lost their pestle, the leather-seller who churned up all Greece...he did well to get lost, just when the city needed to lose him! (269-272)

In the other 'local' play studied in this essay, *Wasps*, Aristophanes uses a different ploy to identify Cleon to his audience. Rather than caricature Cleon in the guise of a slave character, he names his main protagonists Philocleon and Bdelycleon, creating a theatrical deception which unites himself and the audience in the joke.

What Aristophanes appears to be doing here is building up a 'them and us' relationship; the 'them' being his targeted individuals and the 'us' as himself and the rest of the audience. It becomes a participatory relationship, where he uses information that the audience will recognise enough to see the joke, and putting himself and the audience on the same side versus the individual, in a comic rather than political sense. As Zimmerman explains, by mocking certain people by name, Aristophanes '...offers enlightening social

⁴⁹ Hornblower S and Spawforth A (eds), p.346.

analysis: the eyes of the audience are opened, their attention is drawn to their [the target individual's] weak spots and above all to those who understand how to exploit those weak spots.⁵⁰ He uses the right amount of local or broader satire to accommodate the relevant festival's audience in order to generate these responses. Aristophanes builds the 'them and us' bonds through laughter, a shared sense of shifting the power temporarily from the individual to themselves. Certainly a level of *Schadenfreude* is evident in this relationship, as the individuals are never painted in a flattering light, their most shocking or pitiful moments put on public display for ridicule. However, as Hubbard points out⁵¹, Aristophanes makes fun of his protagonists' vices to make his audience laugh, but it is precisely the same vices that they themselves are guilty of; support of Cleon, addiction to jury service, obsession with war and such like.

Interestingly, Cleon is only mentioned by name once in *Knights* at line 976, which begins a short hymn sung by the chorus in an almost aside to the play itself. Both Sommerstein⁵² and Slater⁵³ agree with Rogers that a likely theory is that Aristophanes hoped the ode would be re-sung as an anthem away from the theatre at symposiums and such places. The ode in its entirety makes sense of this theory, dismissing Cleon by name as an ignorant oaf, only good for accepting bribes, rather than by epithet of his family's trade, thus making it something that could 'stand alone' outside of the play. Again, Aristophanes may be trying to generate participation, albeit as an extension of the theatre, but it would be a good way to be remembered as a poet post-performance

⁵⁰ B. Zimmermann, 'Poetics and Politics in the Comedies of Aristophanes', in *Playing Around with Aristophanes*, ed. by Kozak, Lynn and John Rich (Oxford: Aris and Phillips, 2006), pp. 1. -2.

⁵¹ T. K. Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), . p.14.

⁵² Aristophanes, (1981), p.196.

⁵³ Niall Slater W., *Spectator Politics: Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p.78.

rather than to suggest that he was trying to influence his audience's political views.

Aristophanes' outlook, as projected in the performances, suggests that he was in tune with his audience, knowing what would amuse and entertain them rather than trying to influence them politically. This would have been a difficult task bearing in mind that the main dramatic festivals only took place twice a year, thus providing a very limited platform from which to try and sway political thought. Likewise the posthumous reference to Cleon mentioned previously, suggests that Aristophanes was not trying to influence people against him politically, as being already dead there would be little point.

It appears that at some point Cleon took offence to one of Aristophanes' earlier plays, *Babylonians* (non-extant), from the City Dionysia in 426BC. We are told this by Aristophanes himself and by other more spurious unassigned ancient fragments, who mention some kind of prosecution against Aristophanes, in particular for his alleged slander against the demos rather than against Cleon personally. From the parabasis of the *Acharnians*, Aristophanes states '...let Cleon hatch his plots and build his traps against me to his upmost...' (659-660) and earlier in the play Dicaeopolis tells us that '...I know what Cleon did to me because of last year's comedy. He hauled me before the Council, and slandered me...' (379).⁵⁴ Both of these instances must be treated with caution rather than the outright truth, as they are after all lines in a comedy. In later *testimonia* (1.19)⁵⁵ the writer states that 'Aristophanes hated Cleon because he has charged him with being an alien and with having in his play *Babylonians* slandered the allotted offices of the Athenians in the presence of foreigners.' The reality is that Cleon was obviously a very powerful man, and as Stow suggests, if Aristophanes was posing a real threat to his

⁵⁴ Aristophanes, *Acharnians. Knights*, The Loeb Classical Library, trans. by Jeffrey Henderson, 1 vols (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Rusten, p.289.

reputation and political career outside of the theatre, he would have found other ways to silence him.⁵⁶ Atkinson tells us that nowhere in any of the extant sources are we told that Cleon was looking for ‘...protection of his good name as a citizen...’ but rather for ‘...protection for his dignity as a member of the Boule...’⁵⁷ In fact the additional publicity that Aristophanes was generating in the theatre would have made Cleon more ‘famous’ out of it. Plutarch, writing five-hundred years later states that ‘Cleon commanded a large following because of his practice of pampering the people...’ and ‘...that knack of playing to the gallery with which Cleon constantly humoured the Athenian people...’⁵⁸ suggests that he was only doing in the Assembly what Aristophanes was doing in the theatre. Two separate sources both attest to the laws on freedom of speech and how they relate to the *demos*. Isocrates tells us that ‘I know that it is perilous to oppose your [the *demos*]’ intentions and that, even under a democracy, there is no freedom of speech except for the most foolish men here [in the Assembly] ...and also, in the theatre, for the *didaskalos* of comedy...’⁵⁹ whilst the Old Oligarch corroborates this, attesting that

They do not permit [the people] to be ill spoken of in comedy, so that they may not have a bad reputation; but if anyone wants to attack private persons, they bid him do so, knowing perfectly well that the person so treated in comedy does not, for the most part, come from the populace and mass of people but is a person of either wealth, high birth or influence. (2.18)⁶⁰

A fragment of scholion on Aelius’ *Aristides* (Or.3.8) states that ‘After Cleon accused Aristophanes of *hybris*, a law was passed forbidding further comic ridicule of any one by

⁵⁶ H. Lloyd Stow, ‘Aristophanes’ Influence upon Public Opinion’, *The Classical Journal*, 38 (1942), 83-92 <<http://www.jstor.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/stable/3291627>>, p.87.

⁵⁷ J. E. Atkinson, ‘Curbing the Comedians: Cleon Versus Aristophanes and Syracosius’ Decree’, *The Classical Quarterly*, 42 (1992), 56-64 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/639144>>, p.158.

⁵⁸ Plutarch, *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives*, Trans. Scott-Kilvert, I. edn (London: Penguin Group, 1960), Nicias 2.

⁵⁹ Jeffrey Rusten, p.81.

⁶⁰ Pseudo-Xenophon (Old Oligarch).

name.’⁶¹ This law may be tied in to the *Syracosius Decree* addressed later in this chapter, and if true, must have presented Aristophanes with a dilemma; to carry on with the same level of satirical attack on certain individuals would have made him either foolish, brave or indifferent to the law.

His response to this alleged change to the laws may possibly be seen through his treatment of another contemporary individual, Cleonymus. A high profile politician and general,⁶² he was often portrayed by Aristophanes as a glutton or a coward and is mentioned at least ten times in the four plays studied here. As a glutton, the jokes tend to be low-level and direct, aimed to get a quick and light-hearted response from the audience. Cleonymus must have been a large, fat man in reality to make the jokes funny, thus prompting such lines from the Chorus in *Knights* as they puzzle over ‘...where on earth Cleonymus gets his food from with so little trouble’ (1290). In *Wasps* his size is once again commented on by Bdelycleon (822) ‘To me he seems as conspicuous as Cleonymus’⁶³ which may be an indirect stage direction, much in the same way with Cleon in *Knights* 202, the large man being pointed out in the audience. Although the references to size may be personally insulting to Cleonymus, they are shallow when compared to the accusation of shield-throwing. This had serious allegations in terms of the law and of honour. Andocides (1.74), a contemporary writer, states that the law said ‘...all who deserted on the field of battle...all who threw away their shields’⁶⁴ would forfeit their own and their families enfranchisement. In terms of slander, it was considered one of the

⁶¹ Aristophanes, *Fragments*, The Loeb Classical Library, trans. by Jeffrey Henderson, V vols (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), p.31.

⁶² Hornblower S and Spawforth A (eds), p.346.

⁶³ Aristophanes, *Wasps*, trans. by A. H. Sommerstein (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1983).

⁶⁴ Andocides, *Minor Attic Orators in Two Volumes 1, Antiphon Andocides*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0027.tlg001.perseus-eng1:74>, edn, trans. by K. J. Maidment, (London: Harvard University Press, 1968), , in *Perseus Digital Library* <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0027.tlg001.perseus-eng1:74>> [accessed 25/05/2014].

main ‘no go’ areas too. A legal action brought by Lysias against Theomnestos (1-12)⁶⁵ in 384/3BC, discusses the minutiae of terminology between ‘shield-flinging’ and ‘shield-throwing’, the distinction highlighting the difference between cowardice and not. It has been suggested that an incident or mishap must have happened to Cleonymus involving a shield⁶⁶ that had struck a chord with the peoples’ psyche and then taken advantage of by Aristophanes, otherwise it would not have been funny. However, it was unlikely that the reality bore any resemblance to Aristophanes’ lampooning jokes, particularly bearing in mind the continuing war, where cowardice would have been a highly sensitive subject to the audience, and Cleonymus, like Cleon, appeared to maintain a successful political career despite this. Sommerstein suggests that the incident, whatever it was, probably happened after the production of *Knights* as it is not mentioned in any meaningful sense in this play,⁶⁷ but in *Wasps* we see the slave, Xanthius, aligning Cleonymus with his dream of an eagle snatching a ‘shieldtail’ snake as ‘...he turned into Cleonymus and dropped the bronze-plate shield!’ (16-19) This translation is based on Sommerstein’s interpretation of the Greek as he does admit that in the original Greek the ‘bronze-plate shield’ is referred to as ‘it’, thus leaving more imagination to the audience to understand the metaphor being used here.⁶⁸ When Trygaeus and Hermes are discussing Cleonymus in *Peace* the audience are left in no doubt about who and what they are discussing.

Hermes: Oh, what sort of person did Cleonymus give the impression of being, as regards to warfare?

Trygaeus: Actively stout-hearted – except that it turned out he wasn’t the son of the man he claims...he showed himself *disposititious* of his equipment! (674-79)

⁶⁵ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., p.182.

⁶⁶ Malcolm Heath, p.18.

⁶⁷ Aristophanes, (1981), p.219.

⁶⁸ Aristophanes, (1983), p.153.

The same follows later in the play when Trygaeus addresses the character of a young boy who turns out to be the son of Cleonymus:

Boy: Some Saian now glories in my shield; the faultless armament which
 I unwittingly abandoned beside a bush'

Trygaeus: '...I know very well indeed that you certainly won't ever forget all
 that that you've just been singing about the shield – not with that
 father you've got' (1298-1304)

The tone and manner of delivery changes significantly by the time we get to *Birds* in 414BC. Apart from where Euelpides states 'Well, if he were Cleonymus, surely he'd have thrown away his ...crest' (290) the language has turned more to the subjunctive with Cleonymus and his equipment being referred to in equivocal terms. Later in this play the Chorus sing a small ode to a species of bird...

...the Cleonymus, useful for nothing, but all the same
huge and trem...ulous.
In spring it always
Sprouts and produces denunciations,
and in winter, contrariwise,
it sheds a foliage of shields (1475-1481)

These lines in *Birds* appear to corroborate with Hubbard's view that the *Syracosius Decree* in 415BC, after the incident of the mutilation of the Herms and violation of the Mysteries, was '...merely encouraging the comic poets to seek more creative and indirect ways to criticise forbidden targets.'⁶⁹ The only evidence we have of this decree is from scholia on *Birds* at line 1287 which states 'He seems to move a decree that no one be mentioned in a comedy by name...'⁷⁰ which Atkinson suggests was more about the mutilation of the Herms being seen as '...part of a broader plot to undermine the democracy..' and that the decree was put in place, not to stop individuals being named in comedy but rather to

⁶⁹ T. K. Hubbard, p.160.

⁷⁰ Jeffrey Rusten, p.89.

‘...protect the innocent against damaging accusations..’⁷¹ in the ensuing trial of the Herm and the mocking of the Mysteries incident. The relationship appears to shift to a more secretive shared experience, with the only ones not ‘in’ on the joke being the authorities. Here Aristophanes is creating a new bond between himself and his audience, of an almost conspiratorial nature.

Aristophanes, through his caricature and close-to-the-edge satire aimed at particular individuals, was eliciting participation from his audience. He did this by effectively encouraging them to be good citizens and actively demonstrate their democratic right to be participants by openly attending and enjoying the plays, and the rights of freedom of speech that they were presented with there. By the time of *Birds* however, it appears that he was effectively moving participation away from authority in general and into the world of theatrical illusion, temporarily suspending disbelief around the individuals he targeted. Although this appears slightly subversive with the highly satirical nature of his comedies still very much in play, it is unlikely that he was aiming to influence his audience’s political views outside of the theatre at this time. They were extremely topical and therefore must have had a very short shelf-life during such troublesome and changing times, and thus did not pose too much of a threat to the individuals’ reputations outside the theatre. We must also not forget that Aristophanes produced his plays for a comic competition, within the context of a religious festival, and so would need to involve his audience in this fun, particularly during the years of the Peloponnesian War and when the democracy seemed more important than ever. The theatre was therefore a place

⁷¹ J. E. Atkinson, p.64.

where 'Laughter stemmed from the collision of Utopian dreams with the harsh political reality of the here and now.'⁷²

⁷² David Wiles, *Greek Theatre Performance: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.33.

CHAPTER THREE

KNOWING WHEN TO LAUGH

In this chapter I aim to show that Aristophanes was aware of his audience as stratified layers of individuals, but that he aimed for them to experience his performances collectively as one homogenous group, ultimately to obtain one set of reactions; laughter and support. This creates a situation of Aristophanes' needs versus his audience's needs. I aim to use the texts of plays to show how Aristophanes used various techniques in how he addressed and involved his audience in the performance, in order to pick out the different nuances in their opinions and thus shape them to his own benefit, whilst at the same time fulfilling their needs as spectators at the theatre. The audience would have consisted of varying levels of intelligence; whether it was academic, political or social and I aim to show how Aristophanes considered all of these so that this shared experience could also be enjoyed on an individual level for his spectators. Consideration will be given to the judges, who were also involved in the participatory relationship between poet and audience, but at a completely different level. Their role lay between pleasing the poet by granting him victory, and pleasing the masses by intelligent judging to promote great performances and entertainment for the future. However, it must not be forgotten that they would be subject to the same principles of intelligence as the rest of the audience.

This investigation revolves around certain themes evident in the texts themselves, from the formal structural elements of the plays to apparent flattery and abuse of the audience using various techniques such as metatheatre and paratragedy. From these themes I hope to show the roles played by the poet and his audience were to result in the participatory experience.

Metatheatre is one technique which Aristophanes uses to its full effect to formulate the participatory relationship between himself and his audience. Its function is to blur the lines between reality and fantasy, with Aristophanes drawing his audience into the performance, whilst at the same time taking his performance into the real world of the audience seated in the theatre. A good example of this can be seen in *Knights* when the two slaves attempt to draw the audience into their discussion about religion:

Demosthenes: We must look in another direction. Would you like me to explain the situation to the audience?

Nicias: Not such a bad idea. But let us ask them one favour: to let us see it plainly on their faces, if they enjoy our dialogue and our doings.
(35-39)

This dramatic device is useful to unite the highly stratified audience in reality to appear to represent 'one audience, one taste'.⁷³ What Aristophanes is doing in these lines, by calling in a 'favour' from the audience, is getting them on his side. He is also turning them into a collective group who feel that they are contributing to the performance by conceding to the poet's wishes. From the very beginning of the play he is establishing '...audience rapport...subject to continuous negotiation' throughout the rest of the play.⁷⁴ Taplin suggests that 'The world of the audience is never safe from invasion, even appropriation, by the world of the play.'⁷⁵ This can be seen very clearly in *Peace*, when Hermes asks Trygaeus to 'Then also look at the faces of the people in the audience here, so that you can recognise their occupations' (543-544). What Aristophanes appears to be doing here is involving the audience members in his topic of peace, by highlighting the different occupations of the audience and how they may personally feel about peace, and

⁷³ Niall W. Slater, (1999), p.361.

⁷⁴ Martin Revermann, *Comic Business* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.118.

⁷⁵ Oliver Taplin, 'Fifth-Century Tragedy and Comedy', in *Oxford Readings in Aristophanes*, ed. by E. Segal (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.9-12, p.12.

the effect it will have on their own welfare. These differences would have presumably struck a chord, good or bad, with real audience members assuming that the trades pointed out by Hermes were represented in the audience to some extent. The 'us and them' relationship mentioned in Chapter Two, is further compounded here, as the audience were able to look upon their neighbours and make snap judgements on those profiting from the war and who, according to Aristophanes, were a barrier to peace. These imagined tradesmen in the audience relate to the '...here and now, in the Theatre of Dionysus'⁷⁶ and that this '...unified audience is precisely the spectacle that the play is attempting to stage.'⁷⁷ Thus the desire for peace in real life, was being '...reinforced by a sense of common experience'⁷⁸ between Aristophanes' world of fantasy and the audience before him.

The metatheatrical device is seen at its most fantastic in *Birds* when Peisetaerus explains the reason for his journey. He speaks to the audience and immediately aligns himself with the true Athenian citizen by mentioning his pedigree and says 'We, having full status of tribe and clan membership, citizens among citizens...' (32-33). He reflects the international flavour of the City Dionysian audience when he mentions a certain Sacas, '...a non-citizen trying to force his way in.' (31-32). Slater argues this as '...the audiences participation in the creation of the performance'⁷⁹ with the two groups contained within the real audience, the Athenians and non-Athenians, being included in the metatheatrical discussion. Roselli suggests that these lines were Aristophanes' way of taking '...into account the responses of non-Athenians in the action on stage'⁸⁰ as well as those of the

⁷⁶ Niall Slater W., (2002), p.124.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.124.

⁷⁸ P. Walcot, 'Aristophanic and Other Audiences', *Greece & Rome*, 18 (1971), 35-50
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/642386>>, p.37.

⁷⁹ Niall Slater W., (2002), p.133.

⁸⁰ D. K. Roselli, p.123.

citizens. This demonstrates again a stratified audience group being united in their complicity of the discussion on the stage, and also highlights the potential difference in the poet-audience relationship between the Lenaea and the City Dionysia.

Peace provides an example of the device being used in its most obvious form and one of the most integral performance-spectator participatory scenes in all of the four plays being studied here. When Peace is hauled out of the cave at line 520, we learn she is accompanied by two 'live' attendants, Opora and Theoria. The latter of these has a name which is rendered as 'Showtime' by Sommerstein⁸¹ and as 'Holiday' by Henderson⁸². These names take the character out of the play, into the world of the festival and religious holiday of the audience attending the play. Theoria is further manipulated when the physical space between the stage and audience is blurred when she is taken out to the crowd, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

The judges were are often used to maximum metatheatrical effect. In *Birds* we have a direct reference to both:

Chorus Leader:	I swear; my reward to be, that I shall be victorious by the verdict of all the judges and all the audience -
Peisetaerus:	You will be!
Chorus Leader:	But should I break my oath, then let me win by just one vote (445-447)

⁸¹ Aristophanes, (1985).

⁸² Aristophanes, (1998).

As Sommerstein notes '...in one and the same sentence the chorus-leader speaks first as a character in the fictive situation of the play and then as a performer in the Theatre of Dionysus...'⁸³

In the above passage, Aristophanes clearly aligns the judges and audience as one, but it is unclear just how much influence the audience en-masse had over the elected judges. The process for selecting judges and how they cast their votes appeared to be very democratic with little room for corruption.⁸⁴ The texts give us plenty of instances where Aristophanes appeals directly to the audience for its approval, often using flattery, abuse and retribution. In *Knights* there are at least three direct appeals to the audience, for example:

Demosthenes: What evidence should I use, please, if I want to
 make the audience think I'm deciding intelligently?
 (1209-1210)

In this passage Aristophanes is clearly drawing his audience into the 'unofficial' judging process and asking them to collaborate with him in order to please the official judges. He is asking them to participate but, as Heath points out, he '...never tries to drive a wedge between their [the judges] verdict and that of the audience at large...'⁸⁵ which suggests he is trying to keep both parties happy to some extent. A fragment by Cratinus, a contemporary poet of Aristophanes, gives us a clue as to the relationship between audience and comic poet;

Greetings, O mob of the great burst of laughter! The morning after
you are the best of all judges of my wisdom...⁸⁶

⁸³ Aristophanes, (1987), p.225.

⁸⁴ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., pp.157-58.

⁸⁵ Malcolm Heath, *Political Comedy in Aristophanes* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), p.6.

⁸⁶ Jeffrey Rusten, p.411.

In other words he still wants to be talked about after the festival performance and it is the audience *en masse* that will do this for him, not the official judges

This creates an interesting dynamic between Aristophanes, the audience in general and the official judges. All three need to get something out of this relationship; Aristophanes the adulation and laughter of the crowd and the vote of the judges; the audience to have a good time and be entertained; the judges to make an educated and intelligent decision, one that may or may not please the crowds.

Slater suggests that lines 445-447 in *Birds*, quoted above, clearly shows that there was a difference of opinion between the audience and judges and further states that the '...vote of the judges...occasionally went against the clear demonstration of popular opinion in the theatre...'⁸⁷ Looking at the archaeological evidence available in the form of victory list inscriptions, Silk suggests that even with these it is impossible to see how far these outcomes 'correspond with audience reactions'.⁸⁸ The outcome of *Clouds* at the City Dionysia of 423 BCE, where it obtained only third place, is possible testimony that a happy crowd does not always equate to a winning performance. In an account of the audiences' reaction to the performance of *Clouds* written approximately seven-hundred years later by Aelian:

They applauded the poet as never before and shouted that he should win and commanded the judges from above to write no other name but Aristophanes.⁸⁹

The judges in this case were not moved by the crowd to vote for Aristophanes. Although this source has to be taken lightly in terms of its distance from the actual performance, it

⁸⁷ Niall W. Slater, (1999), p.351.

⁸⁸ Silk M.S, *Aristophanes and the Definition of Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.7.

⁸⁹ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., p.163.

is useful to show how powerful the force of an audience was perceived to be. Plato presents us with an interesting point of view on the role of a judge in his *Laws*:

A true judge should not be taught by the theatre or frightened by the numerous mob or by his own lack of education...⁹⁰

This alerts us to the fact that the judges were not professional theatrical critics, and were subject to the same intelligence and knowledge stratification as the audience.

Aristophanes seems acutely aware of this later in his career when his chorus in the *Assemblywomen* (c. 391BCE) makes the following direct appeal to the judges:

But first I want to make a small suggestion to the judges: if you're sage judges, declare me the winner by virtue of my sagacity; if you're after humour, declare me the winner by virtue of my jokes. Thus it's virtually all of you that I'm asking to vote for me.
(1221-1224)⁹¹

Here he is highlighting not only the different levels of intelligence but also the different levels of participation, and thus it does appear likely that Aristophanes was playing to two sets of audience and inviting them to participate in two separate ways; one as a competition and the other for entertainment.

If we look at two particular devices that Aristophanes uses, flattery and insult, we see him treating his audience as a whole rather than playing to individuals. Van Steen suggests that this was testament to Aristophanes' skill as a writer in that he was able to temper his work knowing '...how to test and steer the impact of each comic component to the full, but he also insisted that he was seeking spectators who, in turn, possessed sufficient *Sophia* to realise the genius of his plays...'.⁹² In the texts Aristophanic characters often

⁹⁰ Jeffrey Rusten, p.114.

⁹¹ Aristophanes, 'Assemblywomen', in *3 Plays by Aristophanes: Staging Women*, ed. by Jeffrey Henderson, trans. by Jeffrey Henderson (1996), pp. 147.

⁹² Gonda Van Steen, p.116.

talk to the audience about their intelligence. In *Wasps* Xanthias is about to embark on the plot exposition, stating...

No, what we've got is just a little story, but one that makes sense:
Not more intellectual than you
are yourselves, but cleverer than vulgar low comedy
(64-66)

Again in *Knights* we have Demosthenes petition the audience...

...and all who
are honest and decent among citizens, and every man of
intelligence in the audience, and myself, along with them.....
(226-229)

By including himself in his plea for help to the Sausage-seller, he is drawing the audience into a collaborative relationship in his plot to usurp Paphlagon. What better way to gain this support than by flattery, not by singling out individuals for praise and encomium but by bringing the entire audience into the play to consciously encourage the Sausage-seller to comply.

Insults, on the other hand, work equally as well in fostering the relationship between poet and audience. Hubbard suggests that Aristophanes gets away with much of his group insults as he includes himself as '...part of the broader community and thus making his social criticism more palatable.'⁹³ Plutarch, writing five-hundred years later, remarks that 'Some of the comic poets seem to remove the bitterness by poking fun at themselves, as Aristophanes with his baldness'.⁹⁴ This little titbit of information is backed up by Aristophanes himself, as in *Peace*...

In view of this, both the men
and the boys ought to be on my side
And we advise all bald men

⁹³ T. K. Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), . pp.14-15.

⁹⁴ Aristophanes, (2007), pp.52-53.

to join in striving for my victory;
for if I win, everyone will say
both at table and at drinking parties:
“Offer the baldhead, give the baldhead
some of the dessert, and don’t withhold it
from a man who has the same forehead
as the noblest of poets”
(765-774)

...and also *Knights*...

So that our poet may depart rejoicing
and successful,
radiant with gleaming...forehead
(548-550)

Here we can see Aristophanes clearly taking the rise out of himself whilst inviting the audience to join in the fun. Slater suggests that Aristophanic audiences were familiar with ‘...improvisational insult comedy...’⁹⁵ which provided a good degree of audience participation. Insults evidently gave each party in the relationship something; Aristophanes a chance to inject some satirical humour and the audience a good laugh, which as Heath states, results in a ‘...jocular and amiably disrespectful relationship...’⁹⁶ between the two.

The above two quotes are taken from parabolic sections of the plays, which offer the poet the opportunity to have ‘...no necessary dramatic constraints on his relation to his audience.’⁹⁷ The parabasis is also the point in the play where the audience participate as witnesses, as the poet ‘appears’ before them as himself through the chorus, who generally shed their dramatic personas for this section. According to Platonius:

A parabasis is like this: after the actors leave the stage
at the end of the first act, to prevent the theatre
from emptying or the audience from sitting with nothing

⁹⁵ Niall W. Slater, (1999) pp.351-368, p.356.

⁹⁶ Malcolm Heath, (1987), p.13.

⁹⁷ Stephen Halliwell, p.16.

to do, the chorus, unable to speak to the actors, used to address the audience...Plays that contain parabases were performed during the democracy...⁹⁸

Although this source is spurious as its actual date is unknown⁹⁹ and highly unlikely to be contemporaneous with Aristophanes, Platonius' last point, as the extant plays suggest, links this section of the play to the democracy. Aristophanes is apparently using his democratic right to speak to and engage his audience in a very unique way. He flatters, cajoles, berates and insults them but in order to understand what is going on here we need to look at how seriously we take the parabasis, in terms of its place within a comic play. The fact that the parabasis only appeared during plays produced during the democracy may suggest that it does have an ulterior function, although Van Steen warns that it is dangerous to take the parabasis at face value as comedy is notorious for straddling 'every possible variety'.¹⁰⁰ A brief look at the chorus' role in the parabasis it may help us to understand why this section of the play was so necessary, particularly during the democracy and early years of the Peloponnesian War. The chorus as a group could '...identify sometimes with the characters of the play, sometimes with the group of performers, and at other times with the public.'¹⁰¹ It is the last part of this statement which offers the most insight to the varied role of the chorus and how they bridged the physical and emotional gap between poet and audience.

As Platonius notes above, the last thing Aristophanes wanted was a bored audience.

Academic debate is great and divided on the purpose of the parabasis, but as we are only interested in the relational aspect, then only the parts that require audience reaction are of interest here. McLeish states that the parabasis is not an interruption of stage illusion,

⁹⁸ Jeffrey Rusten, p.86.

⁹⁹ Hornblower S and Spawforth A (eds), p.1193.

¹⁰⁰ Gonda Van Steen, p.112.

¹⁰¹ G. M. Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses* (London: The Athlone Press, 1971), p.23.

which Platonius' description suggests, but a point in the play where the audience '...is as much a part of the performance, and of the illusion, as the actors...shifting the role of the audience...as a means both of generating humour and of making serious or satirical points.'¹⁰² The parabasis of *Knights* (498-610) is a good example. Aristophanes starts by using flattery '...you who before now have had first-hand experience of every kind of art' (504-506), which Sommerstein sees as the poet 'flattering the audience's critical expertise' (p.170). Soon after this he admonishes the audience for their 'ephemeral tastes' (519-520) and their so-called treatment of other comic poets as they grew old. It is because of *them*, he states, that Magnus '...was driven from the stage...found wanting in satirical power' (525-526), Cratinus became a 'drivelling fool' (527-535) and Crates suffered 'rape and buffeting' at their hands (536). Aristophanes is expressing his own fear about audience reaction when he states that 'It was in apprehension of that sort of treatment...' (541) that he did not immediately produce plays in his own name and he asks the audience to participate now by raising...

...a great tumult for him, and with all
your eleven oars and send him
a good hearty Lenaeian clamour
(546-547)

Here, both the poet and audience are interacting directly with each other. Aristophanes is openly expressing his fears; he desires the audience to respond with huge applause, and thus the relationship is sealed. I would suggest that Aristophanes is creating a balance in his relationship to the audience and creating an informal contract, rather than a serious attempt to speak politically to them. He needs something from them – their reward is to be entertained.

¹⁰² Kenneth McLeish, p.92.

The form of the parabasis appeared to change from 414BCE onwards, as evidenced in *Birds*. Here the chorus does not step out of character, suggesting that the relationship between performance, poet and spectator had changed quite dramatically since the production of *Peace* in 421BCE. As there are no extant works that were performed between these two dates it is difficult to see if this was a gradual change or something happened ‘overnight’ in response to a political or social event. As noted in Chapter Two, the insults in the parabasis of *Birds* become less direct, which suggests that the parabasis did hold a special key in turning the audience from openly collective witnesses to covert collaborative confidants. The fact that *Birds* also has two very distinct parabases is suggestive of its more metatheatrical than political divisiveness. In the first (677-801) the audience are invited to join the fabulous new city of Cloudcuckooland, with the benefits being pointed out in terms of their association with the theatrical experience of the audience. The second (1058-1117) is a direct appeal to the judges for victory as mentioned previously. The parabasis of *Birds* appears to corroborate with the changes in freedom of speech as discussed in Chapter Two, with its more subtle references to the city and democracy. This would potentially create a division in the relationship with the audience; those that understood the subtleties and were covertly in the know with Aristophanes, and those who did not but enjoyed the theatrical element alone.

Despite the insults and berating, Aristophanes clearly understood his audience enough to know that, although playing to them as a homogenous group, they were intensely stratified in terms of their social standing, political leanings and intellect. He therefore had to develop different methods to satisfy this diversity and invite his audience to ‘...respond at various levels of sophistication’ creating a ‘strata of connoisseurship’.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Martin Revermann, (2006), p.13.

One method he used was paratragedy, and a particular target for this was Euripides.

Harriot concludes that she can find only fifteen instances¹⁰⁴ where the audience would need to be familiar with the actual Euripidean texts in order to find the Aristophanic references funny and that he ‘...assumes that his audience cares about Euripides...’ thus presenting ‘...his material in such a way as to afford the maximum enjoyment to even the dullest spectator.’¹⁰⁵ Paratragedy was thus offering the audience the chance of a collaborative relationship with the poet by requiring them to be receptive and attentive to detail. For example, in *Wasps* when Xanthias is explaining Philocleon’s afflictions, it is his addiction to jury service that Aristophanes equates with the infatuated love of Euripides’ Stheneboea for Bellerophon:

So does he rave; and every admonition
But makes him judge the more
(111)

This works even as a stand-alone remark but is not amusing until it is seen in its paratragic light, providing two levels of performance and in turn two levels of audience participation. In *Peace*, Hermes and Trygaeus are discussing Showtime’s fragrance and comparing it metaphorically with the smells of war and peace:

Hermes: Then it’s not the same smell you get from a soldier’s ration-bag?

Trygaeus: “I spurn that odious man’s most odious pouch!” That
 smells of onions and indigestion. *She* smells of fruit-harvest,
 entertaining, the Dionysia, the pipes, performances of tragedy,
 songs by Sophocles, thrush, neat little lines by Euripides-
 (528-532)

Again the paratragic line ‘I spurn....’ taken from Euripides’ *Telephus*’ does not detract from the context of the passage but merely adds to the humour if the audience

¹⁰⁴ Rosemary Harriott, ‘Aristophanes’ Audience and the Plays of Euripides’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 9 (1962), 1-8, p.2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.4.

understand it in its tragic form. Although still playing to his entire spectatorship, he is also recognising the stratification among them in terms of intelligence and as a result may also expect different responses in return. The audience members in the tragic 'know' may have laughed along in an intellectually select group creating a special relationship with the poet at that point in the play. However, the tragedies of Euripides were as accessible to audiences as were the comedies of Aristophanes, therefore it is unnecessary to suggest that tragedy represented an intellectually unique spectatorship at the festivals.

By using these various techniques, Aristophanes was clearly developing and manipulating the audience experience as one cohesive group but with variations to suit each level of understanding. The participatory element appears most strong from this collective but diverse set of spectators, in a relationship where their feedback could make or break the poet. It was a relationship based on shared needs and democratic principles, but needed Aristophanes at its helm to steer the correct course.

CHAPTER FOUR

SITUATION COMEDY

Following on from the previous chapter's discussion on audience intelligence, which Revermann describes as being based on '...an individual's cognitive and emotional pre-disposition..¹⁰⁶, this chapter looks at how another dimension was added by Aristophanes. I will show that physical entities, such as aural, visual and spatial techniques, were employed by Aristophanes to engage his spectators as part of the performance, and that he used these in a very conscious way when constructing his performances in order to elicit a very specific response. The immediacy of physical devices and acts may have drawn a completely different set of responses and required a different set of skills. I will show that this had a fundamental change on the relationship between poet and audience during these parts of the plays and any particular responses that were generated. In particular I will look at the impact of noise, masks and costumes, and the theatrical space on and off-stage.

The aural aspects of comic performances appear to have quite an impact on the participatory relationship between poet and audience. A good comparison to the theatre is between the law courts and assembly, where the noise from the spectator seats was such that they hoped to influence or sway opinions, which suggests that noise is closely linked to the democracy. As referred to earlier in Chapters Two and Three, Aristophanes was acutely aware of how to condition his performances to a suitably two-way democratic process for himself and his audience, in particular to raise laughter. But other

¹⁰⁶ Martin Revermann, 'The Competence of Theatre Audiences in Fifth- and Fourth-Century Athens', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 126 (2006), 99-124
<<http://www.jstor.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/stable/30033402>>, p.105.

noises such as clapping, heckling, singing or shouting were important features of the relationship from both sides. In *Knights* the Sausage-seller speaks of the moment he received applause from the council (651), which Roselli suggests is ‘...echoing the eager and vocal desire of the audience’¹⁰⁷ to the Sausage-seller’s plans for reducing the cost of sardines. Comedy therefore needs its audience and is ‘...consequently aware of its presence, through its various reactions...’¹⁰⁸ - the most vivid of these being the noise it makes.

Primary sources provide good evidence of the type of noise that audiences were making to comic performances. When discussing the ‘theatrocracy’ of audiences and music in *Laws*, Plato states ‘...as now, the mob’s unmusical shoutings... the clappings which mark applause’ are a result of the comic poets encouraging their audiences to pass vocal judgements thus ‘...the theatre-goers become noisy.’¹⁰⁹ and major participants in the performance. The idea that noise from a participatory audience is linked closely to the democracy is further described by Plato in his *Republic*:

And when the many have sat down all together in an assembly or in court or at the theatres...with much noise they blame some things that are said and praise others...by shouting and clapping, and the rocks and whatever place they are meeting in reverberate and double the crowd’s praise or blame.¹¹⁰

Therefore, the noise from the audiences’ side of the stage was providing feedback to the poet. Hall describes this as ‘dictatorship of the spectatorship’ during which the power

¹⁰⁷ D. K. Roselli, p.49.

¹⁰⁸ G. A. H. Chapman, ‘Some Notes on Dramatic Illusion in Aristophanes’, *The American Journal of Philology*, 104 (1983), 1-23 <<http://www.jstor.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/stable/293756>>, p.1.

¹⁰⁹ Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vols. 10 & 11*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0166%3Abook%3D3%3Apage%3D701> edn, trans. by R.G. Bury, 2014 vols (London: Harvard University Press,), p. 2, in *Perseus, Tufts* [accessed 12/07/2014], 3.700c-3.701b.

¹¹⁰ Jeffrey Rusten, p.412.

balance of the relationship shifts from poet to audience.¹¹¹ However it is important feedback as Aristophanes states in *Wasps* when Xanthias recounts how the drunken Philocleon performs in front of the symposium guests generating applause from some and distaste from others stating, 'They all clapped, excepting only Thuphrasus: he grimaced with his lips...' (1314-1315).

The two-way participatory element of noise-making, whether as audience feedback or singing, shouting or sound effects from the performance on stage, is probably the most dramatic aspect of the poet-audience relationship which Aristophanes factors in when creating his performances, albeit with some calculated risks. As Chapman concludes, the audience are '...part of the cast, they are noisy extras, whose role is essential but difficult to evaluate because it is unscripted and not always predictable.'¹¹² Therefore, Aristophanes would need to use his comic tools to ensure that he was able to control, to some extent, this unknown entity. One method at his disposal was to use sound effects from the stage to engineer this. Of the four plays studied there are at least three occasions when sound effects are created on-stage to have an effect off of it. The first, in *Peace*, we are led to believe that the character, War, is grinding up the Greek states in his mortar:

Hermes:	He's just going to come outside, if you ask me – at any rate he's making some noise in there.
Trygaeus:	Heaven help us! Here, let me escape from him; I've also sort of become aware of the voice of a martial mortar (231-235)

In *Birds* the goddess Iris is announced in terms of her noisy arrival:

¹¹¹ Edith Hall, p.364.

¹¹² G. A. H. Chapman, p.1.

Chorus-leader:- and be on the watch, everyone, looking out in every direction; for already the sound can be heard close at hand of the whirling wings of an airborne god.
(1196-1198)

Slater claims that the close of this play when Peisetaerus brandishes his newly acquired thunderbolt, was ‘...likely that the thunder machine (the *bronteion*) sounds from off-stage’ with Aristophanes deploying this device to ‘...enact his hero’s power’¹¹³. These instances would have the effect of audibly nudging the audience to alert them that something dramatic and possibly funny, was about to happen whilst engaging them to participate with their own noise; noise generating noise.

Aristophanes also uses his chorus to create noisy, song and dance fuelled entrances. In *Peace*, the exuberant entrance of the chorus is tempered by Trygaeus’ constant appeals for them to restrain themselves. ‘Will you be quiet? Take care that in your joy at what has happened you don’t rekindle War in there by your shouting’ (309-310). The Chorus-leader eventually responds ‘...today we’re not going to stop rejoicing!’ (318-319).

Aristophanes is creating dramatic tension between his characters amidst the noise and clamour of the chorus’s celebrations. The audience, probably aware in reality that peace is being negotiated, are caught up as witnesses between the characters but are also likely eager participants in wanting to celebrate with the chorus. In *Wasps* the chorus are again asked to refrain from shouting by Bdelycleon (415), followed by an all-out brawl between his household slaves and the chorus (456ff). The comic value in this scene must have been pure slapstick with the noise, actions and comical wasp costumes providing the audience with ample laughs and opportunities to shout out their support for one side or the other.

¹¹³ Niall Slater W., (2002), p.148.

The visual aspect of Aristophanes' relationship with his audience is manifest in a repertoire of theatrical devices. As Ley observes '...the abundance [of costumes and props] so evident in Aristophanic comedy are aesthetic exploitations of the sensual and sensory awareness of their audience...'.¹¹⁴ Whilst creating a common and democratic sense of collaboration between himself and the audience, Aristophanes also used the physical and visual elements of his stagecraft to highlight the differences between them. This created a defined barrier, not only in terms of the physical space of the auditorium and performance areas but also in how different the actors and performers on-stage looked and behaved. In particular the comic costume and masks must have been a constant visual reminder to the spectators that this was not reality. The characters and plots may have been a reflection of the audiences own moods and sentiments on the current political, military and social situation, but the exaggerated and absurd physical appearance of these characters on-stage were a firm reminder that they were watching a comedy. As Chapman states certain passages '...tend to remind the audience that they are looking at actors in comic costume and thus rupture the dramatic illusion'¹¹⁵ but I would suggest that they are also rupturing any sense of reality so that the audience are suspended between disbelief and shared experience. One case in point is the use of the phallus in comic costume, a topic in itself which is controversial in two ways.¹¹⁶ Firstly, we have no modern precedent with which to compare and secondly, no firm primary evidence to the frequency of its use. The fact that the phallus existed as part of the standard comic costume can be shown through vase paintings. Taplin points to the 'New

¹¹⁴ Graham Ley, 'A Material World: Costume, Properties and Scenic Effects', in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*, ed. by Marianne McDonald and Michael Walton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 268pp. 285, in *RWCambridgeUPressDB* <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521834568.015>> [accessed 19/01/2014; 19/01/2014]. p.283.

¹¹⁵ G. A. H. Chapman, p.15.

¹¹⁶ L. M. Stone, *Costume in Aristophanic Poetry* (New York: Arno Press, 1981), p.72.

York Goose Play' Kalyx-krater as a good contemporary example of comic costume.¹¹⁷

Both males depicted are clearly wearing the phallus, which suggests that this element of costuming is fundamental to the whole nature of Greek comedy where 'grotesqueness is of the essence'.¹¹⁸ Stone concludes that although nearly all 'male' characters wore a phallus costume in some form, they would only be blatantly visible for comic effect or when the humour called for it.¹¹⁹

If we look at its use in terms of the religious elements of the festivals, it could suggest that Aristophanes is drawing his play and audience into the whole Dionysiac ritual by including the phallus in his plays. Cartledge suggests that this '...corresponded to the exaggeratedly male-dominated quality of the sexuality celebrated in Dionysiac rituals on and off the stage.'¹²⁰ The other side of the argument is that the phallus costume was there for purely comic effect, as Wiles states a '...constant opportunity for comic business, [making] heroism a physical impossibility.'¹²¹ In other words, the use of this particular comic costume, by distinguishing itself by its own absurdity, was working towards a very specific audience response – laughter. A small fragment of scholia supports this premise 'For the comedians used to go on stage wearing leather penises to evoke laughter.'¹²² and Aristophanes verbally refers to the phallus on several occasions where its comic, rather than religious value, is implied. In the parabasis of *Clouds* the Chorus-leader informs the audience that this is a 'sophisticated comedy' (521) where his character '...hasn't come with any dangling leather stitched to her, red at the tip and thick, to make the children laugh..' (536-538). This suggests that he is now looking for higher levels of audience

¹¹⁷ Oliver Taplin, *Comic Angels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), fig 10.2, p.38.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.54.

¹¹⁹ L. M. Stone, p.98.

¹²⁰ Paul Cartledge, p.3.

¹²¹ David Wiles, p.33.

¹²² Jeffrey Rusten, p.429.

intelligence and associates childish humour to such devices as the comic phallus. In other texts the phallus' presence is inferred. For instance, in *Wasps*, Philocleon beckons the flute-girl to take '...hold of this rope with your hand...' (1341), to help her on to the stage. This is a blatant innuendo, clearly only there for comic value. The religious origin of the phallus symbol therefore, may have provided Aristophanes with a dual purpose for it in his plays, particularly when looking for audience involvement in the religious and community aspects that this symbol represented during the festivals, and also generating a response to the comic value it brought on-stage.

Like the comic phallus, much modern debate is given over to the use of portrait-masks in Aristophanic comedy. Archaeological evidence only provides us with instances of the familiar grotesque-like comic masks, with its large mouth and eye holes, which would have been immediately recognised by the audience. However, portrait-masks are useful devices for Aristophanes to draw in and make complicit his audience, without the need to worry about slandering the individuals identified on the mask. *Knights* provides textual evidence to suggest that portrait masks were utilised sometimes so that Aristophanes could combine his verbal caricatures as discussed in Chapter Two with a physically comic one.

Demosthenes:	And have no fear, he's not portrayed with his own face; the property-makers were too frightened for any of them to be prepared to make a portrait-mask of him. He'll be recognised all the same; the audience is intelligent enough! (230-33)
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This suggests that on this occasion a portrait-mask was not necessary for two reasons. Firstly, if the character being described here is Cleon, then Aristophanes knows that his audience will recognise him by a description of his traits rather than by facial recognition. Secondly, the joke is on the mask makers who were possibly sat in audience too.

Aristophanes' allusion to portrait masks here and the lack of archaeological evidence, either suggests that they were unremarkable in appearance or not used extensively in Old Comedy. Both of these suggestions may have been as a result of how effective these types of masks were when thinking about how the audience experienced them. The spectators sat at the very back rows or in the unofficial space of the theatre would have found it difficult to discern any details painted or shaped into the masks. As Halliwell observes, if a portrait mask was to have a close resemblance to the target's appearance '...it is doubtful whether this condition could always have been satisfied for Aristophanes' mass audience' and goes on to point out that this type of realistic art form was not common in this era¹²³. Koster highlights the technical difficulties for the mask-makers; the need for eye and mouth holes would have detracted from the likeness of the individual in reality.¹²⁴ Dover suggests that the passage in *Knights* is more about just how *unremarkable* Cleon's face was, setting Aristophanes free to '...express his attitude to Kleon by presenting the Paphlagonian as hideous in the extreme...' ¹²⁵. This theory makes sense when taken in terms of how the audience experienced the visual and verbal aspects of this passage, as they would have recognised this as Cleon anyway. It does provide a good example of how Aristophanes used verbal imagery rather than the actual physical object itself. Welsh¹²⁶ puts forward the opposite view that the passage shows portrait-masks were common in Aristophanic comedy and argues that a fragment by Cratinus

¹²³ Stephen Halliwell, p.9.

¹²⁴ W. J. W. Koster, 'Portrait-Masks in Aristophanes', in *Greek and the Greeks: Volume I*, ed. by K. J. Dover, 1 vols (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1987), pp. 267-278, p.272.

¹²⁵ K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1972), p.29.

¹²⁶ D. Welsh, 'Knights 230-3 and Cleon's Eyebrows', *The Classical Quarterly*, 29 (1979), 214-215 <<http://www.jstor.org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/stable/638623>>, p.214.

backs up this fact; 'In appearance Cleon was repulsive, particularly around the eyebrows'¹²⁷. Aelian concurs:

A certain 'Socrates' was being bandied about on the stage and frequently being named and I wouldn't be surprised if he were actually visible among the actors – for clearly the mask-makers made him as like the real Socrates as possible!¹²⁸

Platonius tells us that the poets of Middle and New Comedy no longer employed personalised masks '...which has been made in Old Comedy.'¹²⁹ However, as Dover points out, the use of any type of mask would call for the rest of the actor's body to perform more '...important gesturing roles...'¹³⁰ so possibly specific gestures and movements may have been combined with the portrait-masks to give an overall impression of a particular individual that the audience would recognise. We may also be underestimating the technical skill of the mask-makers and that a well-designed portrait mask could have projected an easily recognisable image out to the audience.

The spatial elements alluded to in the texts are important as they show the '...relationship between stage and auditorium is based on a mutual exchange...a two-sided interactive process of communication.'¹³¹ One instance where this interaction becomes physical is in *Peace*:

Trygaeus: Now, Prytaneis, take possession of Showtime!
Look how eagerly the chairman took her from me!
You wouldn't have that if you'd had to introduce
some business for no reward.
(905-908)

¹²⁷ *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*, ed. by J. M. Edmonds, 1 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1957), p.101.

¹²⁸ Csapo, E. and Slater, W.J., p.290.

¹²⁹ Jeffrey Rusten, p.424.

¹³⁰ K. J. Dover, p.28.

¹³¹ Willmar Sauter, 'The Audience', in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, ed. by Wiles, David, and Christine Dymkowski, 1st edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 169-183 [accessed 19/01/2014; 19/01/2014], p.173.

Varakis describes this scene as the audience getting involved in the 'creative process'¹³², physically uniting the performance and the audience. Hall sees this as Trygaeus '...strikingly cross[ing] the physical boundary between actors and audience'¹³³ with Aristophanes physically bringing in some members of the audience as direct participants in the stage action, whilst the rest participate as collaborators and witnesses in the joke. In *Birds*, Aristophanes prompts the audience to use their imaginations to see the stage as the new city of birds, as Peisetaerus asks Tereus to look up and states; 'Well, this is surely a stage for the birds, isn't it?' (179) Aristophanes has planted the idea that 'They will build their city in the presence of the Athenian audience...'¹³⁴ A similar situation in *Knights* sees Demosthenes extending the world of the stage to the outside world of the audience and beyond when he asks the Sausage-seller to climb on a table so that he can see '...the islands all around...The trading ports and the merchant ships...Caria, and...Carthage' (170-174). Whether or not these places are visible from the theatre, the important thing is that the character's view is being placed in the minds of the audience thus extending the stage into their own experience.

Peace provides us with an instance of pure slapstick comedy resulting from the combination of clever, technical stagecraft and the inclusion of the audience as unwitting collaborators. In the scene where Trygaeus flies over the stage on the dung-beetle, he first warns the audience;

¹³² Angeliki Varakis, 'Aristophanic Performance as an all-Inclusive Event', in *Classics in the Modern World: A Democratic Turn?*, ed. by Hardwick, Lorna and Stephen Harrison, On-line edn (On-line: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014), <<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199673926.001.0001/acprof-9780199673926-chapter-16>> [accessed 21/06/2014], p.6.

¹³³ Edith Hall, p.336.

¹³⁴ Niall Slater W., (2002), p.139.

And you, on whose behalf I am performing these labours, pray
do not fart or crap for three days; for if this creature smells it while
in the air, he'll throw me off, head first, and go off to graze.
(150-153)

Aristophanes immediately makes them bear some of the responsibility in Trygaeus' mission for peace, combined with the physical presence of Trygaeus straddling a dung-beetle suspended in mid-air created a moment of pure comedy. Once the beetle is airborne, an illusion is created that he is flying over the *Peiraeus* and after a rocky landing the stage space has now become the exterior of the house of the gods. One short, physical scene has created an opportunity for the audience to participate in Trygaeus' plot and also to imagine the spaces, real and imagined on-stage. Zimmermann states this physical aspect of the staging is to '...arouse reflection in the spectator...' ¹³⁵ as comedy '...needs a distancing between the stage action and the world in which the audience lives...' ¹³⁶ the same distancing created by costumes and masks as previously mentioned. However, it is clear that although a creative distance was needed between the performance and the audience, Aristophanes would not be able to hold them at arm's length for the entirety of the performance and still expect their support. One way that he managed to draw the audience back into the performance, and thus by extension into the festive atmosphere, was to create celebrations within the performances themselves '...to serve as catalysts for victory celebrations off-stage as performers re-enter the world of the spectators and extend the play's celebration beyond the performance.' ¹³⁷ Both the wedding celebrations at the end of *Peace* and *Birds* do not specifically invite the audience to join in, but as Roselli states, Aristophanes uses these scenes to '...motivate the

¹³⁵ B. Zimmermann, p.7.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ D. K. Roselli, p.35.

spectators' participation in the performance's celebration'¹³⁸ with the stage spaces representative of the feasting and carnival atmosphere of these scenes in real life.

Audiences were therefore as much a part of the physical aspects of a performance as were the theatrical elements themselves. This participation resulted in audible feedback to the poet, much of this under his control as he was the one cracking the jokes, controlling what was worn on-stage and how the space was used. Visually, Aristophanes was able to create cognitive dissonance in the sense that what was being seen was a distortion of reality and far removed from the more familiar elements of the comic play. This firmly placed his audience in the context of a comic performance, in a festival, and thus the ultimate participatory experience of enjoyment. Spatially, Aristophanes created a definite 'barrier' between reality and theatre, but also allowed these lines to become blurred when he needed the audience to buy in and engage with his imagery created in the play. Overall, these factors suggest that Aristophanes carefully crafted every element of his plays to ensure that he was in control of the poet-audience relationship and to make sure he obtained the reaction he wanted, whilst balancing the needs of the audience.

¹³⁸ D. K. Roselli, p.36.

CONCLUSION

What has been most apparent throughout this study of Aristophanes and his relationship to his audience, is how closely bound it is with the broad and external factors of the performances. I have shown that Aristophanes consciously constructed his work in order to consider these factors and how he employed various techniques to ensure he got the responses he desired for victory, whilst at the same time providing the audience with what they needed – entertainment. We are reminded again and again how important the democracy was during this time, and how it permeated all aspects of life including the writing, staging, performing and spectatorship of comic plays. This in turn integrates seamlessly with the larger festival context. What we learn is that Aristophanes had the technical skills to enable him to develop a democratic relationship with his audience, where they ceased ‘...to be passive onlookers...’ and ‘...made participants in a shared Dionysiac ceremony’.¹³⁹

As Ley reminds us, ‘Between the modern reader and the ancient script, lies the audience for which it was composed...’¹⁴⁰ so the actual level of audience participation may have been very different in reality to what sense we get of it from the texts. However, we do see Aristophanes’ skill at work in what he was hoping to achieve and the ideal relationship he wanted to build with his audience; one of witness, collaborator and participant. As it would have been impossible to entirely predict audience reactions, we can see his skill at attempting to guide and manipulate these responses. This becomes most obvious in the instance he failed. The first performance of *Clouds* may have been a disastrous miscalculation of his relationship with his audience. However, it is clear that

¹³⁹ David Wiles, p.124.

¹⁴⁰ Graham Ley, *A Short Introduction to the Ancient Greek Theater*, 2nd edn (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), p.53.

Aristophanes had a multi-faceted audience to contend with, and he appeared to build his relationship with them on different layers. Citizens and non-citizens, different social and political groups, various levels of intelligence, ability to attend performances – he managed to bind these distinct groups to create one participating audience in a festive experience, a relationship that would not have been possible in reality. Other mass participatory events, such as the Assembly or law courts did not offer the same opportunities for one individual to remove the masses from reality, whilst at the same time addressing everyday issues and situations with which they were familiar.

Aristophanes' skill in manipulation was manifest through his dramatic approaches, whether verbal insults or flattery, direct address, invitations to participate, which mirrored the democratic lifestyles and rights as Athenian citizens away from the theatre. For the non-citizens it was a display of Athenian democratic power at its best. As shown in Chapters Two and Three, once the democracy started to change, this was reflected in Aristophanes' plays. For instance, the decline of the chorus in Aristophanes' later works may have been a sign that as the democracy changed, so did the audiences' theatrical needs. I have shown in these chapters how the war and democracy called for a particular type of comedy for an audience whose day-to-day lives were so embroiled in the topics of the plays. As the outcome of the war became less predictable and Athens' fortunes changed both militarily and politically, so did Aristophanes' themes and the ways in which he engaged and included his audiences. It is difficult to say for sure if this change was audience driven or if Aristophanes was knowledgeable enough about his audiences tastes and needs so as to predict and adjust his writing accordingly. I would suggest this was the case judging by his remark in *Knights* about their 'ephemeral tastes'(519), but whichever the case, it shows that he had enough technical skill and was not afraid to address the

changes needed to ensure that his unique relationship with his audience continued to develop, prosper and move with the times.

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