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Aristophanes of Athens was judged in antiquity to be the foremost poet of Old Attic Comedy,¹ a theatrical genre of which he was one of the last practitioners and of which his eleven surviving plays are our only complete examples.² Since antiquity his comedies have been valued principally for their iridescent wit and beguiling fantasy, for the exuberance and elegance of their language, and for their brilliant satire of the social, intellectual, and political life of Athens in an important era of its history. Legend has it that when the Syracusan leader Dionysius wanted to study “the polity of the Athenians,” Plato sent him Aristophanes’ comedies (T 1.42-45).

Little is known about Aristophanes’ life apart from his theatrical career. According to the ancient *Life* (T 1), he

¹ Already in Plato’s *Symposium* (c. 380) Aristophanes represents comedy; cf. also Aristotle’s *Poetics*, 1448a24-27; see further T 52-95. [Numerals preceded by T refer to the ancient and medieval testimonia about Aristophanes, as collected by R. Kassel and C. Austin, eds., *Poetae Comici Graeci*, vol. III.2 (Berlin and New York, 1984), pp. 1-33].

² The era of Old Comedy is conventionally dated from 486, when comedy became an official event at the City or Greater Dionysia, until roughly the end of the fifth century. Comedy at the Lenaea began in 440.

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was the son of one Philippus and belonged to the urban deme Cydathenaeum in the tribe Pandionis. The exact date of his birth is unknown,³ but probably fell within a few years of mid-century, for *Clouds* 528-532 imply that he was young and inexperienced when he produced his first play in 427, and by 424 people were wondering why he had yet to produce a play on his own (*Knights* 512-513). By his twenties his hair had thinned or receded enough that his rivals could call him bald (T 46-50). *Acharnians* 642-654 show that he had a residence on the island of Aegina, and the context suggests that detractors had tried to use this connection to question his loyalty to Athens or even his Athenian citizenship.⁴ Four comic poets of the fourth century are reputed in ancient sources to be his sons (T 7-8). For Nicostratus and Philetaerus we lack supporting evidence, but for Araros and Philippus we are on firmer ground: Araros launched his career in 387 by producing one of Aristophanes' plays, probably *Cocalus*, and subsequently produced a revised version of another, *Aeoloscicon*; and a son of one Philippus of Cydathenaeum served as Councillor c. 360 (*IG ii²* 2370).⁵ Aristophanes was prob-

³ The date of 444/3 found in ancient sources (T 2, Schol. *Frogs* 501) is unsubstantiated.

⁴ Cf. T 2. Cleon seems to have charged Aristophanes with foreign birth (Schol. *Acharnians* 378, 503, T 1.19-21, 24), and perhaps rival comic poets did as well (cf. Eupolis 392.3-8). Statements in ancient sources (T 1.21-24; 2.1-2; 9-12) that Aristophanes was Aeginetan by birth or that his family had settled there after Athens expelled the natives in 431 are mere inferences from this text, and his assignment to other cities is the result of confusion with other poets.

⁵ In addition to his deme membership, Philippus will have

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ably dead when Plato made him a character in *Symposium* (written c. 380).

Although we do not know how wealthy Aristophanes was, what evidence we do have suggests that he belonged to a prospering family and moved in elite circles. Early in the fourth century he represented his tribe in the prestigious office of Councillor (T 9). In *Acharnians* (6-8, 299-302) and *Knights*, he aligns himself with the upperclass cavalry corps; one of his Chorus of Knights is named Simon (*Knights* 242, *Clouds* 351), possibly portraying the dedicator of a bronze horse at the Eleusinion and author of a treatise on horsemanship,⁶ and another Panaetius (243), possibly the Panaetius later condemned in the scandal of the Mysteries in 415.⁷ This Simon may also have been the priest of a private cult of Heracles in Cydathenaeum (typically these were upperclass fraternities⁸), whose members are listed in an inscription datable to c. 400 (*IG* ii² 2343); they include Amphytheus, the name of the demi-divine fetcher of peace treaties in *Acharnians*, and Philonides, the producer of at least three of Aristophanes' plays (*Proagon*, *Amphiaraus*, and *Frogs*). Throughout his career Aristophanes promotes the views and policies of men on the conservative right and assails their opponents. Finally, in *Symposium* Plato portrays Aristophanes as being at home among the social and intellectual elite of Athens, and as a man of old-fashioned ethi-

inherited his paternal grandfather's name, as often in Athenian families.

⁶ Cf. Xenophon, *On Horsemanship* 1.1.

⁷ See Andocides 1.13, 52, 67.

⁸ See, for example, Demosthenes 57.46.

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cal values (190b-d, 193a-d). Whether or not such a symposium ever actually took place, there is no reason to doubt its historical plausibility.

There is a graceful epitaph attributed to Plato (T 130):

αἱ Χάριτες, τέμενός τι λαβεῖν ὅπερ οὐχὶ πεσεῖται
ζητοῦσαι, ψυχὴν εὖρον Ἀριστοφάνους

The Graces, looking for an imperishable shrine,
found the soul of Aristophanes.

Aristophanes' career as a comic poet spanned some forty years, from his debut in 427 until *c.* 386. Forty-four comedies ascribed to him were known in antiquity; four of these ancient scholars considered spurious, for reasons now obscure.⁹ Eleven comedies have survived intact, and of the lost comedies we have nearly a thousand fragments, a few of them on papyrus, the rest quotations by ancient scholars, most consisting of a word, a phrase, or a line or so.

Aristophanes' comedies, together with the known or conjectured circumstances of their production, are as follows:¹⁰

427 L? *Banqueters* (2nd prize); produced by
Callistratus¹¹

⁹ These are *Dionysus Shipwrecked*, *Dramas or Niobus*, *Islands*, and *Poesy*.

¹⁰ The extant plays are asterisked; L = Lenaea and D = Dionysia.

¹¹ It was not uncommon for a poet to employ someone else as the producer (*didaskalos*) of his play, nor were such collaborations confined to inexperienced poets, as the production of *Frogs* by Philonides shows. Nevertheless, Aristophanes' delay in producing in his own name seems to have been controversial (*Knights* 512-

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- 426 D *Babylonians* (1st prize?¹²); produced by
Callistratus
- 425 L **Acharnians* (1st prize); produced by
Callistratus
- 424 L **Knights* (1st prize); produced by
Aristophanes
- 424? D *Farmers*
- 423? L *Merchant Ships*
- 423 D *Clouds I* (3rd prize or lower¹³); produced
by Aristophanes
- 422 L *Proagon* (1st prize); produced by
Philonides¹⁴
- 422 L **Wasps* (2nd prize); produced by
Aristophanes
- 421 D **Peace I* (2nd prize); produced by
Aristophanes
- 421-12 *Seasons*
- after c. 420 *Women Claiming Tent Sites*
- 419-7 *Anagyrus*
- c. 418 **Clouds II*; never produced, incomplete
revision of *Clouds I*
- after c. 415 *Polyidus*

546, *Wasps* 1015-50, T 1.7-10, 3.9-10), perhaps because of his feud with Cleon.

¹² Suggested not only by Aristophanes' pride in this comedy (cf. *Acharnians* 628-64) and by its political impact, but also by its position in the victory list (*IG* i² 2325).

¹³ The number of competing comedies was five before the Peloponnesian War (431-404); whether and at what point during the war the number was reduced to three is unknown.

¹⁴ See the Introduction to *Wasps*.

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414 L	<i>Amphiaraus</i> ; produced by Philonides
414 D	* <i>Birds</i> (2nd prize); produced by Callistratus
c. 413-11	<i>Heroes</i>
413-406?	<i>Daedalus</i>
after 412	<i>Peace II</i>
411 L	* <i>Lysistrata</i> ; produced by Callistratus
411 D	* <i>Women at the Thesmophoria I</i>
c. 410-9	<i>Triphales</i>
c. 410-5	<i>Women at the Thesmophoria II</i>
after 410	<i>Lemnian Women</i>
after 409	<i>Old Age</i>
after 409	<i>Phoenician Women</i>
408	<i>Wealth I</i>
c. 408	<i>Gerytades</i>
before 406	<i>Dramas or Centaur</i>
405 L	* <i>Frogs</i> (1st prize); produced by Philonides; reperformed by civic decree, probably 404 L
c. 402	<i>Telemessians</i>
before 400	<i>Fry Cooks (Tagenistai)</i>
before 395?	<i>Aeolosicon I</i>
c. 398r-389	<i>Storks</i>
c. 392	* <i>Assemblywomen</i>
388	* <i>Wealth II</i> (1st prize?)
387 D	<i>Cocalus</i> (1st prize); produced by Araros
after 387	<i>Aeolosicon II</i> ; produced by Araros
?	<i>Danaids</i>

Aristophanes was from the start remarkably successful in national competition, winning at least six first prizes and four second prizes, with only one or two lower rankings

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attested.¹⁵ At least once he produced a comedy in the deme theater at Eleusis (T 21), and *Clouds* 522-23 suggest that a first production of that play outside Athens had been an option. Perhaps the highpoint of his theatrical career followed his victory with *Frogs* in 405, when the Athenians voted him an honorific crown of sacred olive for the advice he had given them in the *parabasis* of that play, and decreed that the play should have the unique honor of being performed a second time (T 1.35-39), probably at the Lenaia of 404.

Aristophanes often boasts of the superior quality and originality of his work. The lack of complete comedies by other poets limits our ability to evaluate Aristophanes' claims, but the ancient critics who could still read much of the Old Comic corpus do not contradict him, and the criticisms of his rivals are few and comparatively mild.¹⁶ A few large-scale contributions to the genre can be identified with some confidence. *Knights* was the first comedy entirely devoted to the vilification of a single individual, and seems to have established the main features of the demagogue figure, which Aristophanes did not use again but which proved fruitful for other poets until the end of the century. In plays like *Banqueters*, *Clouds*, and *Lysistrata* Aristophanes seems to have amalgamated the comedy of political satire, pioneered by Cratinus in the 450s and Her-

¹⁵ The first *Clouds* in 423, and perhaps the otherwise unattested play *Odom]antopres[beis* listed in *IG* i² 2321.87-89.

¹⁶ Cratinus 342 (as modishly clever as Euripides); Eupolis 60, 89 (plagiarism); Eupolis 62 and Plato Comicus 86 (the statue in *Peace*); Ameipsias 27, Aristonymus 3, and Sannyrion 5 (that, like Heracles, he spent his career working for others).

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mippus in the 430s, with the domestic and ethical comedy of Crates and Pherecrates, which resembled Sicilian comedy and drew on tragedy to develop tighter plots and more complex characters.¹⁷ Aristophanes is the only comic poet recorded as claiming intellectual sophistication as a virtue. Under this heading we may place his tendency to enrich his language with allusions to many genres of poetry; his intimate satire of sophistic ideas; and his frequent use of tragedy, especially Euripides, both for incidental parody and large-scale usurpation (most notably the virtual recreation of *Telephus* in *Acharnians* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*); Cratinus coined the verb “to euripidaristophanize” (fr. 342). In *Lysistrata* Aristophanes apparently introduced the first comic heroine; in previous comedies, female roles seem to have been confined to such disreputable types as market women, prostitutes, and the wives or mothers of demagogues. Finally, Aristophanes seems to have played a role in the transition from Old to Middle and New Comedy: *Wealth* was perhaps the first comedy to dispense with an integral chorus (T 1.51-54), and *Cocalus* “introduced rape and recognition and all the other motifs that Menander emulated” (T 1.49-51).

Aristophanes is best known as a political satirist. Although not all of his plays dealt primarily with politics—after 415 he seems to have broadened his scope to include more domestic, literary, and mythological subjects—it was his political comedies that most impressed contemporaries and fascinated posterity, and that during his career problematized the distinction between citizen and artist.

¹⁷ Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b.

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Audience and Festival

As institutions the Athenian theatrical festivals were primarily civic: patriotic showcases for the democracy sponsored and administered by the demos (sovereign people) and funded on a grand scale by its wealthiest liturgists, the chorus masters (*choregoi*), who, along with poets selected by the appropriate officeholder, competed for prizes and civic prestige in dithyramb, tragedy and satyr drama, and comedy. The dancers, numbering some 1165 per festival, could be compelled to perform and were exempted from military service to do so. Front-row seating (*prohedria*) was a reward that the demos bestowed upon its most distinguished citizens and guests.

The distinctness of the dramatic festivals from other venues of civic assembly is also significant. The theater, which accommodated at least 17,000 spectators, concentrated much more of the Attic populace in one place at the same time than any other public event; the Assembly could house only 6,000. And the dramatic festivals were not exclusive; we hear of no attempt to restrict attendance by any class of residents or even foreigners.¹⁸ Alongside the demos sat as many of those people who were otherwise debarred from civic assemblies as could get seats: women,¹⁹ children, even slaves, metics (who could also perform at the Lenaea) and visiting foreigners. Moreover, all these

¹⁸ Foreigners did not attend the Lenaea (*Acharnians* 504-6) because it was held in winter, not because they were barred.

¹⁹ No ancient evidence supports the modern notion that women must have been excluded, and Plato twice explicitly mentions them among the spectators (*Gorgias* 502b-d, *Laws* 658a-d).

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categories of people, normally invisible from the vantage point of civic deliberation, were standard characters in drama. As for the poets, they were elite competitors in a democratically organized contest, but unlike purely civic speakers, who could appeal only to democratic laws and procedures, the poets could appeal to much older cultic and poetic traditions, and to a more universal ethical code.

The dramatic festivals might thus be called supracivic: public meetings that encompassed the whole of society, not just its political subset. The concerns expressed in the dramas included but significantly transcended the set of problems specific to the executive worlds of lawcourt and Assembly, for they treated the ethics of family and private life; the lives of people as individuals as opposed to civic categories; the very discontinuity between the political and the larger society; and the wider world beyond Athens. And so drama became the principal communal outlet for portraying the polis in all its diversity and social hierarchies; for reconsidering traditions and norms, airing concerns, examining problems and testing solutions that affected the democratic culture as a whole but that had no other public outlet. As theatergoers, people debarred from all other venues of civic discourse could here experience the role of democratic audience. Community knowledge, from popular gossip to the concerns of the political class, could be aired and diffused. And people whose suggestions, concerns, or complaints had not been, or could not be, presented to the executive demos might expect them to be raised by one of the poets, not least the comic poets. Such people would include civic minorities like the "quiet" members of the elite and the "little people" who were rarely able to attend civic meetings, let alone likely to rise

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in the Assembly or to litigate, e.g. farmers from distant demes, or the poor. In these ways the dramatic festivals served to mend, or at least to paper over, generally perceived rifts in the body politic.

One important difference between the theater and other public assemblies, festive or political, was that attendees had to pay: two obols per person per day, roughly equivalent to the cost of attending a major concert today. The cost to a family of four who wished to attend all four days of a dramatic festival would have been significant: about a week's wages for a laborer, or ten days in court for a juror. This cost may well have deterred the poorer classes from attending, as the creation of the *theorikon* (a spectator fund to subsidize tickets for poorer citizens) perhaps implies, though it is only first attested in 343.²⁰ On the other hand, the dramatic festivals were held only twice a year, so that even a laborer or a juror who wanted to participate would have had no great difficulty saving up the cost of attendance.

Drama and democracy were closely related historically. Although the dramatic genres had ancient roots, their fifth-century forms were the product of festivals revamped for, and in some respects created by the emerging democracy, and they developed in step with democratic institutions. Significantly, both *choregia* and *theorikon* were abolished by the oligarchy of 322-17. The history of comedy in par-

²⁰ Other explanations for the Theoric Fund include mere demagogic egalitarianism and a decline in attendance at the national festivals due to competition from local theaters. In any case, Pericles and Cleon, both sponsors of jury payments, apparently saw no reason to institute such a fund in their own era.

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ticular reveals an especially close synchrony with the history of democracy at Athens, and perhaps elsewhere too.²¹ Comedy became part of the Dionysia in the reform year 487/6, when archons were first allotted and could be drawn from the second as well as the first census class, and when ostracism was introduced. Its most intensely political phase—pioneered by Cratinus in the 450s, continued by Hermippus in the 430s, and blossoming in the work of Aristophanes, Eupolis, Plato Comicus, and others during the “demagogic” era of the Peloponnesian War—coincided with the era of full popular sovereignty that was inaugurated by the reforms of Ephialtes in 461 and nurtured during the long ascendancy of his protégé Pericles. This phase tapered off after the reforms of 403, disappeared entirely during the oligarchic period of 322-307 (the era of the entirely apolitical New Comedy), but reappeared during two democratic restorations.²² By contrast, the contemporary West Greek court comedy of Epicharmus and Sophron was entirely apolitical. Conversely, writers critical of democracy, for example Plato, were hostile toward all dramatic festivity and explicitly link it to democratic practice.

Aristophanes and Athenian Politics

Aristophanes, who stresses more often than any of his rivals the comic poet's duty to chastise and advise the city, early adopted the political style of comedy and did so in spectacular fashion, becoming embroiled in a legal and

²¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a28-40 on 6th-century Megara.

²² The fragments of Timocles are especially instructive.

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political feud with his fellow demesman Cleon, the most powerful politician in Athens at the time. The feud lasted for nearly five years and inspired some of Aristophanes' sharpest satire and most exuberant comedy. *Babylonians* evidently criticized Athenian imperial policies, and attacked Cleon personally,²³ prompting the politician to indict the poet (less likely the producer Callistratus²⁴) on charges of having slandered the magistrates, Councillors, and people of Athens in the presence of foreign allies.²⁵ This round went to the poet, for the Council dismissed the charges. At the following year's Lenaea, in *Acharnians* (again produced by Callistratus), Aristophanes presented a vigorous defence of himself and his art, and announced his intention to launch a more thoroughgoing attack on Cleon soon.

Aristophanes carried out his threat with *Knights*, the first play produced in his own name and the play he was subsequently to recall more often, and with more pride, than any of his others, on grounds both of artistic originality and political courage. Its production was in fact courageous, even if the character Paphlagon is never explicitly identified as representing Cleon: Cleon's stunning victory

²³ *Acharnians* 377-382, 502-508, with Schol.; T 1.21-29.

²⁴ *Knights* 512 shows that the identity of an author was known even if someone else was the producer, and IG i² 2325, a list of victorious poets, credits Aristophanes, not Callistratus, with a victory at the Dionysia in 426 or 425. Aristophanes' own references, in the plays of the 420s, to his battles with Cleon also make it clear that he and no one else was involved.

²⁵ The allies made their annual tribute payments at the City Dionysia.

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at Pylos had made him a popular hero, who was to be elected to the board of generals a few weeks after the production. Cleon again retaliated by indicting, or threatening to indict, the poet. The winner of this round is less clear, to judge from Aristophanes' cryptic recollection in *Wasps*: evidently Cleon violently abused and menaced Aristophanes (1285-1286), who, receiving little support from the public (1287-1289), decided to issue some sort of public apology (1290), which some considered sincere (1284) but which was in fact a trick (1291), since Aristophanes attacked Cleon again in the following year (*Clouds* 581-594) and again in *Wasps*, where he is caricatured as a vicious dog.

Aristophanes' hostility to Cleon was but one element of his consistent tendency to espouse the social, moral, and political sentiments of contemporary upperclass conservatives, a tendency that corroborates the picture of his social position as sketched above. The wealthy as a class are never criticised, whereas the poor often are.²⁶ There is nostalgia for the good old days of the early democracy, before the reforms of Ephialtes in 461 established its "radical" phase, and before Pericles eclipsed Cimon. In those days the people were still united and still deferred to "the best" (meaning men from the traditional ruling families), and so had been able to repel the Persian invaders, win a great empire, and lift Athens to unprecedented heights of prosperity. There is disapproval of the popular intellectual movements associated with the "sophists" (including Socrates),

²⁶ In his postwar plays *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth*, however, Aristophanes seems to have mitigated his attitude toward the poor.

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and of such “vulgar” novelties in poetry and music as those of Euripides (never Sophocles) and the new dithyrambists.²⁷ There is hostility to the populist policies of Pericles and the new breed of leaders (like Cleon) who had emerged after his death in 429, such as the subsidy that enabled the poor to serve on juries (but not the equipment subsidies paid to the wealthy Knights). There is criticism of the way the Council, the Assembly, and the courts exercised their authority, particularly when private wealth in Athens and the empire was thereby threatened. And there is disagreement with the rationale behind, and the leadership of, the Peloponnesian War (431-404), because it had ended the Cimonian dream of joint Athenian-Spartan hegemony and pitted Greek against Greek; because it encouraged renewed barbarian aggression; and because it furthered the selfish and dangerous ambitions of leaders like Cleon. But significantly, we hear such disagreement only when current policy exposed the Attic countryside, and thus the landowners, to enemy invasion and devastation; at other times the plays either say nothing about the war or positively support it, for example *Birds* 186, 640, 813-816, 1360-1369.

Aristophanes shows the same consistent bias in his choice of political figures to vilify and not to vilify. All of his political targets were on what may be called the left, that is to say radical democrats like Pericles and his successors, whereas men like Nicias, Laches, Alcibiades, those implicated in the scandals of 415, and the oligarchs disenfranchised after the coup d' état of 411—potential targets

²⁷ Even though Aristophanes' satire reveals his own intimate familiarity with, and some artistic dependence on these targets.

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at least as obvious as Pericles and Cleon—are entirely spared, and occasionally even defended. This bias cannot be satisfactorily explained as merely an automatic response to the political predominance of the left during Aristophanes' career, on the theory that political comedy tends to attack the powers that be whatever their political stripe, for these reasons: Aristophanes also mentions some political figures favorably, all of them opponents of leftists; he not only ridicules leftist policies but also champions rightist policies on their merits; and during periods when the leftists were in eclipse, he continues to attack them and to spare the currently ascendant rightists.²⁸

The partisan character of the criticism, advice, and advocacy expressed in Aristophanes' plays, and apparently in the political comedy of his rivals as well, supports the poets' frequently expressed claim to be serious advisers as well as comedians: "even comedy knows about what's right" (*Acharnians* 500); "let the prize go to him who gives the best advice to this city" (Cratinus 52). And there is evidence that such comic politics could indeed have an impact on Athenian public opinion. In addition to the *Frogs* decree and the prosecutions by Cleon mentioned above, there was the prosecution of Socrates in 399, which Plato attributes in large part to prejudices popularized by comedy;²⁹ a proposal to reduce the honoraria of comic poets, which Aristophanes attributes to the proposer's re-

²⁸ For example, he continues to attack Cleon in *Clouds*, during the truce won by Cleon's enemy Laches, and in *Peace*, when Cleon was dead and his opponent Nicias was predominant.

²⁹ See *Apology* 18b-19c, 23c-d.

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sentment at having been ridiculed;³⁰ and at least two well-attested decrees that somehow limited the scope of comic satire: the decree of Morychides, in force from 440/39 until 437/6, during the politically divisive Samian War,³¹ and the decree of Syracosius, in force from 415-c. 410, years that saw the scandals of the Mysteries and the Herms and the political and military disasters precipitated by the Sicilian Expedition.³² Beyond these cases we cannot trace the precise impact of comic politics, but it would be surprising if, for example, the drumbeat of comic abuse that preceded the destruction of the popular leaders Hyperbolus and Cleophon did not materially strengthen their enemies' hand. Political comedy, unconstrained by the agenda of deliberative debate, could thus serve as a kind of experimental politics, freely revisiting or previewing matters of public interest that had no other public outlet.

If comic poets reveled in the privilege of "frank speech" (*parrhesia*) that was so proud a hallmark of Athenian democracy, they nevertheless show self-restraint in those areas where they might offend the public or expose themselves to legal or political sanctions. After all, they had been authorized by a magistrate representing the people to perform in a major national festival, and they were competing for prizes that would be awarded by judges representing the people. As the pamphleteer known as the Old Oligarch points out (c. 425), in part to question the reality of the Athenians' vaunted *parrhesia*, "they do not allow

³⁰ See *Frogs* 367-368, where Schol. identifies the proposer as Archinus or (less likely) Agyrrhius.

³¹ See Schol. *Acharnians* 67.

³² See *Birds* 1297 with Schol.; Phrynichus fr. 27.

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comic ridicule and criticism of the demos, lest their reputation suffer, but they encourage this in the case of individuals ... For they are sure that the victim is generally not one of the demos or the crowd but a rich, well-born, or powerful person."³³

Now Aristophanes does often criticize the shortcomings of the demos, but is always careful to blame them on bad leadership. He never criticizes the democratic constitution or the right of the demos to full sovereignty; he condemns both demagogic tyranny and elite oligarchy;³⁴ he does not foment class antagonism, as he accuses Cleon of doing; and he presents all his advice and criticisms as being in the best interests of the demos. Even in their abuse of individuals, comic poets avoid the *aporrheta* ("unspeakable allegations") that would, if true, interfere with the victim's right to participate in public life and so constitute actionable slander (except, of course, when such charges were unanswerable): they do not vilify acting magistrates or generals (though these could be abused as a class), charge people with murder, parent abuse, public debt, evasion of military duty, aspiration to tyranny, *asebeia* (offending the gods), shield throwing,³⁵ inheritance squandering, prostitution, foreign parentage.³⁶ Nor do they ridicule such popular figures as athletes or even mention such

³³ [Xenophon] *Constitution of the Athenians* 2.18; for the wording compare *Acharnians* 503 and 630-631.

³⁴ Cf. *Birds* 125-126, *Lysistrata* 577-578.

³⁵ For the unique case of Cleonymus see *Acharnians* 88 n.

³⁶ In each testable case, the individuals so abused were born near enough to 451 (when the citizenship law was enacted) that the charge was plausible and thus unlikely to be answered.

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sensitive figures as unmarried citizen women. Save for their more indecent language, the comic poets frame their advice and criticisms by the same rules of engagement as the orators.

Like the orators, then, the comic poets were elite voices who were allowed, indeed expected, to speak frankly and honestly in the service of, or at any rate not to the detriment of, the people, and who could be held accountable for abuse of that privilege. After all, general moralizing, the offering of advice, criticism of the status quo, and abuse of one's competitors were standard ingredients of all public speech in fifth-century Athens, and had a traditional place in the Greek poetic tradition as well, from Hesiod onward.³⁷ In this respect comic drama was a festive extension of political debate. By contrast, private writers like Thucydides, the Old Oligarch, and Plato, who share many of Aristophanes' qualms about radical democracy and its leaders, could afford to be less guarded in their criticisms, and are decidedly less constructive in advancing solutions.

The comic poets' perennial success with plays that sharply satirized the demos and its leaders, that urged policies that only a minority of voters were prepared to accept, and that occasionally provoked legal or legislative sanctions does, however, raise the question whether the members of the demos who attended the theater were representative of the demos as a whole. If so, the success of plays like *Knights* is surprising, as is the poets' refusal to cater to majority opinion. Lack of documentary evidence pre-

³⁷ In *Frogs* Aristophanes, like Plato, assumes that poets are teachers of the people and should be held accountable for the effects of their work.

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cludes a definitive answer, but on balance it seems unlikely that any subset of the politically active citizenry who shaped or enacted Athenian policy was significantly under-represented in theatrical audiences, or to put it another way, unlikely that theatrical audiences were dominated by disgruntled upperclass Athenians whose views were at odds with the majority of the executive demos.

Comic poets, orators, and litigators invariably treat their audiences as identical to the demos, but in neither case can this equation be literally true: just as not all members of the demos were present at a given Assembly meeting or court session, so the theatrical audiences included many who did not otherwise participate in democratic life. Thus the equation was only notionally true: official civic and festive assemblies were taken to represent the demos because the demos was in charge of them and because they represented the ideology, character, and authority of the democracy. But nowhere are we given to understand that a theatrical audience was in reality unrepresentative. For instance, if the audience of *Clouds* were largely composed of Cleon haters, we would expect the reproach at 587 “you elected him anyway” to be aimed rather at “those fools in the Assembly.” And it was of course the actual demos that took the advice Aristophanes offered in *Frogs*.

Plato, who as a private writer had no motive for adopting the notional stance toward the demos, also takes it for granted that theatrical audiences constituted a representative cross section of the Athenian populace and included the same members of the demos who otherwise constituted assemblies and juries.³⁸ By contrast with Aris-

³⁸ See for example *Gorgias* 502b-d, *Laws* 817c, 658a-d.

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tophanes, who often flatters his audience on their intelligence and discernment, Agathon in Plato's *Symposium* contrasts the company of his friends, "the few who have sense," with the theatrical audience, "the many who have no sense" (194b). And the charge in *Apology* is that the comic portrayal of Socrates created prejudice against him in the populace at large, including the jurors who heard his case.

Finally, the upperclass and conservative biases of Aristophanes and his rivals cannot by themselves be taken as evidence that their audiences largely shared these biases: orators and litigators, whose audiences did include the lower classes, often expressed the same sorts of biases, even when not championing conservative positions; and the New Comedy that flourished after the establishment of the *theorikon* subsidy largely depicts the life, and reflects the attitudes, of the upper classes. When Aristophanes is urging his views, attacking his victims, and defending himself to the demos, he does not sound like a man preaching to the converted; nor can we imagine him sparing Cleon and attacking Nicias even if his audience were composed entirely of Cleon's partisans.

It would thus appear that in their political moments the comic poets did commend to the demos, sitting among the other spectators, the views of their class, and did hope to persuade the demos to rethink or even change its mind about the way they were governing or about issues that had been decided but might be changed; to discard dangerous novelties; and to be more critical of its leaders. Nor was this effort as quixotic as we might imagine in long retrospect, since the comic poets were contributing to debates and divisions of opinion that were yet unresolved. Aristophanes

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phanes' ongoing plea for a negotiated peace may have been a minority view at the time, but it was not a view entertained solely by Aristophanes nor an issue that was ever finally decided. As for Cleon, the people's discrepant responses in the theater and in the Assembly may well reflect real ambivalence: as Assemblymen the people wanted Cleon, and after Pylos they could hardly deny him a command, but as citizens they may have felt unhappy about giving him so much power; and for all we know *Knights* may have undermined his stature in ways not precisely measurable. The commendation for Aristophanes' advice in *Frogs* was the most salient, but surely not the only instance of political comedy affecting political life.

So perhaps the best explanation for the comic poets' conservative appeals is that they still retained some power: by urging rejection of radical novelties, the poets were trying to recall the demos to its past greatness in a period of political transition and evident decline, when the demos too must have been at least a bit nervous, for all its support of a Cleon. In addition, the soul of Aristophanic comedy was essentially popular: his hero(in)es and other sympathetic characters, always fictitious, exclusively represent ordinary or quiet people who in real life would have little or no power; he offers the city advice and criticism exclusively on their behalf; and he shows them winning out over individuals and groups that held power or celebrity. The comic vantage point is essentially that of the ordinary citizen looking into the arena of civic power and faulting those who dominate it, while they themselves, as the Old Oligarch noted, are righteously spared. The utopia constructed by a comic hero(ine) invariably appeals to the fantasies of the ordinary citizen.

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But our fascination with Aristophanes' politics should not blinker our view of his overall artistry. Even political comedy was much more than a mere platform for criticism and advice: the award of the first prize to *Knights* was not so much a referendum on Cleon as the recognition of a superior drama in which the quality of the poetry, music, dancing, costumes, slapstick, humor, and wit were all relevant criteria of judgment.

The Form and Style of Aristophanic Comedy

Fifth century tragedy and satyr drama have a relatively simple structure: a number of episodes (dialogue among characters) each followed by a choral ode (stasimon) performed by a chorus of 12-15 dancers, who have little or no interaction with the characters on stage. The chorus of Old Comedy, by contrast, had 24 dancers—a legacy of the *komos* (band of revellers) from which comedy (*komoidia* “song of the *komos*”) derives its name—who along with their leader (usually named) have a much more prominent role in the action, a role which moreover changes from play to play. To provide for its complex chorus-stage interactions, comedy developed an elaborate structural scheme that was highly formalized but flexible enough to allow for variation and novelty.³⁹ At the beginning of his career Aristophanes follows this scheme with little variation; by the time of *Lysistrata* he begins to show greater freedom in manipulating its elements; and by the early fourth century

³⁹ All of the elements of this structural scheme can be paralleled in the fragments of other comic poets.

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the choral elements are largely abandoned, comedy having already reached its Middle period.

The elements of the traditional scheme are these:⁴⁰

A *Prologue* in spoken iambic trimeters sometimes enlivened by a song, which warms up the audience, explains the initial situation (either in an expository speech or in dialogue), and sets the plot in motion.

The *Parodos* or entry of the Chorus, in a mixture of song (usually strophic) and recitative in “long-verse” tetrameters (iambic, trochaic, or anapaestic), which often end with a *pnigos* (“choker”), a series of dimeter verses not unlike a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song. In the *Parodos* the Chorus is introduced and characterized, engages in lively (often violent) interaction with the characters on stage, and after an easing of tension prepares for the next section, sometimes with an iambic trimeter scene.

The *Agon* is a formal debate between two contestants,⁴¹ with interjections by a third party and presided over by the Chorus Leader. By convention, the first contestant ultimately loses the debate. The *Agon* regularly takes the form of an epirrhematic syzygy: a song by the Chorus followed by a speech (*epirrhema*) in a tetrameter meter (the number of verses is almost always divisible by four), then a responding song and a speech by the other contestant in the same meter and with the same number of lines as the

⁴⁰ Whether or with what permutations Aristophanes followed these structural features in his lost domestic and mythological comedies cannot be determined.

⁴¹ In *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, and *Assemblywomen* we have less a debate than a news conference held by the hero(ine), with incredulous questions from an opponent.

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first; the structure is thus ABAB. In *Acharnians*, *Peace*, and *Women at the Thesmophoria* the Agon's epirrhematic structure is replaced by a debate in iambic trimeters. The Agon normally concludes the antagonistic phase of the Chorus' involvement in the plot, and settles the motive conflict in which the characters have been involved, but some plays (like *Knights*, *Clouds*, and *Frogs*) have more than one Agon.

The *Parabasis* (the "stepping forth" or self-revelation of the Chorus), during which no characters appear on stage and the plot of the play is not mentioned, consists of (1) a speech in tetrameters (normally anapaestic) delivered by the Chorus Leader *qua* Chorus Leader to the spectators, followed by (2) an epirrhematic syzygy in which the Chorus Leader speaks, and the Chorus sings, in character about some topic of interest to them. In (1) the Chorus Leader often speaks on behalf of the poet, praising his art, denouncing his enemies, and offering advice to the city. In (2) the speeches consist of sixteen verses, except for *Clouds*, *Wasps*, and *Frogs*, where there are twenty, and *Peace*, where there are no speeches at all. In some plays there is a second parabasis consisting only of the syzygy. In *Lysistrata*, whose Chorus is divided until late in the play, there is only a brief epirrhematic syzygy for each of the two Semichoruses.

A series of *Episodes* illustrating the hero(ine)'s success and/or the consequences of the debate, punctuated by choral songs, usually strophic and usually consisting of free-form abuse of individuals in the audience. These Episodes allowed the poet scope for revue-like scenes which do not advance the plot, which is often effectively concluded before the Parabasis, while in plays like *Clouds*, *Birds*, and

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Lysistrata the Episodes illustrate a plot that is not resolved until the end of the play.

The *Exodos* is the conclusion of the play, which has no fixed pattern (thus maximizing the poet's opportunity to spring surprises) but typically features feasting, wine, women (or boys), and song in a celebratory mode.

In its functional structure, an Aristophanic comedy typically depicts a character in the grip of an apparently intractable problem, usually one shared by a particular class of spectators: for example, misconceived warfare, bad political leaders, an unjust jury system, dangerous artistic or intellectual trends, turmoil in the family. This character, who becomes the play's hero, conceives of a fantastic but essentially plausible way to solve this problem and thus to achieve the sort of safety and success that everyone would envy—for him- or herself, family, city, or (as in *Peace* and *Lysistrata*) the whole Greek world. But before the hero succeeds he or she must face determined opposition from opposing characters and/or the Chorus, and overcome it by persuasion, guile, magic, or force.

Aristophanes' characters fall into two main categories: sympathetic and unsympathetic. The sympathetic characters—the hero and his or her supporters—are always fictitious creations embodying ideal civic types or representing idealized versions of ordinary, marginal, or powerless Athenians. The unsympathetic characters embody disapproved civic behavior (political, social, artistic, religious, or intellectual) and usually represent specific leaders or categories of leaders. The sympathetic characters typically advocate positions allegedly held by political or social minorities (e.g. women) or by ordinary, disempowered citizens (e.g. small farmers). But these are shown winning out

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against the unsympathetic characters, who represent the current social or political hegemony. Characters or choruses representing the demos as a whole are portrayed as initially sceptical or hostile to the sympathetic character(s), but in the end they are persuaded. Those who are responsible for the problem are exposed, then disgraced or expelled, and Athens is recalled to a sense of her true (traditional) ideals and thus renewed.⁴²

The language (or better, literary dialect) of tragedy and satyr drama is loftily “poetic” in both dialogue and choral lyric (which has a traditional Doric color); any approach to the topical or colloquial could be criticized as vulgarization, with which Aristophanes taxes Euripides in *Frogs*. By contrast, the basic linguistic register of Old Comedy (both characters and choruses) was urbane, colloquial Attic. In addition, the conventions of the genre allowed, and evidently encouraged, a strong admixture of other registers both higher (e.g. parody of tragedy and other serious poetry) and lower (e.g. imitation of vulgar speech) than the colloquial norm, together with any other elements that the poet cared to toss into the rich linguistic farrago. Very prominent are puns and other types of word play; novel coinages; rabelaisian compound words; long accumulations and enumerations; and metaphors verbal, visual, or both. To a significant degree, the invective, obscenity, and colloquial styles of Old Comedy preserve the ethos of iambic poetry, which had flourished in the archaic period, and elaborate the carnivalesque festivity of the fertility cults,

⁴² *Clouds*, with its misguided and unsuccessful “hero” Strepsiades, is the exception to this pattern, and that may well have contributed to its failure in competition.

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particularly those of Demeter and Dionysus. Old Comedy also features the open (though grotesquely stylized) display of human sexual, excremental, and gustatory functions. In the classical period, iambus, comedy, and the fertility cults were the only permissible public outlets for this sort of language and display.

The rough, abusive language and uninhibited action of Old Comedy may strike some readers as being shockingly crude, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, or the like. But we should bear in mind (1) that Aristophanes was writing not for us but for contemporaries living in a society at once very sophisticated and very different from our own, and (2) that outrageousness was a traditional ingredient of Old Comedy and one fully in keeping with comedy's tendency to expose, deflate, and provoke. Thus nothing that we hear or see in an Aristophanic comedy can automatically be assumed to reflect the norms and behavior of the average, or indeed any, Athenian. In my translation I have therefore made no attempt to spare the modern reader by censoring or circumventing potentially disturbing material; instead I have tried to render each of Aristophanes' linguistic registers by using the nearest English equivalent.

Production

The principal occasions for the production of comedy, as of tragedy and satyr drama, were the Dionysiac festivals of the Lenaea (January or February) and the City, or Greater Dionysia (March or April). At both festivals the dramatic competitions were held in the Theater of Dionysus on the south slope of the Acropolis, but we also hear of a special Lenaeian theater (location unknown). Normally

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five comic poets competed at each festival, each with a single play, though during at least some of the Peloponnesian War the number of competitors may have been reduced to three.

Comedy, tragedy, and satyr drama were performed in the same theater and perhaps on the same day (if that is the import of *Birds* 786-789), but the requirements of comedy were more elaborate and quite various, suggesting that the performance areas could be rapidly and flexibly configured both during and between plays.

The chorus performed on a large circular *orchestra*, or dance floor, surrounded on three sides by the audience; the chorus entered and left the *orchestra* by walkways called *parodoi* by modern scholars but *eisodoi* by Aristophanes. Behind the *orchestra* and approached by a few steps was a slightly raised stage, where the actors performed. Behind the stage was a two story building called the *skene* ("tent," from which our word "scene"). It had two or three doors at stage level, windows at the second story, and a roof on which actors could appear. The variety of form and decor that we find in the comedies suggests that the *skene* was a temporary modular structure of wood. On the roof of the *skene* was a crane called the *mechane* ("machine"), on which actors could fly above the stage (as gods, for example, whence the Latin expression *deus ex machina*, "god from the machine"). Another piece of permanent equipment was a wheeled platform called the *eccyclema* ("device for rolling out"), on which actors and scenery could be wheeled onstage from the *skene* to reveal "interior" action. A painted or otherwise decorated plywood facade could be attached to the *skene* if a play (or scene) required it, and movable props (of which comedy used a great many) and

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other scenery were used as needed. Since plays were performed in daylight in a large outdoor amphitheater, all entrances and exits of performers and objects took place in full view of the spectators. All in all, more demand was made on the spectators' imagination than in modern illusionistic theater, so that performers must often tell the spectators what they are supposed to see.

The actors wore masks that covered the entire head. These were generic (young man, old woman, etc.), but in comedy they might occasionally be special, like a portrait mask of a prominent citizen (Socrates may well have been so caricatured in *Clouds*, for example). The costumes of tragic actors were grand, as befitted personages from heroic myth; comic costumes were contemporary and generically suited to the characters except that, wherever possible, they accommodated the traditional features of padded stomach and rump and (for men) the *phallos*, made of leather, either dangling or erect as appropriate, and circumcised in the case of outlandish barbarians.⁴³ All dramatic roles were played by men; the "naked" women who often appear were men wearing body stockings to which false breasts and genitalia were attached. The city supplied an equal number of actors to each competing poet, probably three, and these actors played all the speaking roles. In *Birds*, for example, there are 22 speaking roles, but the text's entrances and exits are so arranged that three actors can play them all. Some plays (like *Lysistrata*)

⁴³ The phallus, in addition to being a traditional element of comic and satyric costumes, symbolized fertility and masculine power, and it was especially associated with the worship of Dionysus.

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do, however, require a fourth (or even a fifth) actor in small roles. Perhaps in given years the allotment changed, or novices were periodically allowed to take small parts, or poets or producers could add extra actors at their own expense. During Aristophanes' career, the actors (unlike the chorus) were professionals; at the Lenaea (though not at the Dionysia) they competed for a separate prize (Best Leading Actor, or *protagonist*).

That all female characters, from tragic heroines to the "naked women" of comedy, were played by men does not mean that Athenian drama was a drag show nor tell against the possibility that these portrayals of women were intended to be believable. After all, Shakespeare's women were also played by men (before audiences that included women), but no one finds them especially untrue to life: like the female characters of Athenian drama, they are now played by female actors without any need of adjustment. If male portrayal of females was not simply an Athenian theatrical convention but a drag show for men, we would expect to find the dramatists (especially the comic poets) calling attention to its artificiality. But there are no examples of this: male and female characters are at all times understood to be respectively men and women, and every character's gender was always obvious at least from the mask: pale for women, dark for men. Finally, the convention by which men played women's roles was less a strain on the imagination in the theater of Dionysus than it would be in today's theatrical media: the wearing of masks, together with the huge amphitheater setting, put a premium on the actor's voice and on broad, stylized gestures.

In the orchestra was a chorus of 24 men, amateurs recruited by the *choregos*, who sang and danced to the ac-

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companion of an *aulos*, a wind instrument that had two recorder-like pipes played simultaneously by a specially costumed player; and there could be other instruments as well. Like the actors, members of the chorus wore masks and costumes appropriate to their dramatic identity. There could be dialogue between the Chorus Leader and the actors on stage, but the chorus as a whole only sings and dances.⁴⁴ The choral songs of comedy were in music and language usually in a popular style, though serious styles were often parodied, and the dancing was expressive, adding a visual dimension to the words and music.

The History of the Text

The earliest text of a play of Aristophanes, being made not for readers or theater companies but for those who would perform it at a single festival, included only the words of the script; there were no lists of *dramatis personae*, notes, stage directions, or even assignments of lines to speakers. All performance aspects of a play had to be inferred from the script, so that editors ancient and modern differ to some degree in reconstructing them. The scripts themselves, as in all texts duplicated in handwritten copies, no doubt contained errors and omissions, and these inevitably multiplied in subsequent copies. In choosing among the readings in available manuscripts, and in emending the text where no manuscript reading seems right, editors differ in their restoration of the hypothetical original. Although some information about ancient copies

⁴⁴ There was no ancient counterpart to the “choral speaking” often heard in modern performances of Greek drama.

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of the text survives indirectly—on a few papyri, through quotations in other authors, and in exegetical scholarship of the sort preserved in scholia (marginal annotations in manuscripts of the text)—our earliest copy of the text itself dates only from c. A.D. 950.

Very few copies of Old Comic texts circulated in the fourth century BC. Old Comedy was used as a source by historians like Theopompus, and from c. 335 Aristotle and other scholars of the Peripatos (e.g. Dicaearchus) did research on drama using official archival records and texts. Early in the third century Ptolemy I commissioned the collection of all classical Greek authors still extant, including the Old Comic dramatists, for deposit in the Library attached to the Museum in Alexandria. There scholars began the process of cataloguing comic texts and writing historical, literary, and exegetical studies of them. Principal among these scholars are Callimachus, Lycophron, Eratosthenes, Machon, and Dionysiades of Mallos.

Early in the second century, Aristophanes of Byzantium produced the first critical edition of his namesake's plays, including the first colometry of the lyric passages. His text became the vulgate as well as the standard Alexandrian text; all our copies descend ultimately from it. The first learned commentaries on this text were written by Callistratus and Euphronius for some of the plays; Aristarchus of Samothrace wrote the first major commentary, treating at least eight, and possibly all eleven of our extant plays.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Beyond our eleven plays, only three are known to have been commented on in antiquity (*Danaids*, *Merchant Ships*, and *Storks*).

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At about the same time, scholars in the Library at Pergamum in Mysia also worked on Aristophanes (Crates of Mallos is the principal name), but very little of their work was absorbed by our tradition. Around the time of Augustus, Didymus of Alexandria compiled a variorum commentary that both collected a large amount of previous scholarship on comedy and added a considerable amount of new, particularly historical, information from a broad range of sources. Probably at the same time, Heliodorus and then Hephaestion reworked the lyrics; their systems superseded the Alexandrian colometry and were inherited by the medieval tradition.

Over the next three centuries, and especially during the Atticist revival of the second century, the plays of Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Eupolis were still widely read, and Didymus' commentary was excerpted and recompiled by Symmachus, Phaeinus, and perhaps others. Around A.D. 400, probably as a result of the suitability of the new commentaries for use in schools, our eleven extant plays became canonical, while all the rest of Old Comedy was gradually lost through neglect or as a result of the anti-pagan extremism of the period *c.* 650-850. By stages no longer precisely traceable, abridged and often dislocated versions of these commentaries, infused with grammatical and rhetorical matter from Byzantine schoolrooms, found their way into the margins of our medieval manuscripts and into reference works like the tenth century Suda. Meanwhile the text itself, protected from irremediable corruption by the learned commentaries and by its rela-

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tively restricted circulation in late antiquity,⁴⁶ survived to be copied and studied by scholars of the ninth century renaissance, in particular Photius and Arethas. Whether only one or more than one copy of a given play survived into their era cannot be determined with assurance.

We possess some three hundred manuscripts of Aristophanes dating from the tenth to the sixteenth century, most containing only the Byzantine triad of (in numerical order) *Wealth*, *Clouds*, and *Frogs*, with *Knights* the next best attested (31 manuscripts); at the other extreme are *Peace* (ten, only one complete), *Lysistrata* (eight, only one complete), *Assemblywomen* (seven), and *Women at the Thesmophoria* (one). Only two manuscripts, R (c. 950) and V (11th-12th c.), precede and thus are unaffected by the editorial interventions and conjectural activity of the scholars of the Palaeologan period (1261-1453), principally Maximus Planudes (c. 1255-1305), Manuel Moschopoulos (c. 1265-1316), Thomas Magister (c. 1275-c. 1350), and Demetrius Triclinius (c. 1280-c. 1335). Of these, Triclinius most heavily influenced the subsequent tradition: he made full-scale editions of eight, perhaps nine, of the plays (omitting *Lysistrata* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*); compiled his own massive corpus of scholia (including some ancient material otherwise unattested); and extensively emended the texts, especially the lyrics.

R is the only manuscript containing all eleven plays complete; V contains seven plays complete. Both R and V

⁴⁶ The some 35 papyrus fragments of Aristophanes that we possess reveal no substantial difference in quality between the ancient and the medieval text.

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carry copious scholia derived from a common source, but those in V are fuller and more accurately preserved. The relative value of R and V for constituting the text varies from play to play. In addition to R and V, the Suda is an important early witness: it contains a great many quotations of Aristophanes' plays from lost pre-Palaeologan manuscripts and sometimes preserves readings unattested elsewhere.⁴⁷ Of the remaining significant manuscripts, none equals R and V in value, but collectively they provide a check on R in the four plays missing in V; often help us decide the inherited reading where RV are divided; and sometimes (singly or in groups) preserve the truth when both R and V are in error.

Since the transmission of the Aristophanic corpus was "open," with scribes often using more than one exemplar and drawing variants from sources different from their exemplar(s), any manuscript or group of manuscripts may in a given case preserve a good reading, and manuscripts may change their affiliations and thus their relative value from play to play, or even within a play. Therefore nothing that is said about the relative value of, or the relationship between the manuscripts in any one play of Aristophanes is necessarily valid for the same manuscripts in another play. Accordingly, in this edition the transmission of each play is separately described.

The first printed edition of Aristophanes was an Aldine (Venice, 1498), edited by Marcus Musurus and containing nine plays, the texts drawn from Triclinian manuscripts,

⁴⁷ The standard edition of the Suda is by Ada Adler (Leipzig, 1928-1938).

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and the scholia (which formed the basis of all editions of the scholia until the late nineteenth century) mostly from the fourteenth-century manuscript E. The remaining two plays, *Lysistrata* and *Women at the Thesmophoria*, were published in a Juntine edition (Florence, 1515) when R, the only manuscript to preserve them both intact, was re-discovered in Urbino by Euphrosynus Boninus, who used it as printer's copy for the edition. A second Juntine edition (Florence, 1525) restored, again from R, the missing lines of *Peace* (948-1011). Subsequently R again disappeared from circulation until the late eighteenth century. The first editor to print all eleven plays together was Cratander (Basle, 1532).

Thereafter no major improvements were made to the text until the edition by L. Küster (Amsterdam, 1710), who used the Suda, which he also edited, and incorporated important conjectures by Richard Bentley.⁴⁸ The edition by R. P. F. Brunck (Strasbourg, 1783) incorporated the Paris manuscripts A, B, and C, and that of P. Invernizi (Leipzig, 1794) first incorporated R. The edition by I. Bekker (London, 1829) first systematically based the text on R and V. Of the subsequent nineteenth-century editions, the most important are those by W. Dindorf, A. Meineke, T. Kock, and A. von Velsen, who provided the first accurate collations of the principal manuscripts.

⁴⁸ Bentley's conjectures were entered in his copy of the Gelenius edition (Basle, 1547), now in the British Library (676. h. 13). They were first published in full by G. Burges in *Classical Journal* 11-14 (1815-1816), but should be republished, since Burges' report contains many errors and omissions.

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Modern editions are cited in the introductions to each play.

Editorial Principles

For the special conditions affecting an editor of Aristophanes' plays, I refer the reader to the preceding discussion of the history of the text.

The present text is my own. For the most part I have relied on previous editions for manuscript readings, but in cases where previous editors differ in their reports, or where I or other editors suspect a textual problem, I have consulted my own microfilm copies of the relevant manuscripts.

Since this is a reader's text with facing translation, I have tried to make it continuously readable: where the text is lacunose but the meaning of the missing line(s) is clear enough in context, I print a suitable supplement in angle brackets and translate it, and where the text is irrecoverably corrupt, I print and translate a conjecture that answers the requirements of sense and style; only if no plausible conjecture can be found do I enclose corrupt text in daggers (obeli).

The notes to the text are not a critical apparatus, but alert the reader only to textual problems, variants, or conjectures that significantly affect the interpretation (and therefore the translation) of the Greek, and to conjectures that have not been published or adopted before. In describing the transmission of individual plays, I do not present a full analysis but only what the reader needs to grasp the essentials.

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Two features of this edition break with usual practice: lines which I assign to the Chorus Leader in the translation are so assigned in the Greek text as well; and in the translation, sung passages are indented and follow the lineation of the Greek.