

# Aristophanes and his theatre

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### III

E.W. HANDLEY

## ARISTOPHANES AND HIS THEATRE

### I

Samuel Beckett's *Rockaby* (1981) presents the audience with a single character, a woman in a rocking chair. The words are given by her voice as a recorded 'voice-over', activated four times by a live request for 'More'. Then the voice fails, there are no more requests, and the short play ends<sup>1</sup>.

Other examples can be found of plays which make minimal demands on the audience's visual imagination or on the capacity of the theatre to feed it. Aristophanes' plays, by contrast, make some very large demands, with settings that can be in Heaven, on Earth or in Hades, and that change from one to the other within a play. They have characters that range from people like those in the world of everyday, by way of gods and demigods, to such creations as birds who speak and act like human beings. What sort of visual dimension does this kind of playwriting

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Rockaby and other short pieces* (London 1982): see Charles R. LYONS, «Character and Theatrical Space», in *Themes in Drama* 9 (1987), 27-44: the volume is devoted to the theme of «The theatrical space», and has much else that is of general interest here.

presuppose? There is no shortage of answers, at any rate in our more modern commentaries and critical discussions; but there is still a very considerable amount of doubt and disagreement. That is so not only because we are dealing with things from the remote past — texts which, for whatever different reasons, we do not always understand as Aristophanes did; and evidence for costume and staging which is much less in quantity and often less clear than we should like. The other factor from which we cannot escape is our own expectations. What we expect may be conditioned by a wide variety of experiences, ranging from amateur or professional productions of classical plays themselves to modern writing for the theatre and modern dramatic production in many experimental forms, both live and recorded — or created — for showing on a screen. If in theory any of these various experiences can be used to undermine any other (perhaps not necessarily a bad thing), in practice we are dealing with a form of popular entertainment, produced in competition, with certain known or knowable conventions of form and style, in which we can sometimes trace processes of change. The question if we think of Aristophanes in terms of performance is how far we can go with conventions that are wholly, or largely, visual, and therefore (at our distance) all the harder to grasp than what we can see plainly (or think we can see plainly) set out in a text.

## II<sup>2</sup>

I should like to leap to the beginning of Sophocles, *Ajax*: «Always I see you, son of Laertes, scheming to seize a way to hunt down an enemy; and so I see you now, at the tent of Ajax,

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<sup>2</sup> This section of the discussion is based on part of a paper entitled «Notes on Aristophanes' *Acharnians*» which was read to the Cambridge Philological Society on 14 March 1991.

by his ships...». In the theatre, we recognise Athena (I belong to the school of thought which holds that she is in fact visible, and not just a voice)<sup>3</sup>. It takes Sophocles thirty-nine syllables, through her words, to present what needs to be known about actor, action and place. Athena does this in a way that was, and is, thoroughly familiar, by moving from a general observation to the particular present situation which prompted it.

Remote though it may seem, the beginning of Aristophanes, *Acharnians* has a comparable pattern. The speaker reflects aloud on the heart-rending misfortunes of his life, offset as they are by a mere handful of pleasures; but nothing (he tells us) stung him so much as the here-and-now. That will do for the comparison with *Ajax*. It takes many, many more syllables before we reach the point we reach so soon in Sophocles. But what a playwright is not prompt to provide, his critics are ever-ready to offer us; and so, in prefatory notes to commentaries, in literary histories and such places, we are told in advance what the modern critic thinks we should know. Plays in books, however, are different from plays in the theatre.

In introducing *Ajax* (1896), Sir Richard Jebb is somewhat more academic than Sophocles, but no great harm is done by that: «Scene: — Before the tent of Ajax, at the eastern end of the Greek camp, near Cape Rhoeteum on the northern coast of the Troad. ODYSSEUS is closely examining footprints on the sandy ground. ATHENA is seen in the air (on the θεολογεῖτον)» (p. 10).

Editors of *Acharnians* commonly do much more. Alan Sommerstein, in his edition of *Acharnians* (1980) simply gives the opening speaker his name, as all modern texts do; but otherwise he leaves him to speak for himself. Yet even with this near zero-

<sup>3</sup> G.H. GELLIE, *Sophocles: A Reading* (Melbourne Univ. Press 1972), 5 can be quoted as a thoughtful critic who follows H.D.F. Kitto in the opposite view.



grade introduction there is something to notice. Aristophanes' audience, as has sometimes been forgotten, did not get the name for some time, not until the man calls it out at Euripides' front door (406). If what we are considering is Aristophanes' concept of this character, we can of course take the name into account together with such other observations as we make from the play. If we are concerned with Aristophanes' presentation to his audience, grateful though we may be to our editor, we cannot let it count till it comes. The speaker is like anyone else we see for the first time and do not know by name.

The beginning of *Knights* has something to contribute here. It is still a matter of dissension whether the two opening speakers should be labelled Demosthenes and Nicias, as they are by Sommerstein (1981), for example; or simply as 'Slave 1' and 'Slave 2', in whatever language, as they are by Victor Coulon and Hilaire van Daele in the Budé edition, which dates from 1923. In *Greek and the Greeks* (Oxford 1987), Sir Kenneth Dover reprints his papers of 1959 and 1968 which are cardinal to the whole modern discussion<sup>4</sup>. So also, I should like to maintain, is the treatment by H.-J. Newiger in his *Metapher und Allegorie* (1957), 11-23 and later. The image of a householder with slaves which represents Demos, the people, with his politicians, is one which oscillates, as Newiger shows, from foreground to background of our attention. The play begins from the domestic image, with the two characters as slaves. It then appears (with what degree of definiteness we can debate) that the fictional pair have another identity as politicians which derives from the real world. At least part of the effect of the presentation is spoilt if anything is done to impose either identity in advance, or even

<sup>4</sup> 307-310; 267-278: originally in *CR N.S.* 9 (1959), 196-199 and in *Komoido-tragemata. Studia ... W.J.W. Koster ... in honorem* (Amsterdam 1968), 16-28; the latter has addenda.

to impose in advance the double identity itself. In the theatre, Aristophanes offers no programme, no written text to carry labels; nor is he committed to portrait masks or anything else which would make the slaves instantly recognizable. If, as I am arguing, his essential object is to keep the audience's expectations in suspense as he builds up his presentation of the play, we are better not creating for ourselves problems which Aristophanes does not set. The initial indefiniteness is what is wanted. Given that, my own inclination is to suppose that the audience were led to guess, without undue difficulty, what people the slaves represent, whether or not we now feel we are in a position to guess with the same confidence.

We shall come back to *Acharnians* in a moment. In order to clarify this technique of theatrical presentation, it is worth looking at two other early plays in which Aristophanes begins by teasing the audience, namely *Wasps* and *Peace*. In these plays, actors pick out people who are really or notionally in the theatre and make a show of reporting their reactions. *Wasps* 71 ff.: «His father has a strange disease which none of you could possibly know or conjecture unless told by us. Try guessing...». Three named people in the audience are supposed to do that — unsuccessfully, of course — before the answer is given. *Peace* 43 ff.: «One of the audience, some smart-pants young man, is bound to say 'What's it about, then?', 'What's the beetle for?'; and there's some Ionian fellow next to him who says 'I do believe it's an allusion to Cleon...'», and so on. In both of these plays, as in other comedies, there is a special element of spectacle to whet the appetite — the house in *Wasps* guarded day and night like a cage or prison; in *Peace*, the mysterious creature being unspeakably gorged in its pen.

By contrast, the man who begins the *Acharnians* is a man who, like the audience, is waiting for something to happen. Just as in *Wasps* and *Peace* Aristophanes has his actors mirror some audience reactions to the play once it has started, so here (I like

to think) he has the man reflect the sort of talk that might go on between neighbours at dramatic or musical festivals while they wait for an event. It is a guess that the pleasure he got from «the five talents that Cleon spewed up» (6) is a reference to a comedy, as it might be Aristophanes' own *Babylonians* of the year before. On this, I have no new detail to add; but given, as has been noted, that the corresponding pain is to do with Tragedy, and is so described, and given that we are not yet thinking of a man called Dikaiopolis or of an assembly, an allusion to comedy is perfectly in place. The transition to the here-and-now comes when the man says that «the Pnyx here is empty» (20). For all that, the switch from festival occasion to political occasion is less abrupt if we think of it in ancient terms than if we think of it as modern people. As T.B.L. Webster put it in 1956: «Whereas our normal convention is to look into a room from which one wall has been removed, their normal convention was that they were sitting, as they did in the Assembly, watching the transaction of affairs of state». Webster was of course thinking particularly of Tragedy, but his words are apt enough here; and Simon Goldhill, in a discussion of this passage published in 1991, makes the further point that the Ecclesia itself did actually have occasion to meet in the Theatre of Dionysus at festival time<sup>5</sup>. So our man is not, after all, a man in a theatre or at a festival: he is like us and not; he is a man in an assembly which (it happens) is being re-enacted in a theatre. The assembly experience, like the theatrical experience, is one shared by the great majority of the audience, the male citizens of Athens; and the details of that assembly's routine, like the herald's formal announcements that

<sup>5</sup> T.B.L. WEBSTER, *Greek Theatre Production* (London 1956), 2; Simon GOLDHILL, *The Poet's Voice* (Cambridge 1991), 186; for the five talents of 6 as an event of the real world rather than something in a play, see E.M. CARAWAN, in *CQ N.S.* 40 (1990), 137-147.

punctuate it, are one way of making sure that they respond. The more fantastic the proceedings, with the King's Eye, the Odomantian army and so on, the greater is the value of these links with reality to give a base from which the fantasy can take off.

The blending of the familiar with the unexpected is, one could claim, the  $E = mc^2$  of Comedy, its basic equation. The speaker at the beginning of *Acharnians* invites the audience to share his experiences, and in that way to identify with him. He is for all that different from a man in the auditorium. For one thing, he does not look like one of us: he is a comic actor with traditional costume and mask. For another, in spite of the ostensibly colloquial tone of much of what he says, he does not speak like the man in the street either. This is not the place to rehearse the very fine discussion of this opening speech which was presented by Kenneth Dover as a case study in «The style of Aristophanes»<sup>6</sup>. It is perhaps enough to say here that if Aristophanes had wanted to present him entirely as an ordinary man, he could no doubt have found means to do so. As it is, the heightening of his language by colourful expressions of various kinds perhaps serves to distance him from us a little, as not quite an ordinary man; but it is in any case more like an enhancing of the situation than an enhancing of the character, whose later role is anything but ordinary, as he speaks with voices other than his own, notably that of the poet (or is it that of the producer?)<sup>7</sup>. Here at all events we do not need to be told in advance that the man's name is Dikaiopolis, that the scene is the Pnyx (we shall learn

<sup>6</sup> *Greek and the Greeks*, 224-236: translated, with some revisions, from «Lo stile di Aristofane», in *QUCC* 9 (1970), 7-23.

<sup>7</sup> *Ach.* 377 ff., 496 ff.: the matter is still hotly argued: see S. GOLDHILL (quoted n. 5), 188-196, adding Niall W. SLATER, «Aristophanes' apprenticeship again», in *GRBS* 30 (1989), 67-82, together with remarks by S.D. OLSON and L.P.E. PARKER in two successive notes in *JHS* 111 (1991), 200-203, 203-208.



soon enough), that he has a house on stage, and so does Euripides and so does Lamachos: that is, they all will have a house when they need one, and if we worry about that now, as Aristophanes gives us no reason to do, we have only ourselves to blame.

### III

I take up the words 'traditional costume and mask'. How much do we now know about the appearance of actors in Aristophanes' time? This enquiry naturally has an authenticity of its own, quite apart from anything it may do to increase our understanding or enjoyment of the plays. There is no necessary, or at any rate no easy correlation between authenticity as established by scholarship and our own aesthetic satisfaction. I have heard it questioned how far it is possible to achieve, and how far genuinely to appreciate, musical performances in period style on period instruments. Without going into that, we have seen already how Aristophanes' notions of presenting a play do not immediately square with our more cut-and-dried expectations of him. It is equally true that some nineteenth and twentieth century ideas of what is a fit costume for the players of a favourite dramatist have done something to obscure the application of such documentary evidence as exists. Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, as is well known, resisted to the end of his life the notion of publishing a book with pictures that were unexpurgated, and thought that the comic scenes on South Italian vases were so hideous and disgusting that readers could be left to find them for themselves elsewhere<sup>8</sup>. Fashions have changed, both in scholarly publications and some popular ones; but we still have

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<sup>8</sup> See T.B.L. WEBSTER's Introduction (p. v) to *Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (1st ed. Oxford 1953) and p. 238 of the text.

a convention gap to cover, an equation to make with ourselves as well as with antiquity.

The most comprehensive single source of illustrations of actors in costume, their masks and the like is still Margarete Bieber's *History of the Greek and Roman Theater* (Princeton 1961); T.B.L. Webster's catalogue of *Monuments illustrating Old and Middle Comedy* was revised and updated in a third edition by J.R. Green in 1978; Green has since contributed a valuable survey of *Theatre Production 1971-1986* in *Lustrum* 31, Jahrgang 1989. Even if we lack the spectacular accessions which have come to Menander and the New Comedy in the last 25 years, there are some interesting objects and insights pertinent to the age of Aristophanes<sup>9</sup>.

Perhaps just three items can be mentioned here. I take first the now famous red-figure calyx-crater in the Getty Museum (82 AE 83), not universally agreed to be Attic — a piece important enough to rate a plate in Brian Sparkes' recent general survey of Greek Art (see note 9), and a piece surrounded by debate since its publication in 1985. Is it another representative, a late one, of that class of vase paintings of comic choruses, or proto-comic choruses, which include dolphin riders, men on horses, and in particular men dressed up as cockerels, for which the Greek could be (and, I am told, in some places still is) *ornithes*? Magnes' old play *Ornithes* has been tentatively connected with two of the cockerel vases that are dated to the first twenty years of the fifth century; it was remembered with other plays from Magnes' repertoire by the young Aristophanes in the *Knights* in 424; but

<sup>9</sup> There is a short selective bibliography in Eric HANDLEY and André HURST (eds.), *Relire Ménandre* (Genève 1990), 173 f.; B.A. SPARKES, *Greek Art, Greece & Rome, New Surveys...* 22 (Oxford 1991), 68 and nn. highlights some important recent items; I have myself learnt much from a paper by Professor Green «On seeing and depicting the theatre in Classical Athens», in *GRBS* 32 (1991), 15-50.



it is not easy to imagine a context for the commemoration of a revival. Are we to think of the *Ornithes* of Aristophanes, the *Birds* itself, no less, of 414? Or is this a special depiction of Right and Wrong in the first version of the *Clouds* in 423, who, according to a commentator on 889, were brought in in cages like fighting cocks?<sup>10</sup>

Next for mention is an Apulian bell-krater by the Schiller painter, dated about 370 B.C., and now in Würzburg<sup>11</sup>. A man on an altar with a sword holds up in his left hand a wineskin which has a child's feet in light shoes or sandals; an old woman runs towards him with a bowl. If the incident ultimately goes back, as we know it does, to Euripides' *Telephus* of 438 B.C., this version of it clearly alludes to Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411. The relevant sequence runs from 689 to 759. Euripides' kinsman, disguised as a woman, takes on the role of Telephus and snatches a baby as a hostage. He discovers that the victim he is threatening is in fact a wineskin with Persian slippers (733-734); as on the vase, a woman comes forward with a vessel to catch the product of the threatened slaughter, like the blood of a victim (754-755); and the actor on the vase seems to wear over his tights a long robe similar to that shown for the woman.

<sup>10</sup> Magnes and Aristophanes *Knights* 520 ff.: see *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* I (Cambridge 1985), 364 = I 2 (1989), 112. Surprises like the Würzburg Telephus (to be mentioned below) suggest that one can underrate the possibilities of revival long after, and even far away from, the scene of a fifth-century comedy's original production. For *Birds*, J.R. GREEN, *The J. Paul Getty Museum: Greek Vases* 2 (Malibu, CA, 1985), 95-118 (the first publication); for *Clouds* I, Oliver TAPLIN, in *PCPhS* 213 (1987), 92-104. The debate continues from both sides.

<sup>11</sup> Martin von Wagner Museum, H 5697, first published by A. KOSSATZ-DEISSMANN, «Telephus travestitus», in *Tainia. Festschrift Roland Hampe* (Mainz 1980), 281-290; E. SIMON, *The Ancient Theatre*, transl. C.E. VAPHOPOULOU-RICHARDSON (London 1982), pl. 15: see O. TAPLIN, quoted n. 10 above and E. CSAPO, in *Phoenix* 40 (1986), 379-392.

Naturally enough, illustrators tend to choose striking moments from their plays, and the prominence of this incident in *Thesmophoriazusae* would make it a good choice. One can see also that with their taste for exciting scenes from Euripides and other later tragedy, this forty-year old play, full of parody, might have a special appeal for audiences in South Italy. But the vase does reopen the question of the relationship of fourth-century South Italian vases to plays which by then ranked as classics, as well as to contemporary imported or local drama; and this is a matter which is being actively pursued<sup>12</sup>.

I select also for brief mention here the group of Attic terracottas known as the New York group, with its fifteen representatives in the Metropolitan Museum, and very many offshoots and replicas elsewhere. Of this group, Green, revising earlier opinions, has written «a date of ca. 400 B.C. or even a little earlier... now seems necessary»<sup>13</sup>. If that holds, instead of being (arguably) post-Aristophanic, these fine models fall unequivocally into Aristophanes' productive years, and strengthen our idea of the image his actors produced, at any rate to the makers and buyers of such souvenirs, who have every reason, one would

<sup>12</sup> O. TAPLIN, quoted n. 10; in a paper to appear in *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis*, ed. A. SOMMERSTEIN *et al.*, and in other work in hand to appear in his book *Comic Angels*. I understand that a new edition of A.D. TRENDALE's *Phlyax Vases* (London 1967) is in progress; for some forethoughts on it, see now J.R. GREEN, «Notes on Phlyax Vases», in *Quaderni Ticinesi di numismatica e antichità classiche* 20 (1991), 49-56. A survey of some of the material with Attic Comedy particularly in mind is given by Paulette GHIRON-BISTAGNE, «La messa in scena della commedia attica antica illustrata nelle arte figurativi», in *Dioniso* 45 (1971/74), 231-250.

<sup>13</sup> In T.B.L. WEBSTER, *Monuments illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*, 3rd ed. revised and enlarged by J.R. GREEN, Institute of Classical Studies, Bulletin Suppl. 39 (London 1978), 45 and 2; and cf. his remarks in *Lustrum* 31 (referred to above) at p. 74: New York, Metropolitan Museum, 13.225.13-14 and 16-28; M. BIEBER, *HT<sup>2</sup>*, figs. 164 and 185-198.

think, for wanting the models to be lifelike and reminiscent of the roles and poses they portray. By this dating, and by the fact that they continued to set the style for so long, they also give an impetus to the long established question of the origins and development of the so-called Middle Comedy. This is a large topic, well beyond the present occasion, but it is brought in not least because of its relevance to the problem we were led into of the revivals of Attic comedies and the perpetuation of their theatrical traditions in South Italy and elsewhere away from their home.

What can at present be said about the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens in the fifth century is hampered by the doubts which have been cast on the date of the conglomerate foundation blocks which have long been assumed to be the base of the so-called 'Periklean' stage building. Again the topic and the discussions devoted to it are too substantial to review here. It may be that even in this very disturbed site there is more to be done to resolve the chronology. One effect of this revolution, which leaves (literally) no sign of a base for a fifth century stage-building, has been to send people in search of information about production back to their texts again. A recent example is a paper entitled «Actors on High: The Skene Roof, the Crane, and the Gods in Attic Drama» by Donald J. Mastronarde, whose well-documented review of the state of the archaeological evidence can perhaps be offered here alongside Green's survey in *Lustrum* 31, as quoted already, as two substitutes for any closer engagement<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> D.J. MASTRONARDE, in *ClAnt* 9 (1990), 247-294; I am grateful to J.M. Bremer for making sure that I did not miss this; J.R. GREEN, in *Lustrum* 31, at p. 19 f. Professor Green (by personal communication) refers me to a new survey by J.P. MORETTI, «L'architecture des théâtres en Grèce (1980-1989)», in *TOΠΟΙ* 1 (1991), 7-38.

Most interesting for our present purposes, and not at all likely to be resolved by archaeology for a period when stage-buildings were characteristically wooden, is the question of doors in the stage building: was there one only, as was suggested by A.M. Dale in a paper published in 1957; or more than one?<sup>15</sup> It is here that modern notions of production, whether realistic, revolutionary or improvised, are likely to call all of us with siren voices which we hear differently; and yet without the sirens, navigating the channel is like navigating with no sense of direction at all. Kenneth Dover is outstanding among the pluralists; the monist case was pursued by C.W. Dearden in a book published in 1976, and seems, at this distance, to have had the worst of the argument<sup>16</sup>.

A passage in Aristophanes in which two households are represented as being on the scene at once is near the end of the *Acharnians* at 1071 ff. There Lamachos is summoned by a messenger to a battle, and Dikaiopolis is summoned by a messenger to a party. The parallelism is reinforced and exploited by having slaves bring each man the appropriate kit. In passing, it is fascinating what basic comic fun audiences have, in modern times as well as in Aristophanes, when objects normally part of the interior world are brought out into the open into view. Here the effect of the parade of gear is doubled; and one can argue *ad lib.* if it is an acceptable part of the joke for the slaves carrying it all to jostle or dodge as they come through one single aperture. For me, the decisive case is in *Clouds*. At 92, Socrates' Phrontisterion is identified by Strepsiades to his son with the words ὁρᾶς τὸ

<sup>15</sup> «An interpretation of Ar. *Vesp.* 136-210 and its consequences for the stage of Aristophanes», in *JHS* 77. (1957), 205-211 = *Collected Papers* (Cambridge 1969), 103-118.

<sup>16</sup> K.J. DOVER, «The *skene* in Aristophanes», in *PCPhS* 192 (1966), 2-17 = *Greek and the Greeks*, 249-266; C.W. DEARDEN, *The Stage of Aristophanes* (London 1976), 20-29.



θύριον τοῦτο καὶ τῷ κίδιον; He wants him to go there to study (110 f.). Phidippides refuses (119 f.); he is threatened with being thrown out of the paternal house and home (123); his uncle Megacles, he says, will not see him horseless, ἀλλ' εἴσειμι, σοῦ δ' οὐ φροντιῶ, «I'll go in, and take no notice of you» (125). No-one (I hope) is prepared to argue that it makes sense for him to go in through the door which has just been identified with that of the Phrontisterion (he has refused to have anything to do with it), a door at which, indeed, his determined father will be knocking in just a moment (133). One late manuscript is quoted for the reading ἄνιππον ὄντ' · ἀλλ' εἴμι...; and this is what the monists adopt, sending the young man off stage, as if to his uncle's, and reinforced by their expectation that after περιόφεται, ἄνιππον ὄντα is better Greek than ἄνιππον anyway. Dover deals with these points in his commentary (Oxford 1968), to my mind satisfyingly. The chances that the manuscript has somehow had access to transmitted truth are negligible; and a justification for περιόφεται ... ἄνιππον can be given<sup>17</sup>. If more is needed, I think it is worth noting what happens when this situation is recalled later in the play. Strepsiades proved to be a failure, and prompted by the chorus of Clouds he resolves to try his son again: 801 ff. «I'll go and get him; and if he won't, there's no way I'll not throw him out of the house. You [*to Socrates*] go in and wait for me a while». Sure enough, when the pair reappear (814 f.) we hear this: «By the Holy Smoke, you're not staying here any more, you can go and eat Megacles out of his portico». Aristophanes is not committed to picking up the earlier scene. He has a choice. If he had just wanted to dispose of Pheidippides off stage, because he had nowhere else to put him, he could have sent him to Megacles, thence to be recovered, or to his trainer's, or

<sup>17</sup> If there is still doubt about this, I should be disposed to consider ἄνιππον <ὄντ'> · εἴσειμι with asyndeton.

to the market, or some place unspecified. The fact that he handles the motif as he does, bringing back into question the idea of being thrown out of the house, suggests to me strongly that he could count on having more than one door on stage for use at need.

It does not follow, of course, that Aristophanes is bound to the fixity of use of the doors in the way that we accept as conventional for Menander and New Comedy. The general principle seems to be that the doors are available for use as required, and can change their identity or be ignored when no confusion results. Thus, as we have seen, at the opening of *Acharnians*, we discover that the scene is in the Pnyx, and no question of the identity of the doors arises at that stage. When the Assembly sequence is over, and the treaty made, Dikaiopolis needs to be at home to celebrate, and he can achieve this by saying simply (202): «I will go in and celebrate the Rural Dionysia». The door, I imagine, is to one side, the central door being used for the tableau-like appearance of Euripides in the act of composition at 394-479. When Lamachos is summoned to the aid of the chorus at 566 ff., the highly dramatic dochmiac metre in which he is invoked lends colour to the thought that he storms in from somewhere off stage, rather than popping out from a house; and likewise, at the end of the sequence, he storms off again to fight the enemy, while Dikaiopolis goes off in the opposite direction with an announcement of his free market. It is also likely, I think, that his servant comes from off stage to make an offer to Dikaiopolis for thrushes and an eel (959 ff.). Yet when he needs a house on stage, as we have seen he does, at 1071, he can have it with the use of another door matching that of Dikaiopolis. The discontinuity of the action given by choral performances and episodic scenes makes this change for a new episode acceptable in a way which would be harder with New Comedy's more integrated structure and greater naturalism.



## IV

When it comes to individual movements by actors, not to speak of the chorus, even a minimum of contact with amateur productions of plays, ancient or modern, shows that there is ample room for the imagination to work in translating the text into action. Ancient dramatists frequently underline major movements or gestures of their actors by the words they give them in the text; and commentators are surely right to spend the energy they do in interpreting movements, even in the knowledge that they will often not recover just what the poet or his producer decided to do for the first staging. General principles are hard to lay down. It is clear that some dramatists are more explicit than others in defining their characters' movements, and in this matter there is much interest in the contrast between Menander's casualness and the practices of his Latin followers, as was pointed out long ago by Gomme<sup>18</sup>. These indications of movement and gesture, though we sometimes treat them as if they were documentation, are better seen as the product of a long tradition of open-air acting before festival crowds than as substitutes for the kind of stage directions that had not yet been invented<sup>19</sup>. Their presence if anything discourages the dangerous game of inventing stage business without some textual clue, or of seeking to explain verbal problems in terms of hypothetical actions.

For all the freedom with which he can change the place of an action, Aristophanes has a set which is much less changeable

<sup>18</sup> A.W. GOMME, *Essays in Greek History and Literature* (Oxford 1937), 254 ff.; since then, a very striking instance has accrued from Plautus, *Bacch.* 526 ff. in comparison with Menander, *Dis Exapaton* 102 ff.

<sup>19</sup> O. TAPLIN, «Did Greek dramatists write stage instructions?», in *PCPhS* 203 (1977), 121-132; J.R. GREEN, in *Lustrum* 31, at p. 26 f.

than that of a modern indoor theatre, not to speak of the wider mobility of the cinema or television screen.

On the face of it, the basic pattern of an Aristophanic plot is anything but static — a revolutionary idea, carried against opposition and then illustrated in its consequences, good for our friends, and bad for our enemies. Such a story can begin statically, at home or in a familiar place, with a mood of impatience or discontent, as in *Acharnians*, *Clouds*, *Lysistrata* and elsewhere; or it can begin with the excitement of travel, as for instance in *Birds* and *Frogs*. Even with our limited knowledge, and our still more limited sample here, it becomes possible to recognize stage routines familiar by their repetition, and attractive both by their elements of comfortable familiarity and by the spice of novelty they provide. Knocking at the doors of Euripides, Socrates or the Hoopoe produces a servant who is an apt forerunner of his master; knocking at the door of Heracles, if you are Dionysus kitted out as Heracles in the *Frogs*, produces no servant, but a confrontation with the real thing<sup>20</sup>. Similarly in Menander's *Dyskolos*, knocking at Knemon's door produces, with a shock to the caller which we are expected to share, a head-on confrontation with Knemon himself. The action is then repeated, in a thoroughly Aristophanic manner, by a second unsuccessful applicant to borrow a stewpot; and for good measure the whole motif is taken up again in the romp of the finale<sup>21</sup>. These recurring actions, of so simple a kind, are a measure of the special interest which will have been aroused when it is Hermes who appears at the door of Zeus in *Peace* (177); or when an approach to the door of Agathon in *Thesmophoriazusae*

<sup>20</sup> *Ach.* 395; *Nub.* 132; *Ran.* 37; see further Thomas Gelzer's remarks at p. 64 f. above.

<sup>21</sup> *Men. Dysc.* 458 ff., 499 ff.; then 911 ff. The 'servant' motif has in any case already been used at 97 ff.

is forestalled by the appearance of Agathon's singing servant as the pair of visitors step aside the watch — a piece of stagecraft which perhaps owes something to the classic incident of the Homecoming of Orestes in Tragedy<sup>22</sup>.

The real world of course provides the basis for comic actions on a vastly greater scale than these instances. It is important in a special way that we have noticed already in passing, when it enters into such sequences as the Assembly scenes of *Acharnians*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, and *Ecclesiazusae*, with their patterns of procedural formulae, including prayers, and recognizable rhetorical gambits by the speakers, all of which at the same time verify the action and the spectacle and give a base or a point of departure for the comic caricature<sup>23</sup>.

The essentially static nature of long speeches and structured debates, which sometimes seems to give modern producers problems, was perhaps less striking in a society accustomed to oratory and altercation in assemblies and lawcourts. The pleasure of responding to the words themselves and their variations in pace and tone could be a substitute, if one was needed, for physical movement; the violence of the verbal confrontation in such an exchange as that between the Sausage-Seller and the Paphlagonian at *Knights* 284-302 is something that carries its own excitement.

Tragedy remains in the background to give an extra vocabulary of tone, allusion and gesture, as well as a pattern for perfor-

<sup>22</sup> *Thesm.* 36 ἐκποδῶν πτήξωμεν; Aesch. *Cho.* 20 σταθῶμεν ἐκποδῶν; Eur. *El.* 107 ff.; Soph. *El.* 77-85 produces a variant in which Orestes (if it is Orestes) refuses to stay and listen. Cf. Ed. FRAENKEL, *Beobachtungen zu Aristophanes* (Roma 1962), 24 f.

<sup>23</sup> *Ach.* 43-173; *Thesm.* 295-764; *Eccl.* 128-284: on the last, see Ch.T. MURPHY, «Aristophanes and the Art of Rhetoric», in *HSCP* 49 (1938), 69-113; the fact that it is a representation of a rehearsal and not of the real thing adds to the comic possibilities, both verbal and visual.

mance sustained beyond the norm of comic dialogue. The obvious example is the 'long speech' from Euripides' *Telephus*, which Aristophanes has his hero echo at *Acharnians* 496-556. Looking ahead, to a period when Comedy's echoes of the tragic manner are as a rule milder and less colourful, I do not doubt that whatever else it does, the echo of Euripides, *Orestes* in the long speech of Menander's *Sikyonios* (176-271) does something to justify the sheer scale of the narrative by comparison with New Comedy's usual standards<sup>24</sup>.

The celebration to which comedies commonly progress in their later stages gives opportunities for the exciting move of bringing cooking gear and other objects out from inside; and this motif admits both parallel developments, as with the setting up of Philokleon's domestic court in the *Wasps*, and more elaborate variants of its own, as with the sacrifice in the *Peace*, where Aristophanes makes a joke against the inside/outside convention itself. *Peace* 948 f.: «We have the basket with the meal, and wreath of green and knife; and here's the fire. There's nothing holding us up but the sheep». The ceremony goes on. A show is made of scattering grains to the audience, for the sake of what may be a new joke on an old custom: «The women have got none» «But the men will give it them tonight» (966 f.). There are prayers, again comically elaborated. But when we come to the moment of «Take the knife and slaughter the sheep, cook-like» (1017 f.), Aristophanes draws back. «Peace», says Trygaeus, «does not like slaughter, and her altar is not blooded. Take it inside, slaughter it, and bring the thighs out here. That way the choregus is saved the sheep» (1019-1022)<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> For a much more reserved opinion of the effect of the echo, see F.H. SANDBACH (Oxford 1973), *ad loc.* (650 ff.).

<sup>25</sup> See *Entretiens Hardt* 16 (1970), at p. 19 f. for a possible instance of Menander playing on the inside/outside convention, as conjectured from Terence, *Andr.* 481 ff.



Real life contributes ritual in motion as well as static. The action of *Acharnians* is diversified by Dikaiopolis' one-household phallic procession (241-279); wedding processions form finales for *Peace* and *Birds*; a funeral crosses the path of Dionysus and Xanthias in the *Frogs* on their way to Hades (170 ff.), and so on<sup>26</sup>. Again these enlivenments of the spectacle have some continuity in Comedy, as two instances can show: the procession with a pipe tune on arrival which is led by Sostratos' mother in Menander's *Dyskolos*, and the uproarious bogus hymeneal in Plautus, *Casina*<sup>27</sup>.

What sort of stage action did Aristophanes dislike? Some of the comic routines of his rivals: he would, wouldn't he? The hungry Heracles, excessive by-play with the costume phallus, jokes about not standing the pressure from one's bowels, a drunken old woman doing the *kordax*: an anthology can be made from passages of *Clouds* (537 ff.), *Wasps* (56 ff.) and *Frogs* (1 ff.) with a little help from elsewhere, but, as an ancient commentator on the passage of *Clouds* points out, and as we can see for ourselves from the opening of the *Frogs*, Aristophanes is perfectly ready to sail as close to the wind as can be when it suits him. Comic entertainers are not necessarily the most straightforward of men — perhaps they are necessarily the reverse.

## V

I have been trying to sketch the way in which stagecraft relates to the structure of the plays and to point, for the sake of

<sup>26</sup> The procession of the Initiates in *Frogs* is the subject of a separate discussion in this volume by Sir Kenneth Dover, pp. 173 ff.

<sup>27</sup> Men. *Dysc.* 430 ff.; Pl. *Cas.* 798 ff.; perhaps note with the former the *loutrophoria* which is taken to be the subject of a fragment of an unidentified play published in E. HANDLEY-A. HURST (eds.) (n. 9 above) at pp. 138 ff.

comparison and contrast, to some continuities in Later Comedy. I could correct the balance, if I felt expert enough, by trying to consider choral movement, from the excited entrances characteristic of the early plays to the set dances of *Thesmophoriazusaë* (947-1000) and the end of *Lysistrata*, not to speak of the lyrics of *Frogs*. What is also characteristic of Aristophanic comedy, and, like the chorus, disappears almost to vanishing point in Comedy's next age, is its capacity to translate words and concepts into stage spectacle, in a way which has been particularly illuminatingly discussed by H.-J. Newiger<sup>28</sup>, who was quoted near the beginning of this paper for the sake of his discussion of *Knights*. Everyone has in mind Dikaiopolis, translating Telephus' image about speaking over a chopping block from the words given to his hero by Euripides into a piece of literal stage action (*Ach.* 359 ff.); or Socrates in his basket keeping up with the Elevated in a literal sense (*Nub.* 223 ff.); or the omen for the journey at the beginning of *Birds*, which is translated literally into the carrying of a couple of birds bought in the market as guides. To follow out how these visions translate themselves into forms of stage action would largely be to repeat the message of Newiger's book; and it is with this tribute to it that I should like to end.

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<sup>28</sup> *Metapher und Allegorie. Studien zu Aristophanes*, Zetemata 16 (München 1957), which I reviewed in *JHS* 79 (1959), 166-167; for an apt quotation, see J.M. Bremer's paper.



## DISCUSSION

*M. Dover:* I would be interested to know your view of the doors in *Frogs*. I go on the assumption that the palace of Pluto is represented by the central door.

*M. Handley:* I think I am happiest if the large central door is used for the entrance of the poets and Dionysus at *Ran.* 830. It represents Pluto's palace; and I should be equally content to imagine Pluto coming out with the party, perhaps to take up position on a throne and so to appear to preside overall.

*M. Gelzer:* Ich kann mir kaum vorstellen, dass Pluton schon 830 erschien, um bis Vers 1414 zu schweigen.

*M. Dover:* I think Pluto is present from 830 onwards. Otherwise, his first words (1414 οὐδὲν ἄρα πράξεις κτλ.), without anything like 'But here comes Pluto himself' beforehand, seem to me impossibly abrupt.

But when the slaves 'go in' at 812 f., where do they go? As they want to get out of the way of the quarrel, it seems strange that they should go in *towards* it.

*M. Handley:* It is probably too speculative to think that the silence of Pluto has anything to do with the long silences of Aeschylean figures, of which Aristophanes makes such a point in this play. As to the surprise utterance at 1414, we should perhaps remember from Aeschylus the sudden intervention of Pylades at *Cho.* 900 ff., even though it is prompted by a direct appeal from Orestes.

As to the slaves: it is perhaps strange that they should go in order to avoid their masters. But I suppose they can be thought of as going to hide somewhere. The choral ode which comes next means that there is no confrontation. In *Plutus*, Karion finds a way to 'duck out' of a situation by going to the pantry for a snack of bread and meat and eluding his master so that he can enjoy it secretly somewhere (318 ff.).

*Mme Loraux*: J'ai été tout à fait convaincue par ce que vous avez dit au sujet de l'ouverture des *Cavaliers*: que l'on perd beaucoup si l'on cherche à imposer aux deux interlocuteurs une identité précise d'entrée de jeu.

Je me demande si l'on ne rejoint pas ici l'un des traits essentiels du personnage comique en général: son identité 'pauvre', mais offerte à tous les enrichissements, en tant qu'elle est le support d'autres, beaucoup plus précises, qui, ponctuellement ou durablement, viennent se surimposer sur elle au cours de l'intrigue. En d'autres termes, le personnage comique est souvent à la fois lui-même et un autre, sans qu'il lui soit pour autant nécessaire de se déguiser. Pour donner un exemple, dans les *Thesmophories*, la femme dont le parent d'Euripide dérobe la petite fille évoque burlesquement, l'espace d'un instant, la figure de Déméter en deuil de Korè (qui est, je le rappelle, au centre de ce jour de jeûne où les femmes tiennent une assemblée); mais il est vrai que, lorsque la *xóρη* se révèle une outre pleine de vin (*Thesm.* 733-734), la femme perd tout aussi vite cette dimension.

Seriez-vous d'accord avec cette idée d'une identité flottante, voire multiple, du personnage comique?

*M. Handley*: Yes, I agree — probably much under the influence of Simon Goldhill's *The Poet's Voice* in discussing *Acharnians*, and of the authors he quotes there (see above, pp. 102-103 nn. 5 and 7). Sometimes, it is true, I wonder if this kind of analysis can become too complicated. But the case of Dikaiopolis' multiplicity of 'voices' is clear (however much we dispute details) and I am grateful for your suggestion about *Thesmophoriazusae*. My point about *Knights* is somewhat different in that it depends on the inherent ambiguity or unclarity of characters we have not seen before — an unclarity which the dramatist chooses not to resolve at once.

*M. Gelzer:* Paul Mazon hat in seinem *Essai sur la composition des comédies d'Aristophane* (Paris 1904) darauf hingewiesen, dass Aristophanes im ersten Abschnitt seiner Prologe oft Handlungen ausführen und Reden halten lässt, deren Sinn das Publikum nicht sogleich verstehen kann. Das dient nur dazu, seine Aufmerksamkeit zu wecken und Spannung zu erregen, was nun im folgenden kommen werde, vielleicht sogar, das Publikum dazu zu bringen, dass es nicht mehr schwatzte, sondern ruhig wurde (vgl. *Vesp.* 85 f.); denn es gab ja keinen Vorhang, dessen Öffnung den Beginn des Stücks anzeigte. (In der Tragödie muss das Publicum allerdings meist schon vom ersten Vers an aufpassen, damit es die Orientierung versteht, die ihm der Dichter zu Beginn des Prologs gibt.) C.F. Russo hat dann gezeigt, dass Aristophanes typischen Figuren, kleinen Leuten aus Athen etwa wie Dikaiopolis, dem Wursthändler Agorakritos, Euelpides und Peishetairos, oft am Anfang überhaupt keinen und dann erst in einer bestimmten Situation der Handlung, wo das passt, einen redenden Namen gibt (*Aristofane, autore di teatro* [Firenze 1962; 21984], 61 ff.).

*M. Zimmermann:* Zu dem, was Thomas Gelzer zum vorbereitenden, gleichsam Ruhe stiftenden Charakter der Eröffnungsszenen ausgeführt hat, kann ich ein Beispiel von einer Aufführung der *Acharner* an der Emory University (Atlanta, USA) im April 1991 anführen: Da sass Dikaiopolis unter den Zuschauern, die sich noch unterhielten und erst allmählich verstummten, als sie wahrnahmen, dass sich eine Person ständig räkelte, räusperte und schneuzte.

*M. Degani:* Vorrei il Suo parere su *Nub.* 537-539, passo per me non del tutto perspicuo: il fallo era elemento davvero irrinunciabile?

*M. Handley:* My own view is much influenced by T.B.L. Webster's interpretation, in which he put special stress on the epithets: the phallos by-play which Aristophanes dislikes (or professes to dislike) is that of a phallos which is long and dangling (καθειμένον), thick and red-tipped (CQ 5[1955], 94-95, and see also 7 [1957], 184-185). By contrast, the phallos can be tied up, as we see it in comic statuettes such as those of the New York group; if the *chiton* is

short it will show, if longer not. We have to add that a long phallos is needed (or probably needed) in *Thesm.* 643 ff., where the long woman's dress must have been taken off or lifted to expose it. On the other hand, there is a conspicuously non-phallic figure represented among the comic scenes on the group of jugs from the Athenian Agora published by Margaret Crosby in *Hesperia* 24 (1955), 76-84; A.D. Trendall and T.B.L. Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama* (London 1971), under IV 5-6.

*M. Dover:* What exactly is the point of the tied-up phallos? Tying up his phallos is not something a man normally does. But if it goes with a *chiton* of normal length, it is understandable; with a normal *chiton* and a tied-up phallos, an actor can play a 'non-phallic' role, and then, if at another point in the comedy he has to play a 'phallic' role, he can untie the phallos when he changes costume. I must admit, however, that one of the New York statuettes clearly shows a man with a tied-up phallos and a short *chiton* which exposes it.

It is possible to adduce a parallel from a more sophisticated culture — the annual *φαλλοφορία* at Nagoya, the heart of the Japanese automobile industry. A gigantic wooden phallos is carried on a platform, the poles being supported on the shoulders of young men, and installed in a sanctuary. It is followed by a procession of girls, each of whom cradles a model phallos in her arms.

*M. Gelzer:* Ich möchte die Frage stellen, ob wir nicht auch mit Häusern mit zwei Stockwerken und mit einem Fenster im oberen Stockwerk rechnen müssen, in den *Wespen* (besonders 317 ff.) und den *Ekklesiazusen* (das Haus des Nachbarn des Blepyros, 323 ff., und dann des jungen Mädchens, 884 ff.). Wenn man das annimmt, so wäre das auch ein Argument dafür anzunehmen, auch sonst sei nicht alles nur in Worten zwar gesagt, in concreto aber der Phantasie des Zuschauers überlassen worden, das heisst für Ausstattung des Bühnenraums mit sichtbaren Gebüsch in den *Vögeln*, mit mehreren Türen und Häusern in den meisten Stücken und mit Requisiten.

*M. Handley:* I think for the moment, with D.J. Mastronarde in his very thorough discussion (see above, p. 108 n. 14), and other earlier writers, that we have to believe our texts, at least from the beginning of *Agamemnon*

onwards, when they indicate the use of a roof. So that I feel we can postulate a roof for *Wasps*, and windows for both *Wasps* and *Ecclesiazusae*. There is a well-known comic scene by a South Italian painter, Assteas, in two different versions, which shows how he imagined a stage set with a window (Vatican U 19 = A.D. Trendall, *Phlyax Vases* [London 1967], 65, and British Museum F 150 = *ibid.*, 36: see A.D. Trendall and T.B.L. Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama*, under IV 19).

*M. Gelzer:* Da es kaum sichere archäologische Anhaltspunkte dafür gibt, wie die Bühnenausstattung im 5./4. Jhdt. gewesen ist (nach J. Travlos überhaupt keine), ist die Rekonstruktion der Bühne und der Requisiten ganz auf die Interpretation der Texte angewiesen, und das heisst: wenn man die Texte nicht wörtlich verstehen will, weitgehend der Spekulation überlassen. Man kann feststellen, wie die Phantasie der Interpreten weitgehend von Vorstellungen des je zeitgenössischen Theaters abhängig ist. Zur Zeit als die Meininger im Theater mit Kostümen und Kulissen möglichst realistisch eine historische Wirklichkeit zu rekonstruieren beabsichtigten, und Richard Wagner im Gebrauch von Maschinen schwelgte, billigte man auch den antiken Dramatikern ein Maximum realistischer Darstellungsmittel, von Türen, Häusern und Dekorationen und des Gebrauchs von Maschinen auf der Bühne zu. Als dann Max Reinhardt auf leerer Bühne mit wenigen symbolischen Mitteln und der Bewegung von Chor und Schauspielern aus dem Bühnenraum heraus neue Wirkungen erzielte, konnte man auch für diese neuen Errungenschaften die Alten 'retten', indem man ihnen nur das dafür Nötige zusprach; noch weniger brauchte das absurde Theater, und so wurde nun auch von den Alten gefordert, dass sie mit einem Minimum auskamen. Es gibt aber keinen Grund zur Annahme, Aristophanes und Euripides sei es verboten gewesen, alle sichtbaren und technischen Mittel einzusetzen, die ihnen von den Choregen erlaubt und finanziert wurden. Das scheint ihr Publikum als Neuheit fasziniert zu haben, und wir finden nirgends — schon gar nicht in der gleichzeitigen darstellenden Kunst des 'reichen Stils' — einen Hinweis auf puristische oder asketische Tendenzen, die auf solche Verbote schliessen liessen.



*M. Degani:* Perché τοῖς παιδίοις ἔν'ῃ γέλως? L'espressione fa venire in mente il piccolo Perseo ποσθοφιλής dei Δικτυουλοί (795), che non pare ricordato nei commenti a *Nub.* 539.

*M. Handley:* I suppose that boys over a certain age may have been taken to the theatre by their fathers; or did they, with attendants, form a separate group? Many, including Aristophanes, may have had powerful early experiences of the theatre in this way, as well as some childish amusement at the crude by-play. There is another reference to jokes for the boys at Eupolis, *Prospaltioi* fr. 244 K/261 KA — or so I think likely, in spite of the corruption of the text of the quotation.



