

# ARISTOPHANES

## WASPS

EDITED WITH  
INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY  
BY

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READER IN GREEK AND LATIN IN  
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## PREFACE

BECAUSE it is many years since the last annotated edition of *Wasps* appeared and it may be some years before there is another, I have tried to make this edition useful to every sort of reader. For the advanced scholar I provide more information than previous editors about the readings of the manuscripts, and I offer some discussion of textual, historical, and dramaturgical problems. For the sixth-former or undergraduate who has read no play of Aristophanes before, I provide a good deal of help with translation; and textual criticism and a few other specialized matters are segregated in square brackets, for easy skipping.

The presentation of the text closely follows that of Professor K. J. Dover's *Clouds*, to assist readers who turn from one play to the other. I follow his practice in the indentation of lines (even though it differs somewhat from the arrangement which I should otherwise have preferred), and in the *apparatus criticus* I use his symbols and abbreviations.

In the introduction and commentary one of my main aims is to approach the play not as a work of literature but as the script of a performance. Aristophanes's purpose was not to produce a book for readers, but to entertain and impress Athenian spectators in 422 B.C. So I try to reconstruct the performance as far as is possible from the text, and to consider what effect the various parts of the play are likely to have had on the original audience.

I do not confine myself to providing information and discussing questions of fact; I venture also to assess. In discussing metre, for example, instead of just describing arrangements of long and short syllables, I make an attempt to judge their artistic effectiveness. This will probably displease some metrical purists, who prefer an austere descriptive approach. Certainly my approach involves some loss of objectivity;

nevertheless I believe it to be right for a commentator to help his readers not just to understand but to appreciate. I happen to think that *Wasps* is one of the world's best comedies, and it is proper that I should give my grounds for this opinion by explaining what I believe to be the play's qualities.

For advice and suggestions on various points I am grateful to several colleagues and friends. Mr. D. Mervyn Jones was particularly generous: he lent me his own extensive notes on the play, and also his photographs of one of the manuscripts. Above all, I owe a great deal to Professor Dover's acute and thorough criticism.

D. M. M.

*Manchester*  
*January 1969*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Most of my abbreviations are like those of LSJ (= Liddell and Scott *A Greek-English Lexicon*, revised by H. S. Jones), except that I do not usually Latinize Greek names. I list below only a few which might cause doubt.

### *Ancient Authors and Works*

Ais.	Aiskhines
Akh.	Akharnians
Ant.	Antiphon the orator
Ek.	<i>Ekklesiastousai</i>
Lex. Rhet.	<i>Lexeis Rhetorikai</i> , cited by page and line of Bekker's <i>Anecdota Graeca</i>
Lys.	Lysias
Lys.	<i>Lysistrate</i>
Plu. Eth.	Plutarch <i>Ethika</i>
Pol.	Polydeukes (Pollux) <i>Onomastikon</i>
Th.	Thucydides
Th.	<i>Thesmophoriazousai</i>
X. Apom.	Xenophon <i>Apomnemonemata</i>
Σ	scholia or scholiast

### *Modern Books and Periodicals*

ATL	B. D. MERITT, H. T. WADE-GERY, and M. F. MCGREGOR <i>The Athenian Tribute Lists</i> (1939-53).
Beer	C. BEER <i>Ueber die Zahl der Schauspieler bei Aristophanes</i> (1844).
Dale <sup>2</sup>	A. M. DALE <i>The Lyric Metres of Greek Drama</i> 2nd edition (1968).
Denniston	J. D. DENNISTON <i>The Greek Particles</i> 2nd edition (1954).
<i>Dith. Trag. Com.</i> <sup>2</sup>	A. W. PICKARD-CAMBRIDGE <i>Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy</i> 2nd edition, revised by T. B. L. WEBSTER (1962).
<i>Dram. Fest.</i> <sup>2</sup>	A. W. PICKARD-CAMBRIDGE <i>The Dramatic Festivals of Athens</i> 2nd edition, revised by JOHN GOULD and D. M. LEWIS (1968).
Flor. Chrest.	FLORENT CHRESTIEN's notes on <i>Wasps</i> , printed in the editions of Portus (1607) and Kuster (1710).

HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology.</i>
Holzinger	KARL HOLZINGER 'Erklärungen umstrittener Stellen des Aristophanes' ( <i>Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-historische Klasse: Sitzungsberichte</i> ccviii [1928].)
Mn. I, II, etc.	<i>Mnemosyne</i> series I, II, etc.
Taillardat	JEAN TAILLARDAT <i>Les Images d'Aristophane</i> (1962, corrected reprint 1965).
Thompson <i>Birds, Fishes</i>	D'ARCY W. THOMPSON <i>A Glossary of Greek Birds</i> 2nd edition (1936), <i>A Glossary of Greek Fishes</i> (1947).
Tyrwhitt	T. TYRWHITT <i>Conjecturae in Aeschylum, Euripidem et Aristophanem</i> 2nd edition (1822).
Wilamowitz	U. VON WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF 'Über die Wespen des Aristophanes' ( <i>Sitzungsberichte der königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> [1911] 460-91, 504-35), reprinted in his <i>Kleine Schriften</i> (1935) i 284-346. References are to the original page numbers, given in the margins of the reprint.
Willems	ALPHONSE WILLEMS <i>Aristophane: traduction avec notes et commentaires critiques</i> i (1919).

All three-figure dates are B.C. Figures with a diagonal stroke, such as '423/2', denote an Athenian official year, from midsummer to midsummer. A figure followed by 'n.' refers to my commentary; thus '38 n.' means 'see my note on line 38'.

## INTRODUCTION

## I. ARISTOPHANES, KLEON, AND THE LAW-COURTS

*Wasps* was performed at the festival of the Lenaia early in 422 B.C. Aristophanes was by then well established as a comic dramatist; six or seven of his comedies had been performed, and at least three of them had won the first prize in their respective contests. Among the most successful had been *Akharnians* (performed in 425) and *Knights* (424). Both of these dealt mainly with political themes and contained satirical attacks on war-mongers, especially Kleon. In 423 *Clouds*, with a more intellectual theme, was a comparative failure, and no doubt it was partly in order to recover his popularity that in 422 he returned to a political subject.

Kleon was now at the height of his fame, the most popular politician in Athens. This loud-voiced man first came to prominence by criticizing Perikles's timid conduct of the war against Sparta in 431 and 430 (*Plu. Per.* 33, 8, 35, 5). After the death of Perikles in 429 he developed the policy of aggression towards Sparta and severity towards the allied cities which formed the Athenian empire. His great military triumph came in 425, when he managed (with Demosthenes) to capture the Spartans besieged on the island of Sphakteria. However, in the spring of 423 the Athenians made a truce with the Spartans for one year, so that in the following winter war was not in progress, and it is not for his aggressive foreign policy that Aristophanes attacks Kleon in *Wasps*.

In recent years Kleon had been making increasing use of the law-courts for political and personal ends. He represented himself as being the watch-dog of Athens (cf. *Wasps* 970), who brought to justice anyone guilty of harming Athens, and especially officials who made money at the state's expense. In Athens an official at the end of his term of office was required

to submit to an examination of his actions with special reference to his handling of public money, and if he was thought to be guilty of peculation or other misconduct he was prosecuted in a law-court. The examination was called *εὔθυνα* and a man subject to it *ὑπεύθυνος*. Kleon and some of his friends and supporters made a habit of prosecuting *ὑπεύθυνοι*. It may seem praiseworthy in a politician to be zealous in bringing offenders to justice, but Aristophanes evidently thought that the zeal went much too far, and that many of the prosecutions were due not to a wish to see justice done but to personal vindictiveness, to vote-catching, and even to the hope of making money out of the accused men by blackmail. He had already alluded to Kleon's legal witch-hunting in *Knights* (774-6), and in a play performed in 423 he had satirized prosecutions made from ulterior motives (*Wasps* 1037-42). Now in 422 he returned to the theme.

But *Wasps* is not just about Kleon. Whereas in *Knights* Kleon is a constant object of attention throughout the play, in *Wasps* there are long passages in which he is not mentioned at all, and in the prologue we are told 'We aren't going to make mincemeat of the same man a second time' (63). The main object of attack is rather the legal system which facilitated unfair prosecutions and convictions.

The most important feature of the Athenian legal system was the large volunteer juries. Any Athenian citizen over thirty years of age could be a juror. Volunteers were called for at the beginning of each year, and a list of six thousand jurors for the year was made out. The jury for each case was drawn from this list. The jury varied in size according to the type of case. It was often five hundred, sometimes more; in one case it is said to have been six thousand (And. 1. 17), but that was exceptional.<sup>1</sup> Each juror was paid three obols for each day on which he sat to try cases.

A jury was regarded as representing the whole Athenian people, and any attack on the jurors was treated as an attack

<sup>1</sup> In the fourth century odd numbers were used to avoid a tie in the voting, but there is no evidence for odd numbers in the fifth century.

on the Athenian democracy. There was no appeal against a jury's verdict, because in Athens the people were supreme. Through the law-courts the people controlled not only all Athenians but also the allied cities of the Athenian empire (many of whose legal cases were tried in Athens); and the jurors could regard themselves as rulers, while the allies were their 'slaves' (cf. [X.] *Ath. Pol.* 1. 18), who supported them by paying tribute.

It is undoubtedly true that this system was democratic, and that the large juries were more representative of the Athenian people than small juries or individual judges would have been. Another advantage was that a large jury was hard to bribe. But there were some serious disadvantages too.

One was that a jury was a crowd rather than a number of individuals. It was easily influenced by a skilful orator (like Kleon), but it could not easily give rigorous scrutiny to the details of a case or appreciate the merits of a case which was badly presented. This defect was the more serious because in an Athenian court there was no judge to give the jury impartial advice; a magistrate presided, but he did not explain the law or sum up the evidence. In *Wasps* Aristophanes satirizes and parodies various devices which speakers used to pull wool over jurors' eyes and to distract their attention from the weaknesses of a case.

A second disadvantage was that jurors tended to regard jury service as a permanent paid occupation. Because the pay was low, an able-bodied man would not usually volunteer to spend a year as a juror when he could earn more money in other ways; but a man too old for ordinary work would volunteer year after year, and his pay as a juror would practically serve the purpose of an old-age pension. Such men relied for their livelihood on the politicians (like Kleon) who provided them with cases to try by bringing politically motivated prosecutions, and who persuaded the assembly to keep up their pay. It was probably Kleon who got the daily rate of jurors' pay raised to three obols a few years before ( $\Sigma^R$  *Wasps* 88). Certainly Kleon claimed the credit for keeping up the

Athenian revenues (especially by seeing that peculators were severely fined, and that the allies paid large amounts of tribute) so that the jurors' pay would be secure: 'I shall feed him and take care of him, finding fair means and foul for him to have his three obols' (*Knights* 799–800). The natural result was that the jurors did their best to please Kleon by condemning men he said were guilty.

Thus the defects of the jury system were giving rise to a very dangerous state of affairs, in which a leading politician could control the verdicts of the courts. Kleon and his associates pretended to be servants and protectors of the democracy, but really they were manipulating the people's decisions for their own personal advantage—or so Aristophanes would have us believe. If the situation was really as serious as he makes out, he did a great public service in showing it up. One must remember, though, that the Athenians were people of an independent turn of mind; they were not sheep (despite *Wasps* 31–6). Probably the picture was not as black as he paints it.<sup>1</sup> What he does is not so much to present to his audience precisely what is happening in 422, but to show them what will happen if present tendencies are allowed to develop unchecked. The play consists of satirical exaggeration; and it is strikingly successful because it manages to make its serious points and be highly entertaining at the same time.

## II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY

*Wasps* tells the story of an old man named Philokleon ('Love-Kleon') who has a strange disease: he is passionately addicted to being a juror, and believes that the life of a juror is happy and powerful. His son Bdelykleon ('Loathe-Kleon'), who knows better, tries to cure him, first by keeping him away from the law-courts by force and later by reasoned argument. By gradual stages the old man is brought round, and is per-

<sup>1</sup> T. A. Dorey (*Greece & Rome* iii [1956] 132–9) argues that Kleon, though a violent and oppressive politician, was not venal and corrupt.

sueded to take up a different and gayer way of life. At one stage of his cure he is allowed to have a private law-court at home, and the trial of a dog for stealing some cheese is a hilarious parody of proceedings in the real law-courts. Later the courts are largely forgotten, and the centre of amusement is the old man's grotesque attempts to adopt new standards of behaviour and enter high society.

The play is well constructed, in a manner which exemplifies Old Comedy at its best. Although our evidence is meagre, since we have no complete comedy by any author earlier than Aristophanes, it seems possible that by his time there existed a traditional pattern of comedy including the following features:<sup>1</sup> a prologue, introducing the theme of the play; the entrance-song of the chorus (*παρόδος*); one or more symmetrical scenes (sometimes called 'epirrhematic syzygies', in which the second half approximately corresponds to the first in form and metre), including a contest or debate (*ἀγών*);<sup>2</sup> a passage of set metrical form in which the chorus address the audience (*παράβασις*), followed later in the play by a passage similar in form to the second half of it ('second parabasis'); further episodes with dialogue, alternating with short songs; and a concluding scene (*ἐξόδος*) of revelry or festivity. In many of Aristophanes's plays some of these features either contribute little to the main theme or even are omitted altogether: *Peace* has no agon, *Clouds* has no concluding festivity, *Frogs* has no full parabasis but only a 'second parabasis', and so on. Not so in *Wasps*; here all the traditional features are used, and all are made to contribute to the purpose of the play. The prologue introduces the character of Philokleon, and the parodos reveals the hardship of the jurors' life. Two symmetrical scenes show the conflict of views about Philokleon's life as a juror, and a third (the agon)

<sup>1</sup> On the form of Old Comedy see *Dith. Trag. Com.*<sup>2</sup> 194–229. Some problems connected with it are discussed by Paul Händel *Formen und Darstellungsweisen in der aristophanischen Komödie* (1963).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed study of this form of scene, see T. Gelzer *Der epirrhematiche Agon bei Aristophanes* (1960).

shows the reasons on which each of the opinions is based. The parabasis justifies the author's approach to comedy, and further describes the character of the jurors; the second parabasis defines further the author's attitude to Kleon. A series of episodes shows the successive stages of Philokleon's conversion, and the drinking and dancing in the final scenes demonstrate the pleasures of his new way of life. This is the sequence:

1-229	Prologue.
230-316	Parodos.
317-333	Song by Philokleon.
334-364	Symmetrical scene.
365-402	
403-460	Symmetrical scene.
461-525	
526-630	Symmetrical scene (agon).
631-724	
725-759	Song (conclusion to agon).
760-862	Episode.
863-890	Song.
891-1008	Episode.
1009-1121	Parabasis.
1122-1264	Episode.
1265-1291	Second parabasis.
1292-1449	Episode.
1450-1473	Song.
1474-1537	Exodos.

All this is not just one incident after another; the arrangement has a satisfying unity. The critique of the jury system is placed in the central portion of the play (526-1008), which consists of a verbal discussion of the system (the agon) followed by a satirical example of its working in practice (the trial of the dog). But the play is not just an attack on the jury system; it is the story of Philokleon. The first third of the play shows his old way of life, and the last third his conversion to a new one. The gay social life at the end is in exact contrast to

the austerity presented in the prologue and the parodos, and his new mania for the joyful activity of dancing is the reverse of his old passion for the severe activity of judging. He reaches a point precisely opposite to the one from which he started, and this makes one feel that the story is complete. Some other plays of Aristophanes create an effect of anticlimax: in *Peace*, for instance, *Peace* is rescued at line 520 and the rest of the play (three-fifths of the whole) contains little but celebration of that event. In *Wasps* this kind of anticlimax is avoided, because Philokleon is not fully converted at the end of the agon; his conversion continues step by step through the following episodes, and is not finished until the final scenes.<sup>1</sup> The last scene (the exodos) makes a climax, both because it completes the transformation of his character and also because the display of dancing is an exciting spectacle, making a fine visual end to the play.

### III. THE CHARACTERS AND THE CHORUS

Philokleon has rightly been called 'a triumph of characterization, one of the best comic figures in literature'.<sup>2</sup> He is supposed to be an old man, and from time to time allusions are made to weaknesses due to age (165, 357, 809-10, 1343, 1380-1), but his behaviour is exceedingly lively; in nearly every scene there is slapstick to give plenty of scope to an actor who is an expert clown. His mind is as lively as his body. Like other Aristophanic heroes<sup>3</sup> he is quick-witted and crafty. In the prologue he is so full of ideas for escaping from the

<sup>1</sup> The superficial view that the last third of the play has too little connection with the rest is refuted by C. F. Russo *Aristofane, autore di teatro* (1962) 198-201, and W. Kassies *Aristophanes' Traditionalisme* (1963) 79-80. The incidents of the later scenes are foreshadowed from the prologue onwards (e.g. 116, 341, 504-6, 736-40), and themselves contain references to the themes of earlier scenes (e.g. 1335-40, 1367).

<sup>2</sup> A. W. Gomme *More Essays in Greek History and Literature* (1962) 79. For another discussion of the character see C. H. Whitman *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (1964) 143-66.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Whitman *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* 21-41.



house that Bdelykleon and Xanthias can hardly keep up with him. Even when they think they have seen through his plan to escape with the donkey, it turns out to be a more ingenious one than they realized (174-89). He continues to show equal comic resourcefulness in later scenes, for instance when he tries to pass off a flute-girl as a torch (1361-77). His normal mood is one of complete confidence in himself and scorn for all opponents: 'I'm excellent in this line' (635) and 'He'll be gulped down' (1502) are typical of his boastful talk. He has no sense of morality (1262-3). Above all, he is thoroughly hard-hearted (*δύσκολος*) towards the accused men whom he tries. To him condemning is not only a duty but a pleasure too.

He is, in short, an old scallywag. And yet one cannot help liking him. One point in his favour (in Aristophanes's eyes at least) is his preference for what is old-fashioned, in music and dancing for instance (269 and the *exodos*). His ignorance of modern fashions is amusing, and yet one feels it to be forgivable; why *should* he have to discard his dear old cloak (1122-67)? Although he behaves badly when he gets drunk, the raucous woman and the two pompous men who threaten to summon him are unattractive because of their litigiousness, and one is glad when he outfaces them. Besides, he is not as hard-hearted as he pretends to be: at the end of the trial scene he actually sheds tears of pity for the accused, though he hastily pretends that they were caused by his hot soup (982-4). But the most important thing is that we are made to feel that he is not really responsible for the harm which he does in the law-courts. He is the dupe of Kleon and Kleon's friends. They are the villains. Philokleon is an ordinary man who has been led astray by them. When his eyes are opened, the truth comes to him as a surprise and a shock (696-7, 713-14). And it is because he evokes our sympathy as well as our laughter that he is a great comic character, perhaps the greatest in ancient comedy.

Bdelykleon is comparatively colourless. He is a good son, and sincerely desires his father's welfare. He is also a firm and efficient controller of his slaves, who stand in some awe of him

(134-7). But those are not characteristics which contribute much to the humour of a comedy. His main function is to present the sensible view of any question, and especially to point out the truth (as Aristophanes sees it) about Kleon and the law-courts. He serves as a foil to Philokleon, a standard of normality by which the old man's absurdities may be measured. His lines are almost always serious. But occasionally he shows some dry humour or sarcasm (146, 150-1, 173, 186, 209-10, 1387), and it is these passages which make him something more than just a necessary part of the mechanism of the play.

The slaves are a couple of good-natured fellows who warm up the audience by their chatter at the beginning of the play, and are a useful dramatic device for introducing the character of Philokleon (54-135), the character of the chorus (211-29, where Bdelykleon needs a questioner), and fresh turns in the plot at several points later in the play (835-43, 1292-1325, 1474-81). Like most slaves in ancient comedy they show signs of laziness, cowardice, stupidity, and lack of imagination (compare 225-9 with 426-7), but this does not mean that they are bad or unlikeable; it is natural (in the Greek view) for slaves to be inferior to free men in these ways. There is no perceptible difference in character between the two of them, and indeed in some parts of the play one cannot be certain which of them is speaking. Some editors attribute the lines to 'Slave A' or 'Slave B' or merely 'Slave', but since the names Xanthias and Sosias are given in the text (1, 136, 456) I have thought it more helpful to the reader to use them. Xanthias is addressed in line 456, and so I assume that it is Sosias who leaves the stage at 141 and that all subsequent lines spoken by a slave belong to Xanthias. But the correctness of this assumption cannot be proved.

Other characters perform useful dramatic functions in single scenes. The dog of Kydathenaion provides a satirical picture of Kleon and his methods of oratorical attack. The three accusers of Philokleon are stooges for comic behaviour on his part; but they also satirize Athenian litigiousness, and in particular the Bread-seller, a loud-mouthed defender of her

own rights and dignity, is a character very vividly drawn in only a few lines. The boy who converses with the chorus-leader in the parodos adds much to the pathos of this passage by drawing attention to the poverty and decrepitude of the old jurors. Although it is unrealistic for old men to have such young children, the departure from realism is justified here because the contrast between youth and age is dramatically very effective; and the boy's mischievous threats (254-7, 299) and wheedling (291-8) make him the most lifelike child in any surviving Greek play.

The jurors who form the chorus are also well characterized; in this play 'the poet has created the most vividly drawn chorus in his entire work'.<sup>1</sup> In their youth they fought in the Persian wars (1060-1101), which makes them, if the audience cares to calculate (as most would probably not), about eighty years old or more.<sup>2</sup> Of course most Athenian jurors will not have been as old as this; but some no doubt were. So, in making his jurors remember the Persian wars, Aristophanes is not making an arithmetical mistake or an absurd exaggeration; he is just showing that some jurors belong to the oldest living age-group.

Although the members of the chorus are old and poor like Philokleon, they differ from him in two respects. First, Philokleon is so perverse as to be poor by choice. He has a rich son who would be glad to keep him in luxury, but he obstinately prefers his old cloak and chilblains (1167), until in the later scenes he is gradually led to see the advantages of a different way of life. But the chorus do not enjoy their poverty at all. This illustrates an important fact about Aristophanes's method of satirizing the jurors: it is the chorus who show what Athenian jurors are really like (in his view), whereas the main character is not a typical juror but an absurd comic exaggeration.

<sup>1</sup> W. Kassies *Aristophanes' Traditionalisme* (1963) 81.

<sup>2</sup> If 1081 refers to Marathon, that makes them even older. But that line is not explicit, and the other reminiscences could all refer to the years 480-479 or later.

The second difference between Philokleon and the chorus is that they are much less lively than he is. In this respect too they are more realistic. He is a clown whose antics amuse the audience. They are afflicted by the weaknesses of genuine old age. Walking along an Athenian street is hard work for them (230-2). Mud and stones are obstacles (246-8). Many of their contemporaries are dead, and they look back nostalgically to the days of their youth and vigour (233-9, 354-5, 1060-1101). In conversation they tend to ramble into irrelevance (237-9, 259-65). They are just feeble old men—except when angered; then their waspish nature is revealed.

Their animal character must not be exaggerated.<sup>1</sup> The chorus of *Birds* are birds. The first chorus of *Frogs* are frogs. But the chorus of *Wasps* are not wasps; they are men who sometimes behave like wasps. The chief point of resemblance is that Athenian jurors, when roused, punish their victims with a seemingly irrational fury; but other similarities are also wittily suggested (1102-21). Their costume is adapted to make them look like wasps: they have visible stings<sup>2</sup> and narrow waists (420, 1071-5), and possibly other features not mentioned in the dialogue, such as tunics with black and yellow stripes.<sup>3</sup> All this is concealed under long cloaks when they first appear. In the parodos they are simply old men. But when Bdelykleon provokes them they become waspish; they throw off their cloaks (408) and their stings become visible (420). It is in this scene that they play their most active part. Once the fight is over they become spectators for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H.-J. Newiger *Metapher und Allegorie* (1957) 74-80.

<sup>2</sup> Some scholars have thought that the sting was the phallos which was a normal part of the costume of performers in a comedy, but that is a mistake. Such lines as 225 and 420 prove that the sting is something which ordinary men like Bdelykleon and Xanthias do not have, and 1075 proves that the sting is attached to the rump.

<sup>3</sup> This costume is not worn by Philokleon. In fact he is never called a wasp at all. In 366 he is called 'little bee', but that is just an affectionate mode of address like the American 'honey'. In 107 he is compared to a bee, but that does not mean that he is a bee; only two lines earlier he is compared to a limpet.

the rest of the play; they sing their songs, but they take no further part in the action.

#### IV. HUMOUR AND ARTISTRY

The chief purpose of a comedy is to amuse, and Aristophanes shows considerable versatility in his use of different sorts of humour and fun. The most important sort is that in which something is said or done which is not quite appropriate to the circumstances. When Philokleon exclaims 'How thoroughly convicted he'll be!' (893), it is funny because he says it before knowing who is being accused. This sort of humour often consists of combining two things which separately would be unremarkable but seem incongruous when put together. It is natural for a juror to enter a law-court, and it is natural for a man celebrating the rites of the Korybantes to have a drum, but to take the drum into the law-court (119-20) is incongruous and therefore funny.

This humour of inappropriateness may take more purely verbal forms. It is funny when addiction to being a juror is called a disease (87-8), because 'disease' is a word which is not generally applied to such conditions. It is funny when Philokleon uses the language of tragedy to express his longing to be in a law-court (750-9), because exclusion from a jury is not a sufficiently serious affliction to justify this kind of melodramatic utterance. Anticlimax or bathos is funny, when a word or speech is inappropriate because it is somehow on a lower level than what has just been said: 'Give me a sword—or else a penalty tablet' (166-7).

A different but related sort of humour is that in which a situation or action is developed logically to an absurd conclusion, the sort of humour which is often employed by Lewis Carroll and in the more recent 'Theatre of the Absurd'.<sup>1</sup> Something which in real life would be an insuperable practical obstacle is disregarded, and, almost before the audience

<sup>1</sup> I am thinking of such dramatists as Eugène Ionesco and N. F. Simpson.

can realize what is happening, the action moves from realism to fantasy. There is less fantasy in *Wasps* than in some of Aristophanes's other plays, but even this play has some fantastic features. One is the trial of the dog in the domestic law-court. Since Philokleon wants to try cases and his son wants him to stay at home, the obvious conclusion is that he should try cases at home; cases tried at home must be for offences committed in the household; the sort of offence committed in a household is the theft of food by a dog; therefore a dog must be tried; naturally his accuser must be another dog; so the speech for the prosecution is made by a dog. Each stage of the development seems logical, and yet the conclusion is absurd, because Aristophanes has disregarded what would normally be an insuperable practical obstacle: dogs can't talk.

Another sort of fun is produced by being disrespectful to persons or things that are usually treated respectfully and seriously. People laugh when an important man is treated rudely, and they laugh more if they think that he deserves it; and so it is funny, especially to their opponents, when Aristophanes says rude things about Kleon and other prominent politicians. It is even funnier if the rude remark is made inadvertently by the victim himself or by a person who means to praise him, if Kleon calls himself a thief (928) or Philokleon calls him 'the shout-conqueror' (596). The spectators laugh because they feel released from the inhibitions which normally prevent them from being rude to an important man. The obscenity which appears from time to time in Aristophanes has a similar explanation. A line like 739 is funny because it says openly something which people usually feel inhibited from saying.

Then there is the humour which arises from play on words, or from words which are funny in themselves. Sometimes Aristophanes invents a funny word, like 'pomposnortical' (135) or 'to waggle-bottom' (1173). A kind of verbal humour which he particularly likes is the pun. In the twentieth century puns have become unfashionable, but many people still

find them funny. In fifth-century Athens, to judge from Aristophanes, they were as popular as in Victorian England. Sometimes a pun is a good one, in the sense that the two words involved are identical in form, for example *ἀσπίς* meaning 'asp' and *ἀσπίς* meaning 'shield' (15-19). But Aristophanes is equally happy to use two words which are only similar, like *ὀπή* meaning 'chink' and *ὀπία* meaning 'cheese' (350-3). Some puns seem to have been old favourites which had become traditional: the mere utterance of the word *σύκινος* was apparently enough to raise a laugh without any need to mention *συκοφάντης* at all (145, 897).

These are only some of the sorts of humour which Aristophanes uses most often; it is hardly possible to make a complete list, or to categorize every joke. Different sorts of humour are not mutually exclusive, and one line may be amusing in two or three ways. A comic compound name may be used to express rudeness to a prominent politician (e.g. 459, 592). A comically melodramatic utterance may prepare the way for bathos (e.g. 312-13). One sense in a pun may be a laughable obscenity (e.g. 808). A pun and a comic invented name may be involved in a parody of a myth which is itself based on a logical absurdity (184-6).

And one must remember that the script is not the whole performance. An Aristophanic comedy includes some slapstick farce. In many places we can get from the text some idea of the accompanying actions, for instance when Bdelykleon claps down the chimney-cover on Philokleon's head (148); putting a lid on someone always makes a satisfying piece of clowning. But the original performance of *Wasps* will certainly have contained a good deal of comic business which does not appear in the text at all. The reader must resign himself to the loss of most of the visual humour—unless he likes to invent some of his own.

Other elements of the play which are completely lost are the music and the choreography. The plays which the Athenians had at their festivals were not only their drama but also their opera and their ballet, and many of them probably

thought the singing and dancing the most important and entertaining parts of the performance. The dancing must have been particularly spectacular at two points in *Wasps*. One is the scene in which the chorus of jurors show their waspish character and attack Bdelykleon and Xanthias; here there is great scope for picturesque or exciting charges, withdrawals, and flank movements. The other is the exodos, where the three sons of Karkinos give a display, Philokleon makes some comic contribution, and the chorus join in at the end.

The songs, one may feel, are not as completely lost as the dances, since at least we have the words. True, a song without its music is only a shadow of itself; who would care about the words of *The Marriage of Figaro* or *Tosca* if they had no music? But still the words of a song may have some value, either as poetry or as comic verse. The lines about Amynias (1265-74), for instance, are a good little comic lyric, with their tripping trochaic rhythm and their neatly arranged sentences, working up step by step to the concluding pun.

There is little or no great poetry in *Wasps*. But there is some excellent verse. Aristophanes has a superb control of the various metres which he uses,<sup>1</sup> especially the smooth-flowing iambs, the hurrying trochees, and the pounding anapaests.<sup>2</sup> They invigorate the whole play, because the insistent rhythms give the words an impetus such as prose can never have.

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the metrical rules see pages 21-9. Some examples which are only briefly mentioned in the introduction are more fully explained in the commentary.

<sup>2</sup> Some readers may object to my interpretation of various metres as fast, slow, smooth-flowing, and so on. I freely admit that all such interpretations are to some extent uncertain, because it is always possible for any passage in any metre to be delivered either fast or slowly, smoothly or jerkily, lightly or ponderously. Nevertheless it does seem to me that some metres lend themselves more easily than others to certain modes of delivery, and that we may fairly assume that for each passage Aristophanes selected a metre which lent itself easily to the tempo and manner of delivery he intended for that passage rather than a metre which did not. His purpose in using different metres was to produce artistic effects; therefore we ought to make some attempt to understand and appreciate those effects, despite the difficulties and uncertainties.

Nearly always the lines seem to run on effortlessly. Each character says just what the author wishes him to say, and hardly ever does one feel that the metre has obstructed the author's wish by compelling a different choice of words or a distortion of the usual word-order. On the contrary, Aristophanes can manipulate the metre to suit the sense. When he wants to talk about slowness, the metre slows down (e.g. 230). When he wants to move faster, the metre speeds up (e.g. 246, 248). When the mood changes, the metre changes with it (e.g. 323-4, 1291). When the audience gasps in amazement, the metre misses a beat (1526-7).

Sometimes, especially in the iambic trimeters of ordinary dialogue, the lines seem to run on continuously, and one is hardly conscious of a verse as a separate entity, so closely does the end of one verse adhere to the beginning of the next (e.g. 1193-4). Yet even an iambic trimeter can have an artistic unity. A single complete verse may be answered or balanced by another single complete verse (e.g. 1-2); the two may even rhyme (e.g. 65-6). Within a verse, the words before the caesura may be rephrased and reinforced by the words after it (e.g. 992). Or a verse may be divided in the proportions 3:4:5, giving a triplet of increasing length and dignity (e.g. 978, 1005). Other effective rhythms are also evolved in this same metre. Line 979 is an amazing example of Aristophanes's control of the iambic trimeter; without breaking the rules of comic iambs it assumes the insistent rhythm of anapaests, and the last word makes a climax and a conclusion, both in sound and in sense.

Language is used no less effectively than metre. Sometimes the characters seem to chat in the most ordinary language, and even become grammatically slipshod: verbs are colloquially omitted (e.g. 142), and a subordinate clause may have no apparent grammatical connection with its main clause (e.g. 517-18). But what is important is not the observance of grammatical conventions but the effective expression of meaning, and Aristophanes's sentences hardly ever fail to make their points clearly and forcefully. He has

a wide range of rhetorical devices for vigorous expression, such as balanced antithesis (e.g. 65-6), repetition of a word (e.g. *rupavvís* in 488-507), and short staccato sentences in asyndeton (e.g. 1214-17). He knows how to arrange a sentence in such a way that the final word comes as a comic climax (e.g. 15-19, 717-18).

But the most important feature of his language is the imagery.<sup>1</sup> He makes lavish use of similes, metaphors, and other sorts of comparative and pictorial expression. It is these more than anything else which distinguish his language from the language of ordinary prose writing and from the language of real-life conversation, by making it more attractive and more vivid. Comparisons with animals are especially common: Philokleon is like a limpet (105), a bee (107), a jackdaw (129), a sparrow (207), or a thieving cat (363), while Kleon is a horrific mythological monster (1031-5). Actions are often seen in military or naval terms, or else in the terms of agriculture or other labour in the countryside: to struggle against difficulties is to fight a sea-battle (479); to resist sleep or a cold wind is like withstanding a Persian invasion (11-12, 1123-4); to do something new is to open up a mine (876); corrupt orators are like a pair of sawyers (694); and Aristophanes himself is an unreliable vine-stake (1291). A tough man is a dog-leash (231), an accuser is a fever (1038), and boasters are smoke (324-5, 459). A look may be mustard (455), a smell may be clever (1059); to be cheated is to be encircled (699).<sup>2</sup> If Aristophanes is, as he claims, a charioteer

<sup>1</sup> For detailed studies of his imagery, see Jean Taillardat *Les Images d'Aristophane* (1962), and Anna M. Komornicka *Métaphores, Personnifications et Comparaisons dans l'œuvre d'Aristophane* (1964). Taillardat's book is the more thorough and useful of the two.

<sup>2</sup> There are several references to encirclement in *Wasps* (132, 395, 432, 699, 924), and circular dancing is mentioned several times in the *exodos* (1517, 1523, 1528-31). Whitman (*Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* 161) argues that these references have a symbolic significance for the play as a whole, conveying 'the underlying idea of the vicious circle where all things return upon themselves'. But encirclement in a trap is really quite different from rotation in a pirouette, and I doubt whether this symbolism was intended by Aristophanes.

who drives past his rivals (1050), his use of vivid imagery is not the least of the means which enable him to do so.

#### V. THE PERFORMANCE

The festival of the Lenaia was held each year in Gamelion (the month corresponding approximately to January).<sup>1</sup> In early times the plays at this festival were performed at the precinct of the Lenaion.<sup>2</sup> Later the performances were transferred to the theatre of Dionysos, beside the Akropolis. It is not known at what date this transfer took place. Some scholars believe that it was before the career of Aristophanes began, but there is no clear evidence for this, and the question remains open.<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately it hardly matters as far as *Wasps* is concerned, because this play needs no unusual scenic arrangements and could be performed in any sort of theatre, whether permanent or temporary. The only scenery needed is a building to serve as the house, with one door, one window at a higher level, and a roof on which Bdelykleon can lie and stand in the prologue. If the building has any other doors and windows, they are kept shut and ignored throughout the play.<sup>4</sup> In front of the house there is some kind of raised stage or rostrum or steps (1341); there is also an altar (used in 820, 860-90).

At the beginning of the play the scene is the front of the house of Bdelykleon and Philokleon, but it would be pedantic to insist that the whole play is supposed to take place there, even though changes of locale are not explicitly indicated in

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the festival see *Dram. Fest.*<sup>2</sup> 25-42.

<sup>2</sup> Its location is doubtful; see R. E. Wycherley in *Hesperia* xxxiv (1965) 72-6, *Dram. Fest.*<sup>2</sup> 37-9.

<sup>3</sup> For recent discussions see W. B. Stanford in *Hermathena* lxxxix (1957) 65, C. F. Russo *Aristofane, autore di teatro* (1962) 1-21, *Dram. Fest.*<sup>2</sup> 39-40.

<sup>4</sup> A. M. Dale (*JHS* lxxvii [1957] 205-11) argues that there are two windows but only one door, K. J. Dover (*Proc. Cambridge Philol. Soc.* cxcii [1966] 2-17) that the number of doors is not necessarily limited to one.

the text. During the trial of the dog, and again in the scene following the parabasis, we may, if we wish, imagine that we are inside the house.<sup>1</sup> When Philokleon is on his way home from the party the scene may be in the Agora (1372), though we are back in front of the house by the end of it (1444). Some passages have no particular location. And even if a location is clearly stated, the characters are at the same time actors performing in the theatre and can converse with the audience (54-135, 1497-1500).

Time is as vague as place; it is indicated when it is important, and otherwise we need not think about it at all. It is night when the play begins, and dawn at line 366. It must be afternoon or evening when Philokleon and Bdelykleon go out to dinner (1264), and dark when Philokleon returns with a torch (1326). But other passages are not at any particular time. It is pointless to ask, for instance, whether the final dance takes place in the middle of the night. This is one of the advantages of an open-air theatre: imaginary darkness is easily forgotten.

It is not known for certain how many speaking actors Aristophanes could use in a comedy, but the number was certainly not less than four. In *Wasps* four speaking actors are needed at 1412-15, where there is no time for one actor to change from the part of the Bread-seller to that of the Accuser, while Philokleon and Bdelykleon are both present. If one actor played Philokleon and one Bdelykleon, it would be possible for two actors to play all the other speaking parts between them. More actors would be needed for the various silent parts.

The chorus of a comedy in Aristophanes's time had twenty-four members. In this play the chorus are accompanied in the parodos by some boys (not necessarily as many as twenty-four), who depart at line 414. The boy performers who took these roles may also have played the puppies and witnesses in the trial scene.

<sup>1</sup> But there is, as A. Müller showed (*Philologus* lxxii [1913] 442-4), no reason to suppose that the *ekkyklema* was used in this play.

Some details of the contest for which *Wasps* was entered are given at the end of the first hypothesis (ancient introduction to the play), but unluckily that passage is confused. The statement that the play was produced by Philonides instead of by Aristophanes himself seems to be clearly wrong.<sup>1</sup> Philonides apparently produced one of the other plays in the competition, *Proagon*, which possibly, though not certainly, was written by Aristophanes. According to the received text of the hypothesis *Proagon* won the first prize and *Wasps* came second, but some scholars have proposed to emend the text in such a way as to reverse the order. There is general agreement that Leukon's *Ambassadors* came third.

Modern performances of *Wasps* have been few. There was a famous production at Cambridge in 1909, for which Vaughan Williams composed some charming but very un-Aristophanic music; but in recent years the play has been performed less often than it deserves.

<sup>1</sup> See note on hyp. i line 32.

## THE METRES

SINCE rhythmical effects form an important part of the artistry of Aristophanes, and a reader who does not understand them fails to attain a full appreciation of the play, I offer here a general introduction to the commoner metres in *Wasps*. It is intended especially for those who have not read an Aristophanes play before, but I assume that readers are already familiar with the use of iambic trimeters in tragedy.

Metres used in only one or two passages in the play and special metrical difficulties in individual lines are not explained here, but in the commentary.<sup>1</sup>

### *Prosody*

The scansion of individual syllables in Aristophanes is generally the same as in tragedy. But the following features may deserve special mention.

1. *A short vowel before a mute and a liquid consonant.*

(a) Before  $\beta$  or  $\gamma$  or  $\delta$  followed by  $\lambda$  or  $\mu$  or  $\nu$ , as in tragedy, a short vowel is normally scanned long. But it is short in 570  $\tilde{\alpha}\mu\tilde{\alpha}\ \beta\lambda\eta\chi\tilde{\alpha}\tau\alpha\iota$  (570 n.).

(b) Before other combinations of a mute and a liquid ( $\kappa\lambda$ ,  $\pi\nu$ ,  $\tau\rho$ ,  $\chi\mu$ , etc.) a short vowel is usually scanned short (except in the preposition  $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ ). In iambic trimeters it is nearly always short, unless tragedy is being parodied; but it is long in 837  $\tilde{\iota}\pi\nu\tilde{\omicron}\nu$  (837 n.).

2.  *$\epsilon$  combined with a following vowel.* When  $\epsilon$  is immediately followed by another vowel in the same word, the two are occasionally scanned together as one long syllable; e.g. 1067  $\nu\tilde{\epsilon}\tilde{\alpha}\nu\kappa\tilde{\eta}\nu$ .

<sup>1</sup> For fuller discussion and statistics see J. W. White *The Verse of Greek Comedy* (1912). For analyses of the lyric passages see Otto Schroeder *Aristophanis Cantica* (1909), Carlo Prato *I canti di Aristofane* (1962); but the analyses in my commentary sometimes differ from theirs.

3. *Correction.*

(a) *αι* is sometimes scanned short in adjectives in *-αιος*; e.g. 40 *δειλαῖος*.

(b) *οι* is sometimes scanned short in *οἶος*, *ποῖος*, and *τοιούτος*, and also in *ποιῶ*<sup>1</sup> and *ποιήτης*; e.g. 25, 261, 318, 1016, 1369.

(c) In the demonstrative *ούτοσί* a long vowel or diphthong immediately before the *-ί* is scanned short; e.g. 256 *τουτοῦ*, 262 *ούτοῖ*, 807 *αύτη*.

(d) Any long vowel or diphthong ending a word is scanned short (except in cases covered by 4, 5, and 6 below) if the next word begins with a vowel; e.g. 291 *μοῖ οὖν*, 699 *ὄπη ἔγκεκύκλησαι*. (But this is avoided in iambic trimeters.)

4. *Synizesis.* The long vowel concluding *έγώ*, *ἦ*, *μή*, *τῆ*, *τῶ*, and occasionally other words, if immediately followed by another vowel, is scanned with it as one long syllable; e.g. 827 *τῆ οἰκία* is  $\cup\cup$ , 1224 *έγὼ εἴσομαι* is  $\cup\cup\cup$ .

5. *Elision of a diphthong.*

(a) *αι* at the end of a verb (in *-μαι*, *-σαι*, *-ται*, *-σθαι*, or *-ναι*) may be elided; e.g. 273 *φαίνετ'*, 1426 *δέομ'*.

(b) *οι* at the end of *οἶμοι* may be elided; e.g. 1449.

6. *Hiatus* is allowed after *εἶ*, *περί*, *τί* or *τι*, *ὄτι*, and exclamations, e.g. *ὦ*, *ὦή*. (Aristophanes also has *οὐδέ εἰς* and *οὐδέ ἔν* in other plays, but there is no instance in *Wasps*.)

7. *Brevis in longo.* As in tragedy and other Greek verse, at the end of a metrical group (at the end of each line in 'stichic' metres like the iambic trimeter and the iambic, trochaic, and anapaestic tetrameter; at the end of each period in a lyric) a syllable which otherwise would be short is counted as long, because a pause follows it. I mark such syllables  $\cup$ .

*Iambic trimeters*

The iambic trimeter is the usual metre for dialogue. It is used for almost half the lines in *Wasps*. Although for some pur-

<sup>1</sup> For the alternative spelling without *ι*, 261 n.

poses it is preferable to treat the line as three metra (one metron being  $\times\cup\cup$ ),<sup>1</sup> I shall here follow the usual and convenient practice of treating it as six feet:

$\times\cup\cup\quad\times\cup\cup\quad\times\cup\cup$

Aristophanes departs from tragic practice in these ways:

1. He admits trisyllabic feet more freely. Any of the first five feet may be  $\cup\cup\cup$  or  $\cup\cup\cup$  (979 is an exceptionally striking example). The first, third, and fifth feet may be  $\cup\cup\cup$ . There is possibly one case in *Wasps* of  $\cup\cup\cup\cup$  in the second foot (967).

2. Porson's law, restricting the use of a long syllable at the beginning of the fifth foot, is not observed.

3. Word-break<sup>2</sup> within an anapaestic foot is sometimes allowed, even between the two short syllables; e.g. 25, 155, 1369. Similarly word-break is allowed in a tribrach or dactyl even between the second and third syllables; e.g. 3, 172, 767.

4. Caesura is sometimes neglected.

Although this metre was evidently considered suitable for conversation in a play, that does not mean that it resembles the rhythm of prose conversation in real life, and Aristophanes's audiences must always have been conscious that they were listening to verse, not prose. The reason for the metre's popularity is perhaps its versatility: a word of almost any metrical shape can, if necessary, be fitted in without seriously obscuring the rhythmical beat (e.g. the awkward name *Ἀλκιβιάδης* in 44-6). And Aristophanes shows great skill in producing different kinds of effect with it (cf. page 16).

<sup>1</sup>  $\times$  marks a position which may be occupied by either a short or a long syllable (anceps).

<sup>2</sup> The space in our printed texts between a prepositive (the definite article, most prepositions, *καί*, *ἀλλά*, *ἦ*, *εἰ*, etc.) and the following word, or between a postpositive (most enclitic words, *μέν*, *δέ*, *γάρ*, *οὖν*, etc.) and the preceding word, does not, to Greek ears, constitute a break between words. For a fuller list of prepositives and postpositives see K. J. Dover *Greek Word Order* (1960) 12-19.



*Iambic tetrameters*

An iambic metron is  $\times - \cup -$ , and iambic tetrameters are catalectic (that is, the last metron is a syllable short, so that there is a slight pause at the end of each line). So the line is:

$\times - \cup - \quad \times - \cup - \quad \times - \cup - \quad \cup - -$

The fourth metron never begins with a long syllable. The second or fourth syllable of each metron (except the last) may be resolved from  $-$  to  $\cup\cup$ , though such resolution is not frequent; e.g. 246:

$\chi\omega\rho\acute{\omega}\mu\epsilon\nu, \acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha \tau\epsilon \tau\acute{\omega} \lambda\acute{\upsilon}\chi\nu\omega \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\eta \delta\iota\alpha\sigma\kappa\omicron\pi\acute{\omega}\mu\epsilon\nu.$   
 $- \cup \cup - \quad \cup - \cup - \quad | \quad - \cup - \quad \cup - -$

Diaeresis (word-break at the end of a metron) is usual at the end of the second metron (marked | in the example above), but sometimes does not occur there; e.g. 235, 634.

The regularity of the beat (caused by the rarity of resolved syllables) and the pause at the end of each line (caused by the catalectic metron) make this a suitable metre for the plodding entry of the chorus of old men (230-47).

*Trochaic tetrameters*

A trochaic metron is  $- \cup - \times$ . Otherwise a trochaic tetrameter is just like an iambic one, with a catalectic metron at the end:

$- \cup - \times \quad - \cup - \times \quad - \cup - \times \quad - \cup -$

As in an iambic tetrameter, diaeresis at the end of the second metron is usual but not invariable. The first or third syllable of each metron (but not the last syllable of the line) may be resolved from  $-$  to  $\cup\cup$ ; e.g. 462:

$\epsilon\acute{\iota}\pi\epsilon\rho \acute{\epsilon}\tau\upsilon\chi\omicron\nu \tau\acute{\omega}\nu \mu\epsilon\lambda\acute{\omega}\nu \tau\acute{\omega}\nu \Phi\iota\lambda\omicron\kappa\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \beta\epsilon\beta\rho\omega\kappa\acute{\omicron}\tau\epsilon\varsigma.$   
 $- \cup \cup - \quad - \cup - - \quad \cup \cup \cup - \quad \cup - -$

But such resolution is not used a great deal, so that usually the trochaic beat, long and short syllables alternating, is very

pronounced. Besides, the first metrical beat of the line falls on the first syllable (whereas in iambics it is on the second). So the effect is one of strong drive and urgency, and this metre is suitable for scenes of excitement. It is used, for instance, for the wasps' attack on Bdelykleon (403-525).

*Anapaestic tetrameters*

An anapaestic metron is  $\cup\cup - \cup\cup -$ , and anapaestic tetrameters, like trochaic and iambic, are catalectic (which in this case means that the last  $\cup\cup$  is omitted), giving the line:

$\cup\cup - \cup\cup - \quad \cup\cup - \cup\cup - \quad \cup\cup - \cup\cup - \quad \cup\cup - -$

The end of the line is always  $- \cup\cup - -$ , but elsewhere  $\cup\cup -$  is often changed to  $--$  or  $- \cup\cup$ . But Aristophanes prefers to avoid any such substitution which produces four consecutive short syllables; so  $- \cup\cup$  is not followed immediately by  $\cup\cup -$  (for exceptions, 397 n.). It is rare for the second metron to end with  $- \cup\cup$  (but it does so in 350, 397).

There is usually (but not quite always: 568 n.) diaeresis at the end of the second metron, often at the end of the first, and sometimes at the end of the third too; e.g. 352:

$\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha \pi\acute{\epsilon}\phi\rho\alpha\kappa\tau\alpha\iota \kappa\omicron\upsilon\kappa \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota \delta\pi\eta\varsigma \omicron\upsilon\delta' \epsilon\acute{\iota} \sigma\acute{\epsilon}\rho\phi\omega \delta\iota\alpha\delta\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\iota.$   
 $- \cup\cup - - \quad | \quad - - \cup\cup - \quad | \quad - - - - \quad | \quad \cup\cup - -$

Because the substitution of  $--$  for  $\cup\cup -$  is very common, there is sometimes a considerable number of long syllables in succession (e.g. 387 has twelve, the maximum possible); trochaic and iambic tetrameters never have more than three consecutive long syllables. This fact, together with the fact that each metron is longer than a trochaic or iambic one, makes the anapaestic tetrameter a slower and more dignified line, but not less forceful: one has the impression of a rhythm pounding relentlessly on and on until the whole of the long line is completed. It is one of Aristophanes's favourite metres, and in *Wasps* it is the next commonest after the iambic trimeter. It is used, as usual, for the main part of the parabasis (1015-50) and in the agon (546-619, 648-718).

*Iambic, trochaic, and anapaestic runs ('dimeters')*

Sometimes iambic, trochaic, or anapaestic metra, instead of being grouped in fours (three full metra with one catalectic) to make tetrameters, follow one after another in a longer continuous run before being brought to a conclusion or a pause by a catalectic metron. This occurs both in songs and in dialogue; it is often hard to guess how far music was used in the performance of a particular passage, and no hard and fast distinction can be drawn between spoken and lyric passages.

For example, 1482-95 is a passage of dialogue consisting of 26 anapaestic metra, of which only the last is catalectic. 324-33 is part of a song; there is a short run of anapaests ending with a catalectic metron in 326, and then a longer run ending with a catalectic metron in 333. 1265-74 is a song in trochaics, divided into four 'stanzas' or 'periods' by the catalectic metra which make pauses at the ends of 1266, 1267, 1270, and 1274. A run of this sort is often used to round off a passage of tetrameters: thus 346-57 are anapaestic tetrameters, and 358-64 are a run of 14 anapaestic metra (13 full and the last catalectic).

In these runs the same kinds of substitution are allowed as in tetrameters: in anapaests -- or - ∪ ∪ is often substituted for ∪ ∪ -, and in trochaics and iambs ∪ ∪ is occasionally substituted for -. In anapaests a diaeresis at the end of the metron (except when the next metron is catalectic) is common but not invariable, but in trochaics and iambs there is no regular diaeresis or caesura. Such runs have been given the name πνίγος ('choker') on the assumption (probably false) that they were delivered by the actor in a single breath.

In manuscripts and editions the metra are generally written in pairs, as though they formed a series of dimeters.<sup>1</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> The first editor to arrange such passages in dimeters was probably the Alexandrian scholar Aristophanes of Byzantium. For the view, with which I do not agree, that the dimeter is a genuine unit in anapaestic passages see Dale<sup>2</sup> 49.

is misleading, because in fact there is not a pause after each alternate metron (as is clear from the way in which words run on from one metron to the next; e.g. 629-30, 754, 1268-70), and sometimes there is an odd number of metra, not exactly divisible into pairs. A passage like 719-24 should not be regarded as five and a half dimeters but (if a name is needed) as one big hendecameter.

To get an impression of the effect of a passage of anapaestic tetrameters concluding with a run of anapaests, it may be helpful to listen to (or, failing that, read) the Lord Chancellor's nightmare song in Act II of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*. Gilbert was strongly influenced by Aristophanes, and that song, though it differs from Aristophanes's metrical practice in certain respects (it is based on stress rather than quantity; and spondees are never substituted for anapaests, so that the rhythm seems much faster), clearly shows the effectiveness of comic anapaestic tetrameters leading up to a πνίγος.

*Reduced trochaics*

In several trochaic passages in *Wasps* some of the metra, instead of having the full form - ∪ - × (or with resolution ∪ ∪ ∪ - × or - ∪ ∪ ∪ ×), are reduced<sup>1</sup> in one of the following ways.

The last syllable may be omitted, leaving - ∪ -. (Metricians dispute whether this should be called 'syncopated trochaic' or 'cretic'.) This is the same as the catalectic metron regularly found at the end of a trochaic tetrameter or run, or at a pause; but in the passages now under discussion it is found in other places, where there is no pause. For example, 418-19 are two tetrameters in which every metron is - ∪ -, and in 413-14 the last three metra of a run are all - ∪ -.

<sup>1</sup> I avoid here the term 'syncopated' because it implies the entire suppression of a syllable. When ∪ ∪ - ∪ is used for a trochaic metron no syllable has been entirely suppressed. On the other hand 'syllable-counting' (Dale<sup>2</sup> 89) will not cover the use of - ∪ - in place of - ∪ - ×. I use 'reduced' to cover both phenomena.

Alternatively the first or third syllable of a metron may be short instead of long.  $- \cup \cup$  is fairly common; e.g. 370 ἀλλ' ἔπαγε, 1062 τοῦτο μόνον. (Some metricians prefer to regard this not as  $- \cup - \cup$  with the third syllable short instead of long, but as  $- \cup -$  with the third syllable resolved.)  $\cup \cup - \cup$  is rarer, but occurs in 342 -τι λέγεις τι, 343 περὶ τῶν νε-. In one catalectic line (where one might expect  $- \cup - \times - \cup -$ ) no fewer than three long syllables have shorts substituted for them: 339 τίνα πρόφασιν ἔχων scans  $\cup \cup \cup \cup \cup \cup -$ .

Where a strophe and antistrophe occur, responding to each other metrically, such reduced metra are often found in the same places in both. But not always; 1062 τοῦτο μόνον responds to 1093 -ους, πλέων ἐ-, and there is similar inexact responsion in 339 ~ 370, 342<sup>b</sup> ~ 374, 343 ~ 375.

410-14 will serve as an example of the combination of full and reduced trochaic metra:

καὶ κελεύετ' αὐτὸν ἦκειν	-	∪	-	∪	-	∪	-	-
ὡς ἐπ' ἄνδρα μισόπολιν	-	∪	-	∪	-	∪	∪	∪
ὄντα κάπολούμενον, ὅτι	-	∪	-	∪	-	∪	∪	∪
τόνδε λόγον εἰσφέρει,	-	∪	∪	∪	-	∪	-	-
μὴ δικάζειν δίκας.	-	∪	-	-	-	∪	-	-

What is the purpose of reducing metra in this way? No certain answer can be given, because of our ignorance of the manner in which the lines were delivered. But my guess is that the purpose is to give an effect of slowness within a more rapid trochaic rhythm. Within any one passage the rhythmic beat is, presumably, regular; that is, each metron occupies the same length of time in delivery. If an individual metron has fewer syllables, or a short syllable in place of a long one, the syllables have to be delivered more slowly (or with a pause at some point) to fill up the time. The actor lingers over his words, or he pauses for breath in the middle of them.

This guess is supported by consideration of some of the passages in which the reduced metra are used. The chorus have a good many before and after their fight with Bdelykleon (403-29, 463-87). They are excited and active, but

they are old men and they get out of breath. The trochaic rhythm easily lends itself to rapid delivery, to give an effect of excited activity; the reduction of some of the metra conveys the impression that they are too breathless to keep up the pace. It is significant that in the longer speeches (403-14, 463-70) the proportion of reduced metra increases towards the end. It is also significant that there are none in the speeches of Bdelykleon and Xanthias; they are young, and able to keep up the pace of the fight without getting out of breath.

In 1060-5 a different effect is obtained by the reduced metra. There the chorus are singing nostalgically of days long past, and they linger affectionately over their memories. At 1066 they turn to the present; the pace becomes brisker, and the reduction of metra ceases.

#### Metrical symbols

- long syllable
- ∪ short syllable
- × position occupied by either - or ∪ (anceps)
- ∪∪ position occupied by -- or -∪ or ∪-
- ∩ syllable which would be short if no pause followed but is counted as long because a pause does follow (brevis in longo)
- || pause whose presence is proved by hiatus or by ∩
- | word-end (caesura or diaeresis)

Where a symbol appears above another in the analysis of a responding passage (∩, ∪, etc.), the upper symbol refers to the strophe and the lower to the antistrophe.

## THE MANUSCRIPTS

*The principal manuscripts*<sup>1</sup>

THE oldest manuscript of *Wasps* is *Π*, a fragmentary papyrus of the fifth century A.D. It contains only bits of about 150 lines from the middle of the play.

The oldest manuscript containing the whole play is *R*, the renowned Ravenna manuscript of about A.D. 1000, in the Biblioteca Classense in Ravenna. It is the only manuscript containing all the eleven extant plays of Aristophanes.

The next oldest is *V*, which is in the Biblioteca Nazionale di S. Marco in Venice.<sup>2</sup> It contains seven plays (*Wealth, Clouds, Frogs, Knights, Birds, Peace, Wasps*).

*Γ* is a fourteenth-century manuscript in the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana in Florence. It must have been copied from a defective exemplar, which had lost a number of pages. It contains (besides various other plays of Aristophanes and Euripides) about three-fifths of *Wasps*, lines 421-1396. In addition the closing lines of the play (1494-1537) appear between 705 and 706; presumably a loose page of the exemplar had been put back in the wrong place.

*J* is one of the Palatine manuscripts in the Vatican library.<sup>3</sup> It contains only three plays (*Knights, Akharnians, Wasps*). It belongs to the fifteenth century, and previous editors of *Wasps* have classed it with other late manuscripts and paid

<sup>1</sup> For a complete list of the manuscripts containing *Wasps*, giving their full names, see page 41.

<sup>2</sup> Its date is uncertain, but it has usually been attributed to the eleventh century. W. J. W. Koster (*Rev. Ét. Gr.* lxvi [1953] 25, *Mn.* IV xvi [1963] 141) has maintained that it cannot be earlier than the late twelfth century, but this view is rebutted by A. Colonna (*Riv. Fil.* xxxii [1954] 318-20); cf. K. J. Dover *Aristophanes: Clouds* (1968) page cv n. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *J* is my symbol for the manuscript which J. W. White (*Class. Phil.* i [1906] 17) called *Vp3*.

little or no attention to it. But its merit is that it is free from the Byzantine conjectures which are found in the other fifteenth-century manuscripts (described below), and it has preserved a number of good readings which are not in *ITRVΓ*. It is particularly useful in those parts of the play which *Γ* does not contain (see, for example, lines 7, 21, 53, 58, 59, 90, 152, 419, 1428, 1461). So this edition, unlike earlier editions of the play, contains a full report of its readings.

It is, in my opinion, a mistake to try to construct a stemma showing the relationships between *ITRVΓJ*, because it is an 'open recension'. That is, these manuscripts and their lost ancestors were not simply copied each from a single exemplar, but after (or even while) being copied one manuscript was often compared with others, and they were corrected (or corrupted) by reference to one another, so that any one manuscript may contain readings drawn from several different sources. Between them our surviving manuscripts show what variant readings were current in medieval times, but no one of them consistently preserves a separate tradition from the rest. This is shown by passages in which the same error is found in two or more manuscripts although others avoid it: no manuscript consistently has the same partners in error. A short list of examples will illustrate the fact that almost every possible division and combination occurs. This is a list (not exhaustive, but only a selection) of false readings shared by two or more manuscripts but not by all: 7 ὑπνον *RV*, 175 ἵνα θᾶπτον *VJ*, 263 ὁ ζεύς *RV*, 508 οὐδὲν *ΠΓ*, 570 -τ' ἀπο-*ΠV*, 602 οὐσαν om. *VI*, 668 περιπεμφθεῖς *RVI*, 675 δωροδοκοῦσιν *RΓJ*, 693 τι om. *VIJ*, 802 ἀνοικο- *RF*, 950 -μέουσιν *RVJ*, 1009 ταχέως *ΓJ*, 1211 κατακλιθῆναι *RJ*.

Furthermore it cannot be assumed that *RVIJ* are all descended from a single text which alone survived the dark ages.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes an error found in only some of them is

<sup>1</sup> The view of Wilamowitz and others that only one manuscript of Aristophanes survived into the ninth century to be transliterated from uncial into minuscule script has been rejected by Max Pohlenz (*Nachrichten*