THE TRICKY DYNAMICS OF LAUGHTER: AUDIENCES AND COMIC PERFORMANCE FROM HOMER TO STEWART LEE

by

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study of comedy and satire. It explores how ancient and modern audiences can be encouraged to laugh through meta-theatrical devices, as well as consider how these same audiences, have and continue to be influenced into engaging with 'serious comedy'. It also examines blends of misdirection and surprise, as well as audience enjoyment of such deception, which I will refer to as 'consensual trickery'.

The structure is chronological and starts with examples of pre-dramatic divine farce in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Following this the case studies move to Euripides' *Bacchae* and Aristophanes' *Frogs* to show how Dionysus is an ideal comic figure to demonstrate themes of laughter and threat. After this the study moves to Aristophanes' political comedies: *Acharnians*, *Knights* and *Wasps* and then to Juvenalian satire and concludes with the British alternative comedian Stewart Lee.

Throughout the case-studies it is shown that laughter can engage 'serious comedy' across satirical platforms, and that self-referential laughter is encouraged as an appropriate response to often challenging ideas. Most of all, the thesis shows the balancing act of power between different audiences and comic performers, as it becomes clear that laughter is also a social response and active audiences are key to its success.

FOR NIALL AND GERRY

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It is with sadness that I must start my acknowledgment with two posthumous thanks, but it is only right that I begin with these individuals who were instrumental in me taking on this project, but unable to see its finished product. The first is to my supervisor Dr Niall Livingstone. Niall was a wonderful tutor, one who not only saw me through my master's degree, but also into my doctorate with great enthusiasm. He gave me the confidence to pursue my interests and always had useful advice and encouragement. I am assured in the knowledge that Niall would have been very happy to see this thesis finished. I would like to add to this particular thanks a brief reflection of a time in 2011, when I asked Niall to sign a book that he published with Ken Dowden. Niall was pleasantly surprised to be asked and he wrote 'thanks for inspiring discussions of tricksters and myth!'. I would like to return these words now with the addition that he was great inspiration in everything I did. The second person I would like to thank here, is my uncle Gerry Hayes. Gerry was a character. An immensely intelligent man and one who was never short of elaborate jokes about mathematics and Latin. I will never forget the day that I told him that I was accepted to start this doctorate, but was worried about following through because of my neurodivergence. Gerry was adamant that I should do it, because he said I had something worth saying. He was a kind and funny man, as well as offering me great support and confidence when my own was lacking.

I would now like to thank the key person who is responsible for me making it this far and for taking me on. This is for my supervisor Dr Elena Theodorakopoulos. Elena is a truly amazing supervisor. Not only did she have to take on the task after the tragic circumstances of Niall's passing, but she has always remained conscientious, supportive and focused in all my access needs. On balance, this thesis has been a hard slog and with my various disabilities, I am not a typical candidate for such an endeavour. Elena, however, made sure that I had every opportunity to succeed. She has seen my tears of frustration and anxiety, as well as my many enthusiastic ramblings. Yet, in all of this, Elena has always kept me on task and motivated me throughout. I am truly grateful to have had Elena help me achieve this mammoth goal.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> We do not laugh as people once laughed…
>
> Propp (1984: 127)

The above extract from Propp is a great line as it is paradoxically both right and wrong in its statement. On balance, it is right that we struggle to comprehend our own laughter, let alone 'how' or 'why' ancient audiences might have laughed. What is more, we cannot see different audiences, be it Greek/Roman, private/public, religious/secular or indeed ancient/modern, as if they were a homogenous cohort. Such groups most likely laughed in different ways and within different cultural and social environments.[1]

We can, however, reflect on the common deceptive and meta-theatrical traits that run through different forms of ancient comedy and the dynamics they created between comic performers and their spectators. We can also reflect on how particular ancient examples can and do hold striking similarities with contemporary stand-up comedians. To do this, I will offer five case-study chapters, from the ancient works of Homer, Euripides, Aristophanes and Juvenal, to the contemporary stand-up style of the 'Alternative Comedian' Stewart Lee. I will demonstrate how observing certain practices within modern stand-up performance is an opportunity to better understand what I will describe as 'consensual trickery' within ancient comedy. This is what my thesis sets out to achieve.

[1] See Beard's article on the 'History of Laughter' in *The Guardian* (2014).

It is true that some pathways have been side-lined in favour of my chosen case studies; there are many other possible avenues to explore within the gap between Roman satire and twenty-first century stand-up comedy. Obvious examples include the comic meta-theatre in Shakespeare and Jonathan Swift's satire of political reactions to the Irish famine.[2] Perhaps the most significant omission are the works of Bertolt Brecht and his 'epic theatre'.[3]

What is more, Stewart Lee is just one individual within a wealth of material available to us as a contemporary source.[4] He is only one example of a British stand-up comedian who follows the combined satirical and performative trends of this thesis. For instance, another avenue could be the more recent works of Nish Kumar and the political criticisms that came out of his show *The Mash Report,* a mock news show that was controversially cancelled on the BBC in 2021.[5] The Birmingham based comedian Joe Lycett would also fit the bill with his satirical political stunts including, but not limited to, his threat to destroy £10,000 if the ex-footballer David Beckham did not end his partnership with the Qatar World Cup in light of the country's anti LGBTQ+ stance.[6] With such variety of satirical examples, I must now explain my own choices.

---

[2] For meta-theatre in Shakespeare, see Fly (1986). For more on Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729), see Hayton and Rounce (2018: 144).
[3] On Brecht's 'epic theatre', see Thumiger (2009: 31-32).
[4] See for example, Lowe's chapter on 'Comedy: Definitions, Theories, Histories' (2008), which states that comedy's 'modern, as opposed to its ancient, use covers all formally marked varieties of *performed humour*, whether scripted or improvised, group or solo, in any medium: theatre, film, television, radio, stand-up, and various hybrids and mutations of these' (Lowe 2008: 1).
[5] Other comedians also contributed regularly to the show, including Rachel Parris, who is now its host. This was after Kumar left the re-commissioned show, called Late-Night-Mash (Channel, *Dave*: 2021). The original Mash Report aired on the BBC from 2017-2021. Some right leaning critics argued that the show was too left wing for the BBC's non-political obligations. See Kumar's tweet in response to the show's cancelation (Kumar: 2021). As well as Ibekwe's *New York Times* article, titled 'His BBC Comedy Show Is Canceled. His Political Fight Continues' (1 April 2021).
[6] See Lycett's various tweets between November 13 – 22 November 2022 (Lycett 2022), as well as Chilton's article in *The Independent*, titled 'They want to kill me': Joe Lycett explains why he was upset by David Beckham going to Qatar' (9 December 2022).

In many respects, my case studies have been cherry picked for their prominence within their respective academic and professional fields. This overarching study will allow for a smooth transition from archaic farce, into the Juvenalian-like voice of Stewart Lee, one of the most popular British alternative comedians of the twenty-first century.[7] I am, of course, not suggesting that ancient satire is the same as contemporary stand-up comedy. After all, there is far too much separating each contingent of ancient sources, let alone the contemporary comedy that we wish to compare them to.[8] It will also become evident throughout this thesis that we must consider inevitably different audiences, with their expectations and reactions to specific comedic practices. For example, Lowe (2007) reflects that to better appreciate ancient comedy and what it likely meant to its audiences, we must consider how it was 'bound up with its history'.[9] Likewise, whether it is the audiences of archaic Greek text, the spectators of classical theatre, the private elite recipients of Roman recitations, or the cabaret-style bars of alternative comedy clubs, I will need to consider their respective cultural understandings of 'satire' and the unique relationships created in the comedy I am about to explore.

This thesis has its own origins from my reading of Kent-based academic Oliver Double and his publications *Getting the Joke The Inner Workings of Stand-Up Comedy* (2014) and *Alternative Comedy: 1979 and the Reinvention of British Stand-Up* (2020).[10] As

[7] See Brassett (2015: 183).
[8] See Lowe (2007), who reflects on the weight of meanings and applications to the word comedy, especially when its ancient practices are looked at with a contemporary appreciation for the word (Lowe 2007: 1).
[9] Lowe (2007: 6).
[10] *Getting the Joke The Inner Workings of Stand-Up Comedy* was first published in 2005, but I will be using the second addition, published in 2014. I will also continue to refer to his more recent collaboration with Sharon Lockyer titled *Alternative Comedy Now and Then* (2022).

well as these two definitive academic works on stand-up comedy, there is also Sophie Quirk and her work *Why Stand-up Matters: How Comedians Manipulate and Influence* (2015).[11] These works offer fresh academic insights on comic performance, with particular interests in alternative comedians like Stewart Lee and the implications of this type of comedic practice.[12] In particular, I found that these approaches to meta-theatrical themes of stage personae and audience dynamics parallel my own reflections on the comic devices within the ancient case studies selected. Also, despite the unique qualities that make up each ancient comic practice within this thesis, Double and Quirk's studies of audience dynamics within stand-up comedy have emphasised that there are parallels worth exploring. Therefore, by reflecting on academic literature within each chapter, I will expand and offer fresh interdisciplinary approaches to the overarching threads of comedic deception and dramatically self-aware laughter.

1.1: MY CASE STUDIES

Starting with my earliest case-studies, Chapter Two will focus on two archaic sources of farcical laughter that in their own way, also offer precursory roles to my wider methodology in exploring meta-theatrical devices. The first of these will be the famous 'Deception of Zeus' (*Dios Apate*) from *Iliad* 14, while the second is the equally memberable extract of the 'Hephaestus Trick' used against Aphrodite and Ares in

[11] I will also consider Quirk's article titled 'Preaching to the converted? How Political Comedy Matters' (2015b). This also addresses important themes on audience consensus and political comedy (243-260). Both Double and Quirk have collaborated with 'The Centre of Comedy Studies' at Brunel University. I witnessed such a collaboration when I attended the 'Alternative Comedy Now' conference at Kent University in 2019. For more on this, see Double and Lockyer (2022: 2).

[12] For a breakdown of the Alternative Comedy movement and Stewart Lee's place within it, see Chapter Six, section 6.1.b. For more scholarship on stand-up comedy, see also G. Dean's *Step By Step to Stand-Up Comedy* (2000) and D. R. *Smith's Comedy and Critique: Stand-Up Comedy and the Professional Ethos of Laughter* (2018).

Odyssey 8.[13] In both of these cases, I will show how the use of deception, coupled with sexual desire (*eros*), are recognised patterns for archaic divine characters which then facilitate devices akin to personae, disguise and direction in the absence of established drama. Moreover, I will consider the often-brutal side of this Homeric comedy and the role that laughter plays in these examples. In particular, I will show how it juxtaposes comedic respite within two typically serious and tragic narratives, as well as the consistent undercurrent of themes like female deception and mockery that inevitably forced audiences to engage with unexpectedly heightened emotional experiences.

Within my analysis of Hera's seduction and subsequent manipulation of Zeus, I will showcase dramatic themes such as her apparent persona and how she prepares and stages her performance; akin to an actor putting on a costume and learning their lines. Then I will address why it is that these distinct dramatic motifs encourage comic overtones. Next, I will make similar comparisons with Hephaestus' trick in the *Odyssey*, as I show how the god's angry response to his wife's infidelity is, in fact, a staged performance for multiple audiences that are both 'real' and narrative-based.[14] The laughter of the gods is directly referenced within this scene, which as a result goes beyond Hera's trick and makes Hephaestus' scene a closer example of a performance within a performance.[15]

[13] *Iliad* 14.153-360 and *Odyssey* 8. 266-365. Throughout this thesis, extracts of *Iliad* and will be taken from William F. Wyatt's revised Loeb edition of Murray's translations (1924, revised 2003). For the *Odyssey*, I will use George E. Dimock's revised Loeb edition of Murray's translations (1919, revised 1998). See also Golden (1989) for further introductions to the *Dios Apate* and Dance (2020) for *Odyssey*'s episode with Hephaestus, Aphrodite and Ares.
[14] See Chapter Two, section 2.3.a, for further introduction to the concept of a 'real' audience.
[15] See references to laughter in *Odyssey* 8.306 and 8.326.

Chapter Three will offer this thesis' first clear theatrical subject. A jump from the epic poetry of archaic Greece, this section will consider the progression of these dynamics in laughter to both classical tragedy and Old Comedy.[16] Using the religious and social layering of the god Dionysus in Euripides' *Bacchae* and Aristophanes' *Frogs*, I will first follow a thematic approach that introduces Dionysian 'ambiguity', 'theatricality' and the idea of 'meta-theatre'. From this I move on to consider how both *Bacchae* and *Frogs* make use of much earlier Homeric Dionysian texts, with familiar themes of Dionysus' divine ambiguity and overtones of blended danger and laughter to reverberate in each of these dramatic counterparts.[17]

Within my meta-theatrical exploration of Euripides' *Bacchae*, I will pay particular attention to the prologue and Dionysus' manipulation of Pentheus through costume.[18] In doing so, I will not only address the divine ambiguity around Dionysus and his mortal family, but also how each scene facilitates moments of dramatic self-referential laughter that furthers the tragic plot. Within this, I will look at how Dionysian-inspired laughter is referenced within the narrative, as well as how audiences can recognise and come to terms with this smiling god in an otherwise gruesome story. I will then consider how audiences engage with a seemingly very different version of Dionysus in

[16]I will use the phrase Old Comedy with the understanding that it comes within its own complications in definition. See Lowe, who states that the Hellenistic distinctions between old, middle and new comedy are ill-defined. Especially when it comes to figures like Aristophanes, with careers that crossed over these divisions. Lowe does, however, recognise that Old Comedy is an established phrase within modern scholarship and that all of the Aristophanic plays within this thesis are considered in the tail end of this period (2007: 16).

[17] These Homeric texts consist of *Homeric Hymn I. to Dionysus* and *Homeric Hymn VII. Dionysus*. Throughout this thesis, extracts of *Homeric Hymns* will be based on M. West's 2003 Loeb translation (2003). See also Dodds (1960: xxv-xxviii), Segal (1982) and Alaux (2011:142), for insight into Dionysian themes in Euripides' *Bacchae*. For Dionysian themes in *Frogs*, see Dover (1993: 37-43) and Lada-Richards (1999).

[18] See *Bacchae* 1-63 and 818-861. Throughout this thesis, extracts of Euripides' *Bacchae* will be taken from David Kovacs' Loeb translation (2002). For some further introductions to the *Bacchae*, see Kirk (1979: 1-22), Zeitlin (1990: 63-64), Mills (2006), Stuttard (2016: 1-10) and Raeburn (2017: 173-188).

Aristophanes' *Frogs*. Here, much more overt meta-theatrical moments complement a similarly recognisable Dionysus but also exist to allow audiences to laugh at their own awareness; for instance, direct addresses to the audience, poorly made costumes and tragic parody, all help to facilitate a dramatically contradictory figure that encapsulates the cowardly buffoon and the comic hero.[19]

Remaining within the parameters of the classical theatre, Chapter Four will offer a greater analysis of Aristophanic comedy and its role within my research on meta-theatre as serious comedy. By focusing on Aristophanes' political plays of *Acharnians*, *Knights* and *Wasps*, I will show why such comedies hold potent uses of meta-theatrical devices that serve to validate the playwright's satirical skill through laughter response. To do this, I will first address the role that Old Comedy has as a contrast to the often serious and emotional tones of its counter-genre tragedy, as well as consider what I mean by serious comedy through the dynamics of an 'active audience', specific to Aristophanes' time.

Starting with *Acharnians*, I will look at two key scenes that address themes of tragedy and costume. The first is when the protagonist, Dicaeopolis, seeks out and parodies the tropes of the tragedian Euripides, whereas the second comes later with a Megarian attempting to sell his two children disguised as piglets.[20] Where this first example relies

[19] In *Frogs*, see 1-34 (prologue), 35-163 (Heracles exchange) and 830-1480 (the competition scene). Throughout this thesis, extracts of Aristophanes *Frogs* will be taken from Jeffrey Henderson's Loeb translation (2002). For some further introductions to *Frogs*, see Dover (1993), Lada-Richards (1999), Sommerstein (2009: 254-271), Griffith (2013) and de la Torre (2016). For the prologue and Heracles exchange specifically, see Lada-Richards (1999: 17-46), Slater (2002: 185) and Compton-Engle (2015: 106-107). On the tragic competition, see Lada-Richards (1999: 312-325) and Henderson (1990: 271-313)(2002: 9).

[20] In *Acharnians*, see 393-479 and 731-835. Throughout this thesis, extracts of *Acharnians* will be taken from Jeffrey Henderson's Loeb translation (2018). For some further introductions to the *Acharnians*, see

on levels of intertextuality, with audiences aware enough of Euripides' works and style to enjoy its parody, this second scene turns tragic parody on its head with the sobering subtext of a man selling his children because of starvation and war. In *Knights*, I will continue this theme of audience self-awareness, but this time via a direct exchange in the play's prologue, as well as the use of political allegory throughout.[21] The laughter achieved from both shows that the audiences are in on the joke, even when important information is withheld until the end, such as the sausage seller's true identity. Finally, within *Wasps*, I will show how the crucial trial scene offers an overt dramatic parody.[22]

Chapter Five will pose another great leap; I jump from the Greek world of theatre to the satirical verse poetry of the Roman author, Juvenal. Within this chapter, I will be referring to the way in which audiences witnessed these as performance recitals and not typical theatre.[23] Looking specifically at *Satire* Six and *Satire* Nine, this chapter will consider how the poet's persona is never stagnant, shifting with the political climate in which he wrote and even offered self-reflective laughter that is comparable to the comedic goals of the meta-theatre found within my Greek case-studies.[24] I will

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Sommerstein (2002: 3-12) and Hubbard (1991: 41-59). For the Euripides scene specifically, see Slater (2002: 42-67). For the Megarian scene, see Konstantakos (2012: 126-161).

[21] For my key reference to direct address in the prologue, see *Knights* 35-40 and 162-4. For later reference to the theatre audience and theatre masks, see *Knights* 230-233. Throughout this thesis, extracts of *Knights* will be taken from Jeffrey Henderson's Loeb translation (2018). For some further introductions to *Knights*, see Sommerstein (1978b, 2003: 31-34) and Anderson (1989: 10). For audience address in *Knights*, see Ruffell (2011: 153). For more on political allegory in *Knights*, see Dover (1972: 93), Slater (2002: 68-85) and Hutchinson (2011: 52-53).

[22] In *Wasps*, see 764-862 (setting the stage) and 891-1008 (trial scene). Throughout this thesis, extracts of *Wasps* will be taken from Jeffrey Henderson's Loeb translation (1998). For some further introductions to *Wasps*, see Sommerstein (1983: xv-xix), Slater (2002: 86-114) and Hutchinson (2011: 62-67). For more on the trial scene, see Slater (2002: 95-98) and Biles and Olson (2015: xxxix-xliii). On the play's political implications, see Konstan (1985) and Olson (1996).

[23] See Ferriss-Hill (2015: 29).

[24] Throughout this thesis, extracts of Juvenal's *Satires* will be taken from S. M . Braund's Loeb Classical translation (2004). For some further introductions to the *Satire* Six, see Watson and Watson (2014). For *Satire* Nine, see Plaza (2006: 159-166).

introduce what it means for Juvenal to be a Roman satirist and how he goes further than Old Comedy in apparent contempt for illusionary theatre. Yet, many scholars recognise the staged quality of Roman satire and in particular Juvenal.[25] Juvenal's practice involves the use of a satirist's mask, as well as his angry monologue style, which may even be a parody of such preconceptions of theatre and laughter for his Roman audience.

When specifically observing *Satire* Six, I will look at possible layers to this satirist persona, through the exploration of his comedic targets. For instance, I will need to ask, who is he trying to make laugh and under what context? Starting with Postumus, the fictitious recipient of his 'advice', as well as the wider anti-women motifs throughout the poem, I can begin to question if Juvenal is in fact playing up to a 'ranting' stereotype and making fun of the elite audience for whom he is actually performing.[26] I will continue this speculation within a section on Empress Messalina, as she is portrayed as a sex worker through dramatic styling of her costume and behaviour.[27] Not only does this scene share similarities to Hera in *Iliad* 14, but its themes of deception and disguise will also bleed into my subsequent exploration of gladiatorial costume and feminine dress in the 'Oxford Fragments' of *Satire* Six.[28] In *Satire* Nine, I will move on to consider the evolution of Juvenal's dramatic satirical skills and how that manifests into a parody of himself through a dialogue scene. We will see how the development

[25] See for example, Jones (2001: 127) and Keane (2003).
[26] See Plaza for themes of women and transgression within this poem (2006:131-154).
[27] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.114-135. See Keane (2015: 72, 76-77). Third wife of Emperor Claudius, Messalina was also highly sexualised by other Roman authors such as Tacitus; see Joshel (1995).
[28] Oxford fragments 6.O1-O34.

of Juvenal's satirical mask comes out of these two voices he embodies, as well as why his audience can enjoy and relate to a comedian who laughs at himself.

In my final chapter, I will offer the only contemporary comparison within this thesis. Here I will consider the literary and performative works of the British alternative stand-up comedian Stewart Lee. By examining Lee's 2010 publication *How I Escaped My Certain Fate*, as well as his involvement in the production *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, Chapter Six will not only be able to reflect on clear Aristophanic and Juvenalian self-referential comedy, but it will also consider how the theme of satirical laughter has moved on for a twenty-first century audience. For instance, while such similarities cannot be ignored and there is much to be said about the power dynamics between my ancient examples and modern comic audiences, I will also consider the significance of Lee as an 'Alternative Comedian', the ethos that comes with it and what it means now to be part of a stand-up audience.

Starting with Stewart Lee's comic persona, I will show the similarities with Juvenal's satirical mask from Chapter Five and how performing as 'himself' on stage is an extension of this. I will also consider the ambiguity that audiences inevitably face when engaging with different versions of the comic. Following this, I will consider themes of accountability and risk, specifically the significance and consequence of religious parody within Lee's work on *Jerry Springer: The Opera* and within transcripts to his show *90s Comedian*.[29] From these reflections, I will be able to consider how the comedian makes sense of their role as a satirical figure and any 'safe space' he may

[29] *90s Comedian* is one of three stand-up comedy transcripts found within Lee's 2010 publication. See Lee (2010: 159-222).

inhabit on stage. Finally, I will return to the power of 'his' audience, as their laughter forms a positive response, subsequently considering how Lee interacts with them directly but also weaves moments of comic deception within these exchanges.

The wider goal of this introduction is to offer its own preliminary approaches to this thesis' wider themes of laughter, comedy and meta-theatre. In doing so, the following sections will first offer consideration of the comparative dynamics of performance laughter, as I consider this comic response from audiences today and in the ancient world. Secondly, it will be important to recognise a major factor within my approach, which is 'serious-comedy'. I will go on to introduce the term 'consensual trickery', which I have coined to match the framework of my own research on audiences who are expecting the unexpected. Then, particular focus will be given to *spoudaiogeloion* and satire. These are two distinct types of ancient 'serious comedy' that will show a progression of social critique that was facilitated through laughter. In doing so, I can pave the way for similar motifs in my contemporary sources. Then finally, I will look at the term meta-theatre itself and what that means for any ancient and contemporary applications. After which, I will be able to further signpost some key meta-theatrical devices within my thesis, as they will be prevalent across my comparative approach.

1.2: LAUGHTER AS AUDIENCE RESPONSE

> Why do human beings tell jokes? Well, why did the chicken cross the road? In keeping the wilfully literal punchline to that particular riddle, we answer thus: to make each other laugh. And to understand why provoking laughter is something that so many citizens of the world aspire to, we need to start by looking at the nature of laughter itself.
>
> Carr and Greeves (2007: 17)

Carr and Greeves are just some of a long line of people who have asked the question, why do we laugh? In doing this, we are often met with the realisation that it is a hard reaction to determine.[30] Its elusive nature is undoubtedly part of its charm, yet this inevitably makes its dynamics with comic audiences a tricky relationship to decipher. To help tackle this, I will first address basic terminology through some key scholarly treatments. Halliwell (2014), for instance, states that laughter is a 'fundamental parameter of comedy and a quintessential symptom of its elusiveness'.[31] Likewise, Propp (2009) acknowledges that even within a performance setting, laughter can take many forms and often appear in quite diverse circumstances.[32] Therefore, laughter can quickly become an action that holds great emotional range and has baffled many notable minds throughout history.[33]

> We have much less conscious control over laughter than over speech. It is easy to say "ha-ha-ha," but difficult to laugh on cue. We do not "speak" laughter.
>
> Provine (1996: 38)

[30] Carr And Greeves (2007: 33). See also Debbèch and Perron's forward to Propp's *On the Comic and Laughter* (2009).
[31] Halliwell (2014: 189). See also Halliwell's much more comprehensive analysis of *Greek Laughter: A Study Of Cultural Psychology From Homer To Early Christianity* (2008) and some of his earlier works: 'The Uses of Laughter in Greek Culture' (1991) and 'Greek Laughter and the Problems of the Absurd' (2005).
[32] Propp (2009: 12).
[33] It will not be the objective of this introduction to list all the scientific standpoints on laughter. For more background on laughter theory, including those who have considered its basic principles, see ancient examples like Plato (*Laws*: 11.935d-6a) and Aristotle (Parts of Animals: 3.10, 673a8). The latter saw the ability to laugh as a means of defining a distinct human position within the ancient world and set them apart from both animals and gods; see Halliwell (2008: 1-3). See also Stott (2005: 18-20). See also Lateiner (1977) on Herodotus and his uses for laughter. For a more contemporary approach to laughter, see for example Scott, Lavan, Chen and McGettigan's *The Social Life of Laughter* (2014). See Lowe (2020), who has considered the sometimes strained relationship between classics and humour theory, as well as addressing how the latter has changed over the last thirty years (2020: 13-15). See also Swallow (2020) and his introduction to humour theory (2020: 2-5).

There are many interpretations of laughter that could be highlighted, from a simple sound that denotes a nervous tick, to the projections of both blame and mockery. Perhaps the most common instance of laughter and of most significance to this research, is laughter as a social response.[34] Provine's 1996 article offers an approach to laughter that encompasses its many social and biological features. Yet, within this, the above quote highlights the complex nature that laughter plays as a form of exchange. It is not typical dialogue, but it can be just as conversational.[35]

Provine also signposts that, on their own, structured attempts at humour rarely gain the best results; this for instance, may include the telling of a joke. Rather, Provine argues that it is when individuals experience laughter as a social signal that they become part of a group setting and are then more likely to respond in kind.[36] The implication is that laughter is a suggestive force when amongst a collective audience, with studies into its social influences being well documented.[37] Therefore, this idea of laughter as a social response will prove particularly relevant for my own analysis, as I will focus on the influential dynamics of laughter within different comedic audiences and reflect on ways that these comics achieve satirical success, consequently making said audiences feel like a social group. In addition to this, I will also look at potential repercussions for a comic performer, if an audience member, or members, no longer feels like a part of this collective comedic experience.

[34] Carr and Greeves (2007: 32). See also Quirk (2015), who notes Critchley (2004) and their argument regarding the shared listening of jokes; within this, they state that the audience must be part of the shared social world (Quirk 2015b: 246).
[35] Provine (1996: 38 and 42). See also Carr and Greeves (2007: 19 and 32) and Quirk (2015a: 13).
[36] Provine (1996: 42). Quirk (2015b: 245).
[37] Examples include Mann (1961), McGuire (1968), Mettee (1971), Goodchilds (1972), Gruner (1976), Norman (1976), Chertkoff and Esser (1976), Kane (1977), Powell (1977); these examples are taken from O'Quin and Aronoff (1981: 349).

I am also drawn to figures like Quirk (2015), as she applies well-trodden humour theories to her own study of stand-up comedy. Quirk, like many analysts of comedy, stipulates the three common theories to laughter. These are 'superiority, relief and incongruity'.[38] Starting with superiority, Quirk outlines this idea as the funniness that comes from the differences in others. As with the harshness of Homeric laughter, the shameless speech of Old Comedy and the mockery within Juvenal, I will return again and again to this idea of superiority. Of course, Quirk also is acknowledging the space for nuances in such a theory, but the basic premise is that 'laughter celebrates comparative excellence'.[39] Within the case of my own analysis, this will present as intellectual superiority in Stewart Lee's comic routines; in particular, I will address this in Chapter 5, with the way he plays at attacking his audience and even 'separates' them under the false assumptions of their intellect.

Quirk also considers others who have followed this approach: from Cicero to Hobbes, she establishes that this is a well-known principle that laugher punishes those who do not conform.[40] While Quirk's reflection of Thomas Hobbes' 'superiority laughter' is intended for contemporary alternative comedy, it can also offer a backward perception within this thesis' ancient material. In her work on *Why Stand-Up Matters* (2015), Quirk references Hobbes' 'superiority laughter' as a way for a comic to elevate their position. This may be at another's expense, but it can also be self-reflective, with 'the joker's

[38] Quirk (2015a: 20)(2015b: 245). For more on these three themes of laughter, see Stott (2005: superiority, 135-5; relief, 138-40; incongruity, 135-7). These themes are also similar to Sommerstein's breakdown of Aristophanic comedy (2009: 105). There is also Swallow, who addresses these key theories, with that addition of 'Play'. Swallow is however predominantly interested in humour theory over laughter (2020: 3-5). See Lowe (2020), as he states that rather than it being ether/or, these three theories are actually complementary of each other (Lowe 2020: 15).
[39] Quirk (2015b: 245).
[40] Quirk (2015b: 245).

realization that he has bested either his former self or his own opinion of himself'.[41] This idea will be particular useful within the context of Juvenal's *Satire* Nine, but also Stewart Lee's developing persona across three performances. I will consider how both satirical authors play heavily on mocking past incarnations of their own dramatic personae.

I am also interested in the two other common theories of laughter. These being humour as 'incongruity' and as 'relief'. These two will hold more influence as I consider ideas of serious comedy both ancient and modern. In the case of 'Incongruity', this is laughter that responds to a juxtaposition of ideas. I will go some way to explain the juxtaposition between tragedy and comedy throughout this thesis. For instance, there is the unease that audiences most likely faced in both archaic and classical Greece, when laughing in congress with more unsavoury themes like death and starvation. Likewise, topics like September Eleventh in Stewart Lee's *Stand-Up Comedian* routine must have had a similar effect.[42]

Quirk stipulates that 'relief theory' follows the principle that laughter is a release of energy. Referring to both Spencer (1987) and Freud (1960), Quirk highlights that this can create relief either from fear, or by breaking convention.[43] In other words, laughter is a form of catharsis.[44] With Spencer's approach, we will see examples of tragic emotions released. This could be through the blend of comedy and tragedy in Homeric epic or the parody of tragic themes that Aristophanes' makes 'ridiculous' in his political

[41] Quirk (2015a: 21).
[42] Lee, *Stand-Up Comedian* (00:02:26-00:10:39).
[43] Quirk (2015a: 21-22). See also Spencer (1987: 99-110) and Freud (1960: 118-119).
[44] See also Carr and Greeves (2007: 22).

plays.[45] Likewise, Freud's theory sees laughter break cultural 'barriers'.[46] In the case of my own work, this will resemble the comic stage as a safe space. This is an idea explored by Quirk, where she stipulates that the stand-up comedian requires a 'comic licence'. this is an 'abstract safe space in which jokers can operate outside of the restrictions which govern most regular interaction'.[47] Applying this idea to ancient comic sources, I will show how figures like Juvenal emphasise un-Roman behaviours like Greek theatre, as well as allowing his audience to indulge in stories with unfavourable themes like adultery in *Satire* Six.

It is now worth highlighting an important observation by Lowe, which is that classicists studying ancient humour, have often had a wary relationship with 'humour theory', Halliwell and Beard being great example of this.[48] Lowe (2020) points out that this is likely down to a few reasons, including: their primary focus is on laughter as opposed to humour, their history of avoiding tidy models and narratives and finally, how 'humour theory' is often unable to adequately describe 'the gelotogenic properties of ancient texts'.[49] Lowe, however, shows how humour theory could be applied to Aristophanic comedy. In addition, he does this by using *Acharnians* as a key example, as he looks at a line within the play's prologue, its comic beats and how the dynamics between audiences and comic performance are realised within the first stages of a comic play.[50]

[45] For this idea of turning fear into ridiculousness, see Quirk (2015a: 24) and Spencer (1987: 107-107).
[46] Freud (1960: 118-119), as quoted by Quirk (2015a: 20-21).
[47] Quirk (2015a: 36). See also Quirk's chapter on the 'safe space' in *Why Stand-Up Matters* (2015a: 36-62) and her section on 'comic licence', which uses Stewart Lee as a case-study (Quirk 2015a: 107-116).
[48] Lowe (2020: 13).
[49] Lowe (2020: 13). See Lowe's chapter on humour theory and how it can be applied to (2020: 13-22).
[50] See Lowe's analysis of Acharnians' prologue (2020: 18-22).

1.2.a: ANCIENT LAUGHTER

> If one is investigating the subject of laughter in the ancient world, there can surely be few better informants than one who practised with great success the art of arousing it.
>
> Sommerstein (2009: 104)

Sommerstein's above comment comes from a specific focus on Aristophanic laughter, but it still rings true to my own wider exploration of ancient laughter in archaic Greek texts, classical theatre as a whole and Roman verse satire.[51] As these will be the focus of my own analysis, I will now introduce some notable figures who have approached the topics of Greek and Roman Laughter and how these will relate to my own analysis.[52]

Halliwell (2008) will prove to be one of my most important secondary resources on Greek laughter. As one of the most comprehensive analyses on this subject to date, I will primarily reference his work *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (2008). Within this work, Halliwell opens up a broad enquiry into the perception of laughter within the ancient Greek world. For instance, within Halliwell's introduction, he ponders whether ancient Greek laughter was seen as an animal instinct, or a sharing of divine characteristics, as well as the possibly for both.[53] As is to be expected from a study that ranges from Homer to early Christianity, Halliwell covers a lot of ground. Yet, most important to my own research will be his exploration

[51] Within his analysis of Aristophanic comedy, Sommerstein sheds great significance on ways in which laughter would have been perceived and utilised within the ancient world. For instance, laughter within the textual evidence of Old Comedy could fall within parameters of a simple smile, or escalate to the belly laughs of Heracles in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 39-43; See Sommerstein (2009: 104-105).
[52] For a broader understanding of in ancient comedy, see Silk (2000). For a comprehensive breakdown on scholarship into ancient comedy, see Lowe (2007), including those from antiquity (2007:12-14).
[53] Halliwell (2008:1). Laughter in animals is a well research phenomenon and still features in various explanations of laughter as a response. See for example, Carr and Greeves (2007: 15-38).

of ancient Greek theory and practice of laughter, as it is staged within Homeric texts and the Classical stage.

I am drawn to Halliwell's work on the ethics of laughter in early archaic Greece and I am particularly drawn to his approach on 'pathos and bloodlust' within these Homeric texts.[54] In doing so, Halliwell addresses the harsher tones that could include laughter, for instance the mockery of Thersites in *Iliad* 2.[55] Furthermore, he distinguishes the morality between mortal and divine laughter, which is most useful for the celestial comic episodes I have chosen for my first chapter.[56] By exploring these moments of deceptive and bitter scenes, I will also show how performance themes allow for farcical parallels between the gods and the tragic content that makes up more of these texts. Audiences are encouraged to laugh at these key moments, but the trick lies in this switch, where the echoes of laughter make the tragedy all the more potent.

I will also consider how Halliwell addresses laughter within the confines of classical theatre. Within Chapter Three, this will be utilised in the examination of how laughter can facilitate the divine worship of Dionysus. Halliwell's chapter on 'Ritual Laughter and the Renewal of Life' offers particular consideration on how the gods could be worshipped through laughter.[57] I will show how the tragic play *Bacchae* and the comic play *Frogs* are extensions of Dionysian festivity within their own genres. Part of this will be to return to the seemingly pitiless comedy found in epic scenes like Dionysus tricking Hephaestus and the pirates in *Homeric Hymns I* and *VII to Dionysus*. As a

[54] Halliwell (2008: 51-7).
[55] *Iliad* 2.65- 71. Halliwell (2008: 51, 63, 69 - 77).
[56] Halliwell (2008: 53, 58, 60-69).
[57] Halliwell (2008: 155-160).

result, I will be able to consider how laughter in *Bacchae* shares in this crueller trend of divine mockery and pre-existing Dionysian themes, but within distinctly meta-theatrical tropes like costume and intertextuality befitting of the god of drama. I will also show how *Frogs* responds to similar ideas of Dionysian worship, but through a self-referential laughter directed at the god's own character. Part of this exploration will be to show how audience laughter can facilitate this seeming contradiction of worship.

Halliwell also argues for the case that 'Old Comedy can be regarded as akin to, perhaps even a sort of offshoot from, ritual laughter'.[58] For instance, themes of 'intent' and 'shamelessness' are facilitated by the polis through communal experiences like the Dionysian festivals.[59] Halliwell also looks at the relationship between laughter and shameful speech. In his chapter 'Aischrology, shame and Old Comedy', Halliwell recognises the cultural complexities that surround this idea of shame and any implications of laughter. Here, he stipulates that 'Laughter itself … stands in an oscillating relationship to shame, and therefore to 'shameful' speech. It can focus shame on others, operating as a powerful medium of public ridicule and humiliation. If ill-judged, however, it can bring shame on the one who laughs'.[60] Within Chapter Four, I will show how this is true of the serious-comedy explored with Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, *Knight* and *Wasps*. In particular, I will reflect on Halliwell's analysis of *Knights*, as the character of the Sausage-Seller is humorous in their shame, but is flipped and shown to be a model citizen, thus reminding audiences of the real shame that exists outside of the theatre.[61]

[58] Halliwell (2008: 216).
[59] Halliwell (2008: 216 - 262).
[60] Halliwell (2008: 216).
[61] Halliwell (200: 262).

In addition to Halliwell's comprehensive assessment of Greek laughter, Sommerstein also argues for three main types within Aristophanic comedy. Of these three, 'provoked laughter' can show an individual benefit directly from the comedy they witness, whereas 'victimless' laughter' is a response that is not at the expense of any individual.[62] The one that I will be drawn to again and again is Sommerstein's approach to 'laughter of derision'.[63] Here, laughter takes effect at the expense of someone else and therefore has similarities to the much earlier Homeric tradition, but also presents itself in every chapter and thus, every time period that follows.

In Chapter Five I will need to move on to consider Roman laughter and its wider implications within my own research. By looking at Beard's *Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling and Cracking Up* (2014), we can see a number of key issues concerning the power dynamics of Roman laughter.[64] I will start with Beard's over-arching question 'How comprehensible, in any terms, can Roman laughter now be?'[65]

> There is a danger that the question "What makes Romans laugh?" might be converted, by an act of spurious empathy, into the question "What do I think would have made me laugh, if I were a Roman?"
>
> Beard (2014: 18)

As Beard observes in it is not enough to simply try and understand what Romans found funny. As twenty-first century readers, we cannot fully achieve this anyway.[66] Rather, it is important to consider how laughter was comprehended by the Romans

[62] Sommerstein (2009: 105, 107 and 111-12).
[63] Sommerstein (2009: 107).
[64] Beard (2014: 17).
[65] Beard (2014: 18).
[66] We should also be wary of turning Roman laughter into an extension of ourselves. After all, successful understanding of Roman laughter is not always achievable (Beard 2014: 18).

themselves. [67] For instance, Beard highlights both Cicero and Pliny for their interest in the mysteries behind Roman laughter, while Galen seemed equally defeated in his attempts to understand it.[68] What is evident from Beard's assessment of Roman Laughter, is that she regards it as essentially '*messy'* by nature. Furthermore, she argues that any attempt to 'tidy it up' only serves to create oversimplifications.[69]

Within my own research, this approach to Roman laughter will be prevalent as I reflect on the satire that Juvenal evokes for his elite audiences. Here, I will address the delicate relationship between audience and satirist, as it is always one of balance. When uninvited, audience laughter is chaotic, or as Beard puts it 'an unruly force'.[70] After all, while a comic performer may enjoy their own humour, their goal is ultimately to make others laugh.[71] Without that laughter, comedy ceases to be comic.[72] Yet, a level of control is always required, so that this laughter does not turn against the comedian, as it appears to do with some of my archaic examples, like Hephaestus in *Odyssey* 8 and Thersites in *Iliad* 2.[73]

1.2.b: LAUGHTER IN STAND-UP COMEDY

With the above considerations for ancient Greek and Roman laughter, I want to now move on to address the specific parameters of this response within a contemporary stand-up comedy setting. As I have already expressed, laughter, both ancient and

[67] Beard (2014: 14).
[68] Beard (2014: 23).
[69] Beard (2014: x).
[70] Beard (2014: 5).
[71] Sommerstein (2009: 106).
[72] See Halliwell (2014: 189) and Propp (2009: 11).
[73] See Chapter Three sections 2.1 and 2.3.

modern, is often unique to the circumstances within which it is engaged. Stand-up comedy is no different.

Starting with Quirk (2015a), she reflects on differences in laughter that various stand-up routines may experience. For instance, an audience member chuckling, is not the same as a big laughter response from a crowd. Quirk also stipulates that while such variations could be considered subjective, they say a lot about how stand-up material is received by any given audience.[74] In addition, Quirk emphasises differences in audience size and characteristics when considering stand-up laughter as a response.[75] One comedian may perform at a packed stadium, while another could have a hand full of spectators in a small pub.[76] In such circumstances, the differences in the laughter they would receive is inevitable. Instead, Quirk states that it is better to assess stand-up laughter 'in a way that accurately communicates their contribution to the exchange in which they occur'.[77]

The space in which stand-up audiences reside can also affect how much they laugh.[78] Quirk's analysis on 'how the [stand-up] venue manipulates', brings in more traditional theatre ideas around 'good' and 'bad' performance space.[79] Typical stand-up venues include small bars/pubs and often underground spaces with limited room. In one sense, they may seem counterproductive, as fewer audience members and even

[74] Quirk (2015a: 9).
[75] Quirk uses the examples of comedians Robert Newman and Jason Byrne (Quirk 2015a: 9).
[76] Although, a more traditional setting for a stand-up gig is the latter, with Double (2014) suggesting that stand-up comedy has its origins from the tavern style set up of British music halls in the 1850's (2014: 35 and 40-41).
[77] Quirk (2015a: 9).
[78] Quirk (2015a: 3).
[79] Quirk (2015a: 70).

irritable ones, could reduce a pleasant experience that evokes laughter. Yet, it also means empty spaces are more likely to be filled. Likewise, it encourages audiences into 'packed' spaces. This may be more uncomfortable, but close proximity with each other means audiences are more likely to react off of each other and expel excess energy derived from discomfort.[80]

Nonetheless, we cannot fail to see some principles of laughter for stand-up comedy, is comparative to comic performers across the board. For instance, Smith points out in *Comedy and Critique* (2018) that 'laughter is the professional jurisdiction of the stand-up comedian'.[81] Double (2014), also refers to the techniques of a comedian that must come from experience.[82] Like Aristophanes and Juvenal, Stewart Lee is a comic by trade, therefore laughter is key to his engagement with an audience and part of that is to make them more active in a shared experience. Part of that is the audience looking to comedians for guidance. In particular, the guidance on what is funny and when to laugh. [83]

Double (2014) recognises the comedian's skill in correcting audience response when needed. It is true that laughter is the audience's prerogative, but there are subtle gestures that a comedian can make to guide this particular response. For instance, a comedian might challenge their audience in a way that is incorporated into the

[80] Quirk (2015a: 67-68).
[81] Smith (2018: 43). See Smith's chapter 'The Professionalisation of Stand-Up Comedy' (2018: 43-74).
[82] Double refers to existing discussions on whether comedians can be taught or not. His view is that a comedian does not come fully formed, but rather they learn on the job - including from bad gigs early in their career (Double 2014: 2), as well as from more seasoned comedians and agents (Double 2014: 2). Then there are acting schools and comic academia (Double 2014: 7-12).
[83] Quirk (2015a: 65).

exchange.[84] As a result, both Double and Quirk refer to stand-up comedy as a form of 'crowd control'. Quirk explains this further as a comedian is individual who must get 'a group of strangers to behave a certain way'.[85] That behaviour is more often than not to make audiences laugh. Although, as we will see in the following section, laughter can be more than the end goal, it can be a tool for 'serious comedy'.

1.3: SERIOUS COMEDY

> Billy Connolly: More people should listen to comedians and fewer people should listen to politicians. You should listen to comedians and poets. They're telling the truth.
>
> Interviewer: So any politicians in particular that we should be ignoring at the moment?
>
> Billy Connolly:
> Boris. Anyone who listens to Boris needs professional help.
> Interviewer: Because?
>
> Billy Connolly**:**
> Because he's a big silly toff and Britain has been listening to big silly toffs for years. It's time they listened to themselves and got on with it.
>
> Sky Interview, Billy Connolly (March 2020, 00:04:44 – 00:05:18)

This extract from Billy Connolly encapsulates the fundamental blurring of boundaries between political truth and comedy. Within the context of my thesis, this is what I mean by 'serious comedy'. Specifically, it plays on first establishing a sense of trust between performer and their audiences, but Connolly's final statement also suggests that comedians are an extension of their audience with the line 'It's time they listened to themselves and got on with it'.

[84] Double offers examples, such as a comedian making a joke at the expense of an audience / audience member that does not laugh, or laughing when they are not meant to (2014: 198-199).
[85] Quirk (2015a: 13).

It is true that comedy has often been treated like tragedy's less important cousin and those studying comic performance are often faced with cynicism.[86] Lowe (2007) also recognises that despite the study of humour being an exciting one, many have regarded it as 'impervious to analysis'.[87] Nevertheless, the implication of the above statement, from a retired stand-up comedian like Connolly, is that comedy serves a social or political purpose beyond making people laugh; more accurately, laughter can hold political and social implication beyond the initial brief response.[88] Therefore, it is a phenomenon worth looking at in more depth. Quirk (2015a) for instance, addresses this with the phrase 'influence'. Within her analysis of stand-up comedian practice, she regards this as 'any ongoing alteration in the beliefs, attitudes or behaviour of audience members that continues after they leave the gig'.[89] So, what are the implications and consequences of this additional relationship between a comic and an audience?

At various points within this thesis, I will use the phrase 'consensual trickery' to address a distinct blend of comic misdirection that exists between comic performers and their audiences. This is all with the express intention to invoke laughter.[90] Why laughter is desired in these instances, both from the performer and from their audience, offers much more complex questions around the fluid power dynamics between the two. For instance, audiences will seek out a comic performer that they are familiar with and

[86] On cynicism to stand-up comedy studies, see Double (2014: 1) and Quirk (2015a: 9).
[87] Lowe refers to the regular assumption that humour is lost when a joke is taken apart. He recognises, however, that this is not the case. Rather, Lowe states that it is through an appreciation of comedy and comic practices that we can experience its 'funniness and as a work of artifice' (Lowe 2007: 12). See also Swallow (2020), who says that dissecting comedy is not an action to kill it, but to understand what makes it work (2020: 1).
[88] See also Brady (2022), who recognises a 'politics of antagonism' within stand-up comedy. In particular, he addresses the idea of 'speaking truth to power' (2022: 191).
[89] Quirk (2015a: 2).
[90] For a similar observations, see Dean (2000: 2-3) and Quirk (2015a: 35).

know will challenge / engage them in ways they enjoy. Yet, laughter is also a natural surprise response. A joke is less funny if you know the punchline before it is said. Therefore, a level of unawareness, or misdirection is needed and even desired as part of the experience. I will argue that comic audiences seek out opportunities to laugh and in doing so, consent to the moments of trickery that facilitate it.[91]

However, comic performance is not a one way street. As will be reiterated throughout this thesis, a performer does not simply make an audience laugh. An audience must be willing to laugh in return.[92] This is particularly true when it comes to satirical practice, with a poorly received joke always being a risk to the satirist. As Quirk puts it, 'If we do not agree, we do not laugh'.[93] In Roman satire, for example, it was not enough to abuse a target outright. Whether it was an individual or institution, public shaming came with its own risks.[94] Likewise, Zimmerman (2002) regards the collective identity of the Demos in Old Comedy. He explained that it was not good to mock the Demos, but those who stood apart from it, be it through their wealth or politics.[95] I will now consider how laughter could offer ancient audiences an accessible platform for critical thought, through the unique phenomenon known as *spoudaiogeloion*.[96]

[91] This thesis has some origins from my MA dissertation, in which I explored the idea of the Trickster and its wider implications.
[92] Quirk (2015a: 4).
[93] Quirk (2015a: 4). See also, Quirk's phrasing of then a comedian fails, such as 'dying' on stage. This expresses the uncomfortable atmosphere when a stand-up comedian's joke landing poorly; this is both for the performer and the audience (Quirk 2015a: 13).
[94] Graf (2005: 195). For more on risk to the comic see Chapter Six, in particular section 6.3.b.
[95] Zimmerman (2002: 1).
[96] Giangrande (1972: 8).

1.3.a: SPOUDAIOGELOION

Spoudaiogeloion, otherwise known as serio-comedy, refers to an ancient Greek form of comic expression, performed to entertain audiences through laughter, but also to criticise life via lessons of truth, morality and self-reflection.[97] Halliwell recognises that the term is generally applied to later figures like Menippus of Gadara, but he also states that this is ultimately an uncertain piece of terminology.[98] I will therefore be addressing the role of *spoudaiogeloion* when it comes to my own analysis of Aristophanic comedy, as well as exploring this two-toned comedic expression that inevitably spreads into the Roman satirist Juvenal.[99] To do this, I will employ much of Giangrande's *The Uses of Spoudaiogeloion in Greek and Roman Literature,* which remains one of the leading texts on this topic, despite being published in 1972. Within his analysis, Giangrande reasons that laughter, when used properly, could offer its audiences an accessible means for critical thought.[100]

There have also been questions about the tone of this particular brand of serious comedy, with Halliwell arguing that *spoudaiogeloion* is often regarded by scholars as the 'hallmark of a Cynic tradition of laughter'.[101] Giangrande believing that it belongs to a later comedy, than the often harsher criticisms of Old Comedy.[102] Whereas Halliwell argues that this term is 'intrinsically ambiguous' as it 'might denote being

[97] Giangrande (1972: 8-10, 31, 33). See also Halliwell (2008: 372).
[98] Halliwell acknowledges that the adjective of 'spoudogeloios' was rare, with the term 'spoud(ai)ogeloios' even more so (2008: 372). Not only that but Halliwell recognises that 'serio-comedy' is present as early as *Odyssey* 8; as Hephaestus' anguish blends with the gods' laughter, making the episode suitably 'uncertain in tone'. On Homeric serio-comedy, see Halliwell (2008: 85).
[99] See Giangrande for a variety of *spoudaiogeloion* in literary and performative platforms including *ainos* / fables, *chreia* / exempla, mime, *charaktêrismos* / character and parody; ancient serious comedy had many ways to interact with Greek and Roman audiences (Giangrande 1972: 19-31). See also Ferriss-Hill for reference to *spoudaiogeloion* from Homer, to Roman satire (2015: 28, n.107 and 29).
[100] Giangrande (1972: 8).
[101] Halliwell (2008: 372).
[102] Giangrande (9, 15, 19, 33-5).

serious about/in laughter, or laughing about things that are supposed to be serious, or fluctuating in tone between playfulness and earnestness'.[103] Nevertheless, while Giangrande argued that *spoudaiogeloion* became a 'formally' established genre after the Cynic Crates of Thebes, Giangrande also argues that there is evidence of ethical comedy explored within the earlier works of Plato's *Laws*, as well as Aristophanes' *Frogs*. [104] Likewise, this 'serious comedy' transfers to Rome, with Giangrande stating that it offered 'genuine criticism of life, society, or institutions, whether it touches on literary … mythical, political or professional matters'.[105]

It is also worth noting that while there is a great deal of academic interest in the political and social mechanics of ancient comedy, there is a surprising lack of discussion of *spoudaiogeloion* in modern research.[106] This is why the prominent work of Giangrande is so important. I will reflect on his work, to see how serious comedy offers an opportunity for performers to engage spectators through a paradox of 'consensual trickery'. By using a similar structure to Giangrande's first chapter on *'*Greek epic, Greek satire and Greek comedy', I will compare how 'serious comedy' was used to interact with different ancient audiences. In doing so, I will reflect on how it took root in Homeric tradition, flourished in classical theatre, shared similarities with Roman satirical practice and even within the present-day contemporary alternative comedy.[107]

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[103] Halliwell (2008: 372).
[104] See Giangrande for references to contemporary philosophers that also saw the potential in laughter to tackle immoralities. These included: Bion of Borysthenes, Diogenes of Sinope and Timon of Philius, (1972: 9). For Plato (*Laws*: 816d-e). In *Frogs*, see 391-2. See Giangrande (1972: 9-10 and 33-4).
[105] Giangrande (1972: 31).
[106] Although there are exceptions, for example Ercolani (2002), who has edited a collection of works on the subject of *spoudaiogeloion* and mockery in Aristophanes' comedies. This includes chapters by: Zimmerman (1-2), Schwinge (3-44), Eire (45-70), Kloss (71-88), Napolitano (89-104), Mann (105-124), Sommerstein (125-146), Stark (147-168), Bierl (169-188), Baier (189-204), Mastromarco (205-224), Ercolani (225-254), Brockmann (255-272), Andrisano (273-298), Möllendorff (299-316), Bagordo (317-326), Auhagen (327-344) and Gelzer (345-374).
[107] Giangrande (1972: 32).

Starting with Chapters Three and Four, I will reflect on *spoudaiogeloion*, specifically the method of blending tragedy with comedy. In particular, I will go on to argue why I think *spoudaiogeloion* becomes an established part of earlier comic practices within classical theatre. While Giangrande argues that *spoudaiogeloion* was established much later, it is also clear that this earlier and admittedly less kind, practice of serious comedy offered its own important civil identity to an Athenian audiences.[108] Of course, Giangrande's work is not ignorant of this, as he notes that the first fragmentary use of the term *spoudaiogeloion* can be found in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.[109] He also notes the serious mindsets of these old comic poets and makes a point of their suggestive potential, such as Aristophanes' use of caricature.[110] Yet, Giangrande seems most comfortable in establishing *spoudaiogeloion* as the kinder laughter of later Cynics, or the forms of joking discussed in Cicero's *De Oratore*.[111]

In Chapter Five, I will also be able to explore Giangrande's exploration of Roman *spoudaiogeloion.* Within this, he offers his readers two different satirical equivalents in Juvenal and Horace. Giangrande argues that the former does not follow the 'kinder' humour that he associates with *spoudaiogeloion*, as Juvenal appears far angrier of the two and tends to alienate his audience.[112] Furthermore, while Giangrande recognises that Juvenal conceals his personality behind simple emotions, he is still less concerned

[108] Giangrande (1972: 17, 33-4 and 36).
[109] *Frogs* 389-90.
[110] Giangrande (1972: 77).
[111] Giangrande (1972: 9, and 37); Cicero, *De Oratore*: 2.250. See also 2.248.
[112] Giangrande (1972: 109).

with the dramatic skill of the satirist's persona and only regards Juvenal's work as approaching *spoudaiogeloion* with a mellowing style in *Satire* Twelve and onwards.[113] What is clear is that skilled use of *spoudaiogeloion* was a suggestive force and therefore a deceptive comic space.[114]

Therefore, despite this theory of an ethical comedy that was less harsh then my earlier Greek examples, *spoudaiogeloion* has deceptive qualities that cannot be risk-free.[115] By this I am referring to possible negative responses from audiences. We can also consider how audiences maintained an equal power of control in the success of this 'serious comedy'. Be it playwrights, actors or Roman satirical poets, it was not enough to simply abuse a target outright. To attack or shame either an individual or an institution, came with its own risks.[116] In all of my case-studies, audiences could turn against a performer, as they in turn feel attacked.[117] Although, it is within these earlier forms of serious comedy that I can introduce the lucrative tool of s*poudaiogeloion,* which maintained this important deception of a comic space.[118] Next, I will look at another ancient comic art form, this time satire. While I have already highlighted that satire can be a form of s*poudaiogeloion* above, this next section will consider the implications of this other phrase for serious comedy within this thesis.

[113] Giangrande (1972: 109-12 and 119). Giangrande's analysis even suggests that he believes Juvenal's 'anger' as a true reflection of the author, by stating 'he lacked that happy combination of the serio-comic' (1972: 113). In contrast, Giangrande also regards Horace as the 'most felicitous exponent of *spoudaiogeloion*'. This is because Horace offers audiences a better life through a 'spirit of geniality and tolerance' (1972: 121). See also Giangrande (1972: 109).
[114] Giangrande (1972: 10-11, 15 and 78).
[115] Giangrande (1972: 78).
[116] Graf (2005: 195)
[117] Giangrande (1972: 78).
[118] Giangrande (1972: 10-11, 15 and 78).

1.3.b: SATIRE

> What is Satire? How can we define it? Is it a weapon for radical change or fundamentally conservative?
>
> Gilmore (2018: viii)

Gilmore asks his own preliminary questions on the nature and terminology of satire.[119] Scholars such as Griffin and Quintero (2007), also tackle this issue of definition by choosing to instead broaden the term.[120] For instance, Quintero argues that 'no literary genre has a lexicon with more nominal red herrings'.[121] Griffin, on the other hand, states that 'satire comes in many different forms, and because satire often seems a "mode" or a "procedure" rather than a single "genre"'.[122] Nevertheless, working definitions have their place within scholarship and this thesis undoubtedly needs to establish some clarity in its use of the word satire, starting with its Roman credentials.

The ancient scholar Quintilian, famously claimed that Satire was distinctly Roman.[123] It offered ways for civic ideals to be voiced through exempla, parody and even imitation, as well as exposing un-Roman conduct. Conversely, it also allowed Roman citizens to wallow in said 'un-Roman' behaviours, all through its performative narratives.[124] The Roman satirical poet would often work via an offering of themes.[125] Nevertheless, audiences of Roman satire must have suspended their disbelief, but also played along

[119] For similar questions over anti-establishment and reinforcement motifs, but within the specific vein of alternative comedy, see Brady (2022: 189).
[120] See Griffin (1994: 4) and Quintero (2007: 6).
[121] Quintero (2007: 6).
[122] Griffin (1994: 4).
[123] See Quintero (2007: 3). See also Chapter Five section 5.1.a, for the Roman Identity around Satire.
[124] Freudenburg (2005: 9).
[125] See Quintero who argues that this type of satire was a bit of a medley/hodgepodge (2007: 6).

with the performance, while never fully surrendering their judgment or sanity; satirists like Juvenal ultimately rely on this audience dynamic and their shared reasoning.[126]

In contrast to Giangrande's interpretation of a kinder *spoudaiogeloion*, Quintero argues that it is the satirist's job to project their dissent.[127] Satirical comedy often delivers powerful political or social messages within a comedic framework. Quintero also argues that satire demands something from its audiences, in particular, that 'the satirist, either explicitly or implicitly, tries to sway us toward an ideal alternative, toward a condition of what the satirist believes should be'.[128]

Yet Quintero also states that it is not the job of the satirist to offer solutions.[129] Likewise Paulson (1967), suggests that satire demands decisions from its readers, so that they do not just rely on their emotions.[130] Instead, once an audience get the satirical message, or have accepted it through their response of laughter, this same message becomes accepted through the communal experience. Roman satire connects its audience by encouraging them to take a critical view of their society together.

Humour is also a common feature of satire and the response of laughter is its own suggestive force between comic and spectator. Satire can be insulting, but a direct insult is not necessary satire. Suggestion is what makes it funny. For instance, Quintero observes that a satirist may employ fiction for exposing other truths, but they

[126] Quintero (2007: 5).
[127] Quintero (2007: 1).
[128] Quintero (2007: 3 and 7); see also Spacks (1971: 363), as quoted by Quintero (2007: 2-3).
[129] Quintero (2007: 3).
[130] First published in 1967; I am using the 2019 second edition of Paulson's *The Fictions of Satire* (2019: 15).

cannot create falsehoods.[131] Likewise, satire may criticise features that represent the bad behaviour of an individual, rather than an individual outright.[132] We will see this in Chapter Four's analysis of Aristophanes' *Knights*, as it reveals the political turmoil of Athens through a surreal narrative, as well as criticism of the politician Cleon, via the character of Paphlagon.[133]

In my next section, I will show how distinct meta-theatrical moments in ancient and contemporary stand-up comedy can facilitate such satirical messages through the mirroring effect of dramatic self-reflection. Paulson stated that 'as a structure of exposition, *satura* is like a house of mirrors in which one theme (or vice) is reflected over and over, with distortion and variations but without essential change'.[134]

1.4: META-THEATRE

Meta-theatre will play a critical role within this thesis. Therefore, this section will need to consider in more depth the dynamics between comic performances and their audiences, particularly as the boundaries between the two become blurred through comic meta-theatrical exchange. To do this, I will first offer a preliminary background on the subject, followed by a summary of three prominent dramatic devices: 'Mimesis', 'Audience Interaction', and 'Parody'. In studying these features, I will demonstrate how audiences can enjoy being tricked into reflective laughter in a range of self-referential comedic practices. I will start with the early Homeric texts and progress to the

[131] Quintero (2007: 5). The eighteenth century writer Samuel Johnson also argues that there was a difference between satire and lampooning someone. He stated that satire should be generally reflective rather than attack an individual. See Vilmar (2009: 1).
[132] Quintero (2007: 5).
[133] Anderson (1989: 10).
[134] Paulson (1967: 43). See also Quintero (2007: 7).

contemporary British stand-up comedian Stewart Lee. Through the course of this thesis, I will refer to meta-theatrical ways in which my case studies trick their audiences into laughter, through direct and indirect interaction. These examples and their meta-theatrical dynamics, will further reflect my concept of 'consensual trickery'.

Starting with the terminology, meta-theatre's first recognised use of the term is in Lionel Abel's *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (1963), but it has found prominence since then with works like Bertolt Brecht's and his famous 'Verfremdungseffekt'.[135] As a result, the term meta-theatre has had numerous, sometimes conflicting academic interpretations. It is helpful to first point out that like many terms with the prefix of 'meta', we are dealing with a concept that is in some way self-aware. This thesis will inevitably follow the same line of thinking. Specifically, I will be addressing self-aware moments within comic performances that in some way reflect, or reference, typical dramatic characteristics.[136]

> The term metatheatre has evolved in theatrical studies to generally describe the moves playwrights make to draw attention to their play's status as a theatrical construct, regardless of whatever other motives might accompany these moves (e.g. promoting audience participation in the spectacle, reminding an audience that a play represents its own social experience, etc.).
>
> Christenson (2019: 136)

Despite Christenson's statement ringing true in many ways, I will not only apply meta-theatre to a more conventional understanding of theatre, by this I mean actors on stage

[135] See also Slater (2002: 1). For more about Brecht's meta-theatrical theories; see the Bloomsbury Revelations edition of *Brecht on Theatre* (2018).
[136] See also Paillard and Milanezi (2021), who stipulate that the term is often regarded as synonymous with 'a self-reflexive tendency in which the text of a drama clarifies its status as a dramatic production' (Paillard and Milanezi 2021: 1).

performing a scripted play to a select audience. I will additionally widen these parameters to various forms of performative practices. Selected archaic sources, for example, may be considered 'pre-dramatic' as they predate Greek tragedy and Old Comedy. Likewise, I will include the often anti-theatrical readings of Juvenal and his recited Satires. Yet, despite these two examples not following a typical theatrical framework, performative themes still saturate these respective works.

Yet, a wide-reaching classification, even within the world of theatre, comes with its own problems. This is made clear by Thumiger (2009), who points out that ideas such as 'self' and 'aware' can vary considerably from person to person.[137] What is more, Thumiger is of the opinion that previous scholarship has allowed the definition of meta-theatre to go unquestioned and therefore this fluid theatrical experience has been neglected.[138] Similarly, Ruffell (2012) argues that this broad inclusivity of meaning makes it 'increasingly difficult to establish what exactly meta-anything amounts to'.[139] Christenson (2019) agrees with the problems of an all-encompassing definition regards the 'tag' of meta-theatre as a cause of linguistic difficulty.[140]

Thumiger states that the use of the term meta-theatre for ancient performance has at times been seen as anachronistic.[141] Certainly, we should always remain aware of important distinctions between ancient and contemporary meta-theatrical practice. For instance, the well-known phrase 'breaking the fourth wall' has theatrical origins, but is

[137] Thumiger (2009:13).
[138] Thumiger (2009: 2-3).
[139] Ruffell (2011: 215).
[140] Christenson (2019: 136).
[141] Thumiger (2009: 18).

now a common motif in film.[142] In theatre, the fourth wall is an invisible barrier between the audience and the performance, so 'breaking the fourth wall' is a direct response to this by challenging ideas of realism with various forms of meta-theatre.[143] This term, however, does not easily apply to the ancient Greek or Roman stage. Slater highlights that the issue is with the word 'breaking'. For instance, Old Comedy relies on pockets of pseudo-realism, so there is no breaking if it is the intention all along.[144] Furthermore, Ruffell argues that Athenian Old Comedy is more 'self-aware' in theatrical status than any modern theatre. He also states, however, that Old Comedy should be considered within the wider remits of meta-fictionality.[145]

Yet, there is a problem that with this approach, we can become confined by terminology when we should be looking at the bigger picture. The method of looking at examples of self-aware theatre may be new, but the concept in itself is not. This is why scholars like Thumiger and Christenson still recognise the need to reflect on the applications of ancient meta-theatrical material, with the latter stating that 'there seems to be no advantage in jettisoning the term metatheatre altogether'.[146] For the present study, meta-theatrical features have proven to be key to the dynamics of laughter that I am aiming to analyse. The performer/satirist/comedian's self-aware, or 'knowing', communication with the audience is a key ingredient in their relationship with said audience, and thus in the dynamics of their comedy.

[142] Brown (2012).
[143] Slater (2002: 3).
[144] Slater (2002: 3).
[145] Ruffell (2012: 3).
[146] Christenson (2019: 136) and Thumiger (2009:20).

Thumiger refers to the various practices within the umbrella term of meta-theatre as 'epic devices'. Taken from Jestrovie's definition, it shares similarities with Bertolt Brecht's terminology of 'Epic Theatre'.[147] Thumiger's devices nicely break down the different ways that meta-theatre can manifest within ancient and modern theatre. Within my own research, I will also consider these as 'devices', with a particular focus on mimesis, direct address and parody.[148] Within these parameters, we will also come across more specific motifs like costume, personae, props, performance-within-performance, prologues, epilogues, asides and intertextuality.[149] All of these offer some form of interaction between the spectator and the stage.

1.4.a: MIMESIS. COSTUME AND PERSONAE

> Paradoxically, costume, stage properties, and effects, the most concrete parts of a comic performance, provide us with examples of both the subtlest and the most blatant kinds of metatheatre
>
> Slater (2002: 15)

While mimesis is not necessarily considered meta-theatrical within its own right, its presence within performance can create key opportunities for self-reflective humour. Hughes (2012) refers to mimesis as a 'compound' that can reflect an 'array of associated arts'.[150] Likewise, according to Gebauer and Wulf (1995), the Greek term *mimesis* is often regarded as meaning 'imitation' or 'aesthetics', but within these definitions, there are also many nuances that are overlooked.[151] So, although mimesis

[147] Thumiger (2009: 25).
[148] Thumiger (2009: 25). Although, Thumiger also highlights that certain epic devices, like direct address, can have very different psychic responses to these other methods I have highlighted (2009:26).
[149] Thumiger (2009:25).
[150] Hughes (2012: 1).
[151] Gebauer and Wulf (1995: 1).

can mean a multitude of dramatic effects, my own research will primarily look at its application through the use of costume and persona. Such examples will include Aristophanes' exploration of absurdist costume in both *Frogs* and *Acharnians*, as they parody both tragedy and epic traditions. I will also look at additional ways in which performance can be imitated, such as mimicry in the trial scene of *Wasps*. As well as this the role of satirical personae, often used by Juvenal and Stewart Lee, both entices and breaks dramatic illusion.

So, starting with costume, what makes it a component of mimesis? Within this thesis, the use of costume will appear in a much more fluid sense than that of typical contemporary understandings of the term. Much like the Greek word *σκευή*, my use of the term costume will reference anything from clothing and even a lack of it, to props and masks on stage.[152] All of these items in their own respect imitate the dramatic arts, but in my case studies, they exist as a comic tool for audiences to remind them of their own engagement with the comic performance they are watching. So, if mimesis is a representation or imitation of a character, then costume is one aspect of that performance in which it is achieved. Furthermore, costume can create key comic material within a performance, as well as acting as another word for disguise.[153] This will prove to be both literal and figurative with the satirist's persona in Chapter's Five and Six. Nevertheless, it will also become apparent from as early as Chapter Two, wherein Hera's staged persona through an exaggerated version of herself will reflect on the deceptive use of costume, beyond its typically dramatic context.

[152] Slater (2002: 16).
[153] See Double (2014) for more on the importance of costume with the stand-up comedian's comic material (2014: 146 -156).

Despite all of this, Slater is right to point out that costume can only occasionally become meta-theatrical within its own right; a more important feature is often the action of putting on or taking it off.[154] To some extent, we will see this with the actions of figures like Hera and Messalina, as the meta-theatrical moment comes from the actions of putting on or the taking off of clothing. A clash of costumes can also create an equally meta-theatrical effect, for example, Chapter Three's analysis will show the contrasting of Dionysian and Herculean costume in *Frogs* and *Acharnians'* parody of Euripides' beggar costume in Chapter Four.[155] Such moments shift the costume into active material for the performance. Both emphasise the role of costume within their respective works and the fact that these are poor imitations of their counterparts and comically' bad in their own right, only serve to stress that this a gag which the audience can recognise and to which they can respond .

This is also where mimesis joins the more abstract idea of persona. For example, I will use phrasing like the 'satirist's mask' to covey more than just ancient Greek costumes and props, but also to reference when stage personalities are presented to an audience.[156] Smith (2018), however, argues that a comedian's persona is 'unlike theatrical personae'. He reasons that masks for the stage are different to the comedian's often heightened version of self, the latter being more indirect performance.[157] So, why is persona a key feature of my own analysis into mimesis?

[154] Slater (2002: 16).
[155] Slater (2002: 16).
[156] See also Wiles (2007), who states 'I shall look at the mask not as an *object* manipulated by humans but as an *agent* engaged in a set of transactions' (Wiles 2007: 5). While he is primarily looking at how masks convey ideas of 'transition' in vase paintings, it is still worth highlighting here this similar approach to ancient masks representing more than just an object.
[157] Smith (2018: 39). See Smith's chapter on the stand-up comedian persona (Smith 2018: 109-132). Also see Quirk (2015a: 129-148).

Within my ancient case-studies, persona will appear in the form of Hera playing 'up' to her role of Zeus' wife, or Hephaestus' emphasising his image of the disabled god. Likewise, I will be addressing the dramatisation of the Dionysian persona, as it is presented differently in tragedy and comedy. Yet, most notable within my research will be the satirist's persona, as it is presented in Juvenal's 'mask' of Lucilius and Stewart Lee's 'mask' of the alternative comedian.

Another important feature of the comedic stage persona, is that it facilitates other dramatic elements for a comic performer. For instance, Juvenal's character of the satirist creates a narrative structure that holds the author's other dramatic voices together. Oliver Double points out an almost identical pattern in stand-up comedy, but states that this transition of narrator to character has no set terminology. Judy Carter calls it 'mimicking', Tony Allen names it 'snapshot characterisation' and Oliver Double coined it 'instant character'.[158] Furthermore. Oliver states that this is a very common method of performance within stand-up comedy, as it replicates the type of mimicry performance that an individual can jump into while within a conversation.[159]

> The persona is clearly manipulative in that it is a skilful presentation of the performer's personality that controls perception in order to direct the audience's interpretation and facilitate the gag.
>
> Quirk (2015: 131)

Finally, it is useful to consider Quirk's above quote, as it nicely emphasises the importance of deceptive control in a comedian's projection of a persona and indeed

[158] Double (2014:393).
[159] Double (2014: 393-4).

the response of a receptive audience.[160] In her breakdown, Quirk uses the aggressive persona of the comedian Nick Helm in contrast to the awkward persona of the comedian Dan Atkinson.[161] Both examples force their audience to interact with their comedy in a carefully crafted structure.[162] This is a further reminder that a receptive audience is vital for a comedian's success and that any control remains conditional at best.

1.4.b: AUDIENCE INTERACTION

> All drama is meant to be heard by an audience, so that there is a sense in which any utterance in a play may be called audience address.
>
> Bain (1975: 13)

Brain's above observation emphasises once again a board concept that can be interpreted many ways. This time it is the phrase audience address.[163] Within this thesis, however, there are varying levels of direct interaction with audience, from '*perceived spontaneity*' to moments of active dialogue.[164] Such variations will exist within my own case-studies, as I will address audience interaction that include the subtle workings of exposition, as well as more direct address with the inclusion of audience participation. In doing so, I show how these variations of audience interaction can facilitate my wider approach to meta-theatrical comedy and its subsequent laughter.

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[160] Quirk (2015a: 94).
[161] Quirk (2015a: 93-94).
[162] Quirk (2015a: 91-94). It is worth pointing out that Atkinson is also aware of his reliance on an audience who are open to this exchange in the first place (Quirk 2015: 91).
[163] See Rengel for a counter approach, as he argues that not all drama is meta-theatre (2017: 148).
[164] See Quirk for more on perceived spontaneity within stand-up comedy (2015a: 77 and 82).

A large feature of my approach will be the illusionary quality to direct address within my case-studies. In Old Comedy, an obvious point in which audiences may feel directly addressed is the parabasis, but I will also show more specific instances when spectators are singled out, such as: the asides in *Frogs*, as well as apparent direct communication in the prologues of *Knights* and *Wasps*.[165] With Juvenal, we will also see a comic who turns his audience into active characters through perceived dialogue and the illusion of conversation. Then with Stewart Lee, we will find that direct address is key to his stand-up comic style. Like the examples of perceived communication in *Knights* and *Wasps*, Lee's interaction with his audience is highly controlled, yet Quirk recognises that these same audiences will likely feel that they are witnessing spontaneity.[166]

Brown points out within his analysis of *Breaking the Fourth Wall: Direct Address in Cinema* (2012), that 'a unifying theory of direct address is neither possible nor desirable'.[167] Quirk, however, looks at controlled response with stand-up which also follows a conversational style.[168] She stipulates that a certain level of awareness and even trust is needed between the two, as well as between different spectators of the same experience.[169] It seems therefore, that there are at least three groups to consider with satirical direct address.

[165] *Knights* 35-40 and *Wasps* 54-40. See Lauriola (2012) for more on the parabasis (2012: 64).
[166] Quirk (2015a: 77 and 82). Quirk also states that even seasoned fans of stand-up comedy will enjoy these moments as if they are spontaneous, even if they know that comedian often follow some sort of script (2015a: 77).
[167] Brown (2012: 1).
[168] Quirk (2015a: 83 and 91-2).
[169] Quirk (2015a: 68-9).

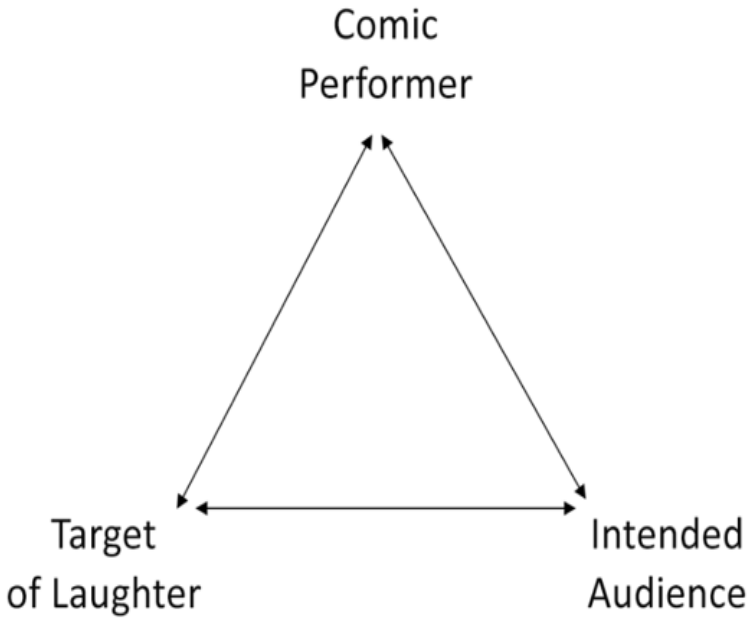

FIGURE 1. SHOWS THE THREE DIRECTIONS THAT AUDIENCE INTERACTION CAN TAKE

The first is the satirist/performer, then there is the collective audience and finally the comic target(s).[170] FIGURE 1 offers a visual aid to the triangular relationship between the three. Over the course of this thesis, I will consider how these three groups may interact and the power dynamics found between them as a result of laughter or failed laughter response.

1.4.c: PARODY

Parody, within the context of my own research, is a key term for referencing moments of intertextuality and mimicry of a comic target. Often assimilated with other phrases like spoof, ridicule and caricature, parody can take many forms and therefore prove an

[170] The comedic target may be an audience member, but they are separated from the rest as a result of being singled out.

attractive subject for scholars of both ancient and contemporary satire.[171] This art also shares similarities with mimeses, as we are once again addressing a form of imitation.[172] These two forms of meta-theatrical practice do often complement each other.[173] Although, I will distinguish the two within this thesis, by referring to parody as a means of conveying an underlying truth; this could be a political or social satire.

Parody has proven to be a very old phenomenon.[174] Margaret Rose (1993) argues that not enough attention is given to its ancient heritage, despite its etymology from the Greek word *παρωδία*.[175] In her assessment of ancient, modern and post-modern parody, she stipulates that there has been a real historical oversight in its definition. This is because it has often been limited to themes such as its comedic aspects, its relationship with parodist / audience, its contextual background, its affiliation to other comedic art forms and its reception.[176] To some degree, I will also be limiting my investigations in this way, as I am primarily interested in parody's meta-theatrical worth. This means that I am drawn to a lot of the themes that Rose emphasises above.

That does not, however, mean I cannot be mindful of its many facets. For instance, Lauriola (2012) also looks at the original *παρωδία,* with the additional emphasis that it could be interpreted as 'beside, near, like, parallel', as well as 'against'.[177] As a result,

[171] Müller (1994: 3). See also Lelièvre (1954: 66).
[172] Lauriola (2012: 84).
[173] See Lauriola for parody as a form of mimesis (2012: 83).
[174] Müller (1994: 3).
[175] Rose (1993: 5). See Rose's introductory chapter on parody (1993: 5-47). Here she has a few key sections to help break down the questions on defining this term. This includes: etymology (6-19), comic features (20-36), reception (36-45), attitudes of the parodist (is it mocking or sympathy?) (45-47), as well as ambiguity in broad / specific parody (47-53).
[176] Rose (1993: 5). See also Lauriola (2012: 83).
[177] Lauriola (2012: 83).

she addresses additional questions of parody in practice. In other words, how can parody be a form of familiarity, as well as one of mockery? Using Aristophanes as an example, Lauriola says that parody can be a form of 'unmasking mimesis', with the playwright mimicking others with the objective to reveal a greater truth.[178] With dramatic rivals like Euripides, Lauriola stipulates that Aristophanes may 'speak like them, to speak against them'.[179]

Likewise, Lauriola refers to parody as an opportunity to 'alert the audience about their deceitful nature – which is the real nature to his eyes. And, in so doing he builds the fabric of his plays'.[180] As we will see in Chapter Four, this last point seems accurate with parody of political figures like Cleon, as well as the mockery of other theatrical practitioners. On the other hand, theatrical targets like Euripides, are not as harshly treated.[181] This is also be true of the baboonish Dionysus in *Frogs*. The parody instead reflects on the audience and their own expectations of the tragedian or the god shown on stage.

Allusivity is a common feature of parody. This is the notion that allusions to other plays and literary texts are a vehicle for meta-theatrical engagement.[182] Another word used for this is 'intertextuality', although it is important to remember this is not the same as parody, despite the two easily blurring together.[183] Rather, Hannoosh (1989)

[178] Lauriola (2012: 84).
[179] Lauriola (2012: 85).
[180] Lauriola (2012: 85).
[181] See Giangrande (1972) on the difference between moderate and violent insult (1972: 78). See also Chapter Four, section 4.2.a.
[182] Thumiger (2009: 34).
[183] Hannoosh (1989: 114).

emphasises parody's reflexive power as 'inherent in the definition … as a comical retelling and transformation of another text, and is demanded by the form itself'.[184] For example, we may consider the fleeting reference to Odysseus and Polyphemus in Aristophanes' *Wasps*. [185] Or the many references to over used jokes at the beginning of *Frogs*.[186] Furthermore, in Juvenal's *Satire* Nine and within Stewart Lee's publication, we will see that this can be self-reflective with both comics parodying their own earlier comic styles.[187]

What is clear from each of my case-studies, is that parody is a device often utilised in a tradition of satirical practice. Although, once again, we must remember that parody does not equal satire. Rose, for example, states that unlike parody, satire does not necessarily need to use of mimicry to convey itself. [188] Nevertheless, Hannoosh states that it is still 'crucial to a thorough understanding of the genre, both in itself and as an agent in the evolution of literary forms'.[189]

CLOSING THOUGHTS:

What will follow now is an analysis into the relationship between comic performers and their audiences, as it appears in examples of pre-dramatic, dramatic and post-dramatic performance. Using meta-theatrical themes like mimesis, audience address and parody, I will reflect on the self-referential style of laughter evoked in my ancient case-studies. This is all

[184] Hannoosh (1989: 113).
[185] *Wasps* 180. See also Alaux (2011) for more on the use of mythic parody on the classical stage (2011: 151).
[186] *Frogs* 1-18.
[187] See in particular section 5.3.b.
[188] Rose (1993: 80-83).
[189] Hannoosh explains that parody is not just art about existing art, instead the parodist must face the scrutiny that they inflict, opening themselves to the same risks of mockery (1989: 114).

with the goal of showing key comparisons to my contemporary study of Stewart Lee and his stage persona.

It is also an objective of this thesis to question whether laughter, as an audience response, is an extension of a satirist's 'serious comedy'. By looking at both ancient and contemporary dynamics of laughter, I will also consider how deceptive a satirist comedy can really be when audiences are tricked into reflecting on themes of tragedy, politics, or morality. This will all come together with the acknowledgment that any tricky nature to a satirist's comedy can only go so far, as audiences expect some level of misdirection and even seek it out through 'consensual trickery'. Therefore, these dynamics between audience and performer are not a one-way exchange and any decision to laugh can be just as definitive to a comic process.

CHAPTER TWO

[STAGING TRICKERY AS COMEDY: *ILIAD* 14 AND *ODYSSEY* 8]

> "Why is the story told?
> What is the teller's mission?
> What is the ultimate source of our deepest intuition?
> Why does the audience come and why did they listen?
> The blind bard's vision."
>
> *Akala's Odyssey* (00:54:14-27)

Devised and performed for a BBC documentary in 2018, the above lyrics are taken from a 'twenty-first century response' to the Homeric *Odyssey.* Written and performed by the Grime artist Akala, it explores how the Homeric tradition inspired writers 'from Virgil and Dante, to Margaret Atwood, James Joyce and Ralph Emerson'.[190] Stubbs (2018), recognises that within this 'Akala … demonstrates that the original oral culture in which Homer's poetry was disseminated wasn't all that different from today's rap battles'.[191] This reminds us that Homeric literature was originally performed in front of an audience and as such, exhibits a performer / spectator relationship that by, modern standards, may appear 'dramatic'.[192] I am particularly drawn to Akala's response, as his questions offer a timeless insight into the nature of audience response, what this may mean for a performer's 'mission' and why Homeric epic is a good early example of this.

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[190] *Akala's Odyssey,* 2018 (00:02:45-49).
[191] Stubbs (2018).
[192] Rutherford (2013) also recognises the oral tradition of these Homeric epics and the predominant themes of performance, transmission and text that have shaped scholarly debate for many years (Rutherford 2013: 23).

A central point of this thesis will be to question what motivates comic authors to be funny; be it epic poet, classical playwright, Roman satirist or an alternative stand-up comedian. Are they trying to fulfil an audience's desire for laughter? Or can said laughter act as a tool for challenging audience response? As will become apparent within this thesis, it is often a murky hybrid of these two ideas. Starting with this chapter, I will share Akala's focus on audience response in Homeric literature, as I look at 'The Deception of Zeus' in *Iliad* 14 and 'Hephaestus' Trap' in *Odyssey* 8.[193] In doing so, these two case-studies will showcase how different examples of divine trickery, facilitate a distinct staging of comedy though the mirroring of 'performance' motifs. All of which, offered Homeric audiences key moments to laugh as an appropriate response.

I will start my initial enquiry with a preliminary review of secondary literature into laughter in Homer. Following this, I will dive into the main body of my research, with my first focus on 'The Deception of Zeus' as a comic interlude within the epic. Furthermore, I will show how Hera's deception holds distinct performative features akin to the goddess creating a script, putting on a costume and learning her lines. Starting with Hera's cunning persona, I will refer to the implications of audiences recognising an amplified version of 'herself' as she parodies her roles as wife, sister and Queen. Moreover, I will compare this with Hera's deceptive speech in *Iliad* 4, as it not only offers its own kind of performance, but also anticipates her role-play in book fourteen. Following this, I will reflect on Hera's use of erotic disguise as a kind of staged trick to get Zeus into bed and off the battlefield. Not only does it mirror almost identical features

[193] *Iliad* 14.153-360 and *Odyssey* 8. 266-365.

from the *Homeric Hymn V. Aphrodite*, but it also shares similarities with Pandora's creation in the Hesiodic corpus; all three examples use costume and props to achieve their respective trickery. Finally, I will consider the comedic potential behind Hera's dramatic sequencing, where audiences witnessed a comic farce within the backdrop of an epic that depicts brutality and war. Within this approach, I will consider what it means for 'The Deception of Zeus' to be sandwiched between otherwise tragic content.

In my second case study, I will show how 'Hephaestus' Trap' in *Odyssey* 8 plays up to laughter as a key response between three different sets of audiences. The first, is the real audience of the poet, second, are those listening to Demodocus' song within the text and third, the Olympian gods who watch Hephaestus' retribution within said song. I will also address how Hephaestus is seen as a comedic figure, particularly when in association with his lame appearance or craftmanship. I will also consider how the god is not in control of the laughter he evokes, as I consider the long-held discrepancy with the terms 'laughable deeds' (ἔργα γελαστὰ) and 'un-funny' (ἔργ' ἀγέλαστα).[194] The ambiguity of his intent will become apparent in my exploration of dialogue within this episode, particularly when addressing the set-up of a joke and the likelihood that it is also at his expense with the dialogue between Apollo and Hermes. Finally, I will address the presentation of Hephaestus' trick as it imitates a literal stage, where the gods remain separate from the 'performers' Aphrodite and Ares, by remaining removed and at the safety of Hephaestus' threshold.

[194] *Odyssey* 8.307. See Dance (2020: 409-10). Those who argue for 'ἔργ' ἀγέλαστα' include Olson (1989: 142.n28), Halliwell (2008: 80.n70) and Bierl (2012: 125) whereas Brown (1989), prefers ἔργα γελαστὰ (1989: 285-6).

Both Hera and Hephaestus are presented in such a way that Homeric audiences witness layers of comedic and serious response that can never really be separated. Here we see something close to the *spoudaiogeloion* that I will explore in Chapter Four. Of course, terms such as 'drama' or 'dramatic' remain problematic when addressing two archaic texts. After all, I will be dealing with a distinctly pre-dramatic age. For instance, instead of conventional actors or theatres, I will be reflecting on the features of a narrator who interwove multiple narratives and mediated speech with action, all into what we now recognise as epic poetry.

As a result, both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have often been considered 'aperspectival'.[195] On the other hand, if we look back to Key (1913), he classified the *Iliad* as 'drama' for its self-interpretive qualities, for instance, it being presented in the present tense and the narrator's descriptive qualities that made them like stage directions.[196] Rosen (2003), also observes that with texts like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, we are dealing with early forms of 'poetic performance'. Yet, he states that one of the great frustrations in studying archaic Greek poetry, is a lack of evidence on its performative context.[197] So, with all this in mind, I will favour the term 'performance' within this chapter. This terminology better reflects these earlier dynamics of audience engagement as well as the subtleties in which they laughed as response. I recognise the pitfalls in comparing epic poetry to 'drama', but also the similarities these text hold with dramatic motifs that we as twenty-first century readers cannot help but see.

[195] The implication is that the perspectives of any characters within epic, are not distinguishable from its narrator. For 'aperspectival' approaches to Homeric text and epic, see Auerbach (1953: 7), Bakhtin (1981: 334-335) and Rabel (1997: 2).
[196] Key (1913: 79-81).
[197] Rosen (2003: 121)

2.1: HOMERIC LAUGHTER

> While in purely quantitative terms laughter does not bulk large in Homeric epic, its appearances in both poems are all highly charged with significance and contribute symbolically to narrative moments which were to remain powerfully resonant for later Greeks.
>
> Halliwell (2008: 51)

As I signposted within this thesis' introduction, Halliwell remains a valuable resource for those exploring the inner workings of Greek laughter. In particular, his work *Greek Laughter: A Study Of Cultural Psychology From Homer To Early Christianity* (2008). For this chapter, I will pay particular attention to his exploration of laughter within Homeric epic. In his section on 'Inside and outside morality: the laughter of Homeric gods and men', Halliwell points out that Homeric laughter spanned across a great range of positive and negative emotions; from intimacy, malice, celebration and even bloodlust. What is more, as the above extract suggests, Halliwell sees the mention of laughter in Homeric epic poetry as a means to intensify these underlying emotions and drive wider tragic narratives forward.[198]

Within the *Iliad*, Halliwell separates four key moments of laughter: these are the combined laughter of the gods in book one, the mockery of Thersites in book two, the familial display between Hector and Andromache in book six and finally, the funeral games in book twenty-one.[199] Noticeably, only his first example deals with my own chapter's focus of representation of divine laughter. That is not to say that Halliwell

[198] Halliwell (2008: 51-3). See also Whissell's research article on the tone of language within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Here she questions whether we can call such epics 'comedies' or 'tragedies'. Her overall suggestion is that the *Iliad* is very much a tragedy of war, whereas the *Odyssey* has 'a much more confusing picture' with more pleasant tones coupled with misfortune (Whissell 2019: 62).
[199] Halliwell (2008: 51).

ignores book fourteen of the *Iliad* completely, after all, he considers Hera's 'malicious smiles' in lines 14.222–3.[200] He also recognises that Hera and Zeus are the only two gods in the *Iliad* who explicitly smile and both do so as 'emblems of their deeply manipulative behaviour'.[201] In the case of Hera, her smile is a consequence of deceiving Aphrodite when performing her false intentions in lines 197-210 .[202] Beyond this, Halliwell also acknowledges that the laughter in book one, amongst the gods, sets a precedent for later divine comic exchanges, like the one between Hera and Zeus.[203] Halliwell does however, share more detailed observations about 'Hephaestus' Trick' in *Odyssey* 8; specifically how laughter facilitates sexual suggestiveness and humiliation.

> The laughter of the gods in Demodocus' song of the adultery of Aphrodite and Ares is not (or so I argued) a moral laughter. In part, at least, it is a form of sexual titillation, mixed with the collective hilarity of the group at the humiliation of two of its members. The scene assigns to laughter an energy or pleasure-flow of its own which seems to ignore the distress and pathos of Hephaestus emphasised by the narrator/singer.
>
> Halliwell (2008: 98)

Like many other academics, Halliwell also recognises that Homeric laughter is often regarded as cruel and unforgiving by twenty-first century readers. Lateiner (1977), also acknowledges that 'laughter in Greek literature is rarely pleasant', although they are focusing on the later works of Herodotus and his approaches to laughter. Nevertheless, Lateiner offers a much earlier Homeric example of Herodotus' idea of laughter in Greek literature as an 'author's weapon'. Using the suitors' laughter within *Odyssey* 18,

[200] Halliwell (2008: 65-7). In his introduction, Halliwell acknowledges that he allowed the term laughter to cover both the actions of laughing and smiling (Halliwell 2008: 7,n.18). See also his Appendix 1, titled 'The Greek (body) language of laughter and smiles' (Halliwell 2008: 520-529).
[201] Halliwell (2008: 65-66).
[202] Halliwell (2008: 66).
[203] Halliwell (2008: 98).

Lateiner refers to its often more sinister use to signify pride before the fall.[204] A famous example of this cruel side to Homeric laughter is Thersites in *Iliad* 2.[205] Notably one of Halliwell's own case-studies, this is a passage where an ordinary soldier attempts to mock 'heroes' of the epic and faces mockery in turn.[206]

> Now the others sat down and were restrained in their places,
> only there still kept chattering on Thersites of measureless speech,
> whose mind was full of a great store of disorderly words, with
> which to revile the kings, recklessly and in no due order, but
> whatever he thought would raise a laugh among the Argives.
>
> *Iliad* 2.211-16

> So spoke Odysseus, and with the staff struck his back and
> shoulders; and Thersites cowered down, and a big tear fell from
> him, and a bloody welt rose up on his back from the staff of gold.
> Then he sat down, and fear came on him and, stung by pain, he
> wiped the tear away with a helpless look. But the Achaeans,
> though they were troubled at heart, broke into merry laughter at
> him…
>
> *Iliad* 2.265- 71

In the first part of the above extracts, we see that Thersites' words are regarded negatively with phrasing like 'disorderly words' and associated with reckless behaviour. Yet, it does recognised a distinct product of this mockery, which is the laughter of his peers. The second extract, however, sees the soldier firmly put in his place, which involves just as much laughter at his expense. Rosen refers to the fragmentary *Aethiopis* as an example of his mockery gone wrong. A later narrative than the *Iliad*, it offers a more detailed account of Thersites' death at the hands of Achilles. Here, Rosen argues that it offers more in the way of 'iambic performance' than the *Iliad* and

[204] Lateiner (1977: 174).
[205] Postlethwaite (1988: 123).
[206] Halliwell (2008: 72-76).

suggests the risks of disconnection between a mocker and their target; this, in turn, extends to the potential miscommunications between a poet and their audience.[207]

The mockery of Thersites is also addressed by Livingstone (2017), who highlights the passage's 'monolithic aristocratic ideology' and explains this rather succinctly by stating that Odysseus' success reveals the innate value in a 'publicly accepted pecking order'.[208] Furthermore, Livingstone emphasises this point with reference to Thersites' ugly appearance, as it further assimilates this character's low status.[209] Similar references to his appearance are made by Rosen (2003) and Simms (2005) with the latter offering the additional observation that Thersites is one of the most detailed characters within the *Iliad*.[210] This emphasis on appearance is potentially dramatically significant. As Thersites' descriptive appearance could be compared to the visual impact that makes up comic costume in later drama. Postlethwaite (1988), also recognises the potential performative qualities of this figure, stating that the mockery of Thersites is an outlet for the text's '*menis*', as it is 'acted out'.[211] In other words, the anger which underlies the poem, is performed in the comedic bullying of Thersites, as well as his grievances against Odysseus and other Greek Heroes.

While Postlethwaite observes that Thersites has often received 'bad press' for being a subversive and insolent character, Deutsch also calls Thersites 'Western literature's

[207] Rosen (2003: 122).
[208] Livingstone (2017:12).
[209] Livingstone (2017: 17-19). See also Simms (2005), who compares Thersites' physical appearance. particularly his teeth, to the condition called *cleidocranial dysplasia* (2005: 30-40).
[210] Simms (2005: 33).
[211] Postlethwaite (1988: 123).

original satirist'.[212] Likewise, Rosen (2003) recognises that 'we have seen Thersites … playing two roles, first that of the comic target in the *Iliad* and then of the satirist in the *Aithiopis*'.[213] Then there is Halliwell, who calls Thersites a 'jester-cum-satirist'.[214] After all, Thersites' unapologetic speech is self-legitimising in its mocking of arrogant Greek heroes and in doing so, he is what Rosen refers to as '*honest, righteous and self-righteous speaking'*.[215] So, anger is a central emotion to this scene, whether you choose to focus on Thersites' indignation or Odysseus' response and both create moments of laughter for an intended audience. The difference is the ability to maintain a sense of control over comedy and the audience they are making laugh.

Anger is also a catalyst for the divine satirical performances explored in this chapter. Rutherford (2013) establishes that audiences of these Homeric texts are familiar with the stories often associated with the Olympians and with that comes themes of conflict that can be found in other archaic sources.[216] With Hera, it is a desire to undermine Zeus and enact a potentially violent rebellion amongst the gods, while Hephaestus is driven by his anger at his wife's infidelity.[217] The mix of anger and laughter in these instances are not the same as that explored with Thersites. Mortality is the difference between these case studies. Unlike laughter between the gods, Thersites' comedy is overshadowed by his own impending death. In contrast, conflict and violence between the gods is never fatal and usually temporary. As Halliwell puts it, 'even if one Olympian

[212] Postlethwaite (1988: 123). See also Thalmann (1988) and Simms (2005); Deutsch (2019: 420)
[213] Rosen (2003: 126).
[214] Halliwell (2008: 72).
[215] Rosen (2014: 21).
[216] Rutherford (2013: 7). Rutherford also acknowledges that a familiarity in stories about the gods can also come from cultic worship (2013: 7).
[217] Louden (2006: 99).

feast is spoilt, there will be future feasts to restore the divine community'.[218] This, in turn allows for an almost adolescent imagery of the gods, as they display a freedom to laugh, which in turn, gives licence to the poet's real audience to do the same.

In the case of 'divine laughter', Halliwell observes that the gods never laugh at humans, but rather at the expense of each other. [219] Myers (2019) emphasises that the gods act as a divine audience that see the life and death of the Trojan War as their own personal entertainment. Furthermore, he reasons that the gods are spectators that offer a meta-performative significance to the text, where their responses offer parallels with the poet's external audience.[220] For instance, any reaction such as laughter or anticipation mirrors potential reactions from the audience. On the one hand, these gods show an inability to understand the human condition yet on the other, they display very human behaviours like pettiness, anger, laughter and even grief.[221]

> Why make humanlike gods? The question is vexed, and, of course, it is ultimately impossible to know. What I hope to show is that the decision to mingle the familiar with the ineffable in this way has an important consequence, which the poet indeed exploits in our text: it allows the poet to draw and play upon correspondences between the perspectives of the divine audience he constructs and the human audience attending his performance.
>
> Myers (2019: 5)

In section 2.3, I will explore this idea of audience septation between divine and 'real' spectators in *Odyssey* 8. In particular, I will reflect on the separation of the real Homeric audience from their literary equivalents, such as the heroic Odysseus and the laughing

[218] Halliwell (2008: 61).
[219] Halliwell (2008: 52).
[220] Myers (2019:2).
[221] Myers (2019: 3-8).

gods in Demodocus' song. In doing so, we will see Myers' argument that mingling the divine and the mortal, is also self-reflective for the external audience of the poem. For instance, I will reflect on the similar use of *erōs* in this comic scene with Hephaestus, as desire is a distinctly human response and one that the Homeric audience can respond to.

Both Hera's and Hephaestus' use of erōs heightens both comic episodes, due to it representing this very human urge. This, in turn, also feeds into Meltzer's idea of self-indulgent gods, who are similarly rooted in sexual desire as it invades their senses and takes as much as it gives.[222] As such, neither are representative of what Halliwell calls moral laughter. Instead, the gods offer tensions between ideas of morality and power, through the themes of sex and deception.[223]

2.2: THE DECEPTION OF ZEUS

This episode tells the story of the goddess Hera, as she manipulates Zeus while playing up to her role as his wife. Executing her deception with the aid of sexual desire, Hera distracts the king of Olympus, with the aim of assisting Poseidon in his aid of the Achaeans, thus interfering with Zeus' grander plans for the Trojan War.[224] What transpires is a clever sequence in which Hera devises a plan, engages with appropriate assistance, and meticulously prepares for her role-play while subsequently achieving her goal.

[222] Meltzer (1990: 265,267).
[223] Halliwell (2008: 98).
[224] *Iliad* 14.153-360.

Like many moments within the *Iliad*, 'The Deception of Zeus' falls under Maureen Alden's definition of a 'para-narrative' (2017). In other words, it acts as a mini story that functions inside a greater plot.[225] Scholars have not always accepted 'The Deception of Zeus' to be an original feature of the *Iliad's* narrative. For instance, Wilamowitz (1920) suggests that such authorship was too different from the tragic style of Hector's death in book twelve.[226] Erbse (1970), on the other hand, states that Hera's seduction complements the more serious actions of Poseidon's military promise in book thirteen.[227] Furthermore, Wilson (2007), argues that Hera's deception does not shift away from Zeus' plans regarding the Trojan War, as both the Greeks and the Trojans continue to slaughter each other long after this episode.[228]

Hera's trickery within 'The Deception of Zeus' appears to be multi-faceted. It is, in many ways, a strategic manoeuvre within the text. After all, throughout the *Iliad*, the audience are given tastes of Hera's potential to manipulate her husband Zeus.[229] What is more, the distinctly deceptive nature of this episode allows for this same audience to recall said examples of her cunning persona, which I will now address.

2.2.a: HERA'S PERSONA

While Hera's use of costume in 'The Deception of Zeus' must be discussed within this chapter, it is important, for the purpose of this section, to highlight that disguise does not

[225] Alden (2017).
[226] Taken from Golden (1989: 1).
[227] Erbse (1970: 98), taken from Golden (1989: 2).
[228] Wilson (2007: 154-5).
[229] See *Iliad* 4.50-65 (Her deceptive speech). See also *Iliad* 15.34-46 (Hera's lie after being confronted by Zeus).

have to be physical. A major feature of my stand-up comedy research is on the idea of a comic persona and while I am not saying Hera is a comedian, her use of persona is key to her success. In the case of Hera's stage persona, I will show how her mask is a distortion of her own reality when she plays up to her responsibilities as wife and sister to Zeus. These aspects that are fundamental to goddesses, have been amplified to an already familiar audience. In a way, this mini plot allows Hera to parody other versions of herself, as well as other deities such as Aphrodite, in similar myths. For instance, these three attributes of Hera are not confined to the *Iliad*, as they are also listed in the below *Homeric Hymn XII. to Hera*:

> Of Hera I sing, the golden-throned, whom Rhea bore to be
> queen of the immortals, of supreme beauty, sister and wife of Zeus
> the loud-booming; glorious one, whom all of the blessed ones on
> long Olympus revere and honor no less than Zeus whose sport is
> the thunderbolt.
>
> *Homeric Hymn XII. to Hera* 1-5

It is therefore unsurprising that these three motifs could be then amplified into a persona bespoke to the goddess. Furthermore, taking into consideration what we already know about the comic function of the gods in the *Iliad*, we should also be unsurprised that these feature in a distinctly comic version of herself. It is the amplification of these roles, in a makeshift role-play, that plays on audience laughter. In the 'Deception of Zeus', this amplification is almost exclusively the role of Zeus' wife, but, by extension, we also glimpse her authority over other deities such as her interactions with Hypnos and Aphrodite.[230] Part of this recognition also lies with the same deceptive Hera prevalent in other archaic myths, especially when concerning her husband Zeus and his illegitimate

[230] *Iliad* 14.187-223 (Aphrodite) and 231-291 (Hypnos).

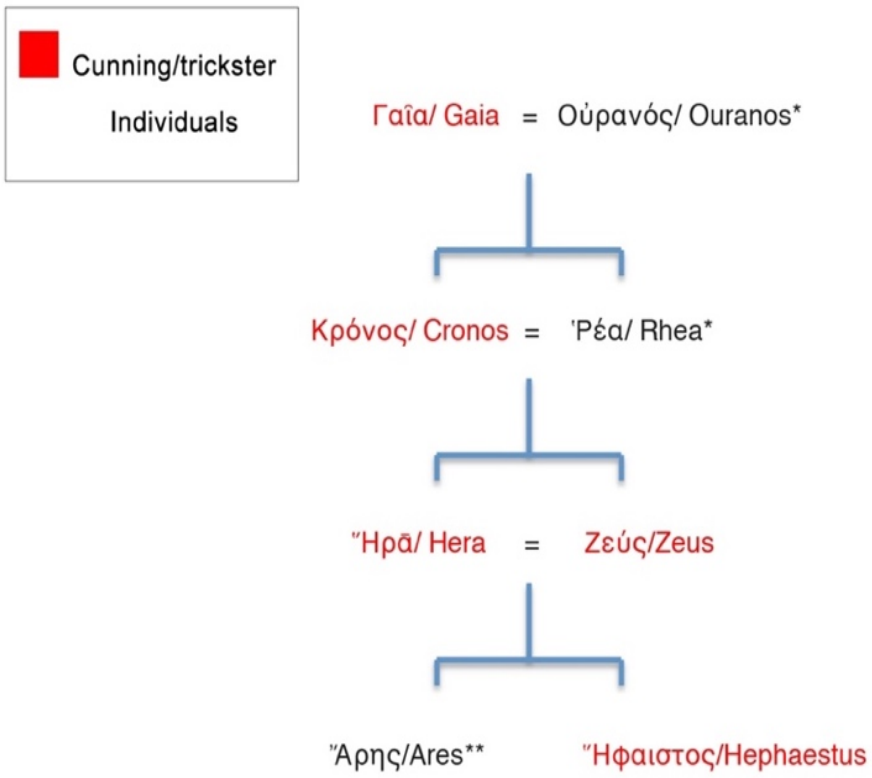
offspring. For instance, *Homeric Hymn I. to Dionysus* sees Hera trick the human Semele, which results in the unique events of Dionysus' birth.[231]This is a story that remained prevalent into later Greek consciousness, as we will see in Chapter Three with Euripides' *Bacchae*. Within the *Iliad* however, we only need to look at her speech in book four, to see this same level of manipulation.

> In answer to him spoke ox-eyed, queenly Hera: "I have three cities that are far dearest in my sight, Argos and Sparta and broad-wayed Mycenae; lay these waste whenever they are hateful to your heart. Not in their defence do I stand before them, nor grudge you in any way. For even though I object, and try to prevent you from destroying them, I accomplish nothing by objecting, for truly you are far the mightier. Still my labor too must not be made of no effect; for I also am a god, and my birth is from the same stock as yours, and crooked-counseling Cronos begot me as the most honored of his daughters, doubly so, since I am eldest and am called your wife, while you are king among all the immortals. But let us yield to each other in this, I to you and you to me, and all the other immortal gods will follow with us…"
>
> *Iliad* 4.50-64

In this speech, Hera successfully mocks Zeus' authority, while simultaneously distracting him with placating words. Hera's declaration of obedience is not only a play on her husband's ego, but it is also a veiled attack on his authority over her. Pomeroy (1975) argues that Zeus' dominance is threatened by Hera, as she equals him in many respects.[232] With this idea in mind, the above extract holds an additional layer of mockery, when we consider her emphasis on their shared father 'Crooked-Counselled Cronos'.[233] In doing so, Hera not only reminds both Zeus and the audience that she is equal to her husband by birth, but also shows that she has authority as the eldest

[231] West (2011:30-1).
[232] Pomeroy (2007: 7). Originally published in 1975.
[233] *Iliad* 4.69.

daughter.[234] With that in mind, I would be worth addressing how Hera establishes herself as cunning within this scene, so that she may use it later for comic effect in *Iliad* 14.



*Rhea and Ouranos are not labled red, despite being involved in tricking Cronos (*Theogony*: 467-80). This is because the source of cunning is suggested to have come from Gaia (*Theogony*: 494).
** Ares is not labled red, despite some use of disguise/shapeshifting (*Iliad*: 5.458) and diversion (*Iliad* 5.510), as this is minimal and all deities have this ability to some extent.

FIGURE 2. SHOWS DIVINE FAMILY TREE THAT LINKS HERA TO OTHER ESTABLISHED CUNNING INDIVIDUALS.

[234] This is different to Hesiod's *Theogony,* where Hestia is named first of Rhea and Cronos' children (*Theogony*: 454). Homer's account of Hera being the oldest daughter could be a different account of the myth, or recognition of a version mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite*. In this Hymn, Hestia is named the oldest and youngest sibling, see *Homeric Hymn .5 to Aphrodite* 21-3. West (2003) says this comes from Hesiod's account, where Cronos' children are sicked up in the reverse order in which they are eaten (West 2003: n.42). If Homer follows the same myth, this could explain why Hera considers herself older than Hestia.

FIGURE 2 maps out Hera's inheritance of cunning intelligence, based off of Hesiod's *Theogony*.[235] Here we see how Hera threatens Zeus' obvious strength and counters the Hesiodic idea of Zeus' 'pure metis'.[236]Hera's subjugation, therefore, becomes a play on past encounters with her husband, as she ultimately mocks him with a subtext to her own cunning lineage. We also see in *Iliad* 15, Hera's clever use of speech in the aftermath of 'The Deception of Zeus'. Despite the threat of Zeus reminding Hera of her previous punishments, she bluffs her way out of responsibility for her trickery.[237] Zeus appears to accept her at her word, although his actual response is 'if indeed you speak truly'.[238] This suggests that Zeus may not have been entirely deceived by her clever speech. Within 'The Deception of Zeus', we see Hera's persona verbalise three moments of manipulative speech. The first is convincing Hypnos to assist her in her scam,[239] the second is fooling Aphrodite into believing her story[240] and the third is Hera's final 'performance' in seducing Zeus.[241]

It is clear that the audience need to believe in Hera's ability to trick a veteran of cunning such as Zeus, but they also need to see the supporting characters of Hypnos and Aphrodite as sufficiently convinced, or at least passive, in this exchange. This ultimately informs us how relationship dynamics between author and spectator can be reached by mirroring a warped version of the narrative. In the case of this episode, the real audience are given a breakdown of what to expect before the performance even takes

[235] *Theogony* 113-210 and 453-500.
[236] On the significance of metis, *see Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (1978), by Detienne and Vernant. For more on Zeus' claim to 'pure metis' (Detienne and Vernant 1978: 279).
[237] *Iliad* 15.41.
[238] *Iliad* 15.53.
[239] *Iliad* 14.249-61.
[240] *Iliad* 14.190-224.
[241] *Iliad* 14.300-360.

place. We see that both the preparation and the execution of Hera's trick are predetermined and fresh in the mind of the listener. Therefore, not only do they witness figures like Zeus as passive spectators, (one who does not see through the trick), but they are, in turn, forced to reflect on their own role, which is one of complicit knowledge. On the face of it, 'The Deception of Zeus' is clearly about Hera's knowledge in how to seduce Zeus and by that token, her trick is about erotic power rather than any dramatic power.

2.2.b: STAGING MOTIFS

I will now consider specific staging motifs within the 'Deception of Zeus', as they can be broken down into manageable bite size chunks, which also seem to follow the cycle of a performance taking shape. Of course, an archaic audience would not have the same dramatic familiarity, but it cannot be ignored that the *Iliad*'s audience would have experienced enough performance to see their role as spectators blurred. I will also explore this mirroring of audiences and spectatorship when addressing Hephaestus' Trick in section 2.3, but it is worth stating here that there is a great deal of scholarship on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as epic performance.[242]

[242] For early scholarship on 'The Dramatic Elements of the Iliad', see Key (1913). For analysis of 'direct speech', both within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, see Beck's *Homeric Conversation* (2005). Then there are those who have observed the Olympian gods as spectators to the Trojan War. Nietzsche (1991), for example, compared them to engaging with 'festival play' (see Kaufmann and Hollingdale translation,1967: 69). Then there is Myers (2019), who reflects on Nietzsche's question: 'with what eyes do you think Homer made his gods look down upon the destinies of men?' (Nietzsche 1991: 299; Kaufmann and Hollingdale 1967:69) (Myers 2019: 1-25). Myers' publication *Homer's Divine Audience: The Iliad's Reception on Mount Olympus* (2019) also addresses a number of dramatic features within the *Iliad*, including: the reference to 'live' events like contests (see his chapter titled 'Many Contests of the Trojans and Achaeans': The *Iliad*'s Battle Books' 141-178), the anticipation and execution of battlefield sceptical (see his chapters on 'Zeus, the Poet, and Vision' 27-64, and 'The Duel and the Daïs: Iliadic Warfare as Spectacle' 65-108), as well as the appearance of 'real time' when these spectacles end (see chapter 'Let Us Cease': Early Reflections on the Spectacle's End' 109-132). See also Myers' reference to the Odyssey as a self-referential poem that explores the performance of epic poetry, such as 'bard-like storytelling' (Myers 2019: 25). Dance (2020) also looks at the parallels between audience(s)

> Now Hera of the golden throne was standing on a peak of Olympus and looked down on him, and immediately recognized him as he went busily about in the battle where men win glory, her own brother and her brother-in-law; and she rejoiced at heart. And Zeus she noticed seated on the topmost peak of many-fountained Ida, and hateful was he to her heart. Then she took thought, the ox-eyed queenly Hera, how she might distract the mind of Zeus who bears the aegis. And this plan seemed to her mind the best, to go to Ida, when she had beauteously adorned herself, to see if he might long to lie by her side and embrace her body in love, and she might shed a warm and gentle sleep on his eyelids and his cunning mind…
>
> *Iliad* 14.152-165

As for any performance, a plan of direction must be established. Whether it is a full script, or improvisation, a set of instructions must be established. In the case of the 'Deception of Zeus', Hera thinks up a plan and makes Mount Ida her stage. Step by step, she successfully predicts its process like a script fated to unfold.[243] What is more, while this prediction is achieved in a single sentence, it succinctly establishes a sense of creativity and productivity that projects direction from Hera; similar to that of a theatre maker. Such foreshadowing is commonplace within the *Iliad*, but it quickly develops into reality within the narrative. What is more, its presence and comic tone must have given its audience a sense of relief regarding the harsher themes that surround this episode. After her initial plan, we immediately see Hera move on to the first stage in her self-preparation – sexual desire.

> …So she set out to go to her chamber that her dear son Hephaestus had fashioned for her, fitting strong doors to the doorposts with a secret bolt that no other god could open. There she entered in, and closed the bright doors…
>
> *Iliad* 14.166-169

within the *Odyssey* (Dance 2020: 411). Then there is Murray's '*Odyssey* as Performance Poetry' in *Performance, Iconography, Reception: Studies in Honour of Oliver Taplin* (2008).

[243] *Iliad* 14.161-5.

Within early Greek myth, as well as much earlier, sexual desire is a powerful force that beguiles its victims, while hiding behind a seemingly beautiful facade.[244] When Hera uses her locked room to make herself beautiful, she separates herself from the rest of the gods, creating a 'back-stage'. This is not a backstage in a literal sense, where an actor puts on a costume, although there is a definite parallel, but it is also a space where Hera prepares to transform herself into something staged and misleading. This idea of a secret space where women beautify themselves in an act of deception is nothing new. In the *Homeric Hymns* it is Aphrodite, we see an almost play by play likeness between the two goddesses as they get ready to sexually deceive.[245] Similarly, while the creation of Pandora, in the Hesiodic corpus, does not happen in a secret space, it is another important example of archaic material dealing with female beauty as deceptive. This does not change in much later ancient texts. For instance, in Chapter Five, it is the perpetration of Messalina in Juvenal's sixth satire and is even seen today with modern tabloid media often trying to 'catch' women out for their outward appearance.[246] Beauty has become a well-conceived trick. So, once Hera has reached the space to prepare for her role, she now needs to look the part.

> …With ambrosia first
> Did she cleanse every stain from her lovely body, and anointed herself richly with oil, ambrosial, soft, and of rich fragrance; if this were but shaken in the palace of Zeus with threshold of bronze, its scent would reach to earth and heaven. With this she anointed her lovely body, and she combed her hair, and with her hands plaited the bright tresses, fair and ambrosial, that streamed from her immortal head. Then she clothed herself in an ambrosial robe which Athene had worked and smoothed for her, and had set on it many embroideries; and she pinned it at the breast with brooches of gold, and she girt about her a belt set with one

[244] For earlier examples of myth that blends preparation and sexual deception, see Brown's references to Mesopotamian examples like Inanna and Dumuzi (Brown: 2020: 31).
[245] *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite* 58-67.
[246] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.457-463.

> hundred tassels, and in her pierced ears she put earrings with three clustering drops; and abundant grace shone from them. And with a veil over all did the fair goddess veil herself, a veil fair and bright, all glistening, and it was white as the sun; and beneath her shining feet she bound her fair sandals…
>
> *Iliad* 14.170-186

Janko likens this preparation scene to a warrior getting ready for battle.[247] Perhaps this is unsurprising when we consider Pomeroy's similar analogy of Hera and Zeus' marriage as 'permanent war, with brief interludes in bed'.[248] Warriors within the *Iliad* put on their armour, perform a speech to an opponent and begin their spectacle of a fight.[249] Nevertheless, while it could be said that Hera is like a Greek hero going off to face an adversary, a typical warrior implies strength as their main source of power.[250] Hera, on the other hand, enhances her role as Zeus' wife, to her own ends. For that reason, I am inclined to agree with Louden's statement that this is a parody of a warrior's armament.[251] As such, it strengthens the comedic tone of the episode by mocking its own tradition.

The additional detail of 'an ambrosial robe' from Athena, sharing similarities with some references to the goddess encouraging heightened female preparation in *Odyssey* 18. Here, Athena gives Penelope 'immortal gifts' to entice her suitors,[252] one of which is ambrosia. The difference between these two occasions, is that Penelope is equally

[247] Janko (1992: 173).
[248]Pomeroy (2007: 8).
[249] Janko makes the connection between Hera putting on her ambrosia and the warrior putting on their leg armour. Recognising the word 'first' as an echo linking the two expressions (1992: 174).
[250] The conflict between cunning and strength is a motif common throughout the *Iliad*, see for instance Lycurgus killing Areïthous with guile (7.140). Then there is Hector's death through the deception of Athena (22.227).
[251]Louden (2006: 99).
[252] *Odyssey* 18.158-193.

tricked. Therefore, 'The Deception of Zeus' links this preparation scene to one of the most cunning individuals in Greek myth.[253] This is added with the use of the Greek word *daidala* (δαίδαλα), which Athene had 'worked' and which suggests that it is 'cunningly made'.[254] Athena is, after all, the goddess who gives such crafts to humanity and she is often drawn to assist those who display similar flair for cunning behaviour.[255] This Homeric text is therefore, not only visualising another object with an abstract power applied to it, like Aphrodite's girdle, but he is making deceit central to this episode by giving Hera the illusion of being cunning through mentioning Athena. It is at this point that we witness Hera's first interaction with an 'accomplice'. After beauteously adorning herself, Hera extends her preparation by calling on the goddess Aphrodite for her girdle of 'love and desire'.[256]

> She spoke, and loosed from her bosom the embroidered strap, inlaid, in which are fashioned all manner of allurements; in it is love, in it desire, in it dalliance—persuasion that steals the senses even of the wise. This she placed in her hands, and spoke and addressed her: "take now and place in your bosom this strap, inlaid, in which all things are fashioned; I say you will not return with that unaccomplished, whatever in your heart you desire."
>
> *Iliad* 14.214-221

Hera's false tale about Oceanus and Tethys, is suddenly fabricated by the goddess and Aphrodite becomes the first recipient of this lie.[257] When Hera tells this lie, it feels similar to an actor learning their lines, making it as elaborate as Aphrodite's lie to Anchises in the *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite*.[258] Hera is still preparing for her

[253] *Iliad* 14.178.
[254] *Iliad* 14.178-9.
[255] *Homeric Hymn V. Aphrodite* 8-15.
[256] *Iliad* 14.198.
[257] *Iliad* 14.300-311.
[258] *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite* 107-142.

eventual second meeting with Zeus. Walcot (1991) observes that Aphrodite finds it easy to lie with pseudo-realism,[259] which can also be said of Hera. Although Aphrodite only tells this lie to Anchises, the intricacy and falsity of her story bring notable parallels between the two goddesses.

It is not beyond the realms of possibility that Aphrodite becomes the first victim of Hera's deceptive performance. This is when Hera gains the girdle of allurements (κεστὸν ἰμάντα).[260] Breitenberger argues that this girdle was an additional detail created for the *Iliad* to represent Aphrodite's primary control over sexual desire.[261] Furthermore, while there is mention of a girdle (ζώνην) in *Homeric Hymn V. Aphrodite*, the particularities of the girdle in the *Iliad* are quite specific to its narrative.[262] So, if the beginning of Hera's performance is extended to her 'rehearsal' with Aphrodite, the girdle is a 'prop' that allows the audience to envisage this happening.

This is similar to Breitenberger's idea of a girdle being a visual tool for a narrative, read as opposed to performed.[263] Janko recognises that Hera's use of the girdle is not dissimilar to any 'significant' warrior who has an object accredited to them, for example, Athena's 'aegis', Achilles' spear and Odysseus' boar helmet.[264] While Hera's use of this girdle may be an echo of this text's military theme, such tools are also props for the performance of each character. Furthermore, while the girdle is not mentioned at

[259] Walcot (1991: 145).
[260] Murray translates this object as 'embroidered strap' (214). Whereas Breitenberger (2007), uses the term 'garment' to denote the wide speculation on the function of this object. (2007: 78).
[261] Breitenberger (2007: 76 and 85).
[262] *Homeric Hymn V. Aphrodite* 164 and 255.
[263] Breitenberger (2007: 76).
[264] Janko (1992: 174).

the point of Zeus' allurement, it is visualised by this prior exchange with Aphrodite. Therefore, the prop in question is in the audience's mind for the remainder of the trick.

It is also likely that the creation of Aphrodite's girdle is a conscious attempt to parallel another well-known archaic myth with deceptive allurement, which is Pandora's jar.[265] This myth tells of the Olympian gods fashioning a woman, to be given to mankind as a punishment for the deeds of Prometheus. By looking at the tale of Pandora's creation, we can see Pandora as a stage trick personified. Granted, Pandora is 'prepared' in a similar sense to both Hera and Aphrodite, yet we cannot ignore her lack of agency within this scene.

> …Immediately he contrived an evil for
> human beings in exchange for fire. For the much-renowned Lame
> One forged from earth the semblance of a reverend maiden by
> the plans of Cronus' son; and the goddess, bright-eyed Athena,
> girdled and adorned her with silvery clothing, and with her hands
> she hung a highly wrought veil from her head, a wonder to see;
> and around her head Pallas Athena placed freshly budding
> garlands that arouse desire, the flowers of the meadow; and
> around her head she placed a golden headband, which the much-
> renowned Lame One made himself, working it with his skilled
> hands, to do a favor for Zeus the father…
>
> *Theogony* 570-580

As we can see in the extract above, this is another instance of intermingled deception and eros, as Pandora is, in essence, a personification of an alluring trick.[266] Brown (2020) argues that this is a 'network of interrelated sexual and economic anxieties that seem to underlie a great deal of what the Archaic poets say about the female sex',

[265] *Theogony* 570-90 and *Works and Days* 69-105; Breitenberger (2007:80).
[266] Most (2018:xii).

which he in turn calls the 'Pandora Complex'.[267] Therefore, by dipping into the cultural memory of the Pandora myth, *Iliad* 4 recognises the inherent cunning qualities of erōs as it is applied to the 'Deception of Zeus'. Brown, further stipulates that it is Hesiod's version of the Pandora myth that states this recognisable dilemma between 'sexual gratification and domestic stability'.

This version of Hera is set up by this image of Pandora, who influences the presentation of women in both comic and exalted epic poetry.[268] Yet, unlike Pandora, Hera not only formulates her own deception; she performs in it and she directs its outcome. The trick itself exists as a performance, with its time-sensitive nature. Hera must follow an order set before her and see it through to the end. Returning to Janko's analogy that Hera is like a warrior, 'The Deception of Zeus' is a parody of a typical *aristeia*.

2.2.c: COMEDIC OVERTONES

As I have already highlighted, the 'Deception of Zeus' stands in stark contrast to the rest of book fourteen and indeed the majority of the *Iliad*.[269] With sporadic distractions found throughout the text, the misdirection of self-indulgent gods only reflects greater human suffering.[270] Likewise, Hera's motivation in tricking Zeus appears to be equal to her desire in helping the Achaeans. After all, Hera's trick is in stark contrast to the very people she is trying to help. The Achaeans still have to fight and die in battle and

[267] Brown (2020: 26).
[268] Brown (2020: 26-27). He further stipulates that Hesiod did not 'invent' Pandora, but rather adapted an existing story to his needs. For a more comparative approach to the figure of Pandora, Brown suggests reading Trencsenyi - Waldapfel (1966:49-75); see Brown (2020: 27).
[269] *Iliad* 14.1-152 and 14.361-522. Golden (1989:1 and 4).
[270] Meltzer (1990: 265 and 267).

the comic tone of her distraction technique only serves to strengthen this contrast between life and death.[271]

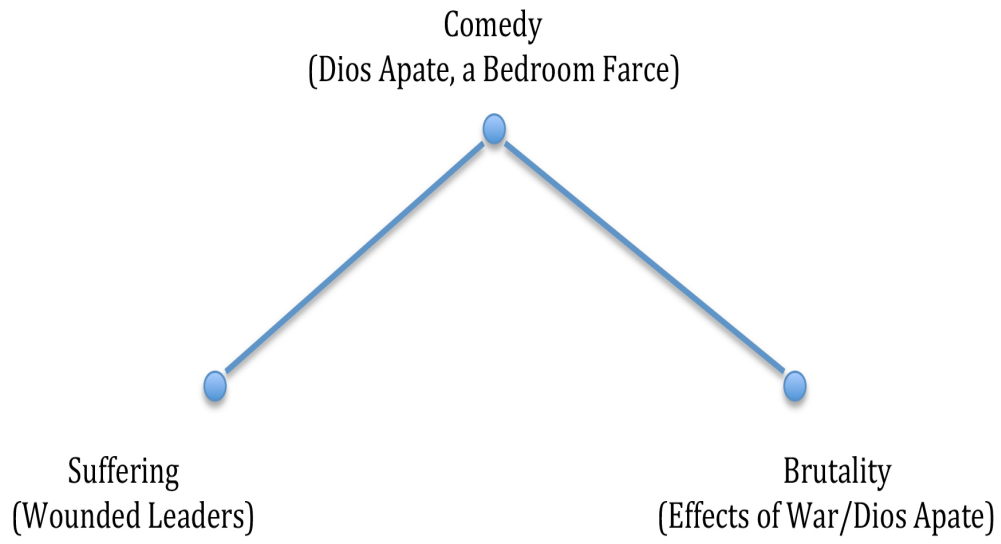


FIGURE 3. SHOWS THE ZIG-ZAG EFFECT OF TRAGEDY MIXED WITH COMEDY WITHIN THE *ILIAD* BEFORE AND AFTER BOOK FOURTEEN.

As the above diagram illustrates, the constant juxtaposition between tragedy and comedy creates highs and lows for audiences that ultimately enhance the overall performance. In the case of 'The Deception of Zeus', the audience is suddenly transported from the Trojan War to this similar myth. Once Hera's trick is over however, they are forced to return to sobering consequences. This is apparent when Zeus wakes up and sees Hector badly injured and the Achaeans suddenly winning the war.[272] This manipulation of worlds is a clever way of using comedy beyond its function to create laughter. When creating these two spaces for audiences, the *Iliad* shifts its magical

[271]Golden (1990: 279).
[272]*Iliad* 15.1-11; Janko (1992:169).

world of the gods into the comedic realm. It is, after all, a deception within its own right and deserves further exploration.

Meltzer (1990), maintains that the comedy with the *Iliad* is somewhat cruel, and laughter at misfortune is a regular occurrence in archaic material.[273] Perhaps this is why Hera's trick falls under a broader bracket of comedy. It reveals an almost human behaviour in the gods. As they are brought down to our level, they suddenly loose a sense of reverence and are therefore open to scrutiny. It is most likely for this reason that we can see further instances of divine mockery in figures like Dionysus and Heracles in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, or indeed in the humanisation of Hephaestus as a comic force in archaic texts like *The Homeric Hymn I. to Dionysus* and the *Odyssey* 8. Therefore, the self-driven and even vindictive personalities of the gods shine through. Hera's desire to help the Achaeans ultimately stems from jealousy from the 'Judgment of Paris'. What is more, Hera's ambition to ridicule Zeus is emphasised at the beginning of this episode, when she notices him sitting on Mount Ida; 'hateful was he to her heart'.[274] Hera and Zeus' volatile relationship is exacerbated by Zeus' extra-marital affairs, a situation that Zeus makes even worse with the lines:

> "Hera, you may go there later. But for us two, come, let us take our joy bedded together in love; for never yet has desire for goddess or mortal woman so shed itself about me and overmastered the heart within my breast - not even when I was seized with love of Ixion's wife, who bore Peirithous, the peer of the gods in counsel; nor of Danaë of the fair ankles Acrisius' daughter, who bore Perseus, preeminent above all warriors; nor of the daughter of far-famed Phoenix, who bore me Minos and godlike Rhadamanthys; nor of Semele, nor of Alcmene in Thebes,

[273] Meltzer (1990: 266). However Meltzer does state that this is not always the case, offering the example of Astyanax crying at his father's helmet, which causes heartwarming laughter between his parents (Meltzer 1990: 276-7).
[274] *Iliad* 14.157; Janko (1992: 172).

> and she brought forth Heracles, her son stout of heart, and Semele bore Dionysus, the joy of mortals; nor of Demeter, the fair-tressed queen; nor of glorious Leto; nor yet of yourself, as now I love you, and sweet desire lays hold of me."
>
> *Iliad* 14.317-28

This is clearly meant to be funny, as the audience witness Zeus fall deeper into a mess of his own making. What is more, these lines invoke laughter at the absurdity of their judgment in trying to win over a wife's affections. Furthermore, this list of women, mixed with Zeus' desire for Hera, reaffirms the weakness Zeus faces due to the power of desire. The audience is therefore complicit in the knowledge that Hera's trick will be effective once Zeus desires to sleep with her. The fact that Hera knows this, and is confident in her plan, shows that even the king of heaven shares human weakness. This desire provides further comedy when Zeus' golden cloud, which he typically uses to assert his power, becomes his own trap.[275]

This comedic use of desire can also be found beyond the *Iliad*, such as *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite*. The irony of Aphrodite being tricked into having sex with a human would not go unnoticed by its audience. This would create a similar ironic comedy to that of Hephaestus, a lame god, trapping the swift and able bodied Ares in Odyssey 8.[276] Furthermore, the *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite* shares the comedic narrative tool discussed above, as it abruptly shifts from humour to serious themes during Aphrodite's closing speech.[277] Within this speech, Aphrodite first tells Anchises not to fear her, but then recites a number of myths where humans, from Anchises' family no

[275] Janko (1992: 169).
[276] *Odyssey* 8. 329.
[277] *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite* 191-290.

less, have suffered unpleasant fates at the hands of divine desire - the exception being Zeus and Ganymedes.[278]

Aphrodite then tells Anchises of her own shame in being tricked, as well as the coming birth of Aeneas and finally, she threatens Anchises with death if he tells anyone about what has happened.[279] This speech is the longest of any of the *Homeric Hymns*, almost 100 lines, so perhaps it is not unsurprising that it would take its own journey in terms of content at that time.[280] The final threat may be genuine, as divine authority must not be undermined; the gods may laugh at her, but it is not for mortals to do so. Alternatively, this could be one final trick by Aphrodite to keep Anchises in check. Therefore, there is an argument for the *Homeric Hymn* ending on a comedic note.

Both the *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite* and the *Iliad* show stark contrasts between the ideas of mortality and immortality. In the *Homeric Hymn*, this is evident in the union between a goddess and a human (Anchises). Their offspring, Aeneas, is further evidence of these two worlds. In the *Iliad* however, these contrasts are clearly separated as comedic (divine) and tragic (human) realms. In the Deception of Zeus, this is evident in the parallels between divine couples like Zeus and Hera, and with mortal ones like Paris and Helen or Hector and Andromache.[281] While Hera may trick Zeus, the absence of mortality removes any serious consequences (she is not even punished in this instance). Both mortal relationships, however, end in misery.[282]

[278] *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite* 200-38.
[279] *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite* 286-8.
[280] Walcot 1991 (148).
[281]Golden (1990: 279).
[282]Golden 1990:279.

Additionally, Zeus and Paris mirror each other in their frenzied desire, the difference between the two being Zeus' subsequent comical list of other women.[283]

Within the 'Deception of Zeus', the *Iliad* showcases a prime example of staged deception, through the workings of the goddess Hera and the guile of desire. Her claim to deception is implicit in her hereditary line and the poet's ability to hint at other stories of trickery further support her speech and action. These powers appear throughout the *Iliad*, but nowhere is it more evident than in book fourteen, when Hera's manipulation extends to Aphrodite and Hypnos. Furthermore, this episode tackles the deeply rooted deceptive nature of erōs with the poet's subtle comparisons to other archaic sources, such as Pandora and her Jar in Hesiod's *Theogony*, Aphrodite's complex status as an instigator of desire, and victim of it in the *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite*, and finally Hephaestus' ability to utilise erōs to create a trap due to his knowledge that it is both universal and irresistible.

Furthermore, the performance parallels found within this myth, such as writing the script, putting on the costume and learning the lines and using props, only strengthens this thesis' argument that Hera uses meta-performative devices to emphasise a real deceptive relationship with the audience. After all, Hera is performing this role not personifying it. Perhaps a mythic trickster can be more constant than those who perform such behaviour in reality, but every trick, in theory, has a beginning, middle and end. The limited time of such trickery helps determine its success, as it is important to differentiate between the trick and its aftermath. Hera successfully distracts Zeus

[283]Golden 1990:279.

from the battle, takes revenge on him for previous misdeeds and asserts a level of power through her cunning behaviour as his wife. What follows, Hera convincing Zeus that she had not defied him, proves to be another trick entirely.

2.3: HEPHAESTUS' TRICK

> Laughter was so inextricably linked to "the tale of Ares and Aphrodite" that the introduction and narration of the episode was akin to recounting a version of a well-known joke in whose telling "Homeric laughter"—as narrative feature and audience response—was anticipated.
>
> Dance (2020: 405)

By referring to this episode as 'the tale of Ares and Aphrodite', Dance (2020) is firmly placing them as the central characters of Demodocus' song, much like how Olson (1989) calls it their 'love song'.[284] Yet, for the purpose of this chapter, I have called this incident 'Hephaestus' Trap'. After all, despite Dance and Olson's wording, Aphrodite and Ares remain voiceless throughout this exchange.[285] In contrast, the primary focus of Demodocus' tale lies resolutely in Hephaestus' deceptive actions.[286] What transpires is a showcase of this god's skill in his craft and showmanship, as he successfully traps the couple in his bed, thus creating a comic spectacle for the other male gods, who are overcome with laughter. What sets this episode apart from the above 'Deception of Zeus', is the emphasis on laughter within the heart of its plot.[287] As Dance points out above, laughter plays such an important role in the make-up and therefore reception

[284] See also Alden (129-1997) and Braswell (1982), who both refer to this episode as the song of Ares and Aphrodite in the titles of their respective publications. Braswell is quoted from Brown's 'Ares. Aphrodite, and the Laughter of the Gods' (1989: 283).
[285] Dance (2020: 408). See also Odyssey 8.362-366, where Aphrodite returns to *Paphos*, as if nothing embarrassing has happened. This is vastly different to *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite*, where she openly expresses her 'terrible sorrow' in being tricked by Zeus, see *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite* 199.
[286] *Odyssey* 8.268.
[287] Halliwell (2008: 78).

of this episode that he even goes as far as to say it is a commentary and criticism on the nature of showmanship and group laughter amongst Homeric audiences.[288] Hall (2018) takes this idea further to state that this comic scene stages Hephaestus as the comedian of the *Odyssey*.[289]

2.3.a: AUDIENCE(S)

Within this chapter's introduction, I highlighted different types of audiences to consider in *Odyssey* 8. First is the Homeric audience. These can also be regarded as the real / external audience who listened to and later read this epic poem. Then within the Homeric text itself, there are two additional examples. The first is Odysseus/ Phaeacians, who listen to Demodocus' song. This in turn reveals the final example, as it tells of the immortal gods who witness and enjoy Hephaestus' trick.[290] Within this layering of performances, we also witness a differentiation of audience dynamics.

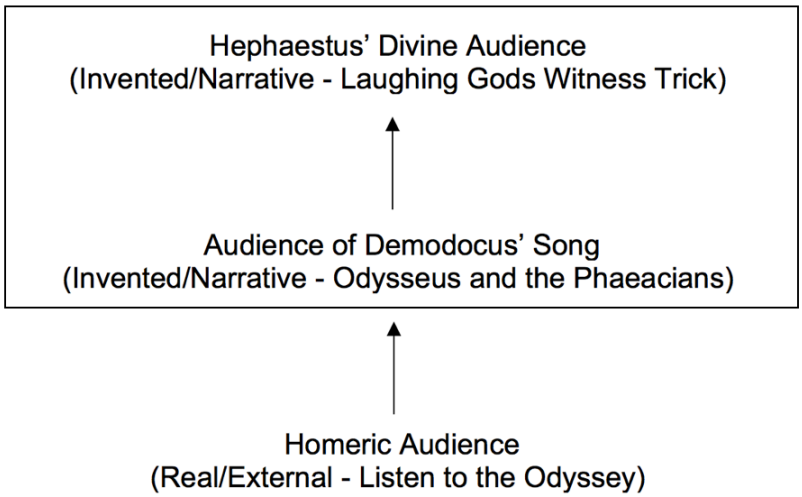


FIGURE 4. DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN AUDIENCES IN ODYSSEY 8.

[288] Dance (2020: 408).
[289] Hall (2018: 372).
[290] Dance (2020: 411).

Using the analogy of a floor plan to a theatre / stage set up, the above diagram similarly shows the direction in which these three audience groups are aware of a performance taking place, as well as their awareness of each other. The boxed audiences are part of performance, while the arrows show the direction of awareness between audience groups. As the only one outside of the box, the Homeric audience are emphasised as the only real and external spectators, with the remaining two groups demonstrating that they are part of a staged performance. In the case of 'Hephaestus' Divine audience', they go a step further as they exist within something similar to the meta-theatrical device known as a performance within a performance, typical of much later dramatic practices.[291]

I am particularly struck by the appearance of separating audiences into groups, as I will demonstrate similar motifs within Aristophanic comedies and even Stewart Lee's separation of audiences in Chapter Six.[292] It is, however, enough to emphasise at this stage that in each of these cases the action of separating audiences ultimately elevates the 'real' audience into comic compliance, through self-aware laughter. In the case of *Odyssey* 8, this is the Homeric audience, who are in on the self-referential joke, because they are privy to seeing the above layering in its entirety. Starting with Odysseus and his engagement of Demodocus' song, I can consider further possible reflections for this 'real' Homeric audience.

[291] Refer back to introduction, section 1.4, for more on this meta-theatrical practice. See also Chapter Four , section 4.4.a for an example in Aristophanes' *Wasps* and Chapter Six, section 6.3.a, with the introduction of *Jerry Springer: the Opera.*
[292] See Chapter Six, section 6.4.a.

Rutherford (2013) argues that the job of the epic poet was not to venerate the present, but to emphasise a glorious past.[293] Yet, he also makes some useful comparisons between the singing / performing within these narratives and that of performing epic poetry in general. Rutherford stipulates that 'the scenes involving bards and song can be combined to yield a coherent and subtle conception of poetry and its function'.[294] For example, on a basic level, Demodocus' song shows similarities with epic performance as these bards do not need text; they perform from memory and with instruments.[295] Rutherford does caution against making too close a comparison, as he argues that these were idealized portrayals of a poet and his audience in a Heroic past.[296] Yet, I am drawn to the idea that these performances, both within *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* are also an opportunity to project the performative dynamics that the Homeric audience were also familiar with. Rutherford even refers to ancient scholia that make similar comparisons, such as Demodocus' blindness being a mirror image to the figure of Homer performing.[297] With such examples in mind, it is not a stretch to see how the audience could also be mirrored in the story's epic tradition of performing 'a poem of the people'.[298]

Then there are very real comic consequences of pairing a heroic figure like Odysseus, with the otherwise farcical story of the god Hephaestus. To do this, I will briefly refer

[293] Rutherford (2013: 6).
[294] Rutherford (2013:23). See also Griffin (1980: 100-2).
[295] Rutherford (2013:23).
[296] Rutherford also shows ways in which there are differences: for example, Demodocus' song is considerably shorter than *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (Rutherford 2013: 24).
[297] Rutherford (2013: 24).
[298] This follows the idea of Parry (1971), who argues that unlike later epic, sources like *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were products of a poetic, oral and linguistic tradition, taken from Rutherford (2013: 26 and 26.n82). There are those who argue in reverse that these Homeric texts were a remoulding of tradition. This would support ideas of this thesis' comic self-referential style of comedy, although Rutherford, argues that it is this mix of 'tradition and originality' that matters. (2013: 26-30 and 30.n96).

back to Odysseus' altercation with Thersites in *Iliad* 2. After all, we have already highlighted the similar theme of ugly appearance when comparing descriptions of Hephaestus and Thersites. So, to see Odysseus within this complex hierarchy of audiences, we cannot help but note the absurdity, yet inevitability, in comparing a god who lacks godly qualities to this lowly soldier. As the key target and challenger to Thersites' mockery, Odysseus' presence as a spectator to Demodocus' song offers a subtle reminder of this other myth. Since Odysseus is in many respects the great 'performer' throughout the *Odyssey*, his very presence as a spectator to Demodocus' song only strengthens these themes of self-awareness and dramatic flair. Griffin (1978) also notes the two roles Odysseus plays within this instance:

> The songs of the minstrel and Odysseus' reactions to them provide important clues for determining how Homer wants Odysseus to be seen by two different audiences, namely, the readers or listeners of Homer, and the listeners of Demodocus who eventually became the dramatic audience for Odysseus himself.
>
> Griffin (1978: 55)

Returning to this idea of self-reflection, Myers' concept of a 'divine audience' reasons that the gods offer an almost meta-performative significance to the text, whereby divine spectators model the dynamics of performance familiar to an audience listening to this same poem.[299] Granted, Myers was specifically referring to the *Iliad* when using this term, but Dance was also able to extend this to this episode of the *Odyssey,* when he states 'The episode offers a commentary on spectatorship, criticism, and group laughter'.[300] Of course, it is problematic to refer to any Homeric text as meta-theatrical,

[299] Myers (2019:2).
[300] See Myers (2019); Dance (2020: 408).

when theatre did not exist as we understand it. Nevertheless, by thinking in these terms, we can at least recognise what Olson (1989) also called 'a self-conscious and self-reflective poetic moment'; one that turns the Olympian gods into stand-ins for this 'real' audience.[301]

So, how can Hephaestus be seen as a comedic figure for each of these audiences? After all, Rinon (2006) uses examples within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, both separately and in conjunction with each other, to show how Hephaestus is a noticeably tragic figure.[302] In particular, Rinon references Hephaestus' physical disability and occupation as a divine artist, a role that results in a lot of physical labour. Rinon observes that these two features make him more human in tone, particularly when compared to the other pleasure-seeking gods.[303] He reasons that 'the tragic is an aspect of existence that is essentially applicable to mortals' and as we have already highlighted within the *Iliad*, this is true of the overall human tragedy displayed throughout the Trojan War.[304] Likewise, Brown (1989) argues that Demodocus' song mirrors more serious values, with Hephaestus restoring his own integrity through comedic shaming, as well as seeking reparations that seem to apply both within human society and the Greek pantheon.[305]

Nevertheless, it can also be said that these 'ungodly' qualities found in Hephaestus' character create an equally comic response. For instance, in contrast to Rinon's

[301] Olson (1989: 142).
[302] Rinon (2006).
[303] Rinon (2006: 1).
[304] Rinon does acknowledge that these are a necessary feature but not superefficient on their own. To see more on what makes Hephaestus a 'tragic god', read Rinon (2006: 1-20).
[305] Brown (1989: 291); Edmunds (2020: 58).

argument, Edith Hall (2018) states the need for scholars of ancient Greek comedy to see Hephaestus as a distinctly comedic figure.[306] Hall even emphasises the same features as Rinon when making her arguments. [307] After all, as the only physically disabled deity within the Olympian pantheon and one whose job is menial in comparison to his peers, Hephaestus reflects an absurd example of a god. This is something we will come across again in Chapter Three with the Aristophanic representation of Dionysus in comic plays such as *Frogs*. In this particular instance, we would not call Dionysus a tragic figure within a comic framework, as he still achieves what he ultimately sets out to do; the same could be said for Hephaestus. As such, Hephaestus instead becomes an important instrument for comedy, which we see also in *Iliad* 1.[308]

> Then he poured wine for all the other gods from left to right,
> drawing sweet nectar from the bowl. And unquenchable laughter
> arose among the blessed gods, as they saw Hephaestus puffing
> through the palace.
>
> *Iliad* 1.597-600

Much like 'Hephaestus' Trap', here we see how in *Iliad* 1, the same god evokes 'unquenchable laughter' from his fellow gods. This not only defuses a heated exchange between his mother and father, but also successfully changes the tone of the text that precedes it and forces a lighter mood to Olympus.[309] Once again, the 'real' audience are given hints of tragedy, only to have the author turn it on its head. After all, in his speech to Hera just moments before, Hephaestus actively reminds the audience of a

[306] Hall (2018: 367).
[307] Hall (2018: 366).
[308] Hall (2018: 336 and 366).
[309] *Iliad* 1.599-600. See Halliwell (2008: 52).

more sobering myth where he falls from Heaven, thus supporting Rinon's tragic figure.[310] Yet, Hephaestus' actions in this scene are clearly meant to be humorous. What transpires is a reminder of his lame appearance, parodying a role typically reserved for beautiful individuals like Ganymede.[311] Halliwell (2008) suggests that the wording within this scene focuses on the movement of his legs thus making them key to this comedy; in the above translation, this word is 'puffing'. Halliwell state that this could also be a focus on Hephaestus' play acting, here his movement poorly mimics an ostentatious and beautiful servant.[312] This would suggest that Hephaestus is in on the joke and therefore a comic figure in this instance.

Brown also argues that the *Odyssey* is far more occupied with ideas of justice than the *Iliad*. This could go some way to explaining the harsher tone to *Odyssey* 8, a contrast to Hephaestus' play acting in *Iliad* 1. Brown differentiates the two by stating that where the scene in the *Iliad* was one of amusement, the *Odyssey* was one of mockery.[313] I however, think that both scenes are about mockery, the difference being that the *Iliad* was one of self-deprecation. This is something that will be explored further as this thesis goes on to address comedic tools of stand-up comedy.

What is more, like *Odyssey* 8, we are dealing with a Homeric audience engaging with divine spectatorship, specifically applied to the action of laughter concerning Hephaestus. Yet, unlike *Iliad* 2, the divine audience in *Odyssey* 8 are exclusively male.

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[310] *Iliad* 1.585-595.
[311] *Iliad* 20.232-235. For Homeric references to the beauty of Ganymedes and his subsequent role as divine cup-bearer, see *Iliad* 20.232 and *Homeric Hymn V. Aphrodite* 203.
[312] Halliwell (2008: 63).
[313] Brown (1989:287).

Doherty (1992) also notes that this is also true of Odysseus and the Phaeacians, as they listen to this song by Demodocus.[314] These are two male-centred audiences, who appear to take pleasure from the spectacle. In the case of the gods, the goddesses avoid the spectacle entirely due to shame.[315] By extension of this, Aphrodite is treated as someone to be gawked at or possessed, thus reiterating this theme of shame through female shamelessness.[316] Neither is this the only time where Hephaestus' craft is linked to female sexual desire. We only need to remind ourselves of his role in the creation of Pandora. According to Hesiod's account, there are a number of gods and goddesses who contributed to the creation of Pandora, but it is Hephaestus who fashions her from the earth.[317] In my next section, I will look at another instance of Hephaestus creating a sexualised trap.

2.3.b: STAGING THE TRAP

> … he went his way to his smithy, pondering evil in the deep of his heart, and set on the anvil block the great anvil and forged bonds which could not be broken or loosed, that they might stay firmly in place. But when he had fashioned the snare in his wrath against Ares, he went to his chamber where lay his bed, and everywhere round about the bedposts he spread the bonds, and many, too, were hung from above, from the roofbeams, fine as spiders' webs, so that no one even of the blessed gods could see them, so cunningly were they fashioned. But when he had spread all his snare about the couch, he made as though he would go to Lemnos, that well-ordered citadel, which is in his eyes far the dearest of all lands…
>
> *Odyssey* 8.273-285

[314] Doherty (1992: 165).
[315] *Odyssey* 8. 323.
[316] Dance (2020: 408).
[317] *Works and Days* 60-64.

> …so they two went to the couch and laid them down to sleep,
> and about them fell the cunning bonds of the wise Hephaestus,
> nor could they in any way stir their limbs or raise them up. Then at
> length they realized that there was no more escaping.
>
> *Odyssey* 8.295-299

Highlighted above are ways in which Hephaestus' craftmanship is described as both cunning and wise, with phrasing like 'snare' and 'cunning bonds' reinforcing an inevitable success in his trapping of Aphrodite and Ares. The term δόλος is more closely referring to bait, unlike 'metis' which has closer connotations to counsel.[318] Here we find the terms snare and 'craftily' being used in conjunction with each other, with the term δολόεντα being used in relation to Hephaestus' skill in creating said trap. It is also highlighting the cunning involved and the secret underhanded way in which he must do it. So, is this a comic reminder of Hephaestus' disability and his need to seek alternative ways to achieve retribution? Or is it a reminder of a well-used Homeric theme of cunning outwitting strength? In reality, it appears to be both, with the themes of trickery once again being applied in a comic way. Hephaestus uses his cunning so that he may shame them in front of the other deities. The response to this is praise for his craftsmanship, which in turn means praise for his cunning intelligence. Yet this same praise has a mocking edge to it.

[318] According to *The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, the word dolos / δόλος originally means 'bait' (LSJ:443). The translation of 'trick' and 'cunning', in its more abstract sense, comes from this word. The term δολόεντα is also being used in relation to Hephaestus' skill in creating a trap for his wife and Ares. See *Odyssey* 8:276, this highlights the cunning involved and the secret, possibly underhanded way, in which he is doing it. According to *The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, *metis* /μῆτις also means wisdom, skill, craft, counsel, plan or undertaking (LSJ:1130). See examples in the *Iliad* 2:169, 2:407, 2:636 and 10:137. Detienne and Vernant suggest that 'metis' is described as a specific kind of intelligence, often called 'cunning intelligence' (Detienne and Vernant 1978: 3).

> Ill deeds do not win out. The slow catches the swift; just as
> now Hephaestus, slow as he is, has caught Ares even though he is
> the swiftest of the gods who hold Olympus. Lame, he has caught
> him by craft. Ares must pay for his adultery.
>
> *Odyssey* 8.330-332

Ares, one of the swiftest of the gods, is outdone by someone who is viewed as physically challenged.[319] Of course, Hephaestus' management of laughter in this episode needs further exploration. Laughter is clearly the desired response for the poet's 'real' Homeric audience, but that does not mean it is Hephaestus' aim with his own divine spectators. In many respects, the above extract suggests a backhanded compliment to Hephaestus: one that laughs at him as much as with him. Rinon argues that it is this laughter within this episode that strengthens Hephaestus as a tragic god, one where Aphrodite's betrayal and the god's response only increases the 'unabridged gap' between the god and his fellow Olympians.[320]

> So he went to his house troubled at heart,
> and stood in the gateway, and fierce anger seized him. And terribly
> he cried out and called to all the gods:
> "father Zeus, and you other blessed gods that are forever,
> come hither that you may see a matter laughable and unendurable,
> how Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, scorns me for being lame and
> loves hateful Ares because he is handsome and strong of limb,
> whereas I was born misshapen. Yet for this is none other to blame
> but my two parents—would they had never begotten me! But you
> shall see where these two have gone up into my bed and sleep
> together in love, while I am filled with grief at the sight. Yet I think
> they will not wish to lie longer like this, no, not for a moment, no
> matter how loving they are. Soon shall both lose their desire to
> sleep; instead the snare and the bonds shall hold them until her
> father pays back to me all the gifts of wooing that I gave him for
> his shameless girl, since his daughter is beautiful but faithless.
>
> *Odyssey* 8.303-320

[319] Scally (1978: 57).
[320] Rinon (2006: 17).

Edmunds on the other hand argues that this laughter does not undercut Hephaestus' revenge, but assists it.[321] Brown is also of the opinion that laughter is in fact Hephaestus' desired response, which in turn can only be understood with a knowledge of early Greek shame-culture.[322] In the above translation, laughter is the desired response. Yet, upon closer inspection, it is not clear if Hephaestus is seeking laughter within this speech; as both ancient and modern scholars have disagreed on the initial phrasing of line 307. The above extract translates 'laughable deeds' (ἔργα γελαστὰ), whereas other readings argue that it was in fact 'un-funny' (ἔργ' ἀγέλαστα).[323] Halliwell (2008) points out that this discrepancy comes out of a lack of marked word divisions in archaic texts and as such, it can never be clear as to whether laughter or an absence of laughter was Hephaestus' desired response.[324] Edmunds (2020) notes that we cannot forget that once the decision was made to write this episode down, a choice had to be made in terminology.[325] Furthermore, as both Edmunds and de Jong (2001) point out, the difference between γελαστὰ and ἀγέλαστα is so slight that it is plausible that this ambiguity was intentional.[326]

Therefore, depending on how you choose to look at this scene, Rinon could indeed be right in stating Hephaestus' tragic nature is to be laughed at, or equally Hall has a point in saying that this scene makes the god a comedic figure of the *Odyssey*. This is strengthened by the fact that he is the creator of this comic spectacle.[327] In these

[321] Edmunds (2020: 58).
[322] Brown (1898: 284);
[323] *Odyssey* 8.307; Dance (2020: 409-10). Those who argue for 'ἔργ' ἀγέλαστα' include Olson (1989: 142.n28), Halliwell (2008: 80.n70) and Bierl (2012:125) whereas Brown prefers ἔργα γελαστὰ (1989: 285-6).
[324] Halliwell (2008: 80).
[325] Edmunds (2020: 57.n.6).
[326] Edmunds (2020: 57); de Jong (2001: 208).
[327] Hall (2018: 374).

circumstances, I am inclined to agree with Hall's assessment, as I feel it is the audience's response that is key. Dance points out that this is similar to someone stating, "Promise not to laugh!". Which means, despite any protest by Hephaestus, the speaker is acknowledging the potential for laughter and even anticipates it.[328] Furthermore, Dance points out that the anticipated laughter of the divine audience encourages a parallel response from the poet's external audience. It is up to the poet to offer the comedy desired by the audience. What feelings said laughter evokes, be it distain or merriment, is up for the audience to resolve.[329] In addition, this full self-reflective experience allows laughter to become a crutch in which the Homeric audience can couple divine representation with the darker tones of sexual betrayal.[330]

> Unlike "live" laughter, which erupts, often spontaneously, in response to jokes, tickling, uncomfortable social situations, feelings of joy, and a multitude of other (often banal) stimuli (Provine 2001: 23–53), laughter within a narrative is never a spontaneous occurrence but an incidence of specific vocabulary that is deliberately incorporated into a story by an (implied) author, narrator, or focalizing agent. The laughter may serve varied purposes, such as announcing generic affiliations, characterizing those who do or do not laugh, or alerting audiences to the appropriateness of laughter as a critical response. But laughter's ambiguous nature—indicating, for example, the contradictory assessments of approval and scorn—means that narrated laughter's impact upon its immediate or broader context may be the creation of uncertainty.
>
> Dance (2020: 407)

In tangent to this, Newton (1987) assimilates Hephaestus as the hero of the tale, likening the situation to Odysseus and his own return to Ithaca.[331] The audience of Demodocus' song do not explicitly laugh, but instead show delight at the narrative.[332]

[328] Dance (2020: 411).
[329] Dance (2020: 408).
[330] Halliwell (2008: 79).
[331] Newton (1987: 12-20); See also Alden (1997: 514).
[332] Dance (2020: 413); See also Edmunds (2020: 55).

Odysseus in particular shows pleasure in listening, despite his own parallels to his less than ideal marital circumstance in leaving Penelope for a full ten years.[333] Furthermore, Brown also argues that to see this laughter at the expense of Hephaestus would be to undermine his victory in this instance and call into question the obvious parallels to Odysseus and Euryalus' dispute.[334] This is an observation that Doherty also highlights when reasoning Odysseus' enjoyment of the song:

> Odysseus has special cause for pleasure at the song, which can be seen as an implicit compliment to him: Hephaestus' triumph, through cleverness, over the more handsome and swifter Ares reflects Odysseus' defeat of the handsome but thoughtless Euryalus, and the restitution made by Ares to Hephaestus anticipates that to be made by Euryalus to Odysseus.' This close correspondence between the song and its setting reinforces the implied comparison between the male gods as spectators in the song and the presumably all-male audience entertained by Demodocus.
>
> Doherty (1992: 165)

Hephaestus is not meant to be in total control of his audience's response and in there lies part of the comedy. For instance, Edmunds nicely breaks the scene down into three instances of laughter, this being 1) the ridicule in which Hephaestus is liable, 2) the reversal of laughter though the lovers' entrapment and 3) a final reversal by Hermes and Apollo through their own joke.[335] Furthermore, the 'real' audience witness the poet's own ability to do what even the god cannot: to offer a controlled experience of laughter.[336]

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[333] *Odyssey* 8.367–368. See Dance (2020: 413) and Brown (1989: 284).
[334] Brown (1989:285). See also Scally (1979).
[335] Edmunds (2020: 61).
[336] Refer back to this thesis' introduction, section 1.2.b, for controlled laughter in stand-up comedy. Of course, this example is far from stand-up, but following the themes of my research, there are similarities in the comic's dynamic with their audience and what said audience expect from a performance in turn.

What is more, as de Jong (2009) points out, the voice of the poet blends with Demodocus' song, in a way that increases the validity of the 'real' storyteller, indicating that he is just as good as a song from a heroic past.[337] Bonifazi (2018) also used this idea of 'viewpoint blending' when she considers how the characters become narrators within the poem.[338] As such, I cannot help but see similarities with the later Aristophanic parabasis. I am referring to the blending of the playwrights' political rhetoric within the voice of a dramatic persona. This is in a sense a clever staging of ideas within a planned comic framework. There are also two other instances of staging that I want to consider here. First is the almost dramatic staging of the gods observing the scene from Hephaestus' door and the second is the staging of a joke between Hermes and Apollo in lines 333-343.

> So he spoke, and the gods gathered to his house with its bronze threshold. Poseidon came, the earth-bearer, and the helper Hermes came, and the lord Apollo who works from afar. The goddesses stayed behind for shame, each in her own house, but the gods, the givers of good things, stood in the gateway; and unquenchable laughter arose among the blessed gods as they saw the craft of wise Hephaestus.
>
> *Odyssey* 8.321-327

Brown points out that the house layout leaves a lot of questions to the access between public and private space. In other words, should the doorway to Hephaestus' home have direct access to the bedroom? This is a good point, but as Brown also suggests, the circumstance is most likely symbolic, showing where the public and inner world met. [339] I would, however, take this further, arguing that this is in fact a symbolic

[337] de Jong (2009: 101); Beck (2005: 217); Edmunds (2020: 56.n.2).
[338] Bonifazi (2018: 249–250).
[339] Brown (1989: 286).

mirroring of the 'real' audience that this 'divine audience' represents. In a sense, we are witnessing something similar to a stage and a theatre/spectator space. Hephaestus has set the scene, including the prop that is his trap. Aphrodite and Ares are the unsuspecting performers, with the male gods' sole purpose being to see this unfold. Edmunds also points out that the third and final moment of laughter comes from an exchange between fellow spectators Apollo and Hermes.[340]

> Thus they spoke to one another. But to Hermes the lord
> Apollo, son of Zeus, said:
> "Hermes, son of Zeus, guide, giver of good things, would you
> be willing, even though ensnared with strong bonds, to lie on a
> couch beside golden Aphrodite?"
> Then the messenger Argeïphontes answered him: "would that
> this might happen, lord Apollo, far-shooter—that thrice as many
> ineluctable bonds might clasp me about and you gods and all the
> goddesses too might look on, but that I might sleep beside golden
> Aphrodite."
> So he spoke and laughter arose among the immortal gods.
>
> *Odyssey* 8.334-344

There are two points that I would like to make about this. First is the imitation of dialogue by the narrative. This is something we see time and again within both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The special feature here is that it is an example of mimicked speech within a mimicked narration. We also see similar dialogue in the exchange between Poseidon and Hephaestus that concluded this episode.[341]

Once again, the audience are witnessing something close to dialogue, as Hephaestus and Poseidon converse over reparations.[342] This ending with Poseidon is also why

[340] Edmunds (2020: 59).
[341] *Odyssey* 8.343- 359.
[342] *Odyssey* 8.344-360.

Edmunds thinks Hephaestus is less a buffoon and more of an artisan who cultivates shame and laughter to his advantage.[343] This is also something that we will come to see in Juvenalian satire, where Juvenal also narrates various characters' dialogue.[344] The difference between the two is that Juvenal is actively being anti-dramatic in his approach, whereas this Homeric text has drama to work from. Nevertheless, a similar effect is achieved, which would in a post-dramatic space be called meta-theatrical; in other words, a play within a play.

I would also like to observe this exchange between Hermes and Apollo as the staging of a separate joke. Edmunds argues that this exchange goes some way to reversing Hephaestus' revenge, as it places the circumstance of Ares in a positive light; almost a privilege rather than a punishment.[345] Apollo is in a sense setting up this joke, so that Hermes may offer the intended witty response. Dance argues this response is not only directed to Apollo, but the rest of the gods present.[346] In other words, the audience are further split, with two becoming comic performers in their own right.

Brown also refers to this exchange as 'banter' between the gods, which only serves to remind the 'real' audience of their less than human nature. In other words, even in the face of betrayal, 'there is no tragedy on Olympus'.[347] This is in some ways supported by Hephaestus' lack of response to this joke. Perhaps this is a reminder that Hephaestus may not be happy with the gods' laughter, or as Dance suggests, it could

[343] Edmunds (2020: 61).
[344] See Chapter Four, section 5.3.a.
[345] Edmunds (2020: 59).
[346] Dance (2020: 409).
[347] Brown (1989: 291).

be a result of the god being distracted by Poseidon, or simply Hephaestus does not care anymore now that he is seeking compensation akin to divorce proceedings.[348]

CLOSING THOUGHTS:

By starting with Homeric laughter, this chapter offered my thesis a chance to explore the greater nuances of comic interludes within the wider frameworks of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Specifically using the 'Deception of Zeus' and 'Hephaestus' Trap', I showcased two instances where trickery was 'staged' within a pre-dramatic text. Homeric laughter is often considered cruel in its execution and in the case of my own case-studies, this could be considered accurate. Yet, within the wider context of the Homeric tradition, laughter has actually proven to hold a great range in emotion, but what they all have in common is the intensity by which the audience is captivated to experience a particular emotion on a higher scale. In the case of Hera and Hephaestus, it is the gods laughing at the expense of other gods. This separation between the divine and the living amplifies their separate roles in providing comedy and tragedy. Where the gods may be almost seen as human or childlike in their laughter, their divinity creates a safety net by which an audience can have respite from the tragic tones of the greater narrative. Yet, when this same audience move on to the horrors of the battlefield, they are all the more struck by this shift in tone.

Starting with Hera's performance, I deduced that a type of persona comedy is created to amplify her role as both wife and sister to Zeus. Her emphasis on these roles is even found in similarly comic scenes, with *Iliad* 1, four and fifteen. Her clever speeches in

[348] Dance (2020: 413).

each episode frame the deception of Zeus nicely, setting up a perceived satirical mask for the goddess in anticipation for her ridicule of Zeus' authority. I in turn was then able to parallel the much later masks of Juvenal and even Stewart Lee in Chapters Five and Six. Both Juvenal and Stewart Lee present versions of themselves in exaggerated comical anger. What is more, it can be said that Hera's mask even resembles Oliver Double's variations of character comedy.

This is all enhanced further through Hera's erotic disguise, which visualises her trick with costume and props. This allows the audience to engage with a familiar divine image, which in anticipation of Chapter Three shows a dramatic sequence of events that complements the later characterisation of Dionysus in classical theatre. Furthermore, this episode's mirroring of erotic costume in other archaic sources, in particular *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* and Hesiod's creation of Pandora, suggest a commonality in staged trickery when applied to female beauty, which should be unusual in a seemingly pre-dramatic era, but is also prevalent in Juvenal's descriptions of Messalina in Chapter Five.

The *Odyssey* plays on the different variations of audience throughout 'Hephaestus' Trap'. With the 'real' audience witnessing both the imaginary spectators of Demodocus and the gods, Hephaestus' house becomes a literal stage for their enjoyment. Laughter is the key response here, as both gods and by extension the 'real' audience are instructed to respond in kind. Like Hera, Hephaestus becomes a key comedic figure, which is not surprising when we consider his role as light relief in *Iliad* 1 or his parallels to Thersites. Yet unlike Hera's trick, he is not in control of the laughter he evokes. With

the ambiguity in whether he is telling the other gods or not, as well as Hermes and Apollo offering side jokes at his expense, the audience are indirectly being instructed to laugh at Hephaestus as much as the victims of his trickery. This could be likened to the comedic ridicule of Dionysus in Aristophanes, but unlike this later classical play, there is no hint of self-deprecation.

CHAPTER THREE

[STAGING LAUGHTER WITH DIONYSUS: EURIPIDES' *BACCHAE* AND ARISTOPHANES' *FROGS*]

> There can, ultimately, be no comedy without the 'Dionysian'
>
> Revermann (2014: 281)

So far, I have focused on comedic deception as it appears in the pre-dramatic texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. As a result, I have yet to grapple with this thesis' wider objective, which is to offer a comparative analysis into the tricky dynamics of laughter between an audience and their comic. With that in mind, this chapter takes Revermann's comment to heart and moves on to a distinctly theatrical space. Here, I will consider the comedic significance of Dionysus as a protagonist in both Euripides' *Bacchae* and Aristophanes' *Frogs*. These two well-studied fifth-century plays use the god in seemingly different ways. Nevertheless, both use a mix of pre-existing cultic ideas with a dramatic persona, to facilitate self-aware laughter within the margins of their own genres. In other words, I will showcase how these two dramatic renditions of Dionysus are a next stage to my overall research; displaying variations of meta-theoretical comedy that create comedian-like personae for the ancient stage. What is more, each use the god to facilitate a similar sense of the 'consensual trickery' so prevalent in my thesis; be it through a paradoxical use of fear and laughter in Euripides' tragedy, or the constant yet typical dramatic self-reference in Aristophanes' comedy.

> The Dionysus who appears in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, though likable, is cowardly and opportunistic, in Euripides' *Bacchae*, he is a seductive killer.
>
> Mills (2006: 15)

As Mills implies above, Euripides' *Bacchae* sees Dionysus as the vengeful reveller, one whose heroism and journey is well suited to a tragic framework and is also steeped in pre-existing mythical readings of the god.[349] On the other hand, Euripides' tragedy sees this same Dionysus as sometimes comic in tone, achieved through the use of meta-theatrical devices like acting, directing and costume. Here laughter is mockery, with Dionysus' key oppressor Pentheus as the target. Furthermore, meta-theatrical sections like the prologue and dressing-up scene only remind the audience of a funny, yet scary god: typical of Dionysian imagery as early as the *Homeric Hymns*. As such, laughter created in these moments serve to enrich the *Bacchae*'s tragedy. In one way it tricks audiences into distraction from the god's sinister intentions, but inevitably, it facilitates the brutality of Pentheus' suffering at the end of the play.[350]

In contrast to Euripides' Dionysus, Aristophanes' *Frogs* portrays a god who is a predominantly comedic figure. This is a figure whose primary function is to invoke laughter from its audience, whether it is the parodying of other dramatic practitioners, or his farcical un-god-like behaviour. Mills is right that this version of Dionysus is buffoonish, with his divinity appearing reversed through demeaning acts like defecation and cowardice. Yet, much like Euripides' *Bacchae*, Aristophanes' *Frogs* plays on recognisable mythic motifs such as references ranging from wine, death, mystery cults and of course drama. Likewise, Aristophanes plays with this idea of divinity through

[349] On Dionysus as a tragic hero, see Alaux (2011).
[350] See Foley (1980:126).

the concluding dramatic contest, wherein Dionysus is a dramatic and divine judge. Furthermore, the play's overarching plot also relies on a Dionysius who is the patron of the stage. Using more obvious examples of self-reflective comedy, this Dionysus uses direct address, bad costume and tragic parody to constantly remind the audience of the dramatic competition in which they were actively a part.

To give this chapter context, I will first need to summarise earlier scholarship on Dionysus, particularly his cultic and dramatic personae. In the process, I will consider recurring themes of ambiguity and contradiction, which then feed into his theatricality in both plays, as well as his natural agency for meta-theatre in tragedy and Old Comedy. Following this, section 3.2 will analyse the pre-dramatic *Homeric Hymns,* to introduce typical Dionysian themes such as the god's birth, his comic procession and a dangerous and comedic persona. [351] At this point, I will be able to show how these early representations of the god fed into the meaning, making and method of my dramatic case studies. In the final section of this chapter, I will shift to examine the actual meta-theatrical mechanisms found in each play. In *Bacchae* this will be through Dionysus' director-like behaviour in the plays' exposition and again in Pentheus' costume. In *Frogs*, I will be showcasing meta-theatrical tools such as direct address, bad costume, and tragic parody. All of these tools will help me consider the extent of audience awareness and question here how they have been potentially deceived by a playwright through the consequences of their laughter.[352]

[351] Halliwell (2009:137).
[352] See Rosen (2015: 455) and Revermann (2014: 280).

3.1: INTRODUCING DIONYSUS

Before exploring the self-referential laughter in *Bacchae* and *Frogs*, or even the pre-dramatic versions of the god that makes these plays so effective in later use of meta-theatre, it is first important to break down a scholarly framework that can be split into three directions. The first allows for a broader look into how scholarship has made sense of the often ambiguous images of Dionysus, be it his cultic and dramatic presence both on and off the classical stage, or indeed his conflicting comedic presence when compared to a dangerous god. From this, I can then establish the second phase, which is to see how research has made sense of the god as a comic protagonist in both tragedy and Old Comedy, specifically Euripides' mocking god or Aristophanes' comic hero. Finally, the third category within this mini literature review is to consider how the study of meta-theatre considers Dionysus as a conduit of dramatic self-referential laughter in both genres.

3.1.a: AMBIGUITY

Seaford (2006) identifies that within any community, Dionysus could act as both a 'focus' and an 'agent' that was 'dangerously ambivalent'.[353] Likewise, Stuttard (2016) comments that 'Dionysus could be unrelentingly savage' despite his charm.[354] This idea of a violent, yet funny god is one that prevails in Dionysian scholarship and will be addressed periodically throughout this chapter.[355] Halliwell's study of Greek laughter offers a particular focus on this issue, when he explains the theory of 'symbolic doubleness'. In all, Halliwell's argument is that this doubleness distinguishes the

[353] Seaford (2006: 21 and 37).
[354] Stuttard (2016: 2).
[355] For Dionysus as a violent god, see Padel (1990: 337).

sympotic and anti-sympotic characters on stage and helps facilitate 'the religious horizons of the entire work'.[356] Furthermore, Halliwell explains that the doubleness of Dionysian laughter simultaneously threatened religious solemnity, as well as characterised Greek dramatic festivity.[357]

Dionysian contradiction is also an important theme in Seaford's breakdown between various Dionysian roles, from the grapevine, mystery cults, bacchic madness and even death. This is most true of his dual god theory, which was influenced by Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). Here Seaford focuses on Nietzsche's idea of 'contradiction' and incorporates it into his own spectrum of representing 'unity' and 'duality'.[358] In doing so, he gives a number of key examples in previous scholarship that he believes fall somewhere within this spectrum. For instance, Otto (1933) and Kerényi (1976) both focus on the contrasting Dionysian themes of life and death, with Otto referring to Dionysus as a 'spirit of duality, while Kerényi recognised Dionysus' contrasting themes as ultimately archetypal.[359] Likewise, Seaford raises Detienne (1977) as an example of this spectrum's range within a single piece of research. Here, Detienne argues for the case of omophagy in tragedy, this being the eating of raw meat by those possessed by Dionysus.[360] The 'duality' lies in the god's wild and domestic roles. For instance, the consumption falls under his wilder state, but the unity lies in its representation on the stage. The audience are not really witnessing the action, but

[356] Halliwell (2008: 138).
[357] Halliwell (2008: 4, 134-136 and 206). See also Dodds (1960: 131) and Segal (1982: 199 and 290-1).
[358] Seaford (2006: 6-7). See also Rohde for his work *Psyche* (1894). His interests in the god's spiritual and practical development in ecstasy and Dionysian cult went on to influence later scholars like Dodds (1960: xi). See Seaford (2006: 7).
[359] As quoted in Seaford (2006: 8-9). For the coexistence of order and disorder, see Oudemans and Lardinois (1987: 216), as quoted in Seaford (2006: 10). Likewise, Alaux (2011) argues that Dionysus is 'permanently a dual god' (2011: 142).
[360] As referenced by Seaford (2006: 9).

enjoy a false version within the joined experience of the city Dionysia festival. Seaford makes sense of this contrast by calling it 'integration'.[361]

Zeitlin (1990) writes that the god's ambiguous nature manifests in theatre through his paradoxical behaviour, disturbing or confusing social conventions.[362] Although Zeitlin uses these terms to specifically acknowledge Dionysus' gender ambiguity within Greek theatre, Dionysian ambiguity is also a strong feature for those who try to rationalise his cultic and dramatic personae. Csapo (1997) for instance, argues against distinguishing Dionysus's mythic personality from his cultic practices, stating 'that Dionysus is unique in this respect: other gods may have developed rituals suited to their personalities, but Dionysus developed a personality to suit his ritual'.[363] Csapo is in effect describing Dionysus' fluid personality. His multiple characteristics of gender and nationality reflect some of his many roles within Greek society.

Likewise, Lada-Richards (1998) argues that the mythic and the dramatic conceptions of Dionysus are fundamentally interwoven, with the god's '*dramatic character*' being indebted to his theatrical traditions of fifth century Athens, as well as his roles in myth, cult and ritual.[364] Lada-Richards explains that the dramatic festivals were organic examples of the social, political, religious and communal Athenian identity. This in turn informed the god's flexible 'personality' in transformation and assimilation, which sees the very medium of acting cross-fertilizing with the Dionysus of the *polis*.[365]

[361] Seaford (2006: 8); Detienne (1977).
[362]Zeitlin (1990:66).
[363]Csapo (1997: 253).
[364] Lada-Richards (1999: 15-16). For the separation of theatre from ritual, see Riu (1999: 1).
[365] Lada-Richards (1999: 2-3); See also Foley (1980), who states that the god could be reached 'through mask, costume, voice and music' (1980: 132).

> Spectators going to the theatre cannot and do not leave at home the whole framework of more general cultural, ideological, ethical principles which they apply to their extra-theatrical activities (Elam 1980:52), and that, for this very reason, a 'stage-Dionysus' cannot be separated from the range of aspects, levels of meaning, and functions which were attached to his mythic, ritual, and cultic counterpart.
>
> Lada-Richards (1998: 2)

Segal (1989), Riu (1999), Seaford (2006) and Cole (2007) have also shown the ritual origins of this dramatic figure, with the god's earlier cultic responsibilities even having similarly performative ritual practices.[366] Cole's *Finding Dionysus* (2007) is a useful reference in this regard, as she breaks down the god's altered states, both pre-theatre and post-theatre; highlighting that dramatic components such as costume and imitation featured in the *Homeric Hymns to Dionysus*, as well as later cultic Bacchic revelry.[367] Similarly, Stuttard (2016) explains how pre-existing mythic ideas of the Bacchic god helped informed his dramatic evolution, with the unusual nature of Dionysus' birth in the early epic tradition, resulting in his name 'twice born' or 'Dithyrambos'; hence the earlier ritual singing and precursor to drama known as 'dithyrambs'.[368] Giannotti (2021) also goes some way to highlighting the significance that ancient spectators had on early theatre, especially in its connotations to this cultic Dionysus. Here he states that while ritual theatre may not have originally been intended as a spectacle, environmental factors like acoustics and the mass gathering of people, eventually had consequences on these rituals.[369]

[366] Cole (2007: 328). Also see Riu (1999: 1 and 131) and Segal (1982: 215).
[367] Cole (2007: 327-41). See also Foley (1980:132).
[368] Stuttard (2016: 2).
[369] Giannotti (2021: 19).

Mills (2006) on the over hand, brings the evolution back to the mythic theme of Dionysus's suffering, stating that his duality over his divinity and mortality is often thought to be the original subject of Greek tragedy.[370] This motif, where Dionysus constantly fights human scepticism, returns to this idea that he is a product of an irregular birth and so lives outside of conventional ideas of divinity.[371] It is this 'in-between' space that allows him to break rules and build new ones. Dover (1993), Cantarella (1974), and Riu (1999) have each argued that Aristophanes and Euripides worked via a similar framework of Dionysian traditions and conceptions.[372] I will now look at how laughter has been equated with the god within this tragedy, through the use of Dionysus as its divine protagonist, starting with the *Bacchae*.

3.1.b: THEATRICALITY

> To understand the close link between Dionysus and the theatre, the best starting-place is probably one of the last works of Euripides, the *Bacchae*: a play, which stands apart from his other works and offers a very distinctive image of Dionysos … the god, who delights in masks, hides behind a human appearance and at the same time behind the actor's mask.
>
> Alaux (2011: 142)

Kirk (1970) suggests that Euripides likely chose the god of drama, as well as themes of Dionysian worship, to reflect the playwright's own lifetime as a dramatist.[373] Whereas Foley (1980) states that the playwright likely responded to contemporary reflections of the theatre god, as divine connotations allowed for a reflective space where the god's presence could make or break dramatic illusion.[374] Foley argues that unlike modern

[370] Mills (2006: 50).
[371] Mills (2006: 51).
[372] Dover (1993: 38). See also Riu (1999: 115).
[373] Kirk (1970: 3).
[374] Foley (1980: 107).

playwrights, the *Bacchae* used self-conscious exploration of costume, music, and dance, which allowed for its audience to 'see' a Dionysus typical of both ritual and the stage.[375] Furthermore, she points out that this was less about Euripides' own drama and more about the human and divine experiences of the city.[376]

Stuttard (2016) offers a focus on the myth, when approaching the subject of the *Bacchae* and its dramatic mix of recognisable Dionysian traditions from fifth-century Athens.[377] Likewise, Alaux (2011) centres on the significance of myth within the makeup of a tragic narrative, especially within the context of Euripides' *Bacchae*. On balance, he argues that myth offered ample source material for ancient playwrights and in the case of the *Bacchae*, a dramatic Dionysus becomes an extension of his mythic role, reflecting the very nature of performance back at a willing audience.[378] Furthermore, Alaux sees this Dionysus as an extreme case of myth feeding into ancient theatre, illustrated with the concentration of tragic motifs including the returning hero and themes of recognition and revenge, especially within the context of family.[379]

Taplin (1986) explains that Dionysus' mix of comic interference with brutality effectively put the audience in a difficult position. This 'unsettling use of Dionysus', he argues, denies the audience a clear direction to take, as the mix of absurd laughter and tragic pity controls the theatrical experience.[380] This, like much of Taplin's work, is about stagecraft and the theatrical experience. For many years Taplin was of the opinion that

[375] Foley (1980: 133).
[376] Foley (1980:108).
[377] Stuttard (2016: 1).
[378] Alaux (2011: 142).
[379] Alaux (2011: 146-7).
[380] Taplin (1986: 165).

tragedy demanded silence from its audience, in contrast to the laughter found in Old Comedy. Within that argument, he stated that laughter was a potential threat to the emotional concentration required for tragedy to be a success. Nevertheless, Taplin did admit that comic themes were more common in later tragedies and even singles Euripides out for this fact.[381] He stipulates, however, that these comic interferences only existed to heighten the tragic tones that surround them.[382] Halliwell (2008) on the other hand, is more interested in the textual passages themselves, as he breaks down the play which first sees the god as a docile animal and then a beast turning on his prey.

> The *Bacchae* not only exhibits the ambiguities of laughter, its involvement in both celebration and cruelty; it transmutes them into the material, the motivations and the disastrous consequences of tragic conflict. One of the supreme, perpetually challenging paradoxes of the play is that Euripides has superimposed the body language of laughter, divine as well as human, onto the bleakest face of tragedy.
>
> Halliwell (2008: 139)

Euripides' *Bacchae* falls under Halliwell's idea of the sympotic laughter mentioned in 3.1. This is the dramatisation of travesties within a satiric mode, where the language of laughter encroaches on the realm of tragedy. Furthermore, Euripides' *Bacchae* offers a particularly revealing example of sympotic laughter, as the play sees Pentheus' mockery of Dionysus fail against the god's own gift of laughter for his true worshipers, these being the chorus of bacchants and the audience of the play.[383] Of course, Halliwell also points out that the thematic use of laughter within the *Bacchae* does

[381] Taplin (1986: 165, 172-3).
[382] Taplin (1986: 165).
[383] Halliwell (2008: 129-130 and 133).

complicate this polarity of the god's own laughter and use of ridicule as revenge against Pentheus.[384]

Slater (2002) notes that the literary and practical sides of *Frogs* reveal various sides of Dionysus from the comic performance that he displays throughout, to the spectator role that is evident from his misgivings in the play's introduction and his judgement in the conclusion.[385] Halliwell (2008) also sees two ways in which audiences could engage with Old Comedy, where they could either enjoy the escapist pleasure of identifying with a character on stage and laughing vicariously 'with' them, or seek the semi-detached enjoyment of seeing past a character to laugh 'at' their absurdity and still enjoy the festive fantasy of a play.[386] Under Halliwell's conditions, *Frogs* exemplifies a Dionysus quite unlike that of Euripides' *Bacchae*, which displays a god who inflicts his will upon others. Instead, *Frogs'* Dionysus is the protagonist that things happen 'to' and is subsequently laughed 'at'.[387]

Hubbard (1991) explains that 'almost every Aristophanic protagonist brings to the world of comedy an observant pair of eyes and a sharp wit providing lenses through which the theatrical audience can view the same absurd world'.[388] Hubbard does go on to state that this becomes less prevalent with changes to the parabases in later Aristophanic comedy, with *Frogs* being an unusual source within this time frame.[389] The play comes later than the heavily political works of *Achanians*, *Knights* and *Wasps*

[384] *Bacchae* 821-846; Halliwell (2008: 136).
[385] Slater (2002: 206).
[386] Halliwell (2008: 211).
[387] Dover (1993: 38-39).
[388] Hubbard (1991: 14).
[389] Hubbard (1991: 157).

and yet, it is still not considered one of his peace plays.[390] With this in mind, Hubbard is more inclined to view *Frogs* through its protagonist Dionysus, one who is simply representing the stage.[391]

> The comic Dionysos is a collection of functions shaped by comedy itself.
>
> Dover (1993: 41)

Dover (1993) points out that Dionysus is the god of the comic poet and the comic actor. Therefore, it is the responsibility of both to get the audience to laugh at portrayals of the god, paradoxically honouring him when he is shown as a buffoon.[392] Likewise, Dover argues that it is a modern preoccupation to focus on Dionysus the individual and rather, we should consider his comic role within *Frogs* as an embodiment of Athenian culture.[393]

Magnelli (2017), offers a comparison to Eupolis' *Demes*, an earlier comedy that has a notably similar plot to *Frogs*. Here a comic hero called Pyronides sets out to revive a 'great man' in the effort to save Athens.[394] Magnelli points out in her assessment of *Frogs*' Dionysus that Aristophanes is moving away from the common man as hero, seeing better worth in a divine hero for this particular story, even if it is a cowardly one.[395] This mockery of Dionysus was also typical of the god's own dramatic festivals.[396] Likening the god to the modern sitcom, Dover sees this dramatisation of

[390] Dover (1993: 72).
[391] Hubbard (1991: 157).
[392] Dover (1993: 41).
[393] Dover (1993: 42-3).
[394] Magnelli (2017: n.56).
[395] Magnelli (2017: 402 and 404).
[396] Hughes (2012: 205).

the god as rather likable, despite him being boastful, yet cowardly, as well as incompetent and just as susceptible to the charms of the stage.[397]

> A primary dimension of Dionysus' dramatis persona in *Frogs* is his theatricality.
>
> Lada-Richards (1999: 159)

Lada-Richards claims that her research fills a gap in Aristophanic scholarship, with its primary focus on the function and central role of Dionysus in *Frogs*.[398] Unlike the *Bacchae*, she empathises that little has changed since Cornford (1914), who called Aristophanes' Dionysus a 'Buffoon' and since then, there is still a wide focus on treating the god as just another Aristophanic stock character.[399] Within her own analysis, Lada-Richards emphasises that the play requires a version of Dionysus that was present on stage and at the same time hold a theatrical complexity that the audience could enjoy.[400]

Despite Lada-Richards' argument that we need to move away from seeing *Frogs*' Dionysus as a stock comic character, there is another scholarly viewpoint worth exploring that sees him as an exemplary comic hero. Riu (1999) stipulates that the construction of a comic hero often comes with characteristics found in myth. Furthermore, he argues that these come with their own traditional models and therefore 'laws', which are not a direct result of a 'poet's free imagination'.[401] So

[397] In *Frogs, see* 279-308 and 479-93 (cowardly); 198-205 (incompetent); Dover (1993: 39).
[398] Lada-Richards (1999: 3).
[399] Lada-Richards (1999: 1); Cornford (1914: 238); Lada-Richards explains that while there are the commentaries of Dover (1993) and Sommerstein (1996), there is still an insufficient amount of focus on Aristophanes' Dionysus since Pascal (1911) and Lapalaus (1934); see Lada-Richards (1999: 1).
[400] Lada-Richards (1999: 159)
[401] Riu (1999: 3).

perhaps these two ideas merge, as Lada-Richards' argument still applies in this instance, with *Frogs'* comic hero working because it is Dionysus. As this complex dramatic version of the god, he is well suited to following these rules with a sense of self-aware theatricality.

3.1.c: TRAGEDY VERSUS COMEDY

It is not the objective in this chapter to offer insight into those who have attempted to define classical meta-theatre up until this point. This has already been touched upon by my thesis introduction and will again be treated in Chapter Four, where I will focus on Aristophanes' early political plays of *Acharnians*, *Knights* and *Wasps*. Here, I will focus on two of the most overtly meta-theatrical plays available to the modern reader and the fact that it is Dionysus that acts as protagonist in both. With that in mind, it is worth starting with a major question within the study of ancient meta-theatre, which is whether tragedy could display the same self-awareness that was so common in Old Comedy. Putting the specifics of Euripides' *Bacchae* to one side, it is worth breaking down some of the key arguments within this discussion.

The first for consideration is Oliver Taplin, whose work on this subject has spanned many years. In Taplin's 'Fifth-Century Tragedy and Comedy: A Synkrisis' (1986), he defines meta-theatre as being 'the ways in which plays may, or may not, draw attention to their own 'playness', to the fact that they are artifices being performed under special controlled circumstances'.[402] Taplin also categorises meta-theatrical devices within

[402] Taplin (1986: 164).

Old Comedy to include audience address/reference, self-reflection of the comic poet, 'play' within costume and parody, particularly the parody of tragedy.[403]

Within this breakdown, Taplin also explains the significance of '*synkrisis',* which he defines as a 'relation of the world of the play to the world of the audience'.[404] This is where a major point is his research is introduced, this being his reluctance to see tragedy as a platform for this 'playness' or '*synkrisis*'. Taplin argues that fifth-century tragedy and comedy defined each other by their differences and a reluctance to overlap.[405] In doing so, Taplin also rejects these same actions in tragedy, as tragedy often temporarily distracts audiences from reality, whereas Old Comedy is 'ubiquitously self-referential'.[406]

Like Taplin, others such as Zeitlin (1996), Wright (2012) and Muecke (1977) have all highlighted the detached nature that comedy holds in contrast to tragedy. Nelson (2016) on the other hand, emphasises that the use of meta-theatre in tragedy does not necessarily break the emotional draw of tragedy. Using the context of dramatic self-reflection in the *Bacchae,* he stipulates that:

> In tragedy, as in the 'costuming' of Pentheus in the *Bacchae*, self-reference does not usually break the emotional grip of the play. In comedy, in a contrast we have seen reflected on comic and tragic vases, the self-reference seems designed … to point out that the dramatic reality the audience is engaged in is a fiction.
>
> Nelson (2016: 241)

[403] Taplin (1986: 166-172). See also Ruffell (2011: 217).
[404] Taplin (1986: 164).
[405] Taplin (1986:164).
[406] Taplin (1986: 164). See also Lowe (2007), who addresses how tragedy does not have the same opportunities as comedy to acknowledge its audience. Instead, tragedy can only indirectly remind its audience of their role as spectators (2007: 27).

Like Nelson's above interpretation of Euripides' Dionysus, Bain (1987) argues that self-reflection displayed in tragedy does not necessarily equal a loss in emotional investment on the part of the audience.[407] In fact, the set-up of the *Bacchae*, allows for an almost paradoxical display of meta-theatre that forces the audience to see the god's cultic and dramatic presence separate to the stage; yet the mocking laughter created from such moments ultimately sees the audience invest in the overall tragic and emotive tone of the play.

Old Comedy, on the other hand, is far simpler as it is generally agreed that meta-theatre and by extension self-reflective laughter was a staple part of its make-up. That is not to say, however, that interpretations of the effect meta-theatre had on comic audiences has always been the same. According to Ruffell (2011) and Slater (2022), early research into meta-comedy placed a lot of significance on the making and breaking of dramatic illusion.[408]

> Earlier discussions of metatheatre in ancient comedy have been heavily influenced by peculiarly nineteenth-century notions of illusion. Thus some acknowledge the presence of metatheatre only when the audience is addressed directly (….) or when a character on stage refers explicitly to a piece of stage machinery (…) thereby "breaking the illusion" of the stage world.
>
> Slater (2002: 3)

Slater also makes a crucial point that the term illusion is itself a deception, as the idea of breaking an illusion implies a violation of audience expectations, when in actual fact

[407] Bain (1987: 14).
[408] Ruffell (2011) and Slater (2022: 3).

spectators of old comedy would have delighted in any sudden changes in this regard. Instead, he argues that we should see it as a 'a renegotiation of the contract' between audience and comic.[409] Furthermore, Slater observes that Aristophanes' comedies constantly renegotiate their relationship with his audience. There are a number of instances within the playwright's career, where the comedic structure shifts, be it the significance of the chorus, or the reduction in the parabasis.[410] Taplin states that ideas of illusion being broken or maintained are unhelpful terminology when dealing with 'highly non-naturalistic theatre'.[411] Ruffell therefore places great significance in Taplin's approach to meta-theatre, as 'this is a major break with earlier accounts of comic self-reflexivity'.[412]

Referring to *Frogs* as 'paratragoedic', Rose (1993) goes on to explain that this is an idea which comes from the Greek word 'παρατραγῳδεῖν', meaning to mock the genre of tragedy through the art of imitation.[413] Along with referencing earlier scholarship that identifies parody within Aristophanic comedy, Rose also singles out Lelièvre's 1954 article on *The Basis of Ancient Parody*, which concluded that 'with Aristophanes there develops the most advanced function of parody, that of selecting and illuminating the special characteristics of the author whose material is employed'.[414] In essence, Rose emphasises the need to consider different types of tragic parody with *Frogs*:

> That the parody of conventions of tragedy in the paratragoedia may take several different forms, and be used together with other types of parody,

[409] Slater (2002: 3).
[410] Slater (2002: 3).
[411] Taplin (1986:164).
[412] Ruffell (2011: 217).
[413] Rose (1993: 18).
[414] Lelièvre (1954: 81). See Rose (1993: 18 and n.59).

> including those associated with the old mock-epics, is evident in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. In that work we not only have the creatures of the title arguing in 'mock-heroic' manner with the god Dionysus who has masked himself (and with comic ineptitude) as the hero Heracles (the frogs win the 'battle' when Dionysus unwittingly begins speaking in their metre), but we also hear the character Aeschylus parodying the tragedian Euripides, and vice versa, and Aristophanes also parodying more general conventions of the tragedy such as the addresses of the chorus and the audience.
>
> Rose (1993: 19)

According to Slater, Old Comedy also had its own 'independent language of self-description'.[415] With a constant examination in the production and the reception of tragedy, it offered an extension of a comic consciousness through self-differentiation.[416] In doing so, Slater acknowledges that 'by naming tragedy as the other which it is not, comedy both articulates its own sense of self and yet acknowledges a certain dependence on tragedy'.[417] So, despite more contemporary research shifting away from the illusionary language found in earlier twentieth-century approaches to meta-theatre, it is easy to see how these concepts of illusion and dramatic illusion fit into the workings of the Dionysia. Segal's work on meta-tragedy (1982) also shows how this is the case:

> Dionysus is the god not only of wine, madness, and religious ecstasy, but also of drama, of the mask. His worship breaks down the barriers not only between god and beast and between man and wild nature, but also between reality and illusion.
>
> Segal (1982: 215)

Segal (1982) states that participants of tragedy, whether spectator or actor, were made to stand outside of themselves, temporarily giving up the safe limits of personal identity

[415] Slater (2002: 9).
[416] Slater (2002: 8-9).
[417] Slater (2002: 9).

to extend in other dimensions of this dramatic experience. This experience would be different to Bacchic ecstasy, but Segal still highlights that audiences were engaging with an immersive and enjoyable illusion facilitated by their worship to the god. [418] Furthermore, Segal states that Euripides' *Bacchae* was a surrogacy for Dionysian frenzy on the stage, since the play expressed Dionysian 'wonders' present in earlier mythic texts and allowed audiences to enjoy them through the safety of the polis.[419] According to Slater, *Frogs* is the most meta-theatrical of Aristophanes' plays, as it critiques the creation of comedy and tragedy on both a metaphorical and practical level.[420] Slater also explains that this is not just a lament for a bygone theatrical age, but rather this literary comedy is inextricably blended with a political criticism apparent in the second half of the play, but implicit from its beginning.[421]

Furthermore, 'drama' as a space of illusion and at times confusion lends itself to more ambiguous Dionysian motifs. In *Bacchae* and *Frogs*, this takes the form of dramatic self-awareness and self-aware laughter. Csapo (1997) maintains that Dionysian worship was based on 'liminal rituals', meaning they dissolved boundaries of society, and created temporary paradoxical unity.[422] It was in these Dionysian festivals that this mythic cunning in the *Homeric Hymns* was reflected back to the audience and integrated into the community. This interaction between society and theatre was an opportunity to revel in this liminal kind of worship, and it brought together the polis - to show off their prowess as a nation state. Stafford (2000) states that this is true of the

[418] Segal (1982: 215).
[419] Segal (1982: 218).
[420] Slater (2002: 205).
[421] Slater (2002: 181 and 205).
[422] Csapo (1997:254).

'Great City Dionysia', one of Athens' most prominent annual festivals.[423] On this occasion a mixture of religion, processions and competitive theatre showed a grand display of Athenian power.[424]

3.2: HOMERIC DIONYSUS IN *BACCHAE* AND *FROGS*

As a god, Dionysus' spheres of influence vary considerably to include the grapevine, mystery cults and most importantly here drama. Each of these domains promote their own branches of contradiction and ambiguity, which inevitably bleed into these performances and create further entertainment value. This can be seen from the extensive use of mania and cultic worship in Euripides' *Bacchae*, [425] to more specific examples like the reference to wine making and consumption in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.[426] By utilising the *Homeric Hymns to Dionysus* and the mythic imagery they created, this section will consider how two seemingly contradictory theatrical depictions of the god - one as Euripides' malevolent punisher and the other as Aristophanes' comedic coward - are in fact both suitably comedic figures from a recognisably Homeric and deeply religious background.

At the crux of these archaic texts is a Dionysus who displays a doubleness and ambiguity that is first referenced in section 3.1. In particular, I will explore a deeply engrained conflict of his mortality and immortality that is explored in three known

[423]Stafford (2000: 230).
[424] For example: the parade of war orphans (Ruffell 2011: 234), the display of Athenian tribute, and the use of cultic objects - such as the wooden statue of Dionysus, which would have appeared to observe the theatre and festival revelry; see Stafford (2000: 230).
[425] In *Bacchae*, see 24-25, 66-67, 151-166, 298-301, 326-7, 359, 664-7, 675-6, 720, 864, 930-1, 977-1000, 1114-29, 1165-7, 1179-82, 1227-32, 1295 (mania). See also 21-2, 31-4, 66-7, 71-87, 79, 101-4, 105-119, 134-143, 146, 330-6, 415, 471-5, 556-6, 680, 1105-13, 1153-4 and 1293 (Bacchic worship).
[426] *Frogs* 218-20.

Homeric Hymns to Dionysus; all of which vary significantly in length, plot and detail.[427] Yet, each offers a perspective on the god's comedic tone, while simultaneously emphasising a reverence for the divine.[428] For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on the two most famous of these Hymns, these being *I* and *VII*.[429]

3.2.a: DIVINITY

The first *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* is the longest of the three, with only fragments still remaining.[430] Presumed the earliest of all the *Homeric Hymns*, it tells a myth that was likely known before the *Iliad* and *Odyssey.*[431] So this impression of Dionysus is understandably a valuable resource when analysing the progression of the god's persona before the creation of the classical stage. Despite this, the fragmentary nature of the hymn inevitably leaves us guessing much of its narrative. So, with the help of much later source material like Euripides' *Bacchae,* as well as various visual depictions and texts by authors such as Pausanias, it is possible to discern two key plot points from what remains.[432] The first is the unconventional birth of Dionysus from his father Zeus and second, his eventual acceptance into the Olympian order.[433]

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[427] Rutherford (2013).
[428] Rutherford (2013), stipulates that what separates these Hymns from Homeric texts, like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, their central focus on the gods, as well as their key characteristics and cultic worship (Rutherford 2013: 16).
[429] After all, the *Homeric Hymn XXVI. Dionysus* is only 13 lines and offers little that is not already explored in the other two, see West (2011: 29).
[430] Around 411 lines in total, see West (2001: 1)(2011: 30). On the fragmentary nature of this hymn, see West (2001: 1) (2003: 6) (2011: 29) and Faulkner (2011: 9 -10).
[431] On the claim of this being the earliest Hymn, see West (2001: 1). See also Rutherford (2013), who acknowledges that this was likely one of the earliest, but with so much of it lost to us, it remains uncertain (Rutherford 2013: 16, n.49). On the Hymn being earlier then the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, see West (2011), who explains that the fragments to this Hymn likely 'reconstruct the principal myth related in the poem. It will appear that this myth, and probably this *Hymn*, was already known to the poets of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and influenced several scenes in those epics' (2011: 29).
[432] *Pausanius* refers to a painting that shows the same myth (1.20.3).
[433] Despite West stating that the Hymn likely came before the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (West 2011: 29), there appears to be some speculation on this issue, particularly the latter two segments of the hymn, see Faulkner (2011: 9-10).

DIONYSUS' BIRTH IN *BACCHAE*

> ... For some say it was at Drakanos, some on windy Ikaros,
> some on Naxos, o scion of Zeus, bull god, and some at Alpheios
> the deep-swirling river {that Semele conceived and bore you to
> Zeus whose sport is the thunderbolt}, while others, lord, say that
> it was at Thebes you were born. All false! The father of gods and
> men gave you birth far from humankind, to conceal you from
> white-armed Hera.
>
> *Homeric.Hymn I. to Dionysus* a.1-8

I have picked out recognisable components of this Dionysus origin myth, with the help of two key sentences. The first is Dionysus' conception from his mortal mother Semele and his divine father Zeus.[434] The second is that Zeus gives birth to Dionysus in retaliation against his wife Hera. What is missing is the circumstances in which Dionysus is born, most notably, Zeus' wife Hera tricking Semele into her untimely death at the hands of Zeus' lightning and Zeus' retaliation by placing a premature Dionysus in his thigh. [435]

Instead, we rely on sources that are much later than these hymns, like FIGURE 5, which shows Semele giving birth to Dionysus and Zeus' thunder ready to strike. Another example is FIGURE 6, where Hera is reaching out to Dionysus upon his birth from Zeus' leg. Of course, all this is implied through references to Zeus' thunderbolt and his 'concealment' of Dionysus from Hera.[436]

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[434] All three *Homeric Hymns to Dionysus* open with some reference to Dionysus' parentage. See *Homeric Hymn VII. to Dionysus* 1, as well as *Homeric Hymn XXVI. To Dionysus* 1-6.
[435] It is worth noting that this was not the only narrative surrounding the god's creation. An alternative example can be found in the Dionysian Mysteries. See Lada-Richards (1999: 34-35).
[436] It helps to have other references to Dionysus' parentage in sources like *Iliad*, *Theogony* and *Homeric Hymns VII* and *XXVI. to Dionysus.*

FIGURE 5. SHOWS ATTIC HYDRIA VASE. SEMELE LIES ON A COUCH WHILE ZEUS' LIGHTNING DESCENDS UPON HER AND HERMES TAKES THE INFANT DIONYSUS. AT THE LOWIE MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY, BERKELEY.

FIGURE 6. SHOWS 5TH-4TH CENTURY KRATER. DIONYSUS' BIRTH FROM ZEUS' THIGH, WHILE THE OLYMPIANS WATCH AND HERA REACHES OUT. AT THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF TORONTO, TORONTO.

What we also gauge from these sources, is the conflicting divine identity that Dionysus' birth creates. For instance, his mortal mother should make him quasi-divine. This is a contradiction that becomes apparent through the Theban familial conflict that runs through the *Bacchae*, as well as *Frogs'* mirroring exchange between Dionysus and fellow demi-god Heracles.[437] Yet, Dionysus' mythic birth from Zeus complicated matters. This is a status that Dionysus only shares with Athena and as she is already fully divine this places him in a unique position. With the king of the gods acting as both father and surrogate mother, he gains a full divinity that is left ambiguous within other archaic texts. Much later, Euripides' *Bacchae* also follows this impression, as it starts by focusing on Zeus, before any mention of his mortal mother. The implication is that Euripides' Dionysus considers his divinity as paramount to his identity.

> To this land of Thebes I have come, I Dionysus, son of Zeus:
> Cadmus' daughter Semele, midwived by the lightning fire, once
> gave birth to me. I have exchanged my divine form for a mortal
> one and have come to the waters of Dirce and Ismenus. I see
> here by the palace the tomb of my lightning-slain mother and the
> ruins of her house, smouldering with the still-living flames of
> Zeus's fire: thus Hera's violence against my mother lives on forever.
>
> *Bacchae* 1-7

As you can see in the first few lines of the *Bacchae,* it jumps straight into reminding the audience of Hera's deceptive actions, as well as Semele's consequential death at the hands of Zeus' lightning. All this reinforces the god's divine ambiguity, as Dionysus' return to his family in Thebes is not met with appropriate worship.[438] Euripides dramatised this by creating a dual personality for his Dionysus: one that contrasts

[437] *Bacchae* 1-3 and 25-26. *Frogs* 35-163.
[438] In *Bacchae*, see 1297, 1303-4 and 1377 (Cadmus accepts his fate). See also 1381-7 (Agave rejects Dionysus).

moments of comedy with his divine anger, as well as transforming him into a performer who uses costume to alternate between this conflict of divinity and mortality.

Furthermore, it is not just a case of recognising this godly motif behind his dramatic persona, but the play itself alludes to the myth no less than eleven times.[439] The key mentions take place in the first half of the play and come from Dionysus himself, the Lydian Chorus, as well as the blind sage Teiresias.[440] There are of course some discrepancies between these two versions. The *Hymn* outright rejects Thebes as Dionysus' birthplace. This is the first sign that Euripides' *Bacchae* does not follow Homeric tradition to the letter. This should not be surprising, as the Theban rendition of this myth appears to be a highly popular version of the myth by the fifth century, with the *Bacchae* echoing other prominent archaic sources.[441] Likewise, the additional mention of Zeus' thigh in lines 285-97 takes on its own comic twist, when Teiresias questions the validity of Dionysus birth.[442]

> …and do you ridicule him because he was sewn in the thigh of Zeus? I will show you that this story too makes sense. when Zeus had snatched him from the lightning-bolt's blaze and had brought him as a young babe to Olympus, Hera wanted to hurl him out of heaven. but Zeus, god that he is, made a scheme to answer Hera's: breaking off a part of the sky that surrounds the earth, he gave her this as a hostage and thereby rescued Dionysus from Hera's contentiousness. as time passed, mortals said that he was sewn up into the thigh of Zeus, altering the word because they failed to understand that as god to goddess he had served as Hera's hostage.
>
> *Bacchae* 285-97

[439] See *Bacchae* 1-9, 88-98, 242-243, 286-297, 417, 468, 522, 550-1, 581, 997-1000 and 1938.
[440] In *Bacchae*, see 1-43 (Dionysus), 88-104 (Lydian Chorus) and 286-297 (Teiresias).
[441] See *Iliad* 14. 323,*Theogony* 940-2, *Homeric Hymn VII. Dionysus* 1 and *Homeric Hymn XXVI. to Dionysus* 1-6.
[442] Euripides is quite happy to reference Zeus' thigh elsewhere, see *Bacchae* 95-98.

Of course, Dionysus' birth does not naturally lend itself to be funny, so any variation on its re-telling would give Euripides a gateway to create unexpected laughter amongst his audience. Here, the character of Teiresias states that Dionysus was not kept in Zeus' thigh at all, but rather, he was a bizarre pawn in a hostage situation between his father and Hera. Later in the play, Euripides then returns to this use of the word 'thigh'.[443]

Why Euripides added this variation is debatable, but one way of reading this is with the mockery of Pentheus in mind. If the audience is to take it that Pentheus is being laughed at for taking the myth at face value, then not only would this reinforce Halliwell's argument that there are different styles of mockery explored within the *Bacchae*, but it also indirectly mocks the audience for sharing in this mythic tradition with the antagonist.[444] This suggests that there is a clever mix of intertextuality that audiences could enjoy as an extension of their self-awareness, as well as laugh at themselves as a collective, contrasting the individual target of Pentheus. In other words, the self-mockery is less personal and therefore harmless. Audiences often enjoy laughing at themselves as a collective much as at each other when there is an individual within their group targeted, with Hubbard pointing out that 'to laugh is to be human, and it is equally human to be laughed at'.[445] Pentheus however, sees a much more dangerous end as a result of his mockery.

[443] *Bacchae* 222-9.
[444] Halliwell (2008: 137).
[445] Hubbard (1991: 14).

Another approach to this scene is to see Teiresias' explanation as bizarre and no more logical than the myth that he is berating. Hubbard writes that comedy and humour function under themes of self-perception, or lack of it. Using Plato's account of Socrates in *Philebus*, he states that comedy relies on a lack of self-knowledge, such as the man who thinks he is richer than he is, or the man who thinks himself more beautiful than he is.[446] In the case of this scene, it could be argued that Teiresias is the man who thinks he is wiser than he is. This scene actually becomes quite funny if we also think of the wise Teiresias that was typical in classical tragedy. What is noteworthy, is that Euripides appears to parody this tragic figure, by transforming him into a rambling old man.[447] This is a meta-theatrical tool that is more typical of Old Comedy. Despite this, the significance of the Dionysian tradition cannot be ignored. Segal (1982) considers Euripides' Dionysus an example of the paradox behind tragedy. While tragedy seeks to convey greater truth behind illusion, Dionysus is someone 'between' these two realms, and therefore this dramatic self-consciousness is what Segal calls the 'metatragic dimension of the play'.[448]

Plato's *Philebus* stipulates that this only works if the individual is weak, as a strong man with a lack of self-knowledge is dangerous.[449] Hubbard argues that Plato's findings can be easily applied to Aristophanic Old Comedy, which is very true if we think of the weaker depiction of Dionysus in his *Frogs*, but I also think that it can be applied to Euripides' style of blending his own style of mockery within tragedy. Teiresias is a blind, weak old man, which is why his scenes with Cadmus allow for

[446] Hubbard (1991: 2); Plato (*Philebus*: 48D-E).
[447] For a counter argument on the comic nature of this scene, see Dodds (1960: 89-91).
[448] Segal (1982: 216).
[449] Plato (*Philebus*: 49B-C); Hubbard (1991: 2-3).

humour. This in turn is juxtaposed when he talks to Pentheus, whose strength lies in his kingship over Thebes. Pentheus only loses that strength when his is literally stripped of what Campton-Engle sees as his masculinity, in the dressed-up scene in lines 821-976.

Unlike the *Bacchae*, Aristophanes' *Frogs* does not outright mention the birth of Dionysus. Instead he gives the lack of divine recognition and respect born out of the myth a more obvious comic twist. During the exchange between Dionysus and Heracles, we are reminded of their shared circumstance in birth. Both have mortal mothers and both owe the circumstances of their birth to Hera.[450] Presumably, Aristophanes is paralleling these two siblings and what is more, it can be said that Hera's trickery is indirectly referenced with Heracles' name. Therefore, Aristophanes is shrewdly reminding his audience of Hera's role in Dionysus' birth, without even mentioning it. A divine Dionysus is in a sense a by-product of Hera's trick upon Semele, as becomes apparent in the second half of *Homeric Hymn I. to Dionysus*. Here, he becomes an equally cunning character because of his birth. It is at this point that there are comic tones to this myth, which in turn reveal obvious parallels with *Frogs'* opening scene.

COMIC PROCESSION IN *FROGS*

> (C) (Zeus speaks to Hera) "…you wish. What else could happen to [you worse that this? I was stuipi]d myself, from […] left of his own accord […] as they [sur]mise ever […he tricked you and pu]t you in hellish fett[ers. Who] could set y[ou] free, my dear? [a painful b]elt encircles y[our body, while he], heed[ing neither co]mmand [nor entreaty, has formed] an unshakeable r[esolve in his heart. It's a cruel] son you have borne, sis[ter…

[450] See *Iliad* 19.97-99 (reference to Hera and Heracles' birth).

craf]ty, even through a cripple […] in front [of…] feet good […]
wrathful […]…angry […] let us find out [if he will soften his
hear]t of iron. For there are [two] clever [sons] of mine at hand [to
help with] your [suffering. There is Ares, who] has raised his
[keen] spear, a th[ick-hide fighter…] to look and bra[ndish…;
and there is] also Dionysus…

Homeric Hymn I. to Dionysus c.1-22

Once again, we are dealing with a fragment in *Homeric Hymn I. to Dionysus*, where the narrative is particularly hard to decipher. Nevertheless, from the extract above, we can gather that the goddess Hera has been trapped in fetters by her son Hephaestus, with Zeus offering up his sons Ares and Dionysus to fix her dilemma.[451] The rest of the scene is missing, but Slater references the *M codex fragments*, for their two alternate endings to the text.[452] The most likely ending, according to West (2003), is that Dionysus became an accepted god into the Olympian order by his father Zeus.[453]

FIGURE 7. SHOWS 6TH CENTURY CAERETAN BLACK-FIGURE HYDRIA: PANTHER SKINNED DIONYSUS LEADS A 'CRIPPLED' HEPHAESTUS ON A DONKEY. A MAENAD FOLLOWS. KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM, VIENNA.

[451] An expansion on the *Hymn*'s use of Ares remains mostly lost to us, although fragments of the early poet Alcaeus not only reference the myth, but also mentions Ares' offering to force Hephaestus back, see West (2001: 3). As this is a *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*, it is safe to assume that it is the Bacchic god who succeeds.
[452] West (2003).
[453] West (2003: n.1 and 31).

FIGURE 8. SHOWS 5TH CENTURY ATTIC RED-FIGURE SKYPHOS: DIONYSUS (HOLDING A THYRSUS AND A WINE CUP), LEADING HEPHAESTUS ON A DONKEY TO THE TRAPPED HERA AND ACCOMPANIED BY A SATYR PLAYING THE AULOS. TOLEDO MUSEUM, TOLEDO.

The iconic image of Dionysus leading a procession comes from other source material like FIGURE 7, where Dionysus and his cultic entourage lead a drunken Hephaestus back to Olympus, with the latter sits on a donkey. FIGURE 8 shows the same myth, but includes Hera within the imagery. Both have a distinctly humorous tone, as Hephaestus is once again the focus of the joke as he is tricked into getting drunk and led back to Olympus on the very un-god-like transport of a donkey.[454] Hephaestus' need to sit on a donkey is another example of archaic humour concerning his lame leg.[455] As in my discussion of divine laughter in Chapter Two, it appears the absence of mortals makes this scene so comfortably comedic in nature, despite its focus on mockery.

[454] Refer back to Chapter Two, section 2.3, for Hephaestus as a comic figure in archaic myth.
[455] See Chapter Two, section 2.3.a, for divine laughter at the expense of other gods, as well as at the expense of Hephaestus' disability.

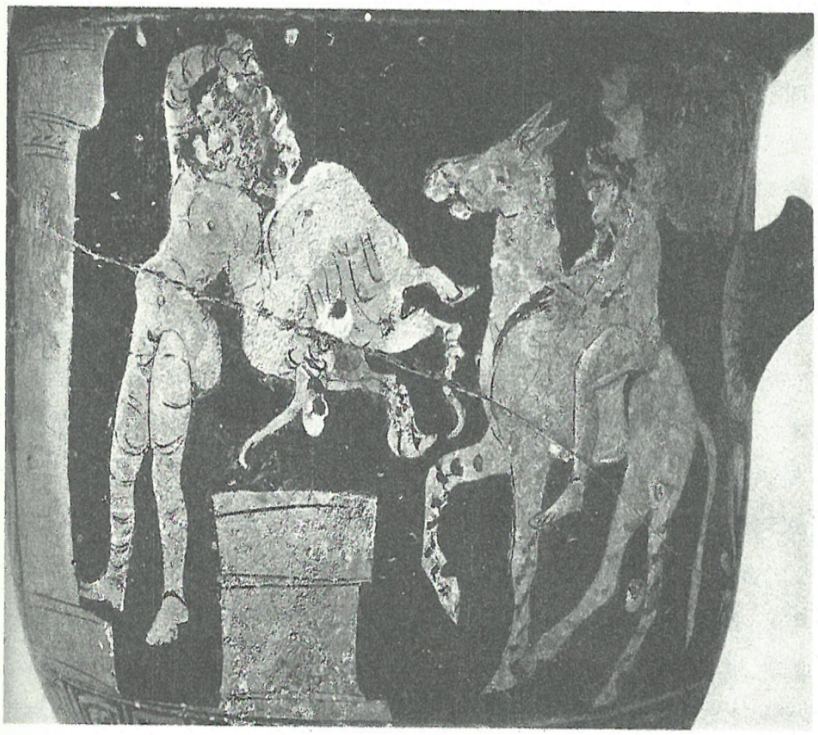

FIGURE 9. SHOWS 4TH CENTURY APULIAN BELL-KRATER. 'BERLIN HERACLES', SUPPOSEDLY DEPICTING AN EARLY SCENE FROM *FROGS* (DIONYSUS LEADING XANTHIAS ON A DONKEY). FORMERLY BERLIN, STAATLICHE MUSEEN (DESTROYED/PLUNDERED IN WORLD WAR II). BIEBER 1920, IMAGE 80. TAKEN FROM GRIFFITH, *ARISTOPHANES* (2013).

Like the interplay of Dionysus' birth within the *Bacchae*, *Frogs'* prologue also takes a section of the hymn to make its own parody of divine laughter. This is made clear when looking at FIGURE 9. This is of a lost fourth-century bell-krater that is thought to be depicting the opening scene of *Frogs*. Mirroring FIGURE 8, Dionysus once again appears to be leading someone on a donkey in a parody of his procession, but unlike the *Hymn*, *Frogs* replaces Hephaestus with Xanthias. This is likely a layered joke. First it is an extension of the archaic divine mockery of Hephaestus' ungodliness, with his replacement by a slave. Second is the reverse divinity of Dionysus. Unlike the *Homeric Hymn* were Dionysus tricks Hephaestus into getting drunk, *Frogs* sees the Bacchic god somehow hoodwinked into allowing a slave to sit on the donkey while he must

walk. It offers a topsy turvy relationship between Dionysus and his slave, which is akin to later festivals of *Saturnalia* and *Carnival*, encouraging paradoxical unity by turning order on its head.[456] This theme of divine recognition, or lack of it, also spreads into Aristophanes' *Frogs*' procession of Eleusinian initiates. These are Initiates who fail to recognise the very god they are praying to. Dionysus does not tell them who he is. Instead, he refers to himself as a stranger.

> Chorus:
>
> … Exalted Iacchus, inventor of most enjoyable
> festive song, come and march along with us
> …
> Iacchus lover of choruses, escort me on my way…
>
> *Frogs* 397-403

> Dionysus:
>
> Now could you please tell us
> where hereabouts Pluto dwells?
> We're strangers who've just arrived.
>
> Chorus:
>
> You haven't very far to go
> and needn't question me again:
> I'll have you know you're right at his door.
>
> *Frogs* 431-36

What is particularly striking about this scene is that the god is tricking the chorus. Longo (1992) says that the chorus were 'representatives of the collective citizen body'. Therefore, it appears that recognising Dionysus is a tricky business, even to the

[456] Cartledge (1990: 4).

audience. This dramatic version of the god is therefore representing his divine authority and the risk to the *polis*.

Furthermore, *Frogs'* Dionysus is cowardly, buffoonish and at times even unlucky; making the god somewhat pathetic and capable of soiling himself in lines 285-305.[457] Cole even observes that Dionysus' diarrhoea deviates from notions of the divine, not only because it is a particularly vulgar image, but also because gods do not eat food.[458] This play with notions of an 'ungodly' Dionysus remains important throughout Aristophanes' play. Nevertheless, Dionysus retains a level of divinity through scenes such as the torture scene. Here, the god pretends to suffer, only to reveal he feels no pain.[459] The fact that Aeschylus is chosen instead of Euripides only enforces a similar motif of divine pettiness in archaic material. Despite all this, the Dionysus of *Frogs* is still far removed from the fearful punisher of Euripides' *Bacchae*. So, with that in mind, I will now consider how it is in the *Homeric Hymn VII. Dionysus*, which paves the way for this destructive performer.

3.2.b: DANGER AND LAUGHTER

> Dionysus:
> Women, the man is walking into the trap! He will go to join the bacchants, and there he will be punished with death!
>
> *Bacchae* 847

> Euripides:
> Now remember the gods by whom you swore that you'd take me back home, and choose your friends.

[457] *Frogs*: cowardly 296-308 and 486; unlucky 310.
[458] Cole (2007: 327).
[459] *Frogs* 653-665. See also lines 628-629, which show Dionysus warning against torturing him as he is a god.

Dionysus:
It was my tongue that swore: I'm choosing Aeschylus.

Frogs 1469-71

Like the first *Homeric Hymn*, the overarching theme of this myth is Dionysus' divinity, or more specifically what happens to those who do not respect it. On the other hand, this narrative is different as it is not about reaching his divine potential, but instead punishing those who mistake him for mortal.[460] As Mills (2006) emphasises, rejection or violence against the god never comes without consequence.[461] It is for this reason that *Homeric Hymn VII. to Dionysus* has a striking similarity to the conflict found in the *Bacchae*, with both seeing the god mock his aggressors as he has his retribution. Beside this, there is another similarity in *Frogs*, where the almost absent divine authority throughout the play is reinstated when he undermines the very tragedian he set out to collect.

The above quotes illustrate the key moment within each play, where the god uses mockery to secure his divine authority, which in turn establishes how each narrative would end. In the *Bacchae*, this moment comes in the form of Dionysus convicting his cousin Pentheus to spy on the bacchants and dress as a woman. In *Frogs*, this comes when Dionysus changes his mind on which playwright to bring back from the dead, by parodying Euripides' *Hippolytus*, thus throwing his own words back at him.[462] With that in mind, it is worth pointing out the opening segment of this *Homeric Hymn*, as it sets

[460] Mills (2006: 23, 50); This tradition also lends itself to other archaic texts such as the divine punishment of Lycurgus in the *Iliad* 6.129-140. This myth is a later focus for Aeschylus' Lycurgus tetralogy, as well as the Satyr play *Lycurgus.* which only exist in fragments. See Sommerstein (2008: 18, 60-1, 126).
[461] Mills (2006: 23 and 50).
[462] *Hippolytus* 612.

up this Dionysian duality of a playful and vicious personality, best visualised with his smiling eyes in line 15.

> Of Dionysus, glorious Semele's son, I will make remembrance: how he appeared by the shore of the barren sea, on a jutting headland, in the likeness of a youth in first manhood; the fine sable locks waved about him, and he had a cloak of crimson about his strong shoulders. Suddenly men from a galley came speeding over the wine-faced sea, freebooters from Tuscany, led on by an ill doom. When they saw him, they nodded to one another, and at once leapt out, seized him, and set him aboard their ship, exulting, for they reckoned he was the son of a princely line fostered by Zeus. And they meant to bind him in grievous bonds; but the bonds would not contain him, the osiers fell clear away from his hands and feet, while he sat there smiling with his dark eyes.
>
> *Homeric Hymn VII. Dionysus* 1-15

FIGURE 10. SHOWS 6TH CENTURY DRINKING VESSEL. DIONYSUS SITTING ON A SHIP, WITH GRAPE VINES, AND DOLPHINS ENCIRCLE IT. AT STAATLICHE ANTIKENSAMMLUNGEN, MUNICH.

This *Hymn* is particularly interesting, as despite the Hymn's clearly hostile exchange between humans and the god, Dionysus appears to smile when the pirates' bonds fall off him. Furthermore, Dionysus' transformation into a young man suggests that it was a trap designed by the god to lure these sailors into abducting him. It is also worth looking at FIGURE 8, which displays a sixth-century drinking vessel depicting Dionysus sitting on a ship, which is covered in grape vines, and dolphins encircle it. In what is generally thought to be a later version of this same myth, the god is reclining on the ship, which suggests that he is enjoying the events taking place. Therefore, this hymn appears to be an early depiction of Dionysus staging a scenario for his own amusement. This is a trend that we will see again in section 3.3, where Euripides' Dionysus appears as a makeshift director within the *Bacchae*.

Laughter, or a smiling face, offers both amiability and hostility that cannot be easily separated.[463] Halliwell emphasises that this symbolises the double-sided qualities of Dionysus, in this case a gentleness and savagery.[464] In the case of the *Bacchae*, Halliwell also points out that some critics believed the god's laughter was visualised through the use of a mask that 'incorporated a symbolically enigmatic smile'. This is an argument that comes from two separate lines; the first is line 439, where a servant refers to Dionysus allowing himself to be captured while laughing and line 1021, when the chorus appeal to the god to come with laughter on his face.[465] Halliwell does further state that such highly charged moments could have been confused with a fixated smile,

[463] Halliwell (2008: 127 and 137).
[464] Halliwell (2008: 134-136). See also Dodds (1960: 131) and Segal (1982: 199 and 290-1).
[465] Halliwell (2008: 136).

although it could have also emphasised an ambiguity and uneasiness that befits the god.[466]

> Dionysus was the god of transformation. Like other gods, he could metamorphose into whatever creature he might wish… but he also had the power to alter his followers' perceptions of reality, whether through drink or through drama.
>
> Stuttard (2016: 1-2)

As Stuttard points out, transformation was also a significant theme within Dionysian worship, so it stands to reason that disguise and illusion are features in both stories. As we can see from the *Homeric Hymn,* it follows the Bacchic god as he deceives a crew of Lydian pirates into thinking he is a wealthy youth.[467] This is a bit unusual as Foley, Zeitlin and Cole explain, with earlier images of the god tending to show an older bearded man; by the time of Euripides' *Bacchae*, images of Dionysus had experienced a cultural shift to a more youthful image.[468] Reflecting back on FIGURE 10, Dionysus is also fully grown and bearded. It is likely that this scene depicts Dionysus after he has reverted back to his divine form and is therefore another visual reference to his trick. Although, we cannot forget that this is a classical depiction of an archaic myth, so the fact that Dionysus is portrayed in this way could also be an artistic choice. Nevertheless, if Euripides was also following this particular *Homeric Hymn*, even unconsciously, he too could have followed this style when revealing the god at the end of the play.

[466] Halliwell (2008: 136). See support for this idea in Dodds (1960:131), Foley (1980: 127), Segal (1982: 249) and Halliwell (1993: 206, n.35).
[467] *Homeric Hymn VII. to Dionysus* (1-5).
[468] *Bacchae* 233-5; Foley (1980: 108), Zeitlin (1990:65) and Cole (2007:328).

The theme of disguise plays an important role within this hymn, with Jaillard (2011) questioning the extreme 'blindness' of the pirates in relation to Dionysus.[469] This is a valid point as why didn't they recognise the god? I think the answer lies in what the character wants them to see, with the god altering their perceptions through illusion. The narrative sees Dionysus use a number of illusions in accordance with divine attributes; this includes grape vines sprouting from the ship, the sea turning wine red and the god himself transformed into wild beasts.[470]

Dionysus sets his targets out to fail. He sees them coming and transforms into a beautiful youth in anticipation of the events to come. Despite this, he still seeks out punishment for a trick of his own making. Like this scene, the beginning of the *Bacchae* sees Dionysus appear in a similar disguise, as someone who is wealthy with blond hair and appearance likened to Aphrodite. In contrast, it is true that the Dionysus of *Frogs* is neither youthful nor beautiful. Rather the ugly costumes of Old Comedy suggest a play on these images of the god. By inverting his dramatic presence, Aristophanes is relying on his audience to pick on this additional layer of self-aware theatre.

> Agave:
> Dwellers in fair-towered Thebes, come and see the catch, the beast we daughters of Cadmus have snared! …
> … We caught the beast with our bare hands and tore him limb from limb …
> And where is my son Pentheus? He should bring a ladder to the house so that he can nail to the triglyphs the head of this lion I caught before coming here.
>
> *Bacchae* 1202- 1215

[469] Jaillard (2011: 143).
[470] Turns into a Lion, see *Homeric Hymn VII. to Dionysus* 47-51.

Similarities of illusion can be found in *Bacchae*'s Agave, when she thinks her son is a lion.[471] See for instance, FIGURE 11 which shows a scene from the *Bacchae* where Agave and her sisters 'unknowingly' rip Pentheus apart. What is more, Dionysus is on the reverse holding a wine cup. This is further emphasised in the text itself, when Agave calls for her son, failing to notice that she carries his head as a trophy.[472] Both texts show helpless spectators who maintain clear heads. In the *Homeric Hymn*, it is a single pirate who recognises Dionysus as a god.[473] In Euripides' *Bacchae*, this first appears to be Pentheus' messenger, but the play ends with Cadmus mourning over his grandson's body.[474]

FIGURE 11. SHOWS 5TH CENTURY ATTIC RED-FIGURE VASE. PENTHEUS BEING RIPPED APART BY TWO THEBAN WOMEN WHO ARE WEARING PANTHER SKINS AND A SATYR WATCHING NEARBY. AT KIMBELL ART MUSEUM, FORT WORTH.

[471] *Bacchae* 919.
[472] *Bacchae* 1202- 1215.
[473] *Homeric Hymn VII. to Dionysus* 6-24.
[474] *Bacchae* 1078-1081 and 1222-1377.

Where the hymn and *Bacchae* see the god dress up in anticipation of a fight that he is sure to win, *Frogs* in contrast has Dionysus become the victim of violence, as a direct result of his costume.[475] Even in the second phase of the play, when Dionysus sheds his Heracles costume, his divine image is often overlooked. Euripides and Aeschylus both speak very harshly to Dionysus, even though he holds sway over their fate and in turn, Dionysus appears easily swayed by their words.

This is vastly different to the mythic and tragic depictions of the god, where a lack of recognition always has a consequence.[476] Which in a sense is the point: what should be disastrous in tragedy becomes harmless within Old Comedy. Much like the beating up scene in lines 605-673, there is no threat or consequence to the god being beaten, so the audience's only appropriate response is to laugh. Similarly, Dionysus' divinity is called into question through indirect epic parody, as the *Frogs'* chorus holds a shouting match with the god that suggests that he is not as in control.[477] Both the *Homeric Hymn VII. to Dionysus* and *Frogs* see Dionysus have an altercation on board a ship, but as Slater points out, this Dionysus is not like his archaic counterpart.[478]

> …the implication is clear: Dionysus can no longer be a layabout on shipboard, whiling his time away in the self-absorbed pastime of reading, but has to learn the fundamental Athenian skill of rowing.
>
> Slater (2002: 206)

[475] *Frogs* 605-673.
[476] Mills (2006: 23 and 50).
[477] *Frogs* 209-267.
[478] Slater (2002: 206).

Whether he is a seductive killer, or a cowardly buffoon, the Dionysus in these two case-studies exhibits a comic version of the god, as a means to blur the boundaries of divinity, nature, reality and illusion.[479]. As the deity of drama, it is to be expected that Dionysian ideas of ambiguity, manipulation and trickery would manifest within essential theatrical practice, which in turn stimulate his dramatic persona through self-aware comedy. In my next section, I will address how a dramatic Dionysus exists within examples of theatrical self-awareness in each play, otherwise known as meta-theatre. After all, Segal (1982) made the integral point that as the god of madness, wine, religious ecstasy and drama, Dionysus' worship breaks down barriers between reality and illusion.[480] Therefore it is not surprising that using such a figure would be useful to blur the illusion of the stage with the reality that is its audience. This will be achieved by exploring each script in turn and will consider key textual evidence of costume, parody and audience interaction, starting with Dionysus acting as a director within the *Bacchae,* who constructs various performances within the play.

3.3: META-THEATRE AS LAUGHTER

3.3.a: *BACCHAE*

> Euripides' *Bacchae* is one of the most exciting, yet also one of the most problematic tragedies when thinking about fifth-century staging … one of his latest plays to survive, we can see this interest culminating in the creation of an intensely self-conscious tragedy which puts Dionysus, god of drama, centre stage.
>
> Wyles (2016: 59)

[479] Segal (1982: 215).
[480] Segal (1982: 215).

Wyles points out in ‘Staging in Bacchae’ (2016) that the figure of Dionysus remains central to interpreting the play. Her main focus is on Dionysus’ direct words in the prologue, the literal staging of Semele’s tomb/ the palace, the use of costume in the dressing-scene and finally the addition of an internal audience during the play’s concluding denouncement of Pentheus.[481] On a similar level, the character of Dionysus presents an added meta-theatrical comic layer to the otherwise tragic story, as this character becomes a makeshift director in the play’s introduction, as well as his manipulation of costume, both in his own disguise and again with the famous punishment of Pentheus.

PROLOGUE

As a tragedy, Euripides’ *Bacchae* is understandably less ‘direct’ than Old Comedy, especially with its interactions with an audience. Still, it has been addressed by figures like Thumiger (2009) and Wyles (2016) that the play’s prologue holds some key instances of meta-theatre and staging.[482] Wyles goes as far as to say that this Dionysus sets the scene for his audience, who are in turn directed to the play’s central theme of self-referential theatre. Wyles also explains that the prologue ‘informs the audience’s understanding of elements of staging, preconditioning the way in which it should be understood by encoding symbolic meaning through Dionysus’ words’. [483]

Dionysus is seen to be introducing himself while giving exposition to his circumstance and intent. Dionysus does not limit this introduction to himself. By setting up the play’s

[481] Wyles (2016: 59-67).
[482] Thumiger (2009: 28); Wyles (2016).
[483] Wyles (2016: 61).

narrative, he also introduces a number of key characters before they even appear on stage, these include: his grandfather Cadmus, his aunts and his cousin Pentheus.[484] Moreover, Dionysus introduces the play's chorus by establishing the two types of bacchants within it. The 'real' Dionysian worshippers make up the chorus of Lydian followers, whereas the Theban women are under Dionysus' control.[485] Dionysus' various introductions within *Bacchae* are clear examples of direct speech to the audience, but exposition is found every time the audience needs clarity on the narrative. This happens most often when the audience need to know what is happening offstage.

Wyles also raises the point that the audience are made aware of the mythic symbolism that runs through the play, with Semele's tomb a constant visual reminder from the very start.[486] Acting as a backdrop, this myth sets up the thematic plot of Dionysus returning to his family in Thebes, with expectations of worship that are not met. After all, this version of Dionysus cannot punish Pentheus or Agave for rejecting his divinity, if he is not born divine in the first place. This literal staging also sets up moments of exposition offstage, such as Dionysus destroying Pentheus' palace.[487] The audience do not see Dionysus on stage, but rather hear what happens when the chorus sing:

> Chorus:
> Ah, ah,
> do you not see, not mark the fire
> about Semele's holy tomb <here>
> the flame left behind
> by Zeus's lightning?

[484] In *Bacchae*, see 10, 30 and 43 (Cadmus). See also 31-4 and 37 (Dionysus' Aunts) and 43-54 (Pentheus).
[485] *Bacchae* 55-61.
[486] *Bacchae* 6-9.
[487] *Bacchae* 580-95.

> Hurl to the ground your trembling bodies,
> hurl them, maenads!
> Our lord, Zeus's son is attacking this house,
> turning it topsy-turvy!
>
> *Bacchae* 596-603

The question '*do you not see'* resonates with the audience's inability to do so. They rely on the chorus to fill in the gaps and it reminds the observer that theatrical space is a relationship between what is clear and what is hidden.[488] Dionysus is the perfect character to display this blurring of theatrical spaces, a point that the chorus recognises in line 603 when they refer to his ability to turn the offstage palace on its head. This is seen again much later when Pentheus' 'Messenger' informs the chorus of his master's death and the reveal of Dionysus' divine state.[489] It is clear that the stage itself must have been quite regimented, as major events like death and divine intervention almost always took place offstage. This common practice therefore gives exposition a second purpose of negotiating these theatrical spaces.

> Dionysus:
> … I have exchanged my divine form for a mortal
> one…
>
> *Bacchae* 4

When considering the meta-theatrical implications of costume within Euripides' *Bacchae*, it is first worth addressing the sheer scale of its use within the play. Mimesis, in particular the imitation of another through dressing up, functions at the very core of this performance. Furthermore, when it comes to the god's own disguise, Dionysus

[488] Zeitlin (1990: 75-6).
[489] *Bacchae* 1063-1074.

ceases to be the dramatic trope of a divine figure observing the fringes of a tragedy. Instead, his use of disguise allows for him to make that leap into the role of actor. By 'acting' the part of a mortal, he is in fact rejecting this label. This is highly significant as the divine Dionysus/ actor Dionysus, is being played by a real actor on stage. This is a point that is brought back to the audience's attention time and again, with the god speaking in the third person, a feature that takes place as early as line four in his introduction.[490] What the diagram below points out, is the full circle effect of costume within the context of this character.

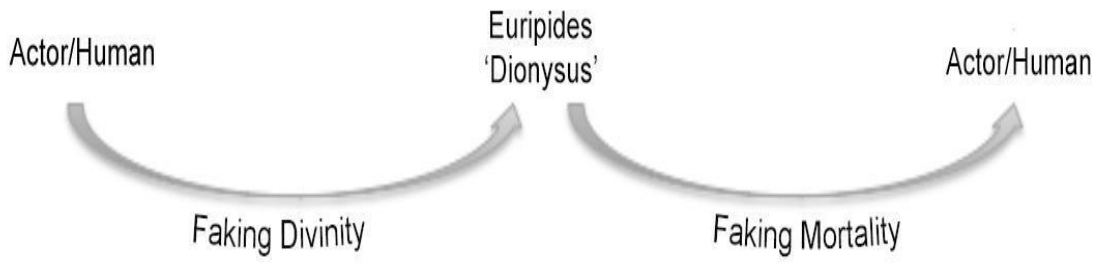

FIGURE 12. SHOWS THE MANY LAYERS OF MIMESIS AND DECEPTION, BLENDED INTO THIS SCENE OF TRAGIC PARODY

The audience, who are experiencing a dramatic Dionysus within the context of a cultic festival, are reminded of his ambiguity through the actions of imitation on stage. Dionysus' ability to alternate between human and divine forms forces the audience to also see the actor playing Dionysus.[491] This is also true of *Frogs*, when this comic

[490] Examples of *Bacchae's* Dionysus speaking in third person, see lines 498, 500-3, 614, 623-632, 790-1, 808, 825, 849, 923-4, 976.
[491] *Bacchae* 4, 576 and 1330.

Dionysus abandons his initial disguise, appearing as his divine self to judge the competition between Aeschylus and Euripides.[492]

A final note for the play's self-referential introduction is the use of the term *skeuē*, which Dionysus uses to describe his worshippers' clothing. Wyles highlights that this is significant, as it is also a standard term for theatre dress.[493] This, she emphasises 'is an ambiguity that we will see is exploited within the stage action of the tragedy. The emphasis on the clothing and accessories of bacchic worshippers in the prologue is used to prefigure this'.[494] Here, the god's 'power over disguise' when combined with his cultic worshipers, sets the scene for the play's eventual meta-theatrical theme of 'power over costume'.

Costume also has major implications for the rest of *Bacchae's* characters. Cadmus and Teiresias' Bacchic dress shows that comedic costume can have a place within tragic performance, the forced dressing of the Theban women symbolises their punishment and subsequent lack of control and finally the 'dressing up scene' between Pentheus and Dionysus shows that costume exists within the realm of Dionysian worship. So, to undermine the god is to have costume used against you.[495] The first character for consideration must be Dionysus himself. As the protagonist of this play, his use of costume offers an interesting standard by which the other characters can be compared.

[492] *Frogs* 829-1471.
[493] Wyles (2016: 60).
[494] Wyles (2016: 56).
[495] In *Bacchae*, see 170-369 (Cadmus and Teiresias), 31-4 (Theban women) and 821-976 (dressing up scene).

MOCKERY OF PENTHEUS

> Dionysus' eventual power over Pentheus is symbolized through the king's appearance when he emerges from the palace (918): he is dressed as a woman and carries bacchic accessories.
>
> Wyles (2016: 64)

This relationship between actor, character, stage and spectator is further emphasised when the audience witness Dionysus using his costume to trick his opponents; for instance, Dionysus toys with Pentheus in line 614, when the disguised god says that he was rescued by himself. This is a call back to an earlier scene, when the same character stated he would be saved by the god Dionysus.[496] This is not a confession, but a joke at the expense of Pentheus' ignorance. Zeitlin calls this 'discrepant awareness', as the audience have access to knowledge that some characters do not.[497] Another example of this can be found in lines 477-478, when Pentheus tries to find out the appearance of the cultic figure.

> Pentheus:
> The god - what did he look like? You claim you saw him clearly.
>
> Dionysus:
> He looked as he wished to look: I had no say in the matter.
>
> *Bacchae* 477- 478

These goes a little beyond the typical 'discrepant awareness' of tragedy', most likely encouraging laughter as a response to Dionysus' play on words. After all, the phrase '*he looked as he wished to look'* is a reference to the costume that the actor is currently

[496] *Bacchae* 498 and 500-3.
[497] Zeitlin (1990:84).

wearing. Dionysus is denying that he is in fact 'Dionysus' with the words '*I had no say in the matter'.* Therefore, the audience suddenly sees the actor on stage, rather than just the illusion of his character Dionysus within the play. What is more, the extent to which costume is used within the *Bacchae* creates a wider awareness of the actors playing roles like Dionysus and Pentheus.

> When the chorus sings of Pentheus' hubris against the Dionysus who inspires the elates, life-enhancing laughter of the symposium (and related forms of celebratory worship), the audience can perceive the Pentheus of the preceding scene as, literally and metaphorically, a figure both hostile to the ideals of the symposium and an embodiment of the aggressive, alienating laughter that is incompatible with sympotic concord.
>
> Halliwell (2008: 135)

Another important feature of Dionysus' disguise is its success. It appears his costume is part of his trickery within the play, revealing his overall ability to deceive others. The god only reveals himself on his own terms.[498] The same cannot be said for other costumes within the play. According to Halliwell (2008), laughter enjoyed by the *Bacchae's* Dionysus, as well as his chorus of followers, is driven by resentment with lines like 'I bring you the one who hurls laughter at you, me and my sacred rites', as well as 'I want him to incur laughter among the Thebans by being led in women's form through the city streets, to pay him back for his own violent threats against me'.[499] This Dionysus uses laughter to replicate the mockery put upon him by Pentheus, as a means to then mock him in return.[500] Laughter, according to Pentheus' lines before this, is the worst act against him.[501]

[498] *Bacchae* 580-1 and 1130-1351.
[499] *Bacchae* 1080-1 and 854-6; Halliwell (2008: 137).
[500] Halliwell (2008: 137).
[501] *Bacchae* 840-2; Halliwell (2008: 137).

What makes the dressing up scene one of the most theatrically self-aware segments of the play and indeed within classical tragedy, is its interplay between costumes onstage. What would have been two characters faced with putting on costumes, one already in a disguise, is heightened by the fact both characters are being played by actors who are wearing costumes to reflect this. This is heightened all the more when considering that the character of Dionysus 'acts' as Pentheus' aid, fixing his costume, hair and instructing him on how to hold his wand.[502] This reminds the audience once again that costume and actions echo the very art of performance. Zeitlin (1990) points out that in this scene with Dionysus and Pentheus, they are in a sense meant to look the same, the only difference being that Pentheus' costume is clumsy.[503] This would create a visual separation between the two, and Dionysus (as a representative of drama) shows how it should be done.

Halliwell offers the additional observation that Dionysus' dressing of Pentheus in female dress is a vivid comparison to another instance when men readily dress as women; this being staged comedy.[504] This is a comparison that is actively referenced by the chorus later when the tragic parade of Pentheus' severed head is referred to as a *kōmos*.[505] Halliwell sees this moment the climax of Euripides' sympotic-komastic moments within the play.[506]

[502] *Bacchae* 932-938 and 941-944.
[503]Zeitlin (1990: 63-4).
[504] Halliwell (2008: 138-9).
[505] *Bacchae* 1167 and 1172; Halliwell (2008: 139).
[506] Halliwell (2008: 139).

> So Dionysus' plan to lead Pentheus through Thebes in this manner carries pervertedly komastic connotations. It is part of Pentheus' blindness that he is an unwitting participant in a cryptic 'revel' choreographed by Dionysus, a revel that ironically forms the prelude to a tragic dénouement.
>
> Halliwell (2008: 139)

Dionysus too has a distinctly feminine image within Euripides' *Bacchae*. In line 353, Pentheus refers to the god as the 'woman shaped' man.[507] Furthermore, the Theban king calls him attractive, longhaired, and pale skinned.[508] Although, these are not exclusively feminine features, the last matches numerous descriptions of women within the play, such as: the Theban bacchants and their white feet, as well as the white feet of the Lydian chorus. Then there is Agave's comments on her own white hands.[509] Bar Dionysus, only women are given this description in Euripides' *Bacchae*, which suggests that this is a conscious parallel between the two. Noticeably, Aristophanes' *Frogs* also describes Dionysus as going pale at the thought of Empusa.[510] David Wiles (2000) says that the pale face on a tragic mask often symbolises a woman, on an otherwise neutral face.[511] If Wiles' theory is to be accepted, it could be said that Aristophanes was parodying a tradition used in the *Bacchae*, where in this case he likens feminine pale skin to cowardice, with Dionysus' feminine image an visual aid to emphasising his lack of bravery throughout the play..[512] Alternatively, this last point could be a bit of a stretch, as skin does go pale with fright and may not be referencing tragic costume in this way.

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[507] *Bacchae* 353.
[508] *Bacchae* 453-9.
[509] In *Bacchae*, see 604-5 and 863 (white feet) and 1206 (white hands).
[510] *Frogs* 307.
[511] Wiles (2007: 148).
[512] *Frogs* 294, 296, 307, 463-4, 486-491 and 498-9.

3.3.b: *FROGS*

It is undeniable that the *Bacchae* is one of the most highly charged meta-theatrical plays still in circulation. Slater explains that authority is fair game in mockery, which is clear from the role Pentheus plays within the *Bacchae*, but he also points out that authority can extent to the stage itself. Meta-theatre, he elaborates, is the opportunity for 'hackneyed or oppressive' theatrical traditions to be renewed.[513] With that in mind, it is Aristophanes' *Frogs* that embodies the quintessence of the Dionysian self-aware comedy. Granted, Slater was not talking about the Dionysian influences of the stage, but the potential for meta-theatre within Greek New Comedy. Furthermore, Slater argues that this explanation cannot suffice for Old Comedy. Yet, his statement has a ring of truth to the god's meta-theatrical presence within Aristophanes' *Frogs*. Here, Dionysus is not only 'the' dramatic authority figure being mocked, but his very presence is a plot device that continually references a need to shift Athenian drama in a different direction.[514]

DIRECT ADDRESS AND ASIDES:

> Xanthias:
> Shall I make one of the usual cracks, master, that the audience always laugh at?
>
> *Frogs* 1-2

The opening scene of *Frogs* could not appear more different to the overarching serious tones within Euripides' *Bacchae*, but like Euripides' use of exposition, Aristophanes finds

[513] Slater (2002: 7).
[514] The choice to use Dionysus as an agent of dramatic 'change' therefore makes even more sense when we consider Lowe's observations that Old Comedy had a more transformative nature then the more conservative genre of tragedy (Lowe 2007: 15).

his own methods of integrating audience awareness from the start.[515] This first happens in the opening dialogue between his comedic characters Dionysus and his slave Xanthias.[516] This exchange sees both using existing comic material in a clever twist of audience expectations within this comedic drama. After all, Dionysus agrees to the jokes, but proceeds to warn Xanthias not to use tired or predictable material.[517] This is already a plunge into meta-theatre territory, but this is further emphasised when the god complains about having to watch tired comedy as a bystander himself:

> Dionysus:
> Just don't do it, because when I'm in the audience and see one of those clever bits, I go home a whole year older.
>
> *Frogs* 16-18

Dionysus is referring to his role as the god of Drama, a function that drives the plot of the play, but more specifically it emphasises the very festival that the audience are attending. We see this again when he directly references his own priest in the audience, who would have likely had a seat of honour.[518] Dionysus on stage is purposefully blurring the lines between his divine and dramatic self. Furthermore, by constantly referring to these 'old jokes', Aristophanes is actually injecting other poets' comedy into his dramatic framework. By insinuating well-known punch lines, a similar (if not stronger) effect is reached – with the added layer of comedic mockery that puts Aristophanes on a self-

[515] Lowe (2020) recognise the importance of a prologue for making comic audiences laugh. He states that they 'are under particular pressure to warm up the audience while simultaneously building characters and world, and constructing relationships of identification and collusion between performers and audience' (2020: 18).
[516] *Frogs* 1-37.
[517] *Frogs* 3-4, 5, 7-8, 11, 16-18, and 19-20.
[518] *Frogs* 297; Stuttard (2016: 1).

proclaimed pedestal. This stealing of other lines and jokes appears later in the play too, with Dionysus stealing the words out of the frog chorus.[519]

Audience address is also apparent, when considering the character of Xanthias' later asides. Dover points out that before *Frogs*, a dramatic slave usually served two functions. The first was to offer exposition to an audience; as we will see in Chapter Four's exploration of *Knights* and *Wasps*. The other was to prompt laughter when they are shown as hurt, threatened or scared.[520] In some ways, *Frogs* does this when Xanthias first appears as a conventional suffering slave, complaining about his burden. Yet Xanthias, like Karion in *Wealth*, offers a dramatic role that is unusual in the context of this trend.[521] In the case of Xanthias, not only does he continually reverse social roles with Dionysus, a contrast that is only more acute when compared to Pluto's shocked slave in lines 738-743, but Xanthias has the added oddity of interacting with the audience, in the form of asides that take place during the exchange between Heracles and Dionysus.[522]

> Heracles:
> what about Xenocles?
>
> Dionysus:
> to hell with him!
>
> Heracles:
> and Pythangelus?

[519] *Frogs* 251.
[520] Dover (1993: 43). Dover does, however, acknowledge that there are play titles from the fourth century, which imply a slave protagonist. Thus, roles of slaves may have been more complex than we can judge with the material at hand (Dover 1993: 48).
[521] Dover (1993: 47).
[522] Dover (1993: 44-5).

Xanthias:
not a word about me, while my shoulder's getting so badly bruised?

Frogs 86-88

Heracles:
come now, it's obviously complete rubbish.

Dionysus:
stick to your specialty: eating.

Xanthias:
but not a word about me!

Dionysus:
well, the reason I've come wearing this outfit in imitation of you is so you'll tell me about those friends of yours who put you up when you went after Cerberus, in case I need them. Tell me about them, about the harbors, bakeries, whorehouses, rest areas, directions, springs, roads, cities, places to stay, the landladies with the fewest bedbugs.

Xanthias:
but not a word about me!

Frogs 107-115

Other possible asides are more speculative, like lines 34, 42 and 308-311. The reasoning behind them is the lack of Dionysus' response. Dover points out that we need to be careful here, as a common feature of Old Comedy is the withholding of angry reactions that would otherwise happen in real life.[523] Nevertheless, Dover does state that there is no doubt when it comes to lines 86, 107 and 115.

[523] Dover (1993: 45).

COSTUME:

I recently attended a conference on serious-comedy, where it was speculated that Shakespeare may have invented the first 'knock-knock' joke, but Taplin (1986) observes that knocking on a door was a common trope in Old Comedy.[524] In *Frog*s, the butt of the joke comes when Heracles sees Dionysus' state of dress. As the god of drama, the 'feminine' pieces of clothing represented his normal attire, and they serve to remind the audience that this is a comedy because the god of drama should not be so bad at wearing costumes.

> Heracles:
> By Demeter, I just can't stop laughing! Even though I'm biting my lip, I can't help laughing.
>
> Dionysus:
> (to Heracles) Come here, my man; I'd like a word with you.
>
> Heracles:
> I just can't get rid of this laughter. It's the sight of that lionskin atop a yellow gown. [3] What's the idea? Why has a war club joined up with lady's boots? Where on earth have you been?
>
> *Frogs* 42-48

Dionysus' opening comedic disguise takes the form of a poor imitation of a Heracles costume. Here Dionysus, accompanied by Xanthias, visits his half-brother Heracles, who upon seeing the costume claims he cannot stop laughing. Heracles points out Dionysus' mixture of club, lionskin, dress and theatrical boots. Although it is not

[524] Taplin (1986: 165); The conference titled *Serious About Comedy* (2022) was at the Birmingham REP theatre and in partnership with the University of Birmingham.

mentioned until lines 38-164, it still would have still caused laughter amongst an audience from its first reveal.

Another references to Dionysus' appearance in this play follow more traditional comedic style. For example, Charon calls the god 'fat' (200). When looking at the usual comedic dress, characters are often fat, old and bearded. Therefore, this Dionysus most likely had a distinctively masculine appearance, with the added comedy of a feminine dress peeking out of a poor Heracles costume. This 'bad' costume gives the audience instructions to think of the actor (masculine), wearing a dress (feminine), loosely covered in a lionskin (masculine) and then representing a fat Dionysus (old/masculine). This process provides a great example of Dionysian ambiguity played for laughs.

In some parallel to this, the *Bacchae*'s scene with Cadmus and Teiresias also explores this theme of ill-fitted costume and therefore shows that this was not limited to the old comedy.[525] Granted, these are not Dionysus, but they are wearing the revelry Bacchic costumes, thus visualising two old men wearing youthful clothing.[526] The image these men likely created is well put in Pentheus' words 'πολύν γέλων' (much laughter).[527] Not only is Pentheus specifically bringing these bad costumes to the audience's attention, but Kovacs translates the phrase as a 'ridiculous sight'.[528] Of course Pentheus is not safe from this fate either, as Dionysus makes Pentheus wear a 'bad' costume in the dressing-up scene. Perhaps both plays see poor use of Dionysian

[525] *Bacchae* 170-369.
[526] There are multiple references to their old age *Bacchae*, which include: Pentheus telling Teiresias that if he was not so old, he would be in prison, 258. See also Teiresias' mention of their grey hair *'We are a pair of grayheads, but still we must dance'* 322-325.
[527] *Bacchae* 250.
[528] Kovacs (2002: 33).

costume as an extension of his comic influence. After all, Compton-Engle expresses that:

> Costume is an underappreciated weapon in the comic poet's arsenal, often deployed for specific theatrical and thematic purposes. Its use in comic performance also reflects cultural assumptions about power, the body, status, and mimesis
>
> Compton-Engle (2015:1)

This comedy also creates a level of ambiguity that is much needed in each play. This is first apparent in *Bacchae*'s Cadmus and Teiresias, as they are fooled by their own poor costume. They are fooled by their own poor costume into thinking that they can manage a difficult walk despite being two old men and one blind.[529] Pentheus, like Cadmus and Teiresias, is not aware that his costume is bad. In fact, he asks Dionysus who out of his other and aunts he looks like the most (925-926). Both are strikingly similar to Dionysus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, who continues to confuse himself with his Heracles costume. This is most clear when Xanthias tries to invoke Heracles and Dionysus replies 'Don't invoke me, man, I beg you, and don't use my name!'.[530] When Xanthias alters his request to 'Well then, hey Dionysus!', Dionysus retorts 'That's even worse!'.[531]

In what Slater calls the play's 'more comic first half', he argues that we see the themes of identity, role-playing and teaching at its centre.[532] Dionysus, after all, is committed to role-play when he decides to dress as Heracles. What he learns over the course of his journey to the underworld is that wearing a costume is not the same as fulfilling a

[529] *Bacchae* 191-194.
[530] *Frogs* 297-298.
[531] *Frogs* 299-300.
[532] Slater (2002: 205).

role. Without learning how to act like Heracles, Dionysus' disguise becomes pointless.[533]

> One can hardly say that Dionysus becomes a successful performer in the first half of the play, although he does improve his skills. In the second half, however, he does finally master what is required of him to become a successful tragic spectator, and in doing so he models that behaviour for the rest of Athens.
>
> Slater (2002: 206)

With regards to the second half of the play, Slater explains that Dionysus displays two faces for his audience. Not only is this achieved through the duality of comedy and tragedy, but also in the god's contrasting roles as spectator and performer.[534] This is a contrast that was tempered by the active nature of Aristophanic spectatorship, which saw contribution from audiences as part of the dramatic experience.[535] Furthermore, Dionysus still gets what he wants at the end of the play. Slater likens this to Dionysus being a poor performer but a great tragic spectator.[536]

TRAGIC PARODY:

According to Dover (1993), the fact that *Frogs* and *Bacchae* were likely performed within months of each other is a 'provocative coincidence'. Steering away from previous conceptions that Euripides' *Bacchae* was circulated before Aristophanes' performance of *Frogs* in 406 BCE, Dover states that it was unlikely a parody of this particular tragedy existed before it was even performed. Nevertheless, the action of

[533] Slater (2002: 206).
[534] Slater (2002: 206).
[535] Slater (2002: 206).
[536] Slater (2022: 206).

tragic parody in its broader sense was still prevalent within the play. With this in mind, I must consider two ways that tragic parody manifests within *Frogs*; these being the parroting of pre-existing plays at the expense of their authors and the mock imitation of tragic tropes. The more obvious direction for this incorporates both, with *Frogs*' extensive use of Euripides.

According to Giangrande (1972), Aristophanes 'regarded Euripides as a degrader of human ideals', with the implication being that Euripides neglected his role in giving instructive advice and so, failed to fulfil the 'self-evident function' of drama.[537] Insult is implied within the play as Euripides' tragic tropes are in effect being ridiculed and ultimately rejected by a fellow dramatist. Nelson (2016) even states that unlike *The Women of Thesmophoria*, where Aristophanes appears to try to 'correct' Euripides' earlier tragic plays, *Frogs* instead denies Euripides the seat of tragedian altogether in favour of Aeschylus.[538]

Whether Aristophanes resented or admired Euripides is a long-standing moot point. Many scholars have collected textual evidence to suggest ridicule and distaste are the fuel of Aristophanes' Euripidean parodies. Others have turned these moments around in favour of friendly rivalry, or even professional recognition as a counter point. It is true that to parody something, there must be an interest in the subject. Unfortunately, comprehending the tone of Aristophanes' interest in Euripides, being it scorn or fondness, is beyond our grasps. We can only deal with speculation.[539] Therefore, it is

[537] Giangrande (1972: 76).
[538] Nelson (2016: 242).
[539] See Wycherley (1946:98).

better to direct such energy to how Aristophanes used the subject of Euripides, to engage with his audience in notable moments of self-referential laughter.

> Dionysus:
> Anyway, as I was on deck reading Andromeda to myself, a
> sudden longing struck my heart, you can't imagine how hard.
>
> *Frogs* 52-4
>
> Dionysus:
> I can't put it into words, but I'll try to explain it to you by analogy.
> Have you ever had a sudden craving for minestrone?
>
> Heracles:
> Minestrone? Oh my, thousands of times in my life!
>
> Dionysus:
> Am I spelling out the obvious, or should I express it another way?
>
> Heracles:
> No problem with minestrone; I get the point entirely.
>
> Dionysus:
> Well, that's the kind of longing that's eating away at me for
> Euripides.
>
> Heracles:
> You mean, dead and all?
>
> Dionysus:
> And nobody on earth can persuade me not to go after him.
>
> Heracles:
> Even below to Hades?
>
> Dionysus:
> By heaven, even if there's somewhere below that.
>
> Heracles:
> What is it you want?
>
> Dionysus:
> I need a talented poet, "for some are gone, and those that live are
> bad".
>
> *Frogs* 60 - 73

As you can see, the setup to *Frogs* has Dionysus pining for a bygone age of drama and lamenting over the declining state of Athenian drama, while obsessing over the idea of resurrecting the recently deceased Euripides. In his chapter on the Dionysia in *Frogs*, Biles points out that Euripides' death would have been a literary crisis for Athenian audiences. Furthermore, despite only winning four competition titles in his professional lifetime, the playwright still worked within the dramatic festivals for half a century; his absence would have been keenly felt by dramatic practitioners and audiences alike.[540] With that in mind, Dionysus' sense of urgency in this early exchange with Heracles becomes more potent when we consider the possibility that it is reflecting an uncertainty shared by the audience with the comic. Stuttard (2016) also wonders if *Frogs* was in fact a funny homage to a fellow playwright after his death, as Euripides' role in *Frogs* was clearly an opportunity for Aristophanes to make use of the circumstance within his own profession.[541] For instance, Sophocles was also a recent death at this point and also had a mention in this exchange with Hercules:

> Heracles:
> If you must resurrect someone, then why not Sophocles, who's better than Euripides?
>
> Dionysus:
> No, first I want to get Iophon alone by himself and evaluate what he produces without Sophocles. Besides, Euripides is a slippery character and would probably even help me pull off an escape, whereas Sophocles was peaceable here and will be peaceable there.
>
> *Frogs* 76-82

[540] Biles (2011: 211). For possible reasons why Euripides only had four wins, see Stuttard (2016: 3).
[541] Stuttard (2016: 6).

The tragedian not only serves as a major plot device throughout the play, but he also becomes an active character within its second half. Dionysus ends up discarding Euripides for the more traditional tragedian Aeschylus. Not only would this setup have played on the very competitive space in which these playwrights thrived, but it also reminded the audience of the competitive atmosphere that *Frogs* was currently performing in at the Lenaia in 405.[542]

CLOSING THOUGHTS:

Both Euripides' *Bacchae* and Aristophanes' *Frogs* allowed a god of drama to simultaneously inhabit the roles of protagonist, actor and spectator within their respective plots. By utilising the *Homeric Hymns* to Dionysus and the mythic imagery they created, this section considered how two seemingly contradictory theatrical depictions of the god were also recognisable as this religious figure. As the deity of drama, it is to be expected that Dionysian ideas of ambiguity, manipulation and trickery would manifest within essential theatrical practice.

I have predominantly showed how pre-existing cultic themes of Dionysus' divinity could be reinvented for both tragedy and comedy, from the mythic exposition in *Bacchae*, to *Frogs*' parody of comic procession. Not only that, but this blend of divine authority and rejection from archaic sources such as *Homeric Hymns I* and *VII* only strengthened the ambiguous blend of laughter with danger in Euripides' and to some extent Aristophanes' plays. Furthermore, I have shown how a cultic and dramatic Dionysus extended to invoke laughter with theatrical self-awareness - otherwise known as meta-

[542] Biles (2011: 211).

theatre. Using the prologue and use of costume in Euripides' *Bacchae*, as well as the blend of direct address, performance, and tragic parody in *Frogs*, this chapter has been able to explore the role of laughter as a cause and effect of two very different examples of self-reflective Dionysian comedy.

One area that has not been discussion within this chapter is the political significance of *Frogs*. The reason for this is because of the Dionysian direction that I took. Nevertheless, scholars such as Slater have warned against seeing the play simply for its literary value; they have pointed out that the splitting of a literary focus in the first half, with the play's practical ending, has political implications throughout. [543] In my next chapter, I will have a more political focus, as I move away from the Dionysian and consider a distinctly dramatic side to the 'consensual trickery' introduced in Chapter One, as it manifests into laughter in Aristophanes' political plays.

[543] Slater (2022: 205).

CHAPTER FOUR

[META-THEATRE AS 'SERIOUS-COMEDY': ARISTOPHANES' *ACHARNIANS*, *KNIGHTS* AND *WASPS*]

In my previous chapter, I looked at how Euripides' *Bacchae* and Aristophanes' *Frogs* addressed pre-existing cultic images of the god Dionysus, which lent themselves to later dramatic personae that used meta-theatrical devices that instigated self-referential laughter within the confines of both tragedy and Old Comedy. Within these findings, it became clear that Euripides' *Bacchae* had a knack for blending these divine comic tones to enhance an otherwise sombre narrative, but it is still Aristophanic comedy that remains our most lucrative resource for meta-theatrical devices within the classical stage.[544] Therefore, this chapter will offer additional insight into some of the comic's most self-referential scenes in his political plays of *Acharnians, Knights* and *Wasps.* Furthermore, by exploring the already established meta-theatrical devices of costume, tragic parody, audience address and performance-within-a-performance, I will reflect on how they aid in his *spoudaiogeloion* or serious comedy. As a result, I will be reflecting on more recognisably satirical comedy, where this same laughter forces agency on comic spectators and shapes political depths to these plays.

To begin, 4.1 will address previous research on meta-theatre, specifically within Aristophanic comedy. From that, I will then re-address the idea of *spoudaiogeloion* explored in my thesis introduction, but specifically as it informs Old Comedy and its

[544] See Slater (2002: 1). See Rengel (2017) for the intrinsic meta-theatrical nature of Aristophanic comedy (2017: 146).

active audience. Both of these approaches will then help me explore how others have analysed the unique and deeply ingrained meta-theatrical experience of this ancient genre, where a give and take over the dramatic and the anti-dramatic allow for spectators engaged with content on multiple levels of laughter and political thought that ultimately makes them complicit in a play's comic success.

The second half of this chapter will again follow a case-study approach, where it will break down particular extracts from these three early Aristophanic plays. Starting with *Acharnians*, I will consider the dramatisation of costume within themes of tragedy. Within this first case study, *The Acharnian*s' protagonist Dicaeopolis visits the home of the tragic poet Euripides, all in the search for an appropriate costume for his upcoming speech against the Acharnian chorus.[545] While the speech itself is rich in meta-theatrical deception, in particular the inter-textual manipulation of Euripides' *Telephus*, it is the initial preparations of this trick that first highlight its key meta-theatrical design. With this in mind, the principal themes for consideration include costume manipulation and how that can facilitate tragic parody. My second exploration of *Acharnians* comes in lines 738-883 and once again addresses the theme of how costume is mixed with deception. Here we see a starving Megarian along with his two daughters, who are disguised as piglets. This is done so that he may sell them to Dicaeopolis as livestock. Instead of the tragic parody with Euripides, this moment simultaneously uses comic dress to contrast feelings of helplessness; this reminds the audience of the real human consequence of the Peloponnesian War in an otherwise humorous scene.

[545] In *Acharnians*, see 393-479 (visiting Euripides) and 497-627 (Dicaeopolis' speech).

Following this, I will look at Aristophanes' subsequent play *Knights* to address a more direct relationship between his audience and the play's comic performance. Here, I will look at the use of direct address in its prologue; this is where the collective audience would likely have felt integrated into the play's script, disguised as direct interaction. Moreover, produced a year after *Acharnians*, this play is arguably one of his most political plays. Presumed to be set against the politician Cleon, it continues to implement a detailed meta-theatrical experience of audience interplay and political deception that crescendos to the play's epilogue. This is where this same audience are tricked by the character of the Sausage-Seller and his true identity.

Then in my final analysis of *Wasps*, I will use the famous mock trial scene, where its key protagonists of Bdelycleon and Philocleon mimic the public space of the law courts via the staging of a private household.[546] In effect, this final example addresses the well-known meta-theatrical trope of a performance within the narrative itself. By specifically looking at the dramatic staging of this key moment within the play, as well as the political implications of the main character's obsession with the law courts, I will question what self-aware comedy adds to the serious message behind the comic hero; if there is one at all.

4.1: OLD COMEDY AND SERIOUS COMEDY

In Chapter Three, I explored how meta-theatre was presented in examples of ancient tragedy and Old Comedy, particularly within the context of the Dionysian themes in two very different plays. Nevertheless, it is worth considering in more depth here how the

[546] Slater (2002: 113-4).

roles of meta-theatre functioned in the uniquely religious and festival setting of Old Comedy. This is particularly the case because, according to Ruffell (2011), the comic meta-theatre of this genre had more overt techniques than that of its counterpart of tragedy.[547]

Like Ruffell, Slater (2002) states that Old Comedy knows and names itself, as he separates Aristophanic comedy from its counter-genre of tragedy, specifically for its overt self-referential nature. Slater uses eight Aristophanic plays to display their relationship between ancient space, performance and plot.[548] In doing so, he also acknowledges a number of ancient meta-theatrical techniques, as Old Comedy *'proceeds to discuss its various parts with its audience – which itself is one of the parts*'.[549] So with that in mind, I am curious to see if these more overt examples of self-aware comedy encourage laughter as a means to respond to more serious subjects, through what we may as a modern audience perceive as political satire.

4.1.a: OLD COMEDY

> Comic metafiction is both impossible and dislocating, but also and at the same time involving, intensifying, and engaging.
>
> Ruffell (2011: 216)

[547] For example, Ruffell addressed the 'metatheatrical environment' in which Old Comedy functioned (2011: 230-238).
[548] See Slater's chapters on *Acharnians*, *Knights* and *Wasps* (2002: 42-67, 68-85 and 86-114).
[549] Slater (2002: 1).

As I have already established in Chapter Three, Taplin (1986), Wiles (2007) and Slater (2002), have all approached ancient theatre from what Compton-Engle calls 'performance studies', this being a directional awareness to the fundamental performative nature of ancient drama. This reminds us that what we are studying was once 'live theatre' and not just words on a page.[550] Taplin in particular applied this approach to the art of ancient meta-theatre, to offer some of the first deviations away from typical illusion theory and offered distinctions between meta-theatre within the genres. [551]

Ruffell sees Taplin's work as a great starting point for those interested in the pragmatics of self-reference in Greek tragedy and Old Comedy, particularly for his maximal approach and his pioneering avoidance of more traditional language on illusion.[552] Nonetheless, Ruffell also questions Taplin's ability to fully remove himself from this illusionary language, as he falls into a similar trap of fixating on humour as a disruption within the theatrical flow of a play.

> We do not know for sure whether comedy encouraged shouting, whistling, clapping etc., but obviously it encouraged laughter. It wanted to be stopped by laughter; one of the first things young actors of comedy have to learn is how to accommodate the audience's laughter, leave enough pause but not too much.
>
> Taplin (1986: 172)

[550] Compton-Engle (2015).
[551] For various works by Taplin, which also address meta-theatrical ideas on the classical stage, see his various works (1977, 1986, 1993 and 2021). For more on illusionary theory before Taplin, see Chapter Two section 3.1.c.
[552] Ruffell (2011: 217).

This is the assumption that comic audiences cannot fully engage with a performance when faced with humour. The result being that audiences are not allowed to settle or engage emotionally, in the same way that they might with tragedy.[553] Ruffell is dubious of this approach and argues that while comic engagement may not be the same found in tragedy, that does not mean there is no engagement to be found.[554]

Instead, Ruffell applies the theory that comic meta-fiction can be 'both impossible and dislocating, but also and at the same time involving, intensifying, and engaging'.[555] For instance, self-reference in dramatic fictionality can equally engage comic audiences. Aristophanic comedy and, in a broader sense, Old Comedy, uses the absurd and the impossible to communicate with an active audience, including issues around politics, gender and cultural intervention.[556] Furthermore, Ruffell stipulates that the most substantial form of this absurd style comes from the often self-referential style of Old Comedy. In particular, Aristophanes' 'theatrical and fictional self-consciousness', according to Ruffell, acts as a mechanism to overlap humour with acts of communication.[557]

> Given the degree of such audience awareness in Old Comedy, a straightforward deception/illusion theory of fiction would always be problematic, but such a theory has proved persistent, even among those who acknowledge the problem. Neither illusion nor disruption are, however, the only models available. Rather, the audience is always engaged in the fiction, always constructing the fictional world. Audiences are always aware to some extent of their role as spectators; in Old Comedy, this is merely being foregrounded. And so it is not exactly the case either that there is no illusion, or that illusion is being punctured, or of rupture being the rule rather

[553] Ruffell (2011: 217).
[554] Ruffell (2011: 218).
[555] Ruffell (2011: 216).
[556] Ruffell (2011: 215-17).
[557] Ruffell (2011: 215).

> than the exception. Rather, analysis in terms of illusion just is not helpful at all.
>
> Ruffell (2011: 260)

A common phrase applied to meta-theatre is to 'break the fourth wall'. Such a term is problematic when applied to ancient comedy, as the word 'breaking' implied a disruption of convention. Yet, if meta-theatre is such an integral part of Old Comedy, then what is actually broken? The fourth wall was never really there. This instead raises the question of convention within Old Comedy, specifically the convention of self-aware theatre. Ruffell also gives some insight into this by looking at the common structure of Old Comedy.

> While Aristophanes goes much further than many celebrated exponents of self-reflexive fiction, nonetheless there are limits to comic metatheatricality which mean that the environment is not wholly destabilized. Structural, self-reflexive devices are used strategically and tactically as intensifiers and multipliers. This over-heated, self-consciously engaged atmosphere of Old Comedy also operates with a glance or more at the competition—at other types of fictional (and political) engagement.
>
> Ruffell (2011 :221)

Sommerstein (1980) breaks down the functional structures of Old Comedy, while stating that it was never constant. For instance, he explains that basic patterns like the parabasis and the Chorus were more typical of early Aristophanic plays and were greatly reduced after 411BC. Therefore, a text like *Acharnians* has a more typical dramatic arrangement compared to the much later *Frogs,* or even *Wasps*.[558] Thomas Hubbard gives similar attention to these devices and even blends them into his *Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis* (1991). Here he argues that

[558] Sommerstein (1980: 11).

the directness of the parabasis was a much later addition to Old Comedy.[559] Hubbard rejects the formulaic approach of earlier ritual theory, which argues that the parabasis formulated some of the earliest examples of the genre.[560]

4.1.b: SERIOUS-COMEDY / AN ACTIVE AUDIENCE

> Is Aristophanes "just" a comedian, or is he "serious" about something…
>
> Slater (2002: 5)

Slater points out that this question has risen for almost a century, as he states that we can recover specific political dimensions from the meta-theatricality of Aristophanes' comedies. In particular, he argues that the comic playwright uses meta-theatre as a tool for critiquing certain types of politics, rather than just politics as a whole. In other words, he states that Aristophanes' objection was to how certain individuals conducted politics. [561]

As I established within this thesis' Introduction, Giangrande (1972) remains our main resource for serious comedy or *spoudaiogeloion* in Greek and Roman literature. In his section on 'Old Comedy and Early Expression of the Comic Spirit', he stipulates that Old Comedy and by extension Aristophanes, 'had a strong moral intent' and 'satirized individuals and travestied political figures, revealing the comic as aggressive and displaying its two forms of attack as caricature and invective'.[562] It is also worth

[559] Hubbard (1991: 23-33) and Slater (2002: 75, n.24).
[560] Slater (2002: 75).
[561] Slater (2002: 5-6).
[562] Giangrande (1972: 76).

emphasising the significance Giangrande places on these referential comic actions in the development of this serious-comedy.[563] According to Giangrande, Aristophanes was 'an exponent of the serio-comic' and one who worked within the golden age of caricature.[564]

> The "demagogue" Cleon (*Knights* 137 and *Acharnians* 381) was called kuklôboros (devourer).[565] Aristophanes calls himself the bald (phalakros) in Peace 771. We also note that Antimachus (*Acharnians* 1150) is called son of dew (psakas), because he sprinkles saliva while talking. Excessive height (*Frogs* 55) is caricatured, but dwarfness also in *Acharnians* 367… Aristophanes (Wasps 1388) caricatures the bread-girl, noisy and insolent, who reproves Philocleon for having jolted her… It is apparent from these examples that such caricature is on the threshold of humoristic satire, and would be particularly mortifying if combined with invective.
>
> Giangrande (1972: 77-78)

Giangrande offers a number of ways in which Aristophanes partakes in this practice, from having an actor wear a padded stomach like Ctesiphon's belly in *Acharnians,* to the more subversive remarks in the example above.[566] Giangrande also explains that when caricature was combined with invective, it could become 'particularly mortifying' for those targeted; invective often being personal or political and Aristophanes usually displaying both.[567] Furthermore he argues that invective was 'of the comic spirit', but when this exercise in laughter becomes a teaching against moral incongruity, 'it implies the ultimate death of the pure comic spirit and the birth of spoudaiogeloion'.[568] In other

[563] See Lowe (2007), for issues on the vagueness of using the word 'serious' to describe Aristophanic comedy (2007: 59). Lowe also references Silk's similar issues with this (Silk 2000: 305) (Lowe 2007: 59).
[564] Giangrande (1972: 77 and 80). See also Lowe (2007), who recognises that we cannot establish if political mockery within Aristophanes' comedies was personally motivated or generic to the art form (2007: 59).
[565] *Wasps* 903-930 (Cleon presented as a dog).
[566] *Acharnians* 1002.
[567] Giangrande (1972: 78).
[568] Giangrande (1972: 79).

words, this is the shift from more rustic comic expression like sexual and phallic realism, to comedy with 'didactic intent', this being Aristophanes' justification for his parody of others.[569]

Another important observation for this chapter is that Aristophanes' spectators know what they are part of, as they are an active audience.[570] Slater reminds us of earlier discussions on meta-theatre and nineteenth-century ideas of illusion. In particular, there is the idea that meta-theatre only occurred when audiences were directly addressed, or direct references to stage mechanics were made, thus breaking the illusion of theatre.[571] Thumiger highlights that direct address can have a very specific psychic response from an audience, more so than other forms of meta-theatre.[572] It is not a simple case of breaking an illusion if the scene in question is part of or even typical of a comedic performance. Instead, this rejection of typical theatrical illusion reveals how devices such as direct address were an ingrained part of the ancient stage. Audiences would know to expect such integration and the act of separating the chorus from the real spectators suggests a creating of two types of audience: one dramatic, and one real. Therefore, when Aristophanes tricks one of his dramatic audiences, what stops him from doing the same to the other?

4.2: *ACHARNIANS*

This play is above all else a comedy, but as the first of Aristophanes' complete plays to survive for a modern audience, it is also typical of his other political works, in that it

[569] Giangrande (1972: 79-80).
[570] Slater (2002:206).
[571] Slater (2002: 3).
[572] Thumiger (2009:26).

displays some harsher and often tragic tones that could be interpreted as a brutal honesty to his peers within the confines of the play's humour.[573] Moreover, the play came during a politically charged time, which it does not shy away from, being set around the antics of an Athenian farmer named Dicaeopolis and telling his story of seeking peace from the ongoing war against Sparta. When he first fails to convince his fellow Athenians, he instead brokers peace for himself and his family for 30 years, which comically appears in the form of wine jars that were likely a visual joke for the stage.[574] Consequently, he then becomes unwilling to share said wine jars with others due to his previous treatment by the generally inept Athenian Assembly. [575]

It is worth noting that the voice of Dicaeopolis has at times been reinterpreted as Aristophanes' own political aspirations for peace.[576] This is of course problematic, as the poet's true political and social motivations cannot be known when we rely only on the existing text. It is, however, reasonable to pinpoint moments where the poet appears to speak directly to the audience on more serious matters. For instance, bar the parabasis, there is one obvious breaking of character when Aristophanes berates the politician Cleon, a powerful politician of the time.

> Dicaeopolis:
> … This time Cleon will not
> accuse me of defaming the city in the presence of foreigners; for
> we are by ourselves; it's the Lenaean competition
>
> *Acharnians* 502-4

[573] On *Acharnians* being the first complete play available, see Slater (2002:42).
[574] *Acharnians* 186-260. This is also a visual pun because wine libations are called *spondai*, which is strikingly close to the Greek word for 'peace treaty'. For this word *spondai*, see Slater (2002: 49). For reference to the similarities in wording, see Henderson (2018: 82, n.34).
[575] *Acharnians* 17-173, 130-3, 176-202, 204-240, 280-715 and 719-1236.
[576] Forrest (1963: 1).

Here, Dicaeopolis suddenly stops the central theme of peace and instead defends the play itself. So, what is the reason for this? It is generally thought that Aristophanes was responding to Cleon's supposed condemnation of the playwright's previous play *Babylonians,* written just a year prior, for which he accused Aristophanes of slandering the city of Athens.[577] This mutual disdain between Aristophanes and Cleon is apparent by the continued ridicule of the politician in my other two case-studies, not to mention Cleon's second threat of indictment after *Knights.*[578] As such, it seems that the audience are experiencing the voice of the poet, as he taunts the politician who is likely a spectator himself. Moreover, not only would audience members have seen this as a slipping of Dicaeopolis' character persona into that of the playwright's, but it also appeals to the audience's prior knowledge of *Babylonians* and by extension other dramatic festivals like the Great City Dionysia in which it was performed, as well as Lenaea, which was the dramatic environment that they resided in.[579]

Ruffell points out the significance of the meta-theatrical environment in which these plays functioned. Using noise as an example, he highlights how audience sounds during a performance could replicate other Athenian large-scale events; he also states that this is why the opening scene of *Acharnians* is able to use the sounds of the dramatic festival to appear as the Assembly.[580] This is from its opening scene, where Ruffell highlights the interlinking meta-theatrical devices that blend Aristophanes'

[577] Henderson (1998: 13).
[578] Henderson (1998:15).
[579] Other festivals and shared customs are referenced within this play, although not dramatic in nature, they do strengthen the audience-sceptical relationship. This includes the Apaturia (146), the Rural Dionysia (202) and the partaking of wine during the making of peace treaties (186)(Henderson 2018: 82).
[580] Ruffell (2011: 232).

spectators with his performance. The play opens with protagonist Dicaeopolis waiting for the Athenian assembly to begin, which becomes apparent with the line 'the Assembly's scheduled for a regular dawn meeting, and here's an empty Pnyx'.[581] Slater points out that there were only two places where Athenian citizens were expected to sit and judge the words of their peers, the Assembly and the Theatre.[582] Therefore, Aristophanes most likely worked the space so that his audience appeared as both Assembly members and dramatic spectators.[583] With that in mind, it is not surprising that the opening scene of *Acharnians* plays on this duality.

Slater also points out that that the play's fictional space shifts between city and country on more than one occasion; each designed to illustrate a change in time and political control.[584] Starting with the Pnyx, we see a country farmer amongst his city counterparts; later the audience see Dicaeopolis within his own space at the rural Dionysia. Furthermore, the character's acceptance of peace treaties in the form of wine jars, or *spondai*, sets in motion the creation of a 'new' absurd reality within the drama.[585] This character's 'new' space is one that he can control as the comic protagonist.

4.2.a: DICAEOPOLIS ACQUIRES A COSTUME

> Dicaeopolis:
> … So now,
> before I make my speech, please let me array myself in guise most piteous.
>
> *Acharnians* 383-4

[581] *Acharnians* 19-20.
[582] Slater (2002: 45).
[583] Slater (2002: 46).
[584] Slater (2002: 49).
[585] Slater (2002: 49).

> Dicaeopolis:
> (inspecting the rags) O Zeus who sees everywhere, through and under! Euripides, since you've been so kind to me, please give me what goes along with the rags: that little Mysian beanie for my head. For the beggar must I seem to be today: to be who I am, yet seem not so. The audience must know me for who I am, but the chorus must stand there like simpletons, so that with my pointed phrases I can give them the finger.
>
> *Acharnians* 435-445

My first focus from within this play comes from a scene between its protagonist Dicaeopolis and the tragedian Euripides. As we see above, the set-up sees Dicaeopolis seeking a 'guise most piteous' that will help him avoid the wrath of the Acharnian chorus, made up of old men who wish to kill him for making peace with Sparta. By presenting himself as a beggar, Dicaeopolis attempts to trick the chorus into letting him off, which he performs to varying success in lines 497-627.

Much like Hera's plan to trick Zeus in *Iliad* 14, this above extract displays a similarly predictive quality.[586] Chapter Two likens Hera's opening speech to a script devised by a performer and director. This is also true of Dicaeopolis, who establishes his upcoming speech as a performance designed to trick others within the narrative. Furthermore, this whole scene between Dicaeopolis and Euripides echoes trends within the Dios Apate; as like Hera's visit to Aphrodite for her girdle, Dicaeopolis visits Euripides to gain appropriate costume and props for his upcoming performance. Nevertheless, Dicaeopolis goes a step further than Hera's trickery, by distinctly recognising the theatrical space in which he functions. For instance, in the second extract we see him reference both the chorus and the audience by name and separate

[586] See Chapter One section 2.2.

them into two kinds of spectator. First, those who will be tricked (the chorus) and second, those who will become implicit in his actions (the real audience). These real audience members are in effect being addressed, although indirectly. As Compton-Engle (2015) states, this passage does what vase painters do for complex dramatic scenes.[587] Aristophanes has laid bare the principles of the play's dramatic irony and that the audience will know more than most of the play's characters do.[588] Yet, these same audience members have had this knowledge thrust upon them and so become co-conspirators whether they like it or not.

Slater also considers this moment the most meta-theatrical in Aristophanic comedy and it is not hard to see why, when we consider the clever blend of costume and parody at the core of this scene.[589] Similarly, Thumiger (2009) explains that more literal references to theatre had an equally meta-theatrical effect to other devices such as direct address; this may include mentioning a play's author, actors, logistics or even practices.[590] In the case of Dicaeopolis, the references to costume and Euripidean tragedy allow for the protagonist to develop a new dramatic authority that showcases a confidence that challenges those who threaten him.

Slater similarly acknowledges Dicaeopolis for his actor facade, but one who is searching through old theatrical material to inform his own performance, in what he calls '*Euripides' rag-and-bone shop*'.[591] This is a rather good description of a scene

[587] Compton-Engle (2015: 91).
[588] Compton-Engle (2015: 91).
589 Slater (2002: 55).
[590]Thumiger (2009:25).
[591] Slater (2002: 55).

where a disproportionate concern for rags and broken objects reaches a comedic finale after Dicaeopolis makes his final request and Euripides exclaims '*Fellow, you'll make off with my whole tragedy!*'.[592] Euripides' art is reduced to the broken props in question and by extension Aristophanes is suggesting it holds similar value.[593]

So what about this actual beggar's costume within this scene? When Dicaeopolis exclaims '*O Zeus who sees everywhere, through and under!*' Sommerstein considers this to be a joke about the rags that Euripides presents to the protagonist. Furthermore, Sommerstein thinks that this line could be a parody of a tragic quote, most likely from Euripides' *Telephus*.[594] Such a theatrical self-aware moment reveals layers to the actors and the characters they inhabit on stage.[595] The audience see this in the actor's playing of Dicaeopolis, who in turn acts the role of Telephus, who is also known to disguise himself as a 'beggar' within the original Euripidean play.[596] This is no accident of storytelling, but more like an infinite mirror, where Aristophanes uses a mix of dramatic devices to encourage the audience to respond with knowing laughter.

> Dicaeopolis:
> Do you compose with your feet up, when they could be down? No wonder you create cripples! And why do you wear those rags from tragedy, a raiment piteous? No wonder you create beggars!...
>
> *Acharnians* 410-13

[592] *Acharnians* 465.
[593]Slater (2002: 55).
[594]Sommerstein (1980: 177-8). In Euripides' *Telephus,* see fr. 698. See Lowe (2007), who recognises that despite there being lost works, like Euripides' *Telephus,* we as twenty-first century readers can bridge the gaps within tragedy because they fit within stabilized genres (Lowe 2007: 15). It is the conventions of tragedy, more specifically Euripidean tragedy, that Aristophanes appears to be mocking here.
[595]Sommerstein (1980:175 and 177).
[596]Compton-Engle (2015:90).

This mockery of Euripides is further apparent by the tragic poet's appearance on stage. Also dressed in rags and wheeled around on a couch, the tragedian becomes an extension of an overarching gag of the scene, which is Euripides' over-reliance on beggars or disabled protagonists.[597] Sommerstein points out that Euripides' appearance is a joke at the expense of the playwright, with the popularised idea that characters resemble their creators in comedy.[598] With the above reference to Euripides' feet up and choice of rags, it is easy to see Sommerstein's argument.[599] So, whether this particular scene was designed to poke fun at Euripides' unoriginality, or even his lifestyle habits, it required a prior knowledge of the tragedian that Aristophanes clearly expected of his audience. It is clear that Aristophanes was intent on mocking Euripides' portfolio of work and the poet's appearance in this play serves as a comedic mirror to Aristophanes' artistic criticisms.

Sommerstein highlights that Euripides mostly speaks with a tragic metre and yet he does not think this constitutes 'parody'. At least, Sommerstein does not identify parody until line 454, when there is a clear indication of a direct Euripidean passage.[600] While Sommerstein is right to point out the distinction between tragic language for comedic effect and Euripidean text, I feel he is being too restrictive with the term 'parody'. Dicaeopolis' distinct authority over Euripidean costume in this scene seems like another instance of the comic playwright monopolising well-known tragedy to elevate his own

[597] *Acharnians* 399-413.
[598] Sommerstein (1980: 174).
[599] Olson (2002), on the other hand, says there is no evidence to suggest Euripides ever dressed like this (2002: 181).
[600] Sommerstein (1980: 174).

dramatic worth. Furthermore, Dicaeopolis displays authority over the use of costume and disguise more than once within *Acharnians,* as we will see when addressing the Megarian trick.

Yet, it is worth highlighting here that this scene between Dicaeopolis and Euripides is a self-contained meta-theatrical moment where costume manipulation becomes key to its structure and also the development of Dicaeopolis' character. This is also a focus of Compton-Engle's work *Costume in the Comedies of Aristophanes* (2015), with this scene being the centrepiece of the play's costume manipulation.[601] What is more, Compton-Engle considers this mastery of costume to be the measure of a character's control over narrative, as well as other characters, in Aristophanic comedy.[602]

In the case of Acharnians' protagonist, Compton-Engle states that 'Dicaeopolis has a clear manifestation in his control over costume'.[603] With that in mind, it is easy to see why this scene could be considered a turning point in the character's dramatic and political success within the play. This is a fair assessment when we consider Dicaeopolis' distinct lack of authority prior to this exchange. He may have an affiliation with costume throughout the play, as it appears to be his only constant, but his ability to see through his fellow Athenians in lines 155-22 has no effect on his political voice. Therefore, Dicaeopolis' meta-morphosis comes when he manipulates costume for himself with the help of Euripides. Only when he becomes active in his affiliation can costume have a central role within the play. Once he achieves this, his affiliation changes to control, and

[601] Compton-Engle (2015: 90).
[602] Compton-Engle (2015: 8 and 90).
[603] Compton-Engle (2015: 90). See also Whitman (1964) for more on this characteristic of Dicaeopolis' (1964: 59-80); this is taken from Compton-Engle (2015: 90, n.8 and 166).

sees the character continue to assert similar power in the rest of the play, such as stripping the costume/armour of a military man like Lamachus and his enjoyment in playing along to the Megarian's trick in lines 738-883.[604] It is also worth noting that Dicaeopolis' ever-growing list of props shows Aristophanes' apparent monopoly over his genre of comedy, particularly over its counterpart tragedy. Here is a comic actor, using Euripides' tragic props to his own effect. Furthermore, any joke is strengthened by the playwright's apparent superiority over his dramatic peers and the audience get to share a sense of that superiority as they 'get' the joke that Euripides cannot see.[605]

> What can appear, then, to be an interest in fictionality or performance in general is most often an interest in the mechanics of tragedy or of other performance forms.
>
> Ruffell (2011: 343)

It could also be said that this parody of tragedy is a recognition of another dramatic art form and that fellow playwright Euripides, who remains a favourite target for Aristophanes in many of his plays. This is made clear by constant intertextual referencing, as well as further characterisations in Aristophanes' later *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Frogs*.[606] Furthermore, this ridicule is best displayed through

[604] Compton-Engle (2015: 90-1).
[605] See Rosenmeyer (2002), who argues that anything with the prefix 'meta' implies a superiority over the subject it is referencing. He also believes that meta-theatre does not do this and that such a term does not encapsulate the intrinsic qualities that make up theatre. He therefore argues that a better term is 'para-theatre', if any term is needed at all (2002: 90-1). I would argue, however, that Aristophanes constantly critiques other dramatic practitioners within his works, this scene between Dicaeopolis and Euripides being a prime example. See also Rengel (2017) for more on the meta-theatrical qualities of Aristophanes. In addition, while he is primarily focused on the play *Frogs*, he does counter argue Rosenmeyer's approach by saying theatre is 'capable of inciting critical examination' and can question theatrical conventions and practices and any meaning behind them. He also states that 'comedy in particular can, often obviously, draw attention to theatrical devices, making fun of the artificiality of the theatre. it can identify, satirise, and critique the very techniques it highlights' (2017: 148).
[606] While *Thesmophoriazusae* sees Euripides as a primary character throughout, *Frogs* instead limits the tragedian to a plot device and only presents him as a character at the underworld contest scene. See *Frogs* 830-1476.

deception. Dicaeopolis continually lies to Euripides with lines like '*No, but give me just one thing more'*.[607] Despite protests, Euripides does everything asked of him, with the exception of giving Dicaeopolis '*chervil'*.[608] This last prop is generally regarded as a joke at the expense of the tragedian's mother and so holds less dramatic presence to the scene.[609] Nevertheless, the clear power dynamic between the comedic protagonist and the submissive tragic poet sees comedy placed on a higher footing than tragedy.

It is worth noting that this Euripides in *Acharnians* does not have the same tone of invective as someone like Cleon in lines 502-4. Giangrande likely has the answer as to why when establishing differences between the moderate and the violent insult. Within his differentiation, he argues that moderate insult works within the vein of comedy, whereas more violent insult is a defamation or attack.[610] Granted, Giangrande was of the opinion that Aristophanes had strong negative responses to Euripidean tragedy, but his parody of the tragedian remained firmly within the realms of comedy. This parody of a fellow dramatic art form is also just that. Later within the play, however, we see another kind of tragic and comic mix, where costume and serious comedy blend with more jarring results.

4.2.b: THE MEGARIAN'S TRICK

Our next segment comes much later within the play and immediately after the *Acharnians'* parabasis. Here, Dicaeopolis faces another exchange, but this time with an

[607] *Acharnians* 458.
[608] *Acharnians* 478.
[609] Henderson (1998: 117) and Compton-Engle (2015: 90).
[610] Giangrande (1972: 78).

un-named Megarian traveller and his two young daughters.[611] Unlike my previous example, this scene does not fixate on the genre of tragedy like Euripides' works or dramatic style, but instead addresses the very real tragedies of war, in particular starvation. Yet what these two case studies have in common is a focus on the subject of costume as a means of deception and the self-referential style in which it is addressed amongst an audience.

The main feature of this scene is once again deception through theatrical costume.[612] In one sense this echoes Dicaeopolis' actions in the previous example; however, this time instead of the chorus it is Dicaeopolis who is the intended unsuspecting audience. The real spectators once again are privy to this information, which controls how they once again observe the scene. The Megarian's introduction with his daughters makes sure of this. Unlike the previous example, however, Dicaeopolis does not appear to be a loser in this situation. After all, this part of the play falls under the functional structure that Sommerstein calls the 'consequences phase'.[613] This is usually the part where spectators witness the reward or effects of the hero's great plan and Dicaeopolis is no different. While he may be the recipient of a trick in costume, his discussion still suggests that he is not completely convinced by their disguise.[614]

While we know costume played an important role within this sequence, the actual outfits on stage remain a bit of a mystery. It is possible that Dicaeopolis donned another Athenian outfit, as his Telephus trick is concluded before the parabasis. It is also

[611] *Acharnians* 738-883.
[612] *Acharnians* 738-48, 764, 781-2, 785, 789, 801, 818-19 and 824-27.
[613] Sommerstein (1980: 13).
[614] *Acharnians* 767-89.

possible that the character of the Megarian wore equally stereotypical clothes to emphasise his non-Athenian identity, as well as his impoverished state; but without it explicitly mentioned in the text, it is just speculation. On the other hand, we already know that the protagonist is not going to be fooled based on his previous successes with costume, so having him voice his scepticism suggests he is making a point about the costume quality. 'It is not just about the costume itself either; we must also consider the meanings behind them.

In effect, the use of costume is not just a case of funny absurdism, but in this instance it is also a vehicle for comedy to show the real absurdity and horrors of war. In other words, it is similar to the much more modern concept of 'Black Humour' coined by André Breton.[615] For instance, a blend of self-aware comedy with tragic undertones can be found in the jarring existence of innuendoes throughout this scene, especially when we consider that they are being paralleled to characters that are two young girls who are given no autonomy over their own fate.[616] Henderson highlights that these sexual suggestions come out of the double meaning behind the word *choiros* which could mean 'piglet' or 'vulva'.[617] Likewise in line 785 they are accused of having no tail, which Henderson also says is slang for penis.[618] This is also where a brief moment of direct address takes place. For instance, the Megarian states '*Isn't this awful?* Look! The skepticism of the man! He says this isn't a piggy'.[619] Presumably he is speaking to the spectators. This suggests that he believes he can also deceive the

[615] See Polizzotti's introduction to *André Breton: Anthology of Black Humour* (1997: vi).
[616] *Acharnians* 781-2, 785, 789 and 801.
[617] Henderson (1998: 147).
[618] Henderson (1998: 155).
[619] *Acharnians* 70-1. Also see Henderson (1998: 151).

audience, not knowing their awareness of the overall scene. Once again, this suggests that the Megarian is the butt of his own trick and Aristophanes gives the impression of a complicit comedic audience.

As is typical of puns, this is for comedic effect and yet its content offers an uncomfortable subtext for both audiences ancient and modern. Presuming the two girls are quite young the sexual suggestion behind Dicaeopolis' jokes is deeply disturbing. The father is subjecting his own daughters to a fate that sees women as '*food for men's lust*'.[620] The fact that the girls do not seem to realise this means that despite being the ones in the costume, they are the real victims of this charade. Dicaeopolis in turn is displaying an aggressive control over costume, so that he may gratify this lust.[621] This returns us to an important point from section 4.1 of this chapter. If Dicaeopolis represents an ideal Athens to his audience, how can he get away with using people this way? Is this all just a comedic aside? Or does the non-Athenian status of these girls make them less important to this ancient audience?

The trick itself illustrates the sorry state of the Megarian's mind, whose apparent circumstance creates little love for his daughters. He calls his children 'miserable' and 'rotten' in line 732; presumably because they are two more mouths to feed. His disregard for them is further diminished by the apparent delight upon selling them for a bit of garlic, which is a staple within his own land.[622] The audience are then left to decide whether such a small sum of money is tragic or absurd. He even contemplates

[620] Sommerstein (1980: 195).
[621] Compton-Engle (2015: 90).
[622] *Acharnians* 813 and Sommerstein (1980: 196).

selling his own mother in line 817, which Sommerstein says would be so abhorrent to a Greek audience. Aristophanes hints within the parabasis not to trust foreign travellers *'…our poet says that he deserves rich rewards from you, since he has stopped you from being deceived overmuch by foreigners' speeches*'.[623] Although this is referring to the kind of deception found in the play's prologue, the same argument could be said for this scene. This behaviour complicated the figure, as the Megarian's actions are so wrong that it plays on a negative interpretation of his non-Greek identity.

Henderson similarly places emphasis on the mockery of the Megarian's accent as another example of theatrical awareness of the character's 'otherness'.[624] Likewise, Sommerstein argues that the supposed accent of the Megarian is also emphasised through the Doric dialect, which is similar to known Megarian inscriptions.[625] He argues that the statement '*What's this? A Megarian?*' in line 750 is evidence that Dicaeopolis hears the accent before any costume is seen.[626] Similarly one of the most striking comic moments of this scene is from a misunderstanding between the two characters, presumably because of their difference in accents or possibly simply because he is presented as a non-Athenian.

> Dicaeopolis:
> How are you all doing?
>
> Megarian:
> We're always in front of the fire, fasting.
>
> Dicaeopolis:
> Feasting, yes, that's certainly nice, if there's music. Otherwise, how

[623] *Acharnians*(633-637).
[624] Henderson (1998: 145).
[625] Sommerstein (1980: 194).
[626] Sommerstein (1980: 195).

are you Megarians doing these days?

Acharnians 749-52

Sommerstein states that the miscommunication between the Megarian and Dicaeopolis comes out of mis-hearing the Greek word *diapeināmes,* confusing it with *diapīnomes*.[627] While Olson thinks this is less comic miscommunication and more that Dicaeopolis is pretending to mishear.[628] What is more, the mix up between being the words 'hungry' and 'drinking' is first a comedic jibe at the non-Athenian, but it also reinforced the tragic juxtaposition between the two characters' circumstances. Dicaeopolis can afford to be flippant. On the other hand, the Megarian's circumstances are to be pitied. Here is a man driven by starvation.[629] A little later in this exchange, Aristophanes goes a step further by implying Athens is responsible for the Megarian's plight:

Dicaeopolis:
What else at Megara? How's the price of grain?

Megarian:
Where we are it's mighty high, like the gods.

Dicaeopolis:
What have you got there? Must be salt.

Megarian:
Don't you all control it?

Dicaeopolis:
Garlic, then?

Megarian:
Garlic! Every time you invade, you dig up the bulbs with a hoe,
like field mice.

Acharnians 758-60

[627] Sommerstein (1980: 195).
[628] Olson (2002: 264).
[629] Sommerstein (1980: 197). When looking at a comic beats within the *Acharnians'* prologue, Lowe (2020) recognises that single line can holding multiple comic rewards. See also his exploration of Pseudartabas in lines 98-108, which also addresses comic themes of miscommunication (2020: 19-21).

These complaints against Athens echo sentiments found in the preceding parabasis. In lines 626-660, Aristophanes' chorus berates the city-state for assuming they are perfect, and taking compliments from those who would trick them. The above mention of raids and the monopolising of salt all share in this theme of a less than perfect Athens. It even suggests Athens is guilty of the crimes it berates Sparta with in lines 182-3.[630] This political mirroring of a non-Greek's plight with that of the *Acharnians* appears to get the audience to see things from the 'other' perspective, if only in certain respects. Aristophanes promises to guide his audience through a true reflection of themselves, insisting that comedy is an ideal means to do that.

It has become evident from this exchange between the Megarian and Dicaeopolis that this scene creates a complex mixture of deception, performance and political consequence. The scene also relies heavily on audiences remembering Dicaeopolis' transformation in lines 497-627, so that it can remind audiences that they are still Dicaeopolis' comic accomplices. Knowledge of what is really happening on stage is placed on the audience in both instances, but it is within this later scene that the audience start to see a sour side to this knowledge. They know what the Megarian is planning, while they also understand Dicaeopolis' sexual innuendoes and so they experience the uncomfortable undertones that are coupled with the comic meta-theatrical devices of costume and direct address. Furthermore, the impoverished state of the traveller and his daughters makes a comedic paradox of war, in which laughter can actually showcase the irrationality bred out of starvation. This in turn can play on the audience's fears of real consequence to the Peloponnesian War being highlighted.

[630] Sommerstein (1980: 2).

Furthermore, where the upheaval between Athens and Megara reinforces the political freedom of Dicaeopolis, it reminds the Athenian audience of how far removed they are from this 'ideal' and that they want this for themselves.

4.3: *KNIGHTS*

Produced a year after *Acharnians*, the play *Knights* sees Aristophanes heighten his abuse of the politician Cleon and once again receive first prize at the Lenaea for his efforts.[631] Despite it being seen as Aristophanes' most scathing attack on the politician, Slater states that it is the least studied of the Aristophanic plays.[632] Central to its plot, is the antagonist Paphlagon, who is widely regarded as a caricature of the politician Cleon; with his authority constantly mocked as his is reduced to being depicted as a simple house-hold servant.

As with *Acharnians*, there are indeed references to theatrical tools within *Knights*, such as the mention of the chorus in line 225 and mask makers in 230-3. This section will be more focused on the play's prologue and to some extent the epilogue, to consider the audience's interaction with direct address and the use of symbolic characters as political allegory. By introducing the *demos* as an inept master of a household in line 42, Aristophanes is even parodying the audience he is trying to interact with. So, like the previous case-study, dramatic irony plays an important role in deceiving this same audience.

[631] Henderson (2018: 220).
[632] Slater (2002: 68)

The prologue for *Knights* is a comprehensive example of political expression mixed with farcical humour, as it sets this trend for the whole play. Lowe (2020) refers to Aristophanic prologues as having a difficult task to 'warm up the audience' and establish collaborative relationship between audience and performer. In *Acharnians*, Lowe states that this is achieved with the play's prologue offering a 'stand-up style solo routine'.[633] With a similar approach, we will come to see how the prologue of *Knights* is like a double act, achieving comparable results.

4.3.a: TALKING TO AN AUDIENCE

The opening scene uses two slaves to set the scene of the play. After being introduced to these two characters, simply named First Slave and Second Slave, the audience are treated to the play's plot.[634] Their opening segment is in effect a farce. In other words, it uses a blend of buffoonery, puns, slave jokes and then political allegory to parallel the entirety of the Athenian *demos* into a small household setting.[635] These slaves also use more overt examples of direct address to include their audience into their dramatic conversation. We will now consider how lines 35-40 introduce the play's main exposition, while also momentarily blurring the roles of spectator and performer.

> First Slave:
> You've certainly convinced me. But we've got to consider
> something else. Would you like me to explain the situation to the
> spectators?
>
> Second Slave:
> Not a bad idea. But let's ask them one favor: to make it obvious to

[633] Lowe (2020: 18). Lowe also explains that this allows for the prologue to 'instruct and induct the audience into the play's problems – world and characters' (Lowe 2020:18).
[634] *Knights* 35-6.
[635] Slater (2002: 69-70).

us by their expressions whether they're enjoying our dialogue and action.

First Slave:
Now I'll tell them.

Knights 35-40

The first line of the above extract offers a variation on direct address. He may not be speaking to them directly, but he has changed the theatrical space in which they reside. The performer playing the First Slave acknowledges his audience when stating '*Would you like me to explain the situation to the spectators?'.*[636] Although speaking to another character on stage, he has established that the audience are now themselves part of this performance. Furthermore, the Second Slave's response takes this notion of audience integration to the next level.[637] By requesting an actual response, Aristophanes is illustrating a less common occurrence, as typically audiences appear silent when actively addressed. This response is implied by the First Slave's satisfied response in line 40. Despite this being unusual, it is not unheard of in Aristophanic comedy. For example Slater thinks that the set up to *Wasps*' exposition also does this with the suggestions for Philocleon's sickness.[638]

Slater calls both scenes from *Knights* and *Wasps* 'improvised' and also offers a slightly alternative impression of the *Wasps*' example, which has the capacity to inform this instance in *Knights*. Using MacDowell's approach to this scene, Slater says that Xanthias isn't actually seeking real answers from his audience, but instead Sosias pretends to

[636] *Knights* 36-6.
[637] *Knights* 37-8.
[638] *Wasps* 54-84; See Slater (2002: 87).

hear responses and passing them off as coming from the audience. MacDowell offers the additional suggestion that Sosias walks amongst the front row known as the *Proedria*, which would create further humour at the prospect of these audience members suggesting things like gambling and drinking.[639] This creates further humour at the prospect of the performance leaving the stage. Sommerstein follows a similar idea but argues that the slave may have imitated the audience when doing this, by shouting these suggestions himself.[640] If this controlled exchange is the case, it simply creates the illusion of spontaneity. Therefore, we must ask, can this also be said for lines 35-40 in *Knights*?

The presumption is no, as the level of exchange between the two are quite different. *Wasps* actually names the people who supposedly reply, thus parodying individual audience members, while *Knights* suggests an unknown generic response based on the First Slave's consequential remarks, like a modern-day pantomime at Christmas. Furthermore, this exchange with the audience sees the slaves as both characters and performers. This illustrates a level of control on the part of the author that both placates and misinforms the role of the audience interaction, making them appear more active than they actually are. The audience are in this case the target of the humour, although the action is self-referential enough that they too are in on the joke that this is not a real audience response.

> First Slave:
> …Look out there: do you see the ranks of this
> assembled host?

[639] *Wasps* 74-84; taken from Slater (2002: 87 and 268). Sommerstein, however, places Xanthias as the one shouting these suggestions (Sommerstein 1983: 158).
[640] Sommerstein (1983: 158).

Sausage Seller:
Sure I do.

First Slave:
You're going to be top dog of them all…

Knights 162-4

Here we see the beginning of *Knights'* First Slave's persuading the Sausage-Seller to challenge Paphlagon. Not only does this illustrate another instance of integrating the play's audience into the scene, but it also momentarily transgresses the over-arching political metaphor of the play. After all, Paphlagon is meant to be just a steward, so saying the Sausage Seller could be 'top dog' over a real audience, removes the allegorical pretence of a household and suggests as a leadership role over the people of Athens. Additionally, by knowing how the play ends, we see how the actor playing the Sausage-Seller is performing on two levels. First, he is playing his intended character the Sausage Seller, but second, he is also playing Agoracritus, the deceiver of characters and audience alike.[641]

This leads on to the final mention of direct address that also bridges us to my next focus of political allegory within the play. Despite not being in the prologue, we see another instance of direct address when the antagonist Paphlagon is compared to the theatrical use of masks in lines 230-2. This theatrical self-awareness of masks in performance, as well their means of creation, inevitably creates a multi-layered meta-theatrical experience when combined with the line '*He'll be recognized all the same, because the audience is smart*'.[642] Whether this line is designed to explain a lack of portrait mask for

[641] *Knights* 1257.
[642] *Knights* 230.

Paphlagon, or be a joke to accompany a ridiculous substitute, it both commends and ridicules the audience directly. After all, the audience as a whole are being called smart, but Cleon, who is in the audience, is being mocked. Henderson also thinks Cleon is singled out in another line '*This Paphlagon here is the rawhide eagle*'.[643] Here we see the direct link between the hide-dealer and Cleon, which formulates much of the play's political and allegorical nature.

4.3.b: POLITICAL ALLEGORY

Despite this prologue predominantly featuring a double act from the two slaves, it still offers a wealth of exposition that sets up all the allegorical figures within the play, although Demos does not actually appear until line 727. The First Slave and Second Slave prove to be the more speculative examples of allegorical figures within this scene. These slaves have often been attributed to Cleon's contemporary politicians Nicias and Demosthenes, yet arguments and counter-arguments regarding this theory mean Paphlagon remains our most certain example of a politician being parodied. [644] The centrepiece of this mix of household and state politics must be Paphlagon.[645] A clear slight against Cleon for his low birth, and Athenian status, Paphlagon sees the politician reduced to an obnoxious, loud-mouthed, and gluttonous steward to Demos.[646]

The prologue as a whole emphasises a great deal between Cleon and Paphlagon. It suggests that Paphlagon is Demos' new and favourite slave, but also states that he

[643] *Knights* 203; see Henderson (1998: 257).
[644] For scholarship exploring the identity of these slaves, see Slater (2002: 68), Sommerstein (1980) and Henderson (1998).
[645] Hutchinson (2011: 49, 50, 52-3).
[646] Compton-Engle (2015: 45).

steals a Spartan cake from Nicias at Pylos.[647] This is clearly a reference to Cleon's victory over Sparta not long before the play; here Aristophanes makes out that both Cleon and his fictitious counterpart are ill deserving of praise.[648] This is once again emphasised towards the end of the play, when the Sausage Seller uses his own trick against him: '*I'm just imitating you with the men from Pylos*!'.[649] This layering of political parody within is rather scathing of Cleon and the audience would not have been able to miss it and its implications on the individual it is attacking. Any laughter produced out of this meta-theatrical exchange is a clear indication of the serious comedy I am referring to and the deceptive potential of laughter as an influential tool.

Nor is stealing victories from under other politicians the only way Aristophanes parodies Cleon. In this scene alone, Paphlagon is depicted as intimidating, an arch criminal, a slanderer, a swindler, a thief, a blackmailer, bad at reading oracles, and an obstacle against other slaves/politicians being successful.[650] Not to mention that the slaves also introduce Paphlagon as physically grotesque with flatulence, loud snoring and a hideous face that no mask maker would replicate.[651] Up until this point, costume has not featured much in this discussion. Compton-Engle considers that comedic costume, despite having little overt reference within the text, provides important emphasis in the grotesque features of Paphlagon and by association the Sausage-Seller who plays Paphlagon at his own game.[652] The wide-mouthed mask and typical padded stomach of Old Comedy

[647] *Knights* 55.
[648] See Henderson (2018: 220). On this victory over Sparta, see Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (4.1-41).
[649] *Knights* 1198.
[650] *Knights* 222; 45; 49;103-4; 65; 116, 118, 171 and 154; 58-63.
[651] *Knights* 115; 230-3.
[652] Compton-Engle (2015: 45).

could represent the gluttony of the demagogue, whose greed is frequently shown through the stealing of food in lines 55, 103-4, 258-63 and 280-83.

The character of Demos condenses an entire Athenian people into a single dramatic entity. As the apparent master of this allegorical household, Demos is predominantly driven by his desires as an old man seeking food, comfort and companionship wherever possible. On the other hand, there are two key moments that contradict this image. The first sees a conversation between Demos and with the chorus, which shows the old man as shrewd and even performance-driven in his manipulative behaviour. Here, Demos is accused by the chorus of being easily led by those who flatter, but curiously Demos' reply is not what we would perhaps expect from a character who has appeared easily influenced throughout the play. Here we see Demos tell the chorus not to make assumptions about his character and that he has a plan to reveal these two men for who they are. The chorus change their tune and compliment Demos for his cunning, who in turn says he will play the part to get his answers.[653]The second instance sees the transformation of Demos into a younger, and more capable version of himself.[654] This transformation is the great reveal at the end of the play, and sees the Sausage Seller as another unassuming performer.

At the root of the Sausage Seller's performance is an individual who appears politically dubious and his insulting behaviour sees condemnation, through a paradoxically opposite reaction of praise. In other words, the Demos is drawn to bad politicians and so praises the Sausage Seller for poor qualities like being loud mouthed, low class, illiterate

[653] *Knights* 1121-1150.
[654] *Knights* 1315-1408.

and incompetent.[655] Yet this does not remain the case. The Sausage Seller only reveals his true name '*Agoracritus*' when he shows his true nature as a good Athenian citizen and the ideal alternative to Paphlagon.[656]

This has some parallels to Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians*; as while it takes 404 lines for Dicaeopolis to be named, which is less than half the length before *Agoracritus* is named in *Knights*, both instances see the protagonists' political presence shift once this happens. In the case of Dicaeopolis, he is also the Athenian comic hero whose name also means 'just city'. Not only does this imply his is the ideal citizen, but this hero becomes a comic champion for Athenian hope. Aristophanes is relying on his audience to recognise the literal meaning of a name, so that they may see a deeper worth in the comic hero. Furthermore, while his later refusal to help his Athenian peers may contradict any theory that he represents Athens as a whole, it does in fact support my idea that Dicaeopolis represents an 'ideal' Athens: one with no room for those who fail to meet Aristophanes' ideal standards.

Likewise in *Wasps*, the names of the co-protagonists Philocleon and Bdelycleon literally mean 'Love-Cleon' and 'Loath-Cleon', but they are not named until lines 133-4.[657] As his name implies, Philocleon is addicted to the gratifications that Cleon's politics have brought him, while his son Bdelycleon sees this gratification as a symptom of Cleon's control over his father and indeed the Athenian people.[658] So, in each of these plays, Aristophanes makes his audience wait a decent amount of time before unveiling this

[655] *Knights* 182-3,190-3 and 214-16.
[656] *Knights* 1257; see also Sommerstein (1980:204).
[657] Slater (2002: 88).
[658] Slater (2002: 96).

crucial information, and each of these names apply a literal meaning for the audience. For the Sausage-Seller in *Knights*, it is the point in which he names himself *Agoracritus* that we see that character's political transformation.

It is evident from *Knights'* central use of allegorical manipulation that Aristophanes plays with audience perceptions of political individuals and the Athenian state as a whole. One way to break down these characters within the house and state dynamic is to consider the effect of those who represent individuals like Cleon, compared with those who represent a collective, like the Sausage Seller who is a low born Athenian, or the Demos representing all Athenians. Hutchinson actually separates Aristophanes' plays into those with allegorical heroes who fight individuals and those who fight collectives.[659] What does it mean if the hero of this piece represents a collective fighting an individual? As we have already highlighted, the Sausage Seller pretends to be Paphlagon's grotesque equal, only to reveal he is a dedicated Athenian at the end of the play. This is of course unknown at the point of the prologue, so the audience are introduced to the character based on his trade and for the majority of his time on stage he appears as bad as Paphlagon. Demos on the other hand is only seen as a grumpy old man who falls for Paphlagon's tricks, with the exception of lines 1121-1150. Both Paphlagon and Demos offer reflective roles for the audience, because just like Cleon's singling out in line 203, the audience as a whole can be parodied too.

This play's political themes and meta-theatrical devices provide a useful aid in our analysis of audience interaction, as well as any observations on notions of consensual

[659] Hutchinson (2011: 49-50).

trickery. Focusing on the performance's prologue, this section looked at the staging of direct address, as well as the use of symbolic characters representing both real people like Cleon and more abstract ideas like the Demos. The prologue for *Knights* is a comprehensive example of political expression that mixes with farcical humour, which goes on to set this trend for the rest of the play.

As with our previous source material, controlling the audience's perceived knowledge of what is happening on stage is key. Only unlike *Acharnians*, *Knights* uses misdirection. The audience only think they know everything from the prologue. They are in fact as much in the dark as any other character in the play, with the exception of the Sausage Seller who deceives everyone.

4.4: *WASPS*

The trial is a product of the play's wider mockery of the Athenian justice system and the politicians who manipulate it. Philocleon represents the wider collective of mistreated jurymen who make up the chorus. Furthermore, the mock trial once again mixes house and state politics, which parodies the justice system in the hands of a Cleon fanatic. Cleon is again represented through an allegorical character, but this time he is reduced to a dog called 'Demadogue'.[660]

According to Slater, Aristophanes' *Wasps* also remains different to the preceding plays due to its surfeit of plot. Unlike *Acharnians*' steady progression of a 'great idea', or indeed *Knights'* succession of agons, Slater breaks down *Wasps* into the following plot points:

[660] *Wasps* 415-16 and 1023-3.

1) Philocleon's sickness, 2) Philocleon's cure, 3) Philocleon's induction into good society and 4) the eventual results of that integration. Yet, Slater argues that despite these various points, the play remains unified through the themes of spectatorship and performance.[661] In this part of my chapter, I am predominantly focused on the highly-charged meta-theatrical act, aptly named by Ruffell as 'the law court parody' which is regarded by Biles and Olson (2015) as the 'centrepiece of the play'.[662]

4.4.a: PERFORMANCE WITHIN A PERFORMANCE

> Loathcleon:
> All right, since that's what you enjoy doing, just stop going to court.
> Stay here instead, and judge the household slaves.
>
> *Wasps* 764-7)[663]

The above extract illustrates the moment in which the trial is formulated, but it is not until in lines 891-1008 that we see it performed. In both instances, however, we see Bdelycleon redirecting his father's jury obsession to a domestic setting and as a result, the character of Philocleon is tricked on two levels. First with the underhanded persuasion to judge his household instead of the citizens of Athens and second, Bdelycleon's actual trick on Philocleon to acquit his target when that was never the older man's intention.[664]

Important to my own research is Bdelycleon's actions in paving a way for the well-known and highly-charged meta-theatrical device known as a 'performance-within-a-

[661] Slater (2002: 86).
[662] Ruffell (2011: 11); Biles and Olson (2015: 321).
[663] Throughout his translation, Sommerstein (2018) translates the names into 'Loath-Cleon' and 'Love-Cleon', instead of 'Bdelycleon' and 'Philocleon'.
[664] *Wasps* 990-95.

performance'. Unlike my previous excerpts, which take on elements of dramatic action like mimesis, this mimicry of a law court instead creates a self-contained performance within the greater narrative. Aristophanes' audience would have inevitably engaged with this performance as it informed and reflected the real performance taking place in front of them. Biles and Olson consider a two-phase implementation of the trial scene, with the first being the creation of this 'new court' in lines 760-862, and second, is the actual 'Dog Trial' taking place in lines 891-1008.[665]

> Loathecleon:
> Just look! Now what have you got to say? I've brought everything I said I would, and lots more. For one thing, this chamberpot here will be hanging by that peg, right beside you in case you need to piss.
>
> Lovecleon:
> That's ingenious of you; you've really thought of the perfect to an old man's incontinence.
>
> Loathecleon:
> And here's some fire, and right next to it some lentil soup to slurp, time you want.
>
> Lovecleon:
> That's handy too. Even if I have a cold, I'll still get my pay, because I'll stay right here and slurp the soup. But why have you brought me out the rooster?
>
> Loathecleon:
> Why, if you fall asleep while a defendant is speaking, this rooster up here will crow you awake.
>
> Lovecleon:
> Everything's to my liking, except one thing I'm still missing.
>
> Loathecleon:
> Namely?
>
> Lovecleon:
> Is there any way you could supply the shrine of Lycus?
>
> Loathecleon:

[665] Biles and Olson (2015: xl and xlii-xliii).

(*pointing to the stage altar*) There's this. (*motioning one of the slaves on to the altar*) And here's the hero himself!

Lovecleon:
(*getting up to look closer*) Lord Hero, I couldn't see you there.

Loathecleon:
He's about as hard to see as Cleonymus!

Lovecleon:
Well, I admit that even though he's a hero, he's got no equipment either.

Wasps 805-825

With some similarities to the Dionysus of Euripides' *Bacchae* in Chapter Three, the Bdelycleon of this scene also becomes a much more multifaceted character. Taking on the roles of both director and performer, he sets the scene itself and influences its eventual result.[666] This is first apparent when Bdelycleon creates the stage with odd props, as seen below.

Loathecleon:
Oh hell! How annoying, I've forgotten to bring out the voting urns.

Lovecleon:
Hey you, where are you running off to?

Loathecleon:
To get the urns.

Lovecleon:
Don't bother, I've already got these soup ladles.

Loathecleon:
They'll do just fine. So now we've got everything we need—everything except a water clock!

Lovecleon:
(*pointing to the chamberpot*) And what's this here if it isn't a water clock?

[666] Slater (2002: 96).

Loathecleon:
You've truly got the native Athenian's resourcefulness. On the double now, somebody fetch fire and myrtle wreaths and the incense from the house, so that we can begin by praying to the gods.

Wasps 852-862

These props remain prominent within the text, with Philocleon explicitly referring to them on more than one occasion.[667] Slater explains that this is an opportunity for the audience to be entertained by a shift in stage setting, when a comic by-play of various law court furnishings is also transformed from household items.[668] What transpires next is a prayer by Bdelycleon and the chorus, which Slater argues foreshadows Lovecleon's disposition, as well as a wishing for a new political order and a praising of Philocleon's commitment to the *demos*.[669] Not only is this scene a recognised meta-theatrical episode, but it also deals with the pivotal moment of deception within the play, with Bdelycleon also illustrating his director role at the moment of his trick:

Bdelycleon:
Come on, daddy, turn over a new leaf. Take this pebble, shut your eyes, rush over to the second urn, and acquit him, father.

Philocleon:
Absolutely not! I never learned to play the lyre either.

Bdelycleon:
Come on then, let me usher you around this way, it's quickest.

Philocleon:
This is the first urn?

Bdelycleon:
It is.

Philocleon:

[667] *Wasps* 906, 918, 934 and 935.
[668] Slater (96).
[669] Slater (2002: 96).

There she goes!

Bdelycleon:
(*to the audience*) He's fooled; he voted for acquittal unawares. (*to Philocleon)* Let's do the count.

Wasps 986-995

The above extract is a key moment of deception within the play. It is the only trick that proves successful at its point of use. While Bdelycleon's verbal instructions get rebuffed, his actions as director manifest in his ability to lead his father towards the voting urns. If anything, this trick works too well. It becomes the turning point within the narrative, which sets off Philocleon's transformation into a sleazy old man. As with the Megarian in *Acharnians,* the instigator of this trick is not privy to its consequence. Bdelycleon may have some control over his father, but his control over the plot remains limited. He does get away with the deception, as his father does not blame anyone but himself. Furthermore, line 983 offers a rare moment of direct address within this sequence. The decision to speak to the audience at the moment of Bdelycleon's trick suggests that deception and audience interplay remains a prominent link for Aristophanes.

4.4.b: IDEAL OUTCOMES

According to Slater, Aristophanes has created a much earlier example of Robert Notzick's 'experience machine'; this is where a sensory experience is created to facilitate a person's desires. In this case, it is the law court that Bdelycleon simulates for Philocleon.[670] Here, Slater argues that the performance allows Aristophanes to 'explore the consequences of detaching the profoundly emotional and theatrical experience of

[670] Slater (2002: 95); see also Nozick (1974: 42-45).

acting as a juror in the law courts from any practical consequence'.[671] Furthermore, Slater stipulates that the comic does not leave Philocleon within the machine. Instead, Bdelycleon reprograms it to cure his father's obsession.[672] I can understand why Slater uses the term 'cure' when describing this section of the play, as Philocleon does seems to lose interest in the courts.[673] Yet, It is worth noting that unlike the previous two plays, *Wasps* does not end with the same level of political solution.

Perhaps just as important an observation is how this play deviates from a typically positive ending.[674] This ending is a mixed bag, but the reason for this lies in both protagonists being flawed individuals. Lowe (2007), observes that this is 'a generational-gap comedy'.[675] At the core of this play's narrative, we see a prolonged struggle between a father (Philocleon), and his son (Bdelycleon), and this is all heightened during the mock trial, in which both characters try and fulfil their own aims.[676] Philocleon in particular remains an important agent within this performance, as he is both representative of an individual juror and embodies the characteristics of many jurymen referenced in Aristophanic comedy.[677] He mostly maintains his hot-headed façade throughout this scene and constantly accuses the defendant before ever hearing him out.[678] Slater also emphasises that Philocleon is a man with an obsession, even likening him to the American politicism of 'the crazy aunt in the cellar'.[679] Slater also likens this obsessive

[671] Slater (2002: 95-6).
[672] Slater (2002: 95-6).
[673] Slater (2022: 86).
[674] Slater (2002: 86). On the play's ending see Sommerstein (1980: 11-13).
[675] Lowe (2007: 42).
[676] Slater (2002: 97-98).
[677] He is often mentioned in other Aristophanic plays, see for example, in *Acharnians,* see 66-7, 90, 160-1, 377 and 682-93. In *Knights,* see 53, 256-7, 270, 315-8, 713, 800, 908 and 1210-20.
[678] *Wasps* 893, 898, 900-3, 912-14, 920-1, 941 and 953.
[679] Slater (2002: 94).

behaviour to Bergsonian comedy; the audiences see Philocleon judge his servants and pets with the same zeal as judging enemies of the state.[680] Moreover, Slater also highlights how Philocleon's ease in transferring to this private setting is a reminder that the character is only concerned with gratifying this obsession.[681]

Thorburn alters the idea of Philocleon being 'obsessed' with law courts to being an 'addict' instead.[682] This is not a bad analogy, as even when Philocleon displays a softening resolve, it appears Philocleon does not actually give in to these impulses.[683] Furthermore, the mock trial itself offers a controlled environment to wean him off his addiction and even when the trial does not go to plan, Bdelycleon proceeds to use deception to 'manage' his father's dependence. Philocleon's actions are also driven by fear of an oracle, which suggests that justice is, once again, not at the forefront of the character's mind. Instead, he is a pawn in a wider political net, with this oracle symbolising Cleon's influence.[684] This is not surprising when considering Philocleon's name. Neither is it the only way in which Aristophanes mocks the politician, as he is also characterised within the trail as the dog '*Demadogue of Cydathenaeum*'.[685]

Characters like Demadogue and the accused Labes set this trial scene apart from the rest of the play through their deeply-ingrained allegorical presence. While accusing Labes, Demadogue reveals that the crime of stealing Sicilian cheese is not his concern,

[680] Slater (2002: 95).
[681] See Slater (2002: 95).
[682] Thorburn (2005: 50-61).
[683] *Wasps* 973-4.
[684] *Wasps* 997-1002.
[685] *Wasps* 895. Cydathenaeum was the deme of Cleon; see Henderson (1998: 337). This is not the only time Aristophanes likens Cleon to a dog; see also *Knights* 415-16 and 1023-3.

but that he did not get a portion.[686] In keeping with Aristophanes' gluttonous image of Cleon, it nicely parallels the two very different dogs.[687] Labes is wrongly accused and yet Demadogue threatens to abandon his guard duties if the defendant is let off. Bdelycleon gains the backing of the chorus, who think he is working on behalf of Athens,[688] but ultimately he manipulates a new court environment; although replicating the old as soon as it becomes convenient.[689]

> Bdelycleon's political views appear to be the right ones (as the chorus of reluctant old men eventually acknowledges), but his attempt to heal his father from his morbid, pathological passion for jury-service and to convert him to a more relaxed lifestyle is not crowned with very great success.
>
> Magnelli (2017: 396)

Magnelli argues that it is in fact Philocleon, with all his flaws, who is the real protagonist.[690] So, with that in mind, *Wasps'* protagonist does not result in the same political liberty as Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians* and the sausage-seller in *Knights*. Instead, his debauchery at the end of the play replaces one bad behaviour with another. On the other hand, Singer (2018) likens this drunken and erotically-charged behaviour from lines 1326 onwards as an embracing of Dionysus and an accepting of the comic festival in which the play is performed. Therefore, there is a positive regard for this ending that is 'an antidote to his inhuman, purely destructive jury-mania'.[691]

[686] Slater (2002: 97) and Olson (1999: 322).
[687] Olson (1999: 322).
[688] *Wasps* 887-90.
[689] *Wasps* 891-2; see Slater (2002: 96).
[690] Magnelli (2017: 369).
[691] Singer (2018: 318).

CLOSING THOUGHTS

My closing thought for this chapter is that it is Old Comedy, more specifically Aristophanes, who proves the prime source for ancient self-aware comedy. With its own dynamic between author and spectator, Old Comedy moved away from the suspension of disbelief typical of tragedy and forces a different kind of agency on its audience. The poet's clear ease and success in using it suggests a practice already established within classical Greece. On the other hand, as the driving reference to Old Comedy still available to us, Aristophanes inevitably offers a limited perspective on the use of meta-theatre at this time. We are similarly faced with not knowing the full extent of the poet's reference points, which becomes abundantly clear when faced with the disruptive flow of his work. They are disruptive in part because we cannot fully understand them, but we are not his intended audience and are far removed from context. Nevertheless, Aristophanes clearly had a flair for manipulating meta-theatrical devices. While we have only explored three of his plays, we have shown how *Acharnians*, *Knights*, and *Wasps* have each utilised epic devices to create a complex mix of dramatic deception, audience interplay, and political persuasion. All of these themes manifest differently within each play.

In *Acharnians*, the use of costume as the central meta-theatrical device maintains the multi-layered theatrical space, which sees the audience observe actors playing numerous parts, while also blurring their own role as spectators. *Acharnians* also uses peace as a weapon to counter the hardships well known to audiences from the Peloponnesian War. Furthermore, Aristophanes manages to interplay tragic themes, whether it is the parody of Euripides, or the underpinning of harsher realities like

starvation and child slavery in the Megarian trick. Also, by using Dicaeopolis and the Megarian in this way, comic costume represented a deceptive core to *Acharnians* that even extended to how its audience engaged with these themes.

From *Knights'* prologue, I explored how a 'scripted' interaction between the audience and two slave characters gave the former an artificial sense of dramatic control. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that the relationship between this play and its audience is different to *Acharnians*, *Wasps* and even Chapter Three's *Frogs*, as the audience are left in the dark about the protagonist's true intentions. Instead, this extra layer of audience deception accompanies the use of political allegory, to help facilitate a serious warning to see past deceptive speech and corrupt officials.[692]

Finally *Wasps* takes the notion of performance itself to see Athenian law parodied, which In turn showcases the political distortion and hypocrisy of its main characters with Philocleon wanting to enjoy his role as a jury man at the expense of real justice and Bdelycleon orchestrating a setup that makes him no better than the politicians he hates.[693]

Within each of these plays, it becomes clear that the use of these meta-theatrical devices held great sway in the execution and flow to performance. Although quite different in structure, each play controls how its audiences perceive its comedic narrative. Furthermore, despite each play's unique take on audience control, these self-aware dramatic devices still prove quite versatile in practice. Aristophanes continually gives

[692] Slater (2002: 84-5).
[693] Slater (2002: 97-98).

crucial information to his audience, which ultimately comes at the price of perceptive control. This is control they may willingly relinquish when attending a performance, but considering theatrical festivals were a religious affair for all Athenians, can such a varied audience fully consent to this interaction? This was a big question of this thesis and it is in these plays' protagonists and their constant meta-theatrical manipulations that we see a regular exchange of controlled laughter between audience and the stage. These then inevitably fluctuate between notions of consensual and non-consensual trickery.

CHAPTER FIVE

[JUVENAL'S COMEDIAN PERSONA: *SATIRE* SIX AND *SATIRE* NINE]

In Chapters Three and Four, I had been primarily concerned with showcasing the distinctly dramatic mindset of both Greek tragedy and Old Comedy, which created and utilised self-reflective laughter amongst Athenian audiences with often satirical results. It may seem that the obvious transition from these chapters is to consider this same self-referential style of laughter in Roman theatre, or more specifically Roman comedy. Granted, this is a direction someone could easily take if they wanted to go on to explore contemporary theatre, but my own interest will move towards the stand-up comedians and as such, I am now interested in the apparently anti-dramatic persona of the Roman satirist Juvenal and his Satires Six and Nine.

That is not to say Roman theatre will be absent in this chapter. With the complex relationship between Roman audiences and their performers, it would be hard to ignore the mimicry of theatre, or the dramatic themes and their social implications in these works.[694] Therefore, I have chosen to continue my terminology of meta-theatre despite Juvenalian satire not being a typical staged experience. Part of this negotiation comes from dealing with evidence that starts as the written word. With that come questions about what happened to these texts: were they 'fixed' by their literary nature, or were there opportunities for a fluidity in the ways audiences accessed these comical poems? These questions will be explored through the course of this chapter, as I consider performance-like moments within Juvenal's works. In particular I will address how he

[694] Braund (2007) refers to ancient theories on possible dramatic origins to satire (Braund 2007: x-xi).

plays many roles and uses them to converse with his audience in moments of direct speech, staged management and even dialogue. I will also consider the reality that these moments would have been read aloud at Roman recitals in what can only be considered a performance. Furthermore, many of these devices, which have already been explored in previous chapters, will have the added reflection that Juvenal offers this additional layer of a literary exchange between himself and his audience.

I am drawn to Juvenal for two additional reasons. First, there is an inevitable Greco-Roman relationship with themes such as the Greek language, epic poetry, classical theatre and its philosophy.[695] This allows us not only to see a bridge of influence from previous chapters but to consider how the opinions of theatre and self-aware comedy shift for a new audience dynamic. The second reason is Juvenal's style of the ranting satirist, as he creates time and again perfectly crafted rants that only give the impression of spontaneity to his audience. He is therefore the ideal link between ancient performance trickery and our own contemporary comedian performers. For now, we will consider how the dramatically driven Juvenal functions best and that is through his comedian-like personae.

I will start my analysis with an exploration into a number of key themes in scholarship on Roman satire. Specifically, I am interested in the 'Roman-ness' of satire as a practice, which will help feed into Juvenal's own exploration of Roman identity as he neglects a straightforward answer. It will be worth addressing how others have tackled Roman themes of morality that Juvenal himself seems to explore time and again, in

[695] See Watts (1976) for more on how Juvenal navigates 'non-Romans' within his satires, including Greek influences (Watts 1976: 83-104).

particular the depravity associated with theatres, the challenges of freedmen perceived by the elite and the roles of women within Roman society. I will also consider how scholars have addressed the accessibility of such texts to a Roman audience; in particular how these may have even been performed, which helps form my final observation of Juvenal's angry persona and his deceptive use of the satirist mask.

Within the main body of this chapter, I will address two case studies that address his comic personae in different ways. The first will look at *Satire* Six as it is written as a performance between himself and his target Postumus. I will also consider the relationship between Juvenal's satirist persona and his 'real' audience, as he rants against women for the majority of the poem. Here I will consider how this may be a strategy of attack, first directed at his own audience by parodying an over-the-top misogynist, or women as a whole as he may be simply whipping up pre-existing misogynistic views of the day. It is worth noting that old scholarship has in the past had a tendency to look at Satire Six as factual evidence about the perceptions of Roman women. Yet there are distinct performative moments like Messalina's shifting empress and 'She-Wolf' facades, as well as the deceptive meta-theatrical flair of the so-called Oxford Fragments. All of which, suggests this dramatic heavy text is more complicated than initially thought. [696]

Following this, I will look at how Satire Nine takes on a distinct dialogue structure, as we see a more concentrated example of Juvenal playing different roles. Within this assessment I will consider how the audience may have perceived this piece,

[696] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.116-32 and 6.O1-34.

particularly whether Juvenal can be identified through his conflicting personae. I will also illustrate once again how 'masking' and mimesis play important roles in the deceptive performance between Juvenal and an earlier version of himself under the guise of his character Naevolus.

5.1: JUVENAL THE ROMAN SATIRIST

This section will address, in part, what Roman satire actually offered its audience and what it meant to the world in which it existed. In particular, I will consider how others have addressed its role in forming Roman ideals and its relationship with more typically dramatic pursuits of its time.[697] In doing so, I will begin to map the type of audience that Juvenal would have likely been working with and how Roman identity was applied to the practice of satire. I will also look at the role of the satirist's mask as a dramatic tool and the famous ranting persona of Juvenal, or possibly even a range of personae found in Juvenal's poems.

5.1.a: ROMAN IDENTITY

> Satire, for its part, is entirely ours.
>
> Quintilian (10.1.92)[698]

Satire in its contemporary form is generally quite a fluid concept. It manifests itself in various art forms such as television, film, live performance, visual art and literature; yet as a Roman phenomenon, satire has its own complex identity and a long history of

[697] See Webb (1912) for an early example of scholarship on balancing possible dramatic origins to satire, through the Roman practice of *satura*. Here he argues 'that the essential elements of Roman satire, as embodied in Ennius, seem a natural outgrowth of a native drama, transmuted by pressure of circumstances, and by the genius of a poet, into a new literary form' (Webb 1912: 189).
[698] This is taken from D. A. Russell's Loeb translation of Quintilian's *The Orator's Education* (2001).

those who have studied and continue to study it. The above quote by the ancient scholar Quintilian appears to declare a clear Roman ownership of the genre known as satire.[699] Quintero (2008) argues that Quintilian's view was in part due to Roman satire being a relatively new kind of poetry, which became 'metrically disciplined into hexameters and stylistically purified into an identifiable verse genre'.[700] Likewise Keane (2007), highlights that the technical criteria of first-person personae and book publications suggests a 'literary tradition' unique to Rome.[701]

On the other hand, there is an obscurity to the origins of verse satire, which is why it is hard to know if Quintilian was being literal in his above claim.[702] While it is true that he was not a satirist himself, Quintilian would not have been void of being humorous or indeed facetious in his words. Freudenburg (2005), argues that this quote was actually a joke at Roman sensibilities. After all, other well-known satirists like Horace were well aware of the Roman link to the much earlier Greek Old Comedy, in particular Aristophanes, Eupolis and Cratinus.[703] Therefore, Freudenburg believes that we should take Quintilian's statement with a pinch of salt, and in fact emphasises earlier Greek influences on Roman satire through a reverse action of rejecting it.[704]

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[699] Freudenburg (2005: 1-2).
[700] Quintero (2009: 6-7).
[701] Keane (2007: 31).
[702] Braund (2007: x).
[703] Freudenburg (2005: 1-2). For more on Horace's interactions with Greek comedy, see Leach (1971), Keane (2003: 257 and 257.n1), Cucchiarelli (2001) and Braund (2007: x). Although, Braund also states that there is no 'Greek original' for Roman satirists to work from and that Horace refers to satire as 'verse never handled by the Greeks' (Horace, *Satires*: 1.10.66)(Braund 2007: x). She also references Ennius (239-169 BCE) from south Italy as the 'earliest known proponent' of what may be considered satire, with his books of *Saturae*. Ennius was also influenced by Greek Culture (Braund 2007: xi).
[704] Freudenburg (2005: 2).

We can, however, find more unique Roman practices to satire when we consider the audiences who engaged with it and how they typically accessed this material. For instance, Keane specifies that the reception of Roman satire held a newer mix of public and private audiences that were also emphasised as 'educated'.[705] While Braund also emphasises that 'whether a private recitation at a dinner-party attended by friends (i.e. patrons and clients) or a more formal public occasion, the recitation displayed and reinforced the power relationships at the heart of Roman society'.[706]

Freudenburg also argues that a Roman satirical audience was in many respects the victim of the genre's attacks, partly because of their complacency in allowing themselves to be included.[707] Audiences have a role to play as it is all an act; they become part of the 'performance'. We may agree and laugh, or agree but feel uneasy with the approach.[708] Freudenburg argues that this unease around Roman identity heightened in the second century, with economic and imperial success, as well as subsequent Greek fixations on the rich.[709]

Freudenburg addresses the analogy that satire is like food, but more than that it is sustenance and it is there to impress.[710]As Freudenburg also points out, Roman satire allowed its audience to wallow in un-Roman behaviour without practising it themselves.[711] With how much Juvenal makes use of meta-theatrical devices, as well

[705] Keane (2007: 31).
[706] Braund (2007: viii). Braund signposts these dynamics of 'friendship' (*amicitia*), within these private recitations (Braund (2002: viii-ix). See also Braund and Raschke (2002).
[707] Freudenburg (2005: 25).
[708] Freudenburg (2005: 25).
[709] Freudenburg (2005: 4-5).
[710] Freudenburg (2005: 30).
[711] Freudenburg (2005: 9).

as various references to the stage, it is worth considering these conflicting ideas of Roman theatre. Part of this comes from the idea that theatre was not intrinsically 'Roman', but rather a dramatic invasion, with Livy seeing it as Etruscan; or, according to Tacitus, it was uncomfortably Greek with its origins and connotations as a democratic space.[712] On the art of immorality within Roman culture, it is worth considering Edwards (1993), who addresses the juxtaposition of Roman culture, as it both enjoyed and ridiculed the practice of theatre and acting. Edwards stipulates that theatre was seen as a place of profanity, sexual license and religious ridicule. Christian authors were struck by dramatic parody at their expense, as well as many Roman moralists and literary elites thinking theatre was embroiled with ideas of adultery and, interestingly enough, laughter. This was in part because it was an art form not really aimed at them and so they instead chose to undermine it to raise their own image of what it was to be an educated Roman.[713]

Additionally, Edwards points out the political expectations that furthered this unease amongst Juvenal's typically elite audiences. Theatre was a problematic space for such individuals as it offered a double-edged sword; in one capacity it was a place to reaffirm the hierarchy of power and wealth, but in another it was also a place to be judged by their peers.[714] For instance, the emperor and political individuals, would have been expected to attend performances and by doing so they exposed themselves to the requests of the people. Their power was on show, but so it could be subverted.[715]

[712] Edwards (1993: 100-3 and 118).
[713] Edwards (2003: 98-9 and 104-108).
[714] Edwards (2003: 100-114).
[715] Edwards (2003: 111, 114 and 127).

On top of this, the literal practice of acting was seen as ambivalent in the ability to transcend dress, status and even political speech. All of these were mediated by Roman society and were even segregated from certain citizen rights. Edwards only emphasises this further by offering the example that by the time of the Republic, actors were not even allowed to stand as magistrates and by the time of the Empire, they were unable to enlist as soldiers.[716] Nevertheless, as Edwards also points out, theatre was deeply engrained in the workings of Roman identity. In particular, it could influence political mobility amongst its elite and even hold religious significance like the *ludi* for certain festivals. This conflict of acceptability is why Roman theatre was a problematic space in Roman society.[717] It was a double-edged sword, mediating tensions amongst the people and emphasising the hierarchy of social standing amongst its citizens, but it was as a means to present tension and expose those in authority and create civil unrest.[718]

Fritz Graf offers the idea that satire is also ritual, as it not only singles out themes of blame, masks and performance, but it also questions this Roman identity of satirical blame and the risks of defacing 'good citizens'.[719] This need for careful negotiation between Roman blame and protecting its citizens, places satire in a careful balancing act that in many respects can only be achieved by an audience's acceptance of a satirist's mask, as well as what that entails and what they come to expect from such practices.

[716] Edwards (1993: 102).
[717] Edwards (1993: 99-107).
[718] Edwards (1993: 100).
[719] Graf (2005: 192 and 197).

5.1.b: MASKING JUVENAL

One of the big questions addressed in this thesis is whether the satirist has a persona. Within this section I will apply this specifically to Roman identity as it is revealed in something akin to a satirist's mask. Keane (2015) offers this similar observation that the satirist plays the actor, echoing conventional morals. As such, his real identity remains much more complex.[720] Rimell calls this ambiguity a 'fog of deception', as she highlights this problem of sincerity in contemporary criticisms of Juvenal. In particular, is Juvenal a moralist? Is he prejudiced? Or can it be both?[721] Despite these broad questions, the content of his satires, coupled with the ambiguity of performance that a mask of a satirist can bring, does go some way to revealing the consensual trickery between Juvenal and his audience. It is with that in mind that we first focus on the often overlooked differences between Juvenal and earlier satirists. After this, we can see how others have addressed what this dramatic and satirical image of Juvenal may have meant for his audience.

The key comparison to earlier satirists is with Lucilius, who Goh (2015 and 2018) states was the 'inventor of Roman verse satire'.[722] Furthermore, while his thirty books exist to us as mostly fragments, we can deduce that Lucilius used a number of methods that became standard in later satirical practice. Braund offers examples such as the use of first person presentation and a 'loose' construction used that can mimic conversations.[723] Lucilius is also often seen as the first satirist to address what it is to

[720] Keane (2003: 263).
[721] Rimell (2005: 82).
[722] Goh (2018: 128). See also Braund (2007), who explains why it is Lucilius and not Ennius, who is given this title (Braund 2007: xi).
[723] Braund (2007: xi).

be Roman, despite his Campanian roots.[724] Freudenburg highlighting that this is likely because Lucilius constantly addresses Roman institutions, as well as plays on ideas of shame and Roman values that Juvenal later replicates.[725] In particular, Freudenburg addresses the satirists' criticism as an embodiment of Roman free speech, with its offering a political slant just by existing.[726] This has some contrast to many later Roman satirists who were more subdued in their attacks on others.

Horace for instance, was not always liked for his reserved approach to blame, as this was seen as breaking from Lucilius 'Real Roman' tradition of criticism. Of course, satirists like Horace and Juvenal had different priorities to the apparent father of Roman satire. Horace for instance did not take the same risks as Lucilius because he did not come from the same time or comfortable social class.[727] As the son of a freed slave, Horace is more careful about who he criticised.[728] Of course, Freudenburg also points out that Horace's satire still held a sharpness with wit and aggression, but his first book was more about striving to survive and his second was striving to succeed.[729] Then there is Persius, who was influenced by Horace, but took satire from the outward-facing persona to reflect what Freudenburg says is an inward soul. Persius is also seen as a more 'stoic-satirist', which according to Freudenburg is an unlikely combination,

[724] Goh (2015: 92). See also Braund (2007:xi), who states that his satires appear to stage a sense of political morality, as well as criticisms of public and private life, as well as on language and literature.
[725] Freudenburg (2005: 5).
[726] Freudenburg (2005: 5-6).
[727] Horace is writing over seventy years after Lucilius; Braund also highlights contrasts to Lucilius' aristocratic (*eques*) background and his influences amongst the Scipio Aemilianus elite (Braund 2007: xi-xii).
[728] Freudenburg (2005: 7-11); See also Rudd (1966: 132-59) and Braund (2007: xii).
[729] Freudenburg (2005: 11-12). See also Braund (2007), who argues that Horace's blend of 'praise and criticism' allowed for his own literary, moral and political credentials; Braund states that this allowed for him to be 'a new Lucilius for a new age' (Braund 2007: xii).

but he goes on to say it allows Persius to be one of the most aggressive satirists under the surface.[730]

Keane (2003) singles out Juvenal for his colourful take on human activity, with his emphasis on the visual suggesting an influence from both theatre and spectacle.[731] As such, Juvenal is often seen in a separate light to these other satirists, with Rimell calling him a 'heavyweight' that makes 'Horace's bitter-sweet social commentary, or Persius' harsh medicinal concentrate … begin to taste like very thin soup'.[732]

> Yet why I choose to charge across the same plain where the great protégé of Aurunca steered his chariot.
>
> Juvenal, *Satires* 1.19-20

Juvenal's *Satire* One chooses instead to create sell-proclaimed parallels to the much earlier Lucilius.[733] Appearing to sideline other satirists like Horace and Persius, Juvenal goes straight for the foundation of satire itself. [734] Nevertheless, with so little of Lucilius' satire still available to us, the extent to which Juvenal is 'treading' Lucilius' ground remains unknown.[735] Yet, it is enough to know that according to scholars like Freudenburg, satire is equally about identity.[736] So, what does it say to both ancient and modern readers that Juvenal chooses to identify with Lucilius?

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[730] Freudenburg (2005: 7-11).
[731] Keane (2003: 257).
[732]Rimell (2005: 81).
[733] Braund notes that Lucilius is being presented here like an epic hero (2004: 133, n.11).
[734] Yet, he deploys similar structures to these individuals all the same: see Keane (2003: 263).
[735] I acknowledge that the extent to which Lucilius is regarded as the first satirist is a long-standing discussion, but it is one not suited to the focus of this chapter. For a useful breakdown on the influences and practitioners of Roman satire both pre-Lucilius and post-Lucilius, see Freudenburg's introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire* (2005).
[736] Freudenburg (2005: 23).

Not only that, but Juvenal also presents himself as a frustrated listener of performance. Freudenburg (2001) goes as far as to state that Juvenal is in fact challenging the safety of the literary works, with epic being a particularly prominent example. Freudenburg argues that these are less the complaints of a disgruntled listener of a bad recitation, but the frustration of a satirist, one who sees missed opportunity when epic only serves to remind 'again and again, of just how irrelevant and docile poetry has become'.[737] With this in mind, accompanied by the parallels made to Lucilius, it is clear that Juvenal is playing on an image of a true/pure satirist lamenting for his craft, not unlike Dionysus at the beginning of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, the god of drama complaining about the state of current performance only to comically follow suit.[738]

The humour of this hypocritical action, although clearly meant to be enjoyed, is neutralised by Juvenal's choice of deceptive costume. Freudenburg sees this as a clear moment of misdirection and a sort of deception placed upon Juvenal's audience to perceive Juvenal in this Lucilius-like fashion.[739] Rimell similarly highlights that Juvenal's approach to satire is to dig up a century of angst, only to then throw it at dead people who cannot reply.[740] Yet, it is fair to say a citizen such as Juvenal functioned under different rules to the earlier Lucilius. For instance, growing up in a Rome with emperors like Domitian, a target of Juvenal's Satire Four and indirectly through Messalina in Satire Six, Juvenal faced different challenges to his predecessor.[741] Perhaps Juvenal's comparison created a sense of authority within his own satirical

[737] Freudenburg (2001: 211-212).
[738] *Frogs* 1-18; Juvenal, *Satires* 1.1-21.
[739] Freudenburg (2005: 15-16).
[740] Rimell (2018: 81).
[741] For more on the social conditions of Juvenal's time, see Courtney's introduction to his *A Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal* (2007).

voice, one that is not easily achieved in his lifetime. For example, Lucilius is often given credit for bringing Roman satire into existence.[742] It could be said that Juvenal played on that idea to appear just as 'groundbreaking' in his own satire. This is further supported by arguments such as those of Freudenburg who states that Juvenal created new satiric traits that went on to characterise the genre long after the period of Ancient Rome, including in the revival of satire in Elizabethan England.[743] These similarities include the complaints of the honest man existing in a corrupt space, the touring of a city, the satirist himself as morally respectable but stuck seeking some ideal golden age and sometimes xenophobic or misogynistic in an instructional way to their audience.[744]

Rimell suggests that Juvenal interacts with his audience as a form of attack.[745] Audiences of Juvenal are inevitably at risk of mockery, missing the joke, or even becoming accomplice performers to his words at recitals. So perhaps Juvenal is more like Lucilius then he is given credit for. He moves the goalposts to suit the constraints of his time and, using meta-performance devices like costume, he is able to attack the very people reading his work. For instance, Juvenal's elite audiences are in effect the same sort of individuals who would put Lucilius on a pedestal, so perhaps he puts on the Lucilius mask and makes him a textual costume. This in turn allows the audience to question what it is to be a Roman satirist, while convincing them that he is just as provocative and groundbreaking. By targeting Lucilius so early, Juvenal also mirrors and mocks notions of old Roman satire. Juvenal is in a sense stripping satirical

[742] Freudenburg (2005: 4).
[743] Freudenburg (2005: 22).
[744] Freudenburg (2005: 14).
[745] Rimell (2008: 81-2).

authority away from Lucilius and making himself the next defining satirist. Furthermore, by wearing Lucilius' mask, the old satirist is transformed to suit Juvenal's more deceptive form of satire: the crafted rant.

5.1.c: AN ANGRY PERSONA

> Is a satirist supposed to express emotion? Should satire engage its audience's emotions as well as its intellect and appetite for play? Precisely what feeling or feelings are appropriate to express, or to elicit, in the practice of mockery and social criticism?
>
> Keane (2015: 2)

Keane's above questions in her introduction to *Juvenal and the Satiric Emotions* (2015) nicely remind us just how emotionally charged Juvenal appears within his satires. Keane even states that Juvenal not only offers commentary on such emotion, but even prompts the question himself; all in a way that helps shape the response to his comic work.[746] We as readers can also identify a key speaker who holds all sixteen satires together with emotion as a glue. Keane and Watson (2007) describe this as Juvenal's 'angry persona'.[747] This is where a version of Juvenal constantly looks to the past to demean his contemporary Romans and sees the ideal citizen as a product of a bygone age. A case in point is the beginning of Satire Six opening with references to the Hesiodic Golden Age.[748] Yet, as a citizen of the same Roman empire, Juvenal cannot fully sustain this ou- of-touch mask. Or maybe he does not want to, as even when this persona shifts by Satire Nine, Juvenal's 'classic' tropes instead shine through in the voice of Naevolus.

[746] Keane (2015: 2).
[747] Keane (2015: 2) and Watson (2007: 628).
[748] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.1-24.

Keane also argues for this 'angry persona' sharing intertextual similarities with other texts like Seneca's *On Anger* and even parallels to moments of audience attack in the much earlier Old Comedy tradition of the ranting parabasis.[749] This meta-theatrical device also festers beneath the surface of Juvenal's satires by parodying old ideas and strengthening the text in hand; for instance, he makes fun of contemporary performance in *Satire* One, with lines like 'Shall I always be stuck in the audience?' when talking about the poet Cordus, as well as references to an influx of mythical trends around the same time, with lines like 'No one knows his own house better than I know the grove of Mars and the cave of Vulcan near the Aeolian cliffs'.[750]

Then there is the line 'It's a stupid act of mercy, when you run into so many bards everywhere, to spare paper that's bound to be wasted anyway', which essentially states that he will throw his own hat in the satirical ring. This is particularly interesting when considering the almost reverse angle of his self-reflecting yet mocking personality in Satire Nine. This poem also uses an intertextual angle, but this time using the works of Homer to validate his advice to his addressee and presumed self-portrait Naevolus, with the line 'as single as the broad eye of Polyphemus—clever Ulysses' means of escape'.[751]

Keane suggests that Juvenal's audience may see him as this ranting disenfranchised Roman, struggling to maintain Roman status.[752] Yet Uden (2014) argues that Juvenal

[749] Keane (2015: 02, 15). See examples of parabasis from Chapter Three's case studies: *Acharnians* 626-718, *Knights* 495-614 and *Wasps* 1015-1121.
[750] Braund (2004:131).
[751] Juvenal, *Satires* 9.65.
[752] Keane (2015: 6).

is entirely invisible as an author, as well as indistinguishable as a single persona. Stating that Juvenal's voice changes with very theme he addresses, Uden argues that Juvenal instead acts as a 'blank canvas' for his many characters.[753] There is some truth to these observations, as will be made clear when I look at his varying satirical mask between advising Postumus in Satire Six and Naevolus in Satire Nine.

Uden goes on to call Juvenal a ventriloquist for all the characters he voices.[754] Uden's analogy of a ventriloquist is an interesting choice of wording. A ventriloquist is meant to be as close to invisible as possible to an audience. While, if we were to call Juvenal an 'actor' of said personae, as I have compared to the pre-dramatic Homeric tradition, as well as various Aristophanic characters, Juvenal would very much be in the audience's eyeline. Furthermore, if we consider the fact that these poems were also performed in readings, then Juvenal or the performer would very much be seen by the audience. So which is he? Invisible or conspicuous? I do not think it is a simple case of either/or, but rather Juvenal's satires are a multifaceted dramatic experience that audiences can enjoy in the same way that they can experience them as a literary and performative satirical experience.

I am inclined to agree with Uden on Juvenal's disruptive skill in disguise. However, I also agree with Keane, Watson, Freudenburg and Rimell for their take on Juvenal's primary ranting persona. I also accept Uden's methodology in selecting specific satires that display Juvenal's varying dramatic voices.[755] With that in mind, I argue that it is

[753] Uden (2014: 52).
[754] Uden (2014: 51).
[755] Uden (2014: 54).

possible to see a key angry satiric voice, which also acts as a springboard for his various meta-performative pathways that include his other personae. This chapter will therefore focus on Satires Six and Nine, to explore Juvenal's use of meta-performance that instigates satirical laughter in what Rimell considers a 'force-feeding' of Roman experience. The consequence is also a considerable blurring of lines between audience, author and his satirical victims.[756]

5.2: *SATIRE* SIX

As the longest of Juvenal's works, Satire Six has seen a great deal of attention for its loose structure, dramatic flair and apparent tirades against the women of Rome.[757] All of which are achieved from a blend of mini-narratives that share this theme of attacking Roman women, be it themes on women abandoning their families, being sex obsessed, wasting money, being 'too' clever , or even murdering their families.[758] Such a tirade of abuse makes these women an obvious choice for Juvenal's satirical target and I will consider this in more depth below and again when addressing the character of Messalina, but first it is important to consider Juvenal's range in dramatic voices; from sporadic moments of direct speech to full blown dialogue, it is clear that his audience are another possible target of his dramatic comedy, but who exactly are his audience in this instance? [759]

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[756] Rimell (2005: 81-2).
[757] On *Satire* Six's loose structure, see Smith (1980: 323) and Braund (1992: 71). On its dramatic flair, see Jones (2007:133-44). Regarding Juvenal's approach to women, see Smith (1980: 329) and Keane (2015:15). Also see Rogers (1966: 41), taken from Braund (1992: 71).
[758] See Juvenal, *Satires* 6.82-6, 355 and 387-90 (abandonment); 6.129, 231-41 and 317-34 (sexual obsession; 6.352-65 (money); 6.399-412 and 435-56 (clever women) and 6.133, 219-223 and 634-661 (murdering families).
[759] See Juvenal, *Satire*s 6. 21, 28, 46, 416, 481-4 and 9.39, 63, 102 (direct speech); 6.172-4, 219-223, 280-1, 638-44 and 9.1-26, 27-90, 90-101, 102-120, 121-29, 130-34a, 135-150 (dialogue).

5.2.a: JUVENAL'S COMIC TARGETS

> Postumus, are you really getting married? Tell me what Tisiphone
> and what snakes are driving you mad.
>
> Juvenal, *Satires* 6.28-29[760]

A major meta-theatrical quality to this text is the overarching address to his apparent friend Postumus. As with previous chapters, this suggests a contrast of a real audience, which is the reader or the listener, with his fictitious charge who is the target of his speech. It could be said that this relationship is quite toxic, as Postumus is also one of Juvenal's satirical victims. Above, Juvenal appears to be trying to stop his friend from becoming a married man, but as Postumus transitions to a married state, he becomes less significant to the text and indeed the satirist's concerns.[761] Instead, Juvenal goes on to accept Postumus' choice and proceeds to inform him of all the vices he should now expect.[762]

Postumus is sometimes lost within the dramatic style of Juvenal's direct speech with its constant use of 'you' and quick succession of mini-narratives making it very hard to know who is being addressed at any given time. Is this Postumus? Or is this Juvenal's real audience? Or is that the point? On the other hand, a reason that Postumus can be seen as an unsuspecting audience of Juvenal's satire is that he offers a stand-in for the real spectators of this comedy. Keane refers to this as Juvenal attacking

[760] Brand points out that Tisiphone is a mythic reference, as she is one of the Furies and has snakes for hair (2004: 237, n.5).
[761] Smith (1980: 325-7).
[762] Smith (1980: 327).

Postumus' moral choices, instead of the 'naive listener' and allows Postumus to don this mask so that the audience does not have to.[763]

In contrast, Jones (2007) describes Postumus as a colourful framing for the poem, rather than a fully functioning character in his own right, which is much like Naevolus' self-parody function that I will discuss for Satire Nine.[764] Similarly, Postumus' wife, who remains nameless, appears to embody all of the women Juvenal targets throughout the text.[765] Braund (1992) sees the misogynist take on Juvenal Satire Six as an unfounded case and instead seeks to emphasise it as a misinterpretation of rhetorical intertextuality.[766] Braund also states that Satire Six is a poetic take on the then typical rhetorical set-piece, where men are questioned about marrying.[767] Keane also makes this observation, but adds that Satire Six is like a parody of said Greco-Roman question, by using seemingly generic individuals like Postumus.[768] Braund goes on to see Satire Six as an attack on marriage, saying that the text was a complement to Juvenal's first book, which looks at 'public life and the foolish, selfish, and criminal acts of, primarily, men'.[769] Although, she does argue that 'Satire 6 is not, as has often been said, a blanket rant against women, such as found in earlier classical literature' and instead offers a dissuasion against the action of marriage.[770]

[763] Keane (2015: 22).
[764] Jones (2007:90).
[765] Smith (1980: 327).
[766] See Braund (2004), who makes this same observation in her translation of Juvenal's *Satires* (2004: 230).
[767] Braund (1992: 71-2); see also Treggiari (1991), who shares in this view that Juvenal is influenced by an anti-marriage tradition, as well as tropes against women (1991: 223),
[768] Keane (2015: 2,4-5).
[769] Braund (2004: 320).
[770] Braund (2004: 320).

There has, however, also been a trend in scholarship to see this poem as an attack on women. For instance, Freeman (1975) who, upon addressing the Oxford Fragments and their authenticity, suggests that if there can be two books on the vices of men, then why can there not be two on the vices of women.[771] Likewise, Smith (1980), while sharing Braund's view on the attack of marriage, calls the satire a '*grotesque and prejudiced vision of male-female relationships*'.[772] Smith appears more convinced by Juvenal offering an anti-woman message, when he questions the often made counter-argument that Juvenal wrote his character simply for laughs. Here, Smith states that 'Such a vivid presentation reads like the product of a man who is emotionally involved with his material, and to that extent is "sincere"; would a disinterested comedian, primarily concerned with causing laughter, be capable of sustaining such a devastatingly consistent attack?'.[773] Furthermore, Smith stipulates that whether or not these marriages discussed by Juvenal were even plausible, the point is to consider how he convinces his audience of these ideas.[774]

The problem with this argument is that it equates content with the author's motivation, which is too trusting of the dramatic persona and assumes that the audience cannot enjoy the character of Juvenal separate to the author of these poems. By simply seeing Juvenal as 'the woman hater', we do not strip away enough of the text's complex layers, especially if we compare his top persona with the character comedians of today. For instance, no one regards the self-centred persona of Alan Partridge on television as the same as his creator Steve Coogan. Neither is the oblivious character of

[771] Freeman (1975: 425).
[772] Smith (1980: 329).
[773] Smith (1980: 329).
[774] Smith (1980: 329).

Philomena Cunk the same person as Diane Morgan, who plays her. Instead, their audience enjoy these instances of comedy for what they are: performances.

Likewise, Braund also calls Juvenal a 'misogynistic persona' and offers the example that even when he is talking about a wife who has all the qualities typically desired by Roman men, Juvenal states, 'who can stand a wife who is perfection itself ?'[775] The implication is that he is an irrational character whose primary objective is to be in an angry, ranting state. The implication is that those who would fall for his guise become a victim to his comedy as they are separated from the rest of the audience as fools. Stewart Lee, who is perhaps the most obvious cross-cultural comparison to Juvenal in contemporary stand-up comedy, mainly for his ranting style and aggressive play with his audience, is not as irrational as he appears onstage. I will address this in much more detail in Chapter Six, but we should consider this same reality for Juvenal, who was capable of the same tactic nearly a thousand years before. Juvenal's similar ranting persona also parodies these exhausting and over-the-top misogynistic views.

With this in mind it is it is worth re-addressing Smith who, despite his argument that Juvenal was misogynistic, does recognise that some performative qualities in this satire which go some way to supporting this chapter's argument of consensual trickery. Smith calls the text a dramatic skit, particularly on the character of Postumus.[776] This skit sees the satire's progression of plot as a dramatic tool that rebounds on itself, so the audience think the author is just as lost in his argument as they are.[777] This would

[775] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.166.
[776] Akin to *Satire* Five and its character Trebius. For more on this, see Smith (1980: 324).
[777] Smith (1980: 323).

suggest that ultimately Juvenal's main persona is a trap for some of his audience to fall in. Nevertheless, humorous writing works on opportunity, and as such it is directed by the next laugh. Audiences continue to play an important role, not only as victims of Juvenal's text, but also as patrons of his comedy and even directors of their own experience. Part of this chapter's aim is to highlight that the direction of Juvenal's rants, as they are likely to be far less apparent than previously speculated. The many 'voices' that Juvenal creates allow for multiple perceptions to be heard, meaning one target and even one motivation is unlikely.

5.2.b: MESSALINA

I am also interested in specific self-contained moments of the poem that I have previously referred to as its mini-narratives. One of these mini-narratives comes in lines 116-132 and although it is short in length, it is a fantastic spectacle of costume performance. Here the prevailing theme sees Juvenal seemingly chastise the empress Messalina for her unquenchable sexual appetite.[778] Within this text, the wife of Claudius absconds from her royal chamber in disguise for a local brothel and takes on the role of a sex worker for the duration of a night.[779] When this role concludes, Messalina returns to her husband's bed, along with what Juvenal describes as 'the smell of the whorehouse'.[780]There is quite a lot to unpack within this story, but what becomes clear from various meta-theatrical devices is that Messalina becomes a narrative device to blur the lines of her public and personal identity. Further to this, this scene is reminiscent of some of the dramatic devices displayed in Chapter Two, where

[778] Keane (2015: 5).
[779]Juvenal, *Satires* 6.118-21 and 6.122-9.
[780]Juvenal, *Satires* 6.132.

Hera performs her trickery on Zeus. As such, I will also explore some theatrical themes like staging and costume.[781]

The first of Messalina's personae is 'Empress of Rome'. Within this role we see very little of the woman herself, but how she is perceived in conjunction with the state. This is evident from her distinct lack of name throughout the text. This is not uncommon even for males within Juvenal's satires, as he does not even give himself a name when speaking. Nevertheless, as an audience we are made aware of Messalina's identity through her habitation in the palace, her marriage to Claudius, and her role as Britannicus's mother.[782] Messalina is then given a temporary title when assuming her second persona as the 'She-Wolf'; here the audience see Messalina's first instance of a personal motivation through sexual exploits. [783] On the other hand, Juvenal does not always separate the two roles, as is clear when he calls her an 'Imperial harlot', or 'whore-empress' in Braund's translation.[784] Furthermore, this separation between public and personal roles is accompanied by further parallels between high status and low status.

It could be that Messalina was an easy target, especially as Keane states that there were rumours around the sexual dealings of the empress in ancient sources. Tacitus in particular attacked her for her over-the-top sexual desires.[785] On the other hand,

[781] On acting see (6.122-123, 125 and 132); on staging see (6.122-3 and 128); on costume see (6.118, 120, 122-3 and 124).
[782] On her role within the palace, see (6.119 and 132); on her marriage to Claudius (6.116); on her role as Britannicus's mother, see (6.124).
[783] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.123.
[784] Juvenal, *Satires* 6: 118.
[785] Keane (2015: 77); Tacitus, Annals (XXVI and XXXVI).

Juvenal could be parodying the very sources targeting Messalina in this way. This seems all the more possible when we look at how Juvenal describes the empress' return. Here he states that the Empress 'went away, exhausted by the men but not yet satisfied, and, a disgusting creature, with her cheeks filthy, dirty from the smoke of the lamp, she took back to the emperor's couch the stench of the brothel'.[786] This is obscenely over-the-top. It animalises the empress and by association all women of Rome, as someone who cannot be sexually gratified and yet wildly seeks this unachievable goal. It could be that Juvenal really meant this, but such a description is highly fanciful and probably facetious.

Furthermore, Juvenal uses the royal household to further his 'advice' and as such this comes back to Postumus being a stand in for Juvenal's real audience. Many would say that targeting Messalina is a way to get at the emperor, with the implication being he is too feeble to control his own wife, let alone the state. The imperial marriage is meant to be a paradigm for the welfare of the whole of the state and if that is a sham, then so is the Rome that Juvenal is ridiculing. On the other hand, Postumus is also being made aware that even emperors face these hardships in marriage, so If 'the rival of the gods' should experience this, Postumus should not expect any better.[787] This is not the only time a wife of Claudius is used by Juvenal within this satire. In the poem's concluding section on wives murdering their spouses, Agrippina is also mentioned by name.

[786] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.133-35.
[787] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.115. See also Braund (2004: 245, n.23).

Juvenal actually begins this story by offering a comparison between a 'typical' household wife called Eppia and the Empress.[788] This distinction between the status of these two women, and by association their wealth, is commonplace within Juvenal's satires. It is, however, hard to know what Juvenal wants his audience to take away from these comparisons, as one side never comes out clean. It is therefore likely that the audience are compelled to want what Juvenal appears to want, which is everyone living according to their apparent 'roles'. In the case of Messalina, this is as an empress; a public figure whose ambitions should not go beyond what she can offer society, be it her offspring or role as wife to Claudius.

We cannot ignore another difference between Eppia and Messalina. Out of these two women, only Messalina is referenced as having control over her appearance in a way that could be construed as costume. In fact, there is even some contrast to be made, as Eppia falls victim to the deceptive art of a gladiator's costume in lines 82-114. Other than driving this mini-narrative forward, another reason for Juvenal to give Messalina this power is to elevate her as a performer. Furthermore, the use of costume is seen as distinctly deceptive in this instance, as it plays an important role within the interplay of Messalina's two key roles.

From the beginning of her exploits, she puts on a number of items to disguise her imperial form '… to don a hooded cloak at the dead of night…with yellow wig concealing her raven locks…'.[789] This extract gives a distinctly deceptive function, with Rudd's translation using terminology like 'stealing away' from her husband when

[788] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.115-6.
[789] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.119-21.

describing her escape and Braund's translation suggesting it is particularly bold with 'she had the nerve to put on a night-time hood'.[790] Yet as the narrative develops, so does Messalina's method in using costume, as partly meant for disguise, she undresses to assume her new role as the 'She-Wolf':

> …Then she stood there, naked and for sale,
> with her nipples gilded, under the trade name of "She-Wolf,"…
>
> Juvenal, Satires 6.120-1

It could be said that this moment sees Messalina as a sex worker 'playing' at being an empress; this is particularly true if we look at it from the angle that she removes her clothing and therefore removes her empress costume. While it is worth considering the idea that this is Messalina's true form, as it agrees with those who think Juvenal a misogynist satirist, there are some flaws in this reflection. First of all, we should consider more the duality in her roles. For instance, it is of interest here that her name 'lupa', while the word for prostitute, is also the she-wolf 'Lupa' that is responsible for rearing Romulus and Remus. This double meaning is only strengthened in line 124 when Juvenal references Messalina as 'displaying the womb which gave the lordly Britannicus birth'. Here we have reference once again to her role as the mother of Rome's apparent future, through the presence of her bare stomach that is as such for her preparation as a sex worker.

[790] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.119, Rudd translation (2008: 40); Juvenal, *Satires* 6.120, Braund's Loeb translation (2004: 245).

Expanding to this idea of her duality is this constant jumping from her roles as she-wolf to empress, particularly in reference to disguise, or lack of it. For instance, in line 123 Messalina's 'She-Wolf' signage is referred to as 'bogus' and when emphasising her stomach, it echoes some of the themes of bad costume already explored in earlier chapters regarding Old Comedy. Here the art of bad costume reveals the meta-theatrical reality that lies underneath Juvenal's specific use of costume. Like Dionysus's terrible Heracles costume in Aristophanes' *Frogs* or the Jurymens' stings in *Wasps*, Messalina's naked costume cannot hide her imperial identity as an acting mother of Rome.[791]

I think it is likely that Juvenal is presenting Messalina as a character capable of being both of these roles. So, instead of seeing her as one or the other, we should return to Chapter Two's idea of exaggeration and half-truths as a form of dramatic deception; these include Hera's performative deception of Zeus and the goddess' inhabitation of versions of herself that allows her to manipulate her influence through exaggerated versions of herself. Furthermore, there is a notable similarity in the way that both women appear to prepare themselves for their roles. It is true that where Hera adorns herself in gold and Aphrodite's girdle, Messalina is in fact removing all clothing, but her She-Wolf costume must be suitably drastic. The absence of clothing, therefore, suddenly appears as a new form of costume within the text.

Comparably, there is also the way they use location and privacy in this act. If we look back to Hera's locked room in lines 163-184 of *Iliad* book fourteen, we are reminded

[791] *Frogs* 42-3 and *Wasps* 1110.

of her locked door that allows her to get ready in her own space. For Messalina, her space is a cubicle that becomes her stage when her preparations are complete; her sign is established and she starts welcoming clients. [792] By calling the space a cubicle, I am using Braund's translation, whereas Rudd uses the word 'cell' to describe this space.[793] A cell implies an environment suitable for a prisoner and I do not think that matches a scene that sees Messalina working towards her own supposed desires. After all, like Hera using her own palace to prepare in the *Iliad*, Juvenal makes a similar point with Messalina, by stating that it is 'her' cubicle in line 122. This could also be a segue to remind the audience of the personal shift for Messalina's 'acting', as this is the space where Messalina assumes, or takes off her costume.

Another point for consideration lies with Juvenal's attention to detail, in particular his use of smell. Near the beginning of the segment, Juvenal states that the brothel smells of 'ancient blankets', while at the very end Messalina is noted for her smelling of the brothel.[794] Based on a seminar by Esther Eidinow, titled *Sensing Divinity: Smell, Society and the Gods* (2018), I am compelled to see a great deal more significance around the description of smells in ancient texts. After all, a description of smell can arouse audiences' memory or emotion, or even control perception.[795] In a more typical theatrical setting, descriptions of smells could remind audiences of the unpleasant aromas around them, such as other spectators. Or in contrast, they could distract spectators from the reality of the stage, drawing them into the narrative. Such an

[792] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.123-125.
[793] Braund (2004: 245); Rudd (2008: 41).
[794] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.121 and 132.
[795] Eidinow was a visiting lecturer at the University of Birmingham, presenting for the 'Research Seminars' in the Department of Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology (21 November 2018).

underappreciated meta-theatrical device still has proclivity in literature, the way they are conducted might be different, but the overall outcome is the same: readers read the smells, which can offer moments of escapism and self-awareness of circumstances they are at least familiar with. Furthermore, any poem that goes on to be recited publicly or privately at a gathering would fit the more traditional theatrical effects. In the case of the brothel smells, the sexual proclivity of Messalina is suddenly brought to the centre of the audience's awareness.

A lingering thought after addressing this short narrative is that Messalina is a channel for many satirical objectives. We cannot help but notice how her need for deceptive costume, both as disguise, and for acting, mirrors that of Juvenal's own exaggerated ranting persona. Audiences are further prodded to this theatrical coupling with the aid of meta-theatrical themes like staging and even smell. The stark contrast of Messalina's public and private identities further emphasises the need to mock serious ancient sources that undermine a woman who can only been seen through her male family members, or even male sexual organs.

5.b.c: THE OXFORD FRAGMENTS

The next piece for consideration comes from the so-called Oxford Fragments, referred to here as 'so-called' as they are often challenged as later or misplaced additions to Juvenal's *Satire* Six.[796] It is not my objective to speculate in detail on the authenticity of these fragments, merely to acknowledge that there are arguments both for and against their place in this poem. Freeman (1975), like myself, chooses to recognises

[796] For more on this, see Griffith (1963).

these contrasting opinions, as he suggests that there is a stalemate on this topic due to a lack of external evidence. He therefore instead suggests that those who believe in its authenticity must look towards the internal content of the text.[797] So, with that in mind, what do these Oxford Fragments actually consist of?

As these fragments are available to us, they are separated into two main topics. The first is a commentary on different types of gladiatorial costume and the repercussions of said dress on their status or morality. The second part of these fragments introduces an instructor who disguises his masculinity and adulterous nature, specifically through feminine dress.[798] These are 34 lines that not only offer another example of Juvenal's trend of blending dramatic themes with deception, but they also emphasise themes of transparency that only serves to create a double bluff on Juvenal's own mask as a satirist. Prior to both of these examples however, the audience are introduced to the first scene with a possible moment of direct address.

> In any house where a professor of obscenity lives and sports,
> his fidgety right hand suggesting he stops at nothing, you'll find
> that everyone is disgusting—no better than pathics. [68] These
> creatures they allow to pollute the food and to stand close by the
> sacred table. The crockery which should be smashed once Gourd
> or bearded Swallow-tail [69] has drunk from it they simply have
> washed. That makes the gladiator trainer's establishment purer
> and better than your holy hearth.
>
> Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O1-O7

[797] Freeman (1975: 425-6).
[798] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O21-4.

Here, Juvenal gives his audience a comparison between their own home and that of a gladiator trainer. The question is, which audience is he talking to? His readers? Or this fictious Postumus? Smith would argue that this is actually directed at the latter, when we consider Juvenals shift in tone and advice once Postumus is married.[799] One the other hand, this could easily be for the reader. It is clearly meant to be ambiguous, so that all of Juvenal's audiences, real and invented, can feel like they are being targeted. What these lines also offer is a segue from a household to the gladiator's domestic space in which they may dress for their roles.

The Oxford Fragments are not the only time Satire Six approaches the topic of gladiators, or indeed gladiatorial costume. Returning to Juvenal's introduction to Eppia in lines 82-113, the reader sees a woman infatuated with a gladiator who is distinctly past his prime.[800] Unable to see past the uniform, Eppia abandons her family and even Rome for a man who once he is discharged will 'soon … resemble Veiento'.[801] By referencing the Senator Veiento in this way, McDermott (1970) questions if Eppia is actually a 'metrical substitute' for his wife Attica and their own likely age difference.[802] The comical implication being that when the gladiator loses his role, he will be unveiled as just another old man underneath an elaborate costume. In lines O7-13 of the Oxford Fragments, Juvenal takes this theme of costume further, by establishing the different levels of gladiatorial dress. For instance, we see below an extract where they are once again likened to actors assuming a role.

[799] Smith (1980: 325-7).
[800] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.109.
[801] Juvenal, *Satires* 6. 113.
[802] McDermott (1979: 135-136 and n. 26).

> … In his troop Skin is told to keep
> well away from Loaded. Then there's the fact that the nets aren't
> kept alongside the tunic of disgrace, and that the shoulder guards
> and the trident of the gladiator who fights naked are not stored
> in the same locker.
>
> Juvenal 6.O9-O12

As Braund explains, the two main distinctions are the '*psillus*', who were the light-armed gladiator and the '*euhoplo*', who were the armoured gladiator.[803] Braund interprets these two as 'skin' (psillus) and 'loaded' (euhoplo) in her translation, while Rudd counters this with his own translations of '*lisp*' and '*normal voice*'.[804] Courtney (1980) sheds light as to why there may be alternative opinions on these words, by stating that it is a difference in manuscripts.[805] Nevertheless, both versions offer their own interesting takes on costume, performance and transparency.

Braund, for instance, stipulated that the line about gladiators using different lockers is in fact a reference to how trainers stored gladiators' equipment according to their status, with this text suggesting that the fighter with less armour is superior.[806] Similarly, we can apply a dramatic reading of Braund's translations that is also more in keeping with lines 10-13 that follow. Here the naked/skin gladiator who wears a loincloth is superior to those who '*wear tunic that signal disgrace'*.[807] The implication being that those who hide nothing are more transparent and therefore better than those who hide behind their armour. This is despite the fact that the naked gladiators used nets and tridents, which imply a longer distance fighting and cunning not typically

[803] Braund (2004: 265, n.70).
[804] Rudd (2008: 49).
[805] Courtney (1980: 306).
[806] Braund (2004: 265.n71).
[807] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O9.

associated with brute strength. It is therefore a bit surprising that Juvenal would make these fighters represent honesty .[808]

Braund also offers a comparison between her translation of the word 'euhoplo' with sexual vigorousness.[809] This shares in many of Juvenal's themes of dramatic costume and promiscuity within this poem, not only with the instructor that follows but also with Messalina's 'She-Wolf'. Although, a counter point would be that Messalina's costume is also naked. How can a gladiator's nakedness be more honourable than an empress? Or is it a comment on social mobility? Everyone should fit the role they are given. So Eppia's naked gladiator loses all status after he stops being a fighter, whereas Messalina remains an empress underneath.

Alternatively, it could be construed that this a joke in which Juvenal preaches the importance of transparency, while acting under his own guise of a persona. We return to the idea that Juvenal is playing up to the satirical mask of Lucilius, especially as we can look back to instances when his predecessor also showed apparent contempt for gladiators. For instance, Goh points out a fragment of Lucilius' twenty-sixth book, where someone is described as avoiding 'Rome with its gladiators'.[810] The presumption being that even in Lucilius' time, gladiators may have been 'actor-type celebrities' that took part in theatres and stage performances in the city.[811] While it is not clear if this fragmented voice of Lucilius is speaking against the entertainment of

[808] Then, if we consider Rudd's translation, the gladiator with the lisp is also seen as lesser than the one who speaks normally. Could this be a comment on quality of performance, with those who recite their lines clearly being the superior public speakers? Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O8-9.
[809] Juvenal, *Satires* 6. O9; Brand (2004: 265, n.70).
[810] Goh (2015: 103).
[811] Goh (2025: 102-103); see also Jory (1986).

gladiators, Goh does point out that they were like an 'anathema to those preaching restraint and humble moderation'.[812] So, with that in mind, it is possible that Juvenal is performing like the proclaimed father of Roman satire, while at the same time parodying the hypocrisy of deception in his own satirical mask. This is an appealing idea when we compare it to Naevolus in Satire Nine. Both show a self-reflective side to Juvenal's personas and both place them as flawed.

This blend of character, costume and even sexual proclivity are also apparent in the second half of the Oxford Fragments. Here, Juvenal appears to warn against an adulterer known as the 'Instructor', with this figure taking on multiple roles at once. First, he is as, his name implies, an instructor of women: be this to marry, or divorce their husbands.[813] He also teaches women to be sexually alluring.[814] Second, he acts as a companion for women's emotional needs and ultimately has sex with them; this makes him appear to Juvenal and presumably his audience as mistrustful for he is '*an adulterer*'.[815] Despite all this, it is worth noting that it is hard to know what the instructor's true nature is as his is given the same anonymous treatment that we come to expect of Juvenal. By this token he could represent any man in Rome. This is likely deliberate; in the same way that Postumus' wife or Messalina are seen as extensions of Roman women as a collective. Noticeably, the instructor's physical appearance and choice of costume are some of the most striking ways in which Juvenal warns against this rather vague character.

[812] Goh (2015: 102).
[813] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O17.
[814] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O19.
[815] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O21-2.

> …But he's not always to be
> trusted. He'll enhance his eyes with soot, his saffron outfit
> unfastened, a hairnetted adulterer! The more sensuous his voice,
> the more often his right hand lingers in his smooth crotch, the
> more suspicious you should be. In bed he'll be supremely virile.
> There he'll take off his mask, a "Thais" danced by an expert
> "Triphallus." "Who are you fooling? Keep that masquerade for
> other people! Let's make a bet: I declare that you are every inch a
> man. I declare it.
>
> Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O20-27

The moral indignation of Juvenal also presents itself in the description of effeminate costume the instructor dons, with his soot enhanced eyes, his yellow/saffron outfit and his hair net.[816] Neither is it just his clothing, but also his voice and even stance that is called into question.[817] Similarly, we can find other examples within the Satire Six where costume and gender fluidity are linked to performance or deception. For instance, Bathyllus dances the story of Leda. While this is also an example of performance and intertextuality within the text, it is also a reference to his appearance and he is referred to as 'sinuous'.[818] Then there is Publius Clodius Plucher, who entered the sanctuary of the 'good goddess' or 'Bona Dea' disguised as a woman in lines 335-41. Juvenal also apparently mocks women who do the same, such as when they use armour and weaponry.[819] The satirist even talks to the women directly, suggesting their husbands would be embarrassed by their actions and he stresses 'what sense of shame can be found in a woman wearing a helmet, who shuns femininity and loves brute force?'.[820]

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[816] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O21.
[817] With the line 'the more sensuous his voice, the more often his right hand lingers in his smooth crotch, the more suspicious you should be', see Juvenal, *Satires* 6. O23-24.
[818] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.63.
[819] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.248.
[820] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.252-3 and 6.255-8.

Notably, in the case of the instructor, he is first introduced with his yellow hair, which could be matched with Messalina's blonde wig in line 120. Sherrow's cultural history of hair colour (2006) states that blond hair was at one time synonymous with sex work in Rome. With an influx of Greek influences and the introduction of fair-haired slaves from Gaul, lighter hair colour did become more fashionable with 'women and some men' applying bleaching agents to get a similar result.[821] As such, it seems likely that in both instances Juvenal is alluding to themes of promiscuity and to a lesser extent, may be ridiculing Greek or non-Roman trends of his day.

The effeminate dress is also coupled with the instructor's softly spoken voice. The implication being that husbands should be watchful of this additional layer of performance.[822] Juvenal clearly shows no pretence about his fixation with dramatic themes in this instance, as the instructor is seen as a male actor disguised as a woman. What is more, Juvenal offers an additional self-referential dramatic reference with the example of Thais, who 'puts off her mask to reveal the accomplished Triphallus'.[823] This 'Thais' is a comic figure found in pantomime. Her mask is suddenly placed on the instructor and when this mask slips, he is compared to a man called 'Triphallus'. Essentially this line creates a new image of the instructor, one who is a comedic actor playing another man, who in turn plays a woman.[824] Once again, I am recognising a multi-layering of performance through a mix of dramatic dress and intertextuality, like that found with Dicaeopolis in Chapter Four's exploration of the Greek comedy *Acharnians*.

[821] Sherrow (2006: 154).
[822] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O23-4.
[823] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O26.
[824] Braund (2004: 267).

Apparently obsessed with anything appearing 'other' in his satires, Juvenal cannot help but fixate on topics like gender roles or women and it is not accidental that they are also grouped with the social mobility of *servi*, freedmen, and gladiators.[825] Not to mention the external influences that face Roman culture, be it Greek education, language and theatre. This sometimes leaves the persona contradicting itself as Juvenal chooses to use Greek origin words like *psillus* and *euhoplo*, while simultaneously complaining about the Greek language in Roman social practice.[826] Then, there is the blaming of women when men choose to marry for shallow reasons such as money or looks.[827] This makes his satirical persona unpredictable and one that turns on his contemporary Roman audience with conflicting voices on morality. It is almost impossible to know what morality lies behind this example of Juvenal's persona.

5.3: *SATIRE* NINE

Significantly shorter than Satire Six, Juvenal's Satire Nine is just 150 lines, but according to Courtney (1989), it is 'Juvenal's masterpiece'. [828] I can see the appeal, as it depicts a wealth of deceptive play on audiences, with scenes that explore similar meta-theatrical themes, but in an ever evolving way. For instance, this poem but once again focuses on an exchange between Juvenal and one of his acquaintances, but this time Naevolus. Nevertheless, what starts out as a structure similar to Satire Six suddenly shifts by line 27. Unlike Juvenal's attack on Postumus, Naevolus has a voice;

[825]For a useful breakdown on the social mobility of slaves, and freedmen (as well as the impact on Roman citizens such as Juvenal) see Weaver's *Social Mobility in the Early Roman Empire: The Evidence of the Imperial Freedmen and Slaves* (1967).
[826] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.O8-9 and 6.193.
[827] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.136-41 and 6.142-60.
[828] Courtney (1980: 424).

95 lines to be exact. So unlike before, Satire Nine becomes a dialogue between friends.

5.3.a: DIALOGUE

> What we have is a poem with a comic frame in which different voices are set incongruously and in various mixtures – epic, didactic, Priapic verse, elegy, and bucolic. In between also is the satiric voice of the interlocutor.
>
> Jones (2007: 126)

As the above quote by Jones suggests, this particular poem is often highlighted for its dialogue structure and complex use of language to access its audience on different levels. According to scholars like Braund, Uden, and Courtney, *Satire* Nine is actually the only surviving example of a dialogue structure in Juvenal's portfolio.[829] Moreover, Jones chooses to refer to this poem as a 'return to the dialogue form'.[830] Jones could be insinuating that another poem is similar in structure, or he could be acknowledging that dramatic voices do interact elsewhere in Juvenal's satires. Despite this, it is worth noting the rarity in Juvenal's dedication to this arrangement, as it emphasises an unapologetic dramatic core of the text. A key observation to make in this poem is the notable shift in Juvenal's dramatic tone as the main speaker, in contrast to his co-speaker Naevolus.[831]

> You have a perfectly justifiable case for feeling resentful,
> Naevolus.
>
> Juvenal, *Satires* 9.90-1

[829] Braund (2004: 348), Uden (2014: 75) and Courtney (1980: 424).
[830] Jones (2007: 92).
[831] Courtney (1980: 424).

No longer does he embody the angry persona that his audience comes to expect, but instead he plays a more reserved individual who even attempts to calm another's wrath. Upon initial inspection, this supports Uden's theory that Juvenal is totally invisible as an author. This is particularly powerful when Uden addresses the fixation on secrecy, as a '*programmatic advertisement of his invisibility*'.[832] On the other hand, we should point out that said secrecy is ultimately unachievable, as pointed out in Juvenal's own words '*do you think a rich man's secret is ever preserved? If his slaves keep quiet, his horses and dog will talk, and his doorposts and statues*'.[833] This secrecy is further violated by the very existence of the poem, which feels like a joke for the audience's benefit. This contrast of secrecy and openness between the two characters sets them apart in many ways, but ultimately they are both written by Juvenal. Furthermore, by noting the similarities and differences between Juvenal and Naevolus, we can see a wealth of meta-theatrical self-awareness worth exploring for their comical effects.

The main distinguishable difference between these two characters is the apparent moral superiority in Juvenal, as contrasted to the self-appointed superiority in Naevolus' language.[834]Unlike with Postumus, Juvenal does not overtly attack Naevolus. Instead, he mimics sympathy and rather hints at Naevolus' un-flattering personality.[835] Juvenal is in a sense the voice of truth that is not always welcome, whereas Naevolus is allowed to self-destruct as a character with the constant comical reminders of his hypocrisy. For instance, Naevolus complaints about being poor, while

[832] Uden (2014: 75).
[833] Juvenal, *Satires* 9.102-4.
[834] Courtney (1980: 424-5).
[835] Courtney (1980: 424-5).

maintaining luxuries like slaves.[836] Then there is Naevolus' contrast of profession as a sexual gratifier with his lofty language, which again allows for a contrast that makes him a butt of Juvenal's satire.

Uden goes further, likening Juvenal and Naevolus to the satirist Horace for his fixation on secrecy and truth. In this instance, Juvenal is a Horace impersonator, like his mask of Lucilius in Satire One, trying to appear honest while constantly playing with disguise and hidden mockery. Naevolus, meanwhile, is unashamedly like Horace for revealing everything he is thinking, even when he tries to elevate himself to figures like Odysseus, by dressing up like the hero with a beggar costume in lines 29-32.[837] In effect, Uden sees these two characters as very different figures and even calls Naevolus '*the kind of satirist Juvenal is not*'.[838] I, on the other hand, consider this conflict of honesty to be two sides of the same coin, with even Uden acknowledging that these two characters are often considered a conversation between Juvenal and his satirical self.[839] So, how could this be the case?

> O Corydon, Corydon! Do you think a rich man can ever
> have a secret?
>
> Juvenal, *Satires* 9.102-3

We cannot help but notice now Naevolus' behaviour mimics Juvenal's angry persona in his other earlier poems. For instance, Jones offers supporting examples by raising

[836] Juvenal, *Satires* 9.66.
[837] Uden (2014: 84).
[838] Uden (2014: 85),
[839] Uden (2014: 76).

an intertextual moment at line 102. Here, Juvenal replies to Naevolus with a reference to Virgil's *Eclogues*.[840] This line '*Corydon, Corydon*' is a nod to a character of the same name. Like Naevolus, Virgil's *Corydon* also complains of a harsh lover and in the process has a dialogue with himself.[841] While Corydon converses with his more sensible inner voice, Jones considers the inclusion of Juvenal a deviation from that dynamic.[842] I would say that this inclusion of Juvenal as the pragmatic voice is a reason to believe the satirist is talking to a version of himself. The audience are given the initial prompt and are now forced to see the dialogue in this way.

The audience are also engaged with this dramatised Juvenal performing through a dialogue structure, who then turns into an actor reciting Virgilian 'lines'. Naevolus similarly mimics the lines of his patron Virro with the lines like *"I paid you this; I gave you that; and then you got more" and "It's impertinent of you to beg".*[843] Both of Naevolus' imitations are distinctly negative. Naevolus' angry agenda means he can only formulate a two-dimensional version of Virro, one who does not match the complexities of Juvenal's own self-reflective creations. Additionally, Jones' list of differences between the two texts only strengthens my argument, with further thematic parallels, for example Corydon's lover Alexis is beautiful and uninterested in Corydon. Naevolus' patron, however, only thinks himself beautiful and constantly seeks gratification from his client.[844] Other mirroring motifs include Corydon buying gifts for Alexis. Whereas Naevolus seeks presents from his patron and only has sex with him

[840] Virgil, *Eclogues* 2.69.
[841] Jones (2007: 125).
[842] Jones (2007: 125).
[843] Juvenal, *Satires* 9.39 and 9.63.
[844] Jones (2007: 125-6).

for money.[845] These differences are so uniformly opposites that they become funny; as Naevolus may think himself Virgilian, but he is nowhere near. So, with that in mind, Juvenal's reference to Corydon is a deliberate meta-theatrical tool to influence the audience as they witness these dialogues, giving a satirical twist to both Virgil and himself and in turn reminding us, the reader, not to be too serious.

As a product of those more impressive complexities, Naevolus is a parody of Juvenal's mimicking behaviour. These lines help formulate the character of Naevolus further as a one-sided client. The theme of patron-client relationships has a strong presence in Juvenal's texts, such as Satire Five, but in typical fashion these lines help make both parties appear unfavourably.[846] These lines are the closest we get to the patron's perspective and yet they are lines seemingly created and performed by his opponent. Juvenal does go some way to elevate this one-sidedness with the line '*But what does he say in reply*?'.[847] The reality is that both characters are a figment of Juvenal's satire.

Another way we can see this dialogue between Juvenal and 'himself' comes with the undermining of the recognisable angry persona seen in Satire Six and used elsewhere in his works.[848] Juvenal appears to be advising himself to think before he leaps, for instance when spreading gossip, or the reminder that self-importance is unbecoming, but ultimately Naevolus does not listen; so nothing changes. This is further supported by the frequent inability to distinguish where one character stops talking and another starts. Returning to line 90, we see where Naevolus appears to pick up what Juvenal

[845] Jones (2007: 126).
[846] Braund (2004: 349).
[847] Juvenal, *Satires* 9.91.
[848] Jones (2007: 93).

is saying midline. The ambiguity of who is talking and which temperament is Juvenal's real persona only strengthens the theme of disguise and offers a camouflage to both Juvenal the author and Juvenal the persona(e).

On the other hand, Jones also says that Naevolus could be a more extreme version of other Roman voices like Umbricius in Satire Three, or Trebius in Satire Five.[849] As Courtney highlights, Naevolus' ranting is of a Roman who has fallen on hard times.[850] Therefore, this could become the voice of any Roman who finds themselves in similar circumstances. This could be the invented Umbricius and Trebius, so why not an invented version of Juvenal too? Furthermore, while Naevolus is named from the very beginning, it is important to point out that Juvenal's character is not identifiable to any title; this is the case in all of Juvenal's main speaker roles. Ironically, we identify Juvenal through his lack of self-identification.

Jones, on the other hand recognises the anonymity of the character and instead calls him the 'unnamed interlocutor'.[851] With this in mind, we not only see a mirroring of a Juvenal who often neglects to name his characters, but the lack of a name given to Juvenal makes him a self-made victim of his own art. Furthermore, by making Naevolus an echo of Juvenal's previous ranting styles, the author is also hinting that he too cannot be trusted as a satirical source. For audiences, they can ether enjoy this self-reflective joke, or fall victim to it.

[849] Jones (2007: 92).
[850] Courtney (1980: 425).
[851] Jones (2007: 92 and 125-6).

5.3.b: DEVELOPING HIS MASK

> Naevolus, I'd like to know why I so often run into you looking gloomy with an overcast scowl like the beaten Marsyas. What are you doing with a face like Ravola's when he was caught rubbing Rhodope's crotch with his wet beard? I can't imagine a more miserable face on Crepereius Pollio, who goes around offering triple the interest rate and cannot find anyone foolish enough to take him up. Where have all those wrinkles suddenly come from? It's a fact that you used to be happy with nothing much, playing the homebred knight, an elegant dinner guest with biting humour and forceful witticisms bred within the city limits. Now everything's the reverse. Your face is grim, your unoiled hair a bristling forest, your skin has completely lost that glossiness which you used to get from strips soaked with hot Bruttian pitch – instead, your legs are neglected and dirty with sprouting hair. Why this emaciation…?
>
> Juvenal, *Satires* 9.1-15

Continuing with the theme of costume, Juvenal also offers his audience more tangible examples of meta-theatre within the poem. Within the first fifteen lines, the audience are bombarded with descriptions of Naevolus' altered appearance, specifically his face.[852] Juvenal visualises it as if it were a tragic mask worn by an actor. Not only does he use the word 'tragic' to describe Naevolus' features in this instance, but Juvenal also refers to them as gloomy, grim, and wrinkled.[853] All play on themes of the expressive headgear. This is then strengthened by the added description of Naevolus' dry and wild hair in lines 12-13. This is hair that could easily be attached to a tragic mask.

Uden, on the other hand, points out that the description of Naevolus' appearance is rather reminiscent of the supposed sexual deviants in Satire Two. These deviants are

[852] Juvenal, *Satires* 9.1-13.
[853] Juvenal, *Satires* 9.6-12.

similar to the above-mentioned effeminate instructor in the Oxford Fragments of Satire Six. Therefore, when considering the self-reflective nature of this poem, the audience are then given the suspicion that Juvenal is not totally serious in his earlier attacks in either Satires Two, or Satire Six. The self-parody in Satire Nine is again prominent through this costume description. For instance, Uden states that this shift in appearance could be a representation of Naevolus' loss of wit.[854] This is supported by the insinuation that Naevolus was once a Horatian-like comic performer, 'You used to ask little of life, and would play the provincial squire, an amusing guest who would make remarks with a trenchant wit'.[855]

Then there is the fact that Naevolus fails to listen to Juvenal's advice, with his appearance accompanying following lines like 'Quote these cases to luckier souls'.[856]If we are to maintain the lens of self-parody, this could be Juvenal representing a shift in his own style of performance. His original satirical voice is getting stale and repetitive through old age, so he is trying something different; yet he still maintains his method of personae and self-disguise. Where there is some deviation from Juvenal's typical message of deceptive disguise is in lines 17-18.

> …We can detect the tortures of
> the soul as it lies deep in the sick body, and we can detect its
> delights, too. From there the face derives both moods. So you've
> apparently changed your life plan and you're going the way
> opposite to your past.
>
> Juvenal, *Satires* 9.17-20

[854] Uden (2014: 76-7).
[855] Juvenal, *Satires* 9.9-11; Uden (2014: 84).
[856] Juvenal, *Satires* 9.135. See also, Courtney (1980: 424-5).

Here Naevolus' outward appearance is said to reflect what is within. Is there a sudden shift from the previously strong correlation between costume and concealment? Or is this another trick? The audience are initially meant to trust this new version of Juvenal as the pragmatic voice and yet this trust is destabilised by his secrecy of speech.[857] This version of Juvenal does not ease Naevolus' mind; instead he promises the man's worst fears under the guise of advice. Furthermore, as Naevolus gains momentum in his speech, Juvenal's voice begins to diminish.[858] This is just another example of the satirist's mask slipping as he falls into old habits. So this suggestion that outward appearances can be honest is in fact a theme that cannot be maintained when the audience start to see another Juvenal underneath.

Alternatively, the above passage could also exist to emphasise the transformation of Naevolus' performance technique. Starting as a successful comedic actor or satirist, Naevolus transforms into a self-appointed tragic figure with his appropriate mask. His appearance therefore reflects his sombre mood. Naevolus' relationship with costume does not stop there either. Naevolus is similarly pre-occupied with the power of costume from the moment he first speaks: '*It is fate that rules humans – even the parts hidden under our clothes have their fate'*.[859] Once again we return to the hidden power of costume, but this is also tempered by the promise of fate and perhaps the inevitable unmasking of Juvenal the Satirist.

[857] Uden (2014: 78).
[858] Uden (2014: 77).
[859] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.27-31.

As Braund points out, Juvenal's ninth poem is unique because of its dialogue structure, with it also offering a final example of a patron/client theme.[860] From its opening lines it plays with these ideas of dialogue and costume and as the text progresses, we see a surprisingly sympathetic Juvenal offering advice to his friend. This relationship between Juvenal and Naevolus remains key to any play on personae and deceptive costume; this is particularly true of his satirist mask. Juvenal is helped by his constant mix of performing found in his earlier works, as well as being able to self-critique his own work in a mix of self-aware comedy that plays on his style of performance and themes of anti-performance.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

As a surprisingly dramatic satirist in a post-dramatic age, Juvenal not only provided this thesis with a handy transition from Greek to Roman meta-performance, but he also illustrates an important shift to more explicit exchanges between comic artists and their audiences. Part of this is his fixation with Roman and non-Roman motifs, which in turn feeds into his ambivalent relationship with the theatre. Juvenal also appears to ridicule his audience for their often elitist behaviour and as an extension of this, he reveals their contradictory behaviour towards the stage. Using a type of performance deemed acceptable to well-educated elites, Juvenal is in fact revealing how close his own art is to the stage. Personae has also played an important role within the exploration of this chapter, with Juvenal's character of the satirist often taking dramatic steps to include roles like presenter, addresser, actor and instructor/director for his own voice, as well as that of those who recited his work. Like the emperors who lap up imitations

[860] Braund (2004: 348-9).

of themselves, or even don the stage themselves, Juvenal's audience may be very aware of their own hypocrisy and enjoy the irony of Juvenal's words. Therefore, Juvenal uses performance to talk about performance.

Juvenal also uses ideas of obscenity and sexual proclivity in both Satires Six and nine, which are often attributed to Roman theatre by those who would belittle it. Part of that is to address the recurring message that Juvenal appears to champion, which is everyone should perform their own roles properly, but it also suggests that when figures like Messalina are involved, that snobbery of the stage is pointless; it is so entwined with Roman society and even its authority.

As the longer of the two texts, Satire Six understandably took a precedent in my overall analysis. Part of this was because of the constantly shifting directions in audience interaction, which hold more significance when we reflect on what we know about satire being performed. Then there is the moral focus of this text that is ultimately depicted with ideas of costume as deceptive performance. This is especially the case because Postumus is another example of a fictitious audience, which we have come across in previous chapters; after all he does not enjoy the comedic layer to this satire, he is merely an addressee and a victim of this comic deception and scorn.[861] In the case of Satire Nine, it feels more like Juvenal is playing with his audience, waiting to see if they will see through his disguises and performance through dialogue and performs both as the speaker and Naevolus, the often interpreted 'earlier' version of his satirical voice.

[861] Juvenal, *Satires* 6. 25-37 and 377.

Therefore, Satire Nine similarly manipulates ideas of costume and deception, but only to create a conversation between Juvenal and his old satirical self.

As I have suggested in this chapter's introduction, Juvenal has been the final step in bridging my ancient examples of self-referential comedy mixed with performance trickery, to what will now be my final consideration; this being contemporary comedic performance. I still believe this to be the case as Juvenal anticipates the modern ranting styles of comedians like those found in the British Alternative comedy scene. Furthermore, this whole thesis so far illustrates a pathway of consensual trickery from Homer's *Iliad* to this distinctly dramatic and literary satirist. With that in mind, my next chapter will be case studies of the alternative comedian Stewart Lee. I will explore in particular his transcripts of three stand-up routines, as well as his role in creating the famous *Jerry Springer: the Opera*; all of which will show how this pathway has reached us as a contemporary comic audience and how it informs our relationship with satire and the laughter it creates.

CHAPTER SIX

[THESE TRICKY DYNAMICS OF LAUGHTER: STEWART LEE'S ALTERNATIVE COMEDY]

> Audiences, in my experience, are like cats. They don't respect you if you seem too desperate for their affection, but disguise your desperate need for their love as a kind of bored indifference, and soon they will be eating out of your hand.
>
> Lee (2010: 73)

The above quote is taken from a footnote in Stewart Lee's publication *How I Escaped My Certain Fate: The Life and Deaths of a Stand-Up Comedian* (2010). It succinctly reveals how a contemporary alternative comedian like Stewart Lee can echo the already discussed ancient themes of self-aware comedy that is still distinctly deceptive in tone. It is therefore the objective of this chapter to make the final leap and use Lee as a focus that demonstrates an inheritance of these laughter dynamics, all the way from the Homeric texts to our own contemporary stand-up comedy.

As is clear from the above extract, deception is at the centre of Lee's performance style.[862] This is coupled with a heavy reliance on an 'active' audience throughout. As I will come to demonstrate, Stewart Lee is dependent on an audience that are essentially 'his', which extends to his literature, with fans who are familiar with his

[862] Double also calls such stand-up comedy a 'confidence trick' (1997: 132).

comedy and its many intricacies. The audience know there is a deceptive performance at work, but on the whole they are on board with it. So, when Stewart Lee engages with his audience via a layered performance like this indifferent façade, he does so with a surprising level of transparency. Using Stewart Lee as a focus moving forward, I will incorporate two very different case studies from his career. The first and more prominent of the two will be his 2010 book (see FIGURE 13) and its associated stand-up performances (see FIGURES 14-16). The second will be the critically acclaimed and also controversial piece of musical theatre called *Jerry Springer: the Opera* (2005)(see FIGURE 17).

My primary case study of this chapter, Stewart Lee's publication *How I Escaped My Certain Fate: The Life and Deaths of a Stand Up Comedian,* comprises of three transcripts of his stand-up shows titled *Stand-Up Comedian* (2005), *90s Comedian* (2006), and *41st Best Stand-Up Ever* (2008).[863] As we can see from the below images, these stand-up shows were already self-contained commercial products at the point when this text was published. Therefore, what makes this a particularly compelling study for this chapter is that this is a companion to pre-existing live shows, as well as the additional content of footnotes and bridging chapters that offer their own makeshift autobiographical performance.[864]

[863] This is published two years after the last of these three performances. See Stewart Lee's website (2023) for information on recordings of his performances (including the three explored in this chapter).
[864] The intermediary chapters between each transcript demonstrate the years between performances, as well as his thought process in developing his persona. To see a similar set-up to this, see his later publication *Content Provider* (2016).

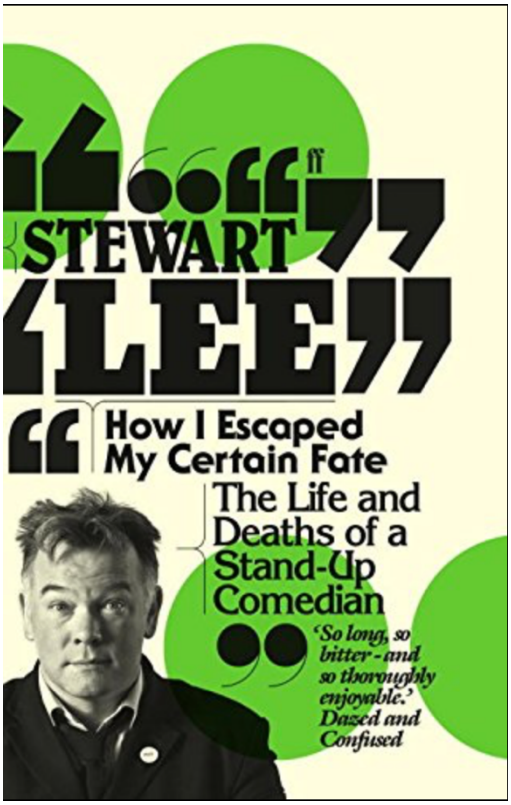

FIGURE 13. SHOWS FRONT COVER: HOW I ESCAPED MY CERTAIN FATE: THE LIFE AND DEATHS OF A STAND-UP COMEDIAN (2010).

FIGURE 14. DVD COVER, STAND-UP COMEDIAN (2005).

FIGURE 15. DVD COVER, 90S COMEDIAN (2006)

FIGURE 16. DVD COVER, 41ST BEST STAND UP EVER (2008).

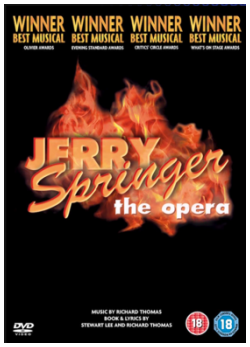

FIGURE 17. DVD COVER, JERRY SPRINGER: THE OPERA (2005)

My second case study, is the co-created production between Stewart Lee and Richard Thomas in 2003. Titled *Jerry Springer: the Opera*, it centres around a characterisation of the well-known American talk show host of the same name, but as he mediates his own conscience and that of dramatic audiences represented like a Greek chorus.[865] The first half is a parody of a typical talk show format, with various 'guests' exploited for entertainment, while the second act offers a response to the earlier themes with biblical figures that are reimagined via this same reality television format.

[865] Within this chapter, any extract or reference to scenes from *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, is taken exclusively from a BBC2 recording (2005); this is from its West End run.

Both of these studies will offer insights into possible ancient influences on Stewart Lee's comedic style, with particular emphasis on those I have explored in previous chapters. Some of these may be obvious, like Juvenal's similar creative decision to perform satire that is dramatic in tone, but ultimately published as a set of literary works. There is also Lee's Aristophanic parody of high culture concepts like tragedy and seemingly self-aware theatrical devices that blur the boundaries between the stage and the audience. Then there are the more subtle influences, like Lee's amplified version of himself as a comedic mask, which not only echoes Juvenal's choices in a satirical mask but also shows comic and performative trends akin to Hera's pre-dramatic persona in Chapter Two.

It will also be important to recognise how these dynamics of laughter extend well beyond classical influences and without going into a rabbit hole of self-referential comedy offered beyond the anti-dramatic and literary space of Roman satire. It will be enough to say that the subject could take on many directions and my most prominent comparison will be Bertolt Brecht's anti-dramatic 'Verfremdungseffekt'.[866] This is a concept that has influenced many avant-garde dramatic movements, including alternative comedy and will undoubtedly be touched upon where appropriate. What is more, Lee's text is very vocal about other performers who have influenced his career to date, like his comedic idol Ted Chippington, his long-term friend Simon Munnery and the stage-abandoning singer Julian Cope.[867] It would be too simplistic to say that these all fit into ancient or even Brechtian-shaped boxes. Still, we can recognise useful

[866] For more on Brecht's 'Verfremdungseffekt', see Silberman, Giles and Kuhn (2018: 5-8).
867 Lee (2010): on Ted Chippington (1, 9-10, 34, 80, 151, 154, 235, 244 & 310), Simon Munnery (13, 15-17, 18, 22, 26, 34, 46, 57-8, 72, 140, 157, 159, 170, 200, 224-5, 229-30, 232, 268, 278-9 & 282) and Julian Cope (lee 2010: 152-3).

comparisons in seemingly ancient anti-theatrical themes, which vastly pre-date the Brechtian Marxist response of 'epic-theatre'.[868]

Within my primary review, I will consider what other scholars have said about comparing ancient and modern satire, the obstacles in attempting such a task and the themes like offense and free speech that are reflected in both. Following this, I will review what it means for Stewart Lee to call himself an alternative comedian today. This will incorporate the problems we face in trying to define this comedic movement, as well as where Stewart Lee fits within its wider history and ethos. I will then finish with consideration of what a stand-up audience is and their perceived roles in consensual trickery and the driving consensus that determines a comic's success. Following from this, I will be able to branch out into my specific case studies, as I revisit the three key themes of 'Satirical Personae', 'Accountability of Parody' and 'Audience Interaction'.

Starting with Stewart Lee's 'Satirical Persona', I will consider how he presents and subsequently developed this over the course of his publication, through the blend of live performance transcripts and its additional autobiographical content. I will start by reflecting on his 'Alternative Comedian' mask and in doing so, I will show how Lee wishes to be seen on stage as an embodiment of this particular comedic movement. In particular, I will demonstrate how Lee compares himself to his own 'Alternative Comedy' champion 'Ted Chippington' and in what way he justifies his mask despite

[868] Thumiger (2009: 31).

his elite educational background.[869] I will then look at how Lee uses a version of 'himself' on stage, but as a fabrication for his comic performance style. I will show how he develops this persona over time, to become distinctly angrier as a direct response to his commercial success and feelings after *Jerry Springer: The Opera*. Finally, this section will also review how Lee presents moments of 'perceived dialogue' while maintaining this overarching persona and ambiguity of motive that this inevitably presents to an audience.

The next stage of my analysis will be to look at Stewart Lee's relationship with religious parody and offense, while questioning the effects of 'Accountability' within his works. This will be the main opportunity to explore *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, as I look at comparisons to Aristophanes' use of religious figures in *Frogs*. I will also revisit themes of offence and risk to the comic artist, specifically, on the consequences that *Jerry Springer: The Opera* had for Stewart Lee's later stand-up comedy set *90s Comedian*. I explore preconceived ideas of the stage as a 'safe space' for comedy, where Lee uses a literal chalk circle to shield himself from would be critics.

I will then finish with the theme of 'Audience Interaction', as I consider how Lee continues to deconstruct the stage and the boundaries that separate him from 'his' audience. In particular, I will consider his use of movement to create moments of apparent dialogue in *Stand Up Comedian* (2005), as well as direct interaction with audiences, like his abandonment of the stage in *90s Comedian* (2006) and *41st Best*

[869] Lee on Ted Chippington (2010: 9).

Stand-Up Ever (2007).[870] Furthermore, like Juvenal, Lee toys with notions of mockery and target.[871] As such, I will also explore his method of splitting his audiences, as he sometimes does to wrong-foot them, but also remembering that Lee needs his audience to succeed.[872] Thus, this emphasises the continued dynamic in laughter that blurs where the authority between audience and comic lies. I will emphasise Sophie Quirk's point that stand-up is also a didactic process between performer and spectator, resulting in a shared comedic experience.[873]

6.1: THE INFLUENCE WITHIN STAND-UP COMEDY

Unlike my previous chapters, I have the benefit of studying a much more varied portfolio of comic performance that we, as twenty-first century spectators, benefit from first-hand. Stewart Lee's stand-up sets, written transcripts, articles, recordings and even the DVD of *Jerry Springer: The Opera,* with its various special features and archive footage, clearly show that we are in a vastly different position to the limited and often speculative nature of analysing ancient performative texts. On the other hand, I face new challenges with this much larger and varied portfolio of work. For instance, how can I compare ancient satire to a contemporary 'Alternative Comedian' like Stewart Lee? Also, what does alternative comedian actually mean? Then finally, how do spectators of Lee's satire function as a stand-up comedy audience? I will offer some context to the above questions, so that we may dive into my particular case studies with enough background knowledge to make meaningful comparisons to my ancient

[870] See Lee, *90s Comedian* (00:58:25-01:01:03) and *41st Best Stand-Up Ever* (00:46:40-51:23).
[871] Rosen (2007: 217).
[872] Lee (2010: 4 & 266).
[873] Quirk (2015: 13).

counterparts, as well as address these dynamics of laughter within its uniquely contemporary setting.

6.1.a: COMPARISONS TO ANCIENT SATIRE

> Satirists form alliances with their audiences or rouse hostilities in them as unpredictably today as they did in antiquity, and even literary scholars, for all their analytical powers, often cannot quite extricate themselves from the snares that satirical genres lay out. This is, of course, a triumph for the satirist, but something of a dilemma for the scholar.
>
> Rosen (2007: x)

Rosen's analyses is useful to this chapter, not only because they offer an examination into the '*relatively circumscribed* phenomenon' that is satire, but they also explore themes of mockery and abuse in ancient satire, as well as in its modern counterparts.[874] The above quote in particular, taken from Rosen's (2007) publication *Making Mockery: The Poetics of Ancient Satire*, gives some indication of its comparative potential for this chapter, but also the difficultly is that we inevitably face in trying to dissect a clear analysis of any satirist, not to mention examples so far removed from each other culturally and historically.[875] Similarly, his article on *Efficacy and Meaning in Ancient and Modern Political Satire* (2012), opens with a warning on similar issues of satirical transparency. Within this, he states that while satire appears to be a direct and straightforward literary or performative art form, it is in fact far more elusive.[876] In his later publication, Rosen goes on to illustrate a cross-comparative link between ancient figures like Aristophanes and the American stand-up comedians

[874] Rosen (2007: xi).
[875] Although, Rosen may consider this thesis as typical of falling into the trap of analysing one satirical author at a time. This is inevitable with such a wide reaching time frame, but it at least does not restrict itself to one genre of satire, a trap that Rosen also seems troubled by (Rosen 2017: xi).
[876] Rosen (2012: 1-2).

Lenny Bruce and Jon Stewart.[877] The premise of his comparisons is that there are always paradoxes to be observed in satire, no matter when it was written. For instance, this could be the idea that satirists speak 'from the heart' and are reacting against something that makes them angry, only to shift with their comedic efforts, where any message may be circumvented for the sake of laughs.[878]

Jones (2007) argues that even trying to compare ancient satirists with each other is problematic. He highlights that there are always differences of tone, content, organisation and proposed purpose.[879] What is more, he argues that 'satire is not a permanent transcendental reality. The individual satirist is also part of his own time, his own social and literary context'.[880] For instance, there is clearly a different relationship taking place between each satirist and their audience, though their use of anti-theatrical and self-aware motifs. Aristophanes, Juvenal and Stewart Lee all appear to reject conventional theatrical practice in their own way, but there is still a difference in their perceived authority in doing so. In classical Athens, theatre was more favoured then in Juvenal's Rome. Aristophanes' parabasis appears to be talking down to an audience in a way that does not match Juvenal's, who in turn is constantly undermining theatre from an elite citizen perspective. Granted there is self-deprecation at play with Juvenal's apparent dramatic hypocrisy, but he is still playing on social conventions of anti-theatre. Therefore, how realistic is it to compare already vastly different satirical experiences to a stand-up comedian like Stewart Lee? This is a

[877] Lenny Bruce was a comedian and satirist of the mid twentieth century, see Rosen (2007: 18-22). Jon Stewart is an American comedian and was the long term presenter of the *Daily Show*, see Rosen (2007: 2-3 and 22-25). See also Beavers (2011).
[878] Rosen (2012: 1-2 & 25).
[879] Jones (2007: 145).
[880] Jones (2007:145).

performer who is typically expected to repeat their material to audiences in far more varied circumstances.[881] With this in mind, I need to consider the implications of a term like stand-up comedy and any potential anachronisms, when comparing this particular comic practice to its most obvious ancient comparison that is Juvenal.

> The OED defines the stand-up comic as 'a comedian whose act consists of standing before an audience and telling a succession of jokes'. This description more or less fits the work of acts like Lenny Bruce, Richard Pryor, Billy Connolly, Ross Noble, Stewart Lee and Josie Long, but doesn't even touch on the extra things they do that make them so extraordinary.
>
> Double (2014: 19)

Oliver Double, succinctly grapples with the term stand-up in his 2014 publication *Getting the Joke: The Inner Workings of Stand-Up Comedy* and again in his article *The origin of the term 'stand-up comedy'* (2014).[882] Like with many issues of terminology found within this thesis, Double states that any single definition causes restrictions. This is partly down to it being such a variable practice, but he does offer three useful classifications. The first is 'Personality'. This is when a person is on display in front of an audience, whether they are an exaggerated comic character or a version of the performer's own self. Second is 'Direct Communication'. This involves the direct communication between performer and audience. It is an intense relationship, with energy flowing back and forth between stage and auditorium and it is like a conversation made up of jokes, laughter and sometimes less pleasant responses.[883] The third is the 'Present Tense', which acknowledges the performance situation of

[881] This may include television series like *Stewart Lee's Comedy Vehicle Roadshow* (2009-2016), scratch gigs (testing new material), tours and DVDs/streaming services.
[882] Double (2014:17-20). This was first published in 2005.
[883] This directness is also emphasised by comedians like Josie Long and Stewart Lee in Quirk's 2015 publication *Why Stand-Up Matters: How Comedians Manipulate and Influence* (Quirk 2015: 3-4).

happening in the here and now. The stand-up comedian is duty-bound to incorporate events in the venue into the act. Failure to respond to a heckler, a dropped glass or the ringing of a mobile phone is a sign of weakness which will result in the audience losing faith in the performer's ability.[884]

Double's above definitions also clearly fit a conventional stand-up comedian like Stewart Lee. Lee is conventional in the sense that he is a comedian standing in front of an audience with a microphone stand. [885] Double also states that if his definitions of stand-up comedy are any good, then the art form has been around a lot longer than the term itself and yet when he offers examples like 'Commedia dell' Arte' and 'Shakespearean clowns', he does not, however, stretch as far back as ancient Greece or Rome when saying this.[886] So, while it may be a bit of a stretch to call a figure like Juvenal a stand-up comedian, It helps to acknowledge how stand-up comedy as a practice may have taken inspiration from this much earlier style of satirical comedy.

Having dealt with definitions, the next question is that of a satirist's 'safe space'. In other words, this is a space in which they are free to criticise and, by extension, offend. As we have seen with the role of the parabasis in Old Comedy, or the very Roman principles of speaking freely, this idea of a safe space also comes from the notion of

[884]Double (2014: 19-20). On the face of it, not all of these definitions work for an ancient satirist like Juvenal. That does not, however, mean comparisons between this ancient figure and stand-up have not been made before; for example, the actor Simon Callow performed a one-man show called 'Juvenalia', with the tag line 'Standup Comedy as Last Delivered in Rome AD 100'. Callow performed Peter Green's 1963 translation of the Juvenal's *Satires*, He first performed this at the Bush Theatre (London) 1967 and a revival at St James (London) 2014. See *The Guardian* article about 'Juvenalia', written by Callow (2014).

[885] Double also acknowledges that stand-up comedy lends itself to blurring lines with other styles of performance such as spoken word, sketch performance and even acting. See Double (2014: 66, 77-82).

[886] Double (2014: 20).

free speech and citizenship.[887] Like many of their contemporaries, Juvenal and Aristophanes were enacting their respective Roman and Athenian citizen rights, which afforded them some protection and even an expectation to be provocative. Likewise, Stewart Lee, as a stand-up comedian, projects these same notions of free speech; a quality that Quirk (2015) emphasises as vital to the social negotiations of joking and that this abstract safe space allows the comedian to 'operate outside of the restrictions which govern most regular interaction'.[888]

Rosen (2007) questions this notion of a 'safe space' and whether this can really exist if persona and author are always interlinked.[889] The ambiguity of who is speaking helps, but there is clearly a limit to what a satirist can get away with. After all, Sommerstein reminds us that Aristophanes was supposedly prosecuted by Cleon for two of his plays.[890] Similarly Rimell, who observes that Juvenal did not attack any Roman that he thought could bite back.[891] Likewise, Stewart Lee famously received a backlash for his involvement of *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, which saw him and his colleague Richard Thomas threatened with prosecution under blasphemy laws by the religious lobby group known as 'Christian Voice'.[892] This legal protection does not extend to moral outrage and Stewart Lee's encounter with Christian Voice and the media frenzy that followed appeared to threaten this notion of safe space. It is perhaps this conflict of free speech and conformity which sees our first major parallel with notions of satire and free speech with ancient figures like Aristophanes and Juvenal.

[887] See Graf (2005).
[888] Quirk (2015: 36).
[889] Rosen (2007: 221-2).
[890] Sommerstein (1980: 2); Rosen (2012: 8).
[891] Rimell (2005: 81).
[892] Taken from Stewart Lee's website (2023).

In effect, this comes back to the idea that ancient and modern satirists speak the truth, or at the very least they want the audience to think that they do.

We must not forget the post-classical influences on alternative comedy, in particular the Brechtian metatheatrical style of 'epic theatre'. Cannon (2012) recognises Brecht's theatre for its Marxist roots, but also that audiences remain key to its dynamics. In his comprehensive history of opera, Cannon also stipulates that the radical narratives of Brecht worked on two main principles. The first is that the audience are enabled to read actions and decisions for their man-made nature, not as simply something inevitable or natural. The second is that each part of an action, as well as its staging, reinforces this by 'declaring its own mechanism'.[893] This is more in keeping with the modern interpretations of metatheatre, which pre-date explorations into such phenomena in ancient comedy.[894] This is, in effect, also different to classical drama like tragedy, as Brecht emphasises that illusion of reality does not offer anything long-term to an audience. Brecht also explains that imitation of life is all it can be and the audience know as such, which is why it is not enough.[895] This question of performance and anti-performance will come up at various points within this chapter, as it has done throughout this thesis, but it is enough to say at this point that scholars like Double (2014) and Quirk (2015) emphasise the significance of Brechtian inspirations, in what was to be a new style of stand-up performance that saw ex-Brechtian actors take the reins.

[893] Cannon (2012: 357).
[894] See thesis introduction, section 1.4.
[895] Brecht (1948: 38).

6.1.b: STEWART LEE: THE ALTERNATIVE COMEDIAN

It has become increasingly difficult to define what an 'Alternative Comedian' is by today's standards, mostly because 'Alternative Comedy' has come to mean different things to different people. Part of this comes from the fact that it was an organic phenomenon that started in the late 1970s, with many of its practitioners still alive and with very personal memories of this time.[896] Despite these difficulties, there are some recognisable themes around the Alternative Comedy movement that can be generally agreed upon. So, what is alternative about 'Alternative Comedy'?

Hunt (2013) and Lee (2010) establish that 'Alternative Comedy' is a sub-genre of stand-up performance that supposedly counters ideas of mainstream comedic entertainment.[897] During the inception of British 'Alternative Comedy' at around 1979, this would have been true.[898] For instance, before the 'Alternative Comedy' movement of the 1980s, British stand-up circuits usually took the form of either music hall and variety shows, or the 'University Comedians' of Oxford and Cambridge.[899] What is clear from the works of Double, Lee, Hunt, Quirk and Wilmut, Washbourne (2022) and Rosengard (1989), is that by 1979 'Alternative Comedy' appeared as a new response to the often racist, sexist, or elitist 'mainstream' comedians of its day.[900] Furthermore, with the creation of venues and events like Comedy Store and the Alternative Cabaret, there was now a place for likeminded audiences to congregate.[901] Not to mention the

[896] For instance, Double points out that the term is usually tangled with 'Alternative Cabaret', with the two often being treated interchangeably (2020: 5).
[897] Hunt (2013: 1) and Lee (2010: 3).
[898] Double (2020: 5). There is not a set date for the origin of 'Alternative Comedy', but see Double for speculation over who coined the phrase (2020: 4-7),
[899] Hunt (2013). See Hunt for references to Wilmut and his breakdown of the 'three waves of British Comedians' (Hunt 2013: 2).
[900] Wilmut and Rosengard (1989: xiii); Hunt (2013: 1-3); Lee (2010: 3-5); Quirk (2015: 7).
[901] Double (2014: 103-5); Quirk (2015: 7).

creation of Alternative Comedy television shows, which went on to offer a wider remit of this style of comedy to wider audiences. In particular, we see this with successful shows like *Saturday Live* and *The Young Ones*.[902]

Despite all this, Lee goes on to suggest a kind of hypocrisy in 'Alternative Comedy' at this time. For instance, he argues that sexist and racist jokes still existed, but shifted to political figures like Thatcher, or non-typical racial stereotypes. [903] Furthermore, he also questions the length of time in which 'Alternative Comedy' could actually be alternative. When Lee references the comedy clubs in particular, he states that 'It's a romantic exaggeration to claim that the Comedy Store had an ideological position. It did, for about a week in 1980, but it didn't when it started and obviously its policy today is defined by commercial imperatives alone'.[904] Double points out that Stewart Lee's point may be exaggerated for comedic effect, but there is still truth behind its claims, as a level of pretence to ideals clearly existed even within its prime and the idea of an alternative comedy to the status quo could not last.[905] What is more, the 'Alternative Comedy' scene had a catalyst effect on British stand-up as a whole, with its commercial success eventually leading the model of what stand-up would become moving forward.[906] As a result, Quirk argues that the term has become an issue of inaccuracy

[902] See Washbourne (2022), who has collected UK newspaper responses to alternative comedy at this time. They stipulate that the most common alternative comedians mentioned between 1981-1997 were Ben Elton and Rik Mayall; this was likely down to the success of these two respective television shows. Washbourne uses these findings to suggest that it was television that influenced the press most, as the live alternative comedy scene was rather small in comparison. In contract to Ben Elton and Rik Mayall, Lee is only mentioned seven times (Washbourne 2022: 167-8). It is worth noting that Lee was part of a television show called *Fist of Fun* (1995-6), see Lee's 'What is Stewart Lee: 1995' page on his website (2023). This does fall under Westbourne's time bracket, but it still came a decade after the formentioned shows and was not regarded as successful.
[903] Lee (2010: 5).
[904] Lee (2010: 3).
[905] Double (2014: 80)
[906] See Double (2020), who argues that while comedy clubs can come and go, many still prevalent today can be traced back to the 'Alternative Comedy' scene of the 1980's (2020: 192-3).

when used to describe comedy today, as its very description does not reflect the 'comic culture that has come to dominate the mainstream'.[907]

Then, what about Stewart Lee specifically and his place within this terminology? Starting his stand-up career towards the very end of the late 1980s, Lee knows the already complicated history of the 'Alternative Comedy' movement, as it is a large feature of the first nine pages of his publication. Yet, Lee still argues that the comedy community he joined 'still retained traces of its birth in opposition to both the political and the entertainment establishments of its day'.[908] At the same time, by his own admittance, Lee comes from a privileged education system and was a member of its 'Oxford Revue', a comedy club that rivals the 'Cambridge Footlights' and both have many famous alumni.[909] This makes Lee an example of an elitist comic background that the 'Alternative Comedy' movement supposedly reacted against. Lee even expresses his own confusion at this, with a comical retelling of meeting with the 'Alternative Comedian' Tony Allen, whose excitement in booking Lee came when he found out that the latter 'got a 2:1 in English from St Edmunds Hall'.[910]

Lee instead grapples with ways in which he can identify himself as alternative, as we will see in section 6.2, but it is clear that at the core of his argument is a moral ethos.

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[907] Quirk (2015: 7).
[908] Lee (2010: 5). Alongside his early stand-up, see Lee's early comedic duo act with Richard Herring (another perceived alternative comedian), which includes their radio/television shows: *Fist of Fun* (1993 and 1995) and *This Morning With Richard Not Judy* (1998-1999); see Lee's website pages 'What is Stewart Lee: 1993 – 9'(2023). As well as Herring's webpages 'History: 1990-1994' and 'History: 1995-1999' (2023).
[909] For background on *The Oxford Revue*, see their website (2011); also see *The Cambridge Footlights* website (2013).
[910] For more on this, see Lee (2010: 4). See also Wilmut and Rosengard (1989: xiv) and Hunt (2013: 2), who highlight that Lee was university educated, amongst other 'Alternative Comedy' figures like Rik Mayall and Ade Edmondson.

Furthermore, Cook, Hunt and Double each emphasise that many of the ethics and codes of practice made up in the original movement still play an important part of its distinction for specific comedians; for instance the idea of owning a joke. Prior to this, variety show comedy would often reuse jokes across platforms and individuals.[911] Furthermore, the grassroots style to the alternative comedians that followed, is also different to many well know comedians today, who employ joke writers.[912] Nevertheless, Lee does argue that since his return to stand-up comedy, he has witnessed new comedians who could be considered equally alternative.[913]

6.1.c: A STAND-UP AUDIENCE

When considering the role of audiences in stand-up comedy and in particular how they may affect the intended humour of someone like Stewart Lee and by extension his other comedic works, a key scholar for consideration will be Sophie Quirk. By emphasising the importance of mechanisms like the already mentioned 'safe spaces', as well as the self-referential crafted response and personae, Quirk's *Why Stand-Up Matters* (2015a) remains one of the most important resources for this thesis.

Quirk also demonstrates in her article 'Preaching to the Converted? How Political Comedy Matters' (2015) that we must not overlook the nature of political consensus amongst audiences and comic performers and that this phenomenon is far more complex then has previously been thought. Within this, she stipulates that it is not

[911] Double (1997: 140 & 260); Cook (1994: 6) and Hunt (2013: 4).
[912] Many comedians today, start out as joke writers, yet this is not entirely new. Lee, for instance, created material for *On The Hour* radio show in 1991, see Herring's webpage 'History: 1990-1994'(2023).
[913] Comedians like Josie Long; See Lee (2010: 35-36).

enough to ask the question 'if' political comedy is important, but rather 'how' it is.[914] To do this, she specifically looks at the comedians Mark Thomas and Stewart Lee, with their 'diverse strategies' in using audience consensus to develop political engagement.[915] Starting with Mark Thomas and his 2004 recording of 'The Night that War Broke Out', she stipulates that his audience are established quickly as 'unified' in his anti-war message. Interestingly, when expanding on this performance, she addresses a quote taken from an interview between Lee and Cook that challenges Thomas's political style of comedy.

> I said [to Thomas] ..."if you're doing political stuff, and you're concerned about it, as you are, there's not really that much point in doing most of the gigs you do, because all the people there agree with you anyway.
>
> Lee, interview with Cook (1994: 225)

Here, Quirk stipulates that Lee is pointing out a common criticism of political comedy, which is that audiences who chose to see it already agree with its apparent political and social messages. Lee goes on to suggest that it would be better to take such ideas to those who do not already agree and challenge them with these unfamiliar messages that they may not be comfortable with.[916] Yet, as Quirk points out, Lee is also perceived as a political comedian that has likewise been 'accused of preaching to the converted'.[917] This is explained further, as she stipulates that where Thomas makes a 'virtue out of preaching to the converted', Lee has instead 'developed a distinctive performance style that purposefully disrupts clear-cut interpretations and unanimity of

[914] Quirk (2015b: 243 & 245).
[915] Quirk (2015b: 243).
[916] Lee, in Cook (1994: 225); Quirk (201b5: 245).
[917] Quirk (2015b: 245).

audience response'.[918] We will see examples of this in section 6.4, as Stewart Lee will often separate his audiences into 'his' and 'other', as part of his performance motif of the angry satirist persona.

Double (2021) establishes that one of the reasons stand-up comedy is even more theatrical than conventional actors is because of the 'audience'; he states that stand-up never has a 'fourth wall', with audiences often offering content to a set on the night and making it a much more intimate exchange.[919] So, what about something as simple as laughter as an audience response? Returning to Quirk's observations about laughter from my thesis' introduction, she argues that laughter can be an expression of discord; this could be a means to express excellence over others, or as a disruptive response to unpleasant ideas and then there is the idea that it is a clash of ideas. What Quirk also reminds us is that irrespective of these different approaches, audience consensus is always important to its success.[920] Additionally, she points to scholars like Critchley (2022) and Douglas (1999), who consider laughter as 'merely' and 'simply' a form of consensus and therefore feeding into the idea that it is not politically important.[921] Quirk reject this, by stating that its power comes from consensus and is 'demonstrated through laughter'.[922]

> Stand-up comedy is like a conversation in which the audience makes a contribution that is as limited as it is vital. Normally, they stick to a very narrow set of responses (laughter, applause, heckling, etc.), but these are absolutely crucial to the comedian. The sounds the audience make are part of the rhythm of the act, providing the energy which fuels the performance.

[918] Quirk (2015b: 245).
[919] See Double's TED talk via YouTube, titled 'Why Stand-Up is More Theatrical Than Theatre' (2021, 00: 04: 34-50).
[920] Quirk (2015b: 245-49).
[921] Quirk (2015b: 247); Critchley (2022: 11); Douglas (1999:152).
[922] Quirk (2015b: 247).

> They are also an important indicator of success or failure. An appalled silence at the end of a joke gives a clear message.
>
> Double (2007:13)[923]

From this preliminary review, it is apparent that self-awareness plays an integral role for the alternative comedian, with themes of personae and audience interaction often being key to its ethos.[924] Although not the same, we may consider similarities with influences on Roman satirists like Juvenal, who were inevitably affected by the metatheatre found in old Greek comedy or indeed New Comedy and Roman comedians such as Plautus and Terence. In acknowledgment of these facts, my answer is to now look at the cross-cultural potential of this thesis' exploration of metatheatrical trickery, when applied to laughter as a means to inform or influence a potential audience.

6.2: STEWART LEE: THE SATIRIST PERSONA

From very early within Stewart Lee's text, the reader is introduced to a number of topics that are carefully crafted to mould his comedic persona and none more so than what it is to be an 'Alternative Comedian'. We see this as Lee's book opens with the line 'I never wanted to be a comedian', which is then countered within the same chapter's closing remarks 'perhaps I could be an Alternative Comedian, which, I gradually remembered, was what I had wanted to be in the first place'.[925] In effect, he sets up the persona of Stewart Lee, as he dons the mask of the 'Alternative Comedian'.

[923] Quote taken from Quirk (2015b: 248).
[924] Quirk (2015a: 127-9) and Allen (2002: 27-8).
[925] Lee (2010: 1 & 39). Juvenal, *Satires* 1.19-20; Freudenburg (2005: 15-16).

6.2.a: THE ALTERNATIVE COMEDIAN MASK

> And in October 1984, I saw Ted Chippington, the man who made me a stand-up, supporting The Fall, and everything changed … At the point tuned-in comedy consumers were beginning to process the new stand-up styles of Ben Elton and Alexei Sayle, Ted was already dismantling the form itself … Ted was stand-up in its purest form, belonging neither to the politically charged world of the new stand-ups nor the reactionary hinterlands of working class men's clubs. I was utterly transfixed … And I thought, 'That's what I want to do'.
>
> Lee (2010: 9)

It is apparent from the segment above that Ted Chippington is Stewart Lee's equivalent to Juvenal's use of Lucilius in Satire One.[926] Where the Roman uses an ideal image of his predecessor to elevate his own satirical career, Lee instead uses Chippington to link himself to what he calls the 'purest form of stand-up'.[927] Lee clearly admires Chippington even above some of the more successful names of 'Alternative Comedy'. For instance, in a *Guardian* article in 2007, Lee refers to the comic as the 'first post-alternative comedian'. This is also where Lee states that as a non-London based comedian in the 1980s, access to Alternative Comedy was still limited. He references in particular a monotonous and repetitive joke said by Chippington, which Lee witnessed at a small Birmingham venue in 1984.[928] In doing so, Lee stablishes that 'just as Britain was processing the new stand-up styles of Ben Elton and Alexei Sayle, Ted was already dismantling the form itself'.[929] In a sense, Lee reflects on Chippington

[926] See Jones (2007: 145-6).
[927] Lee (2010: 9).
[928] Lee refers to a particular joke by Ted Chippington, which starts with the line 'I was walking down this road the other day' (Lee: 2007). *I was Walking Down the Road* (2007) is also the name of an audio boxset of Ted Chippington's work and is executively produced by Lee. See also *The Independent* article titled 'Comedian Who Vanished' (2007).
[929] See Lee (2007); also Lee's Interview with Aroesti (2016) on Chippington's 'funniest joke'; for more on Ted Chippington, see the audio CD *Walking Down the Road: A History of Ted Chippington* (2007), of which Lee is executive producer.

as the ideal alternative comedian, as he embraces the term in its literal sense, even it means being alternative to the then London centric 'Alternative Comedy'.

> And I realised, somewhere within my dead and defeated hulk, I had an ego. For better or worse, I did not want to be Ted Chippington, a fondly remembered and influential cult back to doing a day job. And I did not want to be a footnote in stand-up either…I wanted to get what I did as a stand-up back in the public eye, even if only on a low level, before whatever had been unique about me became submitted into the general mass of comedy.
>
> Lee (2010: 35)

On the other hand, as we can see above, Lee's 2010 publication also rejects a full embodiment of Chippington, due to Lee's own desire to be a successful 'working' comedian.[930] This in turn leads to a major difference between my ancient and modern parallels. Unlike Lucilius' satirical infamy that Juvenal utilises, Chippington is an obscurity for even Lee's own audience. Instead, we rely on Lee to tell us who Chippington was, therefore setting up his image entirely. Yet, like Juvenal, Lee advances himself beyond his comic hero via his own achievements. It is subtle, perhaps to some extent unintentional in the case of Lee, but the effect is the same.

The above extract shows a real shift in Lee's attitude, after all Lee's whole publication may be dedicated to Ted Chippington, but his predecessor is by Lee's own admission reduced to a footnote in his work. It also raises questions about the possible objectives in his initial comparisons. For instance, is Lee reducing Chippington to the very thing he wishes to avoid? This being a comedian who could not make a career of their comedy. Or is this an example of self-degradation over his own successes? On

[930] Lee (2010: 35).

balance, an ideal Alternative Comedian does not put their career above their socio-political ethos, which Lee appears to grapple with when discussing his own desires to make a living from his comedy, as well as his own claims at being an 'Alternative Comedian'.

> What is undeniable is that going to Oxford gave me a degree of confidence, and some organisational skills when it came to writing. But then, I would deny any outright privilege, wouldn't I? I'm a special case. My excuse is that I'm from a single-parent family, got a full grant, and went to an independent boys' school on a part-scholarship and charity bung, so I ain't the same as all them Oxford toffs. Nobody likes to think their own success is anything but hard won and deserved. I expect even David Cameron and George Osborne maintain, privately, that they're not like those other Oxbridge-educated fuckers, and think they have somehow achieved their position as puce-faced masters of the known universe on merit alone.
>
> Lee (2010: 11-12)

Also taken from early within Lee's 2010 publication, this extract takes an opportunity to offer an authorial voice on Lee's greater comedic skill, by once again satirising himself as an 'Alternative Comedian'. We return to a theme that surrounds the genesis of the British 'Alternative Comedy' movement, with Lee admitting that he is part of the top-down career culture that it supposedly rejected. Although this time, we see a version of Lee's persona trying to convince himself, as much as his audience, that he still belongs to this movement.

His choice of language is a conscious tool within this, particularly with the line 'I ain't the same as all them Oxford toffs'. Here, Lee chooses to use colloquial speech as a means to sperate himself from any preconceived Oxford elitism, while at the same time being self-deprecating because he is in fact an English graduate. Lee also specifically mentions studying Anglo-Saxon poetry, which he claims he was particularly bad at, as

well as emphasising his lack of knowledge in Latin, a typical skill found in Oxford candidates.[931] While half-heartedly trying to justify himself with these apparent self-deprecations, Lee is also unashamed by his academic skills when showcasing a mixture of grammar and scholarly tools throughout his text. From a blend of extensive footnotes throughout his publication, to something as simple as the Oxford comma, he equivocally makes a comedic persona out of a desire to be an intellectual comedian.

This is one that is also systematic with his 'Alternative Comedy' persona when he makes it about social mobility; a task he emphasises with reference to his full scholarship to St Edmund Hall College.[932] This is only strengthened by his return to the political message of this extract, as he separates himself further away from preconceived ideas of elitism with the phrase 'Oxford toffs' and by comparing himself to politically polarising figures like David Cameron and George Osborne. He is emphasising this political message by directing his audience to what he considers the real problem; two figures who are widely regarded as privileged men that are fundamentally opposed to the political and social circumstances of Lee and 'his' audience. So, although it may seem paradoxical for Lee to parade his Oxford background and university skills to his advantage, he is also emphasising that he is an 'Alternative Comedian'; in principle at the very least.

[931] See Lee (2010:11-12); also Lee's Independent article (05/09/2004), which references his degree choices. Likewise, if we look at his show Stand-Up comedian (2005), he references the ancient Greeks for their philosophy (00:42:00). This is designed to show his audience that he is educated and knows what he is talking about.
[932] Lee also refers to this this scholarship in an article called 'Students' from the *Independent* (05/19/2004).

6.2.b: PERFORMING HIMSELF

> "In stand-up comedy there is an inherent ambiguity about who that person is that you see on stage. It's different with acting isn't it, because you know there is a difference between actor and character… but in Stand-Up it's persona, it's sort of an exaggerated version of the real person, or something like that."
>
> Double (2021, 00:05:47-06:10)[933]

As I have already highlighted in my previous chapter, Uden (2014) stated that Juvenal had no one over-arching persona. This thesis has in turn counterargued this with the idea that Juvenal's persona developed and reflected the satirist's career over time. This is a pattern that I will argue is present within Lee's three performances and further supported by Lee's own written reflections, when describing his experience in creating those performances. Nevertheless, it is also true that the satirist in this instance should not to be confused with the author.[934] Stewart Lee is no different in his interpretations of his own comic persona, as he even uses terminology like 'character' and 'narrator' when talking about his on-stage self.[935] This is in many respects similar to the majority of stand-up comedians today who, like Lee and Juvenal, create a slippery character that only appears to reflect what Quirk calls the off-stage personality.[936]

It is important to point out that many comedians range considerably in their style of persona, which is why Double has also created a spectrum that ranges from the 'naked self', to the 'character comedian'.[937] While these breakdowns are specifically designed for stand-up comedy, I would argue that both Stewart Lee and Juvenal fall under the

[933] Taken from Double's TED talk via YouTube, titled 'Why Stand-Up is More Theatrical Than Theatre' (2021).
[934] Uden (2014:52).
[935] Lee (2010: 210 & 208).
[936] Quirk (2015a: 132-3).
[937] Double (2014:124-130); see also Quirk (2015: 132-133).

same category of 'exaggerated personae', which Double describes as leaving 'the dividing line between performer and persona unclear…For the audience, it's easy to mistake the persona for the person'.[938] Like Juvenal's satirical self, Stewart Lee also teeters on the edge of performing as 'himself'. The ambiguity of Lee's mask is powerful, with even a perceptive audience engaging with a sense of suspended disbelief. Those who utterly fall for the mask become an extension of Lee's joke. Lee puts this in another way by saying that 'the personal is absent from my work. The me you see onstage is a construct, based on me at my worst, my most annoying, my most petty, my most patronising'.[939]

On the other hand, Stewart Lee's satirical persona does not have to be completely separate from the man for it to have its own distinguishable presence. The 'Alternative Comedian' Tony Allen states that persona can be a version of the performer's real self and any comedian can display numerous versions of that self on stage.[940] This mirrors the idea of an enhanced personal persona discussed in Chapter Two, where *Iliad* book fourteen sees Hera playing a heightened version of herself as Zeus wife. For instance, this particular role is only one attribute of her character, but her other roles are at times used to further enhance her trick. For instance, her role as queen of heaven is used to enhance her performance to Hypnos and Aphrodite, or when the author chooses to remind the audience that she is the cunning daughter of Cronos.[941] With that in mind, it is worth addressing how Stewart Lee can present himself to varying degrees across these three performances and within the text itself.

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[938] Double (2014: 126).
[939] Lee (2010: 249).
[940] Allen (*Attitude,* at Alternative Comedy Now Conference: 2019).
[941] See Chapter one (page 15).

Lee's angry and often defeatist attitude also makes up much of his latter show *41st Best Stand-Up Ever*. Yet, unlike *90s Comedian*, which predominantly consists of indignation and outrage over criticisms of *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, this later version of Lee's comedy is a mix of anger and melancholy about the direct his career has taken. Part of this appears as frustration at the BBC for cancelling a potential series, as well as constantly reminding his audience that he was named the '41st best stand-up comedian ever', despite having to work small gigs.[942] So, it becomes apparent that Lee relies on this angry persona as a recognisable feature of his comedy. Although, like Juvenal's evolution of the satirist mask, Stewart Lee's stage character evolves to meet the steppingstones of his career.

6.2.c: PERCEIVED DIALOGUE AND AMBIGUITY

Additional to this is the ambiguity of multiple voices amongst any one main persona. For instance, Chapter Five has argued for the case that Juvenal's satirist persona created a narrative structure that held the author's other dramatic voices together. Furthermore, Double emphasise that such actions are what make stand-up so theatrical.[943] We know that Lee is performing all of his roles every time, as the recordings of his transcripts illustrate this clearly and we also see that Lee is engaging in a distinctly dramatic discourse.

We can see a similar structure in Lee's stand-up comedy transcripts; he maintains his satirical self and simultaneously displays dialogue by mimicking his mother and even

[942] The cancelled BBC series is likened to a child having his dreams stamped on (00:43:50-00:45:00). Lee also mocks the Glasgow audience that he is performing to, complaining that he still has to accept small gigs like this. See section 6.4, as this is a piece of direct address to 'his' audience.
[943] Double (2021).

an exchange with Jesus.[944] Another great example of this can be found in his first show *Stand-Up Comedian*, when Stewart Lee sets up an exchange between a husband and wife, all under the rather morbid exposition of Princess Diana's death. This scene goes on for quite some time, but what his audience see is a self-propelled dialogue - similar to Juvenal's husband and wife scene in Satire Six.[945] Furthermore, as we will see with FIGURE 18, this skit also makes great use of the small stage to convey this contrived dialogue, as Stewart Lee has to keep shifting between lying down and standing up. The constant repetitive movement reveals the absurdity in one actor speaking these two roles.

> And I imagined a household somewhere on that awful autumn Sunday morning, where perhaps the wife had woken up first, and she'd watched the news and she went through to her still-sleeping husband, and she said…
>
> 'Please, Please wake u-…I need you to wake up and be with me now. There's been a t-… Some terrible news (…)'
>
> But you know, he's asleep…He's going…
>
> [lying down, as though half-awake]
>
> 'What? It's fucking…It's half past six on a Sunday morning. I am asleep. I know I'm speaking but I am asleep (…) So…Just…I know you're upset but just say what it is. What is it?'
>
> And She'd have gone…
>
> [stands up]
>
> 'Please, If you…If you love me, just this one time, just get up. And… Because it's an awful thing and I nee…I can't be alone (…) please. Get up.'
>
> [lying down]
>
> 'Look, I was out late last night. I've got, I've got work at seven…tomorrow. This is my…this is my one day for sleeping in. I don't want to get up until about half past eleven(...) And even then I'm not going to get dressed, I'm

[944] Lee (2010: 205, 210 & 220).
[945] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.219-23.

just going to be, like, in my pants and stuff. Just sitting around (…) just say what it is…you know…what is it?'

[stands up]

She'd have gone…
'Princess Diana, Lady Di…she…has been killed.'

[lying down]

And he'd have gone…
'No! [pounding fist on floor] Not the Queen of Hearts! The Rose of England…And Scotland, and Wales, and bits of Ireland, no! (…)
So presumably at that point, he'd have got up, got out of bed, tried to get a grip on his emotions and his feelings. Calm down his grief. And then he'd have said… 'I'd better go out and get a life-size inflatable model of E.T. You know, for the gates of her home'

Lee (2010: 104-5)[946]

FIGURE 18. SHOWS STEWART LEE LYING ON THE STAGE IN HUSBAND AND WIFE DIALOGUE, STAND-UP COMEDIAN (2005).

[946] Lee, *Stand-Up Comedian* (01:08:04-01:13:00).

This scene is clearly meant to play on the idea of public grief and the heightened way this it was applied to the princess's death at the time. The punchline to the scene is a reference back to an earlier joke, where Lee questions why he saw an inflatable E.T model as a tribute in pictures depicting mourners.[947] Lee is not denying it is a tragic event, as he implies time and again, but he is questioning the response to this tragedy. Furthermore, despite Lee involving two un-named characters into his set, this moment indirectly played on the persona of the satirist as well. We first see this when the husband says *'I am asleep. I know I'm speaking but I am asleep'* . Stewart Lee's satirist shines through the husband character, as he flips the audience back to reality with the implied joke that a sleeping man cannot speak. The dialogue is a little forced, as if the comedian is breaking through. So when the audience watch this scene, they are constantly reminded that they are watching Stewart Lee in an awkward position, while talking to himself.

Judy Carter calls it pattern '*mimicking*', whereas Tony Allen names it '*snapshot characterisation*' and finally there is Oliver Double's own coining of the term '*instant character*'.[948] Oliver states that this is a very common method of performance within stand-up, as it replicates the type of mimicry often performed by individuals engaging in a conversation.[949] For example a person may mimic someone who is the subject of this shared mockery. The person witnessing this mimicry is still the intended audience, but they are invested in the conversation and may chime in at any time. It is perhaps

[947] Lee (2010: 103); Lee, *Stand-Up Comedian* (01:07:13-01:07:50).
[948] Double (2014:393).
[949] Double (2014: 393-4).

for this reason that stand-up comedians have greater problems with hecklers then a conventional theatre experience.

As we have already highlighted, Sophie Quirk also describes the exchange between audience and stand-up as a conversation and even Bertolt Brecht had a theory of characterisation performance. This recognised a type of role-play as inspiration for his 'epic theatre' basic model.[950] It is also important to remember that these unifying satirical personae are always present, even when they project other voices into the comedic mix. The audience are not watching an actor play different roles, but rather they are watching this stage character playing these roles while maintaining an authoritative presence throughout. Brecht describes something similar when he acknowledges the commonality within such characterisation and the characters themselves are infected with the performer's attitude.[951]

Double says that 'this strongly suggests a stand-up routine' and he would be right.[952] The satirist's persona is like a comedy compère, who negotiates the whole structure of the performance and never lets the audience forget that he or she exists to steer the comedy for everyone involved. Brecht's observation is strikingly similar to my own, with the exception that we cannot know for certain any real attitudes of a performer like Stewart Lee, let along Juvenal or Aristophanes.[953] The satirical character may share the attitudes of the performer, but as we have already suggested, this is just a mask and so attitudes expressed are still an extension of the performance at hand. Moreover,

[950] Double (2014: 394).
[951] Double (2014: 394).
[952] Double (2014: 394).
[953] Rosen (2012: 14).

this theme of conversational comedy continues to hold significance, as we consider how the above observation of satirical personae appears in conjunction with their other performances and these moments of mimicked dialogue.

But what about the inevitable ambiguity of 'who' is actually performing? By presenting his persona as a version of himself and at the same time incorporating additional voices and performances into the mix, Lee is inevitably allowing an ambiguity of what it is they are communicating. As Gilmore (2018) emphasises, it becomes impossible to know the author's true motivations, as they blend seamlessly into their performance.[954] We see an example of this ambiguity in Stewart Lee's *90s Comedian* transcript, which sees Lee add a footnote to his opening section on the London terror attacks.[955] Here, Stewart Lee uses this footnote to argue with any reader that may be squeamish about his material, stating they should look at the world from a comedian's point of view.[956] This is an important moment within his text as he appears to be reminding his audience of the cultural role of a comedian, to deal with serious topics in a way that is both witty and thought provoking. Aristophanes appears to use this same approach within his parabasis to *Acharnians*, when he lectures his audience on the moral advantages of comedy, more specifically the merits of his own comedy.[957]

While Stewart Lee's footnote also deals with the prospect of serious topics, he undermines his own role by following it with '*yes, it's terrible, but imagine if your job*

[954] Gilmore (2018: 3).
[955] Lee (2010: 159-77).
[956] Lee (2010: 177).
[957] *Acharnians* 655-8.

was to try and see the funny side…'.[958] There is a sense of defeatism in Lee's joke, but this could all be an extension of a satirical persona. Lee's subsequent line is there for comedic effect and he plays up the image of a misunderstood and under-appreciated genius. This theory is further strengthened by Jones' theory that moral criticisms are only a small part of what an ancient satirist does.[959] This is an idea that is also suggested by Lee when writing about *90s Comedian*, as he states that 'whatever meanings might be laid on top of the show, I wanted to end it by reminding everyone that I was a stand-up comedian and this was a piece of stand-up comedy'.[960]

6.3: ACCOUNTABILITY. PARODY AND OFFENCE

> In short, the "persona theory" does little to resolve the perennial problem of satire, namely, its fundamental didactic and moral claims…For eventually an audience will want to know what the point of all the joking is. And if one responds that the point is simply to raise a laugh, an attentive listener might still want to know why the jokes were configured as they were, why, in fact, are some people and things singled out for mockery and blame, and others not?
>
> Rosen (2007: 222)

Above, we see why Rosen is weary of the persona centric approach to satirical figures. A satirist's motives are always questionable and we must question the extent to which a comic persona can complicate any transparency between a performer and their audience. In the same way that Roman audiences may have asked why Juvenal created an alter ego like Naevolus in Satire Nine, or if Aristophanes really did think his audience were '*traitors*' for their reception of his play *Clouds*, spectators of Lee will

[958] Lee (2010: 177).
[959] Jones (2007:145).
[960] Lee (2010: 13).

also ask questions about the motives behind his 'Alternative Comedy'.[961] This is particularly true of his comedy on religious extremism which not only dominated *90s Comedian*, but also various sections of his publication.[962] Furthermore, this section will offer its primary assessment on Lee's involvement in *Jerry Springer: The Opera*. The impact of its religious parody not only affected his later stand-up, but it also shares in the performance histories and the mythological themes of Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

6.3.a: RELIGIOUS PARODY

JERRY SPRINGER: THE OPERA

> Greek plays are now being staged in all types of theatre… However, all have in common that the theatre practitioners involved want to be regarded as "making it new," putting their stamp (or cutting their theatrical teeth) on plays that have long performance histories and on mythological themes that are lodged in the cultural memory. This means that comparisons can be made and metatheatrical elements abound. It also means that there is a tightrope to be negotiated between the concepts of revival and new work.
>
> Hardwick (2007: 359)

There are some initial observations to be made when comparing *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, with Old Comedy and specifically any Aristophanic play. First of all, we are not dealing with a new translation or adaptation of these classical texts, but rather an inheritance of their themes in narrative and theatrical methodology. In particular, I must refer back to how Old Comedy used highbrow tragic characters for the benefit of 'low' comedy. What this allows is an exploration into possible traditional motifs from the ancient stage, within the creation of this much newer satirical work. This observation will prove important for this chapter as we focus more on modern examples of

[961] *Wasps* 1015-59.
[962] See Rosen (2007: 217).

performance trickery and their shared similarities, while still offering its audience what Hardwick considers a theatre's need to offer something new.[963]

I will be constantly negotiating this 'tightrope' between what is recycled from these much older forms of theatre with what Lee is trying to project for his modern stage and audiences. For example, while we will come to see *Jerry Springer: The Opera* for its various Aristophanic tragicomic traits, it is still a parody of the much later dramatic genre of opera. Opera is generally seen as a high-brow genre of musical theatre, often following a tragic formula and is associated with its elite audiences. It is worth mentioning that Opera has its own complex history that at times has either embraced or rejected Greek theatre; this all depending on which branch of Opera is being addressing.[964] Like Aristophanes' parody of tragedy, something as 'low' as daytime television being mixed with opera, with its highbrow connotations, reveals them to be mutually exclusive. This is in many respects also very Juvenalian, as like the performative qualities highlighted in Satires Six and Nine, we also see hypocrisy of elite entertainers who look down on those who enjoy essentially the same kind of theatre.

Nevertheless, the most notable ancient comparison for this chapter will be with Aristophanes' *Frogs, s*tarting with each play's initial formula. Both plays have a protagonist who makes morally dubious choices in the pursuit of worthy entertainment and they have that character descend into the underworld as a result of that ambition.

[963] Hardwick (2007:359).
[964] Outside of classical influences, a similar motif and influence is surely Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*, see Worrall (2014).

Neither do the similarities end there, with the protagonists' aides Xanthias the slave and Steve Wilkos the security man, who follow their master's progress throughout the play and offer their own meta-theatrical asides to the audience. There is also use of multiple choruses throughout, like Aristophanes' *Frogs* and Eleusinian followers, or Lee and Thomas' television audience, nurses, demons and angels.[965]

FIGURE 19. SHOWS CHORUS OF AUDIENCE MEMBERS IN JERRY SPRINGER: THE OPERA (2005)

In the case of *Frogs*, its main caricature of the god Dionysus is comically flawed and only concerned with his own interests, which is the old days of Tragedy. In the case of Jerry Springer, he is also deeply flawed. Within the first half of the Opera, he ignores his own conscience and takes advantage of vulnerable people's lives for the benefit of his television show. Like Aristophanes' Dionysus, this rendition of Jerry Springer

[965] The separating of choruses into stand-alone entities is actually rare in Aristophanic comedy. See MacDowell (1972), who highlights that there is a disputed argument for this also taking place in *Lysistrata* (1972: 4).

makes entertainment his priority; specifically, entertainment that he had direct control over, above everything else. Of course, there are some key differences between the two. For instance, Dionysus is a god and Jerry Springer is not. We see this in the way that Dionysus willingly travels to the underworld, whereas Springer has no choice because he is shot and therefore reiterating his mortality. Nevertheless, in many ways, *Frogs* humanises Dionysus just enough for the comic stage, in the same way that Jerry Springer is elevated to something 'more' as a celebrity in today's entertainment culture. Both are selfish but also the undisputed authorities on all things dramatic. A great example of these Old Comedy motifs can be found right at the beginning with Jerry Springer's introduction:

> Jonathan Weiruss:
> Ladies and gentlemen, people of most nations of the world...
>
> Chorus:
> go Jerry, go Jerry, Jeeeeerry
>
> Jonathan Weiruss:
> Welcome the host of the greatest show on this Earth…
>
> Chorus:
> go Jerry, go Jerry, Jeeeeerry
>
> Jonathan Weiruss:
> Bigger than Dave Letterman, bigger than Bob Hope,
> and give or take a few million, bigger than the fuckin' Pope!
>
> Jerry Springer: The Opera (00:09:52-00:10:29).

The above extract is taken from the play's opening scene, where *Jerry Springer: The Opera* invokes a number of Aristophanic similarities from the start. For instance, Jonathan Weiruss' lines about other performers shares a typical Aristophanic fashion of undermining professional peers. The difference is that this is just as much a joke at

the expense of the main character. Lee and Thomas do not have a vested interest in Springer as a person, but what this scene does do however, is recognise the practice of undermining others at the beginning of a comic play. This ultimately has its roots in Old Comedy. This is in turn utilised further with the additional comparison to the Pope at the end, returning us to the wider religious parody of the play. As on the one hand, Springer is being likened to God's representative on earth and on the other, the implication is that the Pope is also just another performer.

Also, within this opening scene, we see a different kind of worship presented with the chorus chanting "JERRY-JERRY".[966] Consisting of a mix of men and women, this mimics the 'typical' Jerry Springer audience who chant this in the real television show. This repetitive singing of "Jerry-Jerry" takes place throughout the play, but at this moment they chant while dancing like a gospel choir raising their hands to mirror Christian devotion as well as setting up Jerry Springer's character as a satire on celebrity worship. This is then countered with the same chanting motif in Act II, which holds a far more ominous tone.

> My ideas was [sic] that we would re-play the Jerry Springer Show of the first half on some kind of mythological level. And err… in the end we chose the Christian stories from the new testament, the old testament, where we pulled out various characters from the bible that's seemed to reflect, err …the characters that were Jerry Springer show guests in the first half'
>
> Stewart Lee Interview, Story of the Musical (00:04:35-00-04:49)

[966] *Jerry Springer: the Opera* (00:06:26-00:07:15). We even see the character of Jonathan Weiruss directly interacting with the audience, encouraging them to join in with the chanting (00:06:48-00:07:04). Much like the opening scenes in *Knights* and *Wasps*, we can presume this is similar to what Lowe says about getting audiences actively engaged early on within a show. See Chapter Three, section 4.3.a.

The above quote by Lee suggests that the mirroring between the first and second half of the play remains key to its religious parody. For instance, within this second example of the 'Jerry-Jerry' chant, the protagonist meets the next chorus of nurses. Like when Dionysus meets the Eleusinian followers in *Frogs*, we get the same impression that Jerry Springer has begun his journey to the underworld.[967] While being revisited by old guests and learning of their disturbing fates, Jerry's interaction with the Chorus is eerie despite their chanting of his name in the same way. What is clear is that Springer loses a sense of his authority when faced with these mythic surroundings. We also see with the comparatively Dionysian-like cowardice, when Springer meets Satan. Yet, ultimately Springer remains an integral voice for his audience until the end, and his eventual rejection of these biblical figures levels the playing field. His mortality in Act III is emphasised by the real divinity around him. However, as he is the only human in the room, he retains a sense of authority as he humanises Jesus, God and Satan.

Returning to the most striking parallels between these two plays is how both Dionysus and Jerry Springer end up journeying to the underworld to referee a competition, or in the case of Springer, an overly dramatic argument. In the case of *Frogs,* the god of drama judges the two notable deceased playwrights Euripides and Aeschylus. Jerry Springer meanwhile is forced to mediate between the biblical figures of Jesus and Satan, all within the style of his hit talk show.[968] The implication being that while his style of entertainment is often considered morally dubious, he is forced to embody a more abstract force of as mediator, while at the same time the only representation of humanity onstage.

[967] *Frogs* 316. *Jerry Springer: the Opera* (00:57:09-01:00:02).
[968] *Jerry Springer: the Opera* (01:12:00-01:42:07).

This humanisation is clearly a diminishing of religious figures for comic effect, but it is also worth noting that unlike Aristophanes' *Frogs*, *Jerry Springer: The Opera* expands this idea beyond Dionysus, to include the more obvious examples from divinity, most famously for its portrayal of Jesus Christ. That is not to say *Frogs* does not humanise other divine figures, as audiences are constantly reminded that Heracles is gluttonous (when a god should not eat), while Pluto is reduced to a spectator of Dionysus' dramatic antics (with little objection to his own realm being commandeered). Despite this, the religious figures in *Jerry Springer: The Opera* are more prominent, forming their own leading roles that match the human characters in the first half of the play.

90s COMEDIAN:

> When, suddenly, out of nowhere, the Jerry Springer: The Opera shit hit the born-again Christian evangelist fan.
>
> Lee (2010: 121)

I will now address the provocative second half of Stewart Lee's *90s Comedian* routine, as it appears in both his transcript and the live performance.[969] The setup to this routine sees Stewart Lee recount a fictitious encounter with Jesus Christ that quickly escalates into an absurd fiasco with Lee drunkenly vomiting everywhere; this results in the critical, yet purposefully challenging punchline 'vomiting into the gaping anus of Christ'.[970] As this came a year after the *Jerry Springer: The Opera* backlash, Lee articulated in his publication that this was a conscious exploration into the limits of

[969] Lee (2010: 201-221). Despite my focus on the second half, this encounter with Christian Voice is a theme that follows throughout the show, with it being referred to early on within his set (00:05:35-00:05:54).
[970] Lee (2010: 216). See also Lee, *90s Comedian* (01:02:42-01:03:27).

expression, rather than the limits fabricated by Christian Voice.[971] So, what actually happens within this routine? First there is the initial dialogue between Stewart Lee and Jesus, but second to this is a mix of Lee talking to the audience while 'mimicking' Jesus to back up his initial jokes. Third, is an apparent philosophical take on Christ that says he is not just for those who think themselves worthy and finally a fourth observation is a dramatic conversation where Lee plays himself and his mother that emphasises that he is a victim of religious hypocrisy:

> But then he started talking to me, Jesus. …He said to me 'Stew, I know that my representatives on Earth have come out against you and your co-workers and loved ones and accused you of blasphemy,' He said. 'But I forgive you,' He said. 'And I want you, if you can, to find it in your heart to forgive me.'
>
> Lee (2010: 205)[972]

> I am playing the religious right, our tormentors, at their own game…I am co-opting Jesus to my own ends, and my ends involve establishing that I am the new Jesus.
>
> Lee (2010: 205, n. ref)

> I suppose this is what all stand-up, what all comedy, what all satire does. You take an idea and say, 'What if this was actually real, what would it be like?' If Jesus was really the loving and wise Jesus of the New Testament, rather than the angry and Judgemental Jesus of the Christian right, then just as he fraternised with prostitutes and tax gatherers so he would help me, the drunken blasphemer comedian, home.
>
> Lee (2010: 209, n.)

[971] Lee (2010: 134-5).
[972] See Lee, *90s Comedian* (00:47:06-00:47:29).

Jesus is given a dramatic voice, like that discussed in section 6.2, with his characterisation becoming an agent of Stewart Lee's own satire. Here, Lee sets out an argument that questions the validity of Christian Voice. Lee then mimics this religious lobby group again, by suggesting a core hypocrisy. The final extract however gives the best example of a meta-comedic self-reflection, as it breaks down these moral undertones in a humorous dialogue that allows the author to shoehorn his ideas into the performance that would otherwise not work in a typical monologue setting. Stewart Lee points this out himself within his accompanying text, stating that '*by talking about it to my mother, in the form of reported speech which the audience are overhearin*g', the content is less contrived.[973]

> '…If you are going to talk about this, you have to know why you're doing it, what kind of point you're trying to make.' And I said to her 'Well, three things, Mother. Firstly, to make the point that a symbol, be it an icon or a flag or whatever, is only as worthy of respect as the values of the people who appropriate it. Secondly, that if a symbol goes out into the world, into places where it's perhaps not understood or wanted or valued, you shouldn't be too upset if then takes on a shape you don't recognise as your own. And thirdly, that if you attempt to apply limits to freedom of expression, either through legislation or intimidation or threats, what will happen is that reasonable people, often against their own better judgment, will feel obliged to test those limits, er, by going into areas they don't feel entirely comfortable with.'
>
> Lee (2010: 219-220)[974]

Criticism of religious intolerance underpins most of *90s Comedian*, with references to his ordeal both in the transcript and the accompanying footnotes. This means that the audience actually witness this satirical message way before this dialogue with Jesus or with his mother. For example, when setting up the scene for the religious encounter

[973] Lee (2010: 219).
[974] See Lee, *90s Comedian* (01:09:02-01:09:10).

to come, Lee divulges to his audience that he received hate mail for *Jerry Springer: The Opera* and offers them a paradoxically humorous example:

> I did get one funny one in March last year where someone wrote to me and they said 'I enjoyed listening to you defend your work on Radio 5 yesterday. You seem like a very intelligent and thoughtful young man. What a pity you'll be going to hell'…you have to admire that, don't you, the kind of construct of it…it takes you one way, and then goes the other.
>
> Lee (2010: 196)

We see a number of deceptive moves unfold within this small section, starting with Lee's play on his very real ordeal. His sudden self-parodying line '*What a pity you'll be going to hell',* also appears to be an example of a 'pull back and reveal' joke. This is a premise that he goes on to explain in reasonable depth, signposting how to create one and why they are funny. In essence, this is when an audience are told a narrative without some crucial information.[975] Once that important information is revealed, the joke is realised. Lee also points out that the joke cannot be funny if that crucial information is given at the proper time. If this were to happen, Stewart Lee would just be giving us a sobering example of his ordeal. Therefore, what would normally be a distressing encounter is turned into one of absurdity and Lee's own intellectual superiority. Nevertheless, this momentary interjection of honesty only strengthens a control of the stage character's narrative on stage. The boundaries of what is real and what is dramatic become blurred and the audience are tricked into the performer's point of view. That is not to say that this audience are spared the sharper tones of Lee's frustrations, as a footnote to this 'pull back and reveal' joke set up shows:

[975] Lee (2010: 196).

> Why not try writing your own Pull Back and Reveal jokes? And then why not try smashing yourself repeatedly in the face with a claw hammer?'
>
> Lee (2010: 197)

6.3.b: RISK AND SAFE SPACE

We cannot help but notice that the relationship dynamic between what makes a play and a stand-up performance is indisputably different. The comedian Tony Allen argues that while an actor plays a role, a comedian instead performs 'naked'.[976] What is more Allen goes on to argue that unlike theatre, where deceit is apparently known and suspended in disbelief, stand-up comedy has 'no contract, only a nebulous agreement that the performance is spontaneous and authentic'.[977] He also says that any deceit through learned lines or planned structure is overlooked in return for having the opportunity to laugh and be included.[978]

We cannot ignore that *Jerry Springer: The Opera* has far less explicit audience interaction then a typical Stewart Lee stand-up set. The play, despite being meta-theatrical in many ways, still follows many conventions of the stage with actors interacting with each other and the audience only ever momentarily included within that exchange. Stewart Lee's stand-up comedy on the other hand, is as Allen suggests, a constant dialogue. So, while this idea of 'nakedness' feeds into the already discussed reflection of reality in Stewart Lee's persona, it also reveals a different expectation from the comic audience of the play.

[976] Allen (2001: 28)
[977] Allen (2002: 28).
[978] Allen (2002: 28).

Based on Allen's concept, I would argue that there is still a 'contract' in stand-up comedy, as the audiences are expected to know what they are getting themselves in to. Quirk also offers a counter point to Allen's idea, through the concept of audience investment; this is a form of an audience contract, especially when money is exchanged.[979] Quirk's point is that an audience must know what they are getting themselves into for comedy to work, as the action of investing to watch and buy tickets, is in itself a kind of contract. Similarly, the comedy academic Oliver Double points out the importance of this contract. He states that payment can really affect an audience's response, and that it is 'infinity easier' to convince an audience who have actively come to see you than one that comes by chance from off of the street.[980]

An audience does not require a full knowledge of where every joke will go, only that they are the right audience to receive it. Furthermore, both parties (audience and comedian) acknowledge each other's respective roles for a successful comedic experience. After all, Stewart Lee's return to comedy saw him play smaller venues, with smaller crowds and yet they were now 'his' audience: people '*who would get it and would come back next time with a friend*'.[981] What is more, we cannot ignore how this was in some way affected by his own theatrical experiences, as is made clear when he writes about his work on *Jerry Springer: The Opera*.

> Why are comedians regarded as being so low in status that the most flattering thing you can do is compare them favourably to almost any other form of performer, public figure or artist?
>
> Lee (2010: 157)

[979] Quirk (2015a: 127).
[980] Double (1997: 154).
[981] Lee (2010: 37).

Stewart Lee's question is an important one. It highlights that stand-up comedy is a unique performance style that is not always given the credit it deserves. Lee even compares it to theatre in an interview with Wiegand (2008); he argues that 'It does all the things people think great theatre should do - it ignores the fourth wall and it addresses the audience directly in a really uncontrived way. Even the most straightforward Jongleurs' act is probably working on more levels than most West End plays'.[982] We return then to this ideas of high versus low brow art, as comedy is not recognised for its complexities, with Lee stating that despite all the artistic skills that stand-up comedians gain from their '*harsh environment*', it is never really seen as anything more than a '*trade*'. Yet, within that trade comes a constant tightrope of risk for those involved.

Part way through Lee's performance of *90s Comedian*, he stands in a drawn chalk circle that imitates the French festival '*Bouffinades en Circulades*'.[983] He explains in both his publication and this performance that the circle is a barrier used by these French '*Bouffons*', to create a safe space to perform satirical ridicule on the religious establishment.[984] He then applies this French tradition to his own comedy, stating that '*as I entered the more uncomfortable areas of the show I did feel safer for having the circle around me, and sometimes I would dare myself to step outside it at key moments, as if to test my invulnerability'*.[985]

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[982] See Lee (2008). It is worth noting here that 'Jongleurs' is a chain of stand-up comedy venues that typically shows more mainstream acts, with Stewart Lee often referring to the chain for its mediocrity. See Lee, (2010: 13, 19, 36-7, 278, 318, 321 &326); Also, Lee in an interview with Wiegand (2008).
[983] Lee (2010: 149-51, 194); See Lee, *90s Comedian* (00:36:11-00:37:08).
[984] Lee (2010: 150).
[985] Lee (2010: 161).

FIGURE 20. SHOWS LEE DRAWING A CHALK CIRCLE ON STAGE IN HIS SHOW *90S COMEDIAN* (2006)

Here we see a very visual barrier representing a metaphorical protection for Lee from his own audience. This reinforces my argument that the audience can make or break a comedic performance. What is more, the barrier visualised by Lee is flimsy and easily erasable. This may reflect a genuine emotion of vulnerability in the performer, after his turbulent year, but the chalk circle also reminds the audience of more ritualistic origins to comedy. This is something that Lee is evidently going for as he states in a footnote '*I am not religious or superstitious, but it always felt great stopping to draw the circle, engaging in the briefest nod towards ritual magic*'.[986] Lee also draws back to the transgressive power behind his stand-up, when he states:

> Thinking like a comedian meant, as The Goonies told us decades ago, you could do anything, anytime, anywhere. Leave me here, all you legitimate artists, at the tradesman's entrance, with my can of larger and my notebook. I can draw a magic circle all around myself and do whatever I want. I am a stand-up comedian. You can't touch this!
>
> Lee (2010: 158)

[986] Lee (2010: 194).

Not only does this text remind its literary audience of the metaphorical boundaries between themselves and Stewart Lee, with the chalk circle, but it also emphasises the legitimacy of a stand-up comedian and equates it to any highbrow art like Athenian tragedy or Roman oratory. Instead stand-up disguises itself as something else and exiles itself to the masses as something more accessible. After all, the boundaries of authority are where such comedy lies. Which leads us to our next point, that up until now this chapter has compared Stewart Lee's style of satire to ancient equivalents like Juvenal, Aristophanes and even Homer. So, you could argue that I am falling into the same trap that Stewart Lee points out. On the other hand, the reason for this chapter's comparative analysis has not been to raise Stewart Lee's comedy to some other high art, which classical texts are often seen as, but to illustrate that despite stand-up's seemingly unique selling points of mixing both accessible and confrontational humour, Stewart Lee is still a continuation of a cross cultural and cross disciplinary traditions of satirical performance trickery.

Satire is after all an opportunity to be culturally significant and in Lee's own words it can '*safeguard*' the political liberty of a society.[987] It is however, questionable how much we can believe Lee's claim in 'testing' his vulnerabilities. Perhaps he is telling the truth, as testing boundaries is a satirist's job (even those designed for their benefit/safety), but it might also be a ploy to project the attributes of a marginalised persona he wants to convey. So with this in mind, is this chalk circle like a placebo effect for the audience? Projecting what Lee wants them to see? One argument for this is another statement by Lee, but from a 2009 interviewed by O'Hagan:

[987] Lee (2010: 220).

> The thing about most of those professionally offensive comedians, though, is that no one is ever actually offended. Everyone understands the parameters and operates within them, the audience and the performer. Whereas, with someone like Jerry Sadowitz, there's a part in every show of his where a little piece of me dies and i think, I wish I'd never heard that. Now, that's the most truly offensive comedian you'll ever see.
>
> Lee, interview with O'Hagan (6 December 2009) [988]

Here Stewart Lee talks about parameters of offence, but he also suggests that the audience step into this exchange willingly. Perhaps Lee is suggesting that there is a safe space, but the barrier is not one necessarily between the performer and his audience. They have joined in making this comedic experience together. Like the comedian, they are leaving the barrier of social conventions behind and this gives them permission to laugh. This in turn only breaks down if Lee is faced with an audience who are not actually 'his'.

6.4: LEE AND 'HIS' AUDIENCE

> If you look at any well-known, successful comic you can probably sum up what they do in two or three words. And that's very crucial, because you want as few barriers between yourself, and the audience and the comedy. So if they know who you are and what you might think on a subject […] and if the audience can pre-empt how you might address a subject, it allows it to be funnier. It allows them to buy into it.
>
> Aktinson Interview, Quirk (2015a: 128)

The above quote by the comedian Dan Atkinson emphasises the importance of audience familiarity over a comedic persona and he is right to separate the comedy

[988] Sadowitz is a comedian that Lee claims to be '*quietly in awe of*' (Lee 2010: 15). Sadowitz is known to push his audience to the brink of acceptability, often playing against them depending on their responses. Lee states that he never wanted to be a comedian like Sadowitz, because he could not (Lee 2010: 34).

from both the performer and the audience. By doing so, he recognises that the comedy is a collective success product of both taking part. Furthermore, an audience does not require a full knowledge of where every joke will go, only that they are the right audience for the comedy they are about to engage with. This trust placed in a comedian allows for moments of trickery that the audience are presumably on board with. This in turn supports instances when audience members who do not fit the comedian's brief still end up seeing the show. Lee offers an example of how he judged such incidents with the opening music to *Stand-Up Comedian*:

> Playing the Parker solo was always a good way of identifying troublemakers, of spotting punters that had probably come to the wrong gig. I'd stand at the back of the room watching the audience file in. Anyone who got up and remonstrated with the sound guy, insisting that the music was turned off, as some would, was probably not going to go for the show. In New Zealand, some English fans of Peter Kay and the sport of rugby accidently arrived at my show as a result of a wrongly assumed national kinship. It was their furious reaction to the Evan Parker solo that immediately alerted me to problems ahead, which eventually and inevitably ruined the show.
>
> Lee (2010: 43)

Stewart Lee's pre-show *Parker solo* music is also a useful dramatic tool for controlling his relationship with his audience. He states that 'in essence, I don't want the pre-show music to seem like I am eager to please. I want to start wrong-footing the audience before they've even sat down'.[989] This is really important, as by not allowing his audience be 'comfortable', Lee is denying them the setting to be passive. This fake inference not only echoes the quote at the very beginning of this chapter, but it also places great importance on the staging of his performance trickery.

[989] Lee (2010: 43).

It is the objective of this section to analyse Lee's audience, the space in which he interacts with them and various examples of apparent direct interaction. Below is a quote straight out the transcript to Stewart Lee's *Stand-Up Comedian* performance and it highlights a level of transparency in his own satirical persona that is distinctly self-aware, both to his comedic art form and his own place within that. To start, he makes fun of his own deceptively formulated script. He mocks another well know comedian and following that, he mocks himself for being a hypocrite for being exacting the same.

> I'll come out every night and I'll just make them up. I'll exist in the moment. I'll trust it to chance, I'll improvise like Eddie Izzard…pretends to do. …, when you've tried to do it, you realise why he doesn't. it's hard. It's hard to do. It's much easier to just go 'er' in every sentence and give the illusion of spontaneity.
>
> Lee (2010: 65)[990]

This is something that both Stewart Lee and Aristophanes buy into as audiences are made to finish the joke for themselves. Quirk also focuses on Stewart Lee's method of unfinished jokes and highlights that he makes his audience work for the comedy, as the joke is never made explicit.[991] At the beginning of Aristophanes' *Frogs,* Dionysus makes reference to jokes that are too predictable to say or finish.[992] Likewise, Juvenal seems to replicate something similar in *Satire* One, when he complains about predictable comedy only to accept that he must now join in.[993] As we have made clear in Chapter Three and Five, this is a ruse. Aristophanes, Juvenal and Stewart Lee are allowing themselves to tell these same jokes, but with an air of comedic superiority.

[990] Lee, *Stand-Up Comedian* (00:26:20-00:26:40).
[991] Quirk (2015a: 101).
[992] *Frogs* 1-18.
[993] Juvenal, *Satires* 1.1-20.

This only works, however, if the audience are in on the joke. Like these three authors, the audience must know the style of comedy that is being mocked and be familiar with particular nuances (like punchlines) to enjoy the comedy on both levels. Not only that, but any joke predicted by an audience in this way is then doubled by the reaction of this shared experience.

6.4.a: SPLITTING THE AUDIENCE

> Um. Now, I'm going to, I'm going to tell you a story, right, it'll take about, um, an hour and fifteen minutes, er which is sort of a bit too long for a show without an interval. But it's also not long enough to split into two halves. It's kind of disappointing either way…so if you need to go for a wee… you can do…Also, if you become bored or irritated…you can also go. Likewise, if you're watching this at home on a DVD…you can just pause…I have no problem with that. I won't even know it's happening. Literally.
>
> Lee, *90s Comedian* (2010: 161-2)[994]

This control over audience engagement is further evident from the way Lee constantly splits his audiences into targets of his comedy. For example, in the opening lines of *90s Comedian*, Lee acknowledges the various states of his audience. He is in a way splitting them into his live audience and the viewers of his DVD release. It is also worth noting that in much of Lee's performance, with this section included, he looks directly at a camera and speaks to those watching through a screen. Lee does not mention this in his transcripts, but it is a strong example of direct interaction with an audience who are even harder to engage with. We can in a sense replicate this same concept when talking about his literary audience, meaning those who are engaging with this

[994] *90s Comedian* (00:00:54-00:01:35). Lee also says that this is an invitation for his audience not to like his latter half of the performance (Lee 2010: 161-2). That it could be out of even his audiences' comfort zones, so it is a pre-empt to a more honest performance.

performance from his transcript and its accompanying footnotes. The accompanying material is given in a way that appears to directly talk to the reader. This splitting does not just happen here, but in each of Lee's performances, as he actively separates his spectators into 'his' audience and those who are not.

> Some laughs, some doubts in the room. People going, 'we're kind of with you theoretically. We understand this is some kind of satire of something…
>
> Lee, *Stand-Up Comedian* (2010: 54)[995]

> OK? And so there's good laughs for that over here in this area, and those tail away towards that corner there…there isn't going to be time for me to work a mixed ability room tonight. No offence…Now. So Everybody over here, for the rest of the night, you're on board, you're going to be Team A, OK? And you won't mind if I don't play over here too much, I'm going to mainly concentrate on Team F in that corner…
>
> Lee, *90s Comedian* (2010: 181-2)[996]

> If you didn't get the reference, this show isn't really aimed at you. You may enjoy it anyway, the words and shapes, but it isn't aimed at you. This is not for you. You are welcome to stay. But this is not for you…
>
> Lee (2010: 253)[997]

The above examples also show a shift in the persona's attitude as he develops this motif. In 1), we see Lee's style of speaking to his audience, as if they are mostly a collective that are wavering. In 2), there is a full-blown split as he forces them into his 'Team A' and 'Team F'. Thus, this makes it quite personal from the start, as he returns

[995] Lee, *Stand-Up Comedian* (00:13:00-00:13:06).
[996] See Lee, *90s Comedian* (00:21:55-00:22:27).
[997] This is in the transcript, but not the recording. Although, there are many other instances where Lee interacts with his audience with mock distain, or disappointment. For example, he walks into the audience and simultaneously ridicules them and himself (00:46:40-51:23).

to this idea of his comedy being intellectual. 'Team A' are like himself, but 'Team F' is supposedly less intelligent and need his help. This is of course decided completely at random.[998] Coming to a live gig, these audiences are all 'his' audience, but in this moment they are actively playing parts given to them; all to help facilitate this shared laughter.

Lee also explains in a footnote to *90s Comedian* that separating the room into these groups was an important part of his set. That he always had to do this at some point within the first half, as it would soften what he calls the '*heavy aerial bombardment of toilet-related blasphemy in the second half*'.[999] It is also within this explanation that Lee reveals that he likes separating the room, as he attempts to see if he can win them all over again at the end. The implication is that he always does this within his shows, which is likely true, but this comment also seems like a secondary misdirection for his reader.

The reality is an example of 'us' and 'them', reminiscent of some of my earlier ancient case studies, whether it is Aristophanes' Athens/Greek versus 'other', or Juvenal's Rome versus Greek/un-Roman. Such separation is again exemplified in example 3), with an outright rejection of audience members. Lee claims one audience as 'his' and anyone else watching as unfortunate bystanders. Once again, this is random and the comedian knows that everyone present are likely 'his' fans. Furthermore, in later examples of Stewart Lee's stand-up shows, not included in his 2010 publication, we see this same motif extended into something that appears more aggressive then

[998] Lee (2010: 181).
[999] Lee (2010: 182).

casually alienating.[1000] What this suggests is that as Stewart Lee's success shifts, so must his persona. In his earlier work it is his lack of recognition that he can play against, but as his career grows, he has to find new ways to embody this angry satirist.

6.4.b: DIRECT INTERACTION

> "It's a joke, isn't it, *41st Best*…I don't even have to…I can come, what, five feet from the front row, I don't even need to look round to know that there's people that can't even be bothered to turn thirty degrees. 'We'll just…He'll come back probably…I don't know what this bit is anyway. Is it innovation or a mistake? I'll just look at nothing…"
>
> Lee (2010: 284-5)[1001]

> If you saw, if you saw me here on the tour for the last show, I have put on weight since then, I admit. And coming back here, I thought, 'I like The Stand, it's really nice, I'll try and lose some weight so I look nice for them.' But, you know, I'm glad I didn't actually, 'cause there's people going, 'Oh I won't even look at him. I'll look at a distorted, bad acid image of his own face rather than actually look at him.'
>
> Lee (2010: 285)[1002]

Stewart Lee is not opposed to using dramatic space to his advantage and in his third performance *41st Best Stand-Up Ever*, Lee makes a point of leaving the stage altogether. He walks into his audience and continuing the set from the back of the room. This is only temporary, but it has a great meta-performative effect all the same.

[1000] See for example his television series *Comedy Vehicle* (2009-16) and his show *Carpet Remnant World* (2012).
[1001] 41st Best Stand-Up Ever (00:47:56-48:26).
[1002] The '*bad acid image of his face*' is a reference to the backdrop of his set, which Lee describes as an arty manipulation of his face put there specifically for the DVD recording, see Lee (2010: 285); [1002] *41st Best Stand-Up Ever* (00:49:46-00:49:53).

Then there is the intermediary chapter between *Stand-Up Comedian* and *90s Comedian* that we first see Lee's interest in empty space flourish.[1003]

This observation by Stewart Lee shares similarities to Peter Brook's empty space theory (1968). This means that a performance is not limited to a conventional stage, but rather any empty space has the potential to become an act of theatre.[1004] Double (2019) similarly reflects on the potential of Brook's empty space theory, but takes it further to argue that stand-up offers much more theatrical than conventional theatre.[1005] Lee is talking about the whole venue as a stage, with the audience becoming engaged as they cross the threshold of his terrain this is highly theatrical. Furthermore, this reveals another layer of deception between Lee's comedy and his audience, as the dramatic space holds a great deal of power within Stewart Lee's comedic style, but as the above quote suggests, Lee also uses space to engage with his audience directly.

What is more, dialogue between Lee and his audience does not have to come at the expense of blurring the parameters of the stage. We also see this in an example of contrived exchange, by which I am referring to moments where Lee appears to be engaging in spontaneous dialogue with his audience. We see this spontaneity with Aristophanic direct speech in *Wasps*.[1006] Yet, below is an example of such an exchange within Stewart Lee's *Stand-Up Comedian*:

[1003] Lee (2010: 154).
[1004] Double's TED talk via YouTube, titled 'Why Stand-Up is More Theatrical Than Theatre' (2021, 00:00:35-59).
[1005] See Double's TED talk on 'Why Stand-Up is More Theatrical than Conventional Theatre' (2021).
[1006] *Wasps* 54-84.

[Stewart Lee] I am going to shout out some questions now. I need you to answer loudly to them. The answer to most of them is Yes. Ok, one, two, three. Who likes alcohol?

Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Louder! Who Likes Sweets?

Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Who likes cream cakes?

Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Who likes their favourite food, whatever it is?

Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Who, likes Ben Elton? Oh, it's no one.
OK, here's another one. Who likes, er, who likes, er, The Simpsons?

Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Who likes Spider-Man?

Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Who likes their favourite fictional character from their own childhood?

Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Who likes their beloved mother?

Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Who likes Ben Elton? Oh, it's no one again.
Ok, here's another one. Who likes snowflakes?
Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Who likes sunshine?

Audience: Yes!

[Stewart Lee] Who likes the universal concept of eternal peace and happiness?

Audience: Yes!

> [Stewart Lee] Who likes Osama bin Laden? Yeah! Who likes Ben Elton? Oh, it's no one again.
>
> It's fucking weird, it's weird. That is weird, 'cause I must have done that thirty or forty times, right, and every time, without any element of manipulation, more people like Osama bin Laden, a multiple murderer, than Ben Elton.
>
> Lee (2010: 95-7)[1007]

This extract not only shows Lee display an intertextual mockery of another comedian like Ben Elton, but even the perceived improvisation is mocked for what it is: a fake exchange where the answers of the audience do not really matter. The audience know the performance structure will not change, even if Lee were to give different examples each time. Lee claims to do just that in his accompanying footnote, stating 'I would change the exact detail of these questions every night, but it was always fairly easy to get the crowd to do what I wanted'.[1008]

Nonetheless, we are left with questions after seeing examples like the one above. For instance, is the performer in full control of this comedic exchange? Or can someone like Stewart Lee manipulate his material to get the 'right' audience response? Lee is trusting his audience to 'perceive' the comedy the way he intends and an audience may easily enjoy a stand-up persona on a different reading to the comedian's intentions. As such, Quirk's idea of control is two way between the performer and the audience. We must also wonder if laughter is all that matters to a satirist, or whether a misconstrued message can ruin this mutual experience.[1009]

[1007] Lee, *Stand-Up Comedian* (00:58:59-01:00:00).
[1008] Lee (2010: 96).
[1009] Rosen (2012: 4).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

> We need not turn very far from our own experiences in the twenty-first century to see that satire has lost little of its power to alarm as well as entertain, and the great divide between what satirists claim to be doing and how audiences receive their work is as vast and complicated as it has ever been.
>
> Rosen (2007: x)

In just a few words, Rosen evaluates much of what this chapter has already discussed. The relationship between performer and audience remains crucial to the success of a satirist and Stewart Lee is a perfect example of how performance trickery, through the art of meta-comedy, can transcend classical comedy to the modern stand-up stage. As e have seen from his 2010 publication, Lee is able to showcase two simultaneous performance with his existing material and the commentary voice. The latter of which, maintaining his distinctly humorous persona that is recognisable to 'his' audience'. What is more, this chapter set out to show how Stewart Lee is a continuation of the ancient performance trickery of earlier chapters, with his own meta-theatrical material like *Jerry Springer: the Opera* and his equally meta-comedic stand-up comedy.

Lee remains one of the most familiar 'Alternative Comedians', much like Aristophanes is to those analysing classical Greek comedy, or Juvenal in the Roman satirical tradition. Lee also has a mask that is distinctly Juvenalian in tone. First, for its conversational quality that is mixed with an angry ranting façade, but also for his 'satirist mask' that throw backs to those they admire and for the purpose of appearing worthy of their respective masks. Furthermore, Lee purposefully mixes imagery of 'himself' on stage and on the page that are still extensions of this comedic persona.

I have also shown how Lee explores ideas of high versus low culture in *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, in particular through the religious parody of an otherwise highbrow form of musical theatre, as well as parallels to the religious parody of Aristophanes' *Frogs*. What is more, we also looked at Stewart Lee's exploration of said religious material and the implications of offence and risk within his *90s Comedian* routine. I have considered to what extent there could have been legitimate frustrations in his performance, as well as the possibility that this an amplification for comedic effect.

Finally, I addressed the significance of Stewart Lee's audience, as he sets out to 'split' them, or control moments of direct exchange. It is true that Lee's audience are often the target of his comedy, be it to wrong foot or insult them.[1010] Yet, he is contently self-aware in the relationship dynamics between himself and 'his' audience. This is a dynamic that is undoubtedly direct, even more so than the anti-theatrical motifs of Juvenal. With that in mind, we should finish with a concluding thought in Lee's publication, where he describes watching the musician Derek Bailey. Here he reminds us of the deceptive power of comedy, as he too experiences and relishes in it.

> But the breakthrough moment, for me, of seeing Bailey bash his guitar into the back wall of the RFH, was realising that I could be made to laugh, against my will, in an atmosphere of high seriousness, in the temple of culture, by the simple childlike joy of surprise. Derek Bailey, it seemed, was giving me permission to laugh.
>
> Lee (2010: 326-7)[1011]

[1010] Lee (2010: 266).
[1011] Although Derek Bailey is a musician rather than a comedian, Lee still shows the surprise element of comedy, coupled with his desire to see it as an audience member.

CONCLUSION

> Studying ancient literature is like detective work … to make intelligent guesses … we have to try and shed our modern prejudices about literature, modern prejudices which we are often hardly aware of, modern prejudices which can easily blur our view of ancient literature.
>
> Braund (2007: viii)

Throughout this thesis, I have been very conscious of the potential anachronistic pitfalls that Braund warns against. At the same time, I have maintained an awareness of the performative significance of my chosen ancient texts and the potential behind making my contemporary comparisons. As such, I have attentively broadened my own observations, both culturally and historically, to explore these fundamental dynamics between audience interaction and comic performance. There is, therefore, a lot to unpack from this wide-ranging thesis, as despite my reliance on specific case studies, I have covered a time span of nearly 3000 years and navigated a varying range of satirical practices. Particular emphasis has been given to those practices that explore the very idea of the comic persona; as it is reflected in common meta-theatrical devices such as mimesis, audience interaction and parody.

This thesis has also followed a thread of theatrical evolution, starting with the pre-dramatic comic episodes of Homer, then the dramatic Dionysian personae of Euripides and Aristophanes, as well as the consequences of Old Comedy as serious comedy through self-reflective laughter. This in turn led to the anti-dramatic monologues of Juvenal's Roman poetry, that set the scene for my eventual interpretations of Stewart Lee's established stage persona of a ranting comedian for a receptive audience. So, while my approaches have included themes such as ancient, modern, text and stage,

each chapter has questioned what motivates a comic to elicit laughter and what it means for an audience to laugh in turn. This delicate relationship in each case-study using what I have called 'consensual trickery' to also challenge audiences through laughter, but also relies on this audience response to validate their satirical worth.

Starting with Homeric laughter, I was able to explore the nuances of two comic interludes found within the wider frameworks of *Iliad* 14 and *Odyssey* 8. By specifically using the 'Deception of Zeus' and 'Hephaestus' Trick', I showcased instances where trickery was 'staged' with elements of performative mimicry in otherwise pre-dramatic texts. Through the course of Chapters Two and Three, I showed instances in which Homeric laughter could be considered cruel, as well as the specific application to divine figures like Hera, Hephaestus and Dionysus. In Chapter Two, this mockery is exclusive between the Olympian gods, who turn are shown as petty in their actions and laughter. The comic farce in both archaic case-studies serves as a contrast to the tragic counter story of the Trojan War.

Starting with Hera's performance in *Iliad* 14, I deduced that this Hera and Zeus episode has the feel of a mini-comedy, staged by the goddess' character. Hera's erotic disguise plays an important role in her deception, but it also visualises a sort of performance taking place through costume, props and clever speech. It is also clear from parallels to the *Homeric Hymn V. to Aphrodite* that divine female deception was repeatedly portrayed through this blend of erotic disguise, which is only proven to continue with striking similarities to Juvenal's portrayal of Messalina in *Satire Six*. Hera's deception is also amplified through an exaggerated persona of her roles as wife to Zeus.

Therefore, through this chapter, I was able to show how comic exaggeration of the self could be a kind of persona, which would later be explored again with both Juvenal and Stewart Lee's satirical masks. Of course, unlike Juvenal and Stewart Lee, Hera's persona is a self-referential performance executed by a character within a narrative, as opposed to a first-person performer/author. Yet, it is an opportunity to see the method in an earlier form.

My second archaic example, 'Hephaestus' Trick', also plays on this blend of deception and performance, but this time it concerns a staging between spectacle and multiple audiences. An important distinction to be made is the difference between the 'real' audience who witness the *Odyssey* as it was performed and the fictitious audiences within the narrative. Of the latter, we can branch these further into two, with the imaginary spectators of Demodocus' song and the gods who are the subjects of said song. In each instance, laughter is the key response, with the gods and by extension the 'real' audience, being instructed to respond in kind. Therefore, this apparent guidance suggests similarities with Quirk's theory that a comic must instruct their audience for an appropriate response.

Hephaestus is also an opportune comic character, as we see from the *Iliad,* as well as the Homeric *Hymn I, to Dionysus*. Although, he is as much a target of laughter as he is an instigator of it. Hephaestus' lack of control over the laughter he evokes makes him a different comic target to the meta-theatrical comic hero found in Aristophanes' Dionysus, whose self-deprecating style makes him much closer to a comedian or clown.

By exploring the significance of these wider Homeric traditions, I showed that laughter can hold many emotions, but in all case, it strengthens the way in which audience were likely captivated by these moments. This analysis of early examples not only saw how comedy was enjoyed through these comic performative qualities, but it has also set up the scene for my wider reflection on when laughter response can encourage audiences to experience sobering emotions to a higher extent.

In Chapter Three, this thesis shifted to a distinctly dramatic space, as it explored the role of laughter in connection with the god Dionysus in *Bacchae* and *Frogs*. By exploring the god's role as dramatic patron of festivals like the Great Dionysia and the Lenaia, I was able to see how his comic persona blended with pre-existing religious imagery of the god, irrespective of each play's genre, be this the harsher 'smiling' of Dionysus from *Homeric Hymn V*, or the parodying of a procession in *Homeric Hymn I*, Euripides and Aristophanes fashion their own Dionysus to link the character with his role as patron of the stage. For instance, not only do each of my examples show moments designed to incite laughter where appropriate, but both dramatic readings of Dionysus complemented his associations within tragedy and comedy. In the case of Euripides' *Bacchae*, the laughter is very much one of ridicule and is interwoven into the very image of the god. This is also true to some extent with Aristophanes' Dionysus, the difference being that *Frogs* sees this comic figure as a target of said ridicule as well.

In addition to these dramatic personae, I focused on specific meta-theatrical moments within each play, so that I could reflect on Dionysus' potential as an ideal comic figure for this thesis' wider goals. In *Bacchae*, this was through the illusion of direct address and mythic intertextuality in its prologue, as well as the comic manipulation of Pentheus by directing him to wear a bad costume. In *Frogs*, I also looked at the role of bad costume, but as it is worn by the god himself. In addition, I also showed how more examples of direct address and tragic parody played on audience awareness that they are engaging with a comic performance and this is a typical comic hero. Therefore, in both cases, Dionysus becomes a comedic self-referential figure, associated with the audience's own relationships with dramatic laughter.

Chapter Four followed on from my exploration into the classical stage, with its own subsequent exploration of Old Comedy as a satirical force. Showing particular interest in serious comedy, or *spoudaiogeloion*, this method of comedy emphasised potential and even expectations for teachings through a comic framework. It is here that I really emphasised Aristophanes' skill in executing this method of 'consensual trickery'. I then explored how Aristophanes achieved this with specific meta-theatrical devices in *Acharnians*, *Knights* and *Wasps*.

In *Acharnians*, we saw familiar motifs to Chapter Three, with themes of costume and tragic parody, yet I was able to expand on these ideas by considering the incongruity the audience likely faced in the juxtaposition of laughing at war. In *Knights*, I also looked at the implications of perceived communication between performer and audience, through key examples of direct address. Laughter was likely the only real

response that the audience could make, but it placed them in a position of an 'active audience' throughout the play. In some contrast, I also considered the awareness and even lack of awareness of this Aristophanic audience; this was through the use of political allegory. Laughter remained an appropriate response, even when audiences were caught off guard. After all, these audiences expect to be tricked for comic effect and if there are political connotations to this trick, then that is also part of the Old Comic experience. In *Wasps,* I then addressed the famous trial scene, where a courthouse is mimicked in a household setting. This ultimately sees a performance within a performance. Done to parody the political ineptitudes of the Athenian legal system, it is also the only Aristophanic play, within this thesis, that lacks a positive outcome. For that reason, it holds an additional layer of comic ambiguity for its audiences to ponder. In addition to all this, by using these three Aristophanic political plays, I was able to use this chapter on Aristophanic comedy as a precursor of Roman satire; first due to its emphasis on free speech and political humour and second, in a similar desire to create laughter response from anti-illusionary performance motifs, both of which are present in modern stand-up comedy.

Chapter Five began the next and final stage of the ancient portion to my thesis. Here I leaped from Greek theatre to the seemingly anti-theatrics of the ranting Roman satirist Juvenal. Rome has its own avenue of satirical performance that existed beyond the stage and with that came its own kind of elite audiences. Here, a more familiar image of the satirist is realised, with Juvenal's use of personae and deceptively dramatic exchange circulating in recitations and text. After all, Roman satire was still a performative genre, which intersects with rhetoric and relies on interaction with

audience in ways that have something in common with theatre, but removed enough to parody it along with a political and forensic rhetoric.

Using *Satire* Six and *Satire* Nine I addressed key moments within Juvenal's rhetoric, where his satirist mask shone through. In *Satire* Six, it was in the performative skill of addressing comic targets like Postumus, as well as the description of staged trickery: like Messalina's alternative lifestyle, as well as the gladiatorial and the feminine dress within the Oxford fragments. Each of these examples suggest a ranting misogynist, tailoring his comedy to a like-minded audience. Yet, this thesis has suggested that this is an extension of his dramatic persona, where the traditional views of his elite audience are parodied in a way that they can laugh at themselves. In *Satire* Nine, I went further into ideas of self-deprecation and dramatic motifs, as the use of dialogue within this scene appears to be a parody of himself earlier within his career. Audiences could better laugh at themselves, if the satirist includes himself in this. So, rather than there being a lack of one persona, this thesis argues that Juvenal formed these dramatic monologues, into a developing stage persona that makes his satire a precursor of stand-up comedy.

In my final chapter, I used stand-up comedian Stewart Lee to offer a contemporary comparison. Like Juvenal's satires, I have had access to Lee's comic routines as text, but the added bonus is visual recordings that give this chapter a whole other layer to analyse. I was able to see how Lee uses self-deprecation and ideas of high versus low brow culture, all to confuse the audience in an exchange that tricks them into mixing the real Stewart Lee with a literary version of his comedic persona. Lee's publication

How I Escaped My Certain Fate: The Life and Deaths of a Stand Up Comedian, also offers an auto-biographical interlude between each transcript. These are carefully placed to give the audience two separate impressions of Stewart Lee, which is the comic and the person. Both are actually fabricated performances and both Juvenal and Stewart Lee elevated themselves on the backs of their comic idols. Where these two texts differ however, lies in the contrast of these two influential figures. Lucilius was the architect of Roman Satire but Cunningham, by Lee's own admissions, was not a success. Instead, Lee creates the same Juvenalian effect by referring to Cunningham's comedy as the '*purest form of stand-up*'.[1012]

We also see echoes of all the ancient satires explored within the literary and the performative style of Lee's alternative comedy. Stewart Lee's three performances *Stand-Up Comedian*, *90s Comedian*, and *41st Best Stand-Up Ever*, each illustrate a careful balance of the dramatic and anti-dramatic. In addition to this, my analysis of *Jerry Springer: the Opera* reflected on some meta-theatrical devices recognisable from Old Comedy, including direct address and parody. All of this assisted in my approach to his 'serious comedy', where I reflected on the significance of a 'safe-space' to perform and the repercussions when people are offended by his humour, rather than the desired response to laugh.

Within Chapter Six, I was able to reflect on Lee's clear Aristophanic and Juvenalian meta-theatrical influences and also considered how satire has moved on for a twenty-first century audience. I was also able to make a smooth transition from the

[1012] Lee (2010: 9).

recognisably Juvenalian voice of *Satire* Six and *Satire* Nine, to the surprisingly similar comic style of Stewart Lee's alternative comedian mask. I have already highlighted that Lee is one of the most revered alternative comedians of the twentieth and twenty-first century, after the movement's founders, but this is also part of his persona. Much like how Juvenal's satirist persona was never stagnant, Lee also develops and shifts to address his audience with any career successes that impacts the ethos of his stage image. That is not to say Lee specifically works via a Juvenalian model of comedy. He very well might be, but it is more likely that these influences are a result of a trickling down effect of satire and satirical influences from one comedic movement to the next.

To summarise, I began this thesis with the question, why do people laugh? Followed by, what does it mean for different audiences to laugh within the context of their respective comic experiences? These questions are never straightforward, but this thesis has approached them with the view that ancient and modern audience laughter, while unique in many ways, share familiar power dynamics between performer and spectator. Also, I questioned what does it mean for a comic speaker if they are deceptive in their practice? Also, to what extent is deception ironically expected by comic audiences? By reflecting on academic theories on stand-up comedy, specifically the meta-theatrical style of British alternative comedian Stewart Lee, I looked back at ancient satirical practice with this new analytical eye. Each of my case studies showed comic personas that facilitated self-referential laughter as an appropriate response to the materials they engaged with, but bringing us full circle to an age old question about satirical comedy.

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