"Come here, spectators, and share the sacrificial meat with us" (*Peace* 1115-16):
Metatheater as Reinforcement for Pro-Peace Messages in Aristophanes' *Peace*

Peace is Aristophanes' most overtly metatheatrical comedy, and the metatheater underscores the play's pro-peace message. Rather than seeing Aristophanes' politics as unknowable given the "generic demands [of satire] which answer to their own standards of truth and reality" and the "misdirection" required of the comedic process (as does Rosen 2020: 21), I see comedy's generic requirements—metatheatrical commentary by low-status characters—harnessed for political purposes in this play. *Peace* contains a very large number of overtly metatheatrical comments, many of which are delivered by the protagonist Trygaios, the Athenian farmer who flies to heaven on a coprophagous beetle to rescue the goddess Peace. As is true throughout Aristophanic comedy, overtly metatheatrical language in *Peace*—language that explicitly calls attention to a play as a performance in front of a live audience (Slater 1985: 14)—is the province of primarily low-status or abject characters (citation removed for anonymity's sake). These characters include Trygaios, Hermes (who is portrayed as a subordinate watchman despite his godhood at lines 201 and 416-25—see McKeown 2011: 163), three different enslaved characters, and to some extent the comic chorus (who address the audience in the play's parabasis).

Specifically, Trygaios shows his awareness of *Peace* as a comedy—often by using second-person plural verbs to address the audience or otherwise referring to the audience as spectators—in speeches at 149-76, 244, 276-9, 292-4, 473-4, 546-7, 549, 821-3, 877-8, 881, 884-91, 8940908, 962, 967-8, 1021-2, and 1115-16. Hermes uses very similar language in individual speeches at 543-4, 545-6, 548, 603-14, 619-27, 633-48, 658-9, 664-7, and 671. The three metatheatrical enslaved characters address or discuss the audience in speeches at 13-14, 20-1, 43-5, 45-8, 50-5, 883 (twice), 963-5, and 969.

These characters of course establish the usual rapport with the spectators by means of their overtly metatheatrical speeches (Moore 1998). But *Peace* also aims beyond simple rapport. Storey

(2019: 89) rightly argues that the frequent metatheater in the play incorporates the audience into the comedy so they too share in the rewards of a long-awaited and much-desired peace, but overt metatheater in *Peace* also helps bolster the argument for peace in the first place.

The metatheatrical speeches highlight many of the panhellenic or pro-peace messages in the play (as when Trygaios explicitly asserts his goal of panhellenic cooperation during his address to the audience at 292-4), thereby putting to rest the argument that the portrayal of Trygaios' celebrations is ironic, satirical, or deserving of mockery due to its impossibility (e.g. Sulprizio 2013, Kanellakis 2022). *Peace* upholds the precedent established in *Acharnians* of highlighting the experiences of the farmers (*Ach.* 625-7, 632-3) and the otherwise subordinate whose lives are impacted by the decisions of generals and politicians in power (*Ach.* 603-14, 619-27, 632-48). Finally, the subordinate figures of *Peace* are given more frequent opportunities to connect with the audience in the Theater of Dionysos at the City Dionysia, where spectators from across Greece were likely present (Olson 1999: 76 cites Isoc. 8.82 to argue that subject cities likely carried their tribute to the Theater of Dionysus for display during the City Dionysia). Moreover, the setting of *Peace*'s original performance in a moment when a treaty might finally be possible explains why the quantity of overt metatheater in *Peace* far surpasses that in Aristophanes' other plays. When one compares the number of speeches in each Aristophanic comedy that explicitly address the spectators or reveal awareness of the audience, *Peace*'s total of thirty-one such speeches more than doubles the total of fifteen for the second-place *Acharnians*.

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