



PROJECT MUSE®

The Court of Comedy

Wilfred E. Major

Published by The Ohio State University Press

Major, E..

The Court of Comedy: Aristophanes, Rhetoric, and Democracy in Fifth-Century Athens.

Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/27532>

Introduction

Aristotle is working out the characteristics of the discipline of rhetoric (ῥητορικὴ), when he makes a sharp distinction about those attending a speech: ἀνάγκη δὲ τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἢ θεωρὸν εἶναι ἢ κριτὴν, “The listener must be either a spectator or a judge” (*Rhet.* 1.3.2.1358b2–3). He then divides judges into those who judge about the future, as in the Assembly, and those who judge about the past, as jurors in court, but reckons spectators as those who judge merely a speaker’s ability. He delves at length into the mechanisms at play in persuading judges, but spectators disappear from his analysis. According to Aristotle, then, spectators play only a superficial role in the Assembly and courts. In using this terminology, knowingly or not, Aristotle shuts down and dismisses what had been a lively debate two generations earlier, a debate about the deliberative process not only in the Assembly and courts, but also in the Athenian democratic Council and in another venue where spectators routinely rendered judgments—the theater.¹

This debate suffused discussion in a range of genres and public venues for decades, but the year 427 B.C.E. was pivotal. Events of that year proved

1. For a broad discussion about the governing and efficacy of Athenian democracy and deliberation, see Ober (2008). For surveys of the discussions about modern “deliberative democracy,” see Elster (1998) and Gutmann and Thompson (2004). For these issues applied to Aristophanes, see Zumbrennen (2012).

seminal for the history of (comic) drama and of rhetoric, but equally for the history of the Greek world, especially for Athens and its ill-fated imperial ambitions. Two ancient historical accounts of the year, separated by time and perspective, differ in some details but agree that fascination with language in performance shaped the way the Athenians forged their political decisions. The earlier account appears in Thucydides, who wrote his history after his exile from Athens, and with a decade or two of hindsight, but he would still have resided in the city in 427.² The later version Timaeus of Tauromenium composed in the late fourth or early third century B.C.E., thus with no first-hand experience of the events, but bringing a perspective from his native Sicily, a major player in 427, and being able to reflect on the consequences of the year's events for the political and military history of both Athens and Sicily. He also wrote after Aristotle had composed his *Rhetoric*. Timaeus' interpretation lies behind the account preserved in Diodorus, who wrote his version some two centuries later, in the first century B.C.E., by which time rhetoric was a well-established technical industry central to elite education.

The accounts agree that by the end of 427 B.C.E., the Athenians were engaged in a rare winter military campaign, their first military engagement with Sicilian forces, on the Aeolian islands just north of Sicily. Likewise they agree that the campaign was precipitated earlier that year by the city of Leontini seeking support from the Athenians against the domination of Syracuse. Thucydides ascribes the success of the Leontines' appeal to nascent Athenian imperial ambitions in Sicily (3.86). The account of the embassy in Diodorus agrees with the motive offered by Thucydides but adds that the Leontine embassy succeeded because the famous speaker and intellectual Gorgias was the premiere ambassador.³ In Diodorus' account, a dazzling oration in favor of the alliance enthralled the Athenians:

οὔτος οὖν καταντήσας εἰς τὰς Ἀθήνας καὶ παραχθὴς εἰς τὸν δῆμον διελέχθη τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις περὶ τῆς συμμαχίας, καὶ τῶ ξενίζοντι τῆς λέξεως ἐξέπληξε τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ὄντας εὐφυεῖς καὶ φιλολόγους. πρῶτος γὰρ ἐχρήσατο τοῖς τῆς λέξεως σχηματισμοῖς περιττοτέροις καὶ τῇ φιλοτεχνίᾳ διαφέρουσιν, ἀντιθέτοις καὶ ἰσοκώλοις καὶ παρίσοις καὶ ὁμοιοτελεύτοις καὶ τισιν ἑτέροις τοιοῦτοις, ἃ τότε μὲν διὰ τὸ ξένον τῆς κατασκευῆς ἀποδοχῆς ἤξιοῦτο, νῦν δὲ περιεργίαν ἔχειν δοκεῖ καὶ φαίνεται καταγέλαστα πλεονάκις καὶ κατακόρως τιθέμενα.

2. Ober (1998, 94–104) analyzes Thucydides' presentation of the debate in terms of the tensions between democracy and tyranny.

3. [Plato,] *Hippias Major* 282b also mentions this trip and Gorgias' success. This would be more valuable testimony if Platonic authorship were secure, but, if nothing else, it is likely an early specimen of the perspective that the embassy was a triumph for Gorgias himself.

τέλος δὲ πείσας τοὺς Ἀθηναίους συμμαχῆσαι τοῖς Λεοντίνοις, οὗτος μὲν θαυμασθεὶς ἐν ταῖς Ἀθήναις ἐπὶ τέχνῃ ῥητορικῇ τὴν εἰς Λεοντίνους ἐπάνοδον ἐποιήσατο.

Now when he [Gorgias] came down to Athens and was introduced to the people, he engaged in conversation with the Athenians about the alliance, and by the exotic manner of his speech stunned the Athenians, who are clever and love speeches. For he was the first to use structures of speech that were rather unusual, yet lovingly crafted in their unorthodoxy, such as antitheses, equal and balanced clauses, similar endings, and other such things, all of which at that time were received positively because of the exotic nature of the tricks being delivered, but now come across as precious and silly in their fullness, especially when employed excessively. In the end he persuaded the Athenians of an alliance with the Leontines, and, having made his impact in Athens for his rhetorical skill, made his return to Leontini. (12.53.3–5)⁴

Thucydides does not mention Gorgias in his account of the embassy, but his history of the year does include comment on the Athenian mania for the spectacle of a good orator. Following a revolt at Mytilene, debate ensues in Athens about punishment for the rebels. The Assembly voted to execute the entire male population and enslave the rest, but the next day brought renewed debate about the decision. Thucydides here introduces the original bill's sponsor, Cleon, "the most violent of citizens in other respects and by far the most persuasive with the Demos at the time" (ἐς τὰ ἄλλα βιαιότατος τῶν πολιτῶν τῷ τε δήμῳ παρὰ πολὺ ἐν τῷ τότε πιθανώτατος, 3.36.6).⁵ Thucydides has Cleon, in defending his motion, sharply criticize the Athenian fascination with performed speeches:

αἴτιοι δ' ὑμεῖς κακῶς ἀγνοοθετοῦντες, οἵτινες εἰώθατε θεαταὶ μὲν τῶν λόγων γίγνεσθαι, ἀκροαταὶ δὲ τῶν ἔργων, τὰ μὲν μέλλοντα ἔργα ἀπὸ τῶν εὖ εἰπόντων σκοποῦντες ὡς δυνατὰ γίγνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ πεπραγμένα ἤδη, οὐ τὸ δρασθὲν πιστότερον ὄψει λαβόντες ἢ τὸ ἀκουσθὲν, ἀπὸ τῶν λόγῳ καλῶς ἐπιτιμησάντων καὶ μετὰ καινό-

4. All translations are my own, except where indicated.

5. Throughout this book I leave the Greek word δῆμος untranslated, or more accurately, just transliterated as "Demos." I do this because I want to be clear and consistent about when Greek sources use the term, and because no English word corresponds to the sense of the Demos as both the mass populace and the franchised citizen body of Athens. Greek at this time of course has no orthographic means (such as capitalization) to distinguish a generic instance of the word from a formal, legal designation.

τητος μὲν λόγου ἀπατάσθαι ἄριστοι, μετὰ δεδοκιμασμένου δὲ μὴ
 ξυνέπεσθαι ἐθέλειν, δοῦλοι ὄντες τῶν αἰεὶ ἀτόπων, ὑπερόπται δὲ
 τῶν εἰωθότων, καὶ μάλιστα μὲν αὐτὸς εἰπεῖν ἕκαστος βουλόμενος
 δύνασθαι, εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἀνταγωνιζόμενοι τοῖς τοιαῦτα λέγουσι μὴ ὕστε-
 ροὶ ἀκολουθῆσαι δοκεῖν τῇ γνώμῃ, ὀξέως δὲ τι λέγοντος προεπαινέ-
 σαι, καὶ προαισθέσθαι τε πρόθυμοι εἶναι τὰ λεγόμενα καὶ προνοῆσαι
 βραδεῖς τὰ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀποβησόμενα, ζητοῦντές τε ἄλλο τι ὡς εἰπεῖν
 ἢ ἐν οἷς ζῶμεν, φρονοῦντες δὲ οὐδὲ περὶ τῶν παρόντων ἰκανῶς·
 ἀπλῶς τε ἀκοῆς ἡδονῇ ἡσώμενοι καὶ σοφιστῶν θεαταῖς ἐοικότες
 καθημένοις μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ πόλεως βουλευομένοις.

You are to blame for setting up these contests; you are accustomed to being spectators at speeches, mere hearers of deeds. As for deeds to be done, you determine their possibility on the basis of someone's capable speaking, while for what has already been done, you do not consider your sight more reliable than what you have heard, on the basis of someone honoring the past with a pretty speech. Superb at being deceived by the strangeness of an argument, unwilling to agree with a decision even after it has been approved; slaves to the eternally eccentric, despisers of the ordinary, absolutely everyone wants to speak first himself, or if not, to struggle to seem to follow the ideas of those saying all this, to declare praise sooner than someone can say anything, and yet preferring to be eager for what's said while also to be slow about the consequences of it. You seek out something other, so to speak, than the world in which we live; you give insufficient thought to your circumstances. Completely dominated by the pleasure of sound, you resemble seated spectators before performers more than those deliberating about their city. (3.38.4–7)

While there is no doubt that there was a cultural fascination among the Athenians for oratory, these historians differ sharply in tone and context. For Thucydides, the fondness for dynamic public speaking eviscerates the intelligent deliberative process that should guide the city.⁶ Writing with at least some perspective of the later consequences of the events of 427, Thucydides tacitly embeds the idea that the stakes are high. Five seasons into war with Sparta, scarcely two years after the death of Pericles, the Athenians are finally experiencing a reprieve from the plague (which will surge again later in the year) and making decisions that will shape their long-term policies in the

6. For analysis of Thucydides' models of deliberation and democracy, see Pope (1988), Yunis (1991), Zumbrennen (2008) and Foster (2010, 119–220). For debate about this passage's relevance to deliberation on the tragic stage, see Hesk (2011, 121–27) and Heath (2011, 167–69).

war and their relations with the rest of the Greek world. While he is narrowly defeated in his appeal to sustain his motion in favor of executing the Mytilenians, Cleon himself will come to dominate Athenian war policy and lead the city all but irrevocably on a path toward more blunt pursuit of empire. The alliance with Leontini will mushroom into the monstrous and disastrous expedition against Sicily a dozen years later, arguably the decisive turn in the entire Peloponnesian War.

For Timaeus and Diodorus, the embassy from Leontini in 427 not only foreshadows the later Athenian expedition to Sicily but also showcases a fellow Sicilian, and historical hindsight allows them some perspective on Gorgias, specifically that he was a pioneer in the techniques of rhetoric, but his style seemed dated and primitive in a world where education and practice in formal rhetoric was highly technical and professionalized. Still, the later account recognizes the impact that Gorgias' unusual methods of speech making must have had on the Athenians and the long-range legacy of the fascination of Athenian audiences, or spectators, for inventive oratory.

Another Athenian, however, also put on a show for those crowds of spectators in 427 and also commented explicitly and forcefully on the issues raised in both historical accounts: the functioning of the Athenian democracy, the policies Athenians should pursue in war and empire building, the role of public oratory in both, the influence of intellectualism via foreigners, and the flowering of unorthodox language. A young Aristophanes made his debut at the Theater of Dionysus with *Banqueters* (fr. 205–55) that same year, prior to both the debate over Mytilene and the embassy from Leontini. The play involved two young men of markedly different character, “a decent one and a butt-fuck,” as he would refer to them a decade or so later (ὁ σῶφρων τε χῶ καταπύγων, *Clouds* 529).⁷ The repugnant youth competes with an older man regarding language usage. In one fragment, the adolescent challenges his elder on the meaning of words in Homer and Solon (fr. 233). In another (fr. 205), the older man picks at unusual words in the young man's speech and connects them to problematic speakers in the public sphere in Athens.⁸ Some terms he says belong to speakers in the Assembly and courts (ῥητόρων and ξυνηγόρων). Other terms he links to particular speakers. Alcibiades makes an early appearance here, a decade before his crucial role in the Sicilian expedition (cf. fr. 244), as does Thrasymachus, a shadowy figure for modern scholars (aside from the fiery character Plato makes of him in the *Republic*), but repeatedly cited in ancient accounts

7. *Clouds* was originally put on in 423 B.C.E., but this line comes from a section securely assigned to the revision of the play in ca. 417. See Kopff (1990), Storey (1993) and Henderson (1993).

8. See Chapter 2 and the Appendix for text, translation and discussion of this fragment.

of pioneers who developed rhetoric.⁹ Also cited is Lysistratus, but, whatever his reputation in 427, he is almost totally obscure now, even if he is to be identified with other scattered jokes about a Lysistratus in other plays.¹⁰

The obscurity of these references does not reduce the significance and seriousness of the matters Aristophanes addresses. It only reminds us that Aristophanes was writing and reacting to events and people before he could have the historical perspective of Thucydides and other sources years and centuries later. Gorgias had yet to visit Athens, and Aristophanes could not know that the strange turns of language he had already heard and dramatized would come to be reckoned the beginnings of an institutionalized program that would dominate education for more than a millennium. And yet the issues embedded in the brief fragments of Aristophanes' debut signal the same concerns as Thucydides' Cleon, as there is anxiety that showy, troublesome verbiage makes so marked an appearance in the language of public deliberation at Athens. Unfortunately, the remains of *Banqueters* do not permit productive speculation about how far Aristophanes dramatized and commented on the political and cultural stakes at risk in the deployment of this language, but his later career confirms these risks were consistently critical topics for him. After the military season of 427 and after Gorgias' visit, Aristophanes returned to the stage the next year with *Babylonians* (fr. 67–100), which, according to ancient testimony, in some form addressed the issue of Athens' governance of its empire and reportedly drew the ire of Cleon himself. How far and how directly Aristophanes staged and commented on the political institutions of Athens in these first two plays is not clear.¹¹ Based on the eleven surviving plays over the next four decades, it would not be surprising if Aristophanes had earlier dramatized and commented explicitly on the political bodies of the Athenian democracy and what role the new, unorthodox language played in them. Indeed, no extant play fails to address the bundle of issues raised by the historical accounts of 427.

In contrast to the historians, comic playwrights in Athens had to react, comment and develop their perspectives virtually in real time, very much as

9. AS.6–7, 10–11 and 13). Storey (1988) argues that the Thrasymachus of this fragment is not the same man cited in later sources. Cf. the Appendix and Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.1.7.1404a12–16, where Aristotle says Thrasymachus commented on acting.

10. See Olson (2002, 285–86, on *Ach.* 855) for a survey of the problem; cf. the entry in the Appendix.

11. Σ *Ach.* 378 says Cleon brought Aristophanes before the Council. If, as some think, the scholiast had access only to other plays, this report might relate to events in *Babylonians* rather than to historical reality. *Banqueters* (fr. 216) and *Babylonians* (fr. 75) hint at trials in court. For a reconstruction of the feud between Aristophanes and Cleon, along with a helpful survey of relevant bibliography, see Storey (1995).

the speakers and the language were evolving to become, only after Aristophanes' lifetime, a specialized professional discipline and mainstay of political discourse. Such is the paradox and value of Aristophanes as witness and source for the early years of the development of rhetoric: he composed plays about the language without the benefit or restriction of a historical narrative to orient his observations; he embedded the phenomenon in the politics and culture of democratic Athens; he engaged in spectacle of the sort that Thucydides' Cleon finds contemptible; yet his comedies remain the most extensive explicit commentary contemporary with the crucial, but shadowy, invention of rhetoric across the first century of its development.

Thus the historical narratives are fundamentally unlike the testimony of Aristophanes' plays, but the account in Diodorus also typifies a perspective found in almost all surviving testimony about the oratory, speakers and theorists of rhetoric from Aristophanes' lifetime, a narrative structured according to an Aristotelian template: initial creation followed by selective accretion and refinement as a discipline matures into a stable and sophisticated system. Thus Gorgias is a pioneer in some techniques, while other techniques are deprecated as rhetoric advances toward the system later authors could take for granted. By contrast, the attack Aristophanes mounts in 427 takes place well before our major sources composed their characterizations of Gorgias and his contemporary intellectuals, characterizations that became canonical. Plato, for example, was still an infant, decades away from launching his own historical narratives, which would relegate the thought and expression of Gorgias, Protagoras and others to the margins, and beyond, of productive intellectual pursuit. It is after Aristophanes' career is over that Plato, Isocrates, Alcidas and others define and marginalize "Sophists" as those engaged in ephemeral verbal trickery.¹² Still later, when Aristotle composes the *Rhetoric* and includes an anthology of the development of rhetorical theory and practice, he inherits this formulation, new and old written sources are available to him, and he can take for granted that rhetoric is a discipline of fundamental civic and pedagogical importance. While Aristotle cites scripts of some plays for examples of rhetorical tropes, he scarcely looks to fifth-century Greek comedy for examples of rhetorical language, and never for historical context.¹³

12. On Plato's separation of "rhetoric" from philosophy, see McCoy (2007); and on Plato's engagement with drama and other genres in demarcating *philosophia*, see Nightingale (1995). On the way Plato construes drama as public rhetorical performance, see D. Carter (2011). For analogous studies of Isocrates and Aristotle, see McCabe (1994), Schiappa (1999, 162–201) and Haskins (2004). For Alcidas in this context, see Muir (2001, vii–xv). On the issue more broadly, see Wardy (2009).

13. Aristotle cites *Babylonians* (fr. 92) for diminutives (*Rhet.* 3.2.15.1405b28–32) and a line

Except for imaginative extrapolations, scholarship during the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods hewed closely to Aristotle's narrative of rhetoric's birth and first century of development.¹⁴ Until recently, modern scholarship maintained this allegiance to Aristotle, both in the way scholars narrated the development of techniques and in the way they evaluated and characterized early practitioners, as well as the exclusion of comedy, except for comparison of Aristophanes' *Clouds* to Plato's narrative of the antinomy between Socrates and the now so-called early Sophists.¹⁵ In recent decades, however, scholars have engaged in a substantial revision of Aristotle's narrative and of his evaluation of intellectual activity in the fifth century.

The intellectuals now termed the Older Sophists have enjoyed a considerable rise in their stock.¹⁶ Many hands have contributed to this resurgence, but G. B. Kerferd's work provides a sober review of the vicissitudes of the Sophists' reputation and has generated pragmatic approaches for subsequent study. As Kerferd illustrates, the Sophists long suffered at the hands of scholars and philosophers whose axiomatic precepts made them predisposed to fall in line with the criticisms leveled by Plato and Aristotle.¹⁷ Conversely, in the last two decades, the ideas of the Sophists have benefited from recent schools of thought that allow greater interface with the intellectual challenges posed by Gorgias and others. In part, this has fostered a cottage industry in using the fragmentary, but provocative, remains of the Sophists' writings to articulate a sort of "sophistic rhetoric" for the modern, or post-modern, world.¹⁸ The current study, however, seeks rather to

from an unspecified play of Aristophanes (fr. 649) for an antithesis (3.9.9.1410a28–29). Cf. Chapter 2 on Pericles for Aristotle's swipe at comic poets generally.

14. Cicero (*De inv.* 2.2.6) says that in his day, because of the success of Aristotle's summary history of early rhetoric, *nemo illorum praecepta ex ipsorum libris cognoscat, sed omnes, qui quod illi praecipiant velint intellegere, ad hunc quasi ad quendam multo commodiorem explicatorem revertantur*, "No one learns the precepts [of Aristotle's predecessors] from their own writings, but those who wish to know what principles they espoused come back to him [Aristotle] for a far more amenable explanation." Extant references to the early history of rhetoric are consistent with Cicero's characterization. Cf. Cole (1991b).

15. For typical examples of citing Aristophanes with respect to Plato's disparagement of Sophists, see McCoy (2007, 12, 39, 79 and 165, in contrast to Plato) and Romilly (1992, 83–89 and 134–43, supporting Plato). For an example of using Aristophanes to construct a modern critique of Socrates, see Nussbaum (1980).

16. The issue of who was a "Sophist" in antiquity is fraught with controversy, on which see Kerferd (1981, 42–58) and Schiappa (2003, 3–12). Because this study focuses on comedy's reaction to rhetoric, I am less concerned with whether any given individual should properly be reckoned a Sophist, although I will analyze comedy's use of the term σοφιστής in Chapter 2 and the Appendix. In any case, my aim is to cite and discuss any individual identified in comedy with speech making and language theory, regardless of whether the label "Sophist" applies.

17. Kerferd (1981, 4–12).

18. On the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, see Schiappa (1990b) and (1991). For an example of an updated version of this approach applied to democratic theory, see Crick (2010).

delineate the impact of intellectual investigation into language, including the techniques used in practical settings, against the political and cultural background of democratic Athens in the fifth century B.C.E. The contributions of this study to the reconstruction of a “sophistic rhetoric” should be construed as limited to two areas: making the evidence of Aristophanes and other fifth-century comic texts available and accessible for use in such reconstruction, and, in the process, clarifying the limits of historical reconstruction, since the study of the fragmentary remains of the Sophists’ writing sometimes leads to claims that in the fifth century certain topics and techniques abided, when consulting other ancient sources strongly argues against such claims.¹⁹

When it comes to historical reconstruction, however, no component of the study of the Sophists has perhaps undergone so extensive a revision as that of the early history of rhetoric. The key points of the birth and development of rhetoric, from the mid-fifth century down to the mid-fourth century, that is, prior to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, remained remarkably consistent from antiquity through most of the twentieth century.²⁰ The narrative begins on Sicily in the middle of the fifth century, where Corax and Tisias, in response to the pragmatic needs of the political environment, began laying out the precepts of speech composition and persuasive speaking. These precepts migrated to Athens via traveling teachers and intellectuals like Gorgias, along with a philosophical view that effective persuasion was an acceptable goal in itself, even at the expense of truth or justice. Plato reacted to this emerging tradition by separating rhetoric from philosophy proper and undermining the Sophists’ claims to philosophical coherence. Later, Aristotle would acknowledge the risk of rhetoric, if someone “bent the ruler” (εἴ τις ᾗ μέλλει χρῆσθαι κανόνι, τοῦτον ποιήσειε στρεβλόν, *Rhet* 1.1.5.1354a) to deceive a jury (by making them angry, for example), but nevertheless offered a historical model for the development of rhetoric and an elaborate taxonomy of techniques, a summation of three generations of speakers refining various techniques and strategies.²¹ For scholars following and detailing

19. An *argumentum ex silentio* is always difficult, but even so, reasonable caution and precision can be expected. For example, Consigny (2001, 43–44) makes a claim for the centrality of *kairos* to Gorgias’ thought, but none of the texts he cites even use the term. It is one thing to acknowledge that ancient testimony indicates that Gorgias wrote about *kairos* (82 B13 DK), and even to attempt to reconstruct how such an idea fit into Gorgias’ thought, but it is quite another to operate as if we have any text where Gorgias discusses the concept or even deploys the term. The presence, absence and limitations of meaning of key terms will be a recurring topic in this study.

20. Schiappa (1999, 3–10) catalogues seventeen points of agreement in the “standard” or “traditional” scholarly account of rhetoric prior to Aristotle.

21. On the unity of the *Rhetoric*, see Gross and Dascal (2001). On the problematic history of scholarship on the purpose and unity of the *Rhetoric*, see Poster (1997).

this scenario, the teaching of persuasive rhetoric was reckoned central to the Sophists' mission and fundamental for their popularity and success.

Since 1990, however, a new narrative has emerged. First, the centrality of rhetoric to the Sophists' teaching vanished with the recognition that there was effectively no evidence that the group of fifth-century intellectuals agreed on much of any central doctrine, that some of them were not known to have explored anything that could be construed as rhetoric, and that they did not promote doctrines consistent with what their later detractors held them responsible for. Indeed, the very word "rhetoric" (ῥητορικὴ) was not available until well into the fourth century.²²

A much less centralized and more diverse picture of the intellectual debate about language in the fifth century was now possible. Independently of each other, in 1991 Thomas Cole and Edward Schiappa offered fundamentally revised versions of the development of rhetoric prior to Aristotle.²³ Each in different ways saw Plato as a key figure in declaring rhetoric a focalized point of inquiry, not as reacting to an established discipline. For both scholars, Aristotle was thus capitalizing on a relatively recent development in having the techniques of speech composition and language manipulation formalized, but more importantly, in writing the *Rhetoric*, more than cataloguing established practices, Aristotle was actively shaping the history and methods of rhetoric into a system.²⁴ Thus, prior to Plato's inventive conceptual work (especially in *Phaedrus*), the study of "rhetoric" was fundamentally distinct from what followed and not simply a rudimentary core of what would become the taxonomy promulgated by Aristotle. For Cole, the explorations into language were "proto-rhetorical" at most and involved much more basic experiments with language against the backdrop of a transition from orality to literacy.²⁵ For Schiappa, the fifth century was an open marketplace of ideas in competition to determine the scope and methods for language exploration. Inspired by Kuhn's analysis of the way scientific research programs develop, collapse and reconstitute, Schiappa reckons Plato and Aristotle as key figures in establishing the "normal" research protocols for a new discipline, "rhetoric," but that the generation prior to Plato was engaged in much different work, reacting against their own predecessors

22. Schiappa (1990a), *pace* the objections of O'Sullivan (1993); cf. Schiappa (1994) and Pendrick (1998).

23. Cole (1991a) and Schiappa (2003, revised from 1991 edition).

24. See Wise (2008) for an analysis of Aristotle's *Poetics* that similarly finds him reacting to drama more as it was practiced in his own day than to fifth-century practice. Cf. the response to this thesis in Hanink (2011).

25. Cole (1991a, esp. 71–94). For convenience, I adopt his term "proto-rhetorical" for the cultural investigation into language that Old Comedy dramatizes and satirizes (cf. the Appendix).

(pre-Socratics like Parmenides, for example), and pursuing a wide range of intellectual exploration, much of it tied to the limits and capabilities of human speech.²⁶

The reaction to Cole's and Schiappa's work has been debate and division, with scholars acknowledging, extending or rejecting the new narrative. Thus some engaged in the process of reconstituting the significance of what was rhetoric for the Sophists continue to push their characterizations beyond the traditional narrative, even if they do not necessarily follow Cole and Schiappa.²⁷ Some persist with the traditional model.²⁸ Others extend the new ideas into new areas, such as Ekaterina Haskins, who revisits the role of orality and literacy in Isocrates and Aristotle, and Michael de Brauw, who wrestles with the consequences of the new model for technical aspects of speeches, while David Timmerman, Schiappa and Christopher Tindale extend the theoretical discussion and probe the analytical consequences for our understanding additional fourth-century texts about rhetoric and the Sophists.²⁹

Any stand in this debate involves characterizing what was transpiring with "rhetoric" (however defined) and language in the decades immediately prior to Plato's writings on the subject.³⁰ As productive as the discussion has been, it has remained limited in some respects. While an increasing number of texts have been brought to bear, these have been limited almost entirely to prose writings by and about the intellectuals in the debate. This choice already critically circumscribes the debate, since the choice to write technical prose in the fifth and fourth centuries was to declare allegiance to a certain range of cultural priorities.³¹ So in some ways modern scholars work with a more limited type of sources than even Aristotle did, for drama, historiography and oratory play limited or no roles as resources for current attempts to understand the theory and practice at the time.³² Needless to say, Aristotle's disregard for comedy persists. Once again, then, the testimony of Aristophanes is critical but underutilized, although his career, indeed the entire heyday of Old Comedy, spans exactly the period when rhetoric was

26. Schiappa (2003, esp. 77–81, 157–62) and (1999, esp. 10–13).

27. See Poulakos (1995) in general; Consigny (2001) and McComiskey (2002) on Gorgias; Mendelson (2002) on Protagoras.

28. Wardy (1996); Usher (1999); Pernot (2005).

29. Haskins (2004); Poulakos and Depew (2004); de Brauw (2007); Timmerman and Schiappa (2010); Tindale (2010).

30. For various recent perspectives on this debate and time frame, see Schiappa and Hamm, Gagarin, and Bons, all in Worthington (2007).

31. Cole (1991a, 115–38).

32. For some surveys, see Roisman (on Homer), Clay (on Hesiod), McDonald (on tragedy) and Fox and Livingstone (on historiography), in Worthington (2007). For Hubbard's contribution on comedy in the latter volume, see below.

said to have been birthed and developed. Unlike other authors of the period, however, he discusses the phenomenon explicitly and as it happens.

Scholarship on Aristophanes, in turn, has made limited exploration of the importance of rhetoric in his plays. Well before the sea change in the appreciation for the Sophists and the revision of the historical narrative of early rhetoric, Charles Murphy contributed some initial analysis of rhetoric in Aristophanes.³³ Consistent with the prevailing narrative of early rhetoric at the time, Murphy studies Aristophanes' plays for evidence of core techniques and structures from canonical rhetoric, quadripartite division and so on. He offers the provisional conclusion that Aristophanes was aware of basic core techniques and deployed them, and Murphy appends schematics of speeches from the plays to illustrate his point. No one continued Murphy's work for fifty years, until Maria de Fátima Sousa e Silva explored the topic again.³⁴ While she brings more text to bear, including fragments, her analysis and conclusions effectively repeat Murphy's tentative conclusions.

In the wake of the challenge of Cole and Schiappa, there has been an uptick in attention paid to rhetoric in Aristophanes, but of a limited or reactionary nature. D. M. MacDowell's survey of Aristophanes was the first to include a section about rhetoric in Aristophanes, however brief.³⁵ Neil O'Sullivan has been aggressive not only in rejecting challenges to the traditional narrative but also in contending that Greek comedy deployed formal critical terminology with regard to rhetoric and literary language, terminology that persisted in Hellenistic scholarship.³⁶ Subsequently Thomas Hubbard has come out upholding the idea that comedy reflects formal, organized rhetorical practice.³⁷

O'Sullivan and Hubbard each approach the challenges of Cole and Schiappa by analyzing comedy of the fifth century to cull evidence for active rhetorical theory and practice reflected in the plays. In doing so, they share a methodology that skews their selection of comic material and their interpretation of the evidence in the plays. Both work backward from later models and theories of rhetoric and formal criticism, from periods when the terminology, infrastructure and evidence are much more detailed and extensive than they are for the fifth century, the period of the comic sources they mine. Focusing on somewhat different details, each cites terms and other supposed

33. Murphy (1938).

34. Sousa e Silva (1987–88).

35. MacDowell (1995, 131–32).

36. O'Sullivan (1992), (1993); cf. Rosen (2004), Hunter (2009, 10–52) and Pontani (2009). Bers (1997) provides some close technical readings on the reproduction of speech in drama.

37. Hubbard (2007).

parallels in Aristophanes, which they claim illustrate that components of rhetorical theory or analogous tools of rhetorical analysis are referred to in the plays. Such vestiges then become evidence for some disciplinary activity in the fifth century comparable to post-Aristotelian activity.

The issue of terminology encapsulates the debate, in that all sides agree that the presence and usage of formal terminology, sometimes called “meta-language,” is crucial for arguing the presence or absence of formal analytical activity. O’Sullivan argues at length that comedy, and Aristophanes’ *Frogs* in particular, feature terminology that has a long tail of influence in later stylistic criticism, itself under the umbrella of rhetorical theory. Hubbard asserts that theoretical analysis could have been conducted that would not likely have survived in our written sources but that nonetheless “comedy clearly shows speakers engaged in self-conscious linguistic and discursive strategies.”³⁸ The weakness of Hubbard’s position becomes clear when he discusses specific terminology. He concedes there is nothing in Aristophanes comparable to the jargon found a century later in comedy.³⁹ Among words in comedy that “probably refer to current rhetorical terms,” he finds only four, and only one holds up under scrutiny. Hubbard cites προοίμια from *Knights* 1343, but the context makes clear that it refers not to the first section of a speech (its meaning in canonical rhetorical theory later), but to a greeting, its standard meaning in the fifth century. The Sausage-Seller (now revealed as Agoracritus) is describing the earlier behavior of the Demos:

πρῶτον μὲν, ὁπότε’ εἶποι τις ἐν τ’ ἠκκλησίᾳ,
 “ὦ Δῆμ’, ἔραστῆς εἰμι σὸς φιλῶ τέ σε
 καὶ κήδομαί σου καὶ προβουλεύω μόνος,”
 τούτοις ὁπότε χρήσαιτό τις προοιμίῳ,
 ἄνωρτάλιζες κ’ ἄκερουτίας.

First, whenever someone in the Assembly said,
 “O Demos, I am your lover and I love you,
 And I care about you and I’m the only one who cares for your welfare,”
 Whenever anyone used *greetings* like this,
 You would flap your wings and shake your horns. (*Kn.* 1340–44)

38. Hubbard (2007, 491) presents this argument as if it were one Cole and Schiappa would dispute; in fact, both agree that speakers engaged in techniques of persuasion, but each in his different way (despite Hubbard conflating them) finds this activity fundamentally distinct from the industry of rhetorical analysis a century later, a distinction Hubbard denies but does not discuss.

39. Hubbard (2007, 503); cf. Cratinus Jr. fr. 7.

Another term, τεκμήριον, is not technical at all. It is the word rhetoricians and orators use for “evidence,” but it is the only noun available (as opposed to a number of verbs meaning “show,” “demonstrate,” etc.) and as such not formal or technical, but simply the standard word for referring to evidence. Nothing in its usage suggests it has a more restricted meaning in rhetorical contexts or that untrained speakers and audiences would have used any other, nontechnical word in its place. Hubbard speculates that Aristophanes in *Banqueters* (fr. 205) satirizes a term associated with Thrasy-machus, ὑποτεκμήριον. The term is merely an inference from the verb in the fragment; the noun is unattested and the verb, ὑποτεκμαίρη, is scarcely attested except in this passage, which suggests that it is, like other words in the same passage, a coinage by Aristophanes mocking the unorthodox vocabulary of certain notorious speakers.⁴⁰ No one denies that intellectuals of the time deployed language in unorthodox ways and that comic poets took note of these eccentricities. Nonetheless, just because language use is unorthodox or speakers are talking about the differences does not mean their analysis of language corresponds to rhetorical theory of a century later. In all of surviving fifth-century comedy, only one word potentially corresponds to its usage in canonical rhetoric, ἀντίθετον.⁴¹

O’Sullivan makes a more complex argument, but with the same fundamental flaws. He seizes mostly on metaphors used in comedy to describe language, speaking and style. Terms describing loud and boisterous speakers also turn up in later authors describing style (e.g., ψόφος, “noisy,” and variations on βρεντᾶν, “thundering”), from which O’Sullivan concludes the key terms in such metaphors were in fact nascent critical terminology that later rhetoricians and scholars inherited and used as formal analytical vocabulary. This conclusion goes well beyond the evidence. O’Sullivan does identify some parallels in terminology and metaphor between Aristophanes and rhetoricians of later times, but he never addresses the limitations of such parallels. It does not require formal critical analysis for a comic poet, or a Hellenistic scholar for that matter, to describe the language of a verbose speaker as some sort of storm or concise language as “thin” (λεπτός).⁴² D. Müller, by contrast, makes the case that much metaphorical language in Aristophanes is parody, posing a fundamental challenge to O’Sullivan’s

40. Pollux 9.151 uses the verb, but it does not illuminate this passage. Cf. Bonanno (1983, 62–63).

41. Aristophanes fr. 341 (not *antithesis*, as Hubbard quotes it). The fragment might be a later gloss and not fifth-century language at all. See the entries in the Appendix for this and the other terms discussed here.

42. O’Sullivan (1992, 107–23).

argument, in that Aristophanes' metaphors thus have a consistent, immediate referent in the dramas and orators being parodied, not in a system of formal vocabulary for criticism.⁴³ More recently, Andreas Willi probes the nature and limits of "technical language" in Old Comedy and finds that the technical vocabulary of literary criticism, even in *Frogs*, is all but lacking.⁴⁴ Ultimately, O'Sullivan has no more explicit or direct evidence than Hubbard that references to language or style in fifth-century comedy imply a formal analytical system. The persistence of some of the metaphors isolated by O'Sullivan can indicate that later critics used at least some of these metaphors to the point that they became ossified as technical terms,⁴⁵ but as far as fifth-century comedy is concerned, O'Sullivan's parallels at most suggest that later rhetoricians and scholars, because of their familiarity with classical texts, invoked, and expected their readers to recognize, metaphors culled from Aristophanes.

The arguments of O'Sullivan and Hubbard perhaps gain some traction among scholars because their conclusions are attractive. Proposing a direct parallel in comedy to canonical rhetoric offers greater hope of understanding and systematizing the interpretive work taking place in Aristophanes, in drama in general and in fifth-century Athens more broadly, and if that system has direct descendants in later writings, then the system and the diachronic progression of it offer more intelligibility for scholars. Moreover, with fragmentary material, such a model offers hope that we can organize scattered terminology in a systematic way and that fragments can be placed in some kind of relation to each other in the large puzzle of ancient comedy, drama and antiquity. This is much more appealing than the image of terminology that is simply not part of a larger system, which was deployed *ad hoc* and for a much more immediate and irrecoverable cultural context, and with no demonstrable *Nachleben*.

What hurts the efforts of O'Sullivan and Hubbard most is that they comb through comedy searching for and selecting material that fits the more familiar systems from later periods. Neither seeks to establish how fifth-century comedy treats the developments in language, the manners of speakers and the contexts in the plays, before they build a case around par-

43. Müller (1974). O'Sullivan (1992, 123 n. 112) finds Müller's conclusions "questionable" but offers no reason his own method is more reliable.

44. Willi (2003, 51–95, esp. 87–94). Willi responds to Denniston (1927) rather than to O'Sullivan, but the principle is the same. Willi concludes: "On the whole very little supports the claim that *Frogs* makes much use of an established technical language of literary criticism" (92). For a more sophisticated view of the genesis of literary criticism, see Ford (2002, esp. 188–208).

45. Hunter (2009) pursues this idea.

ticulars. Playwrights of all places and times, of course, dramatize events to reflect and comment on the world they experience. Aristophanes and his contemporaries dramatized trials, debates and other occasions where speakers employed persuasive language, but doing so does not require an established or nascent formalized system of critical terminology to describe speech making. Aeschylus dramatized persuasive speech making in the *Eumenides* in 458 B.C.E., and no scholar seriously contends that these speeches correspond to the canonical methods of a rhetorical speech, but, even though nothing in comedy corresponds any better, the idea that comedy must reflect formal rhetoric persists, primarily because the (inaccurate) historical progression promulgated by Aristotle contends it should.

Integrating Aristophanes' testimony into the narrative of early rhetoric requires analyzing his examples and comments in the context of his dramatization of the sociopolitical life of the Athenian democracy, for all his comments come in this context.⁴⁶ In this area, scholarly debate about Aristophanes' role, oriented with respect to the ideology of the Athenian democracy, has become lively. The same year Murphy's article on rhetoric in Aristophanes appeared, A. W. Gomme declared politics in Aristophanes a "threadbare topic," but the following decades have found scholars ever increasingly taking stands and elaborating reasons for and against claiming Aristophanes' allegiance to some political orientation.⁴⁷ While scholars in antiquity could associate Aristophanes' harsh treatment of public figures with the freedom of democracy, modern scholarship began by aligning Aristophanes with oligarchic and antidemocratic sympathies.⁴⁸ Jeffrey Henderson proposed a model wherein stage comedy serves as a safe venue to voice ideas fraught with ideological and political tension in the democracy.⁴⁹ In this sense, Aristophanes plays a role in the democratic process rather than criticizes it.⁵⁰ Into this fray Malcolm Heath issued a bracing and valuable

46. See Rhodes (1986, esp. 140–41) for the significance of speech making in Athenian politics in the later decades of the fifth century.

47. Gomme (1938).

48. For ancient examples of testimony that Aristophanes and Old Comedy represented democracy, see T62, 65–67, 80, 83b in PCG. Müller-Strübing (1873) is the starting point for modern discussion of Aristophanes' political orientation as oligarchic, but the most-often-cited modern expression of the idea is Ste Croix (1972); cf. the surveys in Henderson (1990), Walsh (2009) and Olson (2010a). For a refutation specifically of Ste Croix, see Pritchard (2012).

49. Henderson (1990).

50. Henderson (1998b) revisits and amplifies his model. Burian (2011) focuses on tragedy (cf. Chapter 6) but offers a generalized model comparable to Henderson's. Cf. Christ (1998, 104–17) on sycophancy in comedy, which, while playing on class tensions and aristocratic criticisms of democracy, nonetheless belongs to the broader civic ideology of Athens. Konstan (2010) analyzes Aristophanes' critique of Athens' war policy along the same lines. Rothfield (1999) argues, primarily out of passion,

critique of the criteria and argumentation employed by many in the debate, and pointed to several areas where the discussion merits more sustained and coherent analysis: comparison between public speakers on Aristophanes' stage and evidence from extant oratory, the presence or lack of discernible policies advocated or deprecated in Aristophanes' plays, and the imprecision of declaring the cultural and historical context for the reception of comedy by Aristophanes' audiences.⁵¹ More recently, scholars have capitalized on work involving ideology, rhetoric and the ritual construction of citizenship.⁵² Here again disparate conclusions continue. James McGlew finds comic protagonists, in pursuing their individual desire for pleasure,⁵³ oppose the aristocratically imposed ideal of physical and ethical self-restraint, while D. Rosenbloom finds comedy a component of criticism of democratic hegemony because it marginalizes the "new elite" as *ponēroi*.⁵⁴

The focus on how citizens individually and collectively defined themselves through civic processes finds overlap with scholarship on rhetoric. Drawing on sociology and anthropology, scholars have constructed nuanced models for how citizens in democratic Athens, by participating as a group in ritualized collective decision making, both in political institutions (Assembly, Council, court) and theater, established, maintained and perpetuated the democracy. Josiah Ober and Barry Strauss provide a useful paradigm for comparing such rituals in the form of courtroom oratory and stage drama, even from different periods, leading to a productive cross-examination of each.⁵⁵

The performance of ritual also requires a link to one more emerging strand in scholarship on ancient drama, that of performance criticism. Especially for tragedy, scholars have become increasingly imaginative with, and

for democratic partisanship. Sidwell (2009) proposes a democratic Aristophanes on the strength of an elaborate sequence of comic poets manipulating each other's identities in their plays, a scenario that strains credibility. Cf. Storey (2003, 281–88).

51. Heath (1998). Sommerstein (2005) responds to one of Heath's challenges by articulating practical enactments preferred in Aristophanes' vision of an "anti-democracy." Heath's critique is especially sharp toward Goldhill (1991, 167–22) and relevant to supporters of the idea of comedy in an insulated "carnival" environment. On the "carnival" model, see the survey in Reinders (2001, 10–14). Spielvogel (2003) attempts to make Aristophanes a moderate between the extremes of the Old Oligarch and radical democrats. B. Zimmermann (2005) tries to redefine the question with Freudian theory. Robson's (2009, 162–87) introductory essay on Aristophanes may suggest that currently the view of Aristophanes as antidemocratic still predominates. For orators' use of comedy, see Harding (1994) and Pontani (2009).

52. For example, Davidson (1997) and Zumbrunnen (2012).

53. McGlew (2002).

54. Rosenbloom (2002).

55. Ober and Strauss (1990), which builds on Ober (1989); cf. the overview of this sort of work in Wohl (2009).

sensitive to, the degree and manner in which ancient Greek playwrights constructed meaning on stage in addition to, and even in contradiction to, the direct verbal expression preserved in our scripts. Comedy has come rather later to the game, but full-length treatments of performance in comedy by Martin Revermann and Alan Hughes indicate much productive work is to come.⁵⁶ Such analysis will be critical for full description and analysis of Aristophanes' treatment of rhetoric and speakers in his plays. His comedies feature far more than verbal examples of political and rhetorical speech making. In four of the extant plays, Aristophanes stages parodies of the Assembly in action: *Acharnians*, *Knights*, *Thesmophoriazusaes* and *Ecclesiazusaes*. The deliberations of the Council constitute a reported scene in *Knights*, and the authority of the Council is crucial for the plots of *Peace*, *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusaes*. The courts are the subject of routine jokes, in addition to generating virtually the entire plot of *Wasps*. Most famously and notoriously, Aristophanes builds most of an entire play, *Clouds*, around the perpetuation of such language. Indeed, every single extant play comments on speakers and language in relation to the function of the Athenian *polis* as a political and cultural system.⁵⁷ Aristophanes is not shy about blurring the distinction between the activity on stage and the functioning of these institutions outside the theater, such as when the personified *Theoria* in *Peace* is restored to the members of the Council seated in their prescribed area in the theater itself.

This study aims to weave together all these strands of scholarship to argue three overlapping points. (1) The references to orators and theorizing about rhetoric in Old Comedy confirm the newer paradigm of the early development of rhetoric, namely, that in the fifth century there was competition among intellectuals to determine the modes of formal analysis of language, not yet focalized under the rubric "rhetoric," but that rival models did not (as traditional histories do) concentrate on the arrangement of parts of speeches and the like. (2) Aristophanes and some other comic playwrights, initially at least, considered the use of proto-rhetorical language as inimical to the democratic process, but, following the challenges to the Athenian democracy in the wake of the disaster of the Sicilian expedition, Aristophanes reframes the problem as what formal rhetorical techniques the *Demos* should allow as a component of democratic debate. (3) Aristophanes' stance toward proto-rhetorical devices, and his depiction of Athenian democratic institutions more broadly, indicate he fundamentally operates within the mechanisms

56. Revermann (2006); Hughes (2012); and cf. Scharffenberger (2008).

57. See the Appendix for a catalog of these scenes.

of internal criticism of the Athenian democracy and not external, oligarchic opposition to it. These arguments unfold over six chapters, which proceed chronologically.

In the first chapter, “Sicilian Pioneers of Comedy and Rhetoric and Their Transmission to Athens,” both stage comedy and rhetoric are reputed to have their earliest expression in the cities of Sicily in the mid-fifth century. Reliable information about the importance of developments on Sicily for the exponents of both rhetoric and comedy in Athens is scarce, but some links and parallels are worth exploring. The tradition of the Sicilians Corax and Tisias as “inventors” of rhetoric is now mostly discredited, but the intellectual milieu of Sicily certainly had an impact on Athens when Gorgias made his famous visit in 427 B.C.E. The relationship between Sicilian comedy and Athenian comedy is even less clear, but writings of the comic playwright Epicharmus would eventually reach Athens, at least in the form of philosophical forgeries. Among the genuine fragments of Epicharmus’ comedies, there is at least one example of a play staging the deployment of subversive reasoning (of a type later linked with “rhetoric”) used by a character in a sympotic and then forensic context. The forgeries under the name Epicharmus can explain why in fourth-century Athens there were also hesitant references to Tisias as a pioneer of rhetoric.

In Chapter 2, “Old Comedy and Proto-Rhetoric in Athens before 425 B.C.E.: The Age of Pericles,” a survey of the fragments confirms the revised history, which expects that there is no established technical vocabulary referring to rhetoric and speech making. References to oratory in the fragments of Athenian comedy are dominated by Pericles. The references to him as a powerful, booming Olympian all turn on his speech making. Consistently in comedy, Pericles’ effective use of public speaking marks a contravention of the democratic process rather than a component of it. By 426 B.C.E., Pericles is dead, new politicians are on the rise, Gorgias has made a successful and popular visit delivering speeches in his new, unorthodox prose style, and Aristophanes recognizes that quirky new language in public speaking is having a cultural impact on Athens.

The next chapter, “The Young Comic Playwrights Attack, 425–421 B.C.E.,” capitalizes on the survival of a complete extant play of Aristophanes for each year in the period 425–421 B.C.E. (*Acharnians*, *Knights*, *Clouds*, *Wasps* and *Peace*) and a handful of suggestive fragments, which constitute the most thoroughly documented period for tracing how stage comedy reacted to the emerging changes in public speaking and how Aristophanes portrayed that language in operation in the democratic institutions of Athens, at a time of considerable internal debate and stress. In *Acharnians*, before his protago-

nist Dicaeopolis departs from the daily reality of Athens, Aristophanes stages the dysfunctional deliberations of the Assembly and has his chorus make sharp comments about the new aggressive and unfair language being used by young prosecutors in the courts. While scholars have previously focused on Dicaeopolis' speech to the chorus as an example of a formally arranged specimen of rhetoric, it does not in fact conform to canonical principles. The real lesson in oratory is that when Dicaeopolis engages in the proper democratic deliberative process, he succeeds wildly, but he must conduct deliberations outside of their proper venue (the Assembly) to do so. The next year, in *Knights*, Aristophanes stages the action of the Assembly and analyzes the relationship between deceptive public speech and the proper decision-making process of the Demos. Crucial in the play is that, unfettered by deceptive and undemocratic speech, the judgment of the Demos will be sound, and the city will prosper. Next, *Clouds* turns to the underpinnings of the theorizing behind the new formal language. Aristophanes puts two Logoi on stage (in a way implicitly linked to Protagoras' famous opposing *logoi*) in order to reveal the moral damage caused by them (rather than allowing them to be morally neutral accounts of experience). Although the morally dubious qualities of the reasoning of the Sophists were established *topoi* later, *Clouds* in fact is our earliest example of transforming an idea of the Sophists from one morally neutral to one morally threatening to the community. Aristophanes returns to the language of political institutions in *Wasps*, where he again asserts that the judgment of the Demos, and hence the operation of the courts, will function properly once "rhetorical" and undemocratic speech making is removed from the equation. Finally, in *Peace*, Aristophanes celebrates the removal of the very sort of speakers whose deceptive and destructive speech making has hurt the city, and dramatizes a functioning Council and a prosperous city.

For the next chapter, "The Years of Confidence, 420–412 B.C.E.," only one complete play and a number of fragments are available, but they suggest a turn in the comic poets' perception of public speech. Eupolis in *Demes* reconstitutes Athenians of the past, notably including now a positive reference to Pericles as a powerful speaker (fr. 102). In the present, Alcibiades is now the speaker with an eerie ability to inspire Athenians with his speech, but references in comedy are too scanty to assess the early reaction on the comic stage. More important is the aggressive persuasion of Peisetaerus in *Birds*, where flattering speech considered undemocratic in the previous decade is now positive, because it is congruent with the imperial ambitions of the Athenian Demos.

In Chapter 5, “Crawling from the Wreckage, 411 B.C.E.,” following the disaster in Sicily, the judgment of the Demos comes under new suspicion and threats. The Demos allows for the creation of the committee of Probouloi to rein in the Demos’ own power. Oligarchic factions gain momentum, culminating in the violent coup of 411. The Probouloi and the various incarnations of the short-lived oligarchy all had a central ideological core: that the decision-making process for Athens should be restricted to fewer hands than that of the entire collective Demos. In this environment, Aristophanes stages *Lysistrata*, which supports expanding, rather than contracting, the number of those entrusted with contributing to the deliberative process. Women, legally barred from participating as citizens, appear as sober, devout and responsible administrators. Lysistrata’s central speech calls for casting an even wider net to draw in as many people as possible to guide the city. The Proboulos, the official symbolizing the bottleneck in the deliberative process, is ridiculed and drummed off the stage. Lysistrata’s speech making calls for the Demos’ renewed authority. Then *Thesmophoriazusae* dramatizes a parody of the Athenian Assembly. Now formal speech in the Assembly functions in support of democratic decision making. In the atmosphere of the oligarchic government, Aristophanes dramatizes the functioning Assembly only among women at a closed festival, but it is a smoothly functioning democratic institution, not an oligarchic one.

In Chapter 6, “Tongues, *Frogs*, and the Last Stand,” on the eve of the end of the Peloponnesian War, the ensuing reign of terror of the Thirty and the reconstituted democracy, Aristophanes staged another play that probed the foundations of public language in theory and practice, and specifically the moral hazard involved. Before *Frogs*, Euripides, while not a threatening figure, was long linked with sophistic reasoning and language in Aristophanes and other comic playwrights, but his recent departure from Athens, and the democracy’s renewed interest in tragedy as its ritual core, made him a newly controversial and problematic figure. Once again, as in *Clouds*, Aristophanes exposes the problem, identifying it not as the language itself but as the underlying threat language poses to the spiritual health of the Demos. Whether it is Euripides or the leading politicians of the day, Aristophanes explicitly links the surface qualities of a speaker to his ability to contribute to the health of the Demos. With twenty years of support for the Demos behind him, Aristophanes can now even call for the support of the exiles from the coup of 411 and be rewarded with a crown from the Demos.

Despite his early antagonism to the formal prose techniques of public speaking in the 420s and the reservations that resurface in *Frogs*, Aristo-

phanes lives to see just such language become not the antithesis of democratic decision making, but the very language of democratic institutions after the democracy is renewed in 403 B.C.E. Aristophanes was right that elite speakers could, and at times did, use their access to this specialized language to achieve ends contrary to the best interests of the Demos, but he comes to reconcile that the elites can deploy such techniques in democratic institutions and the Demos can still sit in collective judgment and lead Athens to prosperity.

The Appendix itemizes the following: (1) formal terminology and techniques pertaining to rhetorical theory and oratorical practice (a crucial catalog, since much of the revision of the history of fifth-century “rhetoric” hinges on the presence and absence of specific terms); (2) portrayals of and references to historical figures, both intellectuals associated with new trends in language (i.e., the “Older Sophists”) and public figures in Athens deploying such language; (3) representations in comedy of democratic institutions (Assembly, Council, courts), which are particularly important to an analysis of comedy’s portrayal of rhetoric, in theory or practice, as the context of its commentary, and often the dynamic of a scene, convey as much meaning as any explicit statements within comedy.

The conclusions reached in this study will not, of course, settle the wide-ranging debates in any of the major areas of scholarship it addresses, but it is my hope that the analysis provided here will prove greater than the sum of its parts. The evidence of Aristophanes and Greek Old Comedy has a role to play in the ongoing revision of the early history of rhetoric. The political allegiances of Aristophanes will assuredly remain a contentious topic, but it is, in my opinion, healthy and productive that this is so. I hope everyone can agree that Aristophanes did not intend his plays merely to reinforce the status quo, in his own day or for anyone coming to his work in other times and places. His treatment of language and his staging of the political institutions in his own community merit consideration, as does his staging of the city of Athens, both as a physical space and as an ideological construct. Whether for the purpose of reconstructing Aristophanes’ original spectacle or of preparing a performance for modern audiences, an improved grasp of the stage dynamics of Aristophanes’ most topical material helps achieve the immediacy and impact for which he strove. Finally, however valuable the current study may be, I hope that research into Greek comedy, itself such a madcap blend of traditions, will continue to combine knowledge, insights and contributions from diverse explorations to create a fruitful and entertaining revue.