

ARISTOPHANES AND KALLISTRATOS

The purpose of this article is to explain what I believe to have been the nature of the relationship between Aristophanes and the producer of his earliest plays, Kallistratos. My view was indicated in my edition of *Wasps* (pp. 124, 263–4) without full explanation. It is much the same as the view taken by Rennie in his edition of *Akharnians* (pp. 11–21), but I think that it can be given more cogent support than Rennie gave it. Recently the whole matter has been discussed afresh by G. Mastromarco (*Quaderni di Storia* 10 (1979), 153–96) and S. Halliwell (*CQ* n.s. 30 (1980), 33–45).¹ This has enabled me to make my article briefer; I need not repeat the full bibliographical references to other views which Mastromarco and Halliwell have given, and I can, for the most part, confine my comments to the points on which I disagree with them.²

Everyone accepts the statements of the Hellenistic scholars that the earliest plays of Aristophanes (*Banqueters*, *Babylonians*, *Akharnians*) were produced διὰ Καλλιστράτου. Consideration of what this meant may begin from his own justification of the arrangement, given in the parabasis of *Knights*.

ἃ δὲ θαυμάζειν ὑμῶν φησιν πολλοὺς αὐτῷ προσιόντας
καὶ βασανίζειν πῶς οὐχὶ πάλαι χορὸν αἰτοίη καθ' ἑαυτόν,
ἥμᾶς ὑμῖν ἐκέλευε φράσαι περὶ τούτου. φησὶ γὰρ ἀνὴρ
οὐχ ὑπ' ἀνοίας τοῦτο πεπονθὼς διατρίβειν, ἀλλὰ νομίζων
κωμωδοδιδασκαλίαν εἶναι χαλεπώτατον ἔργον ἀπάντων...
ταῦτ' ὄρρωδῶν διέτριβεν αἰεὶ, καὶ πρὸς τούτοισιν ἔφασκεν
ἐρέτην χρῆναι πρῶτα γενέσθαι πρὶν πηδαλίοις ἐπιχειρεῖν,
κἄτ' ἐντεῦθεν πρωρατεῦσαι καὶ τοὺς ἀνέμους διαθρῆσαι,
κἄτα κυβερνᾶν αὐτὸν ἑαυτῷ. (Knights 512–16, 541–4)

Knights was the first play for which Aristophanes 'asked for a chorus on his own' (513), and lines 515–16 show that this new departure was not a mere formality.³ When a play was produced 'through Kallistratos', the function of Kallistratos was not just to give his name to a production for which all or most of the work was in practice done by Aristophanes; it was to do 'the most difficult task of all' (516). The nautical metaphor (541–4), with its progression from oarsman to prow-officer to helmsman, indicates that Aristophanes did not take over this task all at once, but by stages. But what were the stages? This is one of the main points of controversy. For Mastromarco and Halliwell, there were three stages:

(1) In the years before 427, Aristophanes contributed comic material to plays by other authors.

(2) In the years 427–5, Aristophanes wrote whole plays but still did not undertake their production.

¹ Mastromarco kindly sent me a copy of his article; and I had the privilege of seeing Halliwell's before publication, because I was the referee mentioned in his n. 30.

² The first version of this article was written in 1964, and I am grateful to Professor H. D. Westlake for reading and commenting on it at that time. I was dissatisfied with that version and put it aside *nonum in annum*. The second version was given as a discussion paper at the Triennial meeting of Greek and Roman Societies in Cambridge on 4 August 1978. The article has been entirely rewritten for the present third version.

³ I agree with Mastromarco and Halliwell that Aristophanes was not prevented from producing earlier plays by a law prescribing a minimum age.

(3) In 424 for the first time he both wrote and produced a play (*Knights*) himself.

In my view (which, on this point, is the view which most scholars have held, and is fairly regarded by Halliwell as orthodox) there is no evidence that Aristophanes ever contributed comic material to plays by other authors, and only two stages of development are clearly distinguished: the years 427–5, when Aristophanes did not produce his own plays, and the year 424, when he did. But Halliwell (pp. 41–2) rightly warns us not to assume that, when Aristophanes did not himself ask for a chorus, that meant that he took no part at all in the preparations for the performance; and I can use this point of Halliwell's to defend my own interpretation of *Knights* 541–4. The nautical metaphor means, I think, that Aristophanes, as he gained experience, gradually took a larger share in producing successive plays. For his first play, perhaps, Kallistratos did virtually all the work of producing it, while Aristophanes watched the rehearsals and learned from them; for his second and third plays he may have done rather more of the producing, though still under Kallistratos' guidance.

So the parabasis of *Knights* presents no difficulty for the orthodox view. But the passage which Mastromarco and Halliwell use as the main support for their view is the parabasis of *Wasps*.

μέμψασθαι γὰρ τοῖσι θεαταῖς ὁ ποιητὴς νῦν ἐπιθυμεῖ.
ἀδικεῖσθαι γάρ φησιν πρότερος πόλλ' αὐτοὺς εὖ πεποιηκώς·
τὰ μὲν οὐ φανερώς ἀλλ' ἐπικουρῶν κρύβδην ἑτέροισι ποιηταῖς,
μιμησάμενος τὴν Εὐρυκλέους μαντείαν καὶ διάνοιαν,
εἰς ἀλλοτρίας γαστέρας ἐνδὺς κωμωδικὰ πολλὰ χέασθαι,
μετὰ τοῦτο δὲ καὶ φανερώς ἤδη κινδυνεύων καθ' ἑαυτόν,
οὐκ ἀλλοτρίων ἀλλ' οἰκείων Μουσῶν στόμαθ' ἠνιοχήσας. (Wasps 1016–22)

This passage distinguishes two stages of Aristophanes' career, a 'secret' period and an 'open' period. In my view, these are the same two periods as those distinguished in the parabasis of *Knights*: the 'secret' period is the years 427–5, and the 'open' period begins with *Knights* in 424. But Mastromarco and Halliwell regard the 'secret' period as being the years before 427, while the 'open' period covers all the years from 427 onwards, when Aristophanes was writing complete plays, whether those plays were produced by himself or not. In their view *Wasps* 1018–20 is evidence that, before he started writing complete plays, Aristophanes contributed comic material to plays by other authors.

The series of objections which Halliwell (pp. 37–9) brings against my interpretation of this passage is substantial. I shall now try to answer them, but I concede at once that my answers are not entirely conclusive.

1. I take ἑτέροισι ποιηταῖς (*Wasps* 1018) to refer to producers of Aristophanes' plays before *Knights*. But *Banqueters*, *Babylonians*, and *Akharnians* were all produced by the same man, Kallistratos: how then is the plural to be explained? To this question I listed three possible answers in the note *ad loc.* in my edition, and Halliwell's statement (p. 37) 'MacDowell finds it difficult to endorse any of them' is not correct: the one which I think may (not must) be correct is Russo's solution, that Aristophanes may have had a play produced by Philonides or someone else at the Lenaia of 426. Halliwell himself lends support to this solution by arguing that Aristophanes did indeed have a play produced at the Lenaia of 426 (pp. 44–5), and Mastromarco too believes that (p. 154).

2. Why was Aristophanes' authorship of the plays of 427–5 secret? I do not think that *Wasps* 1018–20 need mean that he was deliberately secretive (if it did mean that, Halliwell would need to explain why Aristophanes wished his contributions to other men's plays to be secret); it just means that his authorship was not generally known

at this time. I assume that he was not well known in 427–5, and the general public had no interest in him. I shall return later to this point, which is one of the main conclusions of this article.

3. Why does Aristophanes regard himself in the early period as a mere assistant (ἐπικουρῶν)? This point goes with the previous one, and I shall return to it too; I take ἐπικουρῶν as evidence that the author of those plays was subordinate to the producer.

4. Halliwell's next objection (iii. on p. 38) is not clear to me. He suggests that in my view Aristophanes in *Wasps* 1018–20 is 'disowning responsibility for at least one first prize'. On the contrary, I think that Aristophanes is claiming to have contributed to Kallistratos' success.

5. On *Wasps* 1029 I am content to accept Wilamowitz's view, which Halliwell reports.

6. Halliwell (v. on pp. 38–9) considers that the parabasis of *Clouds* shows that the identity of Aristophanes as author of *Banqueters* 'was known to at least part of the audience at the time of the first performance of the play, or not long after'.

ἐξ ὅτου γὰρ ἐνθάδ' ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν, οὓς ἡδὺ καὶ λέγειν,
ὁ σώφρων τε χῶ καταπύγων ἄριστ' ἤκουσάτην,
κἀγώ, παρθένος γὰρ ἔτ' ἦν κούκ ἐξήν πῶ μοι τεκεῖν,
ἐξέθηκα, παῖς δ' ἑτέρα τις λαβοῦσ' ἀνείλετο,
ὕμεις δ' ἐξεθρέψατε γενναίως κάπαιδεύσατε, . . . (Clouds 528–32)

The exact interpretation of this passage is difficult, but I believe (as Halliwell does) that the ἄνδρες in line 528 are some specific individuals, not the audience in general, nor even the σοφοί members of the audience in general. The passage distinguishes three successive stages of the production of *Banqueters*: the third of these is the favourable reception of the play by the audience when it was performed (532); before that comes the occasion when Kallistratos agreed to produce it (530–1); the favourable comments by the undefined ἄνδρες are something even earlier. I conclude that the ἄνδρες were two or three people who read the script and encouraged Aristophanes to try to get it performed. (This interpretation means taking ἐνθάδ' as 'in Athens' rather than 'in the theatre'.) If that is right, lines 528–9 are not evidence that Aristophanes was known to the audience in general at that time.

7. We do not know of any plays written by Kallistratos: could he then be called a ποιητής (*Wasps* 1018)? The lack of evidence is, of course, not conclusive proof that he did not write any; but the more important point to make in answer to this question is that, in my view, he is in fact called a ποιητής in another passage, *Akharnians* 633–58. I discuss this passage below.

Thus I think that it is possible to defend my interpretation of *Wasps* 1018–20 against Halliwell's objections, even though some of those objections are not entirely without force. I come now to the reasons why I consider that this interpretation should still be accepted, despite the objections, and the alternative interpretation by Mastromarco and Halliwell should be rejected.

The first reason is the correspondence between the ship metaphor of *Knights* 541–4 and the chariot metaphor of *Wasps* 1022. For metaphorical purposes, holding the tiller of a ship and holding the reins of a chariot are identical activities. The man who does either of these things is the man who controls the vehicle. In the *Knights* passage it is clear that the occasion when Aristophanes took the helm of his ship was the production of *Knights*; before that he had been in a subordinate position, like an oarsman or prow-officer. Therefore in the *Wasps* passage the occasion when he took the reins of his chariot must have been the production of *Knights*; before that he was

an assistant (*Wasps* 1018 ἐπικουρῶν).⁴ The view of Mastromarco and Halliwell involves the inconsistency of saying that for the production of *Banqueters*, *Babylonians*, and *Akharnians* Aristophanes was in charge (according to *Wasps*) and not in charge (according to *Knights*).

The second reason emerges from consideration of the parabasis of *Akharnians*.

ἐξ οὗ γε χοροῖσιν ἐφέστηκεν τρυγικοῖς ὁ διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν,
οὐπω παρέβη πρὸς τὸ θέατρον λέξων ὡς δεξιὸς ἔστιν
διαβαλλόμενος δ' ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐν Ἀθηναίοις ταχυβούλοις,
ὡς κωμῶδεῖ τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν δῆμον καθυβρίζει,
ἀποκρίνασθαι δεῖται νυνὶ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους μεταβούλους.
φησὶν δ' εἶναι πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν ἄξιος ὑμῖν ὁ ποιητής... (*Akharnians* 628–33)

The first line of this passage makes clear that the man in question is in charge of the chorus, and has had charge of several comic choruses before; and he is called both ὁ διδάσκαλος (628) and ὁ ποιητής (633). Since Aristophanes was not in charge of any chorus before *Knights* (*Knights* 512–16, 541–4: ἐφέστηκεν cannot refer to the same activity as πρῶρατεῦσαι), it follows logically that the man described in the parabasis of *Akharnians* is not Aristophanes but Kallistratos.⁵ And from this it follows (as Rennie maintained, following Briel)⁶ that it was Kallistratos who was given credit in this play for the good advice given to the Athenians in *Babylonians* (633–45), that it was Kallistratos who had some connection with Aigina (652–5), and probably also that it was Kallistratos who was attacked by Kleon in the previous year (377–82).⁷ Thus Kallistratos was the man whom the audience regarded as the ποιητής of both *Babylonians* and *Akharnians*, and that shows that the plays of the years 427–5 belong to the 'secret' period when Aristophanes was in a subordinate position (*Wasps* 1018–20) and not, as Mastromarco and Halliwell would have it, to the 'open' period.

But the problem is: if (as we all believe) Aristophanes wrote the script of *Akharnians*, how could Kallistratos be called the ποιητής of this play, and likewise of *Banqueters* and *Babylonians*? Two alternative solutions must be considered.

(1) Perhaps Kallistratos and Aristophanes agreed to pretend that Kallistratos had written the script although he in fact had not. In other words, Aristophanes was a ghost writer; Kallistratos wished to have the credit for the play, and he either paid Aristophanes for the script or did him some other kind of favour in return for it. This solution, as far as I can see, does not conflict with any of the evidence; it certainly fits *Wasps* 1018–20 well. Nevertheless I find it unattractive. I prefer alternative 2.

⁴ οὐκ ἀλλοτρίων in *Wasps* 1022 is a negative phrase inserted to emphasize οἰκείων. It is not permissible to extract from it a positive statement that Aristophanes did, at an earlier date, control other men's muses; such a statement would, in fact, be incompatible with ἐπικουρῶν.

⁵ I cannot see any validity in Halliwell's claim (p. 36) that the fact that Aristophanes is called διδάσκαλος or κωμωδοδιδάσκαλος in *Knights* and *Peace*, for both of which he was the producer, supports an assumption that he could be called διδάσκαλος in *Akharnians*, for which he was not the producer.

⁶ See pp. 18–21 of Rennie's edition of *Akharnians* (1909); cf. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (1972), p. 14 n. 5.

⁷ The dispute between Kleon and Kallistratos arising from *Babylonians* was distinct from the dispute between Kleon and Aristophanes arising from *Knights*; see the note on lines 1284–91 in my edition of *Wasps* (where, however, the phrase 'Kleon's prosecution of Ar.' needs amendment). Halliwell (p. 35 n. 11) rejects my interpretation of *Wasps* 1284–91, but I think that he is wrong. For it is not true that the aorist ἐξηπάτησεν cannot refer to something which has been done within this play; cf. *Wasps* 1451 for another aorist referring to a change of attitude which has occurred within the play. Nor do I accept that εἴτα νῦν may (like νῦν δέ in the sense 'but as it is') be a-temporal. The phrase is not unique, as Halliwell alleges; there is a striking instance in Dem. 18. 243, ἐμβρόντητε, εἴτα νῦν λέγεις; which is emphatically temporal.

(2) Perhaps we are wrong to restrict the word ποιητής to the meaning 'script-writer'. We should remember that it means 'maker'. A comedy consisted of words, music, dancing, costume, and clowning; and, before Aristophanes came along, it is by no means clear that the words were considered the most important of these ingredients. Earlier comedies probably consisted largely of the cavorting of a comically dressed chorus alternating with actors' slapstick. The ποιητής or 'maker' of a comedy was a man who devised all these things, not the words alone. But a problem of nomenclature arose when Kallistratos and Aristophanes shared the tasks (since, for all we know, such sharing was unprecedented): was the writer of the words or the deviser of the action now to be called the maker of the comedy? The latter may, at first, have seemed more appropriate, especially if Kallistratos was the senior man, the one who was in charge; only gradually, as comedy became more literary, would it become established custom to restrict the term ποιητής to the author of the script.⁸

The following account of Aristophanes' early career is to some extent speculative, but I believe it fits such evidence as we have. When quite a young man, with no experience of the theatre except as a member of the audience, he set about writing a play; the outcome was the script of *Banqueters*. He showed it to two or three intelligent older men of his acquaintance (the ἄνδρες of *Clouds* 528), and they were very favourably impressed by it: here was a comedy which rose above the usual farcical level to include coherent characterization and a moral theme. They wanted to encourage the young man; but how could they help him to get his play performed? He was without experience (παρθένος in *Clouds* 530) of organizing performances, and the arkhon might be reluctant to award a chorus to a young man for a play so different from the kind of comedy which was then customary. The solution which they found was to get Kallistratos to take it on (ἀνείλετο in *Clouds* 531). Kallistratos was no doubt a man of considerable experience in the theatre, either as an actor or as an author and producer, or perhaps in both capacities. He was well able to get a chorus from the arkhon and to put on a performance using Aristophanes' script. The young Aristophanes naturally attended all the rehearsals and, when the arrangement was repeated in the next two years for *Babylonians* and *Akharnians* (and probably also, with a different producer, for a play at the Lenaia of 426), he may have given a considerable amount of help; but Kallistratos remained in charge. It was Kallistratos' show. It was he who was announced as the ποιητής and received the prize. The general public neither knew nor cared about Aristophanes – not because his contribution was kept secret deliberately, but simply because it was treated as a matter of minor importance and was not publicly announced. No one, except his friends, was interested in Kallistratos' young assistant.

But this state of affairs could not last. By the time of *Akharnians* it must have become clear that the play's success was due more to the script than to other aspects of the production. A new kind of comedy had come into existence, more articulate and literary than any that had existed before. Probably copies of the script were made for reading after the performance was over, on which the name of the author of the script would naturally appear. At any rate word somehow got around that these brilliant plays were scripted not by Kallistratos himself but by a young man named Aristophanes.⁹ A number of people (πολλοὺς in *Knights* 512) encouraged Aristophanes

⁸ In the modern cinema a man who 'makes' a film does not always, or even usually, write the script. 'Hitchcock's films' are films directed by Hitchcock, not written by him.

⁹ Halliwell (p. 37) not unnaturally wants to know how this fact became common knowledge. I do not know the exact answer, but I find no difficulty in believing that, in a city the size of ancient Athens, information would circulate quite quickly if people once began to take an interest in it.

to undertake a production on his own, not merely assisting Kallistratos; and when he did so, in 424, he was able to assume, in the parabasis of *Knights*, that the audience knew that he had written the scripts for several previous plays.

In later years he sometimes collaborated again with Kallistratos or Philonides over other plays, including *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, and *Frogs*.¹⁰ His example was followed by Eupolis in 420 (Athenaios 216d), and later by other writers. On those occasions, when the authors were already well-known dramatists, there is no need to suppose that the audience was unaware of the collaboration. The man who applied for a chorus (Kallistratos or whoever it was) was probably still formally regarded as the ποιητής, at least for a while; there appears to be no fifth-century text in which that word is used of the writer of a comic script who was not also the producer. But eventually, at any rate in the fourth century, when the music and clowning had dwindled and the words were the dominating element in a comedy, it became customary to call the writer rather than the producer (when they were different men) the ποιητής of a comedy; and the compilers of the didascalic inscriptions in the third century considered it more appropriate to put down Aristophanes than Kallistratos as the victorious poet of *Babylonians*.¹¹

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¹⁰ But not *Wasps*; I prefer the view that *Wasps* was produced by Aristophanes himself, not by Philonides. See p. 124 of my edition, to which I should add the point that Philonides produced *Proagon* and therefore can hardly have produced *Wasps* too, since it is not credible that the same man would be awarded two choruses at the same festival.

¹¹ IG ii² 2325 col. ii. See Gould and Lewis's second edition of Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (1968). On p. 112 they give the text of the inscription, where Ἀρυ[στοφάνης] is restored as the comic victor at the Dionysia of 426. On p. 86 they say 'It still, of course, remains possible that the official record of the archon may have entered the name of the producer...; and in that case the compilers of the records for our inscriptions, at a later date, may have corrected the archon's entries by substituting the names of the actual poets; but there is no evidence that it was so.' My submission is that the circumstances of production, as recounted by Aristophanes himself, do supply evidence to support that possibility. Cf. Dover's edition of *Clouds* (1968), p. xvii n. 2.