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**Unity and Division in the Farmer Chorus of Aristophanes' Peace**

One of the features that makes Peace distinctive among Aristophanes' works is the remarkable fluidity of its chorus' identity: Peace's chorus seems at points of the play to be made up of particular representatives from various Greek cities and common professions and even an individual with extra-dramatic credentials (Lamachus), at others times it represents farmers of all Greek cities or all Greeks without any internal divisions. If a consistent identity is hardly de rigueur for Aristophanic choruses, still the changes Peace's chorus undergoes seem to disturb our understanding of the play itself. Or do we expect too much? Sifakis (Parabasis and Animal Chorus, 1971, 29-32) has persuaded scholars that in wanting a chorus with a coherent identity, we are applying an aesthetic that is "not appropriate" for Aristophanes or his audience. Yet Sifakis and his followers have done little to elaborate on the distinct conceptions of identity that might make dramatic sense of Peace's chorus. This paper argues that there is method in the madness of Peace's chorus: that Peace's chorus follows a trajectory of dramatic identity that is key for understanding the dramatic as well as the ideological characteristics of this distinctive play &ndash; and, perhaps most importantly, the link between the two.

The fragmented identity of Peace's chorus is conspicuous in the play's first half, where, in most of Aristophanes' early plays, the comic hero's adventure encounters resistance. While Peace lacks a true epirrhematic ag\_n, in the responsive lyric that comes closest to it (459-72; 486-99) Tyrgaeus meets with a more serious impediment to his plan of returning peace to Greece than he encounters either from the dire Polemos, whom he safely ignores, or Hermes, who is willing to be bribed. This resistance comes from Peace's strange chorus. Of course, the chorus professes enthusiasm for Peace's return and is willing to help. Tyrgaeus does not need the rhetorical talents of a Dicaeopolis or Peisetairus to persuade them to join him. What he needs to do is mold them into a force able to extricate Peace. In other words, he needs to act more as a strat\_gos than as a rhetor.

The fragmentation of the chorus, I will argue, is closely related to Tyrgaeus' strategic role. While Peace's chorus appears in the parodos as a mishmash of diverse origins and different professions without any common identity or internal unity beyond the common desire for peace, they also show no divisiveness or internal conflict (cf. 293, 297, 302). Real disunity is first apparent when the chorus, under Tyrgaeus' supervision, begins the actual task of extricating Peace; there Tyrgaeus recognizes different groups, Megarians, Boeotians, Athenians, Spartans, and comedy's old enemy, Lamachus, all of whom, with the sole exception of the Spartans, are impeding the common effort. But if the chorus' identity shatters at its first attempt to dislodge Peace, Tyrgaeus' response, recognizing disunity and castigating the chorus for it, proves a catalyst of the unity the chorus needs to perform the job of recovering Peace. Shamed into recognizing their own internal weakness (496), they transform themselves into the sort of people that can succeed.

I suggest that what passes then for an ag\_n in Peace might then be understood as a kind of comic epipol\_sis of the play's chorus. Like Agamemnon in Iliad 4, Tyrgaeus reviews

his troops of peace (who address him as “autocrat\_r”: 360), finding some worthy of praise and many more deserving blame. What the Homeric commander’s — and Trygaeus’ — parsimonious dispensing of praise and liberal application of shame does is obvious enough: shame renders the warrior in acute need of honor, while praise raises the expectations of further feats of military valor. Trygaeus, of course, is a strat\_gos of peace, not war; the use of military metaphor gives dramatic form to what I argue is Peace’s principal ideological claim: that peace requires a commitment to common interest no less serious than does war. Trygaeus exposes the conflicts, selfishness, complacency and muddleheadedness of the chorus on the way to making them understand that peace is their common interest.

This may help us understand what Aristophanes meant with the chorus’ final transformation as simple georgoi: Aristophanes has Trygaeus, when Peace finally begins to appear, announce without equivocation that “farmers are doing the job and nobody else” (511). But the ideological implications of canonizing farmers as the salvation of peace are not obvious. Rather than understand Peace’s chorus of farmers to refer to any particular extra-dramatic group in Athens or elsewhere, I propose we see the systematic stripping of individual and conflicting identities, political and professional, that describes the chorus’ dramatic trajectory as concluding with a typical comic vision of the citizen everyman. With “farmers,” Aristophanes means all Athenians, indeed in Peace, all Greeks — that is, everyone capable of perceiving and action on the advantages of peace and the horrors of war.