

In the time Aristophanes there were many various types of humour which included satirical humour, sexual humour, slapstick humour, verbal humour and bathos. The satirical humour that Aristophanes used was an attack on the current personalities of the time for example Cleon in Knights, “*you possess all the attributes of a demagogue; a screeching, horrible voice, a perverse, crossgrained nature and the language of the market-place*”. Sexual humour was very common in Aristophanes plays at the beginning to get the audience interested straight away, for example in wasps the subtle comparison of equipment to mens’ genitals in the line “*No harm, in a man losing his equipment?*” is within the first 30 lines. Slapstick humour at the time is the same as today with exaggerated activities that breach common sense such as Proclean trying to escape in episode 1 of Wasps. Verbal humour was mainly made up of puns such as Dionysus in Frogs claiming to be son of Juice instead of son of Zeus.

Bathos was the change in mood from serious suddenly to silly to provoke humour. For example in Wasps Procleon start off with “*And now lend your aid divine*” which then turns silly and ends “*and I’ll promise not to piddle in the reeds around your shrine*”.

Plautus’s audience expected a very different type of humour. His humour was based on that of New Comedy which was lacking in the satirical department and tended to be more about everyday life and the home, rather than political and intellectual ideas like that of Aristophanes. Plautus used puns and plays on word in his plays such as the word “superbum” which had two meanings that cannot be described in English, Making up words and changing their meaning for humour. He could do this well as many of his plays had great poetic meter and the changing of words would have had the same effect as Roman Bathos. Plautus evolved the slapstick humour of Aristophanes and created Farces. Within these comedies were very extravagant and unlikely situations full of verbal humour and a fast paced plot which with increased speed usually involved a chase scene. They were full of physical humour and absurdity, a direct link to that of the slapstick humour in Aristophanes plays.

The humour used by Shakespeare is a collection of both Old comedy and new comedy used by Plautus and Aristophanes. It includes many ideas such as:

- A struggle of young lovers to overcome difficulty, often presented by elders
- Separation and re-unification
- Deception among characters (especially mistaken identity)
- A clever servant
- Disputes between characters, often within a family
- Multiple, intertwining plots
- Pastoral element (courtly people living an idealized, rural life)
- Happy Endings

Within these ides lies many of the original types of humour, if not all of them including slapstick, puns, dry humour, earthy humour, witty banter and practical jokes.

A sub-genre was also developed on the topic of city life in London. This has striking resemblance to the satirical nature of Aristophanes plays about Athens.

Shakespearean comedy nearly always has a happy ending, involving marriages, and a tone and style that is more light-hearted than Shakespeare's other tragic plays.

A major difference I noticed between the three time periods was the change in humour that the audience experienced.

The Greeks experienced humour mainly of a satirical and witty nature. This was because their culture and people at the time was highly educated and very political. With much of the Athenian men being raised in professions rather in strength and courage like that of the Marathon men, the humour that was expected by the audience had to be matched by the playwrights. The political factor of the comedy was added to the plays as many of the members of the audience would have been influential people in government.

The Roman audience experienced humour of a completely different kind, most of and nearly all of the satirical humour had been removed by this time and wit was replaced with outrageous movements and exaggerated ridiculous situations, very similar to slapstick comedy. This was because the plays being written in Rome were designed for lesser educated people such as soldiers who only had a limited education. With this limited education and no real individual power over the way that Rome was run, plays were much simpler and easier to follow.

The Elizabethan humour at the time of Shakespeare was a mix of all the humour found in both Aristophanes' and Plautus' plays. This was because the culture was very mixed and so too was the audience. With many different classes and levels of intellectual people in the playhouse, playwrights like Shakespeare had to appeal to the entire crowd and so included varying different humour styles.