

**The Performance Reception of
Frogs in the English Language,
Past and Potential**

**Royal Holloway,
University of London**

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.

By

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Declaration of Authorship

I Daniel Goad hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, that is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of the performance reception of Aristophanes' *Frogs* across the English-speaking world; in which I include Britain, North America, Africa and Australasia. It will draw on the growing trend of performance reception as a branch of Classical Reception, approaching the material from both a classical and dramatic outlook.

Following an introduction which outlines the methodology, models and background literature, Chapter One outlines the academic reception of the play in the 20th and 21st centuries, drawing out key themes that have been interpreted as being within the play. Chapter Two discusses transmission and translation of the play, following the manuscript's journey from ancient Athens to modern day English translations. Chapter Three discusses reflections on the play, that is other plays that are not direct adaptations, but can be seen to have been influenced by it in some way. Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven focus on the theatrical reception of the play, divided geographically. Chapter three therefore focuses on Britain, chapter four North America and chapter six Africa and Australasia. Chapter five focuses solely on the most influential and high-profile adaptation, the 2004 Broadway version with music by Stephen Sondheim. These chapters draw patterns throughout the performance reception, both within individual geographical areas and across the thesis as a whole. Trends include politics, staging, music and the pedagogical interest in performing *Frogs*.

The thesis will conclude with a short conclusion reiterating the general themes and trends seen throughout.

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Acknowledgements

A thesis is not possible without the input of a large group of people. The nature of this thesis in particular has necessitated my reliance on the kindness of strangers from across four continents. First and foremost I would like to thank my two supervisors, Dr. Nick Lowe and Prof. Edith Hall, for their support and patience throughout this process. They have inspired and guided me in equal measure, and the generosity with which they have offered their time and ideas cannot be understated.

To mention all of the academics, researchers, archivists and theatre practitioners who have assisted me in some way would be impossible, however I include below a list of all those who deserve additional recognition for giving up their time and assisting me at some point in the journey.

- Judith Affleck, Joint Association of Classical Teachers.
- Prof. Robin Bond, University of Canterbury, New Zealand.
- Chris Brandt, Managing Director, Medicine Show Theatre Ensemble.
- Hannah-Marie Chidwick, Artistic Director/Producer, Hecate Theatre Company.
- Prof. Amy R. Cohen, Randolph College.
- Helen Eastman, Director, Cambridge Greek Play.
- Natalia Fernández, Librarian, Oregon Multicultural Archives.
- Prof. Mary-Kay Gamel, University of California, Santa Cruz.
- Katie Giles, Archivist, Sondheim Society.
- Prof. John Given, East Carolina University.
- Dr. Claire Kenward, Archivist/Researcher, The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama.
- Dr. Tony Keen, University of Roehampton.
- David Lardi, Trustee, Sondheim Society.

- Sylvia Lassam, Archivist, Trinity College, Toronto.
- Erin Lee, Archivist, National Theatre.
- Calista Lucy, Keeper of the Archives, Dulwich College.
- Dr. Justine McConnell, University of Oxford.
- David G. Null, Archive Director, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Lucy Pattison, Production Coordinator, Almeida Theatre.
- Naomi Setchell, Archivist, The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama.
- Paul Stephanus, Director/Producer, Bard Productions.
- Dr. Christopher Stray, Swansea University.
- Alex Walker, Bedales School.
- Chella Ward, PhD candidate, The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama.
- Dr. Amanda Wrigley, University of Reading.

On a more personal level I would like to thank my parents for stimulating my childhood interests in classics and theatre and their support that allows me to continue to explore this interest in my adult life.

My final thank you goes to Claire, who has lived this research with me from beginning to end. She has endured countless hours of academic rambling, sat patiently through multiple performances and despite all of that still agreed to become my wife. It is to her that this thesis is dedicated.

Introduction

‘Wouldn’t it be amazing if this play, which comes from the very origins of theatre, from where it all started, could say something to people today?’¹

In one sentence Nathan Lane encapsulates the main aspiration of anyone involved in the adaptation of an ancient Greek play for performance. But what exactly has Aristophanes’ *Frogs* to ‘say’ to later audiences? Like many classical plays it has transcended its theatrical origins to be seen not just as a piece of performance, but also as a source for history, politics and the birth of literary theory and practical criticism. Yet its reception as a text for performance is paramount and needs to be told in greater detail, since it is the only type of reception that recreates its original form and presents the play as the organic totality of all these elements.

This thesis therefore aims to answer the question: ‘How has Aristophanes’ *Frogs* been received in English-speaking performance culture, and what can an archival study tell us about which elements from the original play can successfully be conveyed to a later audience?’ Throughout it I will seek to reconstruct as full a picture as possible of the performance of *Frogs* across the English-speaking world. The thesis is therefore limited by geography to Britain and Ireland, North America, Africa and Australasia. There is no chronological limit to the scope; however, as we will see I have found no evidence of any post-classical production anywhere in the world prior to the earliest English production in 1836. In order to understand the play’s performance reception, it will also be necessary to address receptions of *Frogs* outside theatre, and how these might influence or interact with theatrical reception.

¹ Quoted in Rothstein 2004: 12.

This introduction will explain why *Frogs* remains one of the most important extant works of ancient drama, both from a theatrical and from an academic point of view. The chapter will then introduce one of the central arguments of this research: that *Frogs* is uniquely attractive to performances stemming from pedagogy. The introduction also places the research within its scholarly context, as an exercise in the archival history of performances of ancient drama, specifically of ancient Greek comedy. Finally it will provide a breakdown of the sources and methods used during the research, define the sub-questions asked in each chapter and provide some brief notes on style.

The Importance of *Frogs* in Performance

Given that so few Greek plays have yet been subjected to a full investigation of their performance reception, in explaining why *Frogs* is the focus of this thesis one must take into account its privileged place within the corpus of extant Aristophanic plays as well as Greek theatre as a whole. Performances of Aristophanic plays lag behind the more popular Greek tragedies, such as *Agamemnon*, *Medea* and *Antigone*, but worldwide *Frogs* is the second most performed comedy after *Lysistrata*. However, in Britain *Frogs* has been marginally more popular and has a much longer theatrical history than *Lysistrata*, with the former's earliest performance occurring eighty years before the latter's. Across the four geographical areas investigated by this thesis, I have found evidence of over 200 productions of *Frogs*. Whilst there have been some ebbs and flows in its popularity, it has nevertheless remained part of the theatrical repertoire ever since the first recorded post-antique performance in 1836.

Frogs seemingly has canonical status as the premier example of Greek comedy, at least in the English-speaking world, in the same way that *Agamemnon*, *Antigone* and *Bacchae*

have for the three tragedians. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Three, it has influenced some of Britain's greatest dramatists, from Ben Johnson and Henry Fielding to W.S. Gilbert and George Bernard Shaw. In the US as well it has a similar status. It is the only Aristophanes play other than *Lysistrata* to have been performed on the most famous stage of all, Broadway. And whilst there have been a number of Greek plays performed on Broadway,² none has featured a creative figure of the stature of Stephen Sondheim. Evidence of *Frogs*' canonical status is present elsewhere: for example it was the only comedy prior to the 1600s named by Woody Allen as one of his 'best of the crop'.³

A different kind of explanation for its enduring popularity lies in its distinctive thematic architecture. Claude Lévi-Strauss' theory of structural polarities posits that myths produce meaning out of binary oppositions.⁴ His theory principally concerned itself with myths themselves rather than the particular texts based on them; however in the more popular examples of Greek drama, such as *Antigone*⁵ and *Bacchae*, the thematic richness and resonance of the tragedy comes from the presence of multiple overlapping binaries. *Frogs* can also be seen through this lens. The more layers of opposition, the more ways the play can resonate with later audiences. The most obvious polarity is the old versus the new, but we can also see far more abstract oppositions such as death/life, below/above, past/present, slavery/freedom, exile/return, as well as aestheticism/politics, authority/subversion, canon/modernity, elite/demotic. As we will see, the latter set of oppositions reflects fundamental lines of debate about ancient theatre's own status in reception.

² A survey of these is given in Chapter Six, pp.279-81.

³ Lax 2007: 66.

⁴ Lévi-Strauss 1955.

⁵ Steiner 1996: 231-277 describes *Antigone* as the only play which portrays the five most fundamental oppositions in the human condition: male/female, age/youth, society/individual, living/dead, men/gods.

As far as can be ascertained, *Frogs* was the first Aristophanes play ever to be performed both in England and in English and the first Aristophanic work to be performed as the University of Oxford's Greek play. We can show its transnational appeal by pointing to the fact that it was also the first Aristophanes to be performed in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Zimbabwe and the only Greek play ever to be performed in Malawi. *Frogs* is also uniquely popular in the English-speaking world, hence the focus of this thesis. In other countries with strong traditions of performing classical theatre, such as France, Germany and Italy, *Frogs* does not appear so regularly.⁶ This extends to other countries in the continents studied that were not British colonies: Egypt, Morocco and Senegal all have seen multiple performances of ancient plays but, as far as I can ascertain, no versions of *Frogs*. Looking more closely, across Africa, Australasia and North America, productions of the play are concentrated in former British colonial centres: Cape Town, Harare, Sydney, Wellington, Toronto and New England.⁷ More than any other Greek play *Frogs* seemingly has an Anglo-centric performance history. Partly this is due to *Frogs*' canonical status as described above, but I also want to suggest that an explanation lies in the play's privileged status within academia and pedagogy, and its unique reflection on the issues raised by that status.

Frogs in Academia and Pedagogy

A distinctive strand in the performance reception of *Frogs* is that the vast majority of performances of *Frogs* occur in or stem from universities or schools. *Frogs* received its first performance in 1836, would not be performed without an educational link⁸ until

⁶ This does not mean there have not been several notable adaptations in these countries, for example Luca Ronconi's 2002 adaptation in Italian, which was suspected of having been censored by Silvio Berlusconi's government. See Schironi 2007 for more on Ronconi's production.

⁷ This is explored further in the relevant chapters. See Chapter Five, *passim*, but particularly pp.242-7 and 263-5 on North America and Chapter Seven, pp.316-8 on Africa and Australasia.

⁸ Henry Fleeming Jenkin's 1873 production was not performed in an educational setting, but a number of academics were involved and Jenkin was a professor himself. See Chapter Four, pp.182-3.

1937, and it was not until the 1960s that productions were mounted regularly outside education. This stands in significant contrast to *Lysistrata*, which had its earliest English performance at the Adelphi Theatre in 1910 and in the following fifty years far more ‘theatrical’ productions than school or university ones.

Outside performance, *Frogs* has been subject to sustained and often contested interpretation by the academic community. This has focused in particular on the contest sequence of the play, which has often been claimed as our first extant work of ‘literary criticism’. Whilst not all scholars agree with this reading, it has attracted a level of interpretive attention to the text that other Greek comedies do not enjoy. As well as this, the political and social background to the play make it virtually unique, since it was the last Aristophanes play to be produced before the end of the Peloponnesian War, and the effect of the conflict on the play is central to its plot and themes. Its political content seems to have been regarded as so prominent and important that, we are told, the play was awarded a repeat performance for the political advice Aristophanes gave in the play, as far as we know a unique distinction for a comedy.⁹

Aristophanes was a later addition to teaching curricula across Britain, but as early as the 1700s *Wealth* and *Clouds* were read at Eton.¹⁰ Thomas Arnold introduced Aristophanes to the curriculum of Rugby School in 1835, though he disliked the immorality of the plays,¹¹ and Harrow was reading Aristophanes by the 1850s.¹² *Frogs* itself rose to prominence as a set text in the mid-to-late 1800s, coinciding with its earliest performances¹³ and a dramatic increase in the number of translations.¹⁴ In 1853 *Frogs*

⁹ See Chapter One, pp.47-9 and Chapter Two, p.78n252.

¹⁰ Clarke 1959:52-3.

¹¹ Clarke 1959: 80.

¹² Clarke 1959: 90.

¹³ See Chapter Four.

¹⁴ See Chapter Two.

was set as one of the texts for the Final Honours Examination at Trinity College, Dublin.¹⁵ Since records began in 1872, *Frogs* was amongst a number of Aristophanic plays included in the Examination Statues at Oxford University. Wadham College, Oxford, seems to have a particularly close relationship with *Frogs*, since translators Benjamin Bickley Rogers and Alfred Davies Cope were both linked to the college and the play was performed there in 1958.¹⁶

Alongside this, a growing interest in Aristophanes can be seen throughout the 19th century. Interest in Socrates had a particular effect on the study of Aristophanes, as *Clouds* was seen to be one of the four primary texts for the life of the philosopher, along with Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle.¹⁷ Despite this, Aristophanes seems to have been the least read of the major Athenian authors throughout the 19th century, with Richard Jenkyns saying ‘The Victorians did not greatly value the comic muse, and in any case teachers shrank from introducing their pupils to so rich a storehouse of obscenity’.¹⁸ It was in the 19th century however that Aristophanes came to be seen as an important source for Athenian political history, in particular *Acharnians*, *Wasps* and *Knights*. This is partly owing to Thomas Mitchell’s editions of the plays, published in 1839. Mitchell’s view of Aristophanes and of Athens was greatly influenced by William Mitford’s *History of the Greeks* (1784-1810) which emphasised the shortcomings of Athenian demagogic politicians following the death of Pericles. For Mitchell, the criticisms found in Aristophanes supported Mitford’s reactionary anti-reform views.¹⁹

¹⁵ Clare 1959: 164.

¹⁶ Though in the translation of Dudley Fitts, rather than Rogers’ or Cope’s.

¹⁷ Turner 1981: 264.

¹⁸ Jenkyns 1980: 79.

¹⁹ Turner 1981: 209.

Aristophanes was apparently studied in schools as well. While James Gow (c.1853-1923) was Headmaster of Westminster School, he published his *A Companion to School Classics* based on his own teaching at Westminster. He claims that it includes ‘the information which a commentator is...compelled to assume even in a young student’.²⁰ The third edition (published 1891) dedicates fewer than 30 of its 333 pages to Greek drama, with only a single segment around a page long dedicated to comedy, and that specifically to the parabasis. Further references to Aristophanic comedy abound, however, and the plays mentioned may give some indication of what was studied at Westminster at least. Throughout the text there are five mentions of *Acharnians*, four each for *Wasps* and *Birds*, three for *Knights*, two each for *Ecclesiazusae* and *Clouds*, and a single mention each for *Wealth* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. *Frogs* comes in first place, with six mentions. Again *Lysistrata* is omitted, though it is perhaps surprising that *Ecclesiazusae* has the same number of references as *Clouds*.²¹

At the time of Gow’s third edition in 1891, the ‘Macmillan’s Classical Series for Colleges and Schools’ printed in the back of the book contained no Aristophanes plays, but that was soon to change. W.J.M. Starkie’s *Wasps* was added to the Macmillan series in 1897, and *Frogs* followed in 1906, edited by T.G. Tucker. His introduction tellingly states that although the text ‘may be found to contribute to the exegesis and criticism of the play in a sufficient measure to deserve some attention from scholars, its aim is primarily educational’.²² There had in fact been earlier versions of the text aimed at students, for example H.P. Cookesley’s 1837 edition has the phrase ‘for the use of students’ on its title page and Mitchell’s 1839 edition mentioned above has ‘adapted to the use of schools and universities’, though at nearly 600 pages it was impractical for use in schools, and it was

²⁰ Gow 1891: v.

²¹ Gow 1891: 353-4.

²² Tucker 1906: iii.

W.W. Merry's 1884 edition, a third of the length, which became the standard school edition. Merry's *Frogs* was the first Aristophanes play to be published by Clarendon Press, who would go on to publish several more of Merry's editions.

In addition to editions of the Greek text, a number of the earliest translations of *Frogs* were 'cribs', literal translations designed to help students studying the play in Greek.²³ The first English translation of *Frogs*, Charles Dunster's,²⁴ was reprinted as part of an 1812 collected edition of four Aristophanic plays; with *Frogs* alongside *Clouds*, *Wealth* and *Birds*. The foreword claims that these are the only Aristophanic plays to have been translated into English, and in the case of *Frogs* and *Birds* these are the only translations. The foreword also states that 'the study of Aristophanes is now becoming prevalent in our universities',²⁵ explicitly underlining the pedagogical interest.

There is a similar picture of the study of Aristophanes in the USA. The study of Greek theatre, including Aristophanes, became popular in the 1820s following the publication of a series of German editions of the Greek text.²⁶ However, as in Britain, the obscenity was a cause for concern. The prolific lecturer and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Transcendentalist and acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln, effectively branded Aristophanes the final symptom of classical Athens' gradual descent into obscenity. Despite being more liberal than many of his fellow Christians in America at the time, in 1823 he wrote, 'The progress of debased manners is sufficiently marked by the successive character of the comedy from its primal innocence at its institution to the grossness which disgraces the dramas of Aristophanes'.²⁷

²³ These are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

²⁴ See Chapter Two, pp.103-7.

²⁵ Unknown 1812: viii.

²⁶ Richard 2009: 14.

²⁷ Quoted in Richard 2009: 166.

Yet in the US at least, Aristophanes seems to have been studied not as a body of theatre, but as a historical document. Emphasis is placed on the original political and dramatic context (and in *Frogs*' case the literary), rather than as a piece of theatre with a continuing performance history and reception.²⁸ Nevertheless, the plays of Aristophanes are there taught outside classics, in diverse subject areas such as history, drama, political science and international studies.²⁹ In many ways this mirrors the overall reception of *Frogs*, which, as we will see in Chapter Two,³⁰ disappears early from performance tradition to be received more as evidence for other aspects of Athenian life and culture. Already in antiquity the play became functionally repurposed as a documentary text about past cultural history, rather than as a performance piece – a direction of travel reversed only with the belated twentieth-century return of *Frogs* to the performance repertoire, which has entailed a sometimes uneasy change of ownership and a degree of thematic reflexiveness between the play's pedagogic history and its own status as a resurrected classic.

As mentioned, the majority of productions occurred in school or university settings. There are perhaps theatrical reasons for this; many of the pedagogical productions were performed in Greek, and the spectacle of the frog chorus, the costume-swapping and beating scenes would have been easy to convey to those not familiar with the language. Yet productions took this further, for example by incorporating pedagogical characters³¹ or featuring actual academics in the cast.³² We might also infer that students and scholars

²⁸ Given and Rosen 2016: 88.

²⁹ Based on an 'unscientific survey' conducted by Given and Rosen. See Given and Rosen 2016: 88n1 for details.

³⁰ Particularly pp.78-88.

³¹ Such as the 'Pedantic Lecturer' at Otago in 1993 (Chapter Seven, p.324) and *Professor Dionysus* in the 2009 Malawian production (Chapter Seven, p.326).

³² Robin Bond appeared as Aeschylus in *Canterbury* in 1995. See Chapter Seven, pp.323-4.

felt that *Frogs* was an appropriate vehicle for both representing and provoking debate – just as Aristophanes’ audience possibly did.³³

The play’s engagement with pedagogy can be seen in two ways. First there is the surface-level reading: the play is about tragedy and this would have been a major component of educational syllabuses at the time of those first performances. Just as *Frogs* may have been valued as a source for Euripides in particular as far back as the Byzantine period,³⁴ so too it served as a source text on tragedy for modern students. Further to this, productions of *Frogs* were able to reflect on contemporary views about the value of tragedy. Euripides was seen as dangerously avante-garde in late 19th century Oxford, favoured by controversial Oxford students such as Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater, which might have informed his negative, effeminate portrayal in the 1892 Oxford University production³⁵ as well as the parodying of Wilde in the *Frogs* adaptation, *Aristophanes at Oxford: OW*.³⁶

But there is a second, deeper dimension to *Frogs*’ engagement with issues of classical pedagogy in the modern world. This is seen in elements such as:

- **Canon:** *Frogs* is unique amongst extant Greek plays in discussing what constitutes a ‘classic’ and what is part of the tragic canon. Aeschylus says ‘my poetry hasn’t died with me, while [Euripides’] is as dead as he is’ (868-9). Ralph Rosen has speculated that Euripides became part of the Athenian canon partially because of his portrayal in comedies such as *Frogs*.³⁷ In the modern world we have a canon of ancient plays created by a limited transmission of material, but

³³ For more on this see Chapter One, passim.

³⁴ See Chapter Two, pp.84-5.

³⁵ See Chapter Four, pp.186-90.

³⁶ See Chapter Three, pp.168-70.

³⁷ Rosen 2006.

also an artificial one created by the plays we choose to study and perform. Some are neglected, whilst others (like *Frogs*) are studied and researched more regularly.

- **Elite culture:** the idea of culture being the preserve of the elite is raised by Euripides' claim in *Frogs* to have democratised tragedy (937-67). Modern performances of most Greek plays (and especially *Frogs*) were originally only seen and studied only in private schools or universities such as Oxford, whilst the twentieth century has seen a democratisation of the classics.
- **The educative power of literature and drama in particular:** in a wide-ranging exploration of the question of what tragedy is good *for*, the two tragedians agree in *Frogs* that a poet is primarily a teacher, while disagreeing tellingly over how this is, or should be, achieved. The discussion is therefore about what role the arts and humanities play in education, and by extension their claim for wider value. *Frogs* raises and simultaneously problematizes this debate, one which continues to the present day.
- **The link between theatre and citizenship:** if the poet is a teacher, their natural aim would be to make audience members better people, and by extension better citizens. Dionysus' initial motivation is to bring a poet back from Hades to inspire the Athenians.³⁸ He therefore believes that attending the theatre can make someone a better citizen. As with the role of the poet as a teacher, Aeschylus and Euripides also agree that they 'make people better members of their communities' (1008-9).

³⁸ The cultic interpretation of *Frogs* suggests that Dionysus' underworld journey is an analogy for his initiation as a better citizen. See Chapter One, pp.62-3.

Reception Studies and Performance Reception

I will begin this discussion by outlining some elements of classical reception studies and specifically of performance reception as a type of classical reception in order to contextualise my research against the background of the academic discipline and field in which it belongs. Whilst the research does relate to and make use of previous theoretical frameworks, it nevertheless exists in an under-theorised area: performance reception and particularly performance of comedy. As a result, previous theoretical approaches to reception and performance do not necessarily fit the particular challenge of *Frogs*.

Although a small minority of classical scholars published studies of what they called the ‘classical tradition’ or the ‘legacy’ of Greece and Rome earlier in the 20th century³⁹ – and two books on the Victorians and ancient Greece published in the early 1980s certainly stimulated the emergence of a distinct new field of research into what the Germans call the *Nachleben* (‘afterlife’) of ancient culture since antiquity⁴⁰ – the concept and label of classical reception studies is a more recent phenomenon, often regarded as having been inaugurated, in specifically literary studies, by Charles Martindale’s 1993 *Redeeming the Text*. Whilst it was ostensibly concerned with Latin poetry, in it Martindale also argued for reception studies to be accepted within mainstream classics, an argument which was at that time contentious. Whilst *Redeeming the Text* is a seminal work in the history of reception studies, Martindale’s German hermeneutics-inspired vision for reception has not formed the basis of the modern discipline and it is not without its critics. As indicated by its title, Martindale’s work primarily concerns itself with textual receptions of the classics⁴¹ and he himself has taken a somewhat elitist stance against the direction in which reception has gone. In Martindale 2006: 11, he states ‘already a classics student is far

³⁹ For example De Burgh 1912 and Highet 1951.

⁴⁰ Jenkyns 1980 and Turner 1981.

⁴¹ Elsner 2013: 212-3.

more likely to spend time analysing *Gladiator* than the *Commedia* of Dante. I find this trend worrying' and 'in general material of higher quality is better company for our intellects and hearts than the banal or the quotidian'. He has continued this line of argument more recently in 2013: 'What...is the intellectual justification for the proliferation of courses on Classics and film?'⁴² Because of his very specific method of conducting reception studies Martindale's work is only of minimal help with performance reception, and in certain fundamental ways is actively opposed to the study of performance, therefore I do not make direct use of it.

The more than twenty years since *Redeeming the Text* have seen a rapid increase in what we now call reception studies, though in reality a form of it had been a part of classical scholarship since its beginnings; after all scholarship is, in itself, an act of reception. Whilst reception into more modern media had been neglected by classicists, there has long been scholarly research and comment on older forms of reception, especially in studies of the previous models and sources used by ancient authors (*Quellenforschung*). Virgil's *Aeneid*, for example, is in some senses a 'reception' of Homeric epic, and Seneca's plays are a reception of Greek tragedy. However, it was in the 1990s and early 2000s that analysing material from outside the classical world became more prevalent, particularly analysing contemporary elements that were happening at that time. Some of these – especially the boom in research into the reception of ancient drama, which can be seen as having been inaugurated by the establishment of the Archive of Performances of Greek & Roman Drama at Oxford University by Edith Hall and Oliver Taplin in 1996 – were also informed by scholars working *outside* classics, especially on Renaissance and Early Modern responses to ancient plays. A crucial study here, by a Professor of English

⁴² Martindale 2013: 176.

Literature and Theatre, was Bruce Smith's 1988 *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage 1500-1700*.

In their *Companion to Classical Receptions* (2008), currently the most substantial published collection on reception and the most significant contribution to the *theorising* of the subject, Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray describe a number of different possible approaches to reception studies, highlighting the various different methodological approaches that may be applied.⁴³ They are:

- (1) using examples to seek trends or patterns,
- (2) emphasising the historical context of particular examples of reception,
- (3) emphasising the relationship between the examples of reception and their classical predecessor,
- (4) tracking the history of a particular piece of ancient source material, e.g. text, myth, or something more abstract such as an idea,
- (5) emphasising the use of receptions to mould understanding of ancient source material.

Hardwick and Stray present these methodologies alongside criticisms of each approach and conclude that they are an over-simplification that can create 'false polarities'.⁴⁴ Therefore, while all these approaches are used to some degree throughout the thesis in order to answer different questions as they arise, in many cases the methodologies necessarily overlap with one another.

Some examples of each of these approaches from within the thesis are that:

⁴³ Hardwick & Stray 2011: 2-3.

⁴⁴ Hardwick & Stray 2011: 3.

- (1) the thesis picks out trends and themes that might not otherwise have been obvious. This highlights how *Frogs* is received by different groups and how they use the play to convey their own message. For example, in the most prominent African versions *Frogs* is primarily a political play⁴⁵ whereas in Britain the more successful productions emphasise the comedy over any sort of didactic message.⁴⁶ In the United States *Frogs* has attracted great interest from minority ethnic groups,⁴⁷ whilst at the same time attracting unusual staging, which is also seen prominently in New Zealand.⁴⁸
- (2) many productions of *Frogs* react to contemporary events, just as Aristophanes' original did. This helps imbue productions with contemporary relevance and can highlight *Frogs*' message of the power of poetry and theatre to stimulate debate.
- (3) interacting with the previous approach, the relationship between ancient and modern can be seen most prominently in the political content of adaptations. Some attempt to recreate what they perceive to be the message of the original (and can end up subverting it for their own moral) whilst others add their own political element without claiming any similarity to Aristophanes. Others still will abandon any political comment whatsoever.
- (4) tracking of a particular source is plain, since this thesis tracks the history of *Frogs*. What this shows us is how our understanding of *Frogs* has evolved over time, and how the various disciplines in which receptions occur: historical, literary, translational, theatrical, interact to form a meaning for the play.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ See Chapter Seven, pp.329-31.

⁴⁶ Such as the 2012 Cambridge Greek Play (Chapter Four, pp.228-32) and Double Edge Drama's version (Chapter Four, pp.214-6).

⁴⁷ See Chapter Five, pp.271-3.

⁴⁸ See Chapter Seven, pp.332-4.

⁴⁹ In particular Chapter Two, *passim*.

(5) by studying adaptations of *Frogs* we can see how difficult it is to recreate the complex interaction between politics, literature and, as I argue, pedagogy from the original play. In turn this allows us to understand more about how contingent Aristophanes' own play was. In particular, the question of how and what a piece of theatre can 'teach' a modern audience is central. The better-received modern productions will provoke debate rather than suggest a definitive course of action, just as I will argue Aristophanes' original play was intended to do – and as the Euripides of *Frogs* argues his plays were intended to do.

'Performance reception' is only one sub-section of the wider sub-discipline of classical reception studies, but its focus is radically different from Martindale's because it puts the spectator or audience member at the centre of analysis rather than the individual reader. Whilst plays can be read and not all translations of classical texts are meant for the stage, performance reception by definition is more concerned with the live performance. Reading may also form part of the reception – a modern adapter for example, might read previous adaptations of an ancient play – but the live performance is always the end goal.⁵⁰ However, as Edith Hall has put it, 'No two scholars will practise Performance Reception in the same way'.⁵¹ I must state that I obviously could not witness in person every performance referenced in my research and so my approach is often mediated by other people's reception of the performances, which have themselves been constituted by the writer's and director's individual and personal receptions of Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

In her chapter in *Theorising Performance*, Hall outlines a number of factors which in combination constitute the unique and distinctive approach of performance reception.⁵²

⁵⁰ Hall 2010: 12.

⁵¹ Hall 2010: 13.

⁵² See Hall 2010: 14-26 for further details.

Hall's chapter is titled 'Towards a Theory of Performance Reception' and, as indicated by this, she does not go as far as to advocate a theory or model for performance reception. Her factors are mixed in their relevance to *Frogs*, and indeed to Aristophanes as a whole; there are only two references to comedy in the chapter. Furthermore it is notable that a volume called *Theorising Performance* does not actually suggest any fully-realised theoretical models; instead it raises theoretical questions and discusses how previous theoretical approaches can be applied to performance, such as ideas from Nietzsche or Kant. The neglect of Aristophanes continues throughout the book, with only 12 references to the comic poet throughout.

Despite these issues, the approaches specific to performance reception that Hall outlines do have some relevance to this research. They, and their usefulness or lack thereof for *Frogs*, are:

- **Translation:** performance and translation have necessarily always been intertwined. A translation written for a specific performance might have unique features written into the script, for example conflation of characters with contemporary figures or with specific staging in mind. This is one of the more relevant elements for *Frogs* since a number of productions contemporise their script through the inclusion of modern references. Of particular note here is the 2013 University of Cambridge production,⁵³ which, whilst it was performed in Greek, used a number of modern references in the accompanying surtitles, even going so far as to translate modern songs into ancient Greek in order to perform them.

⁵³ See Chapter Four, pp.228-32.

- **Body:** theatre is voyeuristic by its very nature, with spectators watching real people performing sometimes private acts. Greek theatre is full of physical demonstrations of extreme feelings such as anguish and fear, as well as physical pain itself, and therefore gives us an insight into how the Greeks felt about these most ubiquitous elements of the human experience. For *Frogs* the physical comedy of the beating scene and of the frog chorus themselves is relevant here, and are often elements that are picked out for comment below. For the numerous performances in Greek this is especially relevant, since to audience members with no knowledge of the language physicality is the main medium through which they can understand the performance.

- **Mimesis:** theatre universally remains a medium of substitution and identification, incorporating the ‘substitution of one “person” by another (i.e. by an actor) and identification of one person (i.e. the spectator) with another (represented by the actor)’.⁵⁴ Performance reception can therefore be used to analyse which representations are most effective for any given audience. This element is less relevant in comedy than tragedy, where empathy with tragic characters plays a crucial role in the audience’s appreciation of the performance. Nevertheless part of the comic effect may rely on empathy, or lack of it in the case of the beating scene for example.

- **Memory:** theatre often remains with the spectator long after the performance in a manner more profound than after simply reading the text. Many great works were informed not by the text of a play, but the memory of performance, such as Freud’s response to Mounet-Sully’s performance as Oedipus. As will be explained in

⁵⁴ Hall 2010: 17.

Chapter One, Aristophanes' *Frogs* could have been intended to inspire the audience to think and to question. A modern performance might have the same goal, in which case the memory of that performance could inspire a spectator to think further. In practice this is a difficult element to judge without an explicit link in the manner of the Oedipus Complex, but it may be argued for example that the African-American civil rights group 'The Frogs' was inspired by the memory of the play.⁵⁵

- **Psyche:** Freud was also convinced of the link between the subconscious and drama, supposing that dreamers play out their fantasies on a subconscious stage. Theatre was the original medium through which fantasies might be portrayed in reality. This element is perhaps the least relevant to how *Frogs* has been received, with no academic interpretation taking this approach. Yet given that *Frogs*' underworld journey could be interpreted as a descent into a dreamlike world and the return to reality, it is perhaps surprising that this has been neglected. Few productions have taken this approach, although the Medicine Show Theater Ensemble did use *Frogs* as an inspiration for the semi-improvised production in 1975.⁵⁶ The production was envisaged as a mental *katabasis* where the participants would journey into their own psyche.
- **Contingency:** the real world is contingent, meaning it is unpredictable. Traditional theatre generally strives to be uncontingent, with rehearsed actors performing the same script in the same way each time. Yet the nature of live performance is that no two are ever the same and, as part of the 'real' world,

⁵⁵ See Chapter Five, pp.271-2.

⁵⁶ See Chapter Five, pp.255-6.

audience reactions are always contingent. Avant-garde and other experimental types of theatre also attempt to recreate a contingent and randomised performance. In general this is a difficult approach to link to *Frogs*, since on the whole we are looking at scripted performance. It is very difficult to examine without witnessing a series of performances and analysing the changes between them. And yet *Frogs* has been used as a starting point for avant-garde pieces, most notably the semi-improvised production by the Medicine Show Theater Ensemble mentioned above.

- **Temporal Orientation:** theatre often transports the audience into a different time and Greek theatre takes us to the ancient past. But at the same time we are watching events happening *now* and wondering how they will affect events in the *future*. Since the performance is unfolding as the audience watches, there is a sense that the conclusion might not be fixed and that the outcome can be avoided. On stage this temporal aspect is represented by the Greek tragic chorus, who foresee tragic events but are always powerless to prevent them. Theatre may therefore serve as a metaphor for real life and the power of the collective to change things for the better. Again, this is less relevant for *Frogs*, since the chorus here are not foreseeing events that might be avoided. Nevertheless certain productions do play with the idea of time, such as in the opening line of Sondheim's production 'The time is the present. The place...is ancient Greece.'
- **Political Potency:** theatre can inspire political change, which is why it makes so many turn to it as a means of expression during times of great troubles. It also breaks down social and political boundaries: rich or poor the spectator watches the same performance. With regards to Greek theatre, live performance allows the

ordinary theatre goer to experience the classics, something that until recently was the privilege of those with a classical education. In keeping with Aristophanes' original play, this is relevant across the whole spectrum of *Frogs* performances, but one very important example is the production by Nanzikambe Arts in Malawi,⁵⁷ where the politics of the production were so immediate that it upset the Malawian authorities.

This research is undertaken against the background of a growing academic interest in the performance of ancient theatre. One piece of evidence for this is that the volumes in the new, influential and growing series *Duckworth Companions to Greek & Roman Tragedy* all contain chapters detailing reception of the plays, although this has never been the case before with equivalent series.⁵⁸ This is a sure sign that reception, and indeed performance reception, has now been accepted as more than an appendage to traditional classics but as a core constituent of it. Nevertheless, the theoretical models described do not always fit well with performance of comedy. Performance is difficult to theorise in all disciplines, not just classical reception, and Chapter Two⁵⁹ features a discussion on the difficulty of judging 'performability' as an aspect of translation.

It is perhaps because of the under-theorising of the reception of comedy that Aristophanes is relatively neglected by reception studies when compared to tragedy. Tragedy has seen volumes on the performance reception dedicated to a number of plays; for example

⁵⁷ See Chapter Seven, pp.330-1.

⁵⁸ Although Griffith's book on *Frogs* (the only play featured in the *Oxford Approaches to Classical Literature* series) does include a chapter on reception.

⁵⁹ Pp.94-5.

Medea,⁶⁰ *Agamemnon*,⁶¹ *Trojan Women*,⁶² *Heracles*,⁶³ *Oedipus Tyrannus*,⁶⁴ *Iphigenia in Tauris*,⁶⁵ *Hippolytus*⁶⁶ and *Bacchae*.⁶⁷ Other, more general works have focused on the reception of tragedy, such as *Greek Drama on the American Stage*,⁶⁸ *Dionysus Since 69*⁶⁹ and *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre, 1660-1914*.⁷⁰ There have been some publications on the reception of ancient comedy; for Aristophanes the most notable are Martin Holtermann's study of German 19th-century literary and philosophical responses (2004)⁷¹ and Edith Hall and Amanda Wrigley's (eds.) 2007 *Aristophanes in Performance 421 BC to AD 2007*. This covers the reception of *Peace*, *Birds* and *Frogs*, with chapters dedicated to certain productions or time periods. Also directly dealing with the reception of Aristophanes are Gonda Van Steen's 2000 *Venom in Verse: Aristophanes in Modern Greece* and Philip Walsh's (ed.) 2016 *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aristophanes*. Even more general is S. Douglas Olson's edited 2014 volume *Ancient Comedy and Reception*. Other than these, and with one notable exception, research into Aristophanic performance is usually confined to miscellaneous articles or chapters covering one or more individual productions.

Paradoxically, despite the lack of work on the reception of Aristophanic plays, *Lysistrata* is probably the Greek play whose performance has been researched the most. A lot of the research has been in the form of postgraduate study, but it covers varying aspects of the

⁶⁰ Hall, Taplin & Macintosh (eds.) 2000.

⁶¹ Macintosh, Michelakis, Hall & Taplin (eds.) 2005.

⁶² Willis 2005 (unpublished thesis).

⁶³ Riley 2008.

⁶⁴ Macintosh 2009.

⁶⁵ Hall 2013.

⁶⁶ Looney 2014 (unpublished thesis).

⁶⁷ Bullen 2017 (unpublished thesis).

⁶⁸ Hartigan 1995.

⁶⁹ Hall, Macintosh & Wrigley (eds.) 2004.

⁷⁰ Hall, Macintosh 2005.

⁷¹ Holtermann 2004. For those without German, the contents are described in detail in Hall 2004 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

play, from individual performances;⁷² to Early Modern⁷³ and modern receptions of the play;⁷⁴ to African-American productions;⁷⁵ to the parallels between the play and the Liberian ‘sex strike’ of 2011.⁷⁶ Most notably, there is one recently published work on the performance history of *Lysistrata* in the United States, *Sex and War on the American Stage: Lysistrata in Performance, 1930-2012* by Emily B. Klein.⁷⁷ Like *Aristophanes in Performance*, Klein chooses to focus on specific productions, rather than construct an overall archival survey as I have done. Our differing approaches are necessitated by the very different performance reception of the two plays. As discussed above, *Lysistrata*’s theatrical history is much more compact: the first production Klein discusses is from 1930. The same approach could have been taken with *Frogs*, picking out perhaps ten notable productions for discussion. However, this would not have picked up on the diffuse history of the play and the trends that can be seen throughout. In particular this applies to the pedagogical engagement, which I have suggested is the most important element of *Frogs*’ reception. Productions such as those at Dulwich College might not be considered landmarks in their own right, but serve to demonstrate this trend.

Authenticity

A recurrent issue in this thesis is the concept of authenticity and the question of what this means in the performance of Aristophanic comedy. Authenticity in the performance is frequently discussed in the theatre as a whole,⁷⁸ often in reference to performing Shakespeare. The Globe Theatre mounts ‘original practices’ productions, which feature

⁷² Crouch 2010 (unpublished thesis) and Frohling 2010 (unpublished thesis). Both of these works relate to different aspects of the same production of *Lysistrata*.

⁷³ Kotzamani 1997 (unpublished thesis).

⁷⁴ Charbila 2004 (unpublished thesis); Hardwick 2010; Kotzamani 2014.

⁷⁵ Wetmore 2014.

⁷⁶ Morales 2013.

⁷⁷ Klein 2014.

⁷⁸ A general synopsis of the issues of authenticity in general can be found in Dutton 2003. For a recent outline of the history of authenticity in theatre, see Schulze 2017: 1-66.

all-male casts and no modern theatrical equipment, such as electric lights. The question of authenticity at the Globe was brought to mainstream attention in 2016 by the departure of artistic director Emma Rice, reportedly owing to the modern sound and lighting she attempted to bring to the theatre.⁷⁹

The fundamental problem with performance authenticity is that it is not something that can be achieved fully. As stated above, performance reception gives strong emphasis to the audience, an element which can never be authentic to the original. The modern world is not the world of Aristophanes or Shakespeare and attending the theatre is a very different experience today from what it was in the past. As one actor said in response to Rice's departure from the Globe, 'The Globe may be getting rid of "light and sound", but thank GOD they're keeping the authentic and historically accurate Shakespeare gift shop'.⁸⁰ Similarly, whilst we know that the actors were all male and wore masks, we have no idea how lines were delivered in Athenian theatre. Some reject the notion of authenticity altogether, suggesting that 'performance is always a copy of that for which no original can ever be found'⁸¹ and that 'we are too ignorant to lay any serious claim to authenticity, however honourable our intentions'.⁸²

Instead authenticity is a label for a set of problems and aspirations that are part of performing historical theatre. It is assumed that the adapter/director wants to bring something 'authentic' to the modern production, because without this there is no reason to be creating an adaptation as opposed to something new. As David Wiles puts it, 'Most directors who engage with Greek drama feel (a) that they have touched on something

⁷⁹ Cavendish 2016 [online, accessed 17th February 2018]; Mooney 2016 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁸⁰ Quoted in Cavendish 2016 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁸¹ Savran 2001: 92.

⁸² Barish 1994: 28.

authentically Greek which is worth bringing to the present, and (b) that there is something in the present which they would like to bring to the ancient text’, yet at the same time, ‘What seems authentic to one generation seems stilted, ill-researched and irrelevant to the next’.⁸³

The demands of authenticity often find themselves in competition with what ‘works’ for an audience. Some have argued that ‘the construction of a performance script permits, even demands, modification of the textual “original” in order to render that original theatrically communicative in the present’.⁸⁴ The idea of a production being ‘successful’ is not something that can be readily theorised, but as far as possible I will attempt to document and analyse such clashes between aspirations to fidelity and the pragmatic concerns of engagement with contemporary audiences, using my own reaction to performances I have witnessed and the testimony of reviewers and audience members where available.

In classics, authenticity is generally discussed only in reference to specific productions and even then comedy is neglected.⁸⁵ Mary-Kay Gamel⁸⁶ has theorised authenticity by dividing into six categories, but this encompasses not just authenticity to the ancient performance itself, but also authenticity to the process which went in to the creation of the original play. For her, authenticity is not just about reflecting the ancient play, but reflecting the people, time and place of the modern production in the same way that Athenian drama did. Her categories are:

⁸³ Wiles 2000: 179.

⁸⁴ Hartley 2001: 173.

⁸⁵ The most recent volume that discusses adaptations and their authenticity (Rodosthenous 2017) contains no reference to comedy.

⁸⁶ Gamel 2013.

- **Nominal or historical authenticity**, which seeks to replicate the conditions of the original performance.
- **Expressive authenticity**, where practitioners emphasise their own meaning in the performance, regardless of whether this has been perceived in the original text. Whilst this is not authentic to the original performance itself, it can be authentic to the process which went into the creation of that original performance. For example, just as Aristophanic plays may have sought to say something about Aristophanes' Athens, so might a modern adaptation be authentic by saying something about its own time and place.
- **Processual authenticity** is similar to expressive authenticity, but specifically concerned with the staging of the performance, rather than meaning.
- **Structural authenticity**, where the production reflects the community in which it is created. A professional production will be different from community theatre, which is different from a university or school.
- **Inductive authenticity**, which seeks to engage an audience in a manner similar to ancient Athens, for example by raising political or social questions.
- **Critical authenticity**, where scholars analysing the performance analyse the entire process (including goals) of a production, rather than just the end performance.

This thesis primarily concerns itself with authenticity to the ancient performance and therefore deals with nominal, expressive and inductive authenticity. With regards to the examples of *Frogs* cited in this thesis, nominal authenticity has been practised in three ways. Firstly through language (performance in ancient Greek is common, although peculiar to the English-speaking world), secondly through translation (Chapter Two

discusses literal translations versus more free versions) and thirdly through staging (theatres laid out in the circular Greek style, or through costume or music).⁸⁷

Encompassing both Gamel's expressive and inductive authenticity is what I call authenticity of spirit. Since, as argued above, a fully authentic production is impossible to mount today, instead an adapter seeks to find an element that is Wiles' 'something *authentically* Greek'. In the case of *Frogs*, this might be a political message, a view of literary criticism, or perhaps something as simple as making it comedic. It should be noted that Gamel's categories do not necessarily require a replication of an Aristophanic element. The inductive element might be a political message, but not necessarily one that has been perceived in the original play. Some practitioners involved in *Frogs* have claimed to replicate an Aristophanic message (or what they see it as being), whilst others have claimed authenticity through giving a message of any sort.

The idea of what authenticity means was tackled head on by the Cambridge version of *Frogs* in 2013.⁸⁸ Director Helen Eastman has openly stated, 'I don't believe it's an act of reverence to stage the play how the playwright would have staged it – it's an act of reverence to make it bloody good'.⁸⁹ She clarified this with regards to Aristophanes, saying that for her, reverence to the poet was making it funny.⁹⁰ Other classicist-adapters, however, have differing views. Michael Ewans, whose translation aimed at performance is discussed in Chapter Two,⁹¹ believes that Aristophanes should only be performed 'straight', faithful to the meaning of the ancient script, with no adaptation at all. He states

⁸⁷ Gilbert Murray once suggested that the director of a 1908 Royal Court production of the *Bacchae* should look at vases in the British Museum for ideas about Greek dress (Sampatakakis 2017: 189). At least one production of *Frogs* has used a reference to vases in order to stress its own authenticity. See Chapter Five, pp.249-90.

⁸⁸ See Chapter Four, pp.228-32.

⁸⁹ Pelling 2013.

⁹⁰ Cambridge Greek Play Symposium [20 October 2013].

⁹¹ Pp.159-61.

that *Frogs* is full of names that mean nothing to a modern audience and ‘cannot simply be glossed over or replaced’ and ‘accordingly [he] oppose[s] “modernized” scripts’.⁹² By contrast, Tony Keen, whose planned performance is covered in Chapter Four,⁹³ states, ‘Unlike the Greek tragedians, who warrant translation for the modern stage, Aristophanes is a writer who needs adaptation’ and ‘One should seek to honour the spirit of what he wrote, rather than his precise text’.⁹⁴ Gamel agrees, saying ‘Substituting allusions to those a modern audience can understand...is the only way to create inductive authenticity’.⁹⁵

A sub-question of this thesis is therefore ‘What does it mean to be authentic to Aristophanes’ *Frogs*?’ Where adapters have addressed the subject I will raise this, but I will also discuss it in reference to adaptations where authenticity is not a stated aim.

Sources, Evidence, Bibliography

While this thesis aims to provide as much relevant detail as possible, geographical and chronological barriers prevent me undertaking an analysis of equivalent scale into all productions cited. I do however aim to mention as many productions as possible in order to give a complete impression of the performance history of the play, and while some will only be named in passing, when it comes to the aesthetically or socially significant productions, as many as possible will be fleshed out to a greater degree. Regarding the different kinds of evidence, the most important source will always be my responses when I have witnessed a performance of a production myself; I have been lucky enough to witness a number of live productions of *Frogs* discussed here, as well as several recorded ones of various quality.

⁹² Ewans 2010: 29.

⁹³ Pp.213-4.

⁹⁴ Keen 2006: 7.

⁹⁵ Gamel 2010: 160.

With regards to secondary sources, the starting-point for much of the research in this thesis will be the database of productions provided by the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama at the University of Oxford. The database is invaluable in providing an overall picture of the history of performance, as well as furnishing leads for further research. This initial list has been expanded through a number of sources, and it is estimated that around a third of the productions discovered are not in the archive.

Academic texts⁹⁶ have generally focused on individual productions and these will be drawn on where relevant. There are several articles, theses and other academic resources that cover individual productions or offer a general survey without specific detail. In general, much of the existing research has focused on a small number of influential productions, for example various Oxbridge performances, Universiteit Stellenbosch's *Paradox* in South Africa and the Sondheim/Shevelove version. North American productions are covered by several well-researched (though not necessarily accurate) theses and articles, although, again, these often consist of little more than lists of performances. South African performance is similarly well-documented, as part of a sustained interest in post-colonial and apartheid-influenced theatre. I have found no dedicated research into performance of Ancient Greek drama in Australia, New Zealand or the rest of Africa.

For further research materials I have contacted or visited archives of theatres, universities and schools. Resources are often scarce, but there are usually programmes and articles in student publications available. In general, these materials are similar to those that have informed the previous academic research mentioned above; in some cases they actually

⁹⁶ Such as those mentioned above.

contradict published works and this is noted within my research. Indeed, in some case I have found fairly detailed accounts of productions for which the venue or company attributed has no record whatsoever!⁹⁷

There has been some debate as to the usefulness of archival resources in analysing performance;⁹⁸ it is often stressed that live performance is ephemeral and disappears the moment the curtain goes down. To a certain extent that is true; throughout the thesis I will be able to react in far more detail to productions I have seen as opposed to those I am attempting to reconstruct from other sources of evidence. However, for many of the productions cited in this research, use of archival resources is the only means of reconstructing them. Archive study has been essential to developing my understanding of the trends in performance and how these might tie into wider social and political phenomena.

In many ways the ‘holy grail’ sought by the practitioner of this kind of research is physically obtaining a copy of the adapted script for the play. I am indebted to many individuals and companies who have allowed me access to their unpublished scripts. Whilst it will never be an adequate substitute for seeing the live performance, the script allows the researcher to understand the level of adaptation in a production; it will often include notes on staging and may also go some way towards suggesting the themes and messages that were implied by the production. The element of live performance that the script can never reproduce, of course, is the audience reaction (the ‘contingency’ mentioned in Hall’s breakdown above). For this we are often reliant on critical reviews, which are themselves only the opinion of one particular critic, whose experience is likely

⁹⁷ Most notably in the case of a production at the Experimental College of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which a source claims was performed there. See Chapter Five, p.252.

⁹⁸ For further details on archives and their usefulness or lack of see Stoian 2002 and Michelakis 2010.

far removed from that of the average audience member. Wherever possible I will try to use a number of reviews in order to offer as broad a spectrum of reactions as possible.

The unfortunate downside of the vast geographical and chronological scope of this research is that many interesting productions cannot be explored fully. Archival research of this nature can raise unexpected barriers: for example the archives of Wellington University were housed in an earthquake damaged building and therefore inaccessible. Some of the older material has been digitised with online access, but a lot has not. For these productions I have been reliant on help from librarians, archivists, academics and theatre practitioners, who in many cases have gone out of their way to assist in my research.⁹⁹ It is hoped that in future either myself or another will be able to undertake more focused research on those productions that merit it.¹⁰⁰

Structure

The thesis is broken down into two main sections. The first section comprises the first and second chapters, and details the receptions of *Frogs* outside performance. Chapter One details modern academic receptions of the play, focussing particularly on the two most prevalent, politics and literary criticism. Chapter Two, 'Transformation, Transmission and Translation' bridges the large gap in *Frogs*' performance history. Following the original Aristophanic production, *Frogs* disappears from performance, not reappearing in any theatrical form until the 16th century.¹⁰¹ The first section of this chapter therefore details how the play did survive and speculates as to why it may have done when so much of classical theatre is lost to us. It also briefly recreates the assumed

⁹⁹ A list of acknowledgements is included at the start of the thesis.

¹⁰⁰ In particular the Malawian version of *Frogs*, since this is the only recorded classical play in the country and had some political consequences of its own. See Chapter Seven, pp.330-31.

¹⁰¹ And even then, it wasn't in a full-length version of *Frogs*. See Chapter Three.

journey of the text from Athens to our earliest surviving manuscripts. The chapter next moves on to translation, beginning by discussing the difficulties with translating Aristophanic comedy. Finally the chapter surveys every translation of *Frogs* into English, as well as discussing contemporary events in classical scholarship, translation and theatre which may have impacted on them.

The second section details the performance reception of *Frogs* in the English-speaking world. Chapter Three covers 'Reflections', which is the term I am using to describe theatre productions that have possibly been influenced by *Frogs*, either explicitly or otherwise. The remaining four chapters cover theatrical adaptations of *Frogs*, divided geographically. Chapter Four focuses on Britain and Chapter Five on North America. Chapter Six will focus solely on the most significant production of *Frogs*, that of Burt Shevelove and Stephen Sondheim, tracing its 60-year journey from a Yale swimming pool to *Frogs*' sole Broadway appearance. Chapter Seven will follow performance across Africa and Australasia. This overall picture of the performance history of the play serves to demonstrate how it has appealed to multiple audiences and how they respond differently to it. Owing to the nature and amount of evidence available, Chapter Four is organised chronologically whilst Chapters Five and Seven are organised thematically.

A Note on Style

In general I will use the English names for ancient works, for example *Frogs* and *Prometheus Bound*. But my practice is necessarily eclectic and based on the principle that I do not want to estrange or distract my reader from my arguments by using unfamiliar titles. Thus I prefer *Oedipus Tyrannus* to *Tyrannos* or *Rex*. In some cases I will use the Greek name for the sake of brevity, for example *Thesmophoriazusae* rather than *Women Celebrating the Thesmophoria*. I will also use the established English spelling for proper

names, for example Aeschylus and not Aiskhylos. Where the names have appeared differently in quotation I will retain the spelling used by the writer I am quoting; some quotations will also contain American English for this reason. All translations from Latin and Greek will be from the most recent Loeb editions of the texts, except where otherwise stated. Translations from any other language will be my own. References from primary sources – mainly published and unpublished play scripts, but also other media such as novels – will be included in the text in parentheses. For most modern texts these references will consist of page numbers; for ancient texts, usually quoted in translation, they will be line numbers, which are sometimes necessarily approximate to one or two lines since I am usually pointing my reader at the translation. Other references are given in footnotes.

Having set the stage by defining my research question and the scope of the investigation, identifying previous scholarly contributions to the field, and detailing my sources and methodology, it is now time to enter the dramatic fray and go back to the production which began the whole history in which I am interested, the premiere of *Frogs* in Athens in 405 BC.

Chapter One

Aristophanes' *Frogs*: Modern Academic Interpretations of the Ancient Play

In this chapter, I return to the original text of the play. Reviewing modern scholarship on the subject will make it possible to place the performance history of the play in a wider interpretive framework. This chapter serves the purpose of setting up the two major (and broad) strands in academic interpretation that have influenced modern performances of the play: the political and the literary. That these interpretations of *Frogs* are the most discussed¹⁰² should come as no surprise, since Aristophanes regularly used contemporary politics and tragedy as inspiration and subject matter.¹⁰³ For the purposes of this chapter an exploration of the ways in which *Frogs* has been interpreted within the time-span of the most prolific period of performance history, i.e. twentieth-century and later,¹⁰⁴ is required, rather than a traditional historical literature review. Likewise there is no attempt at a close analysis or commentary on the text of *Frogs*, as such an undertaking would require a thesis of its own.

Pierre Judet de la Combe once said of *Agamemnon*: 'If a performance succeeds in convincing the audience, or at least part of it, of its value, this is not due to the existence of some shared ideas about what a Greek tragedy actually is, or about what the *Agamemnon* means. There is no agreement on these questions and no such shared ideas: directors feel no less bewildered about these difficult texts than classicists themselves.'¹⁰⁵ The point stands for comedy as well, as does the old cliché: that there are as many opinions about *Frogs* as there are people to hold them. Whilst Stephen Halliwell's opinion

¹⁰² The religious background to the play, as detailed in Lada-Richards (1999), could constitute a third significant interpretation. It does, however, cross over with the political aspect, as detailed below, pp.62-3.

¹⁰³ Van Steen 2007b: 110.

¹⁰⁴ A summary of earlier political interpretations of Aristophanes can be found in Walsh 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Judet de la Combe 2005: 273.

on the play is somewhat anti-interpretative,¹⁰⁶ he is not incorrect when he says of the play, ‘to try to ‘mind read’ Aristophanes by extracting a single message from his work...is surely to fall into a critical trap as deep as that into which Dionysus stumbles.’¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the first step must be a survey of these modern academic discussions, highlighting opposing views and the various methodological problems with them. That there is no consensus amongst the academic community over how we should interpret *Frogs* is one of the reasons the play lends itself to such a wide variety of theatrical adaptations with differing motivations.

Politics

The question of how to read Aristophanes ‘politically’ is one that has been debated at length in scholarship.¹⁰⁸ The discussion has traditionally revolved around a number of questions: How far did the Aristophanic plays reflect contemporary politics? Was Aristophanes seeking to provide answers or merely to provoke debate? Is the key to interpreting the politics of his plays to be found in the parabasis, where the actors step out of character to speak directly to the audience? Did Aristophanes actually have a tangible impact on Athenian politics? And finally, do any political messages gleaned from the plays represent the views of the poet himself? Yet these questions may not be the right ones to ask from a performance reception perspective. Perhaps what is more important is what can the play be *made* to say, both in the ancient world and today.

The question of what a play ‘means’ is interpreted differently by an academic and a modern theatrical audience. In the 20th- or 21st-century theatre, the question of what the

¹⁰⁶ See below under both Politics and Literary Criticism.

¹⁰⁷ Halliwell 2009: 144.

¹⁰⁸ The necessarily reductive discussion here omits specific discussion of the significant contributions of, inter alios, Gomme 1938 and Ruffell 2011.

original Athenian audience took from the play, or what the play (or author himself) intended to convey, can be irrelevant. Whether the play can be used to convey what a modern adapter/director wants it to and what the audience might take from it are more pressing concerns. That is not to say certain adaptations will not claim to recreate what they believe to be the message/politics of the original, however they have understood it, perhaps in an attempt to add to the legitimacy of their message. Often this can lead to an interpretation of the Athenian context that is twisted to suit the modern production, rather than the other way round.¹⁰⁹ Of course a modern production need not attempt to say anything at all, entertainment for the entertainment's sake is not such an alien concept, and many productions have had success without needing to contain an explicit (or sometimes even implicit) message.

There is no doubt that Aristophanic comedy has a political element. This was apparent even in the first generation of Aristophanes' ancient reception: the *Life of Aristophanes* (fr. 42-5 KA) tells us that when the Syracusan tyrant Dionysus I wanted to know more about Athenian politics, Plato sent him a copy of Aristophanes' plays. For the ancient commentators comedy was seen as a vital part of holding public figures to account.¹¹⁰ Aristophanes himself claims in several of his plays to be giving good advice to the city¹¹¹ and the poet was also apparently prosecuted by a politician on at least one occasion.¹¹² *Frogs* promises 'much that's amusing | And much that's serious' (389-90) whilst *Acharnians* states 'For even comedy knows about what's right' (500).

¹⁰⁹ For a notable example of this, see the 2013 *Theatro Technis* version in Chapter Three, pp.220-28.

¹¹⁰ Halliwell 1993: 323.

¹¹¹ Heath 1997: 239; Robson 2009: 162.

¹¹² By a regular opponent in his early career, Cleon. See below pp.63-4.

Two influential debating positions about Aristophanic politics were developed by Malcolm Heath and Jeffrey Henderson in the 1980s and 90s. For Heath, Aristophanic comedy referenced and used political subject matter, but ‘did not and was not intended to have a[n]...effect on political reality’ and ‘did not aspire to be a political force’.¹¹³ By contrast Henderson believes comedy did ‘seek to influence public thinking about matters of major importance’.¹¹⁴ Whilst Heath and Henderson offer extreme poles of a complex debate that does not reduce to a simple binary and indeed has often sought to escape from it,¹¹⁵ I want to argue that the play responds to an idea of politicality that we would see as closer to Henderson’s view – one in which Aristophanic comedy did not seek to provide all the answers, although it did offer some explicit pieces of advice on occasion. More often the comedies draw attention to something and provoke debate. In this sense the plays can be read as at least in part trying to provoke political change, while not necessarily giving a complete picture of what that change should be.

Part of the reason for the persistence of the debate is that we rarely have anything approaching direct testimony to how the political content of the plays was received by Aristophanes’ audiences. Ancient scholars made the assumptions that historical figures featured in the plays were guilty of everything Aristophanes accused them of, or why would the Athenians have allowed such defamatory statements in so public a space?¹¹⁶ Yet the evidence of *Knights* indicates otherwise: Cleon’s career does not appear to have been impacted at all following Aristophanes’ jibes.¹¹⁷ Likewise Heath and Halliwell suggest that the politician Cleonymus would have been barred from public office or

¹¹³ Heath 1987: 42.

¹¹⁴ Henderson 1989: 271.

¹¹⁵ And indeed were fundamentally flawed from the outset. See Silk 2000: 308-10.

¹¹⁶ Robson 2009: 164.

¹¹⁷ Robson 2009: 170.

disenfranchised if he was guilty of throwing his shield away in battle, as Aristophanes repeatedly suggested he did.¹¹⁸

Frogs itself, however, is unique in ancient drama, because we *do* have an explicit statement about how the play was received by its original audience, which claims that its success was due to its political content. The hypothesis to *Frogs* tells us that ‘The play was so much admired because of the parabasis contained in it that it was actually restaged, as Dikaiarchos says.’ (*Hyp.* 1.39-40).¹¹⁹ Furthermore, according to the anonymous *Life* of Aristophanes, the poet ‘won praise and a crown of sacred olive, which was considered in worth equal to a golden crown, when he spoke in the *Frogs* about the men who had been deprived of their rights’.¹²⁰ These two sources¹²¹ seemingly refer to a specific passage in the parabasis, which references the naval battle of Arginusae. The Athenian navy had been bolstered by the presence of slaves and following their victory the assembly had awarded citizenship to those who took part. In *Frogs*, the chorus praise the decision to reward the slaves, but also recommend the re-enfranchisement of those who had lost their citizenship following the failed oligarchic coup which happened previously in 411. They suggest that, if slaves are being awarded citizenship for their role in a sea battle, that therefore ‘it’s fitting, in the case of people who have fought many a sea battle at your side, as have their fathers...that you pardon this one misadventure’ (695-700).

For this reason the section on Arginusae and the re-enfranchisement is generally taken at face value; even Heath calls this section of the parabasis ‘the one exception to this general

¹¹⁸ Heath 1987: 18; Halliwell 1984: 13. The Aristophanic references to Cleonymus and his shield can be found at: *Clouds* 353-4; *Wasps* 15-27; *Peace* 670-8 and 1295-304; *Birds* 288-90 and 1470-81.

¹¹⁹ Translation from Sommerstein 1993: 461.

¹²⁰ Translation from Lefkowitz 1981: 171.

¹²¹ Sommerstein believes the information in the *Life* also came from the fourth- and third-century scholar Dicaearchus, since he is quoted as the source of information in the Hypothesis. See Sommerstein 1996: 21, 1993: 462.

tendency' of Aristophanic comedy not concerning itself with Athenian politics.¹²² As far as we are aware a second performance of a comedy was a unique distinction at this time,¹²³ and indeed the re-enfranchisement was carried out in late 405, through the Decree of Patrocleides (Andoc. 1.77-79).¹²⁴

Despite Heath's assertion that the parabasis is 'an unreliable basis for generalisation about the advisor's role in his work',¹²⁵ it is difficult to envisage an Aristophanes who limited the sum total of his political advice to a series of lines in a single play.¹²⁶ There are other instances of explicit pieces of advice both within *Frogs* and other Aristophanic plays¹²⁷ but with no corroborating evidence it is difficult to say whether they were intended to be taken seriously.

There are some dissenting voices to question the evidence of the hypothesis. Wehrli agreed that Dicaearchus is the common source, but suggested that the latter may have known only that there was a second performance, but had merely speculated as to the reason why.¹²⁸ Halliwell suggests that a repeat performance the following year might have been unlikely owing to Athens' recent defeat and the number of topical allusions that even one year later would have made no sense. Instead the second performance may have been much later and not owing to the advice in the parabasis.¹²⁹

¹²² Heath 1987: 19.

¹²³ For further details on the date of the second performance see Chapter Two, p.78n252.

¹²⁴ Though of course the reliability of Andocides' *On the Mysteries* is still being questioned, principally by Canevaro and Harris 2012. Different parts of Andocides are defended in Sommerstein 2014 and Hansen 2015 (the latter asserts the reliability of Andocides' account of Patrocleides' decree). Canevaro and Harris 2017 is a response to Hansen.

¹²⁵ Heath 1987: 20.

¹²⁶ Robson 2009: 177.

¹²⁷ Such as where *Acharnians* advises keeping hold of the island of Aegina.

¹²⁸ Wehrli 1944: 68-9. This view has also been supported by Goldhill 1991: 203; Russo 1994: 335; and Halliwell 2015: 169-70.

¹²⁹ Halliwell 2015: 169-70.

As well as questioning whether the *Hypothesis* and *Life* can be taken at face value, Goldhill goes on to raise further issues with the parabasis and whether the advice was meant to be followed. Goldhill's issues arise when it is examined in the context of the whole play, rather than as an independent unit.¹³⁰ Silk too suggests that the advice in the parabasis is 'isolated' from the rest of the play.¹³¹ Yet if we are to take into account the whole of the play *Arginusae* is referenced elsewhere, by Xanthias at 33-4 and Charon at 190-1, while the Athenian navy is referenced in the *parodos*, condemning those who harm the Athenian navy or help the opposing navy (354-71), and in the naval advice during the contest (1463-5).¹³² Sommerstein¹³³ has also argued (principally against Wehrli) that Dicaearchus was not speculating about the details. If Wehrli is correct, reasons Sommerstein, why was the parabasis singled out as particularly worthy of praise? And why does it describe a 'crown of sacred olive', when the usual reward was one of gold? Sommerstein goes on to suggest that Dicaearchus' source might have been an honorific decree, owing to the presence of the verb ἐπιγέθη appearing in the *Life* – a word that was common in decrees.

The parabasis also criticises contemporary populist politicians, comparing them unfavourably to more aristocratic leaders of the past. And so in the parabasis we find a metaphor using coinage (718-37) to represent this new breed of bad politicians, as exemplified by Cleophon. The chorus leader states 'It's often struck us that the city deals with its fine upstanding citizens just as well as with the old coinage and the new gold' (718-9). Owing to a monetary crisis and shortage of silver the traditional solid silver coins of Athens had been diluted with silver-plated bronze coins. Whereas the old silver coins

¹³⁰ Goldhill 1991: 203.

¹³¹ Silk 2000: 317-8.

¹³² Also see below, p.58.

¹³³ Sommerstein 1993: 462-3.

had been trusted all over the Greek world, foreign merchants would not take the new ones. To solve this problem the Athenians stripped the gold from the temples and melted this down to make solid gold coins, worth too much for the ordinary citizen to use but reliable enough for foreigners to accept.¹³⁴ The chorus leader continues ‘the finest of coins...we make no use of them; instead we use these crummy coppers, struck just yesterday or the day before with a stamp of the lowest quality’ (721-2). So the chorus urge the audience to return to trusting ‘outstanding men, men brought up in wrestling schools, choruses, and the arts’ (729) and rejecting ‘the coppers, the aliens, the redheads, bad people with bad ancestors’ (730).¹³⁵ Just as Athens makes more use of the baser metals instead of the traditional silver and gold, so it makes use of the newer breed of politicians instead of those who are well-educated and experienced.

Goldhill also dismisses the other advice offered in the parabasis, although there are counter-arguments to each of his dismissals. The chorus claim that ‘It’s right and proper for the sacred chorus to help give good advice and instruction to the city’ (686-7). Yet, Goldhill tells us,¹³⁶ the whole point of Dionysus’ journey in *Frogs* is to bring back a poet to give good advice. Goldhill does miss something here, which is that Dionysus’ initial intentions have nothing to do with the city; he is acting purely for selfish reasons.¹³⁷ Regarding the chorus’ advice to make use of those ‘outstanding men’, Goldhill recognises the re-use of the term γεννάδας, meaning noble. This term is used to describe both Xanthias (179, 640) and to make fun of Dionysus (738-40). The Dionysus reference is the lines immediately following the parabasis, and for Goldhill this creates a paradox where Dionysus is immediately made fun of for being what the chorus have just

¹³⁴ Dover 1993: 281; Griffith 2013: 46-7.

¹³⁵ Dover 1993: 69.

¹³⁶ Goldhill 1991: 204-5.

¹³⁷ See below, pp.56-7.

praised.¹³⁸ Again Goldhill leaves out that the term γεννάδας is not used by the chorus in the parabasis. Instead they use εὐγενής (well-born) and σώφρων (of sound mind). The term χρηστός (good) is used for both Xanthias (much earlier in the play at 179) and to describe the preferred leaders in the parabasis, but it is a much more generic term.¹³⁹

Regarding Goldhill's comments on the advice to make use of other people's talent, we should bear in mind that one of the recurring themes of the play is the bringing back and making use of past talent. After all, bringing back Aeschylus, as opposed to the more modern Euripides, is the conclusion of the contest. Hence also the mention of the general Alcibiades in *Frogs*. Alcibiades is an example of an easy target who is surprisingly not criticised in comic poetry.¹⁴⁰ Aristophanes made fun of his lisp (*Wasps* 44), but he did not criticise his character. The general was from an aristocratic family and therefore is representative of those 'outstanding men'. During the contest sequence the two contestants are asked their opinion on Alcibiades. Both agree he is dangerous but Aeschylus advocates that the city still uses him, albeit with caution. He states,

It's best to rear no lion in the city.¹⁴¹

If you do raise one to maturity then cater to its ways. (1431-2)

The fact that both poets advise that Alcibiades should be used with caution underlines the force of this advice. In reality Alcibiades was not recalled and, according to Plutarch, was killed in 404 BC by Persians at the behest of the Spartan general Lysander (*Alcibiades* 39).

¹³⁸ Goldhill 1991: 203-4.

¹³⁹ For example it is used for the chorus' 'good advice' at 686.

¹⁴⁰ Sommerstein 1996b: 334-5; Robson 2007: 179. Although there is some suggestion he had an ongoing rivalry with Eupolis and was criticised in the comedian's play *Bathers* (415BC), see Gribble 1999: 32.

¹⁴¹ An apparent authorial variant states 'It's not good to rear a lion cub in the city.'

Goldhill's argument is therefore not convincing, and advocates of a political reading of *Frogs* alternatively claim these passages as supporting their argument. Sommerstein sees this element as part of an ongoing advocacy of what he calls an 'alternative democracy'.¹⁴² This includes four major elements: abolition of payment for civic functions,¹⁴³ repression of sycophancy, promotion of 'well-born and well-educated' leaders, and peace with Sparta. As well as making the mistake of trying to read Aristophanes' own thoughts from his plays,¹⁴⁴ this theory also assumes that the poet had a consistent political stance throughout his career.¹⁴⁵ The principal plays that demonstrate this for Sommerstein include *Acharnians*¹⁴⁶ and *Wealth*, two plays nearly 40 years apart and at the opposite ends of Aristophanes' extant corpus.¹⁴⁷ Yet for Sommerstein it is no coincidence that these were some of the policies enacted during both the oligarchic coup of 411 (those that *Frogs* argues should be forgiven) and by the Thirty Tyrants who were put in power by Sparta following Athens' defeat in 404.¹⁴⁸

Whilst I would argue that the politics of the plays are not as specific or consistent in this area as Sommerstein claims throughout Aristophanes' career, the idea of bringing back past talent *was* representative of a wider theme, present in a number of Aristophanic comedies,¹⁴⁹ a hazy nostalgia for the days of Athens' height, signified by the victories

¹⁴² See Sommerstein 2005: 196-201.

¹⁴³ In particular for jury service, cf. *Frogs* 1466.

¹⁴⁴ Robson 2009: 163.

¹⁴⁵ To say nothing of the danger of making any overall assumption given we have only a quarter of Aristophanes' plays available to us (Van Steen 2007b: 108).

¹⁴⁶ *Acharnians* suggests another problem with the consistency of Sommerstein's theory, since the play features and makes fun of the general Lamachus as a symbol of continuing war, yet *Frogs* (1039-42) names him as one of the heroic warriors inspired by Aeschylus (Silk 2000 346).

¹⁴⁷ Although of course the extant *Wealth* was the second version, with the original having been performed 20 years earlier. See Sommerstein 2001: 28-33.

¹⁴⁸ Sommerstein 2005: 201-2.

¹⁴⁹ And in other comedians' works as well: Eupolis' *Demes* brought back Solon, Miltiades, Aristides and Pericles from the dead.

over Persia at Marathon and Salamis half a century before. In *Peace* the principal character of Trygaeus says at his wedding that they should:

...move all our equipment back to the country right now,
dancing and pouring libations and driving Hyperbolus away,
and making prayers to the gods
that they grant prosperity to the Greeks
and help us produce lots of barley,
all of us alike, and lots of wine,
and figs to nibble,
and that our wives bear us children,
and together we recover all that we lost
just as it was to begin with,
and have done with the shining blade. (1318-29)

It is perhaps safe to assume that not many audience members would have disagreed with this wish list.¹⁵⁰

Frogs takes this nostalgic longing for the good old days and recreates it throughout the play, and, as mentioned, uses it as an excuse to criticise both the politicians and the poets of its time. This seems to be the motivation for the result of the contest sequence, where Aeschylus, who fought at Marathon, defeats Euripides. Aeschylus accuses Euripides of turning the ‘men with an aura of spears, lances, white-crested helmets, green berets, greaves, and seven-ply oxhide hearts’ (1015-7) into ‘civic shirkers, vulgarians, imps, and criminals’ (1014-5). For Kenneth Dover this is a clear-cut political message: ‘The heroic

¹⁵⁰ Robson 2007: 172.

ideals of Aeschylean tragedy will preserve the city, the unsettling realism of Euripidean tragedy will subvert it'.¹⁵¹

I would argue the intent is not as firm as this, and the main inspiration for the contest is the literary angle, as discussed below. There must, however, be a winner, and picking Aeschylus fits neatly with this Aristophanic sentimentality for an older, more conservative Athens. Halliwell agrees, stating that it is 'hard to interpret [Aeschylus' victory] as anything more than an exercise in comically hazy nostalgia'.¹⁵² Alternatively, Aeschylus wins because his emotive poetry is more inspirational to the Athenians than Euripides' analytical style.¹⁵³ Either way, Aeschylus wins because of what he represents, not because he is the better poet.

Hence Aeschylus is identified with the heroes of myth, such as Achilles, when the chorus address the tragic poet as Achilles (992), itself a quote from Aeschylus' own play *Myrmidons* (fr.131).¹⁵⁴ Another line from the Aeschylean play (fr.132) is also used by Euripides to make fun of Aeschylus, when he repeatedly uses the line 'Aiee the strike! – draw you not near to the rescue?' (1264ff) to create a comedic version of Aeschylus' lyrics. This is part of an ongoing intertextuality with *Myrmidons*, starting with Aeschylus' first entrance at 830.¹⁵⁵ For around ten lines Aeschylus remains silent, with Dionysus asking 'Why so quiet, Aeschylus?' (832) To which Euripides responds 'He'll be haughtily aloof at first, just the way he tried to mystify us in his tragedies.' (833-4) This criticism of Aeschylus' own silence foreshadows a later criticism (see below), where Euripides accuses Aeschylus of opening his plays with a character on stage in silence.

¹⁵¹ Dover 1993: 69.

¹⁵² Halliwell 2015: 157.

¹⁵³ Nelson 2016: 278ff.

¹⁵⁴ Sommerstein 1996: 19-20.

¹⁵⁵ Taplin 1972: 60.

One of the characters he names is Achilles and whilst in antiquity there was some debate over whether the Achilles in question was from *Myrmidons* or *Phrygians* (the first and third plays of the *Achilleis* trilogy), modern scholars have concluded that the play referenced was *Myrmidons*.¹⁵⁶ It has also been suggested that the Aeschylus-Achilles link is reinforced by the weighing scene, which parodies weighing scenes in Aeschylus' lost plays, *Psychostasia* (where Zeus weighs the soul of Achilles against Memnon's), and the afore-mentioned *Phrygians*, (in which Hector's body is ransomed for his weight in gold).¹⁵⁷

Many contemporary politicians are criticised throughout the play, but *Frogs* is less concerned with a sustained political criticism than some of Aristophanes' earlier plays, where he reproduces the language of political attack.¹⁵⁸ Old Comedy was frequently critical of prominent politicians, with Carey hypothesising that this was their way of dealing with the paradox of these much-needed strong politicians being at odds with the democratic process.¹⁵⁹ Yet not all politicians were treated equally: Aristophanes and his fellow poets seem never to have attacked public figures from landed, aristocratic families. Instead their attacks are reserved for the populist demagogic supporters of radical democracy.¹⁶⁰ As well as by the comic poets, this bias is also displayed by other writers such as Thucydides and Aristotle.¹⁶¹ Therefore how far these attacks were a demonstration of Aristophanes' personal bias, or merely an example of the popular discourse at the time, will remain a source of debate.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ See Taplin 1972: 62-9.

¹⁵⁷ Revermann 2013: 121-2.

¹⁵⁸ *Knights* is the principal example. See Heath 1997: 232-3 for a breakdown of the similarities between this play and political language of the time.

¹⁵⁹ Carey 1994: 75.

¹⁶⁰ Sommerstein 1996b: 334; Robson 2009: 179.

¹⁶¹ Carey 1994: 78-9.

¹⁶² Lowe 2007: 58-9.

In *Frogs*, the demagogue Cleophon, well-known as having rejected peace talks with the Spartans several times,¹⁶³ was the principal target of Aristophanes' mockery. He is mentioned by name in the parabasis, together with the rumours that he was not of pure Athenian blood, allegedly having a Thracian mother. He is also mentioned at the end of the play, with the chorus saying as the closing lines that, if Cleophon wishes to continue fighting, he can do it on 'his own native soil' (1533). Prior to this Pluto has handed some items to Aeschylus saying 'And take this and give it to Cleophon' (1504). These items are believed to be a knife or other method of suicide and, therefore, the line foreshadows Cleophon's execution the following year. Sommerstein suggests that a second performance of *Frogs* in 404 may have been supported as an attempt to turn public opinion further against Cleophon. We can only speculate over how much Aristophanes may have been complicit in this action;¹⁶⁴ however Aristophanes was by no means the only comic poet to criticise Cleophon. Competing against *Frogs* at the Lenaea that year, and finishing third overall, was *Cleophon* by Plato (*PCG*. vii.57-64), which included another attack on the politician.¹⁶⁵

There are other specific pieces of political advice in the play, but they have created more debate than the Arginusae reference. At the time of the performance of *Frogs*, Athens was less than a year away from final defeat to Sparta, so the play has often been interpreted with this in mind: any advice offered must be working towards the goal of winning the war. Yet the idea of Dionysus' journey being to save Athens – the play is not clear on what Athens is to be saved from – is only introduced explicitly at the very end of the play. Dionysus' initial motivation to bring back Euripides is entirely selfish.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Roberts 2005: 159.

¹⁶⁴ Sommerstein 1996: 22-3; Sommerstein 1993: 466-7, Robson 2009: 178.

¹⁶⁵ The second place play was *The Muses* by Phrynichus, which featured a tribute and obituary to Sophocles. See Sommerstein 1996: 1.

¹⁶⁶ Heath 1987: 45; Sommerstein 1996: 12; Nelson 2016: 272-3.

Heath has suggested that Athens' desperate state is a comic invention: yes, they were losing the war, but if things were that bad Aristophanes would not have been able to write such funny comedies.¹⁶⁷ They were funny, says Heath, precisely because the audience recognised them as being untrue.¹⁶⁸ For Heath this is evidence that the play was not meant to be political and the later mentions of saving the city were inserted when convenient merely as a comedic trope.¹⁶⁹

Any other specific pieces of political advice are similarly debatable. As the final question of the contest, Dionysus asks each poet for 'one more idea you have about the city's salvation' (1435-6). The text of their replies has become jumbled in transmission, but there are three pieces of advice. Most scholars today agree that of the three, only two would have been included in each of the performances; the third replacing one of the other two for the second performance. Euripides gives the absurd suggestion of flying over the opposing navy and spraying vinegar in their eyes. The second, disputed,¹⁷⁰ piece of advice is more serious in nature, suggesting that other people should be in command, saying 'If we're faring poorly with the current bunch, how wouldn't we find salvation if we did the opposite?' (1449-50) This is similar to the advice offered by the parabasis, to stop following Cleophon and the other popular demagogues and return to trusting the 'well-born' (728). It is also echoed in the opening to Demosthenes' *First Philippic*, when he says of the 'regular speakers': 'if in the past their advice had been sound, there would be

¹⁶⁷ A slightly strange assertion; humour was known to have been a coping mechanism for those suffering under the Nazi regime for example. Philosopher and Auschwitz survivor Emil Fackenheim said "We kept our morale through humor" (Fackenheim 1978: 60). See also Lipman 1991 and Herzog 2007.

¹⁶⁸ Heath 1987: 23.

¹⁶⁹ Heath 1987: 45-6.

¹⁷⁰ Scholars have disagreed on the division, order and authenticity of the various lines. MacDowell 1959, sums up the various options and settles on all three pieces of advice being given. Sommerstein and Dover both believe that only two out of the three pieces of advice would have been given at once, although they assign the disputed advice to different speakers. Sommerstein gives the lines as an alternative to Euripides' absurd advice. Dover assigns the lines to Aeschylus, since the poet's original advice regarding the fleet would have made no sense following its destruction at Aegospotami. See Sommerstein 1996: 286-8 and Dover 1993: 373-6.

no need for deliberation to-day.’ (*Dem* 4.1) It seems likely that both Aristophanes and Demosthenes were tapping into a rhetorical trope that Athens was faring poorly under the current set of leaders and that a change was required.¹⁷¹

Aeschylus’ advice is that the city will be victorious: ‘When they think of the enemy’s country as their own, and their own as the enemy’s; and the fleet as their wealth; and their wealth as despair.’ (1463-5) This advice is clearer (although Heath calls it ‘nonsensical’¹⁷²); Aeschylus is advocating that the Athenians do not attempt to face the Spartans on land and in fact should abandon Attica to the invading force. Instead the Athenians should put their trust in their ships. This is recognisable as being both the policy pursued by Pericles at the start of hostilities with Sparta, and earlier the strategy that defeated the Persians at the Battle of Salamis, where Aeschylus himself is presumed to have fought.¹⁷³ Pericles himself was the target of a number of criticisms by Aristophanes (such as *Acharnians* 524-31 and *Peace* 603-11) and therefore the association cannot be pushed too far. At any rate Aristophanes did not attack Pericles with the same venom as he did Cleon and Cleophon, in the same manner that Thucydides praises Pericles while attacking the later populist demagogues.

Following the questions on Alcibiades and Athens, Dionysus is still at a loss as to who should win the contest. After being forced by Pluto, Dionysus chooses the poet ‘that my soul wishes to choose’ (1467-8).¹⁷⁴ Many scholars have stated that it is the political advice that prompts the decision;¹⁷⁵ in contrast others have suggested that this is essentially an arbitrary choice, and that there is actually nothing to separate the two poets.¹⁷⁶ But whilst

¹⁷¹ Heath 1997: 232.

¹⁷² Heath 1987: 20.

¹⁷³ Griffith 2013: 78.

¹⁷⁴ Grube 1965: 72; Habash 2002: 14.

¹⁷⁵ Halliwell 2009 gives an overview of them at 146n90 then alternate opinions at 146n91.

¹⁷⁶ Silk 2000: 366-7; Halliwell 2009: 145. Also see below under Literary Criticism.

dramatically the scene could be played either way, with Dionysus immediately judging after Aeschylus' advice or delaying further, in reality Aeschylus must come out on top to fit the overarching theme of the play. Even if Dionysus as judge cannot see it, Aeschylus has been getting the better of Euripides throughout the contest. Aeschylus, as representative of the old way of doing things, of the aristocratic Alcibiades,¹⁷⁷ must win rather than Euripides, who might represent the demagogic politicians like Cleophon and Theramenes. Because of this, the contest echoes the themes seen earlier in the parabasis: the debasement of the coinage, the decline of the Athenian people and politicians and the forgiveness of those involved in the oligarchic coup.

One of the most important political aspects of *Frogs* that is often left out of scholarly debate is the portrayal of slavery. The involvement of slaves in the battle at Arginusae and the mention of their enfranchisement in the parabasis might have brought this issue to the forefront of the minds of Athenian audiences. Also in the play we have the character of Xanthias, the earliest example in extant Old Comedy of a slave who laughs at and sometimes gets the better of his master. Previously slaves had only been used to explain things to the audience or provide comedy by being brutalised.¹⁷⁸ Here for the first time¹⁷⁹ is a slave who, for much of the play, shares an equal billing with his master and can speak with his master on virtually the same terms. Indeed, while he shows some elements of cowardice and weakness, on many occasions he is proven to be the quicker witted of the two protagonists. Only much later in the revised version of *Wealth* (388 BC) will another slave be featured in such a prominent role, when Carion is allowed to speak to one citizen as if to an equal and to strip another. Xanthias' future influence on theatre is strong, with Alexis Solomos tracing his descendants from *Frogs*, by way of Carion in *Wealth*, through

¹⁷⁷ Heath 1987: 20-1.

¹⁷⁸ Dover 1993: 43.

¹⁷⁹ Although Walin 2009 argues that the unnamed slave of Trygaeus in *Peace* is an earlier example.

Middle, New and Roman comedy all the way up to more modern examples such as the Spanish Sancho Panza or the English ‘intellectual fool’.¹⁸⁰ While there might not be something of Xanthias in all these examples, his inclusion does mark an apparent turning point and possibly, as Solomos puts it, ‘the twilight of masters and the dawn of slaves’.¹⁸¹

It could be argued this role for Xanthias reflects a changing attitude towards some of the slaves in Athens, particularly those that had previously been freed for taking part in the Athenian victory at Arginusae. As mentioned previously this event is referenced throughout, by Xanthias (33-4), Charon (190-2) and in the parabasis (693-9).¹⁸² As this had only happened the previous year, there may well have been ex-slaves watching a play for the first time and indeed the passages above could have been deliberately written to attract their applause. Suddenly it was not just the slave who was being beaten for comedy, but the master as well, something that would not have been lost on ex-slaves in the audience who may have experienced this themselves.¹⁸³ The rowing scene, where Arginusae is referenced, may also be part of this. As Dover puts it ‘the implications of a contrast between a foolish master who cannot row and a bold slave who could have won his freedom by rowing cannot have escaped Aristophanes or his audience’.¹⁸⁴

Similarly Aristophanes may be on dangerous ground with that same audience when, as previously mentioned, the parabasis advised re-enfranchising those who had been involved with the Four Hundred during their oligarchic coup. The chorus do not disagree with the rewarding of the slaves – in a complicated passage the chorus leader seems to say ‘I applaud it as being your only intelligent action’ (696) – but it is a precedent that

¹⁸⁰ Solomos 1974: 211-2.

¹⁸¹ Solomos 1974: 212.

¹⁸² Dover 1993: 49.

¹⁸³ Hall 2006: 200 and Hunt 2001: *passim*.

¹⁸⁴ Dover 1993: 49-50.

should be extended to those on the side of the former oligarchs if they are also fighting for Athens.

The idea of the hypocrisy of granting concessions to slaves and not citizens mirrors the action of the play somewhat. During the first half of the play Dionysus and Xanthias swap statuses, just as the citizens and slaves of Athens changed statuses. When they are both beaten by Aeacus, Dionysus, the god, finds himself on a level with Xanthias, the slave. The baser population of the underworld supporting Euripides and causing trouble there echoes the situation in Athens, with the group of bad rulers whom Euripides' tragedy has encouraged. Just before the parabasis, things start to fall into their proper place as Dionysus is finally recognised and invited into Pluto's house, where at the end of the play he will be entertained by Pluto himself. After the parabasis Xanthias and the slave of Pluto confirm their mutual statuses by shaking hands and exchanging kisses (754). With the natural order restored, Dionysus has put things right in Hades, just as he hopes to do with Aeschylus back in Athens.¹⁸⁵

Of course, as soon as Xanthias' conversation with the slave of Pluto has set up the contest, he leaves the stage, never to return. In practical terms this is necessary so that the actor is freed up to play another role, probably either Aeschylus or Euripides. However, in terms of the plot he is cast aside as soon as he is no longer important. For a prominent character to completely disappear from the stage was common in Greek theatre, the most obvious example being Electra in *Libation Bearers*.¹⁸⁶ Despite this, the figure of Xanthias will become an important part of the performance reception of the play,¹⁸⁷ and as a

¹⁸⁵ Segal 1961: 52-3.

¹⁸⁶ Griffith 2013: 209. Griffith also notes the suggestion from some that the eponymous heroine of *Lysistrata* possibly exits the stage during the closing scene. At the very least she is silent whilst the Athenian and Spartan soldiers deliberate.

¹⁸⁷ Most notably see Chapter Five, pp.271-3 for the interest in the play from ethnic minorities in the US.

consequence he is never absent from the second half of modern adaptations.¹⁸⁸ Aristophanes' extant text does not give any indication whether he joins the exodos and returns to Athens with his master. So, whilst Xanthias is a more crucial character than the slaves who were previously seen in comic theatre, he does not quite have the same agency that his comic descendants will have.

A further facet of the political element of *Frogs* is found within the religious and cultic interpretation of the play. This interpretation is discussed at length in Lada-Richards 1999, but it crosses over into politics via Lada-Richards' suggestion that *Frogs* is a metaphor for Dionysus' cultic initiation into being a better citizen of Athens. She uses Arnold van Gennep's theory¹⁸⁹ on the three stages of initiation: 'separation', where the prospective initiate symbolically leaves behind their former self; 'limen', where they exists between the two states; and 'aggregation', where they re-enter society as an initiate.¹⁹⁰ Dionysus' 'separation' occurs in the opening lines of the play, when he expresses detachment from the Athenian audience as he is unable to laugh at the jokes they would laugh at. This prompts his journey, as he cannot be content with the current group of tragic poets.¹⁹¹ Dionysus' 'limen' occurs when he is unable to recognise himself (i.e. his former identity) in the songs of either the frogs (213) or the Initiates (215-6) and his not acknowledging references to his own sanctuaries and cultic rites.¹⁹² Furthermore he undergoes certain trials as part of his initiation, either threatened or actual: 'apparitions'; 'dismemberment'; 'flagellation'; and 'ritual nudity'.¹⁹³ The 'aggregation'

¹⁸⁸ Excepting of course straight translations of the play, although usually he remains onstage as a silent character. The modern adaptation that brings us closest to his Aristophanic absence is the 1996 National Theatre production, where the actor playing Xanthias also doubles as Euripides. Following Euripides' defeat Xanthias returns for the exodos. See Chapter Four, p.208-12.

¹⁸⁹ Found in van Gennep 1960.

¹⁹⁰ Lada-Richards 1999: 46-7.

¹⁹¹ Lada-Richards 1999: 55-6.

¹⁹² Lada-Richards 1999: 59-60.

¹⁹³ Lada-Richards 1999: 71-8.

then, occurs when Dionysus realises that his needs and the city's needs are the same. He is no longer disconnected from the Athenian audience and is reborn as one of them.¹⁹⁴ Just as poetry and theatre are meant to create better citizens, so to does Dionysus' initiation make him a better member of the polis.

In the absence of significant corroborating evidence it is difficult to say what difference Aristophanes, and comedy as whole, may have made to the political life of Athens. There is some a suggestion that comic poets would use their plays to further their own political aims, the poet Hermippus possibly both criticised Pericles (fr. 47) and prosecuted his lover Aspasia (Plut. *Pericles* 32), but this evidence is far from compelling, even if it is reliable.¹⁹⁵ It is true that Aristophanes' advice in the parabasis of *Frogs* was enacted, but it is possible he was merely giving voice to something that was strongly supported already in the city. The same could be said of the unfortunate coincidence that two of his targets, Socrates and Cleophon, were put to death following attacks in *Clouds* and *Frogs*, and a third, Hyperbolus, was ostracised and later murdered.¹⁹⁶ In Plato's *Apology* (18d), Socrates states that the most serious accusations against him came from a comic poet. Yet scholars have disagreed on whether he is therefore laying the blame for his trial on Aristophanes, or is stating that there are no serious charges against him.¹⁹⁷

As mentioned, Aristophanes' most vehement attacks seem to have had no impact on Cleon's career, yet the politician appeared to think they had some effect on Athens itself since he brought charges against the poet for his comments about the city in *Babylonians*, albeit unsuccessfully.¹⁹⁸ For Halliwell *Babylonians* is proof that comedy did not have that

¹⁹⁴ Lada-Richards 1999: 109.

¹⁹⁵ Carey 1994: 81.

¹⁹⁶ Hyperbolus was still being mentioned by name in *Frogs* (570) 6 or 7 years after his death. He was also the subject of plays by Plato and Eupolis. See Baldwin 1971: 151 and Sommerstein 1996b: 333.

¹⁹⁷ Halliwell 1993: 336; Robson 2009: 184.

¹⁹⁸ Goldhill 1991: 191; Robson 2009: 185.

great an influence, since there would be evidence of more prosecutions than this one if it was.¹⁹⁹ One final piece of evidence in favour of thinking that comedy did, or at least was perceived to, have a tangible effect is that we know from the scholia that in 440BC a decree was briefly enacted that restricted comedic mockery. Whilst the political climate may have been very different at that time compared to 405 and we do not know what or who this was mockery of, at the very least it implies that there was a real sense that comedy was having some sort of real-world impact.²⁰⁰

Literary Criticism

The second broad strand of interpretation is that *Frogs* is not just a comedy but a piece of literary criticism. The term literary criticism in itself is perhaps misleading, since we are not referring just to written literature here. The phrase has been used to encompass how *Frogs* incorporates, parodies and critiques the performed poetry of Aeschylus and Euripides. Tragic authors and their works were repeatedly referenced and parodied in Aristophanes' plays. *Frogs* has been seen as one of the prime examples of this tradition, since it devotes over half of its length to the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides. This section has been given a far larger share of attention than the rest of the play²⁰¹ (excepting possibly the parabasis) and in the same manner as politics, there is some debate over how serious this sequence is meant to be. Sommerstein boldly calls the contest 'the earliest sustained piece of literary criticism surviving in the Western tradition'.²⁰²

But, like the politics, the contest does not have to be taken at face value. It is not really a simple question of who is the better poet: as mentioned Aeschylus wins because of what

¹⁹⁹ Halliwell 1993: 338-9.

²⁰⁰ Sommerstein 1996b: 332; Robson 2009: 185.

²⁰¹ Somewhat ironically it is the part of the play that causes the most difficulty for later adaptations, something that will be made clear throughout the rest of this thesis.

²⁰² Sommerstein 1996: 14.

he represents.²⁰³ *Frogs* does not simply examine poetry, but interrogates the role of the poets themselves. Again it raises questions and provokes debate, this time about what the role of a poet should be in Athens. It is an idea that naturally has ties to Aristophanes' own self-presentation and comedy's role in the politics of the city, as discussed above.

The contest is a dramatic device that the audience might expect from Aristophanic comedy, though not quite in this form. In several of Aristophanes' previous plays the hero is victorious in an agon just prior to the parabasis, enjoying the outcome of his victory in the latter part of the play. In *Frogs*, however, the contest, including an epirrhematic agon, constitutes most of the latter part of the play and, whilst Aristophanes may have parodied Euripides in earlier plays, nowhere else in his extant plays do we see such an in-depth analysis of poetic content. A comedic play may not be as familiar a forum for 'serious' literary criticism as we would expect to see today, but we are used to the idea of parody and comedy as a critique of popular culture.

We do not know how familiar the audience might have been with Aeschylus' and Euripides' tragedy. Since Euripides' plays were still being produced we might of course expect a strong degree of familiarity with those. But Aeschylus' last trilogy, the *Oresteia*, had been mounted in 458BC, so it is highly likely that most of the audience had never seen an original production of one of his plays. Certainly Aristophanes, born c.450, never did. *Frogs* tells us (868-9)²⁰⁴ that Aeschylus' plays survived his death and were still performed, though we have little evidence of when or where this happened.²⁰⁵ Also

²⁰³ See above, pp.53-4.

²⁰⁴ As do a number of other sources: Scholia on *Acharnians*. 10; Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory* 10.1.66; and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*. 6.11. The *Life of Aeschylus* (12-3) tells us that an Athenian decree stated that anyone who wished to produce an Aeschylean play after the tragedian's death would be granted a chorus and that his plays continued to posthumously win competitions.

²⁰⁵ At least in Athens itself. Performance outside the city is well documented, see Taplin 1993; Csapo 2010; Boshier 2012.

whether these revivals recreated exactly the staging and choreography of Aeschylus' original plays we cannot know.²⁰⁶ There are several references to the staging of Aeschylean tragedy in *Frogs*, for example Euripides criticising how Aeschylus' characters would often stand on stage in silence at the prologue, as well as extensive quotations. Their inclusion implies the audience were expected to be familiar with the Aeschylean plays, either through collective memory of their original performance or from revivals.

In the same way that he consistently targeted political figures, so too did Aristophanes portray and parody tragic poets. Beginning with *Acharnians* in 425 and ending with *Frogs* in 405, Aristophanes composed a series of plays which prominently featured tragedy.²⁰⁷ Principally these plays featured Euripides as the object of ridicule.²⁰⁸ Whilst other comic poets of the age wrote plays concerning poetry of all genres, there seems to be no evidence for the level of preoccupation with tragedy that Aristophanes had,²⁰⁹ nor any evidence that Aristophanes or anyone else used tragedy outside that twenty year period.²¹⁰

Written copies of tragic plays were likely to be available and indeed Aristophanes himself must have had access to written copies in order to reproduce them in *Frogs*.²¹¹ Yet, in a similar manner to the problems of performance, these scripts probably did not include notes on stage directions, costume or anything other than dialogue.²¹² What is noticeable is that Aristophanes shows a familiarity with the deeper workings of Euripidean tragedy; more so than he does with Aeschylus' texts. Of the identifiable references to tragedies

²⁰⁶ Griffith 2013: 116.

²⁰⁷ Silk 1993: 477.

²⁰⁸ Heath 1987: 45.

²⁰⁹ Silk 1993: 477-8.

²¹⁰ Silk 2000: 49.

²¹¹ See Chapter Two, p.79 for more on the availability of written plays.

²¹² For a full discussion of actor's copies of scripts, with further bibliography, see Hall 2006: 39-48.

found in *Frogs*, 20 of Aeschylus are cited, compared to 45 from Euripides.²¹³ This is true not just of *Frogs*, but of other plays that parody Euripides. *Thesmophoriazusae* (850-928) contains a lengthy parody of Euripides' *Helen*, which would only have been possible with the written text of the tragedy.²¹⁴ And Aristophanes' utilisation of Euripides' poetry goes beyond the explicit criticism and parody found within the contest. The tragic poet is paraphrased without acknowledgement throughout, most notably after Euripides reminds Dionysus (incorrectly as far as the audience has seen) that he swore to bring him back from the underworld. Dionysus states, 'It was my tongue that swore: I'm choosing Aeschylus' (1471), a paraphrase of *Hippolytus* 612, when the eponymous character states 'My tongue swore, but my mind is not on oath.' Dionysus had already misquoted the same line earlier in *Frogs* at 101-2 and had paraphrased it before, in *Thesmophoriazusae*, when Euripides' relative makes the tragic poet swear to help him if he gets into trouble at the festival, adding, 'Well then, remember that your heart has sworn, and I didn't get the promise only from your tongue!' (275-6).²¹⁵

Within *Frogs* the nature of the contest and literary criticism plays into the repeated idea of the old ways being good and the new being bad. The contest is described as ἀγὼν σοφίας (882), a contest to see which poet has the greater σοφία. Dover speaks of the difficulty of translating σοφία and σοφός, saying it is often appropriate to translate it as 'wisdom', though this is not a term we generally use when describing the quality of a poet. Although the words can be used sarcastically, Dover claims σοφός never has the negative connotations of the English word 'clever'.²¹⁶ During the contest sequence Aeschylus asks Euripides to sum up what it is to be a good poet. Euripides replies with

²¹³ All seven extant Aeschylean plays are quoted, see Lowe 1993: 73.

²¹⁴ Lowe 1993: 72.

²¹⁵ Robson 2009: 112.

²¹⁶ Dover 1993: 12.

δεξιότης and νουθεσία, ‘skill’ and ‘good counsel’. He states, ‘Skill and good counsel, and because we make people better members of their communities’ (1009-10). This at least Aeschylus and Euripides can agree on: σοφία then is the combination of δεξιότης and νουθεσία, though each asserts his approach is better as far as morality is concerned.

We may ask whether this definition of poetry is an invention of *Frogs* or was a widely held belief. The play makes a number of references to the role of a poet as a teacher (1022, 1026, 1041f) indicating for Dover that there must have been some kind of popular consensus on this role.²¹⁷ And in Plato’s *Republic*, poetry (in particular Homer) is to be banned from the ideal city, since it competes with philosophy as a source of education (10.606e-607b).²¹⁸

Yet, paradoxically, in *Frogs* criticism of Euripides is strongly linked with Socratic philosophy. Euripides claims to have ‘taught these people how to talk’ (954) then later ‘encouraged these people to think’ (971). Aeschylus criticises this, as do the chorus after the contest has been decided. Socrates is mentioned by name, when the chorus state:

So what’s stylish is not to sit
beside Socrates and chatter,
casting the arts aside
and ignoring the best
of the tragedian’s craft.
to hang around killing time
in pretentious conversation
and hairsplitting twaddle

²¹⁷ Dover 1993: 35-6.

²¹⁸ Goldhill 1991: 167-8.

is the mark of a man who's lost his mind. (1491-9)

The criticism of Euripides mentions that the talking prevents young men from exercising and breeds indiscipline in the city (1069-72). There is a clear comparison with the criticism of Socratic philosophy in *Clouds* and a clear echo of *Clouds*' κενὰς δὲ τὰς παλαίστρας (1054) in *Frogs*' ἦ ξεκένωσεν τὰς τε παλαίστρας (1070).²¹⁹

Since the two elements of good poetry were δεξιότης and νουθεσία, both form part of Dionysus' judgement of poetry. To this Griffith seeks to add a third category of judgement, that of knowledge or truthfulness, which he argues is shown historically through Homer calling upon the muses to help him recall the names of the Achaean ship commanders at *Iliad* 2.484-93, because as he says of them, 'you are there and you know.'²²⁰ In practice, however, *Frogs*, mainly concerns itself with δεξιότης and νουθεσία, and Griffith's truthfulness is included simply as part of νουθεσία. The first part of the contest is therefore about νουθεσία and what form this must take. The pair discuss poetry functioning as mimesis, where the poetry imitates life and in turn life imitates the poetry. Aeschylus criticises Euripides for telling stories about cheating wives and other immoral stories (1043ff); Euripides' response is that these were already established myths. To this Aeschylus replies that it is the poet's duty to 'conceal what's wicked' (1053), but Euripides' idea of the truth is that it should never be compromised and poetry should relay everything from the best to worst of real life. By contrast, Aeschylus feels that elements should be hidden in the service of good counsel; the artist must censor parts of real life to set a better example.²²¹ Both poets agree that Euripides moved tragedy from heroic events

²¹⁹ Dover 1993: 326.

²²⁰ Griffith 2013: 91.

²²¹ Griffith 2013: 106.

to a more domestic stage; where the two differ is on whether that is a good or bad thing.²²²

A number of methods of how to judge *νοθεσία* are suggested, but each time these methods are subjected to *reductio ad absurdum* until they make absolutely no sense. For example Aeschylus, at 1032-6, argues that poetry should be read as instructional in the manner of a textbook, effectively ending his argument with the assertion that the *Iliad* should be valued only as a manual on military tactics.²²³

And yet, when Aeschylus begins to criticise Euripides' characters and plots as being all about deception and wickedness, he starts to get the better of his rival. Aeschylus states that Euripides' female characters caused 'respectable women...to take hemlock in their shame' (1050-1). The older poet clearly has the upper hand from 1049, reducing Euripides merely to asking questions and making no actual points against his rival. From 1065 to 1099 Euripides is silenced completely.²²⁴

Despite this Dionysus is unable to decide on a winner. Since *νοθεσία* cannot separate the poets in his mind, they turn instead to *δεξιότης*, the aesthetic of poetry. It is here that we see more of a deconstruction of tragedy, and the introduction of two Aristophanic techniques for critiquing tragedy: parody and paratragedy. Parody has an extensive body of theory outside classics,²²⁵ and Michael Silk has also expanded on Peter Rau's analysis of Aristophanic paratragedy,²²⁶ defining the two: 'paratragedy is the cover term for all of comedy's intertextual dependence on tragedy...parody is any kind of distorting

²²² Halliwell 2009: 122.

²²³ Lowe 1993: 75.

²²⁴ Sommerstein 1996: 16.

²²⁵ See for example, Rose 1979; Genette 1997; Dentith 2000; Hutcheon 2000. An extensive bibliography is given in Hutcheon and Woodland 2012: 1003.

²²⁶ Silk 1993. Whilst he was expanding on Rau 1967's use of the term, Silk is the only scholar to have clearly theorised the divergence between parody and paratragedy (Dutta 2007: 77) and the only one to have appreciated that paratragedy does not necessarily have to be parodic (Dutta 2007: 84). The history of paratragedy in classical scholarship can be found in Dutta 2007: 15-79.

representation of an original'.²²⁷ For Silk paratragedy therefore includes parody, but also two additional sub-types of paratragedy: the inclusion of obviously tragic elements that would not have otherwise been included in a comedy, or direct appropriation of tragic quotations.²²⁸ Parody constitutes a more sustained appropriation, such as in *Frogs* when the two poets proceed to recite sections from both their own and their opponents' works, critiquing as they go. It is, however, not clear where paratragic appropriation ends and sustained parody begins.²²⁹ Shomit Dutta suggests a reformation of paratragedy that is divided into three principal categories: 'assimilative uses of tragedy; reference to tragedy and/or tragedians; the presentation of tragedians as characters'.²³⁰ All of these elements are present throughout *Frogs*.

At one point the two tragedians criticise each other's lyrics, in a section that really shows how closely Aristophanes is engaging with the tragic plays. He is not just quoting them, but deconstructing and understanding their component parts. This is one of the clearest examples of parody featured in *Frogs*. Euripides asserts that all of Aeschylus' lyrics have the same rhythm and goes on to quote eight different passages from different plays that all have the same metre (1284-95). Seven of these are from lost plays (although thanks to the scholia we know the names of them) and one is from the parados of *Agamemnon*. Euripides alternates these lines with the nonsense φλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ. Whilst Aeschylus did use repeated phrases in composition, they were never nonsense and never used so regularly.²³¹ This section of comic nonsense does display a common Aeschylean metre, but again in the extant poetry this metre is never arranged to alternate with the

²²⁷ Silk 1993: 479.

²²⁸ Silk deals primarily with examples of paratragedy found within the text, however it is possible that paratragedy could have been present in other elements of the play, such as staging (Dutta 2007: 50).

²²⁹ Dutta 2007: 58.

²³⁰ Dutta 2007: 88.

²³¹ Silk 1993: 492; Robson 2009: 109.

existing lines that Euripides quotes.²³² The reasons why Aristophanes has chosen to include this phrase are unknown, although there is some suggestion they were meant to replicate the sound of a stringed instrument that accompanied the music.²³³

When it is Aeschylus' turn to criticise Euripides, he claims that the latter poet draws inspiration from everything and anything, creating a confused jumble of lyrics and ideas. Euripides' inspirations are described as 'whore songs, drinking songs by Meletus, Carian pipe tunes, dirges, and dances' (1301-3). Aeschylus begins by parodying Euripides, but the method of parody is very different. Instead of quoting a mix of lines as Euripides did, Aeschylus instead distorts features which are characteristically Euripidean.²³⁴ To accompany the parody Aeschylus calls on the muse of Euripides, a dancer who plays a castanet type instrument (literally 'potsherds' (1306-7)) and is described as not being not being associated with *λεσβιάζειν* (1308), literally 'singing Lesbian songs' or 'Lesbian tradition'. This mention has a double meaning: firstly as Lesbos was known as the birthplace of great lyricists Arion, Terpander and Sappho and secondly as women from Lesbos were popularly regarded as being accomplished at fellatio.²³⁵ Since the muse is not Lesbian, she is therefore both sexually and musically unappealing. The two choral parodies also reflect Aristophanes' greater interest in Euripides as described above. Whilst he is perfectly content to parody Aeschylus through direct quotation, when it comes to Euripides, Aristophanes cannot resist composing an entirely new piece of paratragedy to do the parodying, in fact the longest lyric parody in Aristophanes' extant comedy.²³⁶

²³² Griffith 2013: 135-6.

²³³ Dover 1993: 348; Sommerstein 1996: 271.

²³⁴ Silk 1993: 482; Dutta 2007: 51-2; Griffith 2013: 142-3.

²³⁵ Bain 1991: 74; Dover 1993: 351; Henderson 2002: 203n125; Griffith 2013: 143-6. The modern, homosexual meaning of the word 'Lesbian' was not in use at this time.

²³⁶ Robson 2009: 109.

When the aesthetic criticism cannot divide the poets, attention turns to a set of scales with which to literally weigh their poetry (1367-1406). Whilst the scene is an exercise in absurdity, it does pose a question over whether poetry can be judged quantitatively.²³⁷ The two poets present chosen passages to the scales but as Aeschylus speaks second he naturally wins. Yet despite Aeschylus' clear victory via the scales, Dionysus still cannot decide. In the third and final section of the contest, the two are asked questions of a political nature. Questions that might be put to any Athenian, not necessarily poets.²³⁸ The political significance of these questions has been discussed above, but as far as a tragedy and poetry is concerned they reinforce the idea that poets are teachers and should be valued for their advice as well as their artistry. *νοῦθεσία* is every bit as important as *δεξιότης*.

One alternative to the theory that *Frogs* is itself literary criticism is the idea that the play is instead making fun of criticism. This view has been particularly put forward by Halliwell, whose assertion is that 'If there is an underlying "message" at all to the contest in *Frogs*, it is a message not about which of the two playwrights is really superior but about the problem of poetic *criticism* itself.'²³⁹ He points to elements such as Dionysus not being able to choose between the poets²⁴⁰ and the weighing scene²⁴¹ as evidence that this is not meant to be portrayed as a serious contest of poetry. Halliwell also points out the audience could not side with an Aeschylus that calls them 'crooks' (808)²⁴² or be familiar with every reference featured in the play.²⁴³

²³⁷ Lowe 1993: 77; Halliwell 2009: 139-40.

²³⁸ Dover 1993: 15.

²³⁹ Halliwell 2015: 167.

²⁴⁰ Halliwell 2009: 121.

²⁴¹ Halliwell 2009: 139-40.

²⁴² Halliwell 2009: 124.

²⁴³ Halliwell 2009: 138.

Whilst Halliwell's idea is sound, it fails to take account of the fact that Aeschylus has been getting the better of Euripides throughout the competition. It probably would not have been a surprise to any audience member watching when the eventual winner was announced; aside from everything else Aeschylus speaks second in each round and in Aristophanic agons the second speaker usually wins.²⁴⁴ But, as mentioned above, Aeschylus wins the contest because of what he represents rather than through a firm judgement on the superiority of his poetry. Dionysus' initially stated motivation was, after all, that he wanted a poet for his own entertainment, not for the good advice the poets provide. It is Aeschylus and Euripides that introduce the idea of *νοῦθεσία* as being integral to the judgement. Dionysus shows his preference again when Aeschylus is describing how *Persians* 'taught them to yearn always to defeat the enemy' (1026-7) and Dionysus' response is 'I certainly enjoyed it when...the chorus clapped their hands together like this and cried "aiee!"' (1028-9). In the middle of a discussion on the lessons of tragedy Dionysus is more interested in the action and entertainment,²⁴⁵ in what is pleasurable (*hēdu*) rather than what is useful (*ōphelinon*), to use the classic ancient distinction between criteria for assessing art already apparent in the Homeric *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*.²⁴⁶

Whilst Halliwell's argument has some flaws, his comment about the idea of literary criticism is sound. Yet the two stances, that *Frogs* is itself literary criticism and the idea that the play is instead making fun of criticism, are not mutually exclusive. Aristophanes can engage with both criticism itself and making fun of the (assumed) growing interest in

²⁴⁴ Griffith 2013: 202.

²⁴⁵ Griffith 2013: 105.

²⁴⁶ On the significance of the distinction between pleasure and social utility and the presence of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* in *Frogs*, see the important study of Rosen 2004: passim, but especially 297-314; for its importance to Aristophanes' *Peace* of fifteen years previously, see Hall 2006: ch. 11.

literary criticism. Since he is writing his own play to be judged, then he cannot completely dismiss poetic competition, although he may still be critical of the process. In the revised *Clouds* (which, as far as we know, was not performed) he did admonish the audience for not awarding the play first prize originally. The parabasis states: ‘Then I lost the contest, defeated by vulgar men, though I didn’t deserve to. For that I blame you sophisticated ones, for whose sake I was doing all that work.’ (524-26)

Perhaps in light of this, as well as referring to tragedy there is also some implicit criticism of and discussion over what makes good comedy. As the opening lines of the play, Xanthias suggests that he ‘make one of the usual cracks...that the audience always laughs at’ (1-2). But Dionysus doesn’t want a comic porter scene and Xanthias protests that one of Aristophanes’ rivals at the Lenaea that year, Phrynichus (along with other comic poets Lycis and Ameipsias), have them in all of their plays (12-5). Even if Dionysus isn’t a fan, Xanthias states that the audience ‘always laughs’ at these jokes and Aristophanes acquiesces by giving us the jokes despite Dionysus’ protestations. Later there is another familiar routine from comedy, a door-knocking scene, this time given without complaint.²⁴⁷ We might read this as showing the audience that they can appreciate both the low comedy and the dramatic critique of that comedy, as well as the critique of themselves for enjoying it. Just as with Dionysus’ judgement, it comes down to a matter of taste.²⁴⁸

We might also read the contest as being an analogy for the earlier rivalry between Aristophanes and the now-deceased Cratinus (519-422BC), who was heavily criticised in Aristophanes’ earlier works but treated with more respect after his death. Cratinus’ play

²⁴⁷ Ruffell 2011: 372.

²⁴⁸ Griffith 2013: 107-8.

Plutoi (429BC) was clearly influenced by the *Oresteia*,²⁴⁹ whilst in a fragment of Cratinus someone is accused of εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων (*PCG*. iv.342), literally ‘doing Euripides-Aristophanes sorts of things’.²⁵⁰ The idea that *Frogs* is about the rivalry between Aristophanes and other comic poets has been taken to the extreme by Keith Sidwell, who views Aristophanes’ entire corpus as part of a rivalry with Cratinus and Eupolis.²⁵¹

To sum up this section, as with the politics, *Frogs* is using its place in the public eye to raise questions and provoke debate. The outcome of the contest is largely irrelevant in literary terms and Aeschylus wins because he represents the “Good Old Days” and because Aristophanes cannot resist making a joke at Euripides’ expense. But the play nevertheless asks us what poets should be saying and what role they play in a city. Euripides’ idea that poetry should teach people how to think seems far more plausible than Aeschylus’ idea that poetry is only useful as an instructional manual. Meanwhile the play questions how poetry can be judged adequately, yet spends half a play judging poetry itself. The paradox is clear and could surely not have been lost on the Athenian audience; the weighing scene makes it obvious if nothing else. By telegraphing the paradox *Frogs* invites its audience to choose their own position, something that allows for a productive afterlife with later audiences engaging in their own historical iterations of this fundamental debate about the function of literature and the canons of literary judgement.

Conclusion

Whilst this chapter has not attempted to be exhaustive in recording the scholarly reception of *Frogs*, it has touched on most of the major elements of academic interpretation that

²⁴⁹ See Bakola 2013: passim.

²⁵⁰ Griffith 2013: 18-9.

²⁵¹ Sidwell’s radical suggestion (2009: 283–99) that *Frogs* is about the rivalry between Aristophanes and his by now long-deceased rivals is based on spiralling conjecture; it has not found favour.

recur in the performance reception. As stated, to suggest that there is a single 'correct' interpretation of any play is naive in the extreme. But what Aristophanes has done for the academic readership is exactly what I suggest he sought to do for the Athenian audience: he has provoked debate. Debate over both the nature of politics and poetry and how the two might be interlinked. As I said, his own viewpoint (excepting a few explicit items) is impossible to determine, and indeed, largely irrelevant. Instead he raises questions and so, to repeat *Frogs* 971, 'encouraged these people to think'. This suggests one reason why performance of *Frogs* is so popular in pedagogical settings, since it can be so readily used not to teach, but to provoke debate. In contrast to the more explicitly pedagogy-themed *Clouds*, which pronounces a fairly unequivocal verdict on the value of higher learning with which subsequent rhetorical and scientific tradition would find itself at odds, *Frogs* equips its audiences with a set of critical tools and multiple-choice answers to fundamental questions about the value of literary judgment, framed in a dialogue between classicism and modernity in which *Frogs* itself becomes an object of the very debates it instigates.

Chapter Two

Transformation, Transmission and Translation

Just as the academic responses to *Frogs* form an integral part of its reception in the modern world, so too do its translations. This chapter will firstly describe how the original Greek play rapidly disappeared from performance, yet continued to thrive outside the theatre. It will also briefly describe the transmission of the text and speculate as to how *Frogs* survived when so much of classical theatre is lost to us, as well as how it was received in Britain. The chapter will then turn to translation, briefly summarising the issues relating to the translation of *Frogs* and finally surveying all of the published English-language translations. An account of the translations of *Frogs* is an integral part of the performance history, since many theatrical adapters and directors discovered *Frogs* in translation; a number of these translations would be used as performance texts. The play's academic, translation and performance receptions are naturally intertwined and I will draw attention to this throughout.

Frogs' Journey into English: katabasis and anodos

Whether Aristophanic plays were reperformed in Athens is unknown. Certainly the catalogue of Aristophanic titles (Test. 2a Kassel–Austin) records multiple plays of the same name, yet we cannot be sure whether these were repeat performances of the exact same plays or new versions using the titles. As stated in the previous chapter, the Hypothesis to *Frogs* explicitly mentions that it was awarded a reperformance. The reperformance however cannot be firmly dated, with estimates varying from its having been performed again at the same festival, to its being put on many years later.²⁵²

²⁵² Russo 2004:202 suggests it may have occurred at the same Lenaia festival in 405. He argues for 'technical, economic and administrative reasons alone, that the second performance must have involved the same actors and choreutai, choregos and didaskalos as the first' and that, since comedy

We do not know how widely written copies of plays, tragedy or comedy, were in circulation in the Athens of Aristophanes. In *Frogs* Dionysus mentions ‘reading *Andromeda* to myself’ (52) and the chorus state of the audience that ‘each one has a book’ (1114), though these verses can hardly be taken as proof that the texts were generally available. Private individuals probably had collections of papyrus rolls, and indeed Aristophanes’ use of tragedy implies he himself had a collection.²⁵³ Theatrical families, therefore, may have kept private collections of their ancestral texts; Aristophanes himself had a theatrical family, with two of his own sons, Philippos and Araros, becoming comic poets. Since Araros did not produce any of his own plays until at least ten years after his father’s death, it has even been suggested that in the intervening period he travelled Greece producing revivals of Aristophanes’ plays.²⁵⁴

Aside from some fragmentary and questionable evidence for fourth-century reperformance,²⁵⁵ Aristophanes and Old Comedy seemingly disappeared from Athenian theatre within a generation at most. The development of comedy throughout the stage known as ‘Middle Comedy’ and to Menander’s ‘New Comedy’ at this time cannot have helped the popularity of Aristophanes and there was no known attempt in the fourth century to standardise Aristophanes in the same way there was with the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.²⁵⁶ According to the *Lives of the Ten Orators* (841f), Lycurgus proposed the keeping of official copies of tragedies,²⁵⁷ although many of Aeschylus’ plays would have been one hundred and fifty years old by this point. In the

was such a minor part of the Dionysia it would not have occurred there the following year. Dover 1997: 35-6 and Sommerstein 463-5 place it in 404. Halliwell 2015: 169-70 argues it would have occurred much later.

²⁵³ Reynolds and Wilson 2013: 5; see also Lowe 1993.

²⁵⁴ Sommerstein 2010: 404; Slater 2016: 5-6.

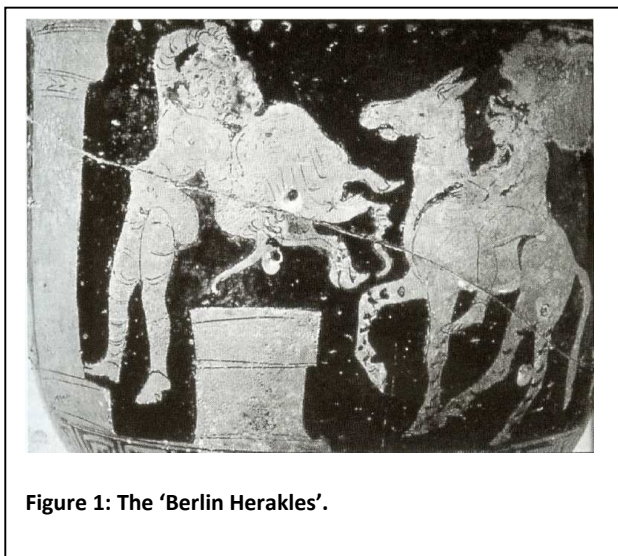
²⁵⁵ Slater 2016: 3-4.

²⁵⁶ Sommerstein 2010: 405.

²⁵⁷ Reynolds and Wilson 2013: 5-6.

Poetics (1448a25-28) Aristotle expected his students to be familiar with Aristophanes around half a century after the latter's death. Repeat performance at this time would be unlikely; the same problems we have today understanding the topical references in Aristophanes' texts would have been a problem in the fourth century as well.

There is, however, some apparent evidence of performance outside Athens in the Greek west. It is possible that vases from southern Italy have demonstrated that Aristophanes remained popular there, particularly the 'Würzburg Telephus', which depicts the scene in *Thesmophoriazusae* when Euripides' *Telephus* is parodied.²⁵⁸ There is also one vase fragment possibly depicting a scene from *Frogs*, the vase now known as the 'Berlin Herakles'. Obtained for the Königliches Museum (now the Altes Museum) in 1847, and unfortunately now missing, the vase was immediately identified as a depiction of *Frogs*. From drawings we know that it showed a figure dressed as Heracles apparently knocking



at a door whilst another figure rides a donkey and carries baggage, immediately reminding us of Dionysus and Xanthias in the opening scene. Baggage carrying scenes were a comedic cliché; this is made clear in this very scene from *Frogs* when Xanthias asks: 'Then why did I have

to carry all this baggage, if I'm not supposed to do any of the stuff Phrynichus always does? Lycis and Ameipsias too: people carry baggage in every one of their comedies' (12-5). Oliver Taplin points out that we do not know whether donkeys were a staple of these sorts of scenes, but even if they were, the combination of the donkey, the baggage

²⁵⁸ Würzburg H5697 (Csapo 2010: 64-5; Slater 2016: 4-5).

and a Heracles-esque figure cannot have been that common.²⁵⁹ There is certainly no other scene in the extant drama or even wider myth that matches it.

There is one major argument given as evidence that this vase does not depict *Frogs*. The Dionysus figure in the painting is depicted naked, with the lion skin over his arm, rather than his shoulders. In the opening of *Frogs* Dionysus is clothed in a dress and this difference in appearance is a clear discrepancy between the vase and the scene. Taplin discounts the discrepancy by suggesting that the artist may not have been talented enough to recreate the dress, or that the dress was intentionally left out so that ‘the emphasis of the entertainment (was) on the recollection of the opening scene, without any allusion to the following scene with the real Herakles.’²⁶⁰ Finally Taplin remarks that the positioning of the lionskin above the arm might indicate that it does not really belong to the figure. Sadly the vase was lost during the Second World War, most likely destroyed, and the surviving images (Figure 1) of it are not of good quality. However, in Taplin’s mind, and mine as well, the similarities with the scene far outweigh the differences. In the absence of an alternative stimulus I think it is likely

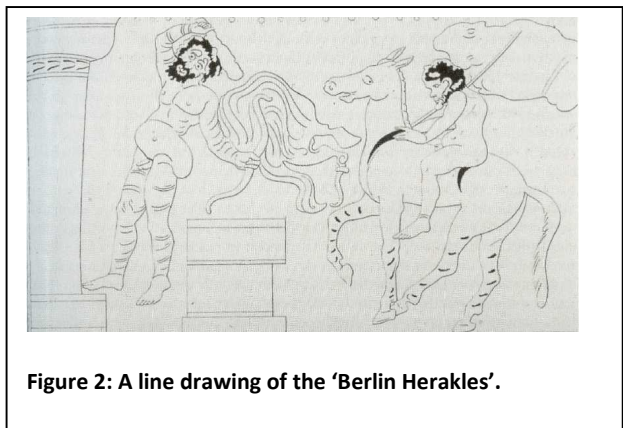


Figure 2: A line drawing of the 'Berlin Herakles'.

that the scene was inspired by *Frogs*. A secondary issue is whether the vase was inspired by an actual performance of *Frogs*, or merely the text itself. Certainly the characters seem to be in theatrical costume, but comedic costumes were likely to have been well-known even if the vase-painter had not seen *Frogs* itself. If it was inspired by performance of the

²⁵⁹ Taplin 1993: 6.

²⁶⁰ Taplin 1993: 47.

play, the Berlin Herakles marks the end of any sort of documented performance reception within antiquity.

Whilst any evidence for the performance reception of *Frogs* seemingly ends here, it is not the end of its reception in other fields. Lines 454-9 of *Frogs*, from the end of the Initiates sequence, were found inscribed on the base of a statue in Rhodes.²⁶¹ This text is identical to the one found in the 10th-century manuscript Ravennas 429, the oldest surviving complete copy of *Frogs*.²⁶² Estimates put the date of the inscription somewhere between the third and first centuries BC, coinciding with the popularity in Rhodes of both mystery cults and theatre.²⁶³ This is the first piece of evidence that *Frogs*, and indeed Aristophanes as a whole, was valued not just for its theatrical merits, but for other cultural reasons.

Other than the inscription there is no record of *Frogs* for the first one hundred years following its performance.²⁶⁴ At some point copies of Aristophanic texts did make their way to the library in Alexandria, and some of the earliest scholars there made reference to the plays. Here we see a further alternative reception for Aristophanes, since these early scholars – such as Callimachus, Lycophron and Eratosthenes – were interested in Aristophanes as a source for language and history, not theatre.²⁶⁵

The first critical edition was created by the second century-BC scholar Aristophanes of Byzantium.²⁶⁶ There is a large amount of scholia on Aristophanes' comedies stemming from this period, perhaps demonstrating how popular studies of the plays were, if not

²⁶¹ Sommerstein 1996: 30; Henderson 2002: 9.

²⁶² Carratelli 1940: 119.

²⁶³ Carratelli 1940: 120-1.

²⁶⁴ Stanford 1958: I.

²⁶⁵ Slater 2016: 9.

²⁶⁶ Stanford 1958: I; Sommerstein 2010: 407-8.

performance.²⁶⁷ All of these scholars only survive as citations in later manuscripts. Aside from the inscription in Rhodes, our earliest fragments of *Frogs* appear in various papyri from the first four centuries AD.²⁶⁸ It is worth noting that from 300 AD the papyri fragments of comedy are almost exclusively Aristophanic, perhaps implying that it was at this time that the other writers of Old Comedy that had previously been preserved in papyri (namely Eupolis and Cratinus) began to disappear.²⁶⁹ As the medium changed from papyri to codex, Aristophanes, and in particular his eleven extant plays, begins to dominate entirely.²⁷⁰ The question of why this might be has never been adequately answered, although it may have something to do with the fact that the other comic poets seemingly do not interact with tragedy in the way that Aristophanes does.²⁷¹ Perhaps the popularity of Aristophanes is tied to the popularity of tragedy.

Again Aristophanes' reception outside performance can be seen through a large number of possible quotations from *Frogs* identified in non-dramatic works from the ancient world. Generally these references do not cite the play or the author, but are single words or phrases cited primarily for linguistic purposes.²⁷² Dover claims that there are around one thousand recognised quotations in Roman or medieval texts, though it should not be assumed that in every case the author knew what he was quoting and, in many cases, the quotations attributed could come from another Aristophanes play or a different writer altogether. Over a quarter of the references occur in the *Suda*, the Byzantine encyclopaedia.²⁷³ The play has also been used for historical reasons: for example the

²⁶⁷ Reynolds and Wilson 2013: 16.

²⁶⁸ Stanford 1958: li.

²⁶⁹ Sommerstein 2010: 410-1.

²⁷⁰ Slater 2016: 11.

²⁷¹ Although it has been argued that in fact they do, see Bakola 2009, Chapter Three.

²⁷² Dover 2003: 102.

²⁷³ Dover 2003: 102-3.

descriptions of Alcibiades (1425, 1432-3) can be found in Plutarch's *Life of Alcibiades* (16.3).²⁷⁴

Aristophanes must have been known throughout the second-century AD Roman empire, with both Galen and Aulus Gellius making explicit reference to him.²⁷⁵ Perhaps the most sustained and dramatic engagement with Aristophanes' plays occurs in the writings of Lucian of Samosata (c.125 AD-after 180 AD). A rhetorician and satirist, his works are filled with Aristophanic settings, plots, characters and style.²⁷⁶ Aspects of *Frogs* appear a number of times in his dialogues. *Zeus the Tragic Actor* features an *agon* between two philosophers judged by the gods, echoing *Frogs*' contest.²⁷⁷ The dialogue *Sailing Down or The Tyrant* features a journey to the underworld, in which a character complains 'they take no account of me', just as Xanthias did in *Frogs*.²⁷⁸ Another dialogue, *Menippus or Consultation of the Dead* (or alternatively *Trip to Hades*), features a character travelling to Hades dressed in a lionskin.²⁷⁹ Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* may also include a reference to *Frogs*, with a speaking tower advising Psyche that throwing herself from the tower is the quickest way to Hades, a possible echo of Heracles' advice to Dionysus at *Frogs* 130-5.²⁸⁰

When it comes to the Byzantine period, *Frogs*, along with *Clouds* and *Wealth*, seemed to hold a privileged position, with the bulk of the manuscripts featuring one or other of these three plays. The three are known together as 'The Byzantine Triad'.²⁸¹ As with

²⁷⁴ For a full list of quotations, see Bowie 2007: 43-9.

²⁷⁵ Slater 2016: 13-4.

²⁷⁶ A full breakdown of Aristophanic presences in Lucian can be found in Bowie 2007 and Slater 2016: 15-8.

²⁷⁷ Bowie 2007: 36.

²⁷⁸ Bowie 2007: 37-8.

²⁷⁹ Bowie 2007: 38; Slater 2016: 16-7.

²⁸⁰ Slater 2016: 14-5.

²⁸¹ Sommerstein 2010: 413.

Aristophanes' popularity over the other comic poets, there is no clear explanation for why these three plays were singled out, but Halliwell has suggested that it was because *Frogs* and *Clouds* could be considered primary sources for Euripides and Socrates respectively, and because of the 'clear-cut morality' of *Wealth*.²⁸² With regard to *Frogs* specifically, we have the remains of two manuscripts on papyrus dating from the fifth and sixth centuries AD. Whilst the entire play cannot be reconstructed from them, they do serve as documents to test the accuracy of the earliest medieval copies of the play, which, on the whole, appear to be fairly accurate.²⁸³

The text of *Frogs* arrived in Europe with the tenth-century manuscript Ravennas 429, which contains all eleven extant plays. The manuscript was discovered in 1794 in a former monastic library in Ravenna and, whilst its provenance is uncertain, it has been hypothesised that it was created in a Byzantine monastery in the last century of the Macedonian Dynasty (867-1056). From there it may have arrived in Italy via the library of the Duke of Urbino. Successive dukes in the 15th and 16th centuries are known to have made a considerable effort to collect classical manuscripts from across Europe. After that it may have transferred to Florence, as markings on the manuscript imply it was used in the printing of the second printed edition of Aristophanic plays, the Juntine edition, in 1515.²⁸⁴ How it came to be in Ravenna is unknown, as are the origins of the library it was found in.²⁸⁵

The manuscript contains an abundance of mistakes and not many corrections, but despite this it contributes more to our own versions of Aristophanes than any other single

²⁸² Halliwell 2015: lxvii.

²⁸³ Dover 1997: 2.

²⁸⁴ See below for more on the printed editions.

²⁸⁵ For a more detailed explanation of this history of Ravenna 429, see Clark 1871: 153-160.

manuscript.²⁸⁶ It does contain fragments of scholia from the Hellenistic and Roman periods, which were copied from separate columns into the margins of the ancient copies and from there to Ravennas 429 and Venetus Marcianus 474, the next oldest manuscript dating from the late eleventh or early twelfth century.²⁸⁷ Despite the mistakes throughout the texts of *Frogs* in these two manuscripts, they generally agree with the papyri and Rhodian inscription, implying that *Frogs* at least has been reproduced without too many errors. A number of other manuscripts have contributed to the modern text, but in fact over 95% of it matches Ravennas 429 and Venetus Marcianus 474.²⁸⁸ The task of comparing the manuscripts for *Frogs* is helped by the survival of one of Demetrios

Triklinios from the early fourteenth century. In his manuscript Triklinios made extensive notes of variations in the text and added scholia from Thomas Magister (1282-1328). He also added some scholia of his own and seems to have been the first medieval scholar to analyse the metre of the lyrics.²⁸⁹

The first ever printed version of any Aristophanic plays, including *Frogs*, was produced in Venice in 1498 by Aldus Manutius, the *Aristophanous komodiai*

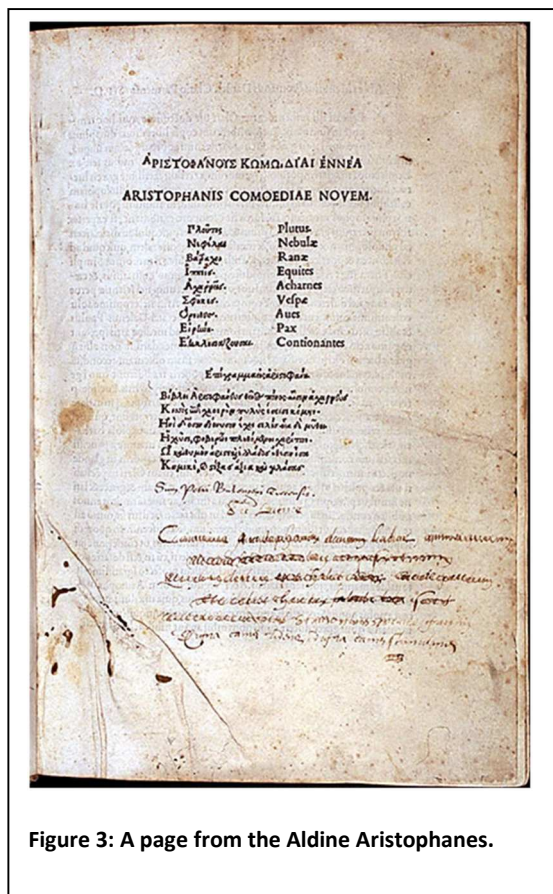


Figure 3: A page from the Aldine Aristophanes.

ennea or *Aristophanis comoediae novem*, also known as the ‘Aldine Aristophanes’. It

²⁸⁶ Sommerstein 2010: 414.

²⁸⁷ Dover 2007: 2-3.

²⁸⁸ Stanford 1958: lii.

²⁸⁹ Dover 1993: 81.

contained nine of the eleven plays and used several Byzantine editions as its source.²⁹⁰ The two missing plays, *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*, were first added in a 1525 2nd edition (the ‘Juntine’ edition).²⁹¹ Multiple further editions were printed in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.²⁹²

The first ever ‘modern’ translation of Aristophanes is a Florentine version of *Wealth* translated into Latin dating from around 1440. It has been suggested that at this time Aristophanes was assessed according to late medieval literary criteria primarily as a moral poet, and the lack of obscenity in *Wealth* would have attracted an audience of that era. This is evidenced by several early performances of *Wealth* in Greek and the fact it was the first Aristophanes to be translated into French (c.1560), Spanish (1577) and English (1651). All eleven Aristophanic plays were translated into Italian in 1545 and printed as *Le comedie [sic] del facetissimo Aristophane: tradutte di Greco in lingua commune d’Italia*. This translation possibly came about due to the importance of Aristotelian canon to the Italian Renaissance humanists, and Aristotle’s naming of Aristophanes as the premier example of comedy.²⁹³

The earliest translation of *Frogs* into Latin was in 1561, by Lamburtus Hortensius in Utrecht.²⁹⁴ It was not until 1783 that another translation of *Frogs* into a modern language appeared, a German version by Johann Georg Schlosser (brother-in-law to German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe). This was closely followed by a French version by Louis Poinset de Sivry in 1784,²⁹⁵ and the earliest English translation by Charles Dunster in 1785, though a detailed synopsis had been printed alongside translations and summaries

²⁹⁰ Giannopoulou 2007: 310.

²⁹¹ Stanford 1958: liii.

²⁹² Sommerstein 2010: 421.

²⁹³ Giannopoulou 2007: 309-10.

²⁹⁴ Giannopoulou 2007: 315.

²⁹⁵ Giannopoulou 2007: 318.

of other Aristophanes plays in 1759.²⁹⁶ Over the next 150 years *Frogs* would be published in Danish,²⁹⁷ Hungarian,²⁹⁸ Russian,²⁹⁹ Czech,³⁰⁰ Polish³⁰¹ and Demotic Greek.³⁰²

While it is clear that Aristophanes' *Frogs* essentially 'arrived' in the public consciousness with those first modern-language translations in the late 18th century, unfortunately, since I am confining this thesis to a performance reception analysis of *Frogs*, there is no space here to examine the important early translations in further depth, but I would like to stress that there is huge potential for further research to be conducted into the whole area of pre-twentieth-century Aristophanic reception, in all languages.

Translation Theory and the Challenges of *Frogs*

Following *Frogs*' arrival in Britain, its reception expanded from a philological one to a textual and cultural one. And as its dramatic afterlife fell into what we now call performance reception, its textual afterlife fits into the field that is now known as translation studies. Therefore, before attempting to survey English translations of the play, it is useful to reflect on the areas of translation study that impact upon *Frogs*, and indeed Aristophanes as a whole. To attempt a summary of translation theory as a whole would take up a thesis of its own and, in any case, that is not the purpose of this research.³⁰³ Instead I limit the theory to a very brief overview of the history of translation studies, before focusing on the issues that impact translation of Aristophanes directly.

²⁹⁶ The summary itself was translated from French: see below, pp.102-3.

²⁹⁷ 1825, by Johan Krag [Giannopoulou 2007: 320].

²⁹⁸ 1875, by Ignác Veress [Giannopoulou 2007: 326].

²⁹⁹ 1887, by K. Neylisov [Giannopoulou 2007: 329].

³⁰⁰ 1897, by Augustin Krejčí [Giannopoulou 2007: 332].

³⁰¹ 1906, by Edmund Żegota Cięglewicz [Giannopoulou 2007: 336].

³⁰² 1910, by Polyvios T. Dimitrakopoulos [Giannopoulou 2007: 337].

³⁰³ And besides, this has been done more thoroughly elsewhere by translation studies scholars, see for example Bassnett 2014 and Munday 2001.

The history of Translation Studies is similar to that of Classical Reception, in that it is a practice that goes back to the ancient world but has only recently been defined as an academic discipline. The key issue of translation was articulated at a very early stage with Cicero being one of the first translators to speak about his translation practice, specifically in reference to oratory. Many translation scholars³⁰⁴ misattribute to Cicero the passage ‘If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or the working, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator’.³⁰⁵ What Cicero does say in *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* (14) is *nec converti ut interpretes, sed ut orator, sententiis isdem et earum formis tamquam figuris, verbis ad nostram consuetudinem aptis* (‘I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language’). The earliest English translations of the Bible³⁰⁶ also attracted similar discussion: since the aim was to open up the text to the common person, emphasis was on translating the sense of the words rather than the exact text.³⁰⁷ Prolific translator Ezra Pound famously advised a fellow translator ‘Don’t bother about the WORDS, translate the MEANING’³⁰⁸ whilst at the other end of the spectrum, Vladimir Nabokov stated that a translator should ‘reproduce with absolute exactitude the whole text the whole text, and nothing but the text’.³⁰⁹ Translation, then, encompasses not just translating words, but meaning as well, a process Susan Bassnett calls decoding and recoding.³¹⁰

³⁰⁴ For example Bassnett 2014: 54.

³⁰⁵ Actually from letter 57.5 of St Jerome, who was quoting his own (now lost) translation of Eusebius. The error probably derives from Nida 1964: 13, which misattributes several of Jerome’s letters to Cicero, although not to any particular work.

³⁰⁶ Such as John Wycliffe’s in the 1380s.

³⁰⁷ Bassnett 2014: 57.

³⁰⁸ Quoted in Robson 2012: 216.

³⁰⁹ Quoted in Underwood 1998: 3.

³¹⁰ Bassnett 2014: 26-32.

Much of translation theory has focused on categorising the different types of translation, from Dryden's metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation³¹¹ to Jakobson's intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation.³¹² More recent developments in the late twentieth century have led to the 'cultural turn' in translation studies:³¹³ an emphasis on the cultural and societal background of a translation, in addition to the text itself. This has allowed translation studies to speak to the wider concerns of classical reception in ways which they have not done so before.

Translating theatre has its own set of problems – ones that are important to address in the context of performance reception. As dramatist and translator, James Planché (himself a translator of Aristophanes, having translated *Birds* for performance in 1846), stated 'There is much more art required to make a play actable than a book readable'.³¹⁴ Translation of a theatrical text is perceived differently from that of other works, since it is just one step of the overall transferral of the original text to the stage. A book is complete once it is translated, but a play will go through the 'translation' of a translator, director and actor before it is received by its audience.³¹⁵ There is as much meaning in how a line is conveyed as there is in what the line actually says, linking performance to the intersemiotic translation proposed by Jakobson.³¹⁶

This, of course, assumes that every translation of a play is meant for performance. When it comes to the translation of *Frogs*, many were made with the intention of them being read, either as a study aid or to accompany a performance in the original language, and

³¹¹ Dryden 1962: 268; see also Hardwick 2000: 17, Silk 2007: 288-9 and Robson 2012: 215-6.

³¹² Jakobson 1959; see also Bassnett 2014: 25.

³¹³ Espoused initially by Bassnett and Lefevre 1990. See also Munday 2001: 126-143 for how the theory has evolved.

³¹⁴ Planché 1872: 246-7.

³¹⁵ Bassnett 2014: 128-9; Hardwick 2000: 19-20.

³¹⁶ Intersemiotic translation 'is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems' (Jakobson 1959: 233).

were never intended to be performed. As Simeon Underwood puts it: ‘the approach to translation should be relative to the purpose for which it is intended...[or] relative to the audience for whom it is intended’.³¹⁷ Nevertheless, there can be a tension between the classicist and the dramatist. J. Michael Walton explains it as ‘a gulf between those whose classical training demands a respect for the play on the page, in the context of the society of ancient Greece, and those for whom text is pretext, no more than a map from which they wish to create a landscape of their own imagination’.³¹⁸

Aristophanic comedy raises further problems that set it apart from tragedy and the more domestic, farcical comedies of later comedy in Greece and Rome. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Aristophanes was filled with political and social commentary that was specific to its time and place. Whilst broad themes may remain relevant to a modern audience, a lot of the detail does not.³¹⁹ Scholars have talked freely about how difficult it is to translate Aristophanes, with his plays combining issues that arise from the translation of theatre, poetry and humour. Dover has said ‘the audience of tragedy tolerates a certain degree of obscurity and mystification, but an audience that has been told that Aristophanes is funny and therefore expects to be amused is less tolerant’,³²⁰ whilst Sommerstein has stated ‘There will never be a perfect translation of Aristophanes’.³²¹

There are broadly speaking, four important and interlinked considerations affecting the translation of Aristophanes, and it is around these that my survey of *Frogs* translation will revolve. First, the translator must decide how to approach the poetry of the original. Here

³¹⁷ Underwood 1998: 4.

³¹⁸ Walton 2006: 15.

³¹⁹ Walton 2006: 145.

³²⁰ Dover 1972: 230.

³²¹ Sommerstein 1973: 140.

again, scholars have attempted to categorise the differing types of poetic translation.

James Holmes theorised four approaches:³²²

1. Mimetic, which attempts to replicate the rhythm of the original.
2. Analogical, where the translator attempts to find an equivalent metre in the target language.
3. Content-derivative or organic, where the translator starts with the semantic material, but allows it to take its own shape as the translation develops.
4. Deviant, where metres or forms that have nothing to do with the original are used.

Mimetic translation of Aristophanes is rare,³²³ since an English-speaker would not recognise and could not distinguish between the extensive range of metres and styles used by Aristophanes³²⁴ and as Holmes says, ‘a verse form cannot exist outside [its own] language’.³²⁵ However most translations tend to cross the boundaries of these categories, combining various approaches throughout. The categories also do not take into account lyric meant for singing,³²⁶ something which many translations of Aristophanes do not take account of either, in contrast to its performance reception.³²⁷ It is noticeable that most of the verse translations of *Frogs* use blank verse, at least until the mid-twentieth century. This is perhaps not surprising, as the bulk of British poetry has been written in blank verse since Chaucer adopted it from Italian. A number of the translators also used rhyming verse for the lyrical sections, and on occasion other sections as well.³²⁸ There are also translations into prose and some translators mix styles depending on the speaker.

³²² Holmes 1994.

³²³ Though not unheard of, see Rogers’ translation below, pp.120-4.

³²⁴ Halliwell 2000: 78; Robson 2012: 226-7.

³²⁵ Holmes 1994: 25.

³²⁶ Robson 2012: 235.

³²⁷ Music is important throughout the reception, see Chapters Four and Six, passim and Chapter Five, pp.274-6.

³²⁸ Halliwell 2000: 78.

The question of ‘localisation’ is the second consideration. Sommerstein has commented that ‘Comedy...is perhaps the only branch of ancient literature which has to be separately translated for British and for American readers’.³²⁹ Yet, some translators would question whether their work should be localised in this manner at all. Lawrence Venuti theorised the difference between ‘foreignization’ and ‘domestication’.³³⁰ The former retains aspects of the original text (e.g. word order or historical references) so that readers are aware they are reading a translation. ‘Domestication’ seeks to find equivalences for the original’s anachronisms, making it more comprehensible to the new audience.³³¹ For Venuti, foreignization was the best approach, since the translator himself should be visible in the translation – essentially, the reader should know they are reading a translation – by highlighting the differences between cultures. Of course, whichever course a translator might attempt, the majority of translations will reflect the time, place and agenda of the translator, whether consciously or unconsciously,³³² and as Venuti puts it: ‘Translations are always intelligible to, if not intentionally made for, specific cultural constituencies at specific historical moments.’³³³

The next consideration must be humour. For Aristophanes this encompasses the general comedy (such as references or parody), and also the use of puns. Puns are notoriously difficult to translate, since they rely on a word having multiple meanings.³³⁴ There may be no word in English that can recreate the multiple meanings of a Greek pun. As

³²⁹ Sommerstein 1973: 140-1.

³³⁰ An explicitly ancient Greek version has been theorised as ‘Hellenizers’ and ‘Modernizers’. See Walton 2006: 62.

³³¹ Venuti 1995: 20.

³³² Venuti gives the examples of John Jones’ 1962 study on Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which asserted that by making simple and innocuous alterations (such as singular nouns where there were plurals in the original) translators were affirming the hero-centric view of tragedy that had long been the dominant reading. See Venuti 1998: 69-71.

³³³ Venuti 1998: 93.

³³⁴ Robson 2007: 169-71.

Halliwell has said, in the case of puns ‘one is at the mercy of luck’.³³⁵ James Robson³³⁶ draws attention to Cicero’s distinction³³⁷ between referential (*in re*) and verbal (*in verbis*) humour. Whilst the verbal humour of puns can be difficult to translate, referential is usually easier. It is not, however, without problems, since this category might include topical jokes relating to people or events in ancient Athens.³³⁸ The humour aspect therefore crosses over into the previous consideration. The translator must decide whether to keep topical references as they are or to make them fit the target language audience, Venuti’s foreignization and domestication respectively. Included in humour is the scatological and obscene humour for which Aristophanes is notable and, as will be demonstrated, this is very much guided by the translators and their audience’s expectations. *Frogs* is by no means one of Aristophanes’ most obscene plays, and yet there are moments of scatological humour that have caused concern for some of the more conservative of translators.

The fourth consideration is ‘performability’: how easily a given script can be performed. It has been discussed under a number of titles, including ‘actability’, ‘speakability’ and, where music is concerned, ‘singability’. There is no firm consensus or theory on what performability means as, for a long time, translation studies scholars treated theatrical texts as a piece of literature, without factoring in performance.³³⁹ In 1998 Bassnett rejected the use of the term performability, simply because it is so resistant to definition.³⁴⁰ Others have rejected the terms since they see them as less to do with theatre and more to do with the business of theatre, particularly in Britain; Clare Finburgh has said ‘In a system such as the UK’s... “performability” ultimately means

³³⁵ Halliwell 2015: lix.

³³⁶ Robson 2007.

³³⁷ *De Oratore* 2.62 and 2.64.

³³⁸ Robson 2007: 172-4.

³³⁹ Snell-Hornby 2007: 106.

³⁴⁰ Bassnett 1998: 94-5.

“marketability”³⁴¹ Despite this, some translation scholars have attempted to theorise the concept further,³⁴² yet without managing to categorise performability in the same manner that Venuti and Holmes above have categorised other elements of translation. Translators of *Frogs*, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century and onwards, often brand performability as an important concept, yet in practice they understand it in different ways.³⁴³

In the midst of the concept of performability comes an argument over how faithful a translator must remain to the original text. For Bassnett, performability is often used as an excuse to diverge further from the source text, creating an ‘adaptation’ or a ‘version’ instead of a translation. Phyllis Zatlin argues that ‘To achieve speakable dialogue, theatrical translators can and do *adapt*’ (my emphasis)³⁴⁴ yet ‘successful theatrical adaptations tend to belong to the middle ground’³⁴⁵ between fidelity to the source and full adaptation. Zatlin’s argument has been criticised as reinforcing the old perception that something is always lost in translation, and that the original is inherently superior to the new version.³⁴⁶ Meanwhile Sirkku Aaltonen has pointed out the ‘terminological confusion’³⁴⁷ arising from the various discussions, with words such as ‘performability’, ‘speakability’, ‘playability’, ‘literal’, ‘literary’, ‘scholarly’, ‘academic’, ‘free’, ‘faithful’, ‘adaptation’ and ‘version’ all meaning different things to different people.

Kevin Windle articulates this argument through two differing (but not mutually exclusive) approaches to theatrical translation: that of the ‘linguist-translator’, who

³⁴¹ Finburgh 2011: 232.

³⁴² See for example, Aaltonen 2000; Zatlin 2005; Snell-Hornby 2007; Windle 2011.

³⁴³ Kenneth McLeish (pp.141-4), Alfred Corn (pp.150-2) and Michael Ewans (pp.159-61) are all translators who claim their translation is a “performance” one.

³⁴⁴ Zatlin 2005: 1.

³⁴⁵ Zatlin 2005: 81-2.

³⁴⁶ Johnston 2011: 11-2.

³⁴⁷ Aaltonen 2000: 43.

translates from the source text directly, not necessarily for performance, and the ‘dramatist’, who may have no knowledge of the source language, but works in tandem with actors and directors, perhaps using existing translations as a starting point.³⁴⁸ Personalities from both approaches are represented in the translation history of *Frogs*. Indeed some translations have been branded by outside reviewers as ‘adaptations’, implying that this significantly lowers their value in some way.³⁴⁹

Classicists have also contributed to this field, but those that concentrate on Greek theatre tend to privilege tragedy.³⁵⁰ Walton is one of the few to have written specifically about Aristophanes, and his best advice is, ‘translation of a theatre piece may happen in the study but the proper place for the translator is in rehearsal.’³⁵¹ In line with foreignization/domestication and humour, the time and place of a performance matters, and so just because one translation was adequately performable at one place and time does not mean it will be the same in another.³⁵² A number of *Frogs* translations stem from workshops or performances, with the translator being directly involved in those productions.³⁵³

Jeffrey Henderson, who has translated *Frogs* himself,³⁵⁴ has written about translating Aristophanes for performance. In his opinion, ‘The translator’s job is to find English

³⁴⁸ Windle 2011: 157-8.

³⁴⁹ It was said of the Penn Greek Drama Series, ‘Tragedies form the stronger part of the series – when properly faithful to the text. Some should certainly be termed adaptations or versions’ (Shone 2003: 209).

³⁵⁰ The most recent volume on translation for performance, Brodie & Cole 2017, has five chapters dedicated to ‘Adapting classical drama at the turn of the twenty-first century’, but only three references to Aristophanes. Tragedy is also similarly privileged in Walton 2006; Goldhill 2007; Walton 2007; Walton 2008; Walton 2008b.

³⁵¹ Walton 2016: 526. This is discussed in a more general way in Snell-Hornby 2007: 115-6.

³⁵² Snell-Hornby 2007: 112-3.

³⁵³ Michael Ewans, for example, specifically talks about how his translation was workshopped for performance. See below, pp.159-61.

³⁵⁴ See below pp.152-3.

equivalents for the Greek words that stay close to the terms of the original where they are theatrically viable for a modern audience, but that abandon the original when its terms are theatrically unviable'.³⁵⁵ Many of the translators have claimed that their translation is a performance standard one, but few actually define what this means to them.

For my purposes, performability is defined in two ways;³⁵⁶ again both are entirely subjective. Firstly it concerns the performers themselves: how easy are the lines to speak out loud and do they allow for the conveying of the emotion behind the lines. Secondly performability concerns the audience: how easy is it for them to understand the words spoken? This does not just encompass understanding the words themselves, but understanding the content. Here performability crosses over into the other considerations above, for example how to translate jokes and references that an audience might not understand. A performance piece cannot be footnoted. Context plays a role as well: a script for performance in an academic setting might be very different for one in a commercial setting.

As a final note I should emphasise that performability is not a judgement of quality, since not every translation is meant to be performed. More translations are undertaken for study than for performance; that does not make them inferior. As Walton states, 'there do need to be some translations around that do actually offer a faithful rendition of the received texts'.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Henderson 1993: 83.

³⁵⁶ There is potentially a third concern, which relates to national and cultural differences in performance tradition and acting style (Bassnett-McGuire 1985: 91-2). However, given that this thesis is concerned with English translations only, I have omitted this factor – save for some mentions of American and English language.

³⁵⁷ Walton 2006: 151.

J. Michael Walton takes all of this into account when he tentatively divides translation of Greek theatre into seven categories:³⁵⁸

1. Literals (cribs): most of the earlier translations from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
2. Those with literary fidelity and the translator's stamp, but with no claims as performance texts.
3. Those faithful to the original but actable.
4. Those intended for, or deriving from, production, with occasional licence.
5. Those adapted from, or based on, the original but from playwrights/writers without a direct knowledge of Greek.
6. Original plays inspired by specific classical tragedies.
7. Translocations to another culture.

The remainder of this chapter generally deals with the first to fourth of Walton's categories, as well as one or two examples of the fifth category. The fifth, sixth and seventh categories usually consist of translations associated with specific productions, such as the Burt Shevelove/Stephen Sondheim script. These translations will be discussed in tandem with their respective performances in later chapters.

Walton's categories are not perfect, which he freely admits, and there is some overlap between them. Translations may crossover between the third, fourth and fifth categories, for example, since just because a translator does not have knowledge of Greek it does not mean his translation is necessarily inaccurate. Similarly a play may be both a new play inspired by tragedy (sixth category) and translocated to another culture (seventh category). I also add an additional category of plays that are discussed in the next chapter,

³⁵⁸ Walton 2006: 182-3.

which I term ‘reflections’. These are plays which are not direct translations, but share a thematic or structural similarity to *Frogs*. Where the line is drawn between these reflections and Walton’s sixth and seventh categories is not clear-cut, and there is an argument that some of the reflections I discuss should have been included in the performance chapters, and conversely productions I discuss later in the thesis should have been included as reflections instead.

English Translations of *Frogs*

I have discovered 40 different translations that have been published since the earliest in 1785 and will mention all of them here. For some translations I will go into more detail, generally those that have been used frequently for performance, or have significant secondary material written about them, or simply those that include notable or unusual features. Generally translations fall into three categories, broadly lining up with Walton’s first, second and a combination of the third and fourth categories above: literal translations or cribs; translations for study use by scholars or students; and translations aiming at performance.

This list expands on earlier catalogues compiled by Walton³⁵⁹ and Giannopoulou.³⁶⁰

Year	Translator	Edition	Original Publication³⁶¹
1785	Charles Dunster	<i>Frogs, a Comedy</i>	Oxford: J. and J. Fletcher.
1822	Unknown	<i>The Plutus and the Frogs of Aristophanes</i>	Oxford: Bartlett and Hinton.
1837	C.A. Wheelwright	<i>The Comedies of Aristophanes</i>	Oxford: D.A. Talboys.

³⁵⁹ Walton 2006: 253-6 & 260-2. Walton’s list contains a number of errors. Two translations – the 1912 of unknown authorship and Webb’s 1962 version – are misattributed (see below, p.125n437 and p.138n467). Furthermore he lists two versions which are not translations, William Lucas Collins in 1972 and William C. Green in 1979: they are a summary (with extracts from Frere) and an edition of the original Greek respectively.

³⁶⁰ Giannopoulou 2007: 318-40. Giannopoulou similarly lists Collins’ and Green’s versions as translations. He also mistakenly lists a further Greek edition as a translation, that of Francis Giffard Plaistowe in 1896.

³⁶¹ Unless otherwise stated, all page and line numbers in this chapter are from the earliest editions of the texts.

1839	John Hookham Frere	<i>The Frogs and Three Other Plays of Aristophanes</i>	London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
1848	Charles Cavendish Clifford	<i>The Frogs of Aristophanes</i>	Oxford: John Henry Parker.
1853	William James Hickie	<i>The Comedies of Aristophanes, Vol.2</i>	London: Henry G. Bohn.
1867	Leonard-Hampson Rudd	<i>Eight Comedies of Aristophanes</i>	London: Longmans, Green and Co.
1883	'A First Classman at Balliol College' (Thomas Nash) ³⁶²	<i>A Literal Translation of Aristophanes: The Frogs</i>	Oxford: A. Thomas Shrimpton and Son.
1896	J.A. Prout	<i>Aristophanes' Ranae, Frogs</i>	London: James Cornish & Sons.
1897	Rev. Anthony Lawrence Kynaston	<i>The Frogs</i>	Weston-Super-Mare: The Mendip Press.
1900	E.W. Huntingford	<i>The Frogs of Aristophanes</i>	London: Methuen & Co.
1900	Lionel James	<i>Frogs</i>	Oxford: James Parker and Co.
1902	Gilbert Murray	<i>The Frogs of Aristophanes</i>	London: George Allen and Unwin.
1902	Benjamin Bickley Rogers	<i>The Frogs</i>	London: George Bell & Sons.
1911	Alfred Davies Cope	<i>The Frogs of Aristophanes</i>	Oxford: Blackwell.
1912	Unknown	<i>Aristophanes: The Eleven Comedies</i>	New York: Liveright.
1925	Alexander Harvey	<i>The Frogs</i>	Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius.
1927	John Marshal MacGregor	<i>The Birds and the Frogs</i>	London: Edward Arnold & Co.
1934	Arthur S. Way	<i>Aristophanes in English Verse</i>	London: MacMillan.
1936	D.W. Lucas & F.J.A. Cruso	<i>The Frogs of Aristophanes</i>	Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1952	John G. Hawthorne	<i>Classics in Translation</i>	Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
1955	Dudley Fitts	<i>The Frogs</i>	London: Faber and Faber Ltd.
1961	Peter D. Arnott	<i>Three Greek Plays for the Theatre</i>	Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
1962	Richmond Lattimore	<i>The Frogs</i>	Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
1962	Robert Henning Webb	<i>Complete Plays of Aristophanes</i>	London: Bantam.
1964	David Barrett (Revised by Shomit Dutta in 2007)	<i>Frogs and Other Plays</i>	London: Penguin.
1970	Kenneth McLeish	<i>The Frogs and Other Greek Plays</i>	London: Longman.
1970	Patric Dickinson	<i>Aristophanes Plays 2</i>	Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³⁶² See below, p.113-4.

1983	James H. Mantinband	<i>Four Plays of Aristophanes</i>	Washington, D.C.: University Press of America.
1993	Francis Blessington	<i>The Bacchae . Euripides. The Frogs. Aristophanes</i>	Lincoln, NE: iUniverse
1993	Kenneth McLeish	<i>Aristophanes. Plays: Two</i>	London: Methuen.
1996	Alan H. Sommerstein	<i>Frogs</i>	Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd.
1999	Alfred Corn	<i>Aristophanes, 2</i>	Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
2002	Jeffrey Henderson	<i>Aristophanes Volume IV: Frogs, Assemblywomen, Wealth</i>	Boston: Harvard University Press.
2004	Paul Roche	<i>Four Plays by Aristophanes</i>	New York: Signet Classics.
2008	Ian Johnston	<i>Frogs</i>	Self-published.
2008	George Theodoridis	<i>Frogs</i>	Self-published.
2011	Michael Ewans	<i>Lysistrata, The Women's Festival and Frogs</i>	Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
2014	Judith Affleck and Clive Letchford	<i>Aristophanes: Frogs</i>	Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2015	Stephen Halliwell	<i>Aristophanes: Clouds, Women at the Thesmophoria, Frogs</i>	Oxford: Oxford University Press.

There are seemingly three distinct turning points in the translation history of *Frogs*; these moments begin new trends within the translations, which have lasting effects. Each of these can be placed in the context of contemporaneous events in the classical and theatrical world, both directly and tangentially relating to *Frogs*. The first is the earliest translation of *Frogs*, Charles Dunster's of 1785, which begins a sporadic interest in the translation of the play throughout the 1800s. The second turning point is around 1900, and encompasses a dramatic increase in the number of translations by some of the best known classicists of the time. The third turning point occurs in the middle of the 20th century; it is at this time that we see the first translations undertaken specifically for performance.

Prior to Dunster's translation, the first appearance of *Frogs* in English occurs in *The Greek Theatre of Father Brumoy*, a 1759 text itself translated from the French original. The *Frogs* present in that publication is not a full translation, but I include it here as it is a very detailed synopsis and commentary on the play.³⁶³ In contrast to some of the other plays in the volume, there is very little translation of *Frogs* contained here, aside from a number of lines of dialogue that appear in the synopsis. The original French text was written by Pierre Brumoy, a member of the Society of Jesus. His *Le Théâtre des Grecs*, containing a translation or synopsis of every extant Greek play, was originally published in 1730. The main text of the book was translated by a team of writers under the supervision of the British novelist Charlotte Lennox,³⁶⁴ whilst the section on *Frogs* was translated by Gregory Sharpe, a clergyman.³⁶⁵

Lennox was not uncritical of Brumoy's own writing and conclusions, saying 'Brumoy is a good critic, and an excellent translator, but he is a bad and a tedious writer' and that 'It is to be wished he had been less critical, and more historical'.³⁶⁶ In his introduction to *Frogs*, Brumoy leaves us in little doubt about what he thought the subject of the play was. He states, 'Without entering here into discussions that are merely conjectural, and incapable of affording satisfaction to a sensible reader, it is certain that [Aristophanes] hated Euripides'.³⁶⁷ According to Brumoy, when Dionysus makes his final choice he

³⁶³ It has been misidentified as a full translation, for example in Hall 2008b: 320.

³⁶⁴ See Gray 1985 and Walton 39-40.

³⁶⁵ C.A. Wheelwright would later use Brumoy's French to compile introductions for his own 1837 translation of *Frogs* (see below, pp.109-10). This has led to confusion at Walton 2006: 40 and 275n43, where he has Brumoy and Wheelwright the wrong way around, describing an 1889 'translation of Aristophanes by Brumoy, with notes by C.A. Wheelwright'. I believe Walton has misidentified a reprint of Wheelwright's 1837 translation - Wheelwright himself died in 1858.

³⁶⁶ Brumoy 1759: vol.1, p.v.

³⁶⁷ Brumoy 1759: vol.3, p.365.

chooses the poet 'who best pleases him'.³⁶⁸ He does however comment that Aristophanes 'does not treat (Aeschylus)...with less severity than he does Euripides'.³⁶⁹

In other places Brumoy makes further judgements on *Frogs* similar to those made by many later scholars, for example interpreting the reference to Arginusae in the first scene as follows: 'The readiness of the Athenians to give the freedom of their city to slaves did not please Aristophanes'.³⁷⁰ Brumoy does not mention either this or the future re-enfranchisement when summarising the parabasis.

Brumoy also has some interesting ideas on the frog-chorus, saying 'They were actors dressed like frogs, with masks made to resemble those poets Aristophanes intended to ridicule, if these actors appeared, for one scholiast says they did not'.³⁷¹ It is interesting that Brumoy shows an awareness of the scholia, yet introduces an otherwise unheard-of element: that the frogs had masks that identified them as rival poets. In the footnotes he says 'Tis this farcical scene...that hath given the name to the whole piece: whence I conclude, there was much sport and shew, to make the people laugh at the expense of some of the Athenian poets, or philosophers'.³⁷²

The first stage of the translation reception of *Frogs* begins with the earliest full translation, that of Charles Dunster, in 1785. Before this only *Wealth* and *Clouds* had been translated into English, in part as a result of the lack of obscenity in the former and the link to Socrates in the latter. To understand why *Frogs* was translated next we need to consider it within the wider framework of classical translation. Dunster's *Frogs* comes just after

³⁶⁸ Brumoy 1759: vol.3, p.382.

³⁶⁹ Brumoy 1759: vol.3, p.383.

³⁷⁰ Brumoy 1759: vol.3, p.366.

³⁷¹ Brumoy 1759: vol.3, p368.

³⁷² Brumoy 1759: vol.3, p368n†.

Robert Potter's 1777 publication of the plays of Aeschylus, the first time all of Aeschylus' extant plays had been available in English. It has been suggested that, prior to Potter's work, Aeschylus' choruses had been too difficult to understand and too lengthy for translation,³⁷³ and were not popular in performance either.³⁷⁴ Dunster had finished his classical education two years before the Aeschylean plays were published, yet as Potter's translation was such a literary sensation, it is likely Dunster would have become aware of it at some point. Prior to Dunster's *Frogs*, Potter also translated the complete plays of Euripides across two volumes in 1781 and 1783, as with his Aeschylus they were the first complete set of the Euripidean plays in English.³⁷⁵ This new interest in Aeschylus and Euripides, combined with the academic view of *Frogs* as literary criticism of the tragic poets, might have precipitated a general interest in translating *Frogs* – and it is in this climate that Dunster undertakes his translation.

Dunster was the son of a clergyman and after studying at Oxford joined the clergy himself. He was a prolific writer, publishing studies on various religious subjects. In his preface to *Frogs* he bemoans the lack of English translations of Aristophanes³⁷⁶ but, despite this, *Frogs* was his only published foray into the classics. His early works did include a number of other non-religious works: an edition of the poem *Cider* by John Phillips, and several books on John Milton. He seemed to have no interest in politics outside the Church, but was not afraid to take a controversial stance on Christian matters. He was, for example, at the forefront of the debate on whether there was an order of priority amongst the gospels based on when they were written, as opposed to the established view that all of the Bible was equally of the highest authority.³⁷⁷

³⁷³ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 209.

³⁷⁴ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 111.

³⁷⁵ Walton 2006: 40-1. The prolific Potter also published the complete plays of Sophocles in 1788.

³⁷⁶ Dunster 1785: iii.

³⁷⁷ Aston 2004: ODNB [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

Dunster's status as a member of the clergy probably influenced his reading of *Frogs*, as he states that 'the design of Aristophanes in his writings was chiefly a moral one' and that 'they hold forth vice and folly to ridicule'.³⁷⁸ He also states that the two existing English-language Aristophanes plays do not give an accurate account of Aristophanes' skill and wit. *Clouds*, says Dunster, is so focussed on ridiculing Socrates that it loses the 'rich variety of satire' found in other plays. And *Plutus* is more of a Middle Comedy than Old Comedy, since it was written after 'the government had interfered to restrain the freedom of the stage'.³⁷⁹ His comments came just 50 years after the Licensing Act 1737, which required plays to obtain a licence before they were performed.³⁸⁰ We might infer from this, as well as from Dunster's religious writings, that he was essentially liberal in his general political outlook.

Despite Dunster's proclamation of Aristophanes as a moral writer, he does make mention of the obscenity contained within *Frogs*. This he excuses by suggesting that the obscenity is not due to the preferences of Aristophanes and his audience, nor due to a lack of skill on Aristophanes' part, but instead 'that the grossness of those passages, for which he has been censured, was purposely adopted, to cover in some degree his satirical intention, and to mask the battery he was preparing to open, so as to give it greater effect'.³⁸¹ It is not an entirely convincing argument and, despite it, Dunster states 'The offensive parts are either omitted, or qualified'.³⁸² Nevertheless, Dunster at least acknowledges the obscene parts of Aristophanes far more than some later writers, since he has Dionysus saying to

³⁷⁸ Dunster 1785: iv.

³⁷⁹ Dunster 1785: v.

³⁸⁰ Playwright Henry Fielding – often credited with being one of the writers whose plays precipitated the creation of the Act – used *Frogs* as inspiration for two of his own plays. See below, pp.167-8.

³⁸¹ Dunster 1785: iv-v.

³⁸² Dunster 1785 vi.

Xanthias in the opening scene 'I would not have thee talk so filthily' and then 'I pray thee hold;- I do not want to vomit' (p.278).³⁸³

Dunster's translation uses a great range of metres throughout. For example, he most commonly uses catalectic trochaic tetrameters:

Such the interested plan,
Of the sly desiring man; (p.319)

In the parabasis, however, the strophes are delivered in iambic tetrameter:

Muse! while to chant the choral strain
I ask they tuneful harmony (p.330)

Before switching to pentameter, with some 11 -syllable lines, for the epirrhema:

The sacred chorus it behoves to counsel,
And recommend to th' practice of the state
An Argive who in Argos was not born,
But 'mongst its native denizens by force
Obtain'd a seat; in tumult he relied,
And an unletter'd confidence, nor wanted
The talent of persuasion to involve them
In any mischief. (p.333-4)

Then using the same pattern for the antistrophe and antepirrhema.

In other places the choral sections are more of a free verse with no consistent metre:

Hush'd be each lawless tongue, and ye profane,
Ye uninitiated, from our mysteries
Far off retire! – Whoe'er a bosom boasts not

³⁸³ Page numbers are from the 1812 reprint in *The Comedies of Aristophanes*.

Pure and unsullied, nor has ever learn'd

To worship at the uses' hallow'd shrine. (p.307-8)

Whilst Dunster's version was the turning point that began full-length translations of *Frogs*, it was not until 1822 that another translation would be published. A number of translations were published in the nineteenth century coinciding with a dramatic increase in the translation of ancient Greek into English. Unlike Latin, knowledge of Greek was not prevalent in nineteenth-century England, and so this increase implies a greater interest in reading Greek literature in translation.³⁸⁴

The 1822 translation of *Frogs* was by an unknown author and combined in a volume with *Wealth*. The anonymity of the author is not unusual for this time period,³⁸⁵ the edition has full commentary throughout, including reference to other classical authors, the scholia and later academic interpretations; this all suggests an academic origin for the author himself. The title page of the volume states it was 'Printed for D.A. Talboys', referring to publisher and translator David Alphonso Talboys (c.1790-1840). He published the Oxford English Classics series, but there is no record that he translated any ancient texts himself. His own translations seem to have been from German.³⁸⁶ It is likely the translator was a recent Oxford graduate and intended to help other students with the text, since Oxford University Press refused to publish translations at the time.³⁸⁷ This then, is the first of our 'cribs' of *Frogs*, Walton's first category of translations, of which we will see a number throughout the 1800s.

³⁸⁴ Hardwick 2000: 25.

³⁸⁵ Walton 2006: 7.

³⁸⁶ Vaisey 2004: ODNB [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

³⁸⁷ Personal communication from Christopher Stray on 16th March 2015. The Examination Statutes of Oxford do not go back this time, but *Frogs* was included when records began in 1872.

The author adds a (mistaken) assertion about *Frogs* that I have not read elsewhere. He states that *Frogs* was written by Aristophanes as an act of revenge on Euripides for the latter writing *Palamedes*: a play in which the eponymous character, the cleverest Greek to take part in the Trojan War, is unjustly executed by the Greeks due to the jealousy of Odysseus and Diomedes. Only fragments of *Palamedes* survive, but a passage in the hypothesis to Isocrates' *Busiris* (24-30)³⁸⁸ records that when the line 'You have killed, you have killed the best of the Greeks' was spoken, the audience knew that it referred to Socrates and wept. For our anonymous author, the popularity of *Palamedes* 'brought Aristophanes...into great odium with the people' owing to *Clouds* and its assumed role in Socrates' death (p.111 note.a). Our anonymous author does not refer to the testimonia directly, but in any case his assertion is incorrect, since Socrates did not die until 399, after *Frogs* had been performed. *Palamedes* itself was first performed in 415, so if the testimonia is correct it must be referring to a repeat performance after Socrates' death.³⁸⁹ There is a textual link in *Frogs*, as the hero Palamedes is referred to by name when Dionysus is praising Euripides' advice (1451) and, elsewhere in the Aristophanic corpus, the play itself was parodied in *Thesmophoriazusae* (769-71).

This anonymous translation itself is entirely in prose, even the choral sections:

Chorus: Muse, assay the sacred choral strains, come to take pleasure in my song, to see the vast multitude of people, where wisdom in a thousand forms is seated, forms more emulous than Cleophon, on whose chattering lips the Thracian swallow horribly screams, seated on a foreign leaf. (p.160-1)

³⁸⁸ Test.iic, in Collard & Cropp 2008: 51.

³⁸⁹ Collard, Cropp, & Gibert 2004: 97; Collard & Cropp 2008: 49.

Just as with Dunster's translation, all obscenity is removed. This translation sees the first instance of Dionysus telling Xanthias not to say a joke until he wants 'an emetic' (p.112) instead of saying he will want to vomit (which even Dunster found acceptable). This trend will continue throughout some of the more morally conservative translations.

It was 15 years before another translation appeared, this time by Charles Apthorp Wheelwright. Wheelwright's two volumes containing all eleven plays of Aristophanes were published in 1837. The publisher was again D.A. Talboys, indicating an ongoing relationship between the Oxford-based publisher and Aristophanes. Like Dunster before him, Wheelwright followed his father into the clergy. He also translated Pindar and Seneca.³⁹⁰

The translation is described as being in blank verse, yet Wheelwright uses a mixture of pentameter and tetrameter. Pentameter is used for the dialogue:

Dionysus: These are small vine shoots, chatterers, mere museums
Of swallows, such as have corrupted art,
Who disappear if they but gain a chorus,
Wafting with prosperous gale to tragedy. (104-7)

Tetrameter is used for the chorus with rhyming couplets:

Muse of the sacred choirs advance,
Delighting in our song and dance;
Survey the peopled crowds where sit
Innumerable tribes of wit. (695-8)

³⁹⁰ Plummer 2010: 360. By coincidence, Wheelwright's *Poems, Original and Translated; Including Versions of the Medea and Octavia of Seneca* was published in 1810 by A.J. Valpy, who re-published Dunster's *Frogs* in 1812.

Wheelwright does attempt to use rhyme to differentiate between styles. For example, where the chorus introduced the contest at 814ff, Wheelwright renders this ‘in imitation of Aeschylus’ by using enclosed rhyme, alongside pentameter and an irregular fourth line:

Tremendous rage will soon possess the soul
Of the high-sounding bard; whene'er his eye
The sharp-tongu'd rival's whetted teeth shall spy,
With madness will it roll. (854-7)

Naturally for a translation of this time period Wheelwright keeps the obscenity subtle, although he does go further than other contemporary translations: ‘Nor that, I beg, unless when I'm to vomit’ (14) and:

Xanthias: Ho there, what hast thou done?
Dionysus: Reliev'd myself. (488-9)

In his introduction Wheelwright claims that Aristophanes did not want to include the obscenities and that the blame for them lay with his audience. He states ‘it can be proved that Aristophanes himself laments the hard task imposed upon him of gratifying the public at the expense of decency’.³⁹¹ He does not offer any proof himself.

The next translation to appear in English is one of the most influential. Published in 1839, the translation by John Hookham Frere (1769-1846), unlike Dunster's version, was an attempt to create a performance-standard script. The first known fully staged English-language performance of the complete text of *Frogs*, Henry Fleeming Jenkin's 1873 production, used Frere's translation.³⁹² It was also performed in 1913 at Kenyon College in the US and provided the basis for the accompanying translation of the 1892 Oxford

³⁹¹ Wheelwright 1837: ix.

³⁹² See Chapter Four, pp.182-3.

production. Frere was a prolific translator of Aristophanes and his translations were still being published as late as 1945.³⁹³ His translations attempted to put Aristophanes into contemporary, accessible spoken language, something which most translations have attempted to do since.³⁹⁴ Frere stated in his introduction to *Birds* that he always wanted the readers not to realise they were reading a translation, something he calls the 'illusion of originality'.³⁹⁵

Frere goes one step further than Dunster by hinting at the obscenity occurring in the play right from the start, when Xanthias asks if he can say 'That I'm ready to befoul myself' (p.3). However, when it comes to the act actually occurring on stage later, Dionysus only falls to the ground and says 'I've had an accident' (p.26). When Dionysus is meant to sponge himself down, the stage directions merely say, 'Here a few lines are omitted' (p.26).

Frere was perhaps the first translator of *Frogs* to attempt a mimetic translation of Aristophanes' metres.³⁹⁶ A mixture of metres are therefore used throughout, alongside sporadic use of rhyming couplets. To a modern audience Frere's translation would sound dated, but despite this it still has a rhythm and flow to it that Dunster's and many later translations do not. For example, his version of the chorus at 814-822 uses archaic words, yet the rhyme does not sound as childish as in more modern translations:

The full-mouth'd master of the tragic quire,
We shall behold him foam with rage and ire;
- Confronting in the list

³⁹³ Hall 2007b: 77.

³⁹⁴ Hall 2007b: 78.

³⁹⁵ Frere 1820: 481.

³⁹⁶ Walsh 2009: 223.

His eager, shrewd, sharp-tooth'd antagonist.

Then will his visual orbs be wildly whirl'd

And huge invectives will be hurl'd

Superb and supercilious,

Atrocious, atrabilious,

With furious gesture and with lips of foam,

And lion crest unconscious of the comb; (p.46)

Even in places where the poetry could (or should) sound wrong, such as when Aeschylus is making fun of Euripides' lyrics, there are some attractive lines:

Ye spider, spiders ever spinning

Never ending, still beginning. (p.65)

There were a number of other translations throughout the 1800s, presumably designed as 'cribs' for all the classics students for whom Aristophanes was on the curriculum. They included Charles Cavendish Clifford's in 1848, William James Hickie's in 1853 and Leonard-Hampson Rudd's in 1867. In general, Clifford and Rudd's verse translations are products of their time, archaic in their language and stilted in structure. In Clifford's version of Aeacus' description of Euripides the verse is full of archaic language:

...these giving careful ear unto

His fetches, reasonings, and arguments,

Became enamour'd, and went raving mad.

They hal'd him wisest: quick elate at this,

He seiz'd upon the chair where Aeschylus

Was wont to sit. (p.25)

In contrast, Hickie's version of this line is translated into prose and uses more modern language:

...and they, hearing his objections, and twistings, and turnings, went stark mad, and thought him the cleverest. And elated he laid claim to the throne where Aeschylus was sitting. (p.569)

Rudd's *Frogs* comes in a volume with seven other Aristophanes plays, the three plays prominently featuring women being notable by their absence. His translation in particular is a difficult read, entirely in rhyming couplets, self-consciously archaising, and features lines such as these:

Tut! Have not pride and luxury too much of it?
When I, the son of Barrel, Bacchus, thus submit
To trudge a-foot, and set this rogue on donkey-back,
Lest he should be fatigued by carrying the pack. (p.349)

None of the three has ever been used for performance to my knowledge. In his introduction, Clifford seems to want to distance himself from the play and is oddly uninterested in his own translation, stating 'It is with much diffidence that I venture to publish a translation of this singular play' (he does not elaborate on what is 'singular' about it), 'Some of the jests are certainly not refined' and 'I fear much of the wit has evaporated'.³⁹⁷

A further crib was published in 1883. Its author is given as 'A First Classman of Balliol College' and it is taken from the Greek text of Paley, but other than these details there is nothing to indicate the identity of the author. It is likely to have been the prolific translator Thomas Nash; it was common in this period for translators to hide their identities to avoid

³⁹⁷ Clifford 1848: Preface.

ridicule.³⁹⁸ Nash (under the guise of the First Classman) was responsible for two other translations published that year as well, *Clouds* and *Acharnians*.³⁹⁹

As is common with cribs the text is translated entirely into prose; even the frog-chorus reads as spoken dialogue instead of giving any indication of verse:

Brekekekex! koax! koax! Brekekekex! koax! koax! Marsh children of the fountains, let us utter a strain of hymns to the notes of the pipe, my melodious song, Koax! koax! which we are wont to sing at Limnae in honour of Dionysus (the child) of Zeus from Nysa, when the host of people tipsily revelling at the (feast of the) sacred Pitchers comes to my enclosure. Brekekekex! Koax! koax!
(p.11)

It also includes a small number of stage directions and bits of commentary within the text itself, making it difficult to follow the text itself in places. It does however include the earliest example of Dionysus actually soiling himself on stage that I can find in an English translation of *Frogs*, as Dionysus exclaims the understated ‘I have messed myself; call a god’ (p.17) on meeting Aeacus. *Frogs* was one of six Aristophanes plays that were on the Oxford University curriculum at this time,⁴⁰⁰ and so it is indeed likely that the publishing of this translation was aimed at students struggling to comprehend the Greek.

It is around this time that the second turning point occurs. Similarly to how Potter’s translations of Aeschylus and Euripides may have precipitated Dunster’s *Frogs*, it was around this period that there was a further heightened interest in Euripides, alongside a

³⁹⁸ Walton 2006: 7.

³⁹⁹ Giannopoulou 2007: 309-10.

⁴⁰⁰ The others were *Acharnians*, *Birds*, *Knights*, *Clouds* and *Wasps*. See the *Oxford University Examination Statutes* for 1883: 32.

general increase in popularity of tragedy as whole.⁴⁰¹ Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* had been published in 1876 and reissued in 1886. It emphasised the ritual origins of Greek drama, which would fit with the katabatic and Eleusinian elements of *Frogs*. Nietzsche was also an influence on George Bernard Shaw and his friend Gilbert Murray,⁴⁰² who would write one of the most important translations of *Frogs* in this time period. Euripides himself was also influencing other playwrights, such as Henrik Ibsen, as well as Shaw.⁴⁰³

With regards to *Frogs* itself, 1877 saw F.A. Paley publish an edited edition of the Greek text, an edition on which several of the translations in this period would be based. There was also a heightened interest in Greek theatre generally in this time period, with the first Greek plays being performed at Oxford and Cambridge in 1880 and 1882 respectively. This would include those by Aristophanes, as Cambridge's second Greek play, in 1883, was *Birds* and in 1892 Oxford University's notable performance of *Frogs* was mounted.⁴⁰⁴ It is against this background that the period from 1896 would see six translations of *Frogs* in six years. These would include those of Murray and of Benjamin Bickley Rogers which, alongside Frere's, rank amongst the most influential translations of the play's entire history.

The first two translations of this phase were lesser known ones, appearing in 1896 and 1899. The 1896 translation was undertaken by J.A. Prout and was published as part of 'Kelly's Keys to the Classics', a series of cribs published in the mid-1800s to mid-1900s. Prout was a prolific translator of a diverse selection of classical works in both Greek and

⁴⁰¹ Hall and Macintosh 2005: 433.

⁴⁰² Shaw 2007: 149.

⁴⁰³ See Chapter Three, pp.170-72 and Hall and Macintosh 2005: 490.

⁴⁰⁴ See Chapter Four, 186-190.

Latin.⁴⁰⁵ The other translation was a bilingual edition made to accompany the 1897 production at Downside School in Bath (then named ‘The College of Saint Gregory the Great at Downside’). It was by Rev. A.L. Kynaston, who was also responsible for a published translation of *Alcestis* for the school. The school was founded by Benedictine Monks (and remains today associated with Downside Abbey), and so unsurprisingly the obscenity is removed.

Both translations are rendered in archaic prose, as evidenced by their versions of the *parados*. First Prout’s:

Arouse thee, for he is here waving flaming torches in his hands, O Iacchus,
Iacchus! thou morning-star of nocturnal orgies! (p.13)

And Kynaston’s:

Rouse thee, for he cometh, brandishing in his hands the flaming torches – Iacchus!
O Iacchus! – he who is the star shining on our worship in the night. (p35)

1902 saw the first ever performance of *Frogs* in Canada, at Trinity College, Toronto.⁴⁰⁶ The performance was in Greek, but a companion translation was provided by E.W. Huntingford, then a Professor of Classics at Trinity. The translation itself had been published by Methuen in 1900. The text is translated entirely into rhyming verse, portrayed in a simplistic manner so as to sound almost like a children’s poem:

Dionysus: Why, here’s a corpse just being carried by.

Hullo! It’s you I mean, you dead man, hi!

My traps for Hades! Will you take the job?

Corpse: How much?

⁴⁰⁵ Examples include such diverse authors as Herodotus, Plato, Cicero, Virgil, and Ovid.

⁴⁰⁶ See Chapter Five, pp.246-7.

Dionysus: (Pointing to bundle) This only.

Corpse:

If you'll pay two bob. (170-3)

As is usual with translations around this time period, the obscenity is removed. This seems to be Huntingford's only published translation.

In 1900 another translation was published as an accompaniment to a school production in Greek. The performance was at St. Peter's College, Radley,⁴⁰⁷ in Abingdon, and the translation was by Lionel James, master of Classics at the school. His translation is published with the Greek text facing it. In the introduction to the translation he laments the necessary cuts he has made the original. These include several sections of the contest which he says are 'amusing to read [but] not well suited to acting on a modern stage'.⁴⁰⁸ James admits that some sections were taken from Frere's translation, but since Frere 'amplifies and paraphrases',⁴⁰⁹ he believes that a more accurate translation is needed to accompany the Greek text. As is to be expected the obscenity has been removed from the script. James does take the unusual step of partially translating the frog-chorus's croaking sound, rendering it as 'Brekekekex croak croak' (176-230). In terms of the metre, James has attempted to reproduce the Greek metre where he deems it possible, into hexameters, for example, but in other cases has used a different metre entirely.

A far more important and influential translation is that of Gilbert Murray in 1902.⁴¹⁰ Murray's translation does not include an introduction, so we cannot tell from this what his thoughts and motivation were for it. It was, however, his only translation of Aristophanes up until 1950, and at this time in his career Murray had little interest in the

⁴⁰⁷ Now Radley College.

⁴⁰⁸ James 1900: iii.

⁴⁰⁹ James 1900: iii.

⁴¹⁰ Page references come from the 1908 edition.

comic poet. He would later change his mind, saying in 1933 that it was, ‘only late in life that I have learnt to care for Aristophanes and, I hope, understand him’.⁴¹¹ Murray’s *Frogs* was more likely undertaken due to his far more fervent interest in Euripides.⁴¹² For Murray, *Frogs* does not mock Euripides personally, but he instead sees Aristophanes’ parodying of the tragedian as a compliment.⁴¹³ Murray saw Euripides as a predecessor to his great friend George Bernard Shaw. In Murray’s *Frogs*, his Euripides was clearly based on Bernard Shaw, predating their link in the Shevelove/Sondheim version of *Frogs* by nearly 70 years.⁴¹⁴

Whilst Murray was politically liberal,⁴¹⁵ he exhibited a Victorian attitude towards obscenity. He therefore removed all of the obscenity of Aristophanes and produced the most prudish translation available; thus, in the very opening scene, when Dionysus tells Xanthias not to do the bit ‘where you shift your baggage and say you need a shit’ (8), the line becomes

Don’t shift your luggage pole

Across, and say, ‘I want to blow my nose.’ (p. 4)

Most translations allow Dionysus or Xanthias to make a pun about ‘easing’ oneself at the very least. In other places Murray keeps the bodily functions, but avoids the use of coarser language; for example continuing the trend begun by the anonymous translation of 1822 by having Dionysus say ‘Keep it till I need emetics’ (p.4), where most translations use a variation on vomiting for *Frogs* 11.

⁴¹¹ Murray 1933b: vii.

⁴¹² Lippman 2016: 287.

⁴¹³ Lippman 2016: 300.

⁴¹⁴ Griffith 2013: 240; see also Chapter Six, *passim*.

⁴¹⁵ He was one of the more radical supporters of the Liberal party at the time, for example on women’s rights, anti-imperialism and education (Ceadel 2007: 233; Walsh 2009: 66).

Murray has attempted to preserve the poetry of Aristophanes in the dialogue by rendering it in blank verse. The chorus lines are all written in rhyming verse, including the lines of the chorus Leader in the parabasis, an interesting choice given that Aristophanes wrote these lines in tetrameters to distinguish it from the choral sections. The final scene after the contest is also written in rhyming verse; whilst this might be to reflect the fact that in the original Greek this scene is not written in the standard metre of Aristophanic dialogue, one can't help but feel Murray has created a problem for himself with this decision, as it leads to some fairly ponderous lines such as these from Pluto:

Then farewell, Aeschylus! Go your ways,
And save your town for happier days
By counsel wise; and a school prepare
For all the fools – there are plenty there!
And take me some parcels, I pray; this sword
Is for Cleophon; these pretty ropes for the Board
Of Providers. But ask them one halter to spare
For Nicomachus; one, too, is Myrmex's share. (p.106)

Like many translations Murray's doesn't read well out loud and was clearly not undertaken with an appreciation of what it would be like to perform the script. In addition to the rhyming couplets, he uses archaic language, which Walton suggests he uses 'as though they award authority to the translation of an old play by virtue of sounding nothing other than old'.⁴¹⁶ In general, history has not been kind to Murray's translations. T.S. Eliot said of them, 'it is because Professor Murray has no creative instinct that he leaves Euripides quite dead'.⁴¹⁷ Walton is particularly scathing, stating of *Frogs* that, in Murray's version, the contest 'would have been for the privilege of remaining dead rather

⁴¹⁶ Walton 2006: 49.

⁴¹⁷ Quoted in Walton 2006: 187.

than having to return to see their works so mangled.⁴¹⁸ Nevertheless, the fact that no study of the translation of Greek drama can omit him shows how influential his works were. In truth his translations are no worse or more old-fashioned than any other contemporary one, it is just that Murray remains so prominent and easy a target.

It is perhaps more Murray's prominence and other activities – his appointment to the Regius Chair of Greek at Oxford, having his translations of tragedy performed by the famous professional company of Harley Granville Barker, his heavy involvement with BBC productions of Greek theatre⁴¹⁹ and becoming a major figure on the international stage with the League of Nations after World War I – rather than the quality of his translation, that has led to his *Frogs* being performed on several occasions. Notable were those by two Oxford Colleges: the all-female Somerville College in 1911 and 1946⁴²⁰ and several productions by the Balliol Players.⁴²¹ There was also one of the few non-pedagogical productions, at the People's Theatre in Newcastle in 1952.

In the same year as Murray's, a further translation was published, this time by Benjamin Bickley Rogers. Rogers was a barrister by trade and an amateur classical scholar,⁴²² who was lauded for his public-speaking whilst at Oxford.⁴²³ He started translating whilst still an undergraduate,⁴²⁴ and from 1902 to 1916 he published the first complete set of Aristophanes in English.⁴²⁵ Later Rogers' translations were re-published as part of the Loeb Classical Library's series, which were printed with the Greek text facing the

⁴¹⁸ Walton 2006: 49.

⁴¹⁹ His translation of *Frogs* was likely the first Aristophanes to be performed on the radio in its entirety. See Wrigley 2014: 853-8 and Wrigley 2015: 137-41.

⁴²⁰ Murray's translation of *Acharnians* was performed at Somerville in 1914.

⁴²¹ See Chapter Four, pp.191-3.

⁴²² Sommerstein 2004: 833; Walsh 2016: 223.

⁴²³ Warren, rev. Smail 2004: ODNB [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁴²⁴ Sommerstein 2004: 832.

⁴²⁵ Robson 2009: 190.

translation. Rogers was not originally chosen for the Loeb translations. The original translator was to be emeritus professor of Greek at Harvard and scholar of Aristophanes, John Williams White. However, White died in 1917, leaving none of the plays completed. Rather than commission a new translator, Rogers' earlier versions were chosen, with explanatory footnotes added.⁴²⁶

This translation is formally quite similar to Murray's, in that it renders the dialogue of Aristophanes into verse and has the chorus sing in rhyme. Rogers' translations of verse are notable for their attempt to replicate the rhythm of Aristophanes where possible,⁴²⁷ making him one of the few translators to attempt Holmes' mimetic approach to poetry.⁴²⁸ A clear metrical contrast can be seen in the scene where Aeschylus and Euripides criticise each other's choruses, (1285-1323) first in Euripides' mockery of Aeschylus:

How the twin-throned powers of Achaëa, the lords of the mighty Hellenes.

O phlattrothratophlattrothrat!

Sendeth the Sphinx, the unchancy, the chieftainness bloodhound.

O phlattrothratophlattrothrat!

Launcheth fierce with brand and hand the avengers the terrible eagle.

O phlattrothratophlattrothrat!

So for the swift-winged hounds of the air he provided a booty.

O phlattrothratophlattrothrat!

The throng down-bearing on Aias.

O phlattrothratophlattrothrat! (pp.195-7)

and then in Aeschylus' mockery of Euripides:

Halcyons, who by the ever-rippling

⁴²⁶ Sommerstein 2004: 833; 2006: 130-1.

⁴²⁷ Robson 2009: 208; Robson 2012: 225; Walsh 2016: 223.

⁴²⁸ See above p.92.

Waves of the sea are babbling,
Dewing your plumes with the drops that fall
From wings in the sale spray dabbling.
Spiders, ever with twir-r-r-r-rling fingers
Weaving the warp and the woof,
Little, brittle, network, fretwork,
Under the coigns of the roof. (pp.199-201)

Rogers does make some other odd choices with the language, such as changing ‘Dionysus son of flagon’ (22) to ‘son of – Pipkin’ (p.5) – a pipkin being a medieval cooking pot. He goes a little further with the obscenity than Murray, although the bulk of it is still absent.⁴²⁹ The opening scene, for example, contains the line:

Xanthias: May I not say I’m overburdened so

That if none ease me, I must ease myself?

Dionysus: For mercy’s sake, not till I’m going to vomit. (p.5)

It is still fairly reserved, but does take a step further than Murray’s version. Rogers’ translations were known for their refusal to engage with obscenity, and this is particularly noticeable in his versions of *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*.⁴³⁰ That they were chosen for the Loeb editions (and remained so until 2000) probably says a lot about the editors and audience of the series and their opinions on the obscenity.⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ Griffith 2013: 241.

⁴³⁰ Warren, rev. Smail 2004: ODNB [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁴³¹ Although the editors of the series did reinstate the missing sections of *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. Changes to the obscenity in other plays were sometimes footnoted, other times they are left without comment. See Sommerstein 2006: 130n6; Robson 2009: 190; Robson 2016: 45-6.

Some of the language used by Rogers is fairly old-fashioned, as seen in this small section between Dionysus and Heracles (131-134):

Heracles: Observe the torch-race started, and when all

The multitude is shouting *Let them go,*

Let yourself go.

Dionysus: Go! Whither?

Heracles: To the ground.

Dionysus: And lose, forsooth, two envelopes of brain.

I'll not try that. (p309)

Other words such as 'thither', 'whoso', 'sirrah' and 'beshrew' make the translation sound much older than it is. In fact the regular use of these words and some of the sentence structure make it seem like Rogers intended the translation to sound archaic. Some of the lines might almost pass as Shakespearean, such as 'Then crouch we down, and mark what's going on' (p.49), whereas other sections are reminiscent of W.S. Gilbert:

Farewell then, Aeschylus, great and wise,

Go, save our state by the maxims rare

Of thy noble thought; and the fools chastise,

For many a fool dwells there.

And *this* to Cleophon give, my friend,

And *this* to the revenue-raising crew,

Nicomachus, Myrmex, next I send,

And *this* to Archenomus too.

And bid them all that without delay,

To my realm of the dead they hasten away. (pp.227-9)

This use of the archaic language throughout makes it difficult to distinguish between different styles within the text: the contrast between Aeschylus' elevated lyric and

Euripides' bawdy ones for example.⁴³² Rogers was not overly concerned with too much accuracy to Aristophanes, or as Sommerstein puts it 'had little concern for pedantic precision'.⁴³³ As Rogers openly wrote in his introduction to *Thesmophoriazousae*, sometimes his translation 'goes clean contrary to the meaning of the Greek'.⁴³⁴ I have found only one instance of Rogers' translation being performed, at the University of Sydney in 1940.

The Edwardian translations of Murray and Rogers end the second turning point and translations of the play now become more sporadic. After six different translations of *Frogs* in as many years from 1896-1902, the next six translations were spread over a 50-year period. The first and fourth are those of Alfred Davies Cope in 1911 and of John Marshall MacGregor in 1927 (published together with *Birds*). Cope's translation uses rhyming verse for the choruses, whilst MacGregor's rhymes throughout. Neither has ever been used for performance, as far as I have been able to ascertain, although a much earlier and 'greatly abridged' version of Cope's was used for a performance at St John's School, Leatherhead, in 1895. He described that version as 'by no mean free of archaisms'. I have grouped the two translations together since they are the only ones that translate all of 'Brekekekex coax' into something else, going one step further than Lionel James did in his 1900 translation. Cope renders it as 'Croak, croak, croak, croak' (p.25) and MacGregor as the similar 'Cr-rr-rr-oak, Cr-oak, Cr-oak'. (p.79) Cope quaintly justifies this in his introduction by stating English frogs make a croaking sound and saying 'To reproduce the Greek sound is not to give the faintest impression of the croaking of our own frogs.'⁴³⁵ MacGregor offers no explanation. These are the only two versions I have

⁴³² Halliwell 2000: 78.

⁴³³ Sommerstein 2004: 233.

⁴³⁴ Quoted in Sommerstein 2004: 233.

⁴³⁵ Cope 1911: 8.

seen that attempt to ‘domesticate’ the frogs ethnically and translate the frog-chorus’ famous song in this way.

The two scripts distinguish themselves from each other in their treatment of obscenity, however. Despite Cope’s claim with regards to obscenity that he has ‘ventured to reproduce it all...toning it down as little as possible’,⁴³⁶ he still avoids explicit mentions and keeps it ambiguous, as in the following example:

Xanthias: What have you done?

Dionysus: Done...something. Let us pray. (p.35)

By contrast, MacGregor, in the same section, leaves no room for ambiguity by stating in the stage directions ‘Dionysus...is seized with diarrhoea and sinks upon the ground’ (p.87). The two authors were both classicists, with Cope being attached to Wadham College, Oxford (as B.B. Rogers had been), and MacGregor at Bedford College. Neither seems to have published any other translations.

Between these two translations came two others. The first appeared in the second of two volumes containing all eleven of Aristophanes’ plays, published in 1912 for the Athenian Society. The translator’s identity was anonymous.⁴³⁷ The translation is entirely in prose but, compared to the archaising language of Murray and Rogers, this version uses more modern speech: ‘We are curious to see upon what ground these clever tilters are going to measure each other. Thy tongue is keen, their wit is ready, their heart is full of audacity.’ (p.236)

⁴³⁶ Cope 1911: 7.

⁴³⁷ Walton 2006: 255 mistakenly ascribes the translation to Horace Liveright (1883-1933). Liveright’s publishing house did publish the plays as one volume in 1943, but a publisher’s note at the start says of the original ‘The name of the translator was not stated’. Liveright was a theatre producer and publisher, but was not known as a writer or translator himself.

The first ever American translation of *Frogs* was published in 1925, by Alexander Harvey as part of Haldeman-Julius' Little Blue Books series. The Little Blue Books were a series of pocket-sized, staple-bound books published from 1919-1978. Sold predominantly via mail order, they were extremely popular in the US, selling 100 million copies in just nine years.⁴³⁸ Those books that did not sell sufficient numbers were removed from circulation. The series covered virtually every subject, from classics to candy making. The series even took the highly controversial step of publishing books discussing atheism and homosexuality.⁴³⁹ *Frogs* was the 758th book to be published in the series. Classical drama was not popular and very few titles remained available. As of 1928 *Frogs* was the seventh most popular Greek play and the only one of Aristophanes not to have been withdrawn.⁴⁴⁰ Alexander Harvey himself contributed a number of translations to the series, from Euripides and Sophocles as well as Aristophanes. His background is unknown, but he seems to have also written about Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Dean Howells, as well as short stories.

Brief sections of commentary are included in the text itself, most of which seems to be abbreviated from William Walter Merry's 1905 edition of *Frogs* in Greek. For example when he says of Euripides' absurd final piece of advice (1440-3) 'This is the rendering of the learned Doctor Merry and it is as faithful as anything suggested by the German Doctor Kock or the Dutch Van Leeuwen.' (p.90) The line itself is Merry's translation found in the notes (p.72).

⁴³⁸ Haldemann-Julius 1928: 223.

⁴³⁹ A full database of the books can be found at <http://haldeman-julius.org/>.

⁴⁴⁰ Haldemann-Julius 1928: 64. *Clouds*, *Birds* and *Knights* were the others available at the time.

Harvey's translation itself is entirely in prose, including the chorus parts. There is no attempt to differentiate between spoken and sung lines. Despite the commentary assuring us the frog chorus 'was accompanied by song and musical strains' (p.20), there seems to be no allowance for this in their words: 'The Muses of sweet song and honey-hoofed Pan, he the reed-voiced reveller, were infatuated with me. Apollo with his lute was enraptured too for the sake of the reed as well which, to go with the lyre, I nourish in watery wastes' (p.21).

In some ways the translation is ahead of its time, owing to its treatment of the performance aspect of the play. It includes a copious number of stage directions; the opening description alone fills almost the entire first page. Harvey clearly has given thought to how the production could be staged in a contemporary manner, as evidenced by his description of the ending: 'Grand march on and up, accompanied by dins of flutes, tipsy choruses, yells of Yo-ho-ho! in the accents of Bacchus, rattling of bones, Aeschylus holding his seat with difficulty on the shoulders of the four youths. Loud braying of the donkey of Xanthias heard off the stage' (p.95).

The verse translation of Arthur S. Way was posthumously released in 1934. Way was in the midst of translating the plays of Aristophanes when he died in 1930. Two volumes covering four plays each were published in 1927 and 1934 respectively. He taught classics at schools in England and Australia, but was also a prolific translator of Homer, Horace, Lucretius, Pindar, Sappho, Virgil and the Greek tragedians. His translations drew mixed reviews. A list of quotations in his 1934 volume quotes the magazine *The Bookman* as saying of Way's Aristophanes 'He has a real poetic gift...and far closer to its spirit than, for instance, Dr. Gilbert Murray'. By contrast Way's Homer was described as 'neither

flowing, gliding, rushing, nor leaping, but mere bouncing'.⁴⁴¹ The combination of verse form and rhyming couplets makes the translation quite stilted, particularly where lines are split between two characters, for example:

Aeacus: Quick, bind this dog-thief! Haul the rogue away
For punishment!

Bacchus: Who's in a tight place, eh?

Xanthias: Go to the devil! Don't you dare draw near!

Aeacus: What? – show fight? Ditylus, Strebylus, Pardokus, here!

At him – fight! – give the rogue a proper drubbing!

Bacchus: Oh shocking! shocking! – here's a fellow clubbing

The very folks he's robbed!

Aeacus: It's worst – it's awful!

Bacchus: Quite so, sir – truly appalling – most unlawful! (606-612)

In 1936 *Frogs* was performed at Cambridge University in the original Greek. The script used was then published, alongside a translation by D.W. Lucas and F.J.A. Cruso. An introductory note by the producer states that the play contained an 'appeal for forgetfulness of grudges and united effort for the common good'.⁴⁴² Despite the treatment of Cleophon and others in Aristophanes' play, Lucas and Cruso are no doubt referring to the forgiveness of the oligarchs urged in the parabasis.⁴⁴³ It is conceivable this was an attempt to tie the performance into the social and political events at this time in Britain. The country was recovering from recession and the increasing power of the Nazi party in Germany had led to the British government following a policy of aggressive rearmament.

⁴⁴¹ Quoted in Gellie 1976 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁴⁴² Lucas and Cruso 1936: v.

⁴⁴³ See Chapter One, p.47.

The rise in popularity of the British Union of Fascists and their violent clashes with anti-fascist protesters had resulted in the government passing the Public Order Act 1936.

Like Kynaston's 1897 script, this edition is meant to aid understanding of performance in its original language, as opposed to a translation meant for study or performance itself.⁴⁴⁴ Its purpose did evolve however, as it was re-released in 1946 specifically as a 'schools edition'.⁴⁴⁵ The dialogue is translated almost entirely in prose with no attempt made to replicate any sort of verse rhythm:

Aeacus: By Zeus the saviour, your master is a real gentleman!

Xanthias: How shouldn't he be a gentleman, seeing he understands nothing but drinking and wenching?

Aeacus: To think of his not beating you when you were completely shown up, pretending to be the master when you were the slave! (p.62)

The choruses are in loosened iambic verse incorporating rhyme, but often switches the rhyme scheme part way through a verse, for example:

Here in thy home we await thy tread,
O come Iacchus of high renown.
Dance o'er this meadow, shake on thy head
The berries that cluster, thy myrtle crown.
And lead with the bear of thy tireless feet
The holy bands in the mystic rite,
The dance of wantonness and delight,
Where the Graces find their chiefest pleasure,

⁴⁴⁴ Frere's text was also used for this purpose, but was not specifically translated with this in mind.

⁴⁴⁵ Walton 2006: 261.

Thy hallowed worshippers' sacred measure. (p.30-2)

The chorus leader sections of the parabasis are translated in prose. In the contest rhyming verse is used for when Aeschylus and Euripides quote each other, and it is used again for most of the post-contest final scene.

The third turning point in translations begins around 1950 and continues to inform translation into the 1970s. The background to this phase is not as clear as the previous two, but there are a number of details that are worth noting. One initial detail is that it is in this time period that we see an increase in translations published in America and by Americans, with translations from American scholars, John G. Hawthorne, Dudley Fitts, Richmond Lattimore and Robert Henning Webb, in the space of ten years. Additionally, although Peter Arnott was originally British, he had moved to lecture at the University of Iowa in 1958.⁴⁴⁶ His 1961 translation was published in America and first performed there. This increase in American translations is perhaps paradoxical, since it occurs during a period in which North American performances of *Frogs* had become far rarer.⁴⁴⁷

Another aspect of *Frogs* translation in the 50s, 60s and 70s is that performance becomes an important consideration. Far more translations from this time period have been performed, a sharp contrast with the time prior to this when English-language performances were almost exclusively based on the translations of Frere and Murray. Translations, therefore, were undertaken with more of a consideration for performance; for example, more stage directions are included in the texts. Four of the first six translations in this time period have all been performed, not only in Britain but in Africa

⁴⁴⁶ Sauer et al. 2000 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁴⁴⁷ From 1950 to 1970 there were only seven recorded performances of *Frogs* in North America, five of which occurred in two universities. Following this, there were only three productions in the 1970s and two in the 1980s. See Chapter Five, passim for further details.

and Australasia as well. Also relevant in Britain was the the 1968 Theatres Act, which put an end to the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain, meaning that the obscenity of Aristophanes became more acceptable.⁴⁴⁸ Blank verse becomes less popular around this time as well, with translations becoming more common in prose or free verse.⁴⁴⁹ We might continue this trend, and by extension this phase of translations, all the way up to the present day, as in the 1990s and 21st century we start to see translations published specifically for performance and often by dramatists rather than classicists.⁴⁵⁰ Returning to Walton's categories of translation, we move from the first and second categories to the third and fourth: 'Faithful to the original but actable' and 'Intended for, or deriving from, production, with occasional licence'.⁴⁵¹

Continuing the performance theme, there are a number of important theatrical productions within this time period that could have some relevance. 1958 saw the performance (and publication of the script) for Douglas Young's Scots language translation of *Frogs*. It had a distinctly nationalist motivation and brought the play to new audiences in Scotland, who, as far as can be ascertained, had not seen a production of the play since 1930.⁴⁵² Towards the end of the time period, at the height of the 'hippie' and Civil Rights movements in the USA, we have Richard Schechner's *Dionysus in 69* (actually performed first in 1968), the director's ground-breaking New York adaptation of the *Bacchae*. Just like Nietzsche before him, Schechner's play brought renewed interest in Euripides' play and the character of Dionysus. In 1974 we then see the first version of Burt Shevelove and Stephen Sondheim's *Frogs*, performed in the swimming pool at Yale University. Despite being a university production, the involvement of Sondheim meant this

⁴⁴⁸ Robson 2016: 47. See also Chapter Four, pp.197-9 and 202-3, for productions that were censored by the Lord Chamberlain.

⁴⁴⁹ Halliwell 2000: 78.

⁴⁵⁰ Alfred Corn's 1999 translation for example, see below, pp.150-2.

⁴⁵¹ Walton 2006: 182; see also above p.98.

⁴⁵² Young's production and translation are discussed in Chapter Three pp.193-9.

adaptation drew national attention. Whilst these two productions come late in the time period we are looking at, and therefore cannot be credited with precipitating the rush of translations at this time, they are nonetheless relevant as examples of the climate in which a renewed interest in *Frogs* occurs.

1952 saw the first US translation of *Frogs* from an academic publisher. The University of Wisconsin Press released two volumes of translations, under the series title of *Classics in Translation*. Volume One contained Greek literature and Volume Two Roman. The two volumes included examples of almost every significant classical author, with the Greek volume including abridged versions of Homer and the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, and selection from lyric poets, philosophers, orators, historians, scientists and satirists. Drama was represented by a single play from each of the three tragedians and Aristophanes. Despite the academic publisher, the preface makes it clear that the texts are translated into modern speech intended for the undergraduate and the lay person.

Frogs is the sole representative of the Aristophanic corpus here, and is translated by John G Hawthorne. The bulk of translation is rendered in rhyming couplets, with different numbers of metrical feet. There doesn't seem to be any pattern in the way how the number of feet was decided on:

Charon: Stop, stop. Lay off the oars. Get out and pay the fare.

Dionysus: Two obols here you are. Where's Xanthias? Oh where

Is Xanthias? My Xan!

Xanthias: Hullo!

Dionysus: Come here at once.

Xanthias: Well met, my master!

Dionysus: Sst! What's that? Look there you dunce. (p.199)

Xanthias: First, go and fetch those chorus girls, suggest
That Heracles in person is their guest.
My boy will fetch the bags and bring them here.
Dionysus: No, wait. You can't believe I was sincere,
Because I dressed you up like that in fun?
None of your nonsense Xanthias just run
And take this bags again confound your game! (p.203)

In other places the metre and rhyme seems to switch mid-scene for no apparent reason:

Heracles: But I can't smear the smile off my face when I see
My lion-skin laid on yellow silk gown.
What's the plan? How do buskin and my club agree?
And where in the world have you come from you clown?
Dionysus: I embarked on Clisthenes' [sic] -
Heracles: And fought a battle on the seas?
Dionysus: Sank the enemies' ships, no less
Than twelve of thirteen, at a guess. (p.195)

The second translation of this period, the translation of Dudley Fitts (1903-68), is one that has been performed in a number of disparate places. Originally published in 1955, *Frogs* was later used for a production at Wadham College, Oxford in 1958 and a production in Otago, New Zealand in 1965. Fitts himself was another prolific translator, not just of classical texts but of Spanish ones as well. He had started by translating Greek tragedy in the 1930s and 40s, jointly translating Sophocles and Euripides with Robert Fitzgerald (himself a prolific translator of tragedy and epic). Fitts also translated poetry, and it was

in the 1950s that he translated a series of four Aristophanic plays, including *Frogs*. After this his only new translations were the poems of Martial in 1967.⁴⁵³

Fitts began his career translating poetry, so it is no surprise that he elected to distinguish between verse and dialogue sections by using rhyming song for the former and prose for the latter. No attempt is made to write in metre, the reason being, as Fitts says in his introduction, ‘There are no corresponding English metres. There are not even equivalent metres’ (p.74).⁴⁵⁴ The chorus sections, therefore, end up being rendered without any rhythm, and would be difficult to put to music:

Descend, O Muse: strike with divine fire

Our mystic choir.

Grant us the grace of song, that

Harmoniously

May charm this audience,

Ten thousand men of sense

Whose hearts are angry when they see

Kleophon on his Thracian tree – (p.114)

Whilst it follows Aristophanes’ lines closely, Fitts’ translation is fairly loose and somewhat inconsistent in its adaptation of classical details. The names of Athenians referred to in the text are kept the same; by contrast the moment where Dionysus asks his own priest in the audience to protect him from the Empusa (297) is replaced with a line asking ‘Is there a doctor in the house?’ (p.96). Fitts acknowledges the original line in the notes (p.151-2). By this time it is deemed acceptable for Dionysus to say ‘I seem to have

⁴⁵³ Brown [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁴⁵⁴ Page numbers are from the 1958 edition, *Aristophanes. Four Comedies*.

soiled myself' (p.104), and most of the scatological humour is not euphemised while not being made too offensive. Fitts also writes that he considered substituting lines from Shakespeare and Dryden for those of Aeschylus and Euripides, but that 'this quickly turned out to be impractical'.

The 1960s gave us three more translations, all of which were used for performance. The first was Peter D. Arnott's version, published alongside *Medea* and *Cyclops* in 1961. Arnott's translation had been performed previously at Iowa State University and the University of Michigan in 1960 and he records that many changes were made to the text as a result of public performance.⁴⁵⁵ In his introduction to *Frogs* Arnott speaks openly about the difficulty of translating Aristophanes' topical humour to suit the modern day in a script designed for performance. He mentions two problems with replacing these references with modern topical allusions and proper names: firstly libel laws (interesting in itself, because it shows that the ancient Athenian playwright in practice enjoyed far greater freedom of speech than modern Americans); and secondly the problem that what is topical in one place may not be topical somewhere else: 'we live in a larger world [than Aristophanes]'⁴⁵⁶ is how Arnott puts it. Instead Arnott has elected to 'reproduce the content rather than the letter of the joke and generalize where Aristophanes particularizes.'⁴⁵⁷

The translation is done into verse, though rhyming is saved for the chorus songs. As a result of Arnott's attempt to contemporise the play, many of the names of the Greeks are left out. The conversation between Heracles and Dionysus about surviving tragic poets is excised completely, save for a reference to the 'son of Sophocles' (p.138). Cleophon and

⁴⁵⁵ Arnott 1961: 131.

⁴⁵⁶ Arnott 1961: 131.

⁴⁵⁷ Arnott 1961: 131.

Cleigenes retain their places in the parabasis, but are replaced in the final scene by some generalised lines:

There are plenty who need instruction! (giving a whip)

Take this to the democrats for me (giving a club)

And this to the Internal Revenue Commissioners (giving a set of chains) (p.211)

1962 saw the prolific and brilliant translator of the Classics, Richmond Lattimore, publish his version of *Frogs*. Lattimore is best known for his Homeric translations, with his *Iliad* in particular being one of the most popular versions of the twentieth century.⁴⁵⁸ *Frogs* was also widely celebrated, winning the Bollingen Poetry Translation Prize, awarded by Yale University. Despite its high-profile nature the translation has to my knowledge only been used for performance twice, by the East West Players in Los Angeles in 1978⁴⁵⁹ and the University of Otago in New Zealand in 1993.⁴⁶⁰ His translation was part of an effort by the University of Michigan Press to publish the complete plays of Aristophanes, spearheaded by William Arrowsmith and involving Lattimore and Douglas Parker.⁴⁶¹ The series was discontinued with seven plays published, and *Frogs* was Lattimore's only contribution.⁴⁶²

The Michigan series was premised on showing a contemporary American audience what the play would have been like in performance. Stage directions are therefore included throughout. The series also incorporated the idea of the 'intruded gloss': the play should be understandable to a modern audience and that it should produce, in the audience, the entirely erroneous, and in fact impossible, impression that *they understand what is going*

⁴⁵⁸ Hardwick 2000: 15.

⁴⁵⁹ See Chapter Five, p.272-3.

⁴⁶⁰ Although it was only used as the basis for the script. See Chapter Seven, p.324.

⁴⁶¹ Parker 1992: 251.

⁴⁶² The other were *Clouds* and *Birds* from Arrowsmith and *Acharnians*, *Congresswomen*, *Lysistrata* and *Wasps* from Parker. See Parker 1992: 255.

on'.⁴⁶³ As they were not allowed to cut anything, in practice this meant inserting into the text subtle explanations for the topical references. Similarly American English was used, as well as substituting alternative jokes that would have made more sense for the American audience. Finally, in order to satisfy the morals of 50s America, obscenity was toned down.⁴⁶⁴

Lattimore's reading of Aristophanes' contest is that it is a pure attack on Euripides, and this informs the characterisation of Aeschylus. He therefore explains that Aristophanes' version of Aeschylus cannot be taken seriously as an accurate reflection of the historical figure, since he must be in every way the opposite of Euripides. As Lattimore puts it, 'So, if Euripides is pacific and unmilitary, Aeschylus must be martial. If Euripides is fascinated by the women and writes of their problems from their point of view, Aeschylus must despise sex'.⁴⁶⁵

The translation generally reads well both on the page and out loud. However, in places there is an odd mix of rhyming and non-rhyming verse used. Despite Lattimore's claim in the introduction that 'Certain metres...seemed in English to come out rather lame and laboured without rhyme',⁴⁶⁶ he has used rhyme sparingly. During the frog-chorus (pp.23-5) it is Dionysus who rhymes whilst the frogs do not, perhaps an intentional way of representing the frogs interrupting Dionysus' rhythm? Lattimore has already stated in his introduction that he has not used rhyming verse for the parabasis, yet he hasn't used it for the Initiates either and only a few of the chorus' short interjections are rhymed. Where

⁴⁶³ Parker 1992: 253.

⁴⁶⁴ Parker 1992: 252-3.

⁴⁶⁵ Lattimore 1962: 4.

⁴⁶⁶ Lattimore 1962: 4.

there is rhyme it seems to lack consistency, as evidenced by this verse passage of Euripides':

So that's what my plays are about,
and these are my contributions,
and I turn everything inside out,
looking for new solutions
to the problems of today,
always critical, giving
suggestions for gracious living
and they come away from seeing a play
in a questioning mood, with 'where are we at?,'
and 'who's got my this?,' and 'who took my that?' (p.62)

A further translation was released in 1962, this time by Robert Henning Webb. It was included in a collection of the eleven plays by various authors, including four of Rogers' translations.⁴⁶⁷ Webb's translation is entirely in verse, with the chorus sections rhyming.

The chorus leader's lines use both internal rhyme and end rhyme:

Be silent. Attend. Let no one be offend by his presence our ritual dances,
Whose taste is impure, nor knows the lure of the Word, the art that entrances;
Nor shared the delights of the elegant rites of the Muse, the Mistress of Glamour;
Nor deeply the wine has imbibed of Cratinus, the dauntless Bull of the Drama.
(p330)

Against this, the chorus songs use end rhyme over differing numbers of lines:

March onward, all ye blessèd,

⁴⁶⁷ Walton 2006: 256 attributes this translation to Moses Hadas. Hadas did provide some of the translations and edited the whole collection, but *Frogs* was by Webb.

By pasture bloom caressèd,
Your step firm and lithesome,
'Mid quip and jest
And mocking banter blithesome –
Though lunch was none too good, at best! (p.381)

Webb also uses a large number of exclamation marks; there are 17 on the first two pages alone.

The Penguin Classics version of *Frogs* was published in 1964 in an edition with *Wasps* and *Thesmophoriazusae*, all translated by David Barrett. Barrett's career path was an unusual one: he studied Classics at Cambridge, but spent the majority of his career as a librarian, working at the Bodleian from 1965 to 1981. Prior to this he had lectured in English at the universities of Helsinki and Beirut. He had also worked for the Foreign Office and been a Captain in the British army. The majority of his publications were of Finnish and Georgian literature, but in addition to *Frogs*, *Wasps* and *Thesmophoriazusae*, he also translated *Birds* and *Assemblywomen* for Penguin.⁴⁶⁸

In his introduction Barrett states that his intention is for the translation to be 'both readable and actable' and he has therefore converted the dialogue to 'ordinary spoken English'. Sommerstein, who contributed a number of other plays to the Penguin series, later called his own and Barrett's translations 'utterly unsuitable' for students of classics, since there was no indication of what material came from Aristophanes and what from the translators.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ Roberts 1998 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁴⁶⁹ Sommerstein 2013: 2 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

For the sung lyrics, Barrett has opted to translate them into ‘simple ballad metres’. He has also added stage directions and scene breaks, though the latter ‘merely indicate places where a break in the performance would be possible’.⁴⁷⁰ Finally he states that he has not ‘tried to turn (the characters) into Englishmen, but rather...persuade the audience to imagine themselves as Athenians’, an example of foreignization of the kind that Venuti would approve.⁴⁷¹ He also aims to ‘make the parodies sound like parodies of Aeschylus or Euripides, and not of Keats or Shakespeare’.⁴⁷²

No doubt owing to its easy availability in a high-profile publication format with an international marketing office, Barrett’s translation has been performed on many occasions and is very popular across the world. Its first performance was in 1966 at Duthy Hall in London,⁴⁷³ and has been performed a number of times as far away as South Africa in 1977 and 1994, Australia in 1994 and 2003,⁴⁷⁴ and the United States in 1993.⁴⁷⁵

The translation was revised in 2007 by Shomit Dutta.⁴⁷⁶ Dutta studied classics at King’s College and Oxford, and whilst at King’s was heavily involved in their Greek play. He also more recently wrote *The Changing of the Guard*, an original play based on the story of Odysseus sneaking into Troy disguised as a beggar, performed at Oxford University in 2016. Dutta, amongst other things, attempted to update some of the topical references and altered certain line numbers to fit with the more established attribution.⁴⁷⁷ Other than the occasional word, Dutta preserves Barrett’s choruses entirely. He makes more changes to the dialogue, though on occasion he does spoil some of Barrett’s jokes by attempting to

⁴⁷⁰ Barrett 1964: 30.

⁴⁷¹ See above p.93.

⁴⁷² Barrett 1964: 31.

⁴⁷³ See Chapter Four, p.202 for further details.

⁴⁷⁴ See Chapter Seven, p.325.

⁴⁷⁵ At Harvard University.

⁴⁷⁶ Sommerstein also revised his own translations in the Penguin series.

⁴⁷⁷ Following Sommerstein’s 1996 edition, see below, pp.148-50.

make them more understandable. For example, the line ἐγκέχοδα: κάλει θεόν (479), where Dionysus soils himself, contains a play on libation. Barrett retains this with: ‘Dear me, an involuntary libation! Invoke the god’ (p.174). Despite explaining the Greek joke in the notes to the passage, Dutta instead elects to use the much more mundane ‘Oh no, my bowel is empty! Call on the god!’ (479) Dutta’s version highlights Dionysus’ accident, which is made clear in the following dialogue anyway, but loses the double meaning and any subtlety of the line, as well as causing ‘Call on the god’ to make no sense.

1970 saw the publication of two further translations. The first was by Kenneth McLeish. It was published alongside *Birds*, *Prometheus Bound* and *Medea*. In 1993 McLeish published a second version as part of the Methuen World Classics series, as volume two of three volumes of McLeish’s translations of Greek comedy (including Menander). McLeish is therefore the only person to have translated *Frogs* twice, though not the only one to have translated the same Aristophanes play more than once.⁴⁷⁸ McLeish studied Classics and Music at Oxford, but made his career as an author and translator. He has translated all of the extant Greek theatre, as well as plays from other languages from writers such as Plautus, Moliere, Ibsen and Strindberg. He had a gift for languages, only translating works from those that he spoke fluently.⁴⁷⁹ He is highly regarded by those classicists who appreciate the translation of Aristophanes for performance, for example Walton,⁴⁸⁰ as well as theatre performers and reviewers.⁴⁸¹ However, he has also been criticised for the loose nature of his translations. Michael Ewans, for example, praises McLeish’s performability, whilst criticising the accuracy: ‘there has not been an actable

⁴⁷⁸ Sommerstein and Henderson have both done multiple versions of Aristophanic plays. See below pp.148-50 and pp.152-3 for their versions of *Frogs*.

⁴⁷⁹ Unwin 1997 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁴⁸⁰ Walton was also editor on the 1993-4 Aristophanes volumes.

⁴⁸¹ Walton 2006: 24 and 123-4.

English verse translation of these three plays since the series by Kenneth McLeish. In my view his versions were often too free and left out more of the sense of the original than is acceptable'.⁴⁸²

McLeish's 1970 translation uses prose for the dialogue and verse for the choruses, whilst the 1993 version is rendered entirely in verse. In some places the two versions have the same choruses, translated into rhyming verse with an irregular rhyme scheme:

Brekekekex, koax, koax,
Brekekekex, koax, koax.
Children of the limpid lake,
Sing with us, till echoes break
Along the reedbeds by the shore,
Koax, koax.
Sing as you never sang before,
For Dionysus, lord of the Vine,
Who leads singing, leads laughter,
Leads revels in the shrine -
Leads fuzzy heads, the morning after.
Brekekekex, koax, koax. (1993, 209-20)

Elsewhere McLeish has rewritten the choruses completely, changing the metre and rhyming scheme. The 1970 version rendered the *parados* as:

Iacchos, O Iacchos!
Lord of these holy places, lead the dance
As the Blessed Ones across the fields advance;

⁴⁸²Ewans 2011: ix. For Ewans' own translation of *Frogs*, see below pp.159-61.

Come down and crown our feast, O lord, we pray;

Come down and honour us on this holy day. (p.164)

The 1993 version contained a much looser translation of Aristophanes' original lines:

Iacchos,

Here in this holy place,

Iacchos, O Iacchos,

Dance with us,

Sing with us.

Toss your head,

Flower-crowned,

In the holy dance.

Dance with us,

Sing with us,

Your worshippers,

Your holy ones,

Come, and share our feast we pray,

Come, crown this holy day. (322-37)

Both versions modernise and domesticate the text without being concerned with accuracy.

For example, Aecus, described in the stage directions as being 'a sergeant-major type'

in the 1970 version, has his lines written as if with an accent:

We've been waiting for you. Thithrasian gorgons'll 'ave you, sharpish, AND I wouldn't like to be you when they've finished with you. You'll be on tortures so long, you won't remember what it was like not to feel the pincers... WHAT WAS THAT? You got anything to say, my lad, you keep quiet about it, or I'll have you...I'll 'ave you as far as Tartaros and back... (p.167)

The 1970 version keeps the accent, but is closer to the structure of Aristophanes' lines, if not the words:

We've been waiting for you:

The Big Black Ole of Ell.

The Gaping Gulf. Y-enas, mate.

The Grasping Gorgon oo'll grab your guts,

The Undred-eaded Unger-snake oo'll ug your eart,

The Pitiless Piranha oo'll pluck your pubes -

Oh, we've been waiting, mate. Don't go away. (469-75)

The 1993 version also reinserts all of the personal names that the 1970 translation left out, such as the mention of Cleophon and Cleigenes in the parabasis. It also reinstates some cuts made in the contest sequence, such as some of the chorus interjections and the question of Alcibiades at 1418ff. Nevertheless it does remain a very loose translation, such as when Euripides explains his political advice to Dionysus:

Group A, Group B. A in, B out, big trouble.

So change. B in, A out. Could work. (1449-50)

The second 1970 translation was by Patric Dickinson, as part of two volumes containing all eleven Aristophanic plays. Dickinson was predominantly known as a poet, and translated Virgil as well as Aristophanes. In the 1940s he worked for the BBC, and a number of his translations of Aristophanes (but not *Frogs*) were performed on the radio.⁴⁸³ His translation of *Lysistrata* was also adapted to film by the BBC in 1964. His Aristophanic translations received a particularly scathing review from Douglas M.

⁴⁸³ Wrigley 2014: 864-70.

MacDowell, who said, ‘the publishers claim that he “has produced faithfully both the sense and the tang of the Greek”. Unfortunately this bold claim is quite unjustified.’⁴⁸⁴

As is to be expected from a poet, the translation is entirely in verse, although MacDowell states ‘it is quite indistinguishable from prose’.⁴⁸⁵ MacDowell does have a point that there is no rhythm in much of the verse, so that when spoken out loud it would sound similar to prose. For example there is this line from Euripides:

I’m quite ready
To stand my ground. I don’t mind
Who bites first, I’ll bark back.
I’m ready to defend the verse
And construction of my plays;
Aeolus, Peleus, Meleagar, Telephos -
I don’t care which you start with. (p.213)

In contrast the choruses seem more rhythmic, and are translated with an irregular rhyme scheme:

Muse of the sacred chorus,
Inspire us!
For there before us sit
Thousands of citizens,
All men of wit and wisdom,
And each of them more fit
For our praise than Cleophon -

⁴⁸⁴ MacDowell 1972b: 406.

⁴⁸⁵ MacDowell 1972b: 406.

That ever-twittering twit
Of a Thracian swallow
Perching upon a barbarian tree
And spluttering out hollow
Imitations of nightingale-odes. (p.207)

Another American translation was published in 1983, alongside *Clouds, Birds* and *Lysistrata*. The translator was James H. Martinband, Professor of Classics at Brooklyn College, City University of New York. In addition to Aristophanes, Martinband has published translations of Virgil, Plautus and Lucretius, as well as the *Dictionary of Latin Literature* and *Concise Dictionary of Greek Literature*. The translation is mostly rendered in free verse, although rhyme is used for the chorus sections:

Now again you'll be quite glad
wearing clothes that first you had,
with the club and lion's skin,
again to play the hero in! (590-4)

Rhyming verse is also used for the epirrhema, although the lines are lengthened:

The sacred chorus is supposed, with counsel wise and just
to come to the assistance of the city, as it must.
Now all Athenians must stand equal, that is only fair,
even if some, following Phrynichus have lost their share. (686-9)

Generally the ancient names and references are kept, but there was one seemingly odd choice to use 'Lucifer, the Morning Star' (344) for νυκτέρου τελετηῆς φωσφόρος ἀστήρ during the initiates' chorus. Whilst Lucifer does mean light-bringer, in the twentieth-century it would have had far different connotations.

In 1985 the Burt Shevelove and Stephen Sondheim script for *Frogs* was published in a volume with *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. Whether it qualifies as a translation or an adaptation is debatable, but I nevertheless analyse the script alongside productions of the musical in Chapter Five.

Continuing the tradition of translations from translators who were not classicists,⁴⁸⁶ the translation of Francis Blessington was published in 1993. Blessington is Professor of English at Northeastern University. *Frogs* is the only Aristophanes play he has translated, though he has undertaken several Euripidean plays and his *Bacchae* was included in the volume with *Frogs*. I have found one example of his *Frogs* having been performed, at Athens State University in 2015.⁴⁸⁷ Blessington writes his own poetry, so it is unsurprising that his translations are entirely in verse.

He translates the chorus songs into rhyming couplets. That and the short lines make them sound childish (as we have seen with rhyme before):

From a man of wits
Come such clever bits;
Having sailed 'round much,
He rolls when he's in Dutch
To the ship's safe side;
Rather than abide,
Like some heroic stone
That keeps one shape alone;
But turns toward softer down,

⁴⁸⁶ Although Blessington does have a Masters in Classics.

⁴⁸⁷ They had also performed his *Trojan Women* in 2013 and *Bacchae* in 2014 (northeastern.edu [online, accessed 17th February 2018]).

Sommerstein's view on Aristophanes is that the plays are highly political. For Sommerstein, Aristophanes is advocating radical changes in the way Athenian democracy is run.

Sommerstein has written at length about his translation practice throughout his career. As mentioned above in relation to Barrett's Penguin, Sommerstein has more recently disavowed his original translations and translation style.⁴⁹³ The first A&P editions sprang from the aborted Loeb translations⁴⁹⁴ and, like that series, the A&P versions are bilingual, with the translation printed opposite the Greek original. However, whereas Loeb's include minimal commentary and brief footnotes, the A&P versions include extensive introductions, rigorous commentaries and substantial footnotes.⁴⁹⁵ The length of these commentaries increased dramatically as the series continued.⁴⁹⁶

For his Penguin translations, one of Sommerstein's most important considerations was 'faithfulness', by which he means neither a literal translation, nor 'a free paraphrase'.⁴⁹⁷ When approaching the A&P versions the new consideration was to create 'as reliable a picture of what the text would convey to a person hearing or reading it in the original'.⁴⁹⁸ He has elected to translate the play into prose, with the chorus songs laid out as verse to reflect Aristophanes' text. Despite the omission of a verse metre, the chorus songs still flow naturally when spoken:

Great is the issue, intense is the quarrel,
stern is the war that progresses!

⁴⁹³ He wrote about the process for the Penguin translations in Sommerstein 1973 – which he similarly disavowed in Sommerstein 2013: 1-2. He was able to revise his Penguin translations in the 2000s, as Dutta did with Barrett's, see above pp.140-1.

⁴⁹⁴ Sommerstein 2006: 134.

⁴⁹⁵ Sommerstein 2013: 3.

⁴⁹⁶ Sommerstein 2006: 134-5.

⁴⁹⁷ Sommerstein 1973: 143.

⁴⁹⁸ Sommerstein 2013: 4.

And it's a difficult job to decide between them,
when one of them strives with great force
while the other is well able to wheel round
and make a sharp counter-thrust. (1099-1103)

There is however, no consideration over what they would be like to sing – in contrast to Sommerstein's practice in the earlier *Penguins*, where he attempts to match the lyric to existing tunes, generally traditional songs and Gilbert and Sullivan.⁴⁹⁹

In some places the dialogue can come across as a little quaint, particularly when a character is exclaiming something, such as Xanthias' line, 'Dash it all, why wasn't I in that naval battle? *Then* I could really and truly tell you to go the blazes!' (p.39). The end result is a volume that is indispensable for someone looking for background and analysis of the text of *Frogs*, but this translation has not ever been performed, as far as I know, and I cannot imagine it ever will be, though there are many much less performable translations available.

The Penn Greek Drama Series, published in the 1990s, was a series of new translations of Greek plays published by the University of Pennsylvania. In 1999 they published a volume of Aristophanes' plays that included *Frogs*. This translation was by American poet and lecturer in Creative Writing, Alfred Corn. The Penn series has a reputation for an uneven standard. Contemporary reviews say 'their performability is well founded, but some of the experiments are much more haphazard'⁵⁰⁰ and 'responses from practicing classicists [have] been less enthusiastic'.⁵⁰¹ Unfortunately, no review addresses Corn's translation directly.

⁴⁹⁹ Sommerstein 1973: 148-9.

⁵⁰⁰ Shone 2003: 209.

⁵⁰¹ Grote 2000 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

He reports in his introduction that the editors of the series asked for the translations to be ‘performance standard’; to this end Corn has abandoned metre and written in prose for the first half of the play, with the exception of the chorus’ songs. These are rendered in free verse:

Come Muse of enchantment, Oh strike up a song!
Our multitudes wait for you, row upon row.
Strong in our wits, ah, stronger than Kleophon,
that mongrel foreigner, whose Thracian babble
mimicked the swallow’s nonsensical wheedling -
hear how she pleads for her countryman, who,
despite a hung jury, did not escape hanging. (591-8)

By contrast, the contest is entirely written in metre, ‘blank verse for Dionysus and Euripides, dactylic tetrameter...for Aeschylus’.⁵⁰² When reading the translation, the rhythm of the pentameter comes across more clearly than the dactylic tetrameter:

Euripides: I’m ready any time to face him down.
If he wants first blood, fine! If not, I’ll go
for the lyric jugular of tragedy,
with *Pyleas*, *Aeolus*, *Meleager*,
all my best plays, and *Telephos* as well.

Dionysus: How do you answer, Aeschylus? Speak up.

Aeschylus: I’d not have chosen to hold our debate down
here, where I suffer a disadvantage. (741-8)

⁵⁰² Corn 1999: 181.

The translation is loose one, with literal translation of the lines rare, but it follows the structure of the Aristophanic script if not the detail. All of the original names are kept in, though modern words and phrases such as, ‘Nobody gives a hot damn what *I* feel.’ (p.192) and, ‘That prick! He can just go to hell.’ (p.197) abound throughout. By 1999, obscenity is no longer shied away from and so the opening scene has Xanthias asking, ‘I can’t say, “I’m so overloaded that if somebody doesn’t help, I’ll have a diarrhea storm”?’ (p.184).

In 2002 Rogers’ version was replaced in the Loeb Classical Library with a new translation by Jeffrey Henderson. Henderson is Professor of Greek Language and Literature at Boston University, and has translated all the Aristophanes plays for the Loeb Classical Library as well as being General Editor of the series. In 1993 Henderson wrote that translations for performance should be in verse (not necessarily in the same metre as Aristophanes) and that choruses should be in a rhythm that can be easily set to music.⁵⁰³ Despite this, his Loeb translation has the dialogue written in prose, with the chorus’ sections written in non-rhyming verse. Whilst therefore it is seemingly not translated with an eye towards performance, as a bilingual edition it follows Aristophanes closely and is one of the best translations for use in study.

His choruses are rendered in free verse, without rhyme. Again, this demonstrates how the translation is not aimed at performance, since the words would be difficult to put to music:

Embark, muse, on the sacred dance,
and come to inspire joy in my song,
beholding the great multitude of people,
where thousands of wits are in session
more high-reaching than Cleophon,

⁵⁰³ Henderson 1993: 83-4.

on whose bilingual lips
some Thracian swallow
roars terribly,
perched on an alien petal,
and bellows the nightingale's weepy
song, and he's done for,
even if the jury's hung. (p.119)

In some places, presumably to aid modern understanding and help the translation seem contemporary,⁵⁰⁴ Henderson makes use of modern phrases and language in the translation with phrases such as 'Humpus of Wankton' (p.83). There are also some more American phrases, such as the use of baseball parlance by Dionysus during the contest: 'That's strike three, Aeschylus' (p.199). Henderson does not shy away from the obscenity of Aristophanes,⁵⁰⁵ for example there is this exchange in the opening scene:

Dionysus: Go right ahead, only make sure it's not the one where-

Xanthias: You mean-

Dionysus: Where you shift your baggage and say you need to shit.

Xanthias: Can't I even say that I've got such a load on me, if someone doesn't
relieve me my rump will erupt?

Dionysus: Please don't! Wait till I need to puke. (pp.15-7)

In other places, however, he has shown restraint towards potential profanity, such as Xanthias' 'Blast my luck, why wasn't I in the sea battle?' (p.19)

⁵⁰⁴ As Aristophanes' play would have seemed contemporary to his audience. Robson 2009: 195; Robson 2012: 217.

⁵⁰⁵ This is unsurprising given that he wrote *the* book on Aristophanic obscenity, *The Maculate Muse* (1975).

Acclaimed translator Paul Roche published a translation in 2004, as part of a volume including *Lysistrata*, *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth*. The following year they were re-released alongside all eleven Aristophanic plays. His Aristophanic translations came very late in his career – he died in 2007 at the age of 91 – but he had published translations of tragedy as early as the 1950s. Over the fifty years of his translation career, he published all three tragedians, as well as Sappho, Aesop and Plautus. His most famous translation is perhaps of *Oedipus the King*, which was used as the basis for the screenplay to the 1968 film, starring Christopher Plummer and Orson Welles. Whilst his translations were popular, they did attract some mixed reviews from classicists. His 1975 volume of *Alcestis*, *Medea* and *Bacchae* was described as, ‘so much that is very good [and] so much that is repellent’⁵⁰⁶ and another review claimed that Roche ‘frequently, but not always, does miss the mark’.⁵⁰⁷ Roche was a poet in his own right, however, so his poetry was consistently praised whilst his use of English was criticised. The first reviewer above stated that Roche’s translations, ‘sound well on stage...only to non-English-speaking audiences’.⁵⁰⁸

Unsurprisingly then, Roche’s *Frogs* is entirely in verse. The metre is varied, and Roche claims to attempt mimetic translation by ‘reflect[ing] the meter as far as I can’.⁵⁰⁹ He avoids rhyme, since he says it is ‘not nearly subtle enough’⁵¹⁰ to reflect Aristophanes, instead opting for what he calls ‘sonic intercoping’.⁵¹¹ This method links the final syllables of lines – the lines might be adjacent, alternate or further apart – not necessarily rhyming, but instead ‘coped’. The syllables are ‘sonically linked’, so they might rhyme, or they might merely have a vocal similarity, through assonance, consonance or

⁵⁰⁶ Hathorn 1975: 76.

⁵⁰⁷ Hornsby 1975: 87.

⁵⁰⁸ Hathorn 1975: 76.

⁵⁰⁹ Roche 2004: xv.

⁵¹⁰ Roche 2004: xv.

⁵¹¹ Roche 2004: xvi-xx.

alliteration. For Roche, this gives the ‘effects of verse without actually using verse’.⁵¹²

For example here is Roche’s version of Aeschylus parodying Euripides at *Frogs* 1331-1339:

O glistening black and somber Night,
What horrible dreams do you send?
Is it from hell these nightmares come?
Things alive that have no life
Yet black as the night they spawn a brat,
A terribly disconcerting sight,
Swaddled in necrophilic black
And glaring murder with a murderous gleam,
Baring enormous claws to attack. (p.155)

These lines feature rhyme (night/sight, black/attack), assonance (night/life/sight, brat/black), alliteration (send/sight, brat/black) and consonances (night/brat).

Whilst Roche’s earlier translations were criticised for their English idiom, the language of *Frogs* is generally modern and natural, although there are sections that come across as old-fashioned and stilted:

Xanthias: Bloody cheek, the creep!
Good riddance! I’ll do it.
Dionysus: Good of you – real nice!
Let’s proceed to the skiff. (p.94)

⁵¹² Roche 2004: xvi.

Like McLeish before him, Roche has elected to domesticate the servant who converses with Xanthias before the contest (here a separate character from the Aeacus who appears earlier), writing his lines in accent:

Yeah, it gives me a real kick
to bad-mouth the guv'nor be'ind 'is back. (124)

Charon is the only other character that is noticeably domesticated in this way.

In 2008 there were two self-published translations released, the first by another American, Ian Johnston. Johnston is a professor emeritus in English and Classics at Vancouver Island University. He is another prolific translator, with all of his translations being self-published on his website.⁵¹³ As well as a number of Aristophanes' plays, Johnston has translated a wide swathe of classical authors in Greek and Latin, including tragedy, epic, poetry and history. He has also translated non-classical texts, predominantly philosophy from writers such as Kant, Nietzsche and Rousseau, and produced some edited versions of English authors, for example Charles Darwin and John Stuart Mill.

Again, this translation has not been used for performance as far as I am aware. The translation remains faithful to Aristophanes, but uses modern language in general:

I can't help myself – he's so ridiculous.
Seeing that lion skin above that yellow dress.
What's going on? Do people with large clubs
now walk around with leather booties on?
Where on earth do you think you're going? (56-60)

⁵¹³ Found at <https://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/>.

It is entirely in free verse. The choruses have an irregular rhyming scheme, mixing rhyming and non-rhyming lines. There does not seem to be a pattern as to when they do or do not rhyme and in some places rhyme is introduced mid-verse:

Iacchus, living here
in your highly honoured shrines –
Iacchus, O Iacchus
in this meadow come to dance
with partners in your mystery.
Shake the garland round your head,
the fruit filled myrtle, come and tread
our playful rite's unbridled step
where the Graces join in, too -
our pure and sacred dance and song,
the chant of your initiate throng. (364-74)

The second self-published translation was by Greek-Australian George Theodoridis. Like Johnston he publishes translations on his website,⁵¹⁴ with a range of Greek writers represented, including the tragedians, Menander and Plato. He has translated all eleven of the Aristophanic plays.

His *Frogs* translation renders the dialogue in prose and is very loose. For example his translation of Charon's entrance follows the lines, but definitely not the words, of Aristophanes text:

Charon: Hurry, hurry, hurry! Who's for the "Coast of No Cares and Concerns?"
"The Plain of Eternal Sleep?" The "Ropes of Ocnos," anyone? "Cerberos'

⁵¹⁴ Found at <https://bacchicstage.wordpress.com/>.

Palace?” “The Crows of Taenaron?”

Dionysus: Me! Me! Me!

Charon: Come on, then! Hurry aboard! Come on!

Dionysus: Errrr, hold on! Where are you off to? “Perdition?”

Charon: “Perdition” it is!

Dionysus: Really?

Charon: Yeah, sure. Just for you. Come on, get in! (185ff)

His choruses are in free verse, with no rhyme:

Oh, Iacchus, Iacchus, most blessed Iacchus!

You who lives in our valleys,

Iacchus! Iacchus come to us!

Come play and dance with us in this valley.

Dance with your devout lovers.

Iacchus, Iacchus, around your head

you carry a virile garland of fully grown myrtle,

a head you throw and toss about with youthful vigour! (325)

Theodoridis is notable for including an excess of modern expletives in his translations, even where no equivalent existed in the original.⁵¹⁵ *Frogs* is no exception, with four-letter words appearing throughout. He also emphasises obscenity that is not in the text through the stage directions, such as when Dionysus is speaking with Heracles:

Anyway, there I was, lying flat on my back, reading a lovely play, you know,

“Andromeda” when suddenly... suddenly (getting excited – shown by the erection

⁵¹⁵ Robson 2016: 48.

of his phallus) I got this huuuuge, painful yearning. Slammed itself deep into my heart! (Erection slapping his chest) Wow! Was that a hard slam! (54ff)

The translation incorporates a lot of these stage directions, showing a consideration towards performance. During the contest Theodoridis places Sophocles on stage as well. As in Aristophanes he has no lines, but the stage directions says that he ‘may make gestures of approval whenever Aeschylus speaks’. As far as I can ascertain this *Frogs* has never been performed, but Theodoridis’ *Medea* has been produced in Alexandria.⁵¹⁶

Michael Ewans, Conjoint Professor in Humanities at the University of Newcastle, Australia, published his translation of *Frogs* in 2011, alongside *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. Ewans has lectured in both Classics and Drama and has published numerous translations of Greek plays. With this background one would expect a translation fit for performance and this is what he promises in his introduction. He describes how his translation of *Frogs* has been workshopped for performance, though not fully staged, and provides a ‘theatrical commentary’ discussing staging the play. Ewans goes to great length to state how he ‘oppose(s) ‘modernized’ scripts’,⁵¹⁷ and that place and personal names should be retained in translation for performance. He does, nevertheless, include some ‘recommended cuts for the modern theatre’, which in *Frogs* includes the parts of the parabasis that mention Cleophon and Cleigenes.

For his translation, Ewans has prioritised translation in verse, which, he says, like the Aristophanes, should be unrhymed, but also it should ‘be in a verse that reflect[s] for actors the formidable range of Aristophanes’ own verse’.⁵¹⁸ He makes it clear, however, that he will not be sacrificing the detail of Aristophanes in order to fit the verse or to make

⁵¹⁶ The poster for this appears on the front page of his website [accessed 9th November 2017].

⁵¹⁷ Ewans 2011: 28.

⁵¹⁸ Ewans 2011: 41.

the translation more performable, as he believes McLeish's versions did.⁵¹⁹ Despite this, Ewans did have his own disagreements with classicists over his translations of Aeschylus, played out through the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*. C.W. Marshall and I.C. Storey described Ewans' *Oresteia* as, 'good and clear, but not great...Too often those familiar with the Greek will be left with a sense of let-down and disappointment'.⁵²⁰ Ewans' response in BMCR was to emphasise the theatrical and workshopped background to the translation, saying 'when dealing with the results of workshopping and performing...it simply will not do for the reviewer to sit in his or her study and assert from the comfort of a chair that (e.g.) "at times it is not clear E's suggestions would function on the ancient stage"'.⁵²¹ The debate was reminiscent of Windle's description of the tension between the linguist-translator and dramatist described above.⁵²²

Ewans also accuses all previous translations of not fully capturing Aristophanes' obscenity, and, therefore, takes the opening scene to the extreme, and perhaps well beyond Aristophanes' level of obscenity, by rendering it as:

Dionysus: That when you shift your load you need a crap.

Xanthias: I can't say I am carrying so great a weight

that if no one relieves me, I will fart out all my shit. (p.163)

Overall the translation is a strong one and certainly reads very fluidly using natural, modern language:

Slave: By Zeus our Saviour, he's a gentleman,

your master.

⁵¹⁹ See above, pp.141-2.

⁵²⁰ Marshall & Storey 1996 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁵²¹ Ewans 1997 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁵²² Pp.95-6.

Classics at King Edward VI School in Stratford-upon-Avon and Letchford a Teaching Fellow at Warwick. The translation was originally used as a performance text at the Joint Association of Classical Teachers' Summer School in 2013.⁵²⁵

Despite the aim that the translation can be 'spoken with all the immediacy of modern English' a number of passages are stilted when read out loud. One example is Aecus' line 'By Demeter, I can't find out yet which of you is the god. Just go inside. The master himself will identify you – and Persephone, since they are both gods themselves.' (669-71). It is an accurate translation that gets across the sense of the line, but difficult to recite in a naturalistic manner. The aim of this translation, however, is not performance. The writers state in their introduction 'If this series encourages students to attempt a staged production, so much the better. But the primary aim is understanding and enjoyment.'⁵²⁶

Even though this translation is aimed at students, the obscenity is not shied away from, with the writers even going so far as to have Dionysus admit 'I've made a crapprifice' (490). In other places, rude jokes are added, such as Euripides' line 'And how appropriate is it anyway, to mention a cock in a tragedy?' (935-6). The word translated as cock is κάλεκτρούνα in the Greek, which does not include the double meaning that occurs in English.

The translation uses prose for the dialogue and free verse for the chorus songs. Like Johnson's translation above, these songs have an irregular rhyming scheme:

Come, Muse, attend our sacred dancing,
Come, take pleasure in our song.

⁵²⁵ See Chapter Four, p.216-7.

⁵²⁶ Affleck and Letchford 2014: iv.

You'll see here a mass of people,
A clever audience, thousands strong,
And keener to win that Cleophon.
In his babbling, two-tongued mouth
Perched upon a foreign leaf
There sits a Thracian swallow;
Twittering like thunder,
Warbling its mournful song,
The nightingale's lament:
'I'll die, if it's a tie.' (675-85)

The most recent translation was published in 2015 by Stephen Halliwell, in an edition with *Clouds* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. He had previously (in 1997) published *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth* for the same series. In the introduction to the plays⁵²⁷ he states that the temptation when translating comedy is to modernise the text, but he feels it is more important to bring a greater sense of the originals to the modern reader. His aim was to create an accessible translation, but with the proviso that 'accessibility must involve access *to* something that is not our own, rather than a modern substitute for it'.⁵²⁸ He therefore avoids the 'intruded gloss' of Arrowsmith and the 'domestication' of Venuti.⁵²⁹ Again, these are not translations meant for performance, but instead meant to be read. He aims for his translations to be 'pleasurably readable...while retaining the historical accuracy necessary for those...who wish to gain a reasonably authentic feel'.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ The introduction to the second volume is a slightly updated repeat of the first.

⁵²⁸ Halliwell 1997: xviii; Halliwell 2015: lv.

⁵²⁹ Both explained above at pp.136-7 and p.93 respectively.

⁵³⁰ Halliwell 1997: v.

Halliwell has a very conscientious approach to Aristophanes' lyrics, altering his own metre to reflect the changes in the original. Where Aristophanes used iambic trimeters for dialogue, Halliwell has used blank verse. This allows for verse to be retained, but for variations in phrasing.⁵³¹ For the recitative sections, which have a mix of types and rhythms in Greek, he mainly uses heptameter, alongside some scattered use of trochees and anapaests to match the Greek.⁵³² Where possible, Halliwell opts to recreate the rhythm of the original language for the lyrics and 'employ English stress patterns in a few contexts where they can provide an intelligible match for the original'.⁵³³ In this way he is perhaps the only translator to fit into Holmes' analogical category above, although elsewhere he fits into other categories.⁵³⁴ He avoids rhyme, since he states it 'tends to make Aristophanic lyrics too uniformly jaunty'.⁵³⁵

Despite these claims, at times the chorus sections seem to lack a consistent rhythm, making it difficult to speak (or sing) out loud. Consider the first strophe of the Initiates' chorus:

Iakchos, venerable lord who dwells in this place,

Iakchos, hail Iakchos!

Come join our dance in this meadow,

Come among the pious followers of your cult,

Toss wildly a head that's crowned

With a wreath luxuriant in fruit

Of myrtle berries, and stamp your foot

⁵³¹ Halliwell 1997: xlix; Halliwell 2015: lvi.

⁵³² Halliwell 1997: xlix-l; Halliwell 2015: lvii-lviii.

⁵³³ Halliwell 1997: l; Halliwell 2015: lviii-lix.

⁵³⁴ Robson 2012: 227-8.

⁵³⁵ Halliwell 2000: 78.

In rhythms bold for this unbridled
Dance-loving act of worship,
An occasion full of Graces,
A sacred dance for pious initiates. (323-334)

As can be expected the scatological humour is retained, if a little childish compared to some of the more graphic modern versions; for example Dionysus exclaims ‘I’ve shitted myself’ (479). Halliwell certainly embraces the use of obscenity, and is the only translator to include such lines as:

And Kallias, it’s rumoured,
The son of one Horse-fucker,
Fought naval battles with cunts while dressed in lion-skin. (428-30)

Unsurprisingly such a recent translation has yet to see any performances.

Conclusion

This chapter has charted the journey of *Frogs* from the Athens of Aristophanes to Britain and its history in the English language. From the literal translations and cribs of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, to the looser, ‘performable’ texts of the second half of the twentieth century, the range of translations is striking. A number of these translations will reappear throughout the performance history, but more common are those productions that follow Walton’s advice above and translate/adapt/devise a production-specific version. The key elements of translation, localisation, lyric, humour and performability, are things that will continue to engage directors and adapters throughout the play’s performance reception. The next chapter will return to performance reception and demonstrate that whilst *Frogs* as a play was absent from theatres for over two

thousand years, it nevertheless had an influence on the British stage several centuries before its first recorded performance.

Chapter Three

Theatrical Reflections of *Frogs*

The previous chapter has demonstrated how *Frogs*' performance history appeared to come to an abrupt end shortly after the repeat performance. After that it did not reappear on stage in its entirety until 1873. However, whilst the play as a whole was absent, it was not without influence on the British stage. This chapter will explore the influence that *Frogs* has had on theatre in the English-speaking world, either explicitly or otherwise. It begins a century and a half before Dunster's translation – though, as mentioned in Chapter One,⁵³⁶ we might see in Xanthias the origins of the 'clever slave' of Plautus, Shakespeare and others – and continues right up to the present day.

In these early pieces of reception it is elements from the contest scene, specifically the criticism of drama found there, that have most often been reproduced. In 1599 the Lord Chamberlain's Men performed Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*. This play features two writers who argue over which type of poetry is superior, in the process defending 'comicall satyre' from both critical and legislative attack.⁵³⁷ *The Rehearsal*, a 1671 play by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, uses parody itself to criticise contemporary drama in the manner of *Frogs*.⁵³⁸ The link with *The Rehearsal* is mentioned in the earliest publication of the Greek text of *Frogs* with commentary in English, that of the Rev. Henry Parker Cookesley in 1837.

In the 18th century, Henry Fielding, who had studied Greek at Eton, used *Frogs* as an inspiration for a number of his plays. His 1730 play, *The Author's Farce*, is about a tragic

⁵³⁶ Chapter One, pp.59-62.

⁵³⁷ Griffith 2013: 238.

⁵³⁸ Hall 2007b: 70.

poet named Mr Luckless, who, as the name suggests, is failing at his vocation. During Act II Scene 1 of the play (pp.23-5) his works are analysed in the manner of *Frogs*. Also within *The Author's Farce* there is a play-within-a-play named *The Pleasures of the Town*. This is supposedly a puppet show, but with the puppets played by live actors. *The Pleasures of the Town* includes a journey across the Styx and the main action of the play-within-a-play is a dramatic contest between different styles, personified by Don Tragedio, Sir Farcical Comic, Dr Orator, Signior Opera, Monsieur Pantomime and Mrs Novel. As in *Frogs* the contest is judged by a deity, in this case the Goddess Nonsense. One song (pp.54-5) may also have drawn inspiration from *Birds*, featuring the hooting of an owl and the croaking of a raven.⁵³⁹ While the script of *The Pleasures of the Town* seems to bear little resemblance to the dialogue of Aristophanes, there are a number of small thematic echoes. Signior Opera, for example, sings about the 'foolish philosopher' (p.50) and Luckless says the line 'Most poets of this Age will have their Works buried with them.' (p.43)

Fielding's familiarity with Aristophanes is well-established and he would later collaboratively publish a translation of *Wealth*. His 1737 play *Eurydice Hiss'd* may also have taken its theme of katabasis from *Frogs*.⁵⁴⁰ He would also name Aristophanes, as well as Lucian, Cervantes, Rabelais, Molière, Shakespeare, Swift and Marivaux, as being inspired by Genius in *Tom Jones* (1749).⁵⁴¹

A century and a half later, a more sustained and contemporary engagement was possible through the 1894 play *Aristophanes in Oxford: O.W.* The text is perhaps the earliest to incorporate the pedagogic themes described in the Introduction, something which would

⁵³⁹ Hall 2007b: 73.

⁵⁴⁰ Hall 2007b: 74.

⁵⁴¹ Griffith 2013: 239.

continue to define its theatrical reception from this point forward. Originally published anonymously (although the authors are now believed to have been three undergraduates led by Leopold Amery)⁵⁴² and as far as we know never performed, the play is an attack on Oscar Wilde and his works. The preface mentions ‘an honest dislike for “Dorian Gray,” “Salome,” “Yellow Book,” and the whole of the erotic, lack-a-daisical, opium-cigarette literature of the day’. The authors also ‘claim no originality, but humbly apologise to all from Aristophanes downward, from whom we have consciously or unconsciously plagiarised.’ In a reverse of the action of *Frogs*, *Aristophanes at Oxford*: *OW* features Socrates, Aristotle and Thucydides escaping from the underworld in a boat. They arrive at Oxford and resolve to stay there to ‘convert’ the students back to traditional philosophical study. Two members of ‘Maudlin College’ resolve to fight off the ancients physically, but not until Oscar Wilde arrives to help.

This reversal of *Frogs* is shown in the thematic conflict as well, with the two Maudlin College members praising the loss of the old ways, in this case ‘Musty classic philosophy’. They say:

Herodotus, Thucydides,
Aristotle, Plato, Bacon,
Maine, Mill, Hobbes and all besides,
Lie neglected and forsaken. (p.5)

The play itself bemoans the loss of this study and blames the influence of Oscar Wilde for it. This is made clear in the parabasis of the play, in which ‘the poet’ says:

And we beg you to remember that our aim is not to sever
Hearts from Oxford and her old grey walls: but as far as in us lies

⁵⁴² Hall 2007b: 81.

To revive her ancient strength of name. Now faintly, weakly sighs
In the garden of self-ease that burst through history's portals,
Sweeping up the steep of glory, heaven's own heritage from mortals. (pp.43-4)

The interaction with *Frogs* is therefore two-fold: the surface criticism of philosophy, but also the blaming of a more contemporary author for the loss of important traditions.

Further small references to *Frogs* creep through as the play progresses. When arriving for the second time by boat, Socrates shouts in Greek Ἰόπ (p.25) in the same way as Charon announced his arrival in *Frogs* (180). The play's Oscar Wilde has clear echoes of Dionysus in his character, as he suggests running away rather than fighting the ancients and complains vociferously when he must engage in manual labour. At the end of the play the two Maudlin College members are converted to philosophy and, when Charon arrives to take the ancients back to Hades, they give him Oscar Wilde instead. The play, therefore, completely reverses the katabasis and return of *Frogs*. Instead of Dionysus descending and returning with Aeschylus, the ancients come from the underworld and send Oscar Wilde back.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, *Frogs*' theatrical reflections grew more ambitious and visible. George Bernard Shaw's 1905 play *Major Barbara* is often quoted as an adaptation of the *Bacchae*. However, it has been postulated that, whilst the *Bacchae* serves as inspiration for the first two acts, the third act is based more on *Frogs*. The first two acts feature the moral Cusins, a professor of Greek, being seduced Pentheus-like by the rich munitions factory owner, Andrew Undershaft, of whom Cusins says "Dionysus Undershaft had descended" (pp.109-10). However, in Act Three Undershaft begins to refer to Cusins as Euripides. Cusins now speaks to Undershaft as an equal and his agon

(pp.134-47) is not with Aeschylus but with Undershaft's Dionysus, who increasingly embodies less the Dionysus of the *Bacchae* and more that of the *Frogs*. Cusins continues to gain the upper hand in the argument, until Undershaft can no longer offer any serious debate, much as the Aristophanic Dionysus has no serious input into the contest of *Frogs*. There is also a structural link between this third act and *Frogs*. Perivale St Andrews, Undershaft's munitions factory and the setting for the second half of Act Three, is portrayed as a hell on earth. This makes the preparation to go there in the first half of Act Three echo the katabatic element of *Frogs*.⁵⁴³

The other link between Shaw and *Frogs* is the playwright's close links with Gilbert Murray. The two were close friends and worked together at the Court Theatre in London. Bernard Shaw himself wrote 'My play stands indebted to Gilbert Murray in more ways than the way from Athens'.⁵⁴⁴ It is no coincidence that in 1902 Gilbert Murray published a selection of play translations that included both the *Bacchae* and *Frogs*, alongside *Hippolytus*.⁵⁴⁵ The Euripidean passages within *Major Barbara* come from this volume.⁵⁴⁶ Indeed the characters in the play themselves are, at least partially, based on Murray and his family, just as Murray had based Euripides in his *Frogs* on Shaw.⁵⁴⁷ The wife of Undershaft is based on Murray's mother-in-law and Major Barbara on his wife. Murray himself is the basis for Cusins, with specific details from the play drawn from Murray's own life.⁵⁴⁸ The ending to *Major Barbara* was even modified at the behest of the Murrays, since they disliked how easily Cusins initially gave in to Undershaft's persuasion.⁵⁴⁹ All

⁵⁴³ Macintosh 2005: 506-7.

⁵⁴⁴ Quoted in Albert 1968: 123.

⁵⁴⁵ Macintosh 2005: 499.

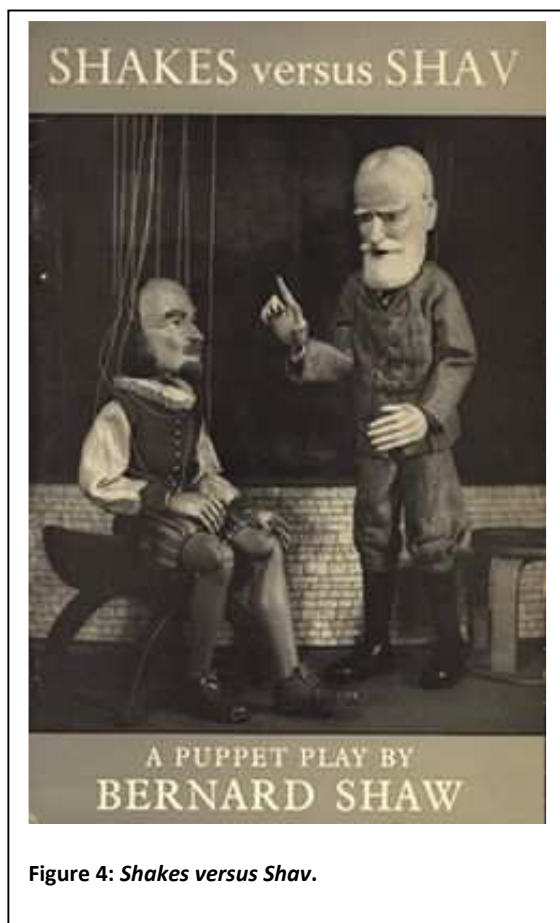
⁵⁴⁶ Macintosh 2005: 492.

⁵⁴⁷ See above, p.118.

⁵⁴⁸ Macintosh 2005: 504.

⁵⁴⁹ Macintosh 2005: 503.

of these links led to speculation in some quarters that Murray himself had written the



play, or at least was heavily involved.⁵⁵⁰

Shaw would return to *Frogs* at the end of his life, just one year before his death in 1950, with the short play *Shakes versus Shav*. In it two puppets representing Shaw and Shakespeare argue over the quality of their work, a pairing that features heavily in the theatrical reception of *Frogs*.⁵⁵¹ Although the character of Shaw begins by asserting the superiority of other writers to Shakespeare (comparing, for example, *Macbeth* with *Rob Roy*), the play leads to

the writers defending elements of their own work in a similar manner to *Frogs*.⁵⁵²

Another play from this era inspired by the contest in *Frogs* is *Crisis in Heaven*. Written by Eric Linklater, it was first performed in 1944 at the King's Head Theatre in London. The opening scene occurs outside the Assembly Rooms in Elysium, in which a chaired discussion between Robert Burns and Alexander Pushkin is due to take place. The link to *Frogs* occurs in the subject matter of the planned debate, 'The Poet and His Responsibility', and the fact that the discussion is to be chaired by Aristophanes. The discussion never takes place as Burns and Pushkin do not attend. Unlike in *Frogs*, where Aeschylus and Euripides agree that a poet has a moral responsibility, the discussion here

⁵⁵⁰ Albert 1968: 125.

⁵⁵¹ Most notably the Sondheim version (Chapter Six).

⁵⁵² Gamel 2007: 213.

revolves around whether a poet ‘is a person of special gifts, and therefore of special privilege, and must be allowed to behave exactly as he likes’ or he ‘is a man like the rest of us, with the obligations and duties common to all in any civilised community’ (p.6). Linklater is best known for writing the Carnegie Medal winner *The Wind on the Moon* (1944), but does not appear to have written anything other than *Crisis in Heaven* that might be related to the classical world; nevertheless, his choice of two national poets partly anticipates his colleague Douglas Young’s engagement with the play fourteen years later. Both were Scottish Nationalists and employed at Aberdeen University, though not at the same time.⁵⁵³

By this time the influence of the contest in *Frogs* can be seen in North American theatre as well. *The Ostriches*, a ‘political fantasy after *The Frogs* of Aristophanes’, was published in 1926 by Gordon Congdon King. This play begins with a discussion between George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. It takes place in the ‘Mount Vernon Political Club’ in Hades, a club for deceased and distinguished American politicians, although it is commented that they ‘haven’t taken in a soul since Lincoln’ (p.16). Most of the play is a discussion of the contemporary USA, with Franklin in particular criticising Americans as having ‘congenital dishonesty’ (p.20) and Hamilton assuring the others that the Republicans would lose the next election.⁵⁵⁴ Two delegates to the Republican convention and a Democrat observer join them on stage. In our first link to *Frogs*, they have mistakenly been allowed to enter Hades, despite still being alive. The two Republican delegates stand in for Dionysus, and having survived the food poisoning that has killed 28 other delegates, they resolve to take advantage of the

⁵⁵³ Linklater unsuccessfully stood for the National Party of Scotland in 1933. He was rector of Aberdeen University four years after Douglas Young was a lecturer there. Young translated *Frogs* into Scots in 1958. See Chapter Four, pp.193-9 for more on Young’s translation and Scottish Nationalism.

⁵⁵⁴ He was wrong, as the Republicans retained the presidency under Herbert Hoover in 1929. Hamilton was correct, however, when he predicted that Hoover would get the nomination.

situation by making their way to Hades with the dead and bringing back Roosevelt to stand as the Republican nomination. The Republicans want to ‘find a man who can save the country from misgovernment’ (p.45). Roosevelt also appears and after some discussion they decide he might not be the right man; what follows is a discussion about the merits of all the men present. Further criticism of contemporary America abounds, as Washington is rejected for having ‘a reputation for common honesty’ (p.47). Hamilton and Franklin both refuse the offer of resurrection and since Jefferson was a member of the predecessor to the Democrat Party, the Republicans are not in favour of him either.

Nevertheless, what follows is a contest of sorts between Jefferson and Roosevelt, with each of the two explaining how they would solve the problems of contemporary America. It is a very in-depth political discussion, omitting any of the comedy of Aristophanes’ contest. Roosevelt favours a strong central government, while Jefferson is in favour of limited state interference and a small government. However, it becomes clear that Jefferson is the more astute politician, espousing the rewriting of the constitution in order to make it a better fit to modern times. Whilst the more conservative of the Republicans is still against Jefferson, the two change their minds, rejecting their original choice in his favour.

King was born in 1893 and graduated from Harvard in 1917 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He published an eclectic mix of texts, including a translation of Herodotus, a history of Rome, a novel based on Shakespeare’s character, Horatio, and a study of Buddhist cave temples. He died of pneumonia at a relatively young age in 1930. It seems that he did not achieve much recognition for his works, unlike his wife, Carol Weiss King, who was a prominent left-wing activist and lawyer. She was also staunchly in sympathy

with some aspects of Communism and was investigated on several occasions by the US government.⁵⁵⁵

There is no indication as to why the play is called *The Ostriches*, although it presumably implies how US politics has buried its head in the sand over the country's problems. The play is very short and as far as I can ascertain it was never actually performed. Given the complicated nature of the discussion between Jefferson and Roosevelt, this is perhaps not surprising. Like *Frogs* it is a play of two halves, and based on the second half alone I would have surmised that the format was used to present ideas in the manner of Plato's dialogues without serious consideration for performance. The first half reads more like a piece of theatre. Given the left-wing activism of his wife it is not surprising to find King's own liberal opinion on the constitution contained within *The Ostriches*; the play, however little impact it made, is very important in this one respect: that it shows how *Frogs* can be adapted to make really radical political points in tense political circumstances.

In the postwar era the contest may also have inspired scenes in a rather unusual American play from 1971, *The Tooth of Crime*, written by Sam Shepard, the American playwright and actor.⁵⁵⁶ Shepard holds the distinction of winning both the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his play *Buried Child* (1979) and an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor for the film *The Right Stuff* (1983). He seemingly had no formal classics training – he studied agriculture for a brief time after High School before dropping out to pursue theatre – and so it is not known whether he was aware of *Frogs* and classical drama. He did, however, write a play based on the Oedipus myths, 2013's *A Particle of Dread*. The

⁵⁵⁵ Most notably she was involved as a lawyer in the 1935 *Norris v. Alabama* Supreme Court decision that established that excluding African Americans from juries was unlawful. See Silber 2000: American National Biography [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁵⁵⁶ Shepard substantially rewrote the play in 1996, renaming it *Tooth of Crime: Second Dance*. The references in this thesis refer to the original version as published in 1981.

play was commissioned by the Irish theatre company Field Day, who have a background in performing versions of classical plays. Shepard also worked closely with Wim Wenders on two movies which engaged with another ancient Greek text, the *Odyssey*, extensively: *Paris, Texas* (1984) and *Don't Come Knocking* (2005).

The Tooth of Crime is set in a dystopian future where 'Markers' take part in the 'Game': a contest, regulated by 'Keepers', that mixes poetry and rock music. At the start of the



Figure 5: Hoss and Crow from a 2006 production of *The Tooth of Crime*.

play the top Marker is Hoss, who represents the old style of composition and always operates within the rules of the Game. However, Hoss is plagued with doubts over his relevance, partly owing to the rise of 'Gypsies': a new wave of Markers who refuse

to operate within the rules. The second act of the play takes the form of a contest between Hoss and one of the Gypsies, Crow, initially under the guidance of a confused and haphazard referee. The referee is soon sidelined,⁵⁵⁷ and the contest continues outside the rules and becomes a fight to the death. Despite gaining the upper hand, Hoss' insecurities are preyed upon by his opponent and the older Marker eventually stabs himself.

Although there is no explicit indication that Shepard was aware of or influenced by the contest in *Frogs*, there are some notable similarities in the narrative and composition. The contest is one of old ways versus the new, and, like Euripides, Crow refuses to follow the

⁵⁵⁷ In the original version the referee was killed. In the revised version the referee walks out, claiming to be unable to control the contestants.

rules or accept authority. Just like Aeschylus, Hoss comes from an older time and claims 'we were warriors once' (p.217). Like mentions of Achilles in *Frogs*, the real personalities that Hoss invokes are paragons of masculinity and physical prowess such as Lee Marvin (p.210), John Wayne (p.226) and Joe Frazier (p.235). Initially he intends to challenge Crow to a knife-fight to show he can still compete physically. The inability of the referee to control proceedings is reminiscent of Dionysus and, whilst the outcome of the 'old versus the new' conflict is the opposite one from *Frogs*, the stakes are similar in that one gets to live and one gets to die. The composition is similar to a Greek play: punctuated by songs and mainly written in unusual language which forms its own sort of poetry. Like many versions of *Frogs*, the two contestants use different styles and language to accentuate the differences between the old and new. Hoss uses semi-mythic personas from the past such as a 'Cowboy-Western' character (p.232) or a '1920s gangster' (p.233); meanwhile, Crow has a more contemporary style, that of a 70s rock-star and explicitly inspired by Keith Richards (p.229). Like Aristophanes' poets, Crow imitates Hoss in order to make fun of him. Our final link to *Frogs* is that of the chair that serves as the only piece of set dressing on an otherwise bare stage. (p.205) Hoss begins the play in the chair and when Crow enters he sits in it as an insult to Hoss. At the end of the play Crow is left alone on stage with the chair. It is symbolic of the shift in power between the two men and can perhaps be seen as analogous to the throne of tragedy in *Frogs*.

Though the above plays have found the contest the most excerptable element on which to base new works, it is not the only element of *Frogs* that has been reflected. In 1983, King's College, London used a scene from *Frogs* as the basis for a segment of their touring production of *Heracles*. This play takes elements from Aristophanes, Sophocles and Euripides to recreate the entire myth of Heracles in dramatic form. It features

Dionysus as a prominent character and Heracles' capture of Cerberus is inspired by his conversation with Dionysus and the latter's own descent to the underworld in *Frogs*.⁵⁵⁸

Another feature that often, and unsurprisingly, transfers to other pieces of performance is the frog-chorus. Their most famous appearance was probably when Gilbert and Sullivan's Modern Major-General boasts that he 'knows the croaking chorus from *The Frogs* of Aristophanes' in *Pirates of Penzance* (1879). Previously in 1835 Hans Christian Andersen had made the toad's son say only 'koax, koax, brekke-ke-kex' in *Tommelise* (*Thumbelina* in English).⁵⁵⁹ In 1898 the frog-chorus' refrain reappeared in the light opera *The Greek Slave*.⁵⁶⁰ Whilst the Roman domestic setting has more in common with Plautus than Aristophanes, the titular character does sing a song entitled 'A Frog He Lived in a Pond'. The song tells the story of a frog who sings 'Brekekekex Koax! Koax!', and the line is repeated throughout. Other less explicitly Aristophanic versions of frog-choruses have appeared in theatre, particularly in musical form. They appear for example in Andre Bloch's 1935 opera *Broceliande* and in *Honk!*, the 1993 musical version of Anderson's *The Ugly Duckling* by George Stiles and Anthony Drewe. The chorus of the former are perhaps the more Aristophanic, with rhythmic croaking similar to the original chorus.⁵⁶¹ We might also mention the 1985 animated film *Rupert and the Frog Song*, in which the frogs again use croaking noises as rhythmic backing to the Paul McCartney-written 'We All Stand Together'.

⁵⁵⁸ *Heracles Programme*.

⁵⁵⁹ Hall 2007: 29 n71.

⁵⁶⁰ Music by Sidney Jones, lyrics by Harry Greenbank and Adrian Ross, libretto by Owen Hall.

⁵⁶¹ Hall 2007: 24.

Conclusion

This chapter and the previous one have demonstrated that even though *Frogs* as a play seemed to disappear from performance history shortly after its original performance, its constituent elements and themes remained firmly in the consciousness of both academic and theatrical audiences. The following chapters map the return of *Frogs* itself to the stage, first in Britain and then in the rest of the English-speaking world.

Chapter Four

Frogs in Britain and Ireland

In my research I have discovered just over 100 productions across the five nations that make up Britain and Ireland.⁵⁶² Whilst I cannot possibly cover all of these in this chapter, I do intend to address any that do something distinctive with *Frogs* or which were landmark productions in their own right. I will be looking at issues writers and directors sought to explore in their *Frogs* and how they have approached this. In some cases the original play has been cut down to select scenes, and an analysis of which scenes have been chosen may go some way to revealing which parts of *Frogs* most appeal to British audiences and adapters. Where possible I will look to document artistic intentions and audience reactions, in order to ascertain whether the performers achieved their aims with their productions.

Throughout the reception of *Frogs* there seem to be three very clear strands that come through. Firstly, as noted in the introduction, there is a pedagogical strand. The overwhelming majority of productions have happened in a school or university setting. I speculated there that this was owing to what the play can tell us about the role of teaching in theatre and poetry. There may also be practical considerations in the choice. Many of the schools were all-male, so the fact that there are very few female roles in the play would have been ideal. Additionally, for performance in Greek the visual spectacle of the frog chorus and sections such as the costume swapping and beating would have appealed to an audience member who could not understand the dialogue.

⁵⁶² It should be noted that I have found no instances of performance in Northern Ireland (other than the 1996-7 National Theatre tour, see below) and only three productions in the Republic of Ireland: one performed between 1960 and 1969 at Dublin High School; one performed in Callen in 2012, with the title (*The Making of*) *The Frogs after Aristophanes*; and one at Trinity College Dublin in 2017. In all three cases I have not been able to access enough material to include a larger mention in this chapter.

The second strand is that of a political and, in places, nationalistic retelling. The nationalistic side can be seen in the Scots and Demotic Greek translations of Douglas Young and Karolos Koun⁵⁶³ respectively. These two productions are not directly linked in any way, yet they are connected in that they set themselves apart from all other versions, both linguistically and culturally. In other cases productions have attempted to bring in a political element, but generally they are successful only when they touch lightly on it. The more heavy-handed political productions tend not to have the impact they desire. *Frogs* is so attractive to adapters precisely because of the perceived politics of the original play, and it is perhaps this that is, as Wiles puts it, ‘something *authentically* Greek which is worth bringing to the present’.⁵⁶⁴

The third strand is the musical history. We know from *Pirates of Penzance* that the frog chorus at least was well-known to more modern audiences, and this is supported by its appearance in *Tommelise* and *Broceliande*.⁵⁶⁵ Music is prevalent throughout the history of performance of *Frogs*, and the reception of the music usually reflects that of the production as a whole. Nowhere have I seen a production praised for its music alone. In many ways ancient comedy is the precursor to modern musical theatre and, whilst Plautus has had more of an influence in mainstream musicals,⁵⁶⁶ Aristophanes lends itself to musical accompaniment as well. *Frogs* is perhaps the most appropriate, since it is suitable for a variety of styles. As the only Aristophanes play with two separate choruses, contrasts can be drawn between the frenetic frogs and the more reverential Initiates. Likewise the songs featured in the contest encourage a musical setting, with many productions using

⁵⁶³ Whilst Koun is a Greek director, his production of *Frogs* toured to London. Although unusual for Britain, political engagement is normal for performances taking place in Greece. See below p.204.

⁵⁶⁴ Wiles 2000: 179.

⁵⁶⁵ See Chapter Two, p.178.

⁵⁶⁶ See Chapter Six, pp.279-81 for more on the ancient world and musical theatre.

music to highlight the differences between Aeschylus and Euripides, which aids understanding for an audience unfamiliar with the poets. It is very easy to portray Aeschylus as old-fashioned and bombastic and Euripides as modern and avant-garde through musical choices.

The pedagogical reception occurs in the earliest British performance recorded of any part of *Frogs*, in 1836 at St. Paul's School in London. Future Oxford Professor Benjamin Jowett appeared as Bacchus and the scene, performed in Greek, depicted Xanthias scaring his master with the description of the Empusa. According to *The Times* 'the comic distress of (Jowett) excited much laughter, even amongst that portion of the audience customarily presumed to be ignorant of the learned languages'.⁵⁶⁷

The earliest English language performance of *Frogs* and, as far as we know, the earliest English language performance of any Aristophanes play is believed to have been in a private theatre in the house of Henry Fleeming Jenkin (1833-85), in central Edinburgh (Great Stuart Street). A professor of engineering at Edinburgh University, he refused to limit his interests to his subject and was also known as a linguist, economist and dramatist. Together with a group of friends he put on productions in his house, Robert Louis Stevenson recording that 'Augier, Racine, Shakespeare, Aristophanes in Hookham Frere's translation, Sophocles and Aeschylus in Lewis Campbell's, such were some of the authors he introduced to his public'.⁵⁶⁸ Fleeming Jenkin's production of 'the principal scenes from the *Frogs*' is recorded by Lewis Campbell as having occurred in 1873,⁵⁶⁹ and we can only assume that the performance was of the Frere translation referred to by Stevenson above. As to the reason why Fleeming Jenkin should pick Aristophanes to go

⁵⁶⁷ Anonymous 1836: 3.

⁵⁶⁸ Stevenson 1925: 141.

⁵⁶⁹ Campbell 1891: 320.

alongside the others, Stevenson quotes him as saying ‘The Greeks made the best plays and the best statues, and were the best architects; of course, they were the best tailors too’.⁵⁷⁰ Though it was a private performance, we might include it in the play’s pedagogical reception owing to the involvement of several academics.

In 1876 scenes from *Frogs* were performed at Dulwich College as the Greek speech for their annual speech day. The *Frogs* seemed to become a popular choice for these speech days, perhaps for the same reasons as the pedagogical interest mentioned above. Between 1876 and 1963 it was performed at least fifteen times at Dulwich, and every production was reviewed, with varying levels of detail, in the Dulwich College newspaper, *The Alleynian*. The 1876 version receives only a small write-up, consisting of a cast list and the brief review, ‘This speech was a great success, and all engaged in it deserve praise’.⁵⁷¹ Whilst this review tells us little, the surviving ‘Argument of the Speeches’ from that year indicates that the chosen scenes were from the contest, specifically the discussion of prologues and the literal weighing sequence. Interestingly the Argument tells us that it is directly as a result of the weighing that Aeschylus is chosen as the winner in the contest. If the audience could not understand the Greek then the simplest way to show Aeschylus’ dominance in the competition would be through the visual cue of the weighing scene.

In the following years the performance received a similar short review, but we can ascertain from the cast lists featured in *The Alleynian* which scenes were chosen. In 1883 it was the Innkeeper and Aeacus scenes,⁵⁷² in 1888 just the Aeacus scene⁵⁷³ and in 1891 it was again the contest scenes performed.⁵⁷⁴ 1895 marks the first time the frog chorus

⁵⁷⁰ Stevenson 1925: 141.

⁵⁷¹ *Alleynian* Vol.IV, No.23: 81.

⁵⁷² *Alleynian* Vol.XI, No.73: 150.

⁵⁷³ *Alleynian* Vol.XVI, No.109: 166.

⁵⁷⁴ *Alleynian* Vol.XIX, No.132: 134.

themselves appeared in the production, included in what appears to be the whole play up to the Aeacus flogging scene.⁵⁷⁵ 1895 was also the first time that costume was used, perhaps indicating why the frogs were now included. The production in 1898 appeared to



Figure 6: *Frogs* at Dulwich in 1898. P.G. Wodehouse is seated on the far right.

feature the same scenes, but the production was remarkable in that a young P.G. Wodehouse (see Figure 6) played a member of the chorus that year. 1898 also incorporated the use of music composed for the production

by E.D. Rendall,⁵⁷⁶ who also composed music for *Acharnians*, *Birds* and *Clouds*. The compositions were very popular and *Frogs* in particular garnered much praise. The biography of the Dulwich Headmaster at the time, A.H. Gilkes, recalls of Rendall, ‘Especially beautiful was his solemn march in “The Frogs” for the Eleusinian worshippers – indeed, all his music for the dancing, croaking and spluttering of the frogs on the banks of Acheron was most spirited and delightful’.⁵⁷⁷ Later productions⁵⁷⁸ performed the same scenes, from the opening of the play to the beating by Aeacus.

The productions were generally well-received, though the pitfalls of performing in Greek drew some mixed responses throughout the years. One reviewer in 1898 stated, ‘The danger...is that of over-acting...It is very easy, therefore, to run into the mistake of exaggerating the gestures’⁵⁷⁹ while another in 1927 took the opposite view in criticising

⁵⁷⁵ *Alleynian* Vol.XXIII, No.164: 148-50.

⁵⁷⁶ *Alleynian* Vol.XXVI, No.188: 186.

⁵⁷⁷ Leake 1938: 127.

⁵⁷⁸ In 1904, 1908, 1913, 1919, 1927, 1931 and 1963.

⁵⁷⁹ *Alleynian* Vol.XXVI, No.188:186-7.

the performance, stating, ‘the players quite failed to realise how essential it is in such a play to throw oneself into one’s part completely and even to over-act it – especially the gesture – if the action is to be at all intelligible to the audience’.⁵⁸⁰

More than any other case study, Dulwich College demonstrates the enduring popularity of *Frogs* for schools. It was far from the only classical play that was put on in this period; Plautus and other Aristophanes plays were popular as well, but *Frogs* seemed to gain far more attention than any other one play. We may see, for example, that during the time period 1864 to 1934, when the majority of these performances took place, there were thirteen productions of *Frogs* compared to ten of *Clouds* and eight of *Acharnians*. *Knights*, *Birds* and *Wasps* account for twelve productions between them and Plautus for five. In 1885 we see a solitary tragedy, the *Ajax* of Sophocles, possibly as a response to the successful Cambridge production that occurred in 1882. It is tempting to assume that once costume was included, the ever-present frog chorus was what attracted Dulwich to *Frogs*. The sight of the students bouncing about on stage in costume croaking the familiar ‘Brekekekex’ must have entertained those in the audience whose Greek was not up to the standard of comprehension. However, an examination of the reviews shows that in, at least, 1908, 1919 and 1923 the frogs did not actually appear on stage, with the 1923 reviewer commenting ‘we think that as they give the title to the play, we might have been allowed to see a little more of them’.⁵⁸¹ Alongside the popular costume-swapping and beating scenes, the productions would have made for constant visual and audio spectacle. If this was the aim, it is perhaps not surprising that Aeschylus and Euripides are absent from productions after 1891. This indicates that at Dulwich the element of what theatre teaches was not as important as the spectacle of the play.

⁵⁸⁰ Alleynian Vol.LV, No.401: 232.

⁵⁸¹ Alleynian Vol.LI, No.377: 142.

Frogs was immensely popular with other public schools, as attested by productions at King's College School (1874), Harrow (1892), Eton (1894, 1899), St John's (1895), Radley College (1900, 1906), St Edward's School (1930) and Charterhouse School (1947). Whilst these schools are all in South-East England, the play did reach Wales, evidenced by a production at Monmouth School in 1909. The appeal was also seen in universities and it was chosen as Oxford University's first ever Aristophanes play in 1892, performed in Greek by the Oxford University Dramatic Society (OUDS).⁵⁸²

This production included what is perhaps the first score to be written for *Frogs*, that of *Jerusalem* composer Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918). He had previously written the score for a production of *Birds* at Cambridge in 1883. Both the music and an emphasis on comic 'business' around the lines: physicality, facial expressions etc., allowed the audience to connect with the play despite the Greek language;⁵⁸³ although one reviewer did say 'cockney humour and cockney "business" are quite out of place in a drama where the lines are spoken in Greek'.⁵⁸⁴ That is not to say that audience members did not have problems understanding the play, and a translation of the acting script was available for purchase at the price of two shillings prior to the performance.⁵⁸⁵ The translation was based on that of John Hookham Frere, with new translations of the choruses, by the future archaeologist D. G. Hogarth and the classicist and humourist A. D. Godley, to fit Parry's score. Any modernising of the script, however, was strictly forbidden by Hogarth and other senior members of the Greek play committee.⁵⁸⁶ The

⁵⁸² N.B. This section owes a great debt to the work of Amanda Wrigley in her 2007 chapter in *Aristophanes in Performance*. The chapter was reprinted as part of her 2011 monograph from which the page references in this chapter come.

⁵⁸³ Wrigley 2011: 62.

⁵⁸⁴ Anonymous 1892.

⁵⁸⁵ Wrigley 2011: 67.

⁵⁸⁶ Mackinnon 1910: 175-6.

script did have to be heavily cut down to remove some of the more obscene moments, as well as most of the female characters (women were banned from performing with OUDS and undergraduates were banned from performing female roles).⁵⁸⁷

Instead of altering the script, the production used more modern elements in its composition. It did not aim for authenticity by attempting to reproduce the ancient setting. Instead ‘an attempt was made to give a realistic presentment of ancient Greek life by means of modern stage pictures, rather than to illustrate the comedy by following approximately the conventions under which it is written’.⁵⁸⁸

The rowing scene, for example, mirrored one that might be seen at a university

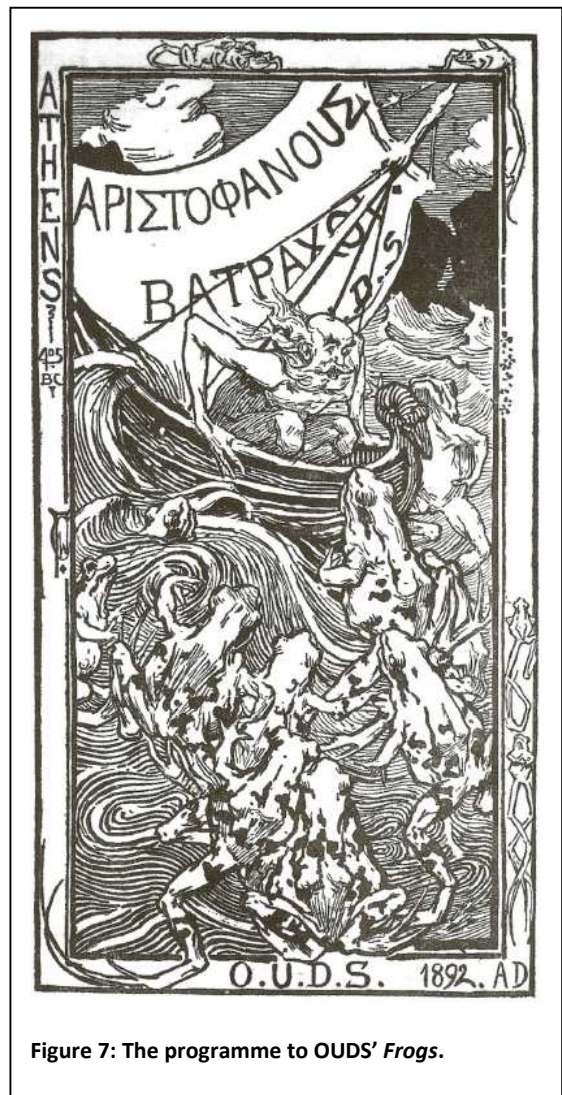


Figure 7: The programme to OUDS' *Frogs*.

coaching session of the most popular sport at Oxford at the time. This was described somewhat disparagingly by one reviewer: ‘The antics in Charon’s boat doubtless appealed to an audience which understands the art of “tubbing”,⁵⁸⁹ but ended up being one of the most popular scenes in the reviews.⁵⁹⁰ Dionysus was played in an effeminate manner perhaps reminiscent of transvestite burlesque performance, drawing criticism

⁵⁸⁷ Wrigley 2011: 65.

⁵⁸⁸ Mackinnon 1910: 177.

⁵⁸⁹ Anonymous 1892.

⁵⁹⁰ Carpenter 1985: 47; Wrigley 2011: 68-9.

from a reviewer who said ‘On what authority the Wine-God was represented as slim and grossly effeminate we know not’.⁵⁹¹

The music was a mix of recognisable styles, from opera to Beethoven to music hall and

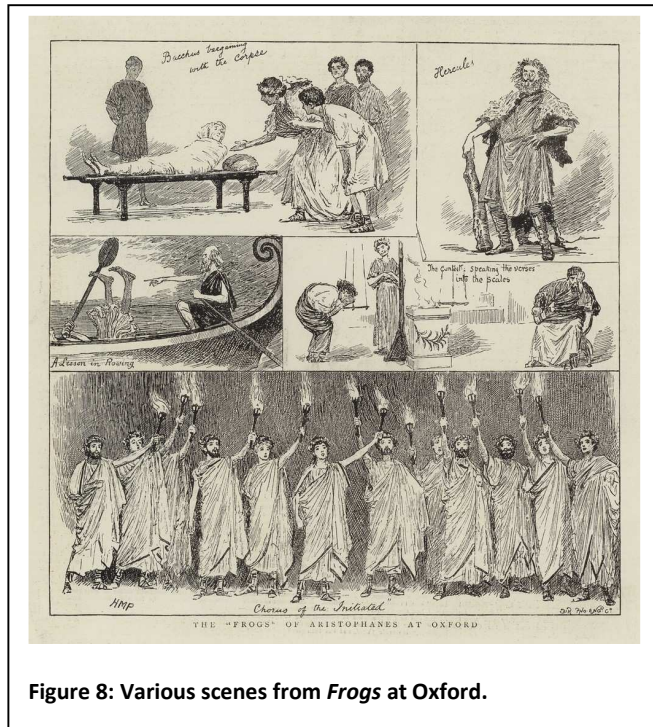


Figure 8: Various scenes from *Frogs* at Oxford.

was used to distinguish between Aeschylus and Euripides in particular. Throughout the contest musical phrases from Beethoven and Meyerbeer were used to underscore Aeschylus and Euripides respectively.⁵⁹² Euripides also parodied Aeschylus’ choruses set to grand music in the style of Gluck, while Aeschylus returned

the favour by setting Euripides’ lines to music hall and other lighter music.⁵⁹³ Costume as well separated the two poets, with pink and green for Euripides and grey and brown for Aeschylus.⁵⁹⁴

The production contains little political content, though there is one subtle element contained in the music. As the words of the chorus become more political, the music changes from a polka to the ‘Boulanger’ March of Henry Duprato.⁵⁹⁵ Boulanger was a nineteenth century French general and Minister of War, who was a republican and nationalist. He also enacted a number of military reforms aimed at improving conditions

⁵⁹¹ Anonymous 1892.

⁵⁹² Shedlock 1895: 98; Mackinnon 1910: 181.

⁵⁹³ Wrigley 2011: 71.

⁵⁹⁴ Anonymous 1892b: 381.

⁵⁹⁵ Mackinnon 1910: 176; Wrigley 2011: 74.

for lower ranked soldiers and allowing more citizens to become soldiers. When the government fell and was replaced with a more conservative one, he was removed from political position but continued as a serving officer.⁵⁹⁶ Given the carefully constructed nature of the musical score for *Frogs*, it is surely not a coincidence that this music was chosen to underscore the political rhetoric within it. It also foreshadowed the more overt political elements of OUDS' 1914 *Acharnians*, coming as it did in a year of momentous international events.⁵⁹⁷

The production as a whole drew critical acclaim, though there was criticism of what was perceived as the more modern elements of the production. One reviewer questioned, 'If the members of the OUDS want to show their powers in burlesque, why experiment on the unfortunate Aristophanes?'⁵⁹⁸ Another argued that the actors did not show enough appreciation for the original author: 'Aristophanes should not be treated in the spirit of farcical comedy...many episodes in *The Frogs* were unpardonable'.⁵⁹⁹ On the other hand, a later commenter remarked 'To those who could lay aside thoughts of archaeology it was even valuable towards the understanding of Aristophanic humour'.⁶⁰⁰

Parry's score drew virtually universal praise, with one reviewer saying it was 'not within the province of the present writer...to unravel the ingenious web of motives from Beethoven's symphonies and popular waltzes which afforded the pleasure of recognition to all classes among the audiences',⁶⁰¹ while another taciturnly stated that the music 'illustrates its latent satire by an appropriate introduction of modern music'.⁶⁰² A music-

⁵⁹⁶ Schultze 2007: 365-7.

⁵⁹⁷ Wrigley 2011: 74-5.

⁵⁹⁸ Quoted in Wrigley 2011: 72.

⁵⁹⁹ Anonymous 1892.

⁶⁰⁰ Mackinnon 1910: 179.

⁶⁰¹ Quoted in Wollenberg 2001: 5.

⁶⁰² Anonymous 1892b: 381.

focused article in *The Academy* claimed, ‘there are no moments...in which one finds time to criticise’.⁶⁰³

However, the influence of this play, and further Aristophanic productions by OUDS, showed the academic audience that Aristophanes in Greek could be entertaining and popular.⁶⁰⁴ In contrast to the majority of OUDS productions at this time, *Frogs* was very well attended.⁶⁰⁵ Amanda Wrigley credits this production with inspiring the full-length productions at Dulwich College in 1895 and 1898,⁶⁰⁶ yet the evidence of *The Alleynian* suggests that the contest was not part of these performances.⁶⁰⁷ 1895 was the first time costume was used, and this perhaps was a result of its successful use in Oxford. Parry’s music was used for a production at St John’s School in Leatherhead in 1895 and was even considered for a production at Cambridge University in 1936.⁶⁰⁸ The OUDS production was certainly a landmark one, and was still being referenced for its success as late as 1914.⁶⁰⁹

Since that 1892 production *Frogs* has been performed a further sixteen times by Oxford University groups, most recently in 1993. OUDS performed *Frogs* again in 1909, once again using Parry’s music. This production was not as well-received, however, with the undergraduate magazine *Isis* saying ‘the novelty of hearing Greek spoken wears off after ten minutes’.⁶¹⁰ Gilbert Murray was by this time part of the Greek play committee and

⁶⁰³ Shedlock 1895: 98.

⁶⁰⁴ Wrigley 2011: 64.

⁶⁰⁵ Carpenter 1985: 47.

⁶⁰⁶ Wrigley 2011: 201n60, 209n56.

⁶⁰⁷ Aeschylus and Euripides are not included in the character list for either year. The 1895 write-up explicitly states ‘the selection ended with a capital scene with Aeacus’. See *Alleynian* Vol.XXIII, No.164:148-50 and Vol.XXVI, No.188:186.

⁶⁰⁸ Marshall 2015: 181-2; see below, pp.228-32 for more on the Cambridge production.

⁶⁰⁹ Wrigley 2011: 210n66.

⁶¹⁰ Quoted in Carpenter 1985: 67.

his translation⁶¹¹ was available for sale alongside the original 1892 Frere script.⁶¹² The all-female Somerville College performed Murray's translation in 1911. Murray was a great friend of the Classics dons at Somerville, especially Isobel Henderson, and spent much of his time in Oxford there rather than at Christ Church; it was at Somerville that his translation of *Acharnians* was performed by a pan-university cast in 1914. It was not until 1993 that a pan-Oxford group would perform the *Frogs* again, this time in English, with a translation by Rupert Warren, and in a double bill with *Women of Trachis* in Greek. This production was directed by Alex Walker, who had recently graduated from Oxford and would go on to direct *Frogs* again in 2013 as Head of Classics at Bedales School.⁶¹³

In 1931 *Frogs* was chosen by another Oxford group, the Balliol Players, as their first Aristophanes play. This time it was performed in translation, again Gilbert Murray's, and it toured to several venues in the south of England, primarily to audiences of school groups. Music was composed for it by the play's producer, Lewis Masfield, son of John Masfield, the Poet Laureate.⁶¹⁴ Just as the OUDS' performance had been previously, the production was a great success, attracting their largest ever audience at Corfe Castle, despite the presence of some wet and windy weather.⁶¹⁵ The production differed from the company's very traditional tragic stagings by adding modern elements into costume and language: the presence of an eye-glass and the word 'OK', for example. The success of the production⁶¹⁶ was such that the following year the company performed *Birds*, instead of returning to tragedy as some members had wanted.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹¹ See Chapter Two, pp.117-20.

⁶¹² *Frogs* programme (1909).

⁶¹³ See below pp.217-20.

⁶¹⁴ Wrigley 2011: 153.

⁶¹⁵ Wrigley 2011: 154.

⁶¹⁶ Wrigley 2011: 155.

Murray's translation of *Frogs* was performed by the Balliol Players on tour again in 1937, before performances of *Acharnians* and *Birds* in 1938 and 1939.⁶¹⁷ The outbreak of the Second World War ended the company's tours for the next seven years and many of those who had been in those productions were lost. Irish poet Monk Gibbon witnessed the 1937 productions of *Frogs* and composed these poignant lines:

Heavy the scene of the Dorset Hay,
The Balliol Players in '36;
Which of them guessed as he croaked 'The Frogs'
How near he stood to the river Styx?
While out laughter yielded to youth's attacks –
Brek-e-kek kek! Ko-ax! Ko-ax!⁶¹⁸

Somerville College performed Murray's translation again after the war in 1946 and it was not much later, in 1948, that the Balliol Players embarked on another tour of *Frogs*. Again this was in Murray's translation, though even more topical changes to the script were creeping in. For example 'mis-laid his oil-flask' became 'the Liberal Candidate lost his deposit'.⁶¹⁹ Music for this production was composed by an Oxford Professor of Music, Jack Westrup, who as an undergraduate in Classics had composed the music for the Balliol Player's productions of the *Oresteia* in 1923 and *Hippolytus* in 1926.⁶²⁰

Frogs remained popular with the Balliol Players, with further tours in 1953 (again Murray's translation) and 1957 (an unknown version). In 1964 an original adaptation was

⁶¹⁷ Wrigley 2011: 165.

⁶¹⁸ Quoted in Wrigley 2011: 170.

⁶¹⁹ Quoted in Wrigley 2011: 174.

⁶²⁰ Wrigley 2011: 174.

used – it was written by a number of students including the now Chairman of the BBC Trust and Chancellor of Oxford University, Chris Patten.⁶²¹ This version used the popular pairing of William Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw in place of Aeschylus and Euripides.⁶²² It was set in France and included an abundance of crude humour. This upset the teachers in the audience with elements such as a song set to the tune of ‘The Lambeth Walk’, which included the lines:

This is Paris at her best:

You will see when we’ve undressed

What we reveal,

Doing the G-string peel.⁶²³

The Balliol Players’ final tour of *Frogs* came in 1972, featuring a Dionysus modelled on the then Prime Minister and former Balliol Player, Edward Heath. His motivation for travelling to Hades is the lack of quality Conservative leaders in Britain and he ultimately competes in the contest himself, defeating Sir Winston Aeschylus and Mr Harold MacEuripides. The choice of this subject matter is especially notable given that the production began its tour with a performance at Chequers, with Heath himself in attendance.⁶²⁴ Dionysus actor Richard Salter stated that Heath ‘was very polite, but suffered something of a sense of humour failure’.⁶²⁵

The first political production with a nationalistic slant is that of Scottish academic and politician Douglas Young (1913-73). He translated *Frogs* and *Birds* into Scots, naming them *The Puddocks* and *The Burdies*. The two were performed at the Edinburgh Fringe

⁶²¹ Wrigley 2011: 184.

⁶²² See Chapter Six for the most high-profile example of this change.

⁶²³ Quoted in Wrigley 2011: 184.

⁶²⁴ Wrigley 2011: 188-90.

⁶²⁵ Quoted in Wrigley 2011: 190.

Festival in 1958 and 1959 respectively, with *The Burdies* going on to be staged by the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company in Edinburgh in 1966. Young had studied at St Andrews and Oxford, leaving Oxford in 1938. He was an intensely political figure and served as Chairman of the Scottish National Party from 1942 to 1945, while still in his twenties. During the war he refused to be conscripted, professing in court that the Act of Union did not give the British Parliament the right to conscript Scottish citizens. This led to him serving two terms in jail. In 1944 he won a by-election in Kirkcaldy, and following the war he held a string of academic posts in Scotland, Canada and the US until his death in 1973.⁶²⁶

Young translated a number of languages into Scots, as well as translating works of Robert Burns into Greek. His translation of *Frogs* was at the request of students at St Andrews University.⁶²⁷ The request from St Andrews follows the involvement of Lewis Campbell in Fleeming Jenkins' production while he was a professor at St Andrews, though there seems to be no other link between the university and the play until Kenneth Dover. *The Puddocks* was self-published in 1957, before being performed by the Reid Gowns (Red Gowns) at St Andrews in February 1958. The Fringe performance by the Sporranslitters (Cutpurses) occurred in August and September that year and, at the same time, the play was republished. It was subtitled 'A verse play in Scots frae the auld Greek o Aristophanes'.⁶²⁸ The performance at the Fringe took place in an outdoor venue where a stream ran between the audience and stage, allowing the frogs actually to be in the water.⁶²⁹ Unfortunately the fickle nature of Scottish weather, even in the summer, disrupted some performances. The scale was large as well, with the St Andrews'

⁶²⁶ Marshall 2010: 539; Findlay 2005: 177-8; Baker 2016 309-10.

⁶²⁷ Young 1958: ix.

⁶²⁸ Marshall 2010: 240.

⁶²⁹ Young & Murison 1977: 22.

production running for 130 minutes and the Fringe production listing 33 chorus members in the cast.⁶³⁰

Given Young's political and nationalistic background it is not a surprise to find that the translation is something of a political statement in itself. In the foreword to the play, when discussing the different Scots accents that appear in the text, he pointedly mentions the 'unhappily United Kingdom'.⁶³¹ The foreword begins, in the spirit of the parabasis, by comparing the current state of the Scots language to diluted Scotch whisky. Young seems to be implying that the Scottish people should not be watching theatre just in English, but in their own colloquial tongue. Despite this, when speaking about other companies producing the work, he states 'I should allow English, Irish, or American words and phrases, or less unfamiliar Scots terms, to be used instead of those which I have printed'.⁶³² He justifies his use of colloquialisms and contemporary references by mentioning 'Aristophanes' Greek usages, localisms, slang, preciosities and archaisms'.⁶³³ Despite the emphasis on the 'Scottishness' of the production, he rejects advice to replace Aeschylus and Euripides with 'Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns, or Burns and Hugh MacDiarmid, or Diana Dors and Marilyn Munroe'.⁶³⁴ The mention of Robert Burns follows his inclusion in the *Frogs*-inspired *Crisis in Heaven*, by Young's fellow Scottish Nationalist, Eric Linklater.⁶³⁵ He does, however, mention his previous doubts as to whether this scene would work for a modern audience – but states that the two productions have proved these fears to be unfounded.

⁶³⁰ Marshall 2010: 241.

⁶³¹ Young 1958: xi.

⁶³² Young 1958: v.

⁶³³ Young 1958: v.

⁶³⁴ Young 1958: ix.

⁶³⁵ See Chapter Three, pp.172-3.

Young had previously expressed his belief in the importance of Scots, which he aligned himself with MacDiarmid and others in calling ‘Lallans’, as part of the Scottish Renaissance. He had written that the ‘national status of Lallans must be emphasised, if only because so many superficial readers or propagandist hacks have dubbed it a mere dialect of English, a provincial variant of the King’s English’.⁶³⁶ It seems that his use of Scots was something he felt hampered the original performance, as he says in his foreword to the second edition, ‘the Scots vocabulary used by me was not all such as to be readily recognised at first hearing even by habitual speakers of Scots, much less by Americans and other English-speakers in a random audience’.⁶³⁷ Despite this, he does not change the script in any major way, but reiterated in the second foreword that things could be changed as required. He does include a glossary and a list of topical references that arose during the first performance. He again cites Aristophanes’ referencing of contemporary matters, saying, ‘Aristophanes made much use of topical allusions, which must be represented by modern locally topical allusions’.⁶³⁸

He also makes mention in the foreword of other plays in Scots, David Lindsay’s *Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaites* from 1552 and Robert MacLellan’s *The Flouers o Edinburgh* from 1948, both of which had been performed at the main Edinburgh Festival.⁶³⁹ It has been suggested that, by connecting his production to these prestigious productions, he was attempting to emphasise the cultural significance of his own play and link it to the higher profile Edinburgh Festival.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁶ Quoted in Findlay 2005: 181.

⁶³⁷ Young 1958: ix.

⁶³⁸ Young 1958: ix-x.

⁶³⁹ Young 1958: ix.

⁶⁴⁰ Marshall 2010: 540.

The cultural significance is something that comes in to play again in the 1958 edition, in which Young has included quotations from academic and literary figures or publications about *The Puddocks*.⁶⁴¹ It begins with the president of the British academy, Sir Maurice Bowra, and then follows with T.S. Eliot, implying the cultural significance of his script through a marriage between the academic and the literary.⁶⁴² The quotations also serve to highlight the superiority of Aristophanes in the Scots language over English. Prime examples include: ‘it catches the neatness and sharpness of the Greek as our new Chicago or Minneapolis versions completely fail to do’;⁶⁴³ ‘Somehow the Scots translation seems to give a much clearer impression of the sense than ordinary English’;⁶⁴⁴ ‘English translations tend towards the tepid. Young’s...does not’,⁶⁴⁵ and ‘a tour de force, in verve, vigour, vitality and virility far surpassing any similar English version’⁶⁴⁶. Despite their presentation as reviews, the quotation from Maurice Bowra, at least, comes from a letter to Young.⁶⁴⁷

The political element and his ongoing feud with the British government are also brought up in the foreword when he mentions changes enforced on him by the Lord Chamberlain for the Edinburgh Fringe performance. After expressing his bemusement at the changes requested, he states, ‘I mention in passing that I had not time to investigate the precise legal rights, if any, of the Lord Chamberlain in regard to Scotland and Scots plays; and sent him his two guineas simply to obviate any hindrance to the Byre production by the students.’⁶⁴⁸ Young did, however, privately suggest that were there ever a professional performance he might pursue a legal challenge for the publicity it would give to the

⁶⁴¹ Young 1958: 50-2.

⁶⁴² Marshall 2010: 541.

⁶⁴³ Quoted from Sir Maurice Bowra.

⁶⁴⁴ Quoted from G.T.W. Hooker, editor of *Greece and Rome*.

⁶⁴⁵ Quoted from *Time (Atlantic)*.

⁶⁴⁶ Quoted from F.R. MacKenzie, in *Scotland*.

⁶⁴⁷ Baker 2016: 322.

⁶⁴⁸ Young 1958: x.

Scottish national cause.⁶⁴⁹ Given Young's political predilections, one might have expected these cuts to be of lines that have a seditious nature; the cuts, however, are actually owing to obscenity. The first is the section where Dionysus soils himself (479 and 486-91) and the second is where Dionysus says, 'kittlan my dearest member, at sicht o his ploy' (545-6) which translates as '(I) tickled my member at the subtlety of his practical joke'.

Unfortunately we do not know whether the play was as successful as the quotations make it out to be. Certainly it did well enough for the Reid Gouns to ask Young for another Aristophanes translation, *The Burdies*. However, neither their production nor the 1965/66 production by the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company were well received and indeed the latter caused a very public argument to break out amongst some of the fiercest supporters of Scots. Amongst the chief detractors of Young's script was the Scots poet and driving force behind the first university Department of Scottish Literature, Alexander Scott.⁶⁵⁰

Without a greater command of Scots it is difficult for me to analyse the script itself; but Lecturer in English at the University of Aberdeen J. Derrick McClure has written an analysis of the adaptation of both *The Puddocks* and *The Burdies*, which concludes that Douglas Young's 'extensive scholarship, his ability to empathise with Aristophanes and his world, his mastery of the many registers of Scots, the verbal ingenuity that enabled him to compose in iambic pentameter, iambic heptameter, dactylic tetrameter, anapaestic heptameter, trochaic tetrameter or free verse, and above all his exuberant sense of humour, enabled him to produce a pair of brilliantly successful translations'.⁶⁵¹ What can be ascertained is that, whilst the script is somewhat loose in its translation of the words,

⁶⁴⁹ Baker 2016: 324-5.

⁶⁵⁰ At Glasgow. Marshall 2010: 542; McClure 2004: 216.

⁶⁵¹ McClure 2004: 230.

its structure sticks very rigidly to Aristophanes: the line numbers, for example, are exactly the same.

This production is nevertheless an interesting one from the point of view of *Frogs* as a political play. In contrast to many of the other political versions, the politics here come not from the script but from the existence of the production itself. A reading of the script, albeit by someone not fluent in Scots, reveals it to be a fairly straight translation, rather than incorporating any extra political comment. The comment is the play itself, and its implication that the Scottish people do not have to rely on an English translation for their entertainment, but can instead enjoy it in their own language.

The mid-60s saw a succession of performances of *Frogs* that, like *The Puddocks*, fell foul of the Lord Chamberlain's censorship. One of these revealed a production that occurred in 1965 at the Arts Theatre, Glasgow University, translated by Hubert Chalk. Chalk was a Lecturer in Greek at the University from 1950-81, and the 'Chalk Prize', for excellence in Level 1 Classical Civilisation, is named after him. The translation itself is unpublished and the manuscript that appears in the Lord Chamberlain's collection was printed from a typewriter, with a number of handwritten alterations. The script describes itself as 'A translation with some adaptation' so, whilst the structure of the play and the number and distribution of the lines follows Aristophanes very closely, the language within the lines themselves is adapted more freely. Whereas the Loeb translation's line from Xanthias goes 'Of course he's a gentleman; all he knows is boozing and balling' (739-40), Chalk adapts it as 'He's sporting all right – he's the God of Wine, Women and Song' (p.37). This self-censorship allows the play to avoid much of the Lord Chamberlain's scrutiny, with only the word 'Shit' (p.9) crossed through. The only structural change is splitting the play into two acts and combining the Initiates and parabasis into one choral sequence.

The interval therefore occurs between Dionysus entering Pluto's palace and the conversation between Xanthias and Aeacus, where the parabasis was originally situated.

The parabasis section (p.24) is very short, occupying less than a page. This segment is described as 'A suggested adaptation' in the margin. It begins with the chorus suggesting out loud that they could 'have a crack or two at someone on the Senate or the Court like they used to in Greek Comedy', but then they say 'of course they are financing this show, and they've lent us this theatre and it might sound a bit ungrateful'. They do mention the 'appalling personal habits of the Professor of Dichotomy', but do not make it clear whether this is perhaps a nickname for a real person.

Aeschylus and Euripides are retained for the contest and much of it stays true to Aristophanes. However, the script strays towards the absurd when Aeschylus makes fun of Euripides (1309-22). The passage is meant to be Aeschylus showing how Euripides 'makes up his material from anywhere – pop songs – brothel-ditties – News of the World', but in reality brings the absurdity of the passage to the forefront:

O-o-o Halcyons! Who by everlasting ocean wave

Burble

Bedewing dewy wing-tips with the drips of dew-drop-dripping Southerlies

And o ye-e-e!

Who up in a corner under the roof

(And the little old spinning wheel tralalas its roundelay)

Spin your woof,

YE

Nimble-fingered flimsy-whimsy

Itsy-bitsy I-love-himsy

SPIDERS!

Where the dolphin loves to sport

On the starboard (I mean port)

Words of ten sea knots import

And the twining vining glory wining

Grapey cluster soft reclining,

Sa-a-ay, what about a spot

O' necking babe? (p.63)

Most of this text is in Aristophanes, though not quite in that form. In contrast to this somewhat loose adaptation, the end of the contest translates almost exactly the pieces of advice on Alcibiades and the city. One unusual choice is that Chalk opts to use the version of Euripides' advice with the wings and the vinegar rather than the alternative 'serious' political advice.

Some names and references are modernised, for example Aeschylus being given a knife for Cleophon is replaced with him being given a noose for Alec Douglas-Home.⁶⁵² Heracles' list of those that Dionysus will find in Hades now includes, 'anyone such as has done violence to children to cheat them of money, or assaulted his mother or socked his dad in the jaw – anyone who ever foreswore his solemnly contracted oath, or who ever wrote "She loves you yea, yea, yea"' to which Dionysus adds, 'and anyone who sets Bernard Shaw to music, too' (pp.9-10), references to the Beatles and *My Fair Lady*. Elsewhere references to Theramenes and Phrynichus, as well as the other tragic poets

⁶⁵² Douglas-Home served as a Conservative Prime Minister from 1963-64 after the resignation of Harold Macmillan on health grounds. Douglas-Home resigned as Leader of the Conservatives himself in 1964 after defeat in the General Election.

mentioned by Heracles, are retained. Some metatheatricality is also included, with Charon telling Xanthias to wait for Dionysus ‘Over there by the wings’. (p.12)

1966 saw two straightforward versions of *Frogs* sent to the Lord Chamberlain. In March Dudley Fitts’ translation was approved for performance at Oriel College, Oxford and in September it was David Barrett’s Penguin translation’s performance at Duthy Hall, London. Once again it was obscenity that was the target of the infamous blue pencil, with the Lord Chamberlain making several changes, despite the two translations being comparatively tame. The section eliminated from Young’s version where Dionysus soils himself (479) was censored again, both with respect to Fitts’ ‘I seem to have soiled myself’ (p.50) and Barrett’s ‘Dear me, an involuntary libation! Invoke the god’ (p.174). The Lord Chamberlain seemed to disapprove of all bodily functions, further eliminating references to breaking wind from the servant: ‘except, maybe, a good strong emission’ (Fitts p.68); and from Xanthias: ‘I’ll let a fart and blow it off my back’ (Barrett p.156). The ‘boozing and balling’ (740) line was censored in Barrett’s translation but not in Fitts’; ‘guzzling and nuzzling’ (Fitts p.67) was deemed appropriate for an audience whereas ‘soaking and poking’ (Barrett p.184) was not. Interestingly, Fitts’ translation is the only one of the four in the Lord Chamberlain’s collection to have had a part of the contest censored, with the description of Euripides’ Muse as being nude and Aeschylus saying ‘I’m coming’, while making fun of Euripides, being picked out. (p.99)

It is somewhat strange that of all the productions that occurred in the UK during the period of censorship by the Lord Chamberlain, only four scripts are contained within his collection. The Lord Chamberlain’s power to license any new play ‘for hire, gain, or reward’⁶⁵³ under the Stage Licensing Act of 1737 (reiterated, but not significantly altered,

⁶⁵³ Quoted in Stephens 1980: 6.

by the 1843 Theatre Act⁶⁵⁴) did not usually extend to university and school productions. This explains why the majority of productions were not submitted to the Lord Chamberlain, though there does not seem to be an explanation as to why the Glasgow University and Oxford University productions were submitted. The bulk of the remaining productions prior to the ending of censorship in 1968 would not have needed a licence. One exception might have been two productions at the People's Theatre, Newcastle, in 1937 and again in 1952, but no record of these exist in the Lord Chamberlain's records.⁶⁵⁵ It should be noted, however, that censorship was difficult to enforce outside London and many plays were performed without licence in the rest of the country; since the right to censor the plays did not extend to opera, many provincial productions escaped the Lord Chamberlain's eye by adding a few songs and pretending not to be spoken drama.⁶⁵⁶

So far *Frogs* had been performed in Britain in its original language and translated into English and Scots. But in 1967 British audiences were exposed to a radically different experience of the play from a rich but unfamiliar reception tradition, with a translation into Demotic Greek. Behind this production was Polish-Greek theatre director Karolos Koun (1908-87). Koun, raised in Istanbul, was a teacher of English at an American school in Greece; while there he staged student productions of *Birds*, *Frogs* and *Wealth*.⁶⁵⁷ In 1942 he founded Theatro Technis, an independent company based in Athens.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁴ Stephens 1980: 11.

⁶⁵⁵ The 1952 production used Murray's translation, the script for the 1937 one is not recorded.

⁶⁵⁶ Stephens 1980: 15.

⁶⁵⁷ Van Steen 2007: 158.

⁶⁵⁸ Van Steen 2007: 159.

Performance of Aristophanes in twentieth-century Greece, where he is the most popular of ancient dramatists for adaptation, is often concerned with contemporary Greek politics.⁶⁵⁹ Whilst they have their own academic tradition, it has been argued that only in Greece has the primary reception of Aristophanes been a performance one.⁶⁶⁰ Modern Greek adapters are generally unconcerned with whatever meaning can be drawn from the original play. Gonda Van Steen tells us ‘the search for the playwright’s “own” political

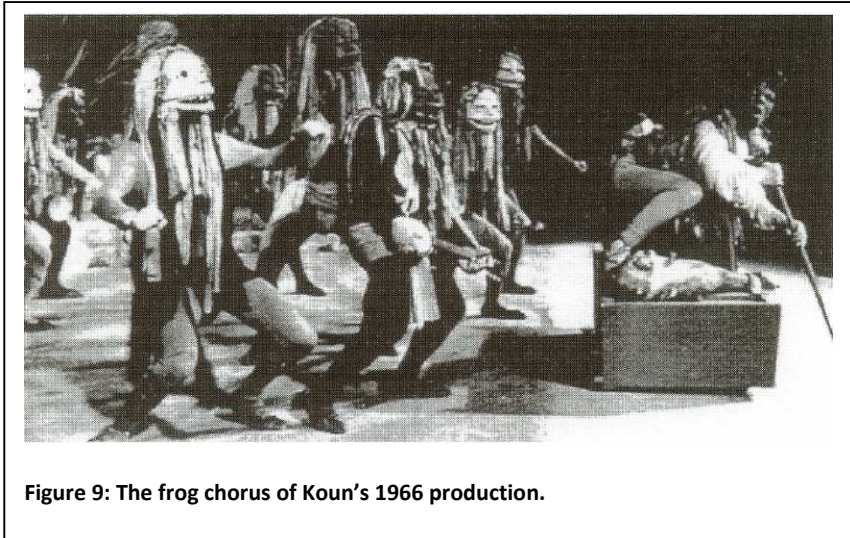


Figure 9: The frog chorus of Koun’s 1966 production.

intentions becomes less important than the modern goal of rendering one or more perceived political or ideological messages

intelligible to the present.’⁶⁶¹

Koun’s productions were no exception to this trend. His Demotic production of *Birds* (1959) caused religious offence and was banned in Greece,⁶⁶² but later performed in Paris (1962) and London (1963).⁶⁶³ It would not see a state-sponsored revival in Greece until 1975.⁶⁶⁴ In 1966 Koun produced *Frogs* in Athens. The parabasis and its call for amnesty resonated with Greeks on both the left and right wing of politics, since they both saw it as referring to the treatment of people on their side.⁶⁶⁵ This production of *Frogs* was first

⁶⁵⁹ Van Steen 2000: xi.

⁶⁶⁰ Van Steen 2000: 5.

⁶⁶¹ Van Steen 2007b: 109.

⁶⁶² See Van Steen 2007 for details.

⁶⁶³ Van Steen 2007: 168.

⁶⁶⁴ Van Steen 2007: 169.

⁶⁶⁵ Van Steen 2000: 179-80.

performed in Athens in 1966 and toured Greece, before moving to Switzerland and finally coming to London in 1967, alternating with *Birds* and *Persians* at the Aldwych Theatre in London. By this time the parabasis had taken on a further resonance not found in British productions, since the military had taken control in Greece and suspended many civil liberties such as freedom of speech. Greeks were now being imprisoned and exiled for their political views.⁶⁶⁶

The staging of this production emphasised the alien nature of the underworld. The music, for example, was given an eastern inspiration. The masks of the Initiates were inspired by ritual iconography and Koun was criticised for making them so similar to the tragic chorus of his *Persians*, which clashed with the comical behaviour of the principal characters. The frog chorus were not represented naturalistically but their oversized masks were again inspired by ritualistic practice.⁶⁶⁷ Some reviewers in London found the chorus of Initiates reminiscent of a Zulu war dance, rhythmically moving to drum beats.⁶⁶⁸

The London production used 'simultaneous translation' into English, using 'wands' through which the English versions of the lines could be heard. While this may have helped some to understand the production, one reviewer commented 'Greek punchlines on the stage consistently drowned out the translator's attempt to time a gag',⁶⁶⁹ whilst another evidently preferred the original Greek, saying, 'Aristophanes...so woefully tedious in translation, becomes in modern Greek as gay as we are told he was'.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁶ Shulman 1967.

⁶⁶⁷ Varakis 2007: 187-8.

⁶⁶⁸ Hobson 1967.

⁶⁶⁹ Shulman 1967.

⁶⁷⁰ Spurling 1968: 21.

Most praise for the production seems to have been reserved for the chorus' segments. One reviewer said, 'It is in the handling of the chorus...that Karolos Koun's production makes its unique impact'.⁶⁷¹ Another stated, 'It is to the chorus...that belong all the dignity and honour and sad, prophetic grief'.⁶⁷² Once again the problem of the contest reappeared, with one reviewer saying, 'it is only Mr. Koun's faculty for keeping his characters in motion that holds one's attention'.⁶⁷³

This version of *Frogs* is very different from any other one discussed, stemming as it does from a Greek theatre director and not a British one. Karolos Koun was, possibly unintentionally, a very political figure in Greek drama after his production of *Birds*. Yet the political resonance for the Greek audience may not have been the same for a British one. However, for Greeks who saw the London production it was still impactful. A contemporary review records that when the chorus came forward for the parabasis they removed their masks and spoke Aristophanes' political advice; during this there was 'a noticeable stiffening, with appreciative murmurs from the Greek part of the audience'.⁶⁷⁴ It is a small comment, but a significant point in the search for *Frogs*' modern political relevance. Maybe for the Greek audience of the 60s, many of whom were in exile from Greece and effectively disenfranchised themselves, Aristophanes' politics were not as far away as they can seem to a 21st Century British one.

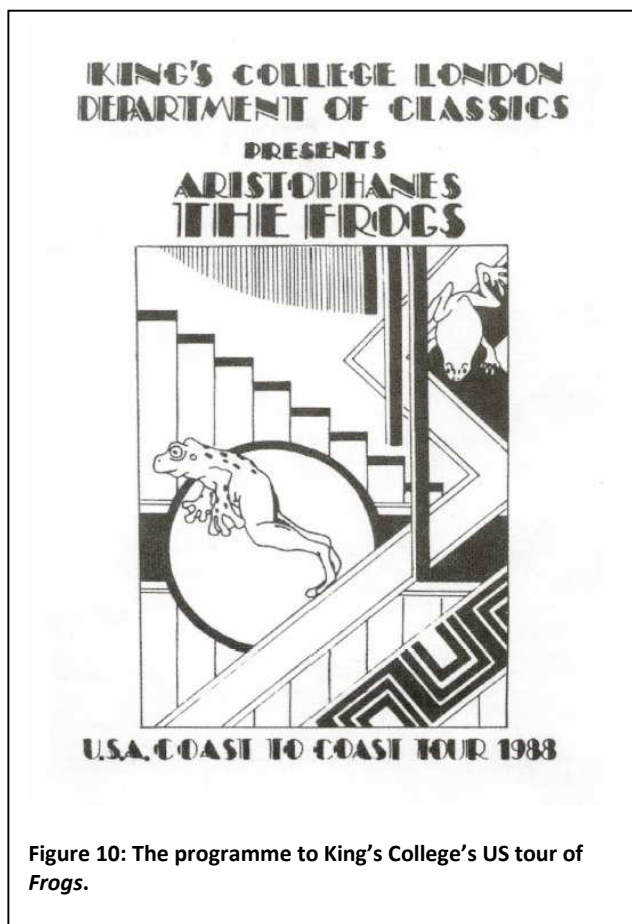
⁶⁷¹ Shulman 1967.

⁶⁷² Hobson 1967.

⁶⁷³ Darlington 1967.

⁶⁷⁴ Spurling 1967: 19.

In 1988, King's College London performed *Frogs*, in a version which subsequently



toured to the US. It did not attempt to recreate a Greek staging of the production, but instead used art deco as its inspiration for everything from the set to the poster.⁶⁷⁵ This stylistic choice continued through the music of the production, arranged by Professor Michael Silk, which used existing songs from 20s and 30s America.⁶⁷⁶ Although performed in the original Greek, the lines were sometimes altered or rearranged to fit with the music.⁶⁷⁷ This production

again shows the significance of music within the reception of *Frogs* and also is the first to show that adaptation does not necessarily require translation.

The physicality of certain scenes within *Frogs* can make it attractive to different sorts of performance art. One such less traditional production was performed in 1991 in Cardiff. Theatr Taliesin Wales produced a number of Greek-inspired plays in the 1990s, beginning with *Frogs*. It was performed in association with Waberi, a Somali dance troupe based in Cardiff. Gamelan instruments were used to provide music to which Balinese Topeng dancers danced while performing as multiple characters. Local school-children formed

⁶⁷⁵ Silk 2007: 293.

⁶⁷⁶ Silk 2007: 295.

⁶⁷⁷ Silk 2007: 297; this method would be used, in a much more extreme fashion, for the 2015 Cambridge Greek play, see below, pp.229-30.

the frog chorus and the production was well-received.⁶⁷⁸ Unfortunately very little else about such an interesting production can be ascertained.

Perhaps the highest profile production of *Frogs* to have occurred in Britain is one produced by the Royal National Theatre, which toured the UK in 1996. Theatre director Fiona Laird was the driving artistic force behind the production, having adapted, composed, directed and musically directed the production. It was not Fiona Laird's first exposure to *Frogs*. In 1991 she had adapted and directed a version in a double bill with *Electra* for The London Small Theatre Company. Classicist Peter Meineck was producer. There were only five in the cast and all singing was done a cappella. The structure follows Aristophanes very closely, as does most of the translation; original Greek names are never changed, though a small number are omitted. The parabasis used the coinage analogy and Cleophon is mentioned by name. The advice from the poets regarding the city and Alcibiades is unchanged and Pluto mentions Cleophon again in the closing speech. The major change in the contest is that Dionysus decides the outcome on a coin toss, rather than as a result of the poet's advice. The programme for this production included a detailed summary of the play, as well as a comprehensive historical background. It also featured a list of personalities mentioned in the play, naming everyone from Ameipsias to Morsimus to Pythangelus. Evidently this production required audiences to read the programme thoroughly to understand the production.

Costume was colourful and reminiscent of clowns or pantomime. The pantomime theme ran throughout, as much of the acting would not have been out of place on a pantomime stage. The frog chorus, perhaps inspired by arguments over whether they appeared in the original production, were onstage but unlit. They did not undertake any of the bouncing

⁶⁷⁸ Morgan 1991: 184.

around that is normally associated with the frogs in modern performances. Instead they used their song in order to distract Dionysus, who was singing his own rowing song. The production was praised for its use of modern music for the choruses⁶⁷⁹ and the audience reaction to the jokes and songs on the VHS is very positive, though the laughter becomes notably scarcer during the contest scene.

The 1996 National Theatre production was put on as part of their 'Mobile Productions' programme. These are plays intended to appeal to younger audiences, so chosen to be both educational and entertaining.⁶⁸⁰ The production was largely indistinguishable from the 1991 version, with only a few noticeable changes, Fiona Laird claimed this version was more faithful to Aristophanes than the 1991 version.⁶⁸¹ The cast was the same size and they were again singing a cappella. There were some extra songs added, incorporating new styles into the score. The programme again contained a detailed historical background and a list of names, though this time limited to characters who appear in the play and a description of Cleophon, Theramenes and Alcibiades as 'Politicians'. The disembodied voice of Pluto was performed by Judi Dench.

This production is available on VHS at the National Theatre Archive. Few audible laughs can be heard and most come from the over-the-top acting rather than the script. In fact, a lot of the dialogue is lost in the silliness. It perhaps betrays a lack of confidence in the script to stand on its own.

There was a huge disparity in the reaction of the reviewers to the production. The reviews in the national press were almost universally negative, while those of regional critics were

⁶⁷⁹ Macauley 1991: 15.

⁶⁸⁰ *Frogs Programme* (1996).

⁶⁸¹ Cook 1996: 44.

far more positive. Whether this implies a higher standard on the part of the national reviewers or a more forgiving nature on the part of the local ones we cannot say. One particularly unkind reviewer described it as a ‘painfully self-conscious irritating knockabout’, accusing the National Theatre of having ‘confused accessibility with the lowest common denominator’.⁶⁸² Another reviewer stated it was ‘frenzied and desperately unfunny’,⁶⁸³ while a third wrote that the production was ‘so keen to make an ancient classic seem FUN! that a sense of desperation sets in’.⁶⁸⁴ In particular, the decision to translate Aristophanes’ play literally was criticised, one reviewer stating ‘To get the most out of Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, it isn’t vital to have been an Athenian citizen of 405 BC, but it would, you feel, certainly help’.⁶⁸⁵ Another review said the ‘once-topical allusions are lost’,⁶⁸⁶ and yet another reported ‘Without a contemporary anchor, this bastardised version amounts to little more than a series of tangential comic riffs’.⁶⁸⁷ As always, the contest proved particularly problematic for the audience, with one reviewer saying, ‘The action...comes to a dead stop at this rather boring battle’⁶⁸⁸ while another remarked that, although Dionysus was modernised, ‘The playwrights, however, remain very much who they always were, which...is going to mystify all but the precious few’.⁶⁸⁹

The regional reviews had much better things to say. One reviewer in Castle Cary mentioned the ‘rapturous response from packed audiences, belying the savaging that the show has got in some national newspapers’, and that it was ‘obviously a huge success in terms of making classics accessible to those who no longer read them in schools’.⁶⁹⁰ A

⁶⁸² Donald 1996: 25.

⁶⁸³ Morley 1996.

⁶⁸⁴ Spencer 1996.

⁶⁸⁵ Taylor 1996.

⁶⁸⁶ Bassett 1996.

⁶⁸⁷ Stratton 1996: 135.

⁶⁸⁸ Curtis 1996: 43.

⁶⁸⁹ Tinker 1996: 54.

⁶⁹⁰ GP-W 1996: 35.

reviewer in Sevenoaks stated, ‘a play written nearly 2,400 years ago brought bang up to date’,⁶⁹¹ while another in Belfast wrote ‘*Frogs* is without doubt the brightest, bestest [*sic*] musical in town’.⁶⁹² In particular there were positive things said about the performances, with Dionysus described as ‘wonderfully camp’.⁶⁹³ Charon was especially popular, as was the versatility of the actor playing him – along with playing Heracles, Aeacus and Aeschylus.⁶⁹⁴

The music received mixed reviews – again with a national/regional divide – with one reviewer describing, ‘resoundingly unfunny a cappella numbers that range, we are told, “from do-wop to hip-hop” but, to my ear, simply range from bad to worse’.⁶⁹⁵ Another thought that the songs were ‘skilful and funny’ but nevertheless found that ‘all this camp window-dressing has nothing whatsoever to do with the original play’.⁶⁹⁶ The music was used to differentiate between the lyrics of Aeschylus and Euripides, with Aeschylus’ being set to a grand aria melody, while Euripides rapped his lyrics. While this was both negatively and positively received, it was at least a distinctive part of the production as a whole.

This is the only production I have found to take the route of a literal translation and include a large number of notes in the programme to support it. The mixed outcomes of the reviews make it difficult to ascertain whether this approach was successful or not. There is no guarantee every audience member will buy a programme and, to get the full appreciation of what is going on, they would have to have it open during the performance, or at least have managed to read several pages of text prior to the start. Whilst this

⁶⁹¹ Farley 1996.

⁶⁹² Fitzgerald 1996.

⁶⁹³ Unknown 1996: 2.

⁶⁹⁴ Curtis 1996: 43; Farley 1996.

⁶⁹⁵ Taylor 1996.

⁶⁹⁶ Curtis 1996: 43.

production and the accompanying literature may teach people more about Aristophanes' Athens, it does little to infuse the production with a sense of relevance. If anything, it reinforces the notion that the play can only be watched as a sort of historical artefact, rather than entertainment in its own right.

In the year 2000 Graham Ley, Professor of Drama at the University of Exeter, wrote an adaptation entitled *Filthy Frogs* which was performed as a rehearsed reading. His is an adaptation deeply rooted in dramatic history and many of the characters represents notable figures from Western theatre. The contest is between Berthold Brecht in the Euripides role and Antonin Artaud as Aeschylus. The frog chorus becomes a chorus of 'Ar-Toadians'. They are opposed to political theatre – just as their namesake Artaud avoided political involvement during his lifetime – and speak entirely in French or *Français*, chanting 'El-lo, el-lo, matelots' instead of 'Brekekekex'. The Initiates appear as theatre critics. Heracles, Charon and Aeacus are all replaced with Irvine Welsh, Jerzy Grotowski and Constantin Stanislavski respectively. Xanthias becomes the female 'Xanthia', with a differing taste in theatre from Dionysus and a dim view of the male-dominated nature of twentieth-century drama. She has been a fan of the work of Sarah Kane, who committed suicide just the year before.⁶⁹⁷

Extracts from the script show it to be full of twentieth-century and more modern references. Diverse figures such as Joseph Goebbels, Marilyn Monroe, Martin Luther King, Augusto Pinochet, John Gielgud and Mr Blobby are seen, heard or referenced throughout. At the end of the play, Brecht and Artaud are both revealed to be unsuitable and so Dionysus instead goes in search of Samuel Beckett; Xanthia, meanwhile, has an encounter with a spirit she believes to be Sarah Kane. The production was performed by

⁶⁹⁷ Ley 2014: 883.

and to members of the drama department and so these references were playing to an informed audience, and it is unlikely that this adaptation would have been understood by the average theatre audience uneducated in theatre theory. In fairness to Graham Ley, he makes no claim that it was suitable for public performance. It does, however, address Gamel's inductive authenticity,⁶⁹⁸ by addressing a deeply theatre-literate audience of the kind that the original production targeted. Such an audience is hard to create in a contemporary, commercial setting, except in a specialised and elite academic context. Alongside this it is also an example of structural authenticity, since it reflects the community in which it is created.

One planned production, which unfortunately as of writing has not been performed, might have raised some very interesting ideas. Classicist Tony Keen wrote in 2006 about a planned adaptation of *Frogs*, which is unique in that it was intended for performance at a Science Fiction convention. He intended to replace Aeschylus and Euripides with SF authors, although would not reveal which ones until the performance actually happened.⁶⁹⁹ He also planned to use the idea that *every* character should represent an existing person, whether real or fictional.⁷⁰⁰ Behind his adaptation is the idea that 'Aristophanes is a writer who *needs* adaptation' and 'One should seek to honour the spirit of what he wrote, rather than his precise text'.⁷⁰¹ What he means by the 'spirit' of Aristophanes is explained as satirical/contemporary humour and profanities. He criticises translations that try to tone down the ruder parts of Aristophanes' plays.⁷⁰² Keen's play was originally aiming for a 2008 performance, but unfortunately by the time of the completion of this thesis it had still not been performed. It is a great shame as such a

⁶⁹⁸ See Introduction, pp.34-5.

⁶⁹⁹ Keen 2006: 7.

⁷⁰⁰ Keen 2006: 8.

⁷⁰¹ Keen 2006: 6.

⁷⁰² Keen 2006: 8.

different adaptation of *Frogs* performing to such a distinctive audience might have brought about some interesting results.

In 2012, *Frogs* made another appearance at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, in a version entitled *Almost Nothing to do with Frogs*, by Dan Byam Shaw and Guy Clark. Again the production has its origins in education, as it was written and performed by students from Eton College. As the title suggests, it is a very free adaptation of Aristophanes, the loosest I have seen that still keeps the same basic structure, i.e. the underworld journey to bring back a writer. The programme tells us that ‘The trouble with performing *Frogs* in the original is that, like an issue of *Private Eye*, the majority of the jokes are referential and highly topical’, and ‘we have tried to keep the dark, satirical spirit of the original alive in our retelling of the play, which otherwise has almost nothing to do with *Frogs*’.

Dionysus and Xanthias are not included, but are instead replaced by a pair of failing television writers. Looking for a way to revive their careers, they resolve to travel to the underworld to seek inspiration from William Shakespeare. Only one character is retained from Aristophanes, which is that of Heracles (although the more familiar Hercules is used). Far from the mythical hero though, he is re-imagined as a Greek waiter, not an insulting portrayal, but featuring a stereotypical accent. Passage to the underworld is secured by means of an airline for the dead, meaning the heroes themselves must pretend to be dead to blend in, a cliché seemingly inspired by the many films that involve a similar dynamic, such as *The Mummy* (1999), *Sean of the Dead* (2004) and *Zombieland* (2009). The corpse that is featured in this scene could be seen as a modern counterpart to Aristophanes’ corpse, but in this version is literally a corpse and therefore unmoving and unspeaking.

Even the frog chorus are not actually frogs, but a group of muses who have formed a band named 'The Frogs'. One anthropomorphic frog does appear, with a frog's head mask on an actor in shirt and trousers, greeting the audience as they enter. The shouting match between Dionysus and the frogs becomes instead a 'battle of the bands' between the two writers and 'The Frogs', the latter of whom are joined in defeat by the anthropomorphic frog. The frog does not take this defeat well, saying 'This isn't over. I'm going to fuck you up.'

Once in the underworld, the two writers have a disagreement and go separate ways. One comes across a man in a ruff that he thinks is Shakespeare, only to find that it is in fact Christopher Marlowe pretending to be his fellow Elizabethan poet for the attention. Shakespeare is later found in disguise, as he has had enough of that same attention. Nevertheless, he agrees to return to the land of the living with the writer.

Meanwhile the other writer finds Harold Pinter and decides to take him back to the land of the living. Once the two writers reunite the stage is set for a contest. With Dionysus absent and the two stand-ins supporting different poets, Alan Sugar is brought forward to judge between the two in an *Apprentice*-style hiring. The contest goes through several stages of varying absurdity, including a dance off and a rap battle. Despite the seemingly frivolous nature of the contest, there are some genuine attempts at literary criticism, for example when Shakespeare echoes Euripides and points out Pinter's penchant for pauses and silences (known as the 'Pinter Pause' and the 'Pinter Silence'). As in so many adaptations where Shakespeare is involved, he wins the contest and is about to return to the living world when the frog makes good on his promise from earlier and returns with a gun. The play ends with the frog holding Shakespeare at gunpoint while the rest of the cast flee the stage.

It is a strange end to this adaptation, which (as will by now be apparent) bears very little resemblance to Aristophanes other than the basic structure. Politics are entirely removed and whilst there is some criticism of the two playwrights, it is nothing compared to what we find in the original. The contest scene cannot have been longer than ten minutes within the hour-long play. Nevertheless, this production was a genuinely funny and well-written piece. The audience, myself included, were constantly laughing.

Again, music played an integral part in the production, with original choral songs written by Guy Clark. Just as in ancient theatre, these songs were used to separate scenes, though often they would have very little to do with the action.

This adaptation, more than any other production discussed so far, highlights questions about the nature of adaptation. As indicated by its title, *Almost Nothing to do with Frogs* is so far removed from Aristophanes as really not to be *Frogs* anymore. It is, for example, the only production which removes Dionysus as a character. It is in this regard not so different from *The Ostriches*,⁷⁰³ which I included in the previous chapter as a ‘reflection’ of *Frogs* rather than a straightforward adaptation.

Given its pedagogical background, it is not surprising that *Frogs* remains popular with school groups. The Joint Association of Classical Teachers mounted productions of it at both their 2012 Greek and 2013 Classical Civilisation and Ancient History Summer Schools. The 2013 production used Affleck and Letchford’s Cambridge translation,⁷⁰⁴ with well-known music to underscore some of the rewritten songs. The frog chorus, for

⁷⁰³ See Chapter Three, pp.173-5.

⁷⁰⁴ See Chapter Two, pp.161-3.

example, sang to the tune of ‘Fever’, while the Initiates sang to ‘All Things Bright and Beautiful’. Again we see work being put into the musical side of the production, with songs adapted where the script has not been.

2013 brought another school production, one that rejected a straight translation of Aristophanes in favour of a fresh adaptation. The production took place at Bedales School in Hampshire. When asked to mount a production in the open-air theatre at the school, the Head of Classics, Alex Walker, was inspired by the presence of a nearby pond to perform the *Frogs*.⁷⁰⁵ According to the programme, the script was ‘rearranged by Katy Walker’ and, as she states in her programme notes, ‘This is not at all a conventional translation, as you will see, but it is, I hope, truly in the spirit of Aristophanes’.

The play starts with the frogs singing a short verse of ‘brekekekex koax’, before Dionysus and Xanthias enter and introduce themselves. They are recast as a politician and his secretary, in a relationship similar to that of the Prince Regent and Blackadder in *Blackadder the Third* (1987). The political situation of Athens is introduced via a series of reporters and an imagined Cabinet meeting. Through these the audience are informed that the war with Sparta is going badly and Athens’ financial situation is so dire that the Cabinet have been forced to melt down treasures from the temples. In addition to this, there are accusations from the philosophers that Athens is bankrupt morally as well as financially. Modern politics are brought into play as the Cabinet’s response to the crisis is to cut funding to the arts, but Dionysus – or rather Xanthias – is able to persuade the Chairman that other action is needed. Instead, the Chairman decides that a poet is needed to inspire the Athenians in their current plight: ‘A Moral Compass, that’s what we need, isn’t it? That’s what they’re all saying, the people, the media’. Like Aristophanes’

⁷⁰⁵ Personal communication from Alex Walker on 28 August 2013.

Dionysus, the Chairman dismisses modern poets, saying ‘they’re all rubbish – style over substance’ instead wanting ‘Those great writers who taught us how to live’ (p.9). And so he sends Dionysus to the Underworld to bring back a poet.

From there the action continues in the same manner as the Aristophanes version, with Dionysus and Xanthias visiting Heracles to ask how to access the Underworld. The corpse scene is omitted and so the play progresses straight to the ferry across the Styx and the introduction of ‘Karen’ the boatperson. Instead of its being because of his status as a slave, Xanthias is forced to walk because Dionysus has spent his fare on wine. Interestingly the frog chorus does not occur here. A number of frogs pop up, but they do not sing the ‘brekekekex’. A version of the Initiates appear after this, recast as stereotypical Frenchmen – perhaps a reference to the British nickname for the French being ‘Frogs’ – singing ‘Le Pique Nique’, at which Dionysus helps himself to plenty of food and wine. The Aeacus, maid and innkeeper scenes then follow, with the innkeeper and Plathane re-imagined as landladies, Evelyn and Veronica. In the palace, Pluto is absent and replaced with Persephone.

In lieu of the scene between Xanthias and the slave explaining the contest, instead Euripides sits in Aeschylus’ seat at dinner. The contest that follows is greatly reduced in size from the Aristophanes version. Specific references to plays are removed, leaving much more generalised criticisms. Aeschylus states ‘(Euripides’) plays are all utterly pointless – they’re all style over substance, gritty dramas about ‘real’ people talking about their feelings’ (p.50). To this Euripides replies, ‘And that’s criticism, is it? Real people talking about their feelings?’ (p.51). He goes on to criticise Aeschylus’ characters as ‘Polite, sensible and worthy’ (p.51). When Persephone suggests a formal contest, Xanthias cuts it short by stating, ‘I’m not sure it would help matters. I have no doubt that

both...would be able to wow us with their brilliance – that they are both experts in their field is not in question’ (p.52). She sums it up by saying ‘what is more useful – thought or feeling?’ (p.53) Dionysus chooses, although there is more than a hint that the decision is made by Persephone, and picks Aeschylus. The decision is given an unusual anti-democratic spin, as the only explanation Dionysus gives for not picking Euripides is ‘well, listening to the people? Sounds pretty dangerous to me’ (p.54).

What is significant about this script is that it removes both the parabasis and the vast majority of the contest, the sections where the bulk of the political material in the Aristophanes is to be found. Despite this, references to financial cuts places it firmly in the realm of contemporary politics. However, it does link the production to its ancient Greek roots, where productions were forced by financial constraints to have more than one *choregos* to fund them. Adapter Katy Walker points this out in her programme notes: ‘so Culture Secretary Maria Miller’s call this month for artists to advertise and promote British businesses abroad is not, in fact, anything new.’

A reference to the *choregoi* is included in the play itself and helps capture the metatheatricality of Greek comedy. When Xanthias is trying to justify why the arts should not be cut he mentions, ‘Why, the poet Aristophanes is, I believe, having to accept sponsorship from several different sources’ (p.7). It transpires that the play he is seeking this funding for is in fact *Frogs*, into which Dionysus and Xanthias step. Repeated instances of characters walking across stage between scenes with signs for various sponsors reinforces this point. Metatheatricality continues throughout with frequent references to the audience. When Dionysus complains, ‘I hate frogs. Nobody said anything about frogs’, Karen replies, ‘To be fair, I think the clue was in the title’ (p.26).

This play lightly introduced a contemporary political message, albeit one that does not really reflect the politics of the original play. Whatever funding problems Aristophanes may have had, these issues do not seem to be raised in the play itself, other perhaps than through references to performers dressed in rags. But a play that is essentially all about the arts lends itself very well to addressing the view that at this time the arts sector is increasingly suffering from cuts and bias against it. While this theme is introduced early on in this script, it is not really taken up and carried through. After the emphasis given to it in the programme, one might have expected the theme on this to be pursued. In fact, there does not seem to be a political slant at the end of the play at all and very little reason is given for the choice of Aeschylus. If the translation wanted to make a more firm statement about this, perhaps it could have found some way to tie Dionysus' decision to the political message.

Schools and universities are not the only places tackling Aristophanes. Theatro Technis,⁷⁰⁶ located in North London, was founded by Cypriot immigrants and they regularly performed Greek theatre since their production of *Antigone* in 1969. In October 2013 they mounted a production of *Frogs*, having previously performed it in 1983. This 2013 production reused the script from the 1983 version, which consisted of a translation by George Savvides, adapted by Ted Creig and George Savvides with lyrics by David Dearlove. As well as their Greek theatrical heritage, they have a strong interest in

⁷⁰⁶ Unaffiliated to the Theatro Technis of Karolos Koun: the term means 'Art Theatre' in Greek.

performing left-wing political theatre.⁷⁰⁷ This production of *Frogs* was no exception: their programme promised it would be placed in ‘the current context of political, social and economic crisis that the world is going through’. Inspired perhaps by the Occupy movement, the aim of the production was to show ‘the needs for change to create a world for the good of the whole society and not just the plutocratic elite’. The notes of director, George Eugeniou, in the programme take this one step further into the contemporary,



Figure 11: *Frogs* at Teatro Technis in 2013.

stating ‘The rise and fall of Athens...is characteristic of all empires, including US & EU today, which bear a great resemblance of Athens of the 5th century in this aspect’. The script had been altered from the 1983 one to

incorporate contemporary references, but it is unclear how much of the message has been changed.

The political aspect is introduced straight away, with an empty set other than one wall to the side covered in pictures of past and present politicians. As the audience enter, the cast are standing onstage in front of this wall, wearing various disparate masks. The production opens with the song ‘Don’t Expect a Crowd’, in which the cast rather self-deprecatingly proclaim:

Don’t expect a crowd

It is not a West End show,

⁷⁰⁷ They have since performed an original piece that proposes a conspiracy within the US Government that was responsible for John F. Kennedy’s assassination.

So don't expect a crowd. (p.3)

Later in the song it is made clear that the cast are actually talking about the size of the chorus, rather than the audience. This introduces the political theme, since they cannot afford a large chorus in the current era of austerity. Throughout the song, the politics of the piece are pressed home:

Don't expect a crowd

Not when there's a crisis on

The world's in a state

The leaders are morons

People are impoverished,

And no-one's feeling proud

Boom and bust is on the horizon,

So – don't expect a crowd. (p.4)

And:

CHORUS THREE: Where every leading politician

Is lying for position

CHORUS SEVEN: Money and power is what they all lick arses for

ALL: No – intellectual revolution isn't what this era passes for! (p.4)

Opening the production in such a way makes it very clear that politics is going to be an integral part of the production. Despite this version having a Greek-Cypriot (as opposed to mainland Greek) origin, it is evidently following the Greek tradition of political content described above in relation to Koun's production.

After this opening song, the script follows the structure of the Aristophanes fairly closely.

Unlike a lot of adaptations this production does not try to steer clear of the more obscene

parts of Aristophanes, but almost revels in them. In the very first scene when Xanthias is asking whether he should tell a joke, he asks ‘What about the one when I strain so hard that I shit my trousers? Or the one when I try so hard not to strain that I fart?’ (p.5) Later Xanthias tells Aeaca (sic) that Dionysus, ‘only thinks of three things: feasting, farting and fucking’ (p.36).

The script also does not back away from criticising high-profile figures within the theatrical industry either. During the Dionysus and Heracles (named Hercules) scene, the latter suggests to Dionysus that he bring back Shaw or Shakespeare. Dionysus replies, ‘Someone’s already tried that, and it failed miserably’ (p.9). This is a clear reference to the perceived failure of the Sondheim/Shevelove/Lane Broadway production of *Frogs*.⁷⁰⁸ Similarly, when David Hare and Marc Ravenhill are mentioned and Hercules says they are not dead, Dionysus’ reply is to say ‘But their muses are’ (p.9).⁷⁰⁹

Modern references abound throughout, such as Hercules suggesting Dionysus jump from the Shard to get to Hades, and the lake to Hades being pumped full of water from Fukushima (p.11). Some of the references to the modern day – a list of playwrights in the first scene for example – come across as unnatural and ‘shoehorned in’ purely for the sake of updating the production. Only two frogs appear for their scene to start with, but are joined by two more during the song. They sing a rather tuneless version of the ‘Brekekekex co-ax co-ax’ before asking:

Whatever’s the point of a couple of frogs

In a play about poets of some bygone age

⁷⁰⁸ See Chapter Five.

⁷⁰⁹ Both these ‘radical’ playwrights are rather unfairly often laughed at in the theatre industry for not having produced any hit dramas for rather too many years.

and ‘But why have a scene on a lake when it’s nothing to do with the actual plot?’ (p.16)

These are pertinent questions within the reception of *Frogs*, but this production makes no attempt to answer them or justify the inclusion.

The contest scene does nothing to resolve the problems of staging it. Aeschylus and Euripides are retained, though Pluto does not appear on stage. The structure of Aristophanes’ contest is followed fairly closely, at least to begin with. The one noticeable change is that the lines of the chorus from Aristophanes are replaced. The first is heavily paraphrased by Xanthias. Take, for example, the following verses translated from Aristophanes:

‘You behold all this, glorious Achilles!’

But what will you say in reply?

Only take care

that your anger does not seize you

and drive you off the track,

for his accusation are formidable.

Yes, take care, good sir.

that you don’t reply in a rage,

but shorten your sails

and cruise with them furled,

then little by little make headway

and keep watch for the moment

when you get a soft, smooth breeze. (991-1003)

These lines are abbreviated to, ‘How true. Now how is Aeschylus going to reply to that?’

He must be careful not to let his wrath get carried away’ (p.45). The next song (1098-

118) is replaced with a song for Dionysus about choosing between the poets. The ‘lost

his oil bottle' segment (1198-248) occurs, though the words are replaced. In the script it uses 'stuck two sharp pencils up his nose' (pp.53-5), whereas in performance the phrase 'with a pair of dirty underpants' was used (a reminder of the risks entailed in studying theatre history from scripts without experiencing performances). The chorus' lines after this, (1251-60) are replaced with a duet, 'Wit and Weight', between Euripides and Aeschylus. Following this, the performance departs from Aristophanes' and cuts straight to the scales scene, omitting lines 1261-1364. For the weighing, a comically small set of scales clearly being moved by Dionysus was used.

The segment regarding Alcibiades is omitted and there is only a small attempt to do anything other than translate the final pieces of advice from Euripides and Aeschylus. Accordingly, the advice that seemingly wins the contest for Aeschylus is to 'regard the enemy's country as our own, and ours as the enemy's and when we realise that people are our true wealth and all other wealth is poverty' (p.59). After the choice is made, Aeschylus further elaborates, pledging:

to fulfil Prometheus dream, (sic)
bread, freedom, equity and justice
for every living human being,
born tomorrow, live today, killed yesterday
by austere measures in this century
for the sake of money, power and hegemony,
the cause of the Peloponnesian war
that ruined Athens and Sparta in the 5th century BC
the way Plutocracy and destroyed Democracy
in the capitalist land of Capitol Hill. (p.61)

The production ends with a reprise of 'Don't Expect a Crowd', this time with some added flattery for the audience:

We didn't expect a house

To show such eruditeness

And audience with such nous

Such sharpness and such brightness (p.62)

Finally the frogs return to the stage. Although it is not in the script, in performance they once again ask, 'So what was the point of a couple of frogs in a play about poets of some bygone age?' Once again no answer is provided.

Unfortunately this was not a successful production. The attempts to contemporise *Frogs* largely failed. Many references to modern politics were heavy-handed, such as 'those who cribbed a speech by Tony Blair' (p.12) being seen in Hades. The rather odd parabasis exemplified this simplistic treatment of the politics. In it, Dionysus asked several leading questions of the audience while the chorus pointed false microphones at unsuspecting audience members. The questions were along the lines of: 'Is the world in crisis?'; 'Is US, who had hegemony since World War 2 in decline, as Athens was in the 5th century BC?'; and 'Do we need new leaders in the darkest dawn Greece and the world faces today?' (p.36) These questions were met with uncomfortable yeses from the clearly confused audience members that were picked on. Dionysus then asked, 'If you were in God Dionysus' shoes whom will you bring back from Hades to lead us today?' (p.36) Various answers were elicited from the audience, before Dionysus suggested that the audience 'Think about that'. Again, it was not clear what message the production was trying to convey.

The script comes across as only partially adapted. Some ancient references are changed whereas others are left in. Xanthias remarks ‘Why didn’t I take part in that sea battle – I would have won my freedom, then I would have shown him’ (p.6) and later Charon says ‘I don’t take any slaves unless they have fought in a sea battle risking their lives’ (p.14). These references to Arginusae are not explained in the programme or in the play itself. Similarly, Euripides’ reference to Phrynichus is retained (p.42, line 910 in Aristophanes). In contrast, some things are changed to be more recognisable. Whereas Aristophanes’ Euripides says, ‘my tragedies, including, yes, my *Peleus*, my *Aeolus*, my *Meleager*, and even my *Telephus*’ (863-4), in this version of *Frogs* Euripides chooses plays better known to a modern audience, ‘Let him choose from my *Medea*, *The Trojan Women*, *The Bacchae* or even *Hecuba*.’ (41) Similarly in 405BC Euripides stated Aeschylus’ followers were ‘Phormisius and Megaenetus the Stooge’ (965), whereas his own were ‘Cleitophon and the sharp Theramenes.’ (967) In this version they are replaced with ‘Sophocles and Aristophanes’ and ‘Plato and Protagoras’ (44). They seem strange choices as those mentioned in Aristophanes were politicians. Given the focus of this production on politics, the message might perhaps have been better served by substituting contemporary politicians for the ancient ones.

This adaptation is further confused, with some modern references seeming natural while others were jarring. They have clearly attempted to keep politics at the forefront, but they have clearly misunderstood the position of Athens in Aristophanes’ time. They used the play as a criticism of US hegemony, but the whole point of *Frogs* is that Athens is losing the hegemony it gained following the Persian Wars. Teatro Technis could have rewritten the play to suit their aims, but by trying to map Aristophanes’ politics⁷¹⁰ on to their own they have created only confusion.

⁷¹⁰ As we’ve seen themselves a source of some debate.

In many ways this production was the antithesis of *Almost Nothing to do with Frogs*, which got rid of most of Aristophanes' text and had no political element, but made it funny. The Teatro Technis production made only limited changes to Aristophanes' script, and crucially kept the politics as much as it could. Unfortunately, this was done at the expense of comedy, and the various obscenities did not address this problem. Whilst I do not wish to claim that Aristophanes was funny all of the time, the play should at least elicit some laughter; while unlike *Almost Nothing to do with Frogs*, Aristophanes' *Frogs* also had some kind of commentary behind the comedy.

The next production to be discussed in this chapter addressed this issue head-on, the 2013 Cambridge Greek Play. *Frogs* had previously been performed at Cambridge in 1936 and 1947, but for the first time ever in 2013 a double bill was performed, comprising *Prometheus Bound* and *Frogs*. The 1936 production had been a landmark performance in its own right, exceeding many others in scale. There were over 40 actors in the cast and the score was written for 23 instruments.⁷¹¹ In total, over 4,500 people attended its one-week run.⁷¹² The production included an element of the political; for example Aeacus' followers gave a salute reminiscent of the Nazi party.⁷¹³ The music was composed for the production by prolific composer and Cambridge graduate Walter Leigh. Like Parry in 1892, Leigh used music to underscore the differences in Aeschylus' and Euripides' poetry, mixing music reminiscent of Arthur Sullivan and jazz.⁷¹⁴ *Frogs* had been chosen for performance again in 1947 as the first Cambridge Greek play after the war and the

⁷¹¹ Marshall 2015: 191.

⁷¹² Marshall 2015: 194.

⁷¹³ Marshall 2015:195.

⁷¹⁴ Marshall 2015: 185-6.

same script and score was used. This marked the first time Cambridge revived a previous production since they began performing Greek plays in 1882.⁷¹⁵

The double bill in 2013 allowed the company to give a taste to the audience of exactly what would be parodied in *Frogs*, in the form of *Prometheus Bound*, which was performed first. This idea is made clear when during Heracles and Dionysus' discussion of tragedy, Dionysus states he wants to find 'Someone who can write a decent line, like...'



Figure 12: Frogs at Cambridge in 2013.

before a few tragic lines are called out. The actor playing Prometheus reappears and begins to recite dialogue from his play, before being booed by the chorus, whereupon he

flounces offstage in an amusing contrast to the serious nature of his own play.

The Cambridge plays were performed in Greek with English surtitles. Whilst *Prometheus Bound* was performed in a straightforward manner, with *Frogs* the surtitles themselves were used as part of the comedy. For example, captions were used to introduce various scenes; during the frog chorus the caption 'Dance Break(ekekex)' appeared. Later, a group of confused actors were ushered onto the stage for the parabasis while the captions gave them these instructions:

The Parabasis

⁷¹⁵ Marshall 2015:178.

Where the chorus improvise.

In ancient Greek please.

Oh, forget it...

Crack jokes.

Make witty comments on today's news

Today's headline:

Energy bills too high?

Put on a jumper, suggests aide to Cameron

Ask the audience to like the play.

...while wearing large appendages.

Job done. On with the story.

When it comes to the dialogue, the use of the Greek text was very liberal, with a number of lines – in particular the songs – composed in English and translated into Greek. Most of the songs used modern tunes, if not lyrics. For example Charon entered singing the words of 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat' in Greek to the tune of 'O Sole Mio'. The Initiates' sequence was turned into a drunken party, with a mix of Aristophanic and modern lyrics set to the tunes of 'I Say a Little Prayer', 'Hey Jude', 'Angels' and 'Livin' On A Prayer'.

A caption at the end of the scene stated:

The Cambridge Greek Play does not
encourage the irresponsible consumption
of alcohol.

Drink responsibly.

Always read the label.

Do not accept drinks from strangers

(even if they sing in Ancient Greek).

Helen Eastman has stated at length that the problem with adapting the ending of *Frogs* was finding a relevant political question to ask in the place of the questions that prompt Dionysus' final choice of Aeschylus in Aristophanes.⁷¹⁶ After finding that there was no easy answer, she elected to make a joke of the scene, and so just as Dionysus is about to ask the question the surtitles cut out. On investigation Dionysus discovers that the onstage surtitle typist is engaged in an embrace with Xanthias. What follows is an exchange entirely in surtitles between the two, and a number of other characters:

Dionysus: You're a disgrace

You've not surtitled the last 20 lines.

Surtitler: Sorry, I got distracted...

Not much was happening

She's very pretty...

I preferred the bit with the frogs

Dionysus: It was the important bit

The point.

The politics.

The message.

Surtitler: Ah... balls.

Aeschylus: Centuries of Greek play tradition! Ruined!

Euripides: Leave it, Aeschylus.

It's not like people understand your stuff

even when it has been translated.

Aeschylus: You little !*£#%

Translate that into Greek

⁷¹⁶ Cambridge Greek Play Symposium [20 October 2013].

and shove it up your %&!*

At this point Dionysus elects to ‘choose the one his soul desires’ and selects Aeschylus. The politics are taken out of the choice, but the comedy of the scene was very effective to the audience, who howled with laughter.

This production was clearly funny, but it achieved this by largely rewriting significant sections of the original Greek. Politics was only touched upon lightly, portraying the Empusa with masks of contemporary politicians. The contest was also significantly edited, something which every modern production has felt the need to do. As mentioned above, Eastman feels that making the production funny was authentic to Aristophanes. However, this misses my interpretation of the original play, that it encouraged people to think and question.

Another unique adaptation made significant alterations to Aristophanes. The production was mounted by Hecate Theatre Company, an all-female company based in Bristol. They specialise in adapting classical and modern theatrical greats with a feminist twist. Their adaptation of *Frogs* was written in blank verse by Charles Scherer, although it was workshopped considerably by the cast in rehearsal,⁷¹⁷ and toured the south-west in 2015.

⁷¹⁷ Personal communication from Hannah-Marie Chadwick, Artistic Director of Hecate Theatre Company, on 19th June 2015.

The production had a cast of only five, and each of them began the play as part of the frog chorus. The frogs played a far larger role in this production than in Aristophanes, since



Figure 13: Shakespeare in Hecate Theatre's *Frogs*.

they were present throughout and the actors simply stepped out of their roles as frogs to play principal characters. They represented this with some simple additions to their costumes, such as a jacket and sunglasses for Dionysus and a leather jerkin for Xanthias. At times the principal characters were unwillingly dragged back into being frogs – Xanthias,

for example, during the contest sequence.

There are a number of additional references, both ancient and modern, added to the text. The frogs warn each other not to speak ill of Dionysus, remembering ‘What happened to Pentheus when he blasphemed’ (p.2). When Dionysus and Xanthias are looking for the Styx, the god says to his servant:

Thanks to your navigation,
We've managed visits to Lethe,
Acheron and Phlegethon. Two left, and if this is Cocytus
I shall be feeling yet more punitive. (p.3)

The mix of ancient and modern is seen when Charon describes Sisyphus rolling his boulder uphill, and the frogs respond by singing ‘Let it Go’ in the style of the Disney film *Frozen*.

The frog chorus open the play by roaming amongst the audience as they take their seats, calling out their 'Brekekekex'. This becomes more frequent and more melodic, until all the frogs are on stage, croaking in a sort of harmony. The frogs then set the scene by explaining that Dionysus is travelling to the underworld. Far from the bumbling god of Aristophanes, Dionysus here is haughty and arrogant, if still unobservant and naive. Heracles is omitted as a character and instead it is to the frogs that Dionysus explains part of his reason for travelling to the underworld. Here there is no suggestion of saving theatre or poetry; instead, Dionysus is travelling to the underworld to settle an argument amongst the gods. Charon is retained, although there is no shouting match with the frogs. The innkeeper, Plathane and Aeacus are also all omitted, and so the action goes straight from Charon to Pluto. It is to Pluto that Dionysus explains the nature of the divine argument, a disagreement between Apollo and the muses over who is the greater writer: William Shakespeare or Jane Austen.

The contest actually takes up over half the running time of the play, the only adaptation I have come across that matches the proportional emphases of Aristophanes. At the start Shakespeare and Austen are respectful, even flirtatious with one another. Austen is somewhat overawed when she meets the bard and at first refuses to take part in the contest, stating that she cannot compare to Shakespeare. However, when Dionysus informs her how admired she is on Olympus, she begins to warm to the idea. Shakespeare's response lacks some tact when he asks:

But is there truly any sense

In pitting my work against that of

A silly lady novelist? (p.24)

At this all good feeling between the two is lost and the contest becomes increasingly bitter and personal. The contest consists only of opening statements from the two writers. At no point do the two authors attempt to praise their own work, but instead spend their time criticising the other's, with the frogs employed to act out various passages. This is not lost on Dionysus, who states that he 'came in search of beauty' but instead got 'pettiness, venom, spite' (p.38). He calls off the contest, and although he says that it pains him 'to grant either an honour' (p.39), he selects Shakespeare to return with him to Olympus because his 'word-craft isn't matched, Even when fumbled by Frogs' (p.39).

Dionysus, Xanthias and Shakespeare depart, leaving Pluto to deliver the final lines of the play. What he gives us is a somewhat bitter and resentful comment on the deceased writers:

There are no gifts. There is always a price.

We've seen the cost of genius in that display.

Who suffers the most? I.

The maladjusted, like the rest,

Live in my house forever.

If one god praying speaks to another.

Grant me this, Zeus, O caring brother

Immortalise the writers while they breathe

And send no more to wretched hell beneath. (p.40)

Following this, Austen is left on stage and gradually pulled back into the frog chorus. They return to their tuneful 'Brekekekex', which, in a reversal of the beginning, gradually rises in volume and becomes less musical until they suddenly stop.

It is a strange end to the play and I struggle to see what the message of it is meant to be from Pluto's speech. Quite the opposite to the Aristophanic view of poets having a moral duty, this version seems to suggest that all writers are bitter and jealous people to whom 'art...is nothing but ambition' (p.38). I am not sure that this was intended, but I struggle to find any other reading of it.

The final production to be discussed in this chapter was a rehearsed reading staged at the Almeida Theatre in 2015 as part of their 'Almeida Greeks' season. As well as full-scale productions of the *Oresteia*, *Bacchae* and *Medea*, the season included rehearsed readings of *Frogs*, *Wasps* and *Lysistrata*. The script for *Frogs* was adapted by Blanche McIntyre, Ben Schiffer and Alex Andreou.

The script retained the scenic structure of Aristophanes, while being liberal in its adaptation of the material. So whilst Aeschylus and Euripides were retained, most other ancient names were omitted or replaced. The list of living playwrights in the scene between Dionysus and Heracles (76-97) consisted solely of Dennis Kelly, Mike Bartlett and 'Royal Court this. Edinburgh Fringe that' (p.4-5). Further modern references occur, such as a mention of the '*Telegraph*' newspaper (p.28), 'Pizza Express' (p.32) and 'the endless pit of cheesed-off tarantulas they're prepping for Katie Hopkins and Paul Dacre' (p.7).

Like all successful productions, this one was very funny, through the combination of a good script and comedic performance. The contest, in particular, managed to sustain the entertainment in a way few productions have managed. Most memorably, it made use of the specific performance location, on the stage that was set up for the performance of

Bacchae later that night. When Aeschylus makes the claim, as he does in Aristophanes, that his plays have survived after his death whereas Euripides' died with him (*Frogs* 868-9), the latter responds 'Is that right? Whose set are we standing on by the way? Is Ben Whishaw just making it up as he goes along every night?' (p.25) Later, Aeschylus gets his own back by saying he can conclude the contest with 'five simple words...Five Stars. West End Transfer' (p.34), referring to the reception of the Almeida's production of the *Oresteia* earlier that summer. However, in staging a successful contest it highlighted the problems associated with the scene – at least for someone familiar with the play. The comedy of the scene was more down to staging and comic buffoonery than the parodic content contained within it. As with the Cambridge production, this perhaps indicates that the scene only works as a piece of pure comedy and not as the witty criticism that it was perhaps intended to be.

Most notably, of all the western productions that I have seen, this one handled the political element with the most skill. There were various simpler political references, such as the chorus of Initiates telling 'David Cameron...And his frightening coven' and 'a crowd of Labour arses' to 'Keep away from our rituals' (p.14). But the real political message was confined to the parabasis (p.22-3). This was delivered by Alex Andreou, who was one of the writers as well as a performer in the play and, crucially, of Greek origin. He began in an informal joking manner, referring to the surrounding area of Islington, 'A place in which a second-hand t-shirt from Primark – original retail three pounds – costs eight quid at the Oxfam shop', and continued about left-wing Labour leadership candidate, Jeremy Corbyn, and the governments of Britain and Greece. He highlighted the fact that, even in its bankrupt state, Greece has taken in 160,000 refugees, whilst Britain has accepted just 187. He then claimed this: 'Because we have colluded with the poisonous rhetoric of a poisonous press, either by support, indifference or silence for so long, that we have made

it politically toxic to be kind'. He went on to say, 'We have bought into the idea that compassion is a zero-sum game, in which the more of it we show to others – to the refugee, the migrant, the disabled, the unemployed, the alcoholic, the depressed, the poor, the dispossessed – the less there will be left in the pot for us'. The juxtaposition between the joking beginning and the impassioned plea, together with the conviction and timeliness with which it was delivered, made this parabasis a highly effective and genuinely moving piece of theatre – there was a notable stirring in the audience as it reached its conclusion. It proved that given the right treatment, a political message can have a strong impact, even if does not necessarily marry with Aristophanes' message.

Conclusion

Returning to the three strands picked out at the start of the chapter, the political content of the plays has proved the most polarising. Productions have taken very different views on how to incorporate this, ranging from making it the central element of the production (Theatro Technis), to subtly referencing it (Cambridge), to ignoring it completely (*Almost Nothing to do with Frogs*). Seemingly the most successful approach, and I would argue the most true to the original political dialectic, was the Almeida production. Whilst it had a clear agenda it did not offer specific political advice. In this way it encouraged the audience to think about what was said in the play, just as I suggest Aristophanes' *Frogs* encouraged people to do.

Whilst this thesis has pointed out overarching themes which span the continents discussed, there are some peculiarities which apply only the UK productions. British productions are generally traditional in terms of staging; aside from *The Puddocks* and the Bedales production, each one took place in a standard British theatre set-up, with a proscenium-arched stage. If there is a defining feature of *Frogs* elsewhere in the English-

speaking world, it is that staging can be adapted almost as much as the script. Performance in ancient Greek is also increasingly confined to UK productions, with no original language performance in Australia since the 1970s⁷¹⁸ and USA since the 1980s.⁷¹⁹ Whilst different types of performance have been experimented with recently, these features indicate that the performance of *Frogs* in the UK is defined by conservatism, perhaps as a result of its roots in private school and university performances.

⁷¹⁸ See Chapter Seven, p.320.

⁷¹⁹ See Chapter Five, pp.253-4.

Chapter Five

Frogs in North America

Much like the reception of *Frogs* within the UK, in North America there has been strong pedagogical interest in the play across the years. Indeed, from the date of the earliest North American performance in 1892 right up to 2017, only 19 documented productions out of 75 occurred outside a school, college or university. In addition, of the 75 productions, nine were versions of the Shevelove and Sondheim *Frogs*.⁷²⁰ The majority of the known North American productions occurred in the US, with only four taking place in Canada and none recorded in any other territory. Piecing together the full picture of productions, particularly in the early part of the time period, has been a difficult task. There are numerous references to productions of which the universities do not have any record. These discrepancies will be noted below. Assuming that all the productions referenced did occur, there are definite patterns in the popularity of performing *Frogs*. The first 70 years, from 1892 to 1960, saw 32 productions. 1960 marked a definite turning-point as in the 57 years since then there have been 43 further productions, but crucially the productions in the earlier time period were all performed at universities, whereas in this later period the number of university productions dropped to only 24 – and five of those were at the same university.⁷²¹ All the professional productions happened in this later time period, the first being in 1967.

Aside from discussion of the Shevelove/Sondheim version, there has been very little written from an academic perspective about performances of *Frogs* in North America. The earliest productions are touched upon by the work of two American scholars, Daniel

⁷²⁰ See Chapter Five.

⁷²¹ Wellesley College, see below, p.266-7.

Dickey Hains (1873-1937) and Domis Edward Pluggé (1897-1982). Hains published a series of articles in *The Classical Journal* on modern performances of Greek plays, most notably 'Greek Plays in America' in 1910. Pluggé published his 1938 thesis with the title *History of Greek Play Production in American College and Universities from 1881 to 1936*. Whilst these two authors are a good starting-point for research, their works usually only mention *Frogs* in passing and both are problematic as authoritative evidence. Hains' articles contain no footnotes, bibliography or references. Some of what he says I have been unable to verify independently and some is arguably contradicted by other sources.⁷²² Pluggé's thesis does name some sources (though often they are private conversations or correspondence with people involved), but his supposedly exhaustive list of 341 University productions between 1881 and 1936 omits at least six versions of *Frogs* and countless other Greek plays. Whilst that may call into question Pluggé's grasp of the full picture regarding performance of Greek plays,⁷²³ it does not in itself call into question the accuracy of what Pluggé has included – particularly as he references more of his work than Hains. It is also nevertheless worth noting that Pluggé references Hains' articles as a source in his own work, yet omits from his list of plays one production of *Frogs* that Hains briefly mentions.⁷²⁴ Pluggé is also the chief culprit in mentioning performances that the university in question has no record of;⁷²⁵ often these mentions will simply be as an entry on a list, but in at least one instance he gives a fairly detailed report on the play.

⁷²² I refer in particular to a supposed 1896 production of *Frogs* at the University of the South. See below, p.243n734.

⁷²³ Indeed it seems that the Colleges and Universities themselves were unaware of what other institutions were doing, as evidenced by the number of productions claiming to be the 'first' production of *Frogs* in the US.

⁷²⁴ A 1913 production at the University of Cincinnati. See Hains 1914: 255.

⁷²⁵ Such as a production at the Experimental College of Wisconsin-Madison. See below, p.252.

Academic work on the more modern productions has been limited, but I have been lucky enough to obtain a copy of a PhD thesis from 2001, *Aristophanes' Plays in the United States: a Production History in the Context of Sociopolitical Revelations* by Susan Carol Day.⁷²⁶ Whilst the thesis only goes into detail on a selection of productions, it does have a list of Aristophanic productions in the US up to 2001. This list includes a number of productions from the 1990s not attested elsewhere, but in many cases does not list sources.

Despite the lack of information, some themes and trends within the American reception do emerge clearly enough to be picked out. Accordingly, much of this chapter will be arranged thematically rather than chronologically, although some of the themes are inevitably related to chronological issues.

Frogs in North America Before the First World War

A clear change in the performance of *Frogs* occurred in North America around the time of the First World War. Productions before were generally characterised by conservatism in their staging, and the need to enhance the universities' prestige by performing Greek drama for the first time or in aping British university performances. This trend probably occurred due to the general position culturally of classical drama in North America. Whereas British audiences had first seen a Greek play in the sixteenth century, American audiences had to wait nearly three hundred years later to see a play by Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles or Aristophanes, with a 1798 adaptation of *Medea* in Boston being the earliest recorded.⁷²⁷ Even then, most of the high-profile productions were tours that came from Europe; such as the 1845 Mendelssohn *Antigone* in New York,⁷²⁸ Legouvé's

⁷²⁶ Submitted to the Department of Drama at Tufts University, Massachusetts.

⁷²⁷ According to the APGRD [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁷²⁸ See Macintosh 2015: 71-84

1856 *Medea* in Chicago,⁷²⁹ and Granville Barker's 1915 *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Trojan Women* in New York and Ivy League venues.⁷³⁰ Prior to this, modern melodramas set in ancient Greece or Rome were far more popular.⁷³¹ Burlesques were also popular, although many of these came from England themselves.⁷³²

The first North American productions of *Frogs* I have found were undertaken at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. According to Hains they performed *Frogs* in 1892, six years after *Acharnians* became the first Aristophanes to be performed in North America,⁷³³ and again in 1896.⁷³⁴ Hains informs us that the two performances 'bookended' a five-year run of Greek plays, with productions of *Alcestis*, *Antigone* and *Oedipus Tyrannus* mounted in the intervening years.

Details are scarce on the 1892 production, but certain things can be pieced together. The university yearbook *Cap and Gown* features only a cast list for the 1892 production, but from this it can be ascertained that the entirety of the play was presented. Hains states that the play was read by the professor of Greek with the cast performing the scenes through tableaux.⁷³⁵ But the cast list in *Cap and Gown* gives no indication of this and merely states that the play was 'Presented by the Students of the School of Greek, under the direction of the Professor.'⁷³⁶ Hains does say that the choral parts were sung. A later

⁷²⁹ See Boshier and Cox 2015: 98-111.

⁷³⁰ Although paradoxically, Granville Barker's productions may have been instrumental in changing American attitudes towards classical plays; see below, p.248.

⁷³¹ Boshier and Cox 2015: 98.

⁷³² Boshier and Cox 2015: 98-9.

⁷³³ *Acharnians* was performed at the University of Pennsylvania in 1886. It was the first Aristophanes only if Franz Schubert's German opera *Die Verschworenen*, loosely based on *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*, is discounted. *Die Verschworenen* was performed in New York in 1877.

⁷³⁴ Although there are no records within the university archives of the 1896 production happening. Hains gives little detail about the production and does not name a source, so it seemingly cannot be proven that this production did actually occur.

⁷³⁵ Hains 1910: 32-3.

⁷³⁶ *Cap and Gown* 1892: 95.

article in another university paper, *The Sewanee Daily Purple*, states that the actors ‘appeared on stage...only in pantomime’,⁷³⁷ seemingly confirming Hains’ assertion. The plays that followed *Frogs* were performed in full, and *The Sewanee Daily Purple* confirms they were performed in English.

It is no coincidence that that first production of *Frogs* occurred in the same year as the landmark production at Oxford. In the early productions we can clearly see that performing a Greek production was seen as a matter of prestige, particularly in the north-eastern states. We might see this as the influence of British universities on the American ones, and that it was another source of prestige for the relatively young American institutions to follow in the footsteps of their European counterparts. In 1905 the University of the South took this influence of British universities to the extreme by recreating the 1892 Oxford production almost entirely, with Parry’s music used and scenery explicitly copied from Oxford.⁷³⁸ The university paper, *The Sewanee Purple*, claimed that it was the first fully-staged production of *Frogs* in America.⁷³⁹

This prestige claim to be the ‘first’ *Frogs* of some sort has been repeated a few times. Consequentially we have Beloit College, Wisconsin,⁷⁴⁰ claiming in a history of the college that their 1902 production was ‘perhaps the first Greek comedy given in America in English translation’.⁷⁴¹ Student newspapers from the time of the production seemed confused themselves: on 5th June 1902 they said ‘Only once has any Greek comedy been

⁷³⁷ *Sewanee Daily Purple* Vol .3, No.1: 1.

⁷³⁸ *The Sewanee Purple* 16: 3.

⁷³⁹ Despite several mentions of the production before it occurred there seems to be nothing written about it afterwards, aside from a very brief mention (without a date) of the performance in an issue from 1917 (*The Sewanee Purple* 307: 2).

⁷⁴⁰ Beloit had a strong tradition of performing Greek plays with 27 recorded performances between 1885 and 1931.

⁷⁴¹ Eaton 1928: 234.

presented in the United States, and none has ever been given before in the West’;⁷⁴² and on 20th June, ‘the first presentation in America of a Greek comedy’ but ‘It is understood that [it] was once given by students of an English University.’⁷⁴³ We also see there this mention of a British university further legitimising the significance of their production. As late as 1913, the International Young Men’s Christian Association College in Springfield, Massachusetts,⁷⁴⁴ were claiming of their production that ‘This comedy has never been presented before in this county by any college or university.’⁷⁴⁵

It was also important for the universities to show how much effort and expense went into the production. In 1902, Beloit College made references to ‘special costumes and unusual scenery’⁷⁴⁶ and the ‘unusual heavy expenses’.⁷⁴⁷ The costumes were to be ‘new, picturesque and appropriate’;⁷⁴⁸ all were ‘made for the express occasion, excepting the frog suits.’⁷⁴⁹ The Initiates did not appear in the rags of the 405BC version, but instead wore ‘mostly white’ robes.⁷⁵⁰

Also in 1913, a production at the University of Cincinnati gained national attention both with mentions in both the *New York Times* and in an editorial from *The Classical Journal*. Whilst the editorial is more preoccupied with a statement from the University regarding the teaching of Classics in schools,⁷⁵¹ the production is included under ‘Current Events’ in the same issue which quotes a brief mention from *The Cincinnati Times-Star*.⁷⁵² The

⁷⁴² *The Round Table* 5th June 1902.

⁷⁴³ *The Round Table* 20th June 1902.

⁷⁴⁴ Now known as Springfield College.

⁷⁴⁵ *Association Seminar* Vol.22, No.2.

⁷⁴⁶ *The Round Table* 5th June 1902.

⁷⁴⁷ *The Round Table* 20th June 1902.

⁷⁴⁸ *The Round Table* 5th June 1902.

⁷⁴⁹ *The Round Table* 20th June 1902.

⁷⁵⁰ *The Round Table* 20th June 1902.

⁷⁵¹ Unknown 1913: 1.

⁷⁵² Quoted in Unknown 1913b: 367.

production was performed in a translation by Professor Joseph Edward Harry, former President of the university and future Dean of the Graduate School. He was also the author of several books and commentaries on Greek tragedy. The script contains perhaps the earliest example of Arrowsmith's 'Intruded Gloss',⁷⁵³ ten years before Arrowsmith was born, as the *New York Times* records that 'many of the Athenian characters into prominent Cincinnatians, which added greatly to the humor of the performance'.⁷⁵⁴



Prior to 1914, the only university that did something different with the staging was the University of Trinity College, Toronto, in 1902.⁷⁵⁵ The physical realisation of this

production took advantage of the semi-circular space use for performances at Trinity, one spectator described the audience as sitting on a grass bank overlooking a lawn where the action of the play took place. A hedge with doors situated in it provided a backdrop to the

⁷⁵³ See Chapter Two, pp.136-7.

⁷⁵⁴ Unknown 1913c: 15.

⁷⁵⁵ There is no indication of whether Greek plays were a regular occurrence at Trinity. A review of *Frogs* does say the Greek play 'had long since ceased to offer any amusement to those who had to do with it', (Trinity University Review: 150) although this is not clear as to whether it is referring to a regular Greek play or just this one in particular. In *A History of the University of Trinity College Toronto 1822-1952* there is no mention of any Greek play other than *Frogs* (Reed: 1952). There was certainly at least one other Greek play performed in another college of the University of Toronto in this time period – a production of Sophocles' *Antigone* at University College in 1894, performed in Greek. This production aimed for 'authenticity', even going so far as to have separate stages for principals and chorus. The production was remounted in 1906, albeit with a single stage and female performers in the cast. See Various Authors (1906): 115. Moira Day indicates that there was a planned production of *Oedipus* in 1883 at the University of Toronto, but it was later abandoned. Following this *Antigone*, a 1900 play named *The Return of Odysseus* and *Frogs* were the only productions in Toronto until 1920 (Day 2015: 188, 192).

action.⁷⁵⁶ The prestige element was present here as well, with *The Ottawa Citizen* calling it ‘the most ambitious dramatic representation by any body of college students in Canada’, and adding: ‘To say that the really excellent acting and costuming were warmly appreciated by all those who had the privilege of attending, is putting it mildly, indeed.’⁷⁵⁷ It certainly seemed to have some impact as it, and the 1896 *Antigone* at University College, Toronto, are the only theatrical productions to have images included in a 1906 history of the University of Toronto and its colleges.⁷⁵⁸

Frogs in North America after the First World War

Following the First World War there was a clear break with the ‘traditional’ performances of *Frogs* that were common in the early part of the 20th Century. This was in contrast to British university productions, which continued to stage *Frogs* in traditional theatre spaces, although perhaps innovating more with the scripts.⁷⁵⁹ Again, this fits in with the general reception of Greek theatre in North America. The seeds for this had already been sown in the nineteenth century, with the United States increasingly seeing themselves as ‘heirs’ to the classical tradition. For example, Elias Magoon’s 1856 *Westward Empire, or, The Great Drama of Human Progress* traces human history through four great ages, the Age of Pericles, the Age of Augustus, the Age of Leo X (i.e. Renaissance Italy) and finally the Age of Washington.⁷⁶⁰ It is perhaps only natural that with this background that American theatre practitioners should, at last, want to move away from their European counterparts.

⁷⁵⁶ Quoted in *Trinity University Review*: 151.

⁷⁵⁷ Quoted in *Trinity University Review*: 151.

⁷⁵⁸ Various Authors (1906): 115 (*Antigone*), 144 (*Frogs*).

⁷⁵⁹ See Chapter Three, *passim*.

⁷⁶⁰ Davis 2015: 112.

It was *Trojan Women* that seemingly changed the landscape across North America. Whilst it was itself a European production, Granville Barker's 1915 production of Euripides' play showed New York that a Greek tragedy could be relevant to a modern audience. Many who commented associated the play's themes with the ongoing First World War⁷⁶¹ and indeed the production was possibly undertaken to increase the popularity of Britain in the US, who had not yet officially entered the conflict.⁷⁶² By contrast, the British-born Maurice Browne mounted his own US production of *Trojan Women* that year in the hope of dissuading the country from becoming involved in the war.⁷⁶³ Canada would see their own version of *Trojan Women* performed in the context of the post-war period in 1920 at the University of Toronto.⁷⁶⁴ It was following these productions that a change is seen in the North American reception of Greek drama, one that left behind the melodrama, burlesques and conservatism of the nineteenth century for newly creative and adventurous forms of reception. This new direction encompassed such disparate strands as inspiration for new plays in the work of Eugene O'Neill;⁷⁶⁵ the dance of Isadora Duncan and Eva Palmer;⁷⁶⁶ feminist responses from Susan Glaspell;⁷⁶⁷ and an increasing move towards new ways of performing Greek plays, including *Frogs*.

That is not to say that the element of prestige about performance of Greek plays was not still present. Often efforts were made to assert the primacy of *Frogs* within the classical and wider theatrical canon. For a 1938 production of *Frogs* at the Winona State Teacher's College (now Winona State University), articles in the University newspaper, *The Winona Republican Herald*, certainly lauded the Aristophanic text, saying 'In educational

⁷⁶¹ Slater 2015: 167.

⁷⁶² Salter 2015: 166 and 178n3.

⁷⁶³ Day 2015: 185.

⁷⁶⁴ See Day 2015: 184-203.

⁷⁶⁵ See Lambropoulos 2015: 221-9.

⁷⁶⁶ See Manning 2015: 233-51.

⁷⁶⁷ See Hall 2015: 157-63.

drama it is a landmark⁷⁶⁸ and that ‘it is not only one of the most hilarious dramas of Aristophanes, but of the entire age’.⁷⁶⁹ But in general, following the First World War, the universities moved away from consciously aping the traditional productions common in

their British counterparts.

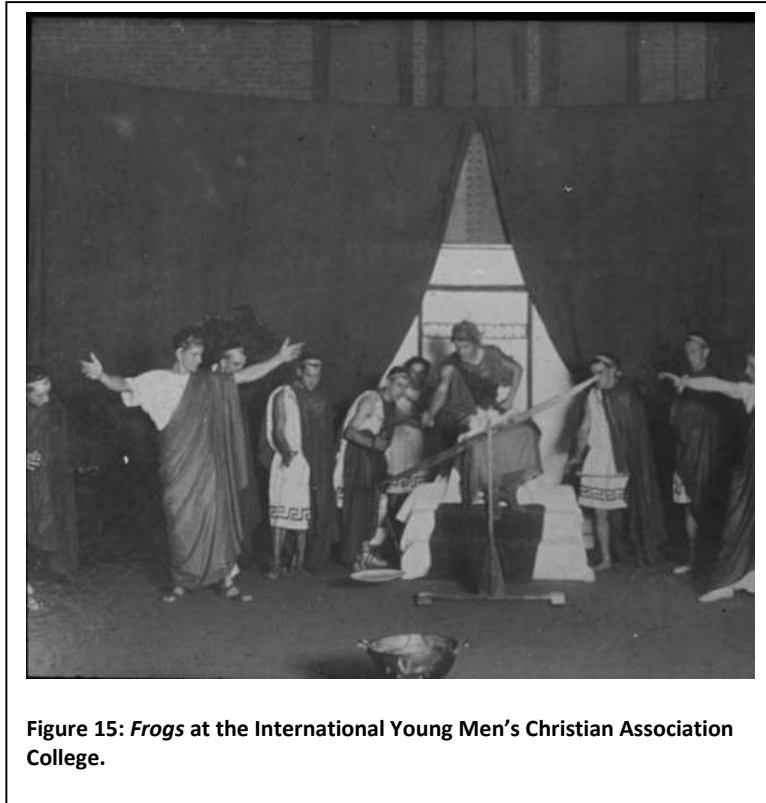


Figure 15: *Frogs* at the International Young Men’s Christian Association College.

Although I have been arguing that the First World War was the turning-point, the change could initially be seen in a production just prior to the start of the War, in 1913, at the International Young Men’s Christian Association College in

Springfield, Massachusetts. Despite the familiar prestige claims of being the first production,⁷⁷⁰ the programme describes how modern *Frogs* is as a play, with Aeschylus and Euripides being ‘the orthodox religionist and the urbane rationalist’ respectively. Pluggé describes the staging as modern, with a proscenium arched theatre and scenery typical of a more recent play.⁷⁷¹ Surviving pictures of the production seemingly show the staging to have been relatively simple: a black curtain formed the backdrop, which was opened in the centre to make way for Pluto’s throne. The costumes were stereotypically classical-esque, with elements such as tunics, sandals and what look like wreaths. The

⁷⁶⁸ *Winona Republican Herald* 14th April 1938: 7.

⁷⁶⁹ *Winona Republican Herald* 6th April 1938: 8.

⁷⁷⁰ See above, pp.244-5.

⁷⁷¹ Pluggé 1938: 71, 79-80.

production was performed as part of a celebration for the opening of a new library at the College, again mixing the old and the new. The music and dance also shows this, since the programme states that there has been ‘no attempt...to reproduce the music of ancient Greece, but some of the dances have been copied from ancient vases’.⁷⁷²

Some universities had made efforts to bring the play to an unfamiliar audience. When the Classical Club at Miami University, Ohio, performed *Frogs* in 1913, it was more of a rehearsed reading than a full-scale production, with the actors reading their lines in English. The actors were costumed and used basic props. *The Classical Journal* was very much in favour of the production, stating that the reading of lines meant that students would not be put off taking part by ‘laborious learning of lines’ and that ‘the costumes and other accessories is a means of interesting non-Greek students in the art and literature of the classical department’.⁷⁷³

That is not to say that universities did not strive towards Gamel’s nominal authenticity,⁷⁷⁴ though some did seem confused about what they were trying to achieve. At Winona State Teachers College in 1938, a large effort seems to have been put into the play: the scenery, costumes and masks took a month to make,⁷⁷⁵ and there was a large cast of 32.⁷⁷⁶ The play was performed in English, but the staging of the production seems to have been a mix of ancient and modern. Every character was masked, although the masks were ‘modernized’.⁷⁷⁷ The university newspapers seem to disagree on whether the performance was meant to be ancient or modern: whilst early advertising for the play claimed that the

⁷⁷² Further details on the music for this production can be found below under Music, p.275.

⁷⁷³ Unknown 1913d: 263.

⁷⁷⁴ Introduction, pp.34-5.

⁷⁷⁵ *Winona Republican Herald* 6th April 1938: 8.

⁷⁷⁶ *Winona Republican Herald* 14th April 1938: 7.

⁷⁷⁷ *Winona Republican Herald* 29th April 1938: 2.

ancient *Frogs* had been ‘faithfully reproduced...in an effort to make the play authentic’⁷⁷⁸ and ‘that they were ‘trying to make it as authentic as possible’,⁷⁷⁹ a later review took a different view that the play had been ‘cleverly brought...up-to-date using familiar places and names’.⁷⁸⁰ Despite this confusion, the production was seemingly well-received, with the review stating that Heracles ‘started the production off on a high note of comedy’ and that the beating from Aeacus was ‘One of the most amusing scenes’.⁷⁸¹ The masks were also a highlight, as they ‘with apt sureness picked out characteristics of principals and caricatured them in the racial [sic] expressions portrayed’.⁷⁸²

Institutional interest in sport, as in the case of rowing at Oxford, was a factor in the appeal of *Frogs*, too: swimming pools remained a popular setting for productions of *Frogs*



Figure 16: Dionysus and Charon at Wellesley, unknown year.

throughout this period. Yale performed in one in 1941,⁷⁸³ as did the University of Michigan in 1960.⁷⁸⁴ Michigan was a large-scale production, utilising the university swimming teams and seven choruses.⁷⁸⁵ The performance was in English, using the translation of Peter Arnott.⁷⁸⁶ Wellesley College mounted a number of productions in

⁷⁷⁸ *Winona Republican Herald* 14th April 1938: 7.

⁷⁷⁹ *Winona Republican Herald* 27th April 1938: 9.

⁷⁸⁰ *Winona Republican Herald* 29th April 1938: 2.

⁷⁸¹ *Winona Republican Herald* 29th April 1938: 2.

⁷⁸² *Winona Republican Herald* 29th April 1938: 2.

⁷⁸³ See Chapter Six, p.287.

⁷⁸⁴ They had previously performed extracts from the play in 1954.

⁷⁸⁵ *Modern Productions of Ancient Plays at the University of Michigan* [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁷⁸⁶ See Chapter Two, pp.135-6.

their pool, beginning in 1940 and again in 1949, 1954, 1961 and 1968. A production in 1977 moved from the swimming pool to a more conventional theatre space. A further production in 1982 was performed outside, although the poster does provide an alternative venue in case of rain. Finally in 1985 Wellesley returned to perform in the swimming pool once again.

Another piece of unusual staging may have occurred at the Experimental College of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.⁷⁸⁷ The only evidence for the play appears in Pluggé,⁷⁸⁸ and he does not state a date or name his source for the production. The college only existed from 1927 to 1932 and Pluggé goes on to talk about further productions at the college in 1929, 1930 and 1931, so *Frogs* was most likely to have been performed in 1927 or 1928. What may have been unusual about the play was that, according to Pluggé, it was performed with marionettes, which were used to portray only the principal characters on stage. Choral odes were spoken from offstage with flute accompaniment and not presented by a marionette chorus. Despite having records of Greek plays from 1928-1931, the university has no evidence of *Frogs*,⁷⁸⁹ and so Pluggé's claims cannot be independently confirmed.

The post-war and North American trend of performing *Frogs* in unusual theatre spaces re-emerged in a 1998 production by Gorilla Theatre Productions in Kansas City. Gorilla Theatre are a non-profit company with a strong history of regularly performing plays from

⁷⁸⁷ The Experimental College was a short-lived college of the university that specialised in liberal arts, and had no set timetable or compulsory lessons. It did have a strict curriculum, which for freshmen consisted entirely of Greek authors, including Aeschylus, Homer and Plato (Further details in Meiklejohn 1932). Aristophanes was also part of the curriculum, with *Frogs* featuring in one assignment in which students were to read the play (and others) aloud in order to contrast the ancient texts with modern dramas (Meiklejohn 1932: 384-5). The APGRD holds a poster relating to an outdoor production there of *Clouds*.

⁷⁸⁸ Pluggé 1938: 105.

⁷⁸⁹ Personal communication from Director of University Archives at The University of Wisconsin-Madison on 12th January 2015.

Aristophanes and the three tragedians. Established in 1989, their first Greek play was *Medea* in 1991 and since then Greek plays have seemingly been an annual occurrence. Their production of *Frogs* occurred, as a number of their productions have, on a set of steps outside the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art at sunrise. They also used masks for the production, which is fairly unusual in North America.⁷⁹⁰ A further performance was undertaken at the Kansas City Zoo.⁷⁹¹

Language and Translation

The pedagogical interest that has been seen throughout the British performance reception of *Frogs* was repeated in North America, although it differed in the language of performance. In Britain, performances of *Frogs* in translation were the exception for most of the twentieth century, with only a number of the Oxford Colleges performing in English.⁷⁹² But in North America the performances are almost exclusively in English, with only Wellesley College and Randolph-Macon Women's College in the US and Trinity College in Canada performing in Greek. Beloit College, Wisconsin, mounted perhaps the earliest fully-staged production of *Frogs* in English in 1902. There is no record of whether they used a published translation or one of their own devising; their newspaper *The Round Table* only records the 'fresh and racy style of the translation, with its numberless piquant and up-to-date expressions'.⁷⁹³ And so in the US *Frogs* had been performed in English by 1902, whereas in Britain there would not be a public performance until Somerville College in 1911.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹⁰ gorillatheatre.org [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁷⁹¹ This performance can be watched online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ecq4H4RT3do [accessed 17th February 2018].

⁷⁹² See Chapter Four, pp.190-93.

⁷⁹³ *The Round Table* 5th June 1902.

⁷⁹⁴ Fleeming Jenkins' 1873 production was performed in English, though this was a private performance given in his own house. See Chapter Four, pp.182-3.

Where *Frogs* was performed in Greek, efforts were made to promote understanding for the audience. At the University of Trinity College a translation was provided, an abridgement from that of former Trinity professor E.W. Huntingford that had been published two years prior to the production.⁷⁹⁵ Similarly, at Randolph-Macon Women's College in 1949 a translation was provided in the programme, abridged from that of Gilbert Murray. At Wellesley College extracts from *Frogs* were studied as part of their Greek Drama course as early as 1902⁷⁹⁶ and they performed Greek and Latin plays in the original language regularly from 1908 to 1996.⁷⁹⁷ The three tragedians, Aristophanes and Plautus were well represented, together with a single play each from Menander and Terence. Whilst the performance was in Greek, at the 1995 performance 'a complete summary in English' was given by a student.⁷⁹⁸ Their last performance of *Frogs* was in 1985.

Gilbert Murray's translation was performed by a number of American universities. It was used for productions at the International Young Men's Christian Association College and Miami University in 1913 and at the Oklahoma College for Women in 1929; at Miami it was edited to keep its length to an hour and colloquial references were added.⁷⁹⁹ The altering of scripts to add local references was a popular practice, and, as mentioned above, the 1938 production at Winona State Teacher's College was described as having been 'cleverly brought...up-to-date using familiar places and names'.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁵ See Chapter Two, pp.116-7.

⁷⁹⁶ *Wellesley College Report of the President* 1903: 20.

⁷⁹⁷ The APGRD records 74 performances in that 88 year period, although there are at least two productions of *Frogs* missing from their database, so the total could be higher.

⁷⁹⁸ *Wellesley College News* Vol.53, No.18: 1.

⁷⁹⁹ Unknown 1913d: 263.

⁸⁰⁰ *Winona Republican Herald* 29th April 1938: 2.

More recent translations have tended to make more significant changes to the script; a number used *Frogs* as the inspiration to create a play that is so far removed from Aristophanes as to be virtually unrecognisable, dealing directly with Hall's contingency approach detailed in the Introduction.⁸⁰¹ The first of these was one very unusual production of *Frogs* performed in 1975 in New York that subsequently toured the US and Europe. It was performed by the Medicine Show Theater Ensemble and on the surface, at least, one struggles to comprehend how it is actually an adaptation of Aristophanes at all. Neither of the two available reviews gives any mention of Dionysus, Xanthias, Aeschylus or Euripides and instead one describes a series of seemingly random sketches: 'An overly sexed prude has parleys with various males...A ballerina imitates Nureyev...A woman walks a stuffed turtle instead of a dog...A man is frenzied into exposing himself and immediately is shamed by his act'.⁸⁰² Even the theme of the production seems to give no link to Aristophanes, as the reviewer describes it as 'questioning...just what is normal'. A listing in the *New York Magazine* describes it as 'a cubist comedy',⁸⁰³ but again does not mention Aristophanes.

Despite this the script, written by Carl Morse, is described on the Medicine Show Theater website as having been 'adapted from Aristophanes'.⁸⁰⁴ Whilst the production may have been described in this way, it appears in fact merely inspired by Aristophanes and not directly adapted.⁸⁰⁵ The composition was a collaborative effort between six actors, a director, a poet, a composer and a visual artist/costume designer. The cast repeatedly read *Frogs* for inspiration throughout the process, though none of the Aristophanic text was used in the final production. The link to Aristophanes was in the overall theme of the

⁸⁰¹ Pp.28-9.

⁸⁰² Niepold 1975.

⁸⁰³ Unknown 1978: 27.

⁸⁰⁴ medicineshowtheatre.org [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁸⁰⁵ This information from personal communication with Chris Brandt, one of the original cast members, on 11th February 2015.

production being a mental *katabasis*: the six characters were going on a journey into their own psyche, analogous to Dionysus' journey into the underworld. Sometimes the characters would meet and a scene would ensue. The frogs themselves played a role; whenever a character became mentally 'stuck' they would become a frog themselves until they could rejoin the action. This easy slipping in and out of the journey is akin to the way the frog chorus of Aristophanes occupies a space between Hades and the world of the living.

Another production where the final performance bore little resemblance to Aristophanes' play was 2002's *Red*



Figure 17: A scene from *Red Frogs*.

play was 2002's *Red Frogs*, written by Ruth Margraff and performed in the New York contemporary arts theatre Performance Space 122. It is not Margraff's only venture into the classical

as she also wrote an operatic retelling of the Electra myth called *The Elektra Fugues*. This used elements of all three tragedians' version of the myth and featured Gilbert Murray as a character, merged with Electra's peasant husband from Euripides' version. Her plays are characterised by a lyrical, song-like quality that overrides plot.

Margraff's plays always have a subtitle that describes which dramatic and literary forms she is exploring in any particular piece, and for *Red Frogs* it is 'a burlesque mirror for the summer purgatorio'. The play is described as being 'inspired by Aristophanes' *Frogs*, the idea of a truly female Charlie Chaplin and a divine comedy burlesqued as a Marxist

“ruthless critique of everything existing” and by the Iraq Liberation Action Committee’.⁸⁰⁶ With these disparate sources it is perhaps not surprising that very little of *Frogs* remains. On the surface the plot revolves around three Coney Island dancing girls and their attempts to humble and appropriate the power of a female media mogul, as well as the mogul’s maid who wishes to do the same; although what the play is actually *about* is not clear. One reviewer stated that the play has ‘little discernible plot and the sketchiest of stock characters’,⁸⁰⁷ and another that it would divide the audience into three segments: ‘those who thrill to the subversive, those who loathe political grandstanding, and those eluded by it all’.⁸⁰⁸ Other than a vague Marxist message, the play is open to interpretation, although the metaphorical and lyrical style of the script probably make almost any interpretation valid.

However, there are several ways in which the influence of *Frogs* can be seen in the play, and in the script in particular. The scene names, referred to as ‘Coins’ in the script, contain elements reminiscent of the action in *Frogs*. For example we have ‘Coin #3: Begging Favor from a Corpse’ (p.104) and ‘Coin #6: Slapstick Flogging of the Real Sublime’ (p.116). Also within the play are set pieces such as a servant being flogged for dressing as her mistress (though the scene reads more brutally than the comedic flogging scene in *Frogs*) and numerous references to travelling to Hell which are further reminders of the Aristophanic influence on the play. There is one line that is very similar to Xanthias’ line in *Frogs*, ‘And all the more reason for a flogging; if he’s really a god, he won’t feel it’ (633-4), when the kept husband/pet of the media mogul twice speaks to the audience and says ‘I call now for the flogging of these gods again! They won’t feel anything if they are really gods.’ (p.123 and p.124)

⁸⁰⁶ Margraff 2012: 79.

⁸⁰⁷ Solomon 2002: 69.

⁸⁰⁸ Jacobs 2002: 45.

Whilst it has usually been university students performing in the *Frogs*, a production in 1989 at the Arkansas Arts Centre Children's Theater allowed younger students to take part in the production. The script was an adaptation which changed Dionysus into a producer of a theatre in danger of being closed. In order to save the theatre he travels to the Underworld to bring back great comedians such as Abbott and Costello, Gracie Allen and Jack Benny.⁸⁰⁹

The Classics department at Bryn Mawr regularly performs Greek plays, with records of performances dating back to 1974. Unlike a lot of universities, however, they are not content to perform an existing translation and often create their own adaptations. Even as far back as 1974 they were performing a version of *Antigone* entitled *The Antagony*. Their 2003 version of *Frogs* was also an adaptation, renamed *The Squirrels*. The name was presumably chosen in reference to Haverford College, a closely linked and rival university whose mascot is the Black Squirrel. *The Squirrels* was written by student Rianna Ouellette, with songs by Catherine Barrett, Claire Collins, Lila Garrott, Zara Yost and Ouellette.

The script is very short, but it contains substantial material and follows the structure of Aristophanes very closely. The productions at Bryn Mawr often combine a single modern influence with the Greek play – they have performed, for example, *Iphigenia in Tauris* mixed with *Star Trek* and the *Bacchae* with *Cheers* – but *The Squirrels* takes inspiration from a number of places. It opens with Dionysus singing ‘I am the very model of a Pan-Hellenic deity’ (p.1) to the tune of Gilbert and Sullivan’s ‘Modern-Major General’. The

⁸⁰⁹ *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* (1989).

song is very cleverly composed and abounds in classical references. For example, Dionysus references the *Bacchae*, amongst other things, with the lines:

I'm very well acquainted too with tearing goats to tiny shreds,
with turning boats to ivy, and with giving mothers their sons' heads'. (p.1)

The song, naturally, retains the line 'I know the croaking chorus from the Frogs of Aristophanes'. It is perhaps ironic that this line should occur in an adaptation of *Frogs* in which the frog chorus themselves do not appear.

Further references to popular culture abound, for example one to Monty Python: 'Euripides is dead. He is no more. He is an ex-poet' (p.2). There are also classical references, such as when Dionysus asks Heracles how to get to Hades and the latter suggests, 'Well, you can always gaze upon Artemis naked, get turned into a stag and be ripped apart by your own hounds' (p.3). The contest is very short and begins with Euripides singing lines from the *Bacchae* to the tune of 'Yellow Rose of Texas'. In response to this, Aeschylus simply pauses and says 'Yo'. At this Dionysus exclaims 'Wow! That was incredible! The poem clearly indicates the tragic nature of the social rift between those who comprehend one-syllable statements and the "Other" who cannot' (p.5). With that Aeschylus wins the contest.

Whilst Sondheim's *Frogs* may have been the only time Dionysus has made it to Broadway, 2008 saw an Off-Broadway production adapted by David Greenspan.⁸¹⁰ The

⁸¹⁰ Greenspan is a prolific Off-Broadway performer, writer and director – although he is principally recognised now as a playwright. He has held several playwriting fellowships and been awarded with five Obie awards (the Off-Broadway equivalent of the Tonys). Greenspan is not a classicist – he holds a BA in Drama – but he has also written one play, *The Argument*, based on Aristotle's *Poetics* and one about an Athenian actor reincarnated.

full title of the adaptation was *Old Comedy After Aristophanes' Frogs* and it was commissioned by Target Margin Theater.⁸¹¹ Generally the script follows the structure of the original closely, and the dialogue is a mixture of Aristophanic and newly composed lines. Greenspan does not shy away from the obscenity of Aristophanes, even going so far as to include some fairly graphic references. There is also a metatheatrical element, since Dionysus refers to the Corpse as the 'Same actor who plays Phrynichus later in the



Figure 18: Dionysus and Xanthias in *Old Comedy After Aristophanes' Frogs*

play' (p.122).

The script also shows evidence of Greenspan having done some background research on the ancient *Frogs* when Xanthias

comments 'Clearly we're not using Jeffrey Henderson's brilliant rendering in the Loeb translation' (p.141). Further classical references not found in the original Aristophanes can be seen throughout, such as when Xanthias says to Aeacus, 'Let me tell you something asswipe, your son Peleus is going to rape the nymph Thetis and their son Achilles is gonna die a miserable death in the Trojan War with a bad case of tendonitis after his big homo boyfriend gets killed by Hector. So if I were you I'd brush up my Homer!' (p.141)

⁸¹¹ In their own words the theatre 'seek(s) continuously to expand our conception of what can take place in a theater' and that they 'have created aggressively re-imagined versions of classics and new creations inspired by existing sources' (targetmargin.org [online, accessed 17th February 2018]). This was also not their first classical play, as this *Frogs* was the culmination of a season of ancient theatre that included Greenspan's *The Argument*, as well as plays based on Plato's *Symposium*, Euripides' *Suppliants* and the complete works of Aristophanes.

The play also includes some implied criticism of Aristophanes and his *Frogs*. When Dionysus and Xanthias are talking to the Corpse, it says to Xanthias, ‘You’re unprecedented, you know. The first of the clever servants’ (p.122). When Xanthias asks whether this means Aristophanes was in favour of emancipation, the Corpse replies ‘Nah. He’s just making jokes’ (p.123). As in the original, it is not until late in the contest that Dionysus refers to bringing back a poet to save the Athens. When Xanthias asks him why he didn’t mention it before, Dionysus replies:

I don’t know, a play,
someone just starts writing it to be funny
and doesn’t know what he’s getting at yet
and doesn’t want to go back to the beginning
and change the whole darn thing to make it add up.
That’s what Aristophanes did. (p.174)

There are allusions to the modern day throughout, with references to disparate things such as the game *Monopoly*, *The Exorcist* and the Westboro Baptist Church. Despite this, the list of Athenian poets is retained for Dionysus’ conversation with Heracles. The underworld scenes prior to the contest are greatly expanded, with the addition of several new characters both ancient and modern. Tantalus appears, alongside Alice Liddell and Wendy Darling, the young female protagonists of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*.⁸¹² Later Phrynichus briefly appears as a character, and the references to modern personalities continue. These references are sometimes exceedingly obscure, such as a mention of

⁸¹² For accuracy, it should be noted that Alice Liddell was the real-life inspiration for Lewis Carroll’s Alice, whereas Wendy Darling is entirely fictional.

Archbishop Peter Akinola (the head of the Anglican Church in Nigeria who infamously supported the outlawing of homosexual marriage and organisations in his country).

Despite the many changes, Aeschylus and Euripides were retained for the contest, which fills the entire second act. However, the dynamic of the contest is very different; interspersed with sections close to the original Aristophanic dialogue are scenes where the two tragic poets take on the persona of more modern writers. Thus Aeschylus and Euripides begin arguing as James Joyce and Gertrude Stein, then as Walt Whitman and Mark Twain. Later they become Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams, while Dionysus takes on the role of Arthur Miller. Finally Aeschylus and Euripides briefly become Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville.

Following this the scales scene occurs and Dionysus cannot decide. Aeschylus asks why he wanted to bring back Euripides, to which Xanthias comments:

It's no coincidence
Dionysus
is obsessed with Euripides; because
Aristophanes was. (p.175)

At this Aristophanes appears on the stage and Euripides asks the comic poet why he made fun of him. Again it is Xanthias who replies:

Because you represent the new the radical
and he yearns for what was
or what he thought once was.
He was to his dying day conservative—
a wit with a fancy of imagination

and a parodist of pretension
with a gift for song
but a loyalist for the glories of the dim past. (p.175)

Aeschylus responds by admonishing Aristophanes for portraying him as a ‘Colonel Blimp’ and saying that he is ‘ashamed’ of having won in Aristophanes’ contest (p.175). He then asks Dionysus what sort of leaders the people of America have chosen, to which Dionysus replies ‘Dishonest brutal people’ (p.176). It is this that leads us to the final and biggest narrative change from Aristophanes.

Aeschylus now refuses to go back with Dionysus and Euripides does the same. Greenspan’s background as a poet as well as a playwright is apparent in the script through Xanthias, as the play starts with the slave reciting poetry that introduces the political element of the play;⁸¹³ later he recites more in place of the parabasis. Aeacus even says to Xanthias, ‘You could have been something’ (p.153) after hearing his poetry. And since Aeschylus and Euripides refuse to return to the living world, Xanthias takes it upon himself to write the play. Although he claims neither he nor any other playwright can make a difference, he still states:

I’ve got to start the play
I’ve already written.
A world of questions. (p.177)

There is one noticeable conservative trait common to most American productions and it is in regard to the contest. Where the details are known, only two productions have

⁸¹³ See below under Politics, pp.268-71.

replaced Aeschylus and Euripides.⁸¹⁴ The first was a production mounted at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1989, which used Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams.⁸¹⁵ The other production was one mounted in 1995 by the Ancient Comic Drama Company⁸¹⁶ in Toronto, in a double-bill with *Assemblywomen*. They gave the contest a musical slant by matching Richard Wagner with A.S. Gilbert.⁸¹⁷ Other than this, even the relatively liberal adaptations at Bryn Mawr College and Target Margin Theater retain the original poets, although Target Margin did not portray them in a straightforward manner, as described above.

Geography

Leaving aside Canadian production, there is a clear bias in the location of performances of *Frogs* towards the eastern half of the US, with a noticeable prevalence of performances in the north-eastern states. States such as Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine and Pennsylvania feature heavily. To a certain extent this might be seen as being linked to the early influence of British universities on North America, with the New England and East Coast states being particularly likely to found early institutions for Higher Education.

The western half of the US is heavily under-represented. Following the first recorded performance in 1892 at the University of the South there was not a production west of Tennessee until a production in Wisconsin in 1920. It was not until 1933 and 1935 that productions were mounted in the western half of the country, at the University of California. After those productions and up until the 1970s there has seemingly been only one other production in the western half of the US, at Montana State (now University of

⁸¹⁴ Whilst the Arkansas Arts Centre Children's Theatre production may have replaced them, it cannot be confirmed. See above, p.258.

⁸¹⁵ Gamel 2015: 645.

⁸¹⁶ In some sources they appear to be referred to as the Ancient Comic Opera Company.

⁸¹⁷ *Didaskalia* Vol.1, No.5: Listings: Performances: North America [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

Montana, Missoula) in 1936.⁸¹⁸ In the closing decades of the twentieth century there was an increase in the number of other west-coast productions, with two at universities and five outside education.⁸¹⁹

To a certain extent this mirrors recorded performances of other classical plays, with California the only western state where Greek or Roman theatre are regularly performed. However, in other ways *Frogs* is curiously neglected for performance, despite its popular status throughout the rest of the US. Amongst a number of west coast venues that hosted regular Greek plays throughout the early twentieth century, there do not appear to be any productions of *Frogs*. These include the Hearst Greek Theatre at the University of California Berkeley Campus⁸²⁰ and the Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman Theater at the Getty Villa Museum in Los Angeles.⁸²¹

Four of the six productions in Canada took place in Toronto the other two performing in Victoria, British Columbia, and Kingston, Ontario. These include the 1902 University of Trinity College production and, what is perhaps, the first production outside a University in North America. The company was Odyssey Productions, performing in 1967 at The Poor Alex Theatre in Toronto. One review stated that ‘Sight gags and puns ricochet against intellectual responses to provide an evening of theatre that is wildly amusing and vulgar yet highly literate’.⁸²² Sadly I can find no other details about this production.

⁸¹⁸ A seemingly apologetic article in the student newspaper says little about the Montana performance but describes it as an ‘experimental work’ and mentions the ‘limitations of student productions’ (*Montana Kaimim* 11th December 1913).

⁸¹⁹ These were: East West Players, California in 1978; University of California, Santa Cruz in 1989; Miracle Theatre Group, Portland in 1991; Pilgrim Center for the Arts, Seattle and Theatre Three, Dallas in 1995; Oregon State University in 1997; and at the Chandler Studio Theatre, Los Angeles in 1998.

⁸²⁰ Based on the theatre at Epidaurus and completed in 1903. It is not known whether the 1933 and 1935 productions at Berkeley were actually performed there. The first production there was one of *Birds*. See Gamel 2015: 630.

⁸²¹ Greek and Roman plays have been performed here annually since 2006. *Peace* in 2009 has been the only Aristophanes. See Gamel 2015: 630-632.

⁸²² Unknown 1967.

Gender

Gender has played a role in the history of the production. *Frogs* has been popular with all-female colleges, such as Oklahoma College for Women in 1929, Randolph-Macon Women's College in 1949,⁸²³ and Bryn Mawr College in 2003. In 1936, Oklahoma College for Women's list of performances from 1929 to 1933 was included as a 'model selection' in a book entitled *A Study of Play Selection in Women's Colleges*. The list included *Frogs* as the only classical play, alongside titles from the likes of A.A. Milne, George Bernard Shaw, William Shakespeare and J.M. Barrie. Oklahoma's list was said



Figure 19: *Frogs* at Wellesley, unknown year.

to have the second most theatrical merit of the 51 colleges surveyed.⁸²⁴ Whilst *Frogs* is not singled out on its own, this does demonstrate how it was seen as a worthy part of a balanced theatrical programme for all-female institutions.

Most notable of all is Wellesley College in Massachusetts, which has a strong relationship with the performance of *Frogs* and with classics in general. They presented classical plays regularly from 1908 to 1996 and *Frogs* – or scenes from the play – was performed at least ten times in that time period, with at least one performance every decade from the 40s to

⁸²³ Now Randolph College.

⁸²⁴ *The Trend* Vol.17, No.13: 1.

the 80s, making it the most popular play.⁸²⁵ Their first production of *Frogs* was in 1917 and was performed by the Alpha Kappa Chi sorority. Judging from the cast list the production featured all the scenes following the lake crossing.⁸²⁶ It was not until 1940 that there would be another production with scenes from the play being performed by the Greek Drama Class.⁸²⁷ A larger scale production was mounted in 1945, this time as a part of a double-bill with Plautus' *Mostellaria*. They would go on to perform the play again in 1949, the programme for which reveals that the contest sequence was 'regretfully omit(ted)', and virtually identical productions in 1954, 1961 and 1968. For production in 1977 and 1982 the contest was re-added, before it was removed again for a 1985 production.

The issue of women or women's roles in the play drew comment in a number of other places as well. *Frogs* at Beloit College may have been the first of their Greek plays to feature women in the cast, as *The Round Table* states in a somewhat patronising way: 'The introduction of ladies into the cast is an innovation which cannot fail to add greatly to the attractiveness and interest of the play'.⁸²⁸ A review of the play in *The Round Table* mentions that 'Prof. Wright states that at Oxford that scene in the comedy was omitted because the manager did not want to trust the women's parts with men.' Again it is stated that the female cast members 'added interest to the play' despite their 'short speaking parts'.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁵ As far as can be ascertained, the next closest are *Trojan Women* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*, with six performances each. The next most popular Aristophanes, coming in with only two performances, was *Birds*. Plautus fares better, with five performances of *Mostellaria*.

⁸²⁶ *Wellesley College News* Vol.24, No.14: 4.

⁸²⁷ *Wellesley College News* Vol.48, No.24: 6.

⁸²⁸ *The Round Table* 5th June 1902.

⁸²⁹ *The Round Table* 20th June 1902.

In other places the all-male cast of the production was evidently the cause of some amusement, such as at University of the South, Sewanee, where an article advertising the play says nothing about the plot or the action other than ‘Messrs. Ticknor and Gaither appear as lay maidens in short dresses. Ticknor and Phillips carry on an awful flirtation that no one can afford to miss’.⁸³⁰

Sports

There has been a curious link between *Frogs* and sport at universities in two cases.⁸³¹ The first does not relate to a particular production, although does relate to a university where *Frogs* has been performed on a number of occasions. As well as having performed the play in 1924, 1941 and 1974, Yale University has a somewhat special relationship with the play. In January 1884 a group of students who studied ancient Greek had decided the frog chorus of Aristophanes would make an excellent cheer. Thus ‘Brek-ek-ek-ek-ex, ko-ax, ko-ax’ was adopted and was used as part of the ‘Long Cheer’, along with Charon’s lines ‘o-op’ and ‘parabalou’, before fading out of use sometime around the 1960s.⁸³² Another link to sport was a 1938 production of *Frogs* at the Winona State Teacher’s College (now Winona State University), possibly the only ancient play ever performed at the university. It was used as a fundraiser, with articles at the time stating ‘Proceeds from the play will be used to buy trophies for this year’s championship basketball team’.⁸³³

Politics

Perhaps surprisingly for productions taking place in a country with such a rich heritage of political theatre, there have been very few productions of *Frogs* which address the

⁸³⁰ *The Sewanee Purple* 22: 8.

⁸³¹ We might also include the use of swimming pools in production of *Frogs* here. See above, pp.251-2 and Chapter Six, pp.287-300. At Oxford the rowing scene was mentioned as reminiscent of their most popular sport (see Chapter Four, pp.187-8) and the same may have been true for the US colleges.

⁸³² Branch 2008 [online, accessed 17th February 2018]; Mayer 2015: 134.

⁸³³ *Winona Republican Herald* 14th April 1938: 7.

political element. Like Theatro Technis's productions of *Frogs* in London,⁸³⁴ the play has attracted expatriate Greeks in North America. In 2007 the Greek Cultural Center in New York mounted a production of *Frogs*. It was performed in English in a relatively literal translation, although the programme does note that as there are differing versions of the advice given by Aeschylus and Euripides at the end of the contest; this 'gave (us) license to find our own answer to the question "How can theatre help save the state"'.

David Greenspan's *Old Comedy after Aristophanes' Frogs* also included a political dimension. Again like the Theatro Technis version Greenspan likens Athens to the US, in this instance the decline of Athens with a perceived decline in US power. The idea is introduced right from the start of the play, in a poem recited by Xanthias, which asks:

The Athenian time in the sun is done—
the American century has run its course—
does might make right? (p.115)

Like the Shevelove/Sondheim/Lane version,⁸³⁵ this one criticises George W. Bush and his administration, although the *New York Times* points out that given Bush was in the last year of his presidency, the jokes about him were not particularly current.⁸³⁶ The Iraq War is repeatedly mentioned: the Corpse whom Dionysus and Xanthias meet on their way to Hades states he was killed in Iraq, to which Dionysus replies, 'Oh why bring that up? Americans have never been happier' (p.122). The Corpse also comments, 'All these caskets here wrapped in the American flags. No 43 didn't want everyone to see all the bodies coming back. That's why they're keeping the cameras away' (p.123). The number 43 refers to George W. Bush, in his capacity as 43rd President. The political element is

⁸³⁴ See Chapter Four, pp.220-28.

⁸³⁵ See Chapter Six, pp.308-9.

⁸³⁶ Genzlinger 2008 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

exceptionally heavy-handed in places, such as when Charon breaks the action to explain at length how the system of the 'republic is ruined' (p.131).

The play not only criticised government but businesses guilty of pollution as well, with the frog chorus singing:

In these bogs frogs are company, lots of dumping see
all the companies do– p.u. –
coat the world with their goddam poo
they fuck up the earth as the girth of their wallets
expands in their hands in impoverished lands
and their bellies swell and the peeps go to hell
as if we couldn't tell we're
frogs dying everywhere. (p.128)

Curiously whilst political criticism is found throughout, it is completely absent from the parabasis. Instead the chorus speak a number of lines that serve to introduce Xanthias reciting poetry. It does come to a head at the end of the contest, when Aeschylus and Euripides both refuse to return to the world of the living because the American people have chosen 'Dishonest brutal people' (p.176) for their leaders.

As with the *New York Times*, many of the reviews did not look kindly on the play or its political element. *Variety*⁸³⁷ was particularly scathing, describing the play as 'twee, pretentious'; it accused the writer and director of having 'larded the plot with so much preening, in-joke shtick that the story is crushed like an ant trying to carry a dictionary'. *Time Out* liked it better, giving it 4 out of 4 stars and describing it as 'a dizzily intelligent,

⁸³⁷ Thielman 2008 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

furiouly hilarious political spoof'. They did however describe the contest sequence as a 'deflated second section'.⁸³⁸

Other productions went for differing messages. Ruth Margraff's 2002 adaptation *Red Frogs* was meant to have a Marxist message, but this was seemingly lost in the poetic script.⁸³⁹ The 1989 production at the University of Santa Cruz used the parabasis to put across a message about equal rights, mentioning examples of racism, xenophobia and sexism in the US. Just like Greenspan's⁸⁴⁰ later production, it criticised a President George Bush, though of course in 1989 it was George Bush Senior. The contest was between Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams and instead of Alcibiades the individual discussed in the closing section was Oliver North, a celebrated American soldier who was heavily implicated in the Iran-Contra affair⁸⁴¹ from 1985-1987. The final question was how to save live theatre. Williams suggested getting rid of politicians who cut funding to the arts, whereas O'Neill suggests restaging the classics in a new form, such as *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

Race

Whilst there is nothing explicitly about race in *Frogs* itself, there does seem to be something about it that appeals to ethnic minorities in the US. Aside from numerous productions of *Lysistrata*,⁸⁴² there are very few explicitly African-American adaptations of Aristophanes (in contrast to tragedy). But the most interesting part of the reception of *Frogs* in the African-American community is not related to a particular performance. In 1908 a group of African-American artists, consisting of directors, playwrights,

⁸³⁸ Shaw 2008 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁸³⁹ See the reactions to *Red Frogs* under Language and Translation above, p.256-7.

⁸⁴⁰ And Sondheim's Broadway version, see Chapter Six, passim.

⁸⁴¹ A scandal revolving around the clandestine sale of arms to Iran, then under embargo.

⁸⁴² As discussed in Wetmore 2014.

composers, actors, comedians and others, came together to form a new organisation. The group became a support for black artists who were finding it difficult to counter the institutional racism within performance at the time, such as the fact they were banned from joining the American Actors Beneficial Association. The name they chose for the organisation was the 'Frogs', after Aristophanes' play. Whilst the reasons behind the choosing of the name are unknown, it has been suggested by Susan Curtis that it is the character of Xanthias that attracted the group to the play; his status as the first slave to get the better of his master⁸⁴³ cannot have failed to resonate with the oppressed artists.⁸⁴⁴ The group were initially denied incorporation by a New York judge, with the reason given that the judge saw no connection between theatrical art and the name 'Frogs'. The judge was duly pilloried by the New York papers due to his ignorance of the Aristophanes play, although it is likely that the judge's explanation was merely an excuse for an underlying racial motivation. He did allow the group to petition a second judge, who approved the incorporation of the group almost immediately.⁸⁴⁵ The group would go on to represent African-American artists for approximately 25 years, but sadly there is very little appreciation today of the role they played in civil rights in the performance industry.⁸⁴⁶



Figure 20: Miracle Theatre's *Frogs*.

It is probably for similar reasons that the play has also appealed to ethnic performance companies, with two completely separate

⁸⁴³ See Chapter One, pp.59-62.

⁸⁴⁴ Curtis 2015: 17-8.

⁸⁴⁵ Curtis 2015: 20-1.

⁸⁴⁶ Curtis 2015: 18.

groups choosing to perform *Frogs*. The first was in 1978, a performance by the East West Players of Los Angeles, which had what has been described as ‘nontraditional’ casting.⁸⁴⁷ Founded in 1965, the East West Players were formed by a group of prominent Asian Americans in Hollywood. Their intention was to give Asian American actors the chance to play roles that they would never play in the film industry, since at the time they were limited to stereotypical roles. Their alumni include most of the Asian Americans working in film and television today, and 75% of all Asian Pacific actors registered with agencies in Los Angeles have worked with the company. They performed the translation by Richmond Lattimore, and as far as I can tell *Frogs* is the only classical play they have performed, although they have performed *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

The second production was in 1991 by the Miracle Theatre Company in Portland, Oregon. Also known by their Spanish name Teatro Milagro, they are the only Hispanic theatre company in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. They formed in 1985 and in 1986 created the Ancient Greek Theatre Festival in Portland, which continued until 1991, after which the company decided to refocus on Hispanic drama. During that five-year period they performed six Greek plays as well as a number of plays based on classical myth. *Frogs* formed part of their final festival, alongside *Theseus, A Dangerous Journey*. Despite their Hispanic heritage they performed in English although it is not recorded what translation they used. The programme does include a quotation that appears to come from the David Barrett translation and the dialogue in the production closely resembles Barrett’s. If that translation was used then it was heavily edited; for example, there is no cast member listed for Heracles.

⁸⁴⁷ Day 2001: iv.

Music and Dancing

One big difference from the British productions is that, excepting the Sondheim version, music does not have as lasting an impact in North America. Nowhere is the music particularly praised and nothing had the impact of Parry's score, for example. Nevertheless, there are occasional and brief mentions of there having been music specially composed for the productions, showing that music was an integral part of the performance history of *Frogs* and Aristophanes as a whole. The first recorded performance of Aristophanes in North America, a production of *Acharnians* at the University of Pennsylvania in 1886, used original music in its staging.⁸⁴⁸ The University of Pennsylvania went on to perform *Frogs* in 1930, using a mixture of original music as well as Christoph Willibald Gluck's overture to *Iphigenia in Aulis*.

There are a few mentions of music throughout the available material on *Frogs*. Often it was kept simple, such as a gramophone for a 1913 Miami University, Ohio, production,⁸⁴⁹ and flute accompaniment at the Experimental College of the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the 1920s. For Wellesley College's 1940 production a member of the music department composed an original score, as they had done the year before for *Agamemnon* and would do again the year after *Frogs* for *Antigone*.⁸⁵⁰ Music in University of Santa Cruz's 1989 production took influence from as diverse areas as Gilbert and Sullivan, modern musical theatre, hip-hop, Rastafarianism and Hare Krishna. Finally a production at the Chandler Studio Theatre in Los Angeles in 1998 brought more modern music to the production, fitting with the frog chorus's portrayal as LA gang members.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁸ Given 2015: 302. On this important production see Percy 2003.

⁸⁴⁹ Unknown 1913d: 263.

⁸⁵⁰ *Wellesley College News* Vol.54, No.18: 1.

⁸⁵¹ Rauzi 1998 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

At the International Young Men's Christian Association College 1913 production, dance featured heavily.⁸⁵² It can be inferred from the programme that the frog chorus did not appear on stage, since it says 'the frogs are heard in a barcarolle.' A barcarolle is, appropriately, a song in the style of Venetian gondolier folk songs and was performed in this production by the College Glee Club. The programme also mentions that the composer of the music and choreographer, Professor F.S. Hyde, 'has sought to express in modern forms something of the freshness and beauty which must have been in the dances and music as originally given in classic Attica.'

Whilst in Britain dance was often left out or not worthy of comment in reviews, in the US we see several mentions of the effectiveness of dance, implying that dance was seen as an important element of the production for both producers and audience. At Bates College, Maine, in 1933, the dancing was picked out as 'an interesting part of the play'.⁸⁵³ At the Oklahoma College for Women in 1929 several dance classes provided dances throughout the play.⁸⁵⁴ It was mentioned in a review that 'The frog dance was one of the most delightful sequences in the play' and 'A choral dance at the close of the play...added a touch of Grecian loveliness and grace'.⁸⁵⁵

The 2003 Bryn Mawr College production used music from a number of different sources. They were mainly from musical theatre; such as the 'Major-General's Song' (from *Pirates of Penzance*), 'Beauty and the Beast' (from the Disney film), 'Reviewing the Situation' (from *Oliver!*) and 'Anything Goes' (from the musical of the same name). In

⁸⁵² Pluggé 1938: 99.

⁸⁵³ *Bates Student* Vol.61, No.2: 1.

⁸⁵⁴ *The Trend* Vol.10, No.20: 1.

⁸⁵⁵ *The Trend* Vol.10, No.22: 1.

other places traditional songs such as ‘Swing Low Sweet Chariot’, ‘Row, Row, Row Your Boat’ and ‘Yellow Rose of Texas’ were used.

The Popularity of *Frogs*

In a similar story to Britain, *Frogs* is one of the most popular Aristophanes plays for performance in North America. *Lysistrata* remains the favourite by some distance, but *Frogs* and *Birds* are seemingly equally popular after this. On the evidence of the APGRD alone,⁸⁵⁶ there have been 86 productions of *Lysistrata* across the US and Canada, 58 of *Frogs* and 52 of *Birds*. When you compare this to the next most popular Aristophanes, *Clouds*, which has only fourteen recorded performances, we see that this triad clearly occupy a privileged position.⁸⁵⁷

So why has *Frogs* remained such a popular performance piece in North America and universities in particular? To a certain extent we can postulate that it is for the same reasons that it was popular in Britain: that the spectacle of the frog chorus and the visual comedy of the costume swapping and the beating scenes make it an easy entry point into Classics for a modern audience. *Frogs* is also one of the easiest Aristophanes plays to make acceptable to a conservative audience. There are only a few moments of obscenity and these are easily removed, as the earlier translations show.⁸⁵⁸ This might explain why even all-female colleges such as Wellesley have only performed one of the female-dominated Aristophanes plays.⁸⁵⁹ *Frogs* has therefore been more palatable as a performance in the US, where the Christian right was influential in universities

⁸⁵⁶ Accessed 2nd February 2018. By no means an exhaustive record, but included as it as being representative of the popularity of each play. Also note that some of the numbers may be slightly skewed by touring productions.

⁸⁵⁷ Although they still lag far behind the most popular tragedies such as *Medea*, *Agamemnon* and *Antigone*.

⁸⁵⁸ This does not, however explain the popularity of performing *Lysistrata*, which was neglected in translation for some time.

⁸⁵⁹ A production of *Lysistrata* in 1971.

throughout the 20th Century. Indeed even universities that are intrinsically linked with the Church, such as University of the South⁸⁶⁰ and Temple College,⁸⁶¹ have found *Frogs* an acceptable performance piece. We have already seen Aeschylus described by the International Young Men's Christian Association College as an 'orthodox religionist'; this meant that his victory over Euripides, the 'urbane rationalist', might have been met with approval by the Church. The college newspaper took this one step further, stating that the college's 'curriculum...has united with remarkable success the Greek ideal of training the mind and body with the Christian ideal today'.⁸⁶²

The popularity of *Frogs* in North American educational establishments remained consistent throughout the second half of the 20th Century. I have found evidence for 28 productions across 20 universities between 1890 and 1950, and a further 27 productions across 20 universities or schools from 1950 onwards. As mentioned previously, productions outside schools and universities only began in this later time period, with all nineteen productions happening after 1967. *Frogs* was particularly attractive to theatre companies in the 1990s, with seven of the sixteen productions happening in that decade. And yet the popularity of *Frogs* before 1950 cannot be denied. For a number of these universities, for example Trinity College in 1902, Montana State University in 1936, Winona State Teacher's College in 1938, *Frogs* is the only Greek play for which there are records.

It is perhaps no coincidence that *Lysistrata* and *Frogs* are the only two to have been produced on the biggest of American stages, Broadway. But it was the popularity of *Frogs*

⁸⁶⁰ They were founded in 1857 by ten dioceses of the Episcopal Church. Today 28 dioceses have joint ownership.

⁸⁶¹ Founded in 1884 by a Baptist Minister.

⁸⁶² *Association Seminar* Vol.22, No.2.

in North America that attracted the attention of Nathan Lane and culminated with the 2004 Broadway version by Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim and Lane. Never before or since has a Greek play involved a personality of the stature of Sondheim. The history of the production encapsulates many of the trends mentioned above, such as unusual staging, politics and, most notably, the use of music. The significance of this most unique of productions will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

Frogs according to Sondheim, Shevelove and Lane

After considering the significant stage productions of *Frogs* in Britain and North America in the two previous chapters, in this separate chapter I will be looking at the 1974 *Frogs*, a musical written by Burt Shevelove with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. The musical was rewritten in 2004 into a full Broadway version by Nathan Lane, with additional songs from Sondheim. I focus a whole chapter on this adaptation owing to its high-profile nature. *Frogs* is the only Aristophanes play, other than *Lysistrata*, to have been performed on Broadway and certainly the only one to have involved a creative personality with the prominence of Sondheim.

Broadway has had a limited relationship with ancient literature, with very few adaptations of ancient classical texts being given the ‘musical’ treatment.⁸⁶³ This is surprising given the wide range of sources that are adapted on a regular basis. Ancient tragedies seem to be rarely adapted to the musical stage, with only 1988’s *The Gospel at Colonus*, based on Sophocles’ Theban plays, standing out.⁸⁶⁴ In the past there have been numerous performances of the plays themselves, although little on Broadway itself since a *Medea* in 2002/3. Sophocles has not been seen on Broadway since 1998/9 and Aeschylus since 1977.

When we look at Roman writers, Plautus has enjoyed adaptation into the genre of American musical by much higher profile personalities. Richard Rogers and Lorenz Hart were the first to use – possibly unwittingly – Plautine plays, adapting William

⁸⁶³ All information on Broadway productions taken from *The Internet Broadway Database*, except where otherwise stated.

⁸⁶⁴ For more on this production see McConnell 2015.

Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* to the stage in *The Boys from Syracuse* (1938).⁸⁶⁵ I say 'unwittingly' as there is no record whether they were aware that Shakespeare's play is based on Plautus' *Menaechmi* and *Amphitryon*, although there are additional classical references added. Nevertheless, the ancient setting was retained for both the musical and the 1940 film adaptation, which included Hollywood's favourite ancient set-piece: a chariot race. Another famous name, Cole Porter, wrote *Out of This World* (1950), again based on *Amphitryon*.⁸⁶⁶ After that Burt Shevelove, Larry Gelbart and Stephen Sondheim would write *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962),⁸⁶⁷ borrowing elements from a number of Plautine plays. In 1981 a further production based on *The Comedy of Errors* moved the setting to the Persian Gulf. In contrast to tragedy, the plays of Plautus *only* seem to get performed on Broadway in adaptation and rarely in their original form.

Other Broadway musicals of the 40s and 50s took inspiration from the ancient world in a variety of ways. Rogers and Hart used the ancient world again in their musical *By Jupiter* (1942), for which they took as their source the play *The Warrior's Husband* by Julian F. Thompson.⁸⁶⁸ *The Golden Apple* (1954) by Jerome Moross and John Treville Latouche relocated the events of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to the Spanish-American War. The musical was a failure, which it has been suggested was down to the creators' decision to have the entire musical sung in the manner of opera, rather than include dialogue as in a traditional Broadway musical.⁸⁶⁹ Thomas Hirschack calls it 'one of American musical theatre's most beloved failures'.⁸⁷⁰ Other than that, Broadway musicals seem to limit themselves to referencing Greek tragedy, such as the explicitly named Greek Chorus in *Legally Blonde*

⁸⁶⁵ Hirschack 2008: 88-89.

⁸⁶⁶ Hirschack 2008: 560.

⁸⁶⁷ Hence *Forum*.

⁸⁶⁸ Hirschack 2008: 108-109.

⁸⁶⁹ Hall 2008: 68.

⁸⁷⁰ Hirschack 2008: 293.

(2007) and the (sadly cut during previews) ‘Geek Chorus’ of *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* (2011). The 2007 musical *Xanadu* featured more of the mythical background than the 1980 film it was based on. It tells the story of a muse, named Clio, who leaves Olympus to inspire the invention of roller discos in 1980s Los Angeles. As well as the muses, the *dramatis personae* included mythical characters such as Zeus, Thetis, Medusa and Aphrodite.

Aristophanes’ performance history on Broadway is heavily biased towards *Lysistrata*.⁸⁷¹ Productions of *Lysistrata* go back as far as 1930 in English⁸⁷² and include two musical adaptations: *The Happiest Girl in the World* in 1961 and *Lysistrata Jones* in 2011/2. *The Happiest Girl in the World* set lyrics by E.Y. Harburg to music derived from several different scores by Jacques Offenbach, and was directed at the Martin Beck Theatre. *Lysistrata Jones*, with music and lyrics by Lewis Flinn and direction by Dan Knechtges, had its Broadway premiere at the Walter Kerr Theater. It abandoned the anti-war message of Aristophanes’ version by featuring a group of cheerleaders who refuse to have sex with their boyfriends until they win a game of basketball. Despite positive reviews and Tony and Drama Desk nominations for Best Book, the show only lasted for 30 performances.

The Broadway *Frogs* was more successful and much more significant. To give a brief background to the writers of this version of *Frogs*, Stephen Sondheim wrote his first musical in 1945, aged just 15. He later became apprenticed to Leonard Bernstein,⁸⁷³ who did not like Sondheim’s music but offered him a position as co-lyricist on *West Side Story*

⁸⁷¹ There have been more professional versions of Aristophanes in touring and regional productions, but again this is usually biased towards *Lysistrata*. Two musical productions of *Lysistrata* (including *Happiest Girl in the World*) and one of *Peace* are analysed in Given 2015. Also of note is the largely forgotten *The Athenian Touch*, which was performed Off-Broadway in 1964. It featured Aristophanes as a character who, while writing *Lysistrata*, is vying with Cleon for the love of a courtesan, Attalea.

⁸⁷² Klein 2014: 23.

⁸⁷³ Who had himself written music for performances of *Birds* and *Peace* as an undergraduate at Harvard (Given 2015: 302).

(1957).⁸⁷⁴ This was to be a huge success and was Sondheim's big break. From there he went on to write the lyrics for the Tony Award winning *Gypsy* (1959) and his first Broadway show, where he wrote both music and lyrics, was *Forum* (1962). After the failure of his next show *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964), he wrote lyrics for the Richard Rodgers musical *Do I Hear A Waltz* (1965). The 70s were a hugely productive decade for Sondheim with him writing music and lyrics to five Broadway musicals. In the middle of these successes came *Frogs* (1974) at Yale. Since then he has remained a prolific writer, with another eight shows reaching Broadway.

Sondheim's musicals are a disparate group, transcending genres in both music and theatre. His most commercially appealing work is *Sweeney Todd* (1979), a favourite of amateur groups the world over and recently made into a film (2007) directed by Tim Burton and starring Johnny Depp and Helena Bonham Carter. As well as this traditional British story he has used fairy tales (*Into the Woods*, 1987, also filmed in 2014), American history (*Assassins*, 1990) and even as mundane a subject as an ordinary man who cannot commit (*Company*, 1970). He is famous for the subversion of traditional musical theatre tropes: for example, in *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), the scenes take place in reverse chronological order, and in *Follies* (1971), both an older and younger version of each character appears on stage simultaneously. His few failures seem to be massively outweighed by his success as he has received a record eight Tony awards, eight Grammys, a Pulitzer Prize and an Oscar. He is regarded as one of the world's finest musical theatre talents, acclaimed by critics, award ceremonies and fans alike. He does however, lack some commercial appeal, especially when compared to personalities such as Andrew Lloyd-Webber.

⁸⁷⁴ Secret 1998: 112.

Forum and *Frogs* were not Sondheim's first forays into the classics. As a student he played a chorus member in *Antigone* and Tiresias in *Oedipus Tyrannus*.⁸⁷⁵ They are also not the only Sondheim musicals to include reference to the ancient world. Although not using the ancient world as its setting, the 1990 musical *Assassins*, an exploration of all the assassins of American presidents, features several references to the ancient world. These references mainly come from the real-life affinity that Abraham Lincoln's assassin John Wilkes Booth felt for Marcus Junius Brutus.⁸⁷⁶ The musical climaxes with a suicidal Lee Harvey Oswald being confronted by Booth, who persuades him to shoot John F. Kennedy instead of himself. When Booth is explaining the difference between a murderer and an assassin the following exchange occurs:

BOOTH: Lee, when you kill a president, it isn't murder. Murder is a tawdry little crime; it's born of greed, or lust, or liquor. But when a President gets killed, when Julius Caesar got killed... he was assassinated. And the man who did it...

OSWALD: Brutus.

BOOTH: Ah! You know his name. Brutus assassinated Caesar, what?, 2000 years ago, and here's a high school drop-out with a dollar twenty-five an hour job in Dallas, Texas who knows who he was. And they say fame is fleeting... (p.95).

It is a reminder that it is not only ancient literature that has had an impact on the modern world, but also ancient history itself.

⁸⁷⁵ McDonald 2014: 319.

⁸⁷⁶ John Wilkes Booth's father was named Junius Brutus Booth and the younger Booth named Shakespeare's Brutus as one of his favourite roles. See Kaufmann 2004 for more.

Burt Shevelove was born in New Jersey in 1915. He studied at Brown University and then completed a Masters in Theatre at Yale. He served as an ambulance driver in the Second World War and afterwards went on to become a writer, director and producer for radio and television. On Broadway he was mainly known as a director, but wrote the books to *No, No, Nanette* (1971) and *Happy New Year* (1981) and co-wrote the book to *Forum*. He died in 1982. Sondheim claimed that he was the second funniest man you could ever meet.⁸⁷⁷

As mentioned, the two men had worked together on *Forum* prior to *Frogs*. Shevelove had already put on musical versions of *Miles Gloriosus*⁸⁷⁸ and *Mostellaria*⁸⁷⁹ at Yale, and was keen to do a full-scale musical based on Plautus' works. Sondheim, coming off the successes of *West Side Story* and *Gypsy*, was introduced to the plays of Plautus by Shevelove. The 'domestic' nature of Plautus' comedy attracted Sondheim, who said, 'Nobody had ever written about husbands and wives, daughters and maids. Plautus is responsible for the situation comedy'.⁸⁸⁰ So Sondheim read through the Loeb Classical Library editions of Plautus,⁸⁸¹ and immediately began working on the score, whilst Shevelove and Larry Gelbart went to work on the script.

Forum was characterised by a lack of any explicit political or social comment. This was made clear to the audience from the very beginning; in the opening number 'Comedy Tonight':

PROTEANS: Nothing of gods,

⁸⁷⁷ The funniest being Larry Gelbart, co-writer of *Forum* and creator of television series *M*A*S*H* (Guare 2004: 9). Gelbart has more recently briefly collaborated with *Little Shop of Horrors* and prolific Disney composer Alan Menken on a 2002 adaptation of *Lysistrata*, before they were replaced for the final version. (Taylor 2002 [online, accessed 17th February 2018])

⁸⁷⁸ *Secrest* 1998: 148.

⁸⁷⁹ *Mtishows.com*: Burt Shevelove [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁸⁸⁰ Quoted in *Secrest* 1998: 148-149.

⁸⁸¹ Guare 2004: 9.

Nothing of fate.

PSEUDOLUS: Weighty affairs will just have to wait. (p.18)

From the evidence of *Forum* – and as we will see again with *Frogs* – Burt Shevelove had very little interest in sending out any sort of political ‘message’. Anyone familiar with Sondheim’s musicals will know that this contrasts greatly with Sondheim’s own approach; he is very political and his natural inclination in songs is to veer towards satire and social commentary. Whilst he avoids explicit political comment in favour of a more social message, there is always something there. Any attempts Sondheim made to indulge his natural inclinations were seemingly resisted by the rest of the production team. The song that ends Act One and contains the entrance of Miles Gloriosus ‘Bring me my Bride’, originally had in place a different song, entitled ‘There’s Something About War’. This song describes all the ‘divine’ acts that soldiers commit in war:

MILES: A warrior’s work is never done,

He never can take a rest.

There always are lands to overrun

And people to be oppressed.

SOLDIERS: There’s always a town to pillage,

A city to be laid to waste.

There’s always a little village

Entirely to be erased.

And citadels to sack, of course,

And temples to attack, of course,

Children to annihilate,

Priestesses to violate,

Houses to destroy – hey!

Women to enjoy – hey!

Mothers to debase – hey!

Virgins to assault – hey!’ (pp.126-7)

The song ends with the lines:

MILES: It isn’t the glory or

The groaning or the gorier

Details that cause a warrior

To smirk.

SOLDIERS: Left-right!

ALL: It’s the knowledge that he’ll never be out of work! (p.128)

The song shows Sondheim’s predilection towards offering a satirical comment, even if it is restricted to a small element within a show which makes no other such references. The song never even made it as far as rehearsals, because Shevelove felt there should be no political slant to anything within the production. It was to be ‘strictly a domestic farce and not a commentary’.⁸⁸²

This conflict between Sondheim and Shevelove’s inclinations is important in looking at the script of *Frogs*, for Shevelove again attempted to write a musical devoid of political and social comment. However, this was at odds with the original Aristophanes, a problem which did not arise so much in the case of Plautine originals in *Forum*. Unlike with *Forum*, the politics *are* present this time, but are provided by Sondheim’s score instead of the dialogue. The 2004 revival by Nathan Lane went much further and added much

⁸⁸² Quoted from Sondheim’s notes in Shevelove, Gelbart & Sondheim 1985: 124.

more social commentary. This chapter will therefore trace the evolution of this American version of *Frogs* from a student play in 1941 to the Broadway production of 2004.

Frogs at Yale (1941 and 1974)

In 1941 Shevelove, then a student and head of the Yale Dramatic Association, wanted to perform a Greek play. Supposedly he sought the advice of the head of the Drama

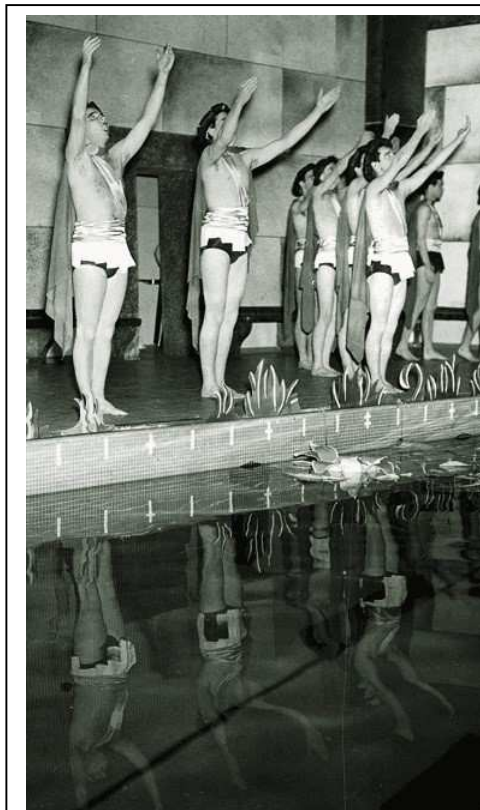


Figure 21: The chorus of *Frogs* in 1941.

Department, Allardyce Nicholl, who suggested *Frogs* in the swimming pool of the Payne Whitney Gymnasium.⁸⁸³ Inspired by the idea of Charon and Dionysus rowing across an actual pool, Shevelove adapted the play, enlisting members of the Yale University swimming team to spend the production in the pool playing the Chorus of *Frogs*.⁸⁸⁴ The production was a huge success and, while there was talk of a Broadway transfer, America's entry into the Second World War prevented it.⁸⁸⁵ Unfortunately the script of this version does not survive⁸⁸⁶ and there seem to be very

few photos, though there is one of the Chorus (Figure 21).

⁸⁸³ Stein 2004: 199.

⁸⁸⁴ Gamel 2007: 211-212.

⁸⁸⁵ Secrest 1998: 233.

⁸⁸⁶ Gamel 2007: 212.

In 1974 Robert Brustein, artistic director of the Yale Repertory Theatre, asked Shevelove to revive the production in the hope that it would bring money into the theatre and be a fun production to end their season with.⁸⁸⁷ Shevelove in turn asked Sondheim to score the revival. Following *Forum* the two men had collaborated further. The previous year Shevelove had helped Sondheim with a tribute production and in return Sondheim had appeared in a film Shevelove was directing; an experience which Sondheim has stated he



Figure 22: The chorus of *Frogs* in 1974. Sigourney Weaver is on the far left.

found rather embarrassing.⁸⁸⁸ Sondheim claims that *Frogs* ‘didn’t interest me at all, but the reason I agreed to it was that I owed Burt a favour’.⁸⁸⁹ Interestingly two

members of the Chorus in the 1974 *Frogs* were then drama students Sigourney Weaver and Meryl Streep.⁸⁹⁰

The *dramatis personae* of Aristophanes and Shevelove’s *Frogs* are comparable. Dionysus, Xanthias, Heracles, Charon, Aeacus and Pluto appear in both versions. Persephone’s maid is given a name, Charisma, and a maid to Hippolyte is added, named Virilla. The Chorus leader is also named as Hierophantes, presumably after the name for the chief priest of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the hierophant. Several characters are omitted

⁸⁸⁷ Brustein 1981: 178.

⁸⁸⁸ Secrest 1998: 232-233.

⁸⁸⁹ Guare 2004: 10.

⁸⁹⁰ Secrest 1998: 234.

in the 1974 version, generally owing to the scenes they featured in being cut from the book. The characters from cut scenes include the corpse that Dionysus and Xanthias meet on their way to Hades, the innkeeper and Plathane. Virilla fills the role of the innkeeper, recognising Dionysus (disguised as Heracles) as the one who stole Hippolyte's girdle.

The biggest and most obvious character change is the replacement of Aeschylus and Euripides with William Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw. Placing Shaw in Hades in the 1941 performance is an interesting move, given that the elderly Shaw was still alive. Unfortunately there seems to be no record of whether Shaw was aware of his role in *Frogs* and what he thought of it. He did however appreciate the comparison between himself and Shakespeare as seen from his own *Shakes versus Shav* (1949). In 1974 both Shakespeare and Shaw would be well-known to an audience.⁸⁹¹

The script in general is heavily adapted. The more 'adult' passages in Aristophanes' original are removed or otherwise tamed.⁸⁹² *Frogs* stuck to the one-act format of the original Greek play, but a scenic breakdown of the script when compared to the Aristophanes original is informative.⁸⁹³ In the original the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides forms the bulk of the play; Aristophanes dedicates just under half of the total lines to this episode. While still the biggest part of the 1974 version, it only accounts for around a quarter of the play. This shrinking of the contest scene is intriguing, especially in the light of other scenes being cut completely – one would think this would bring more emphasis onto the contest scene. So what other parts of the play are being emphasised instead?

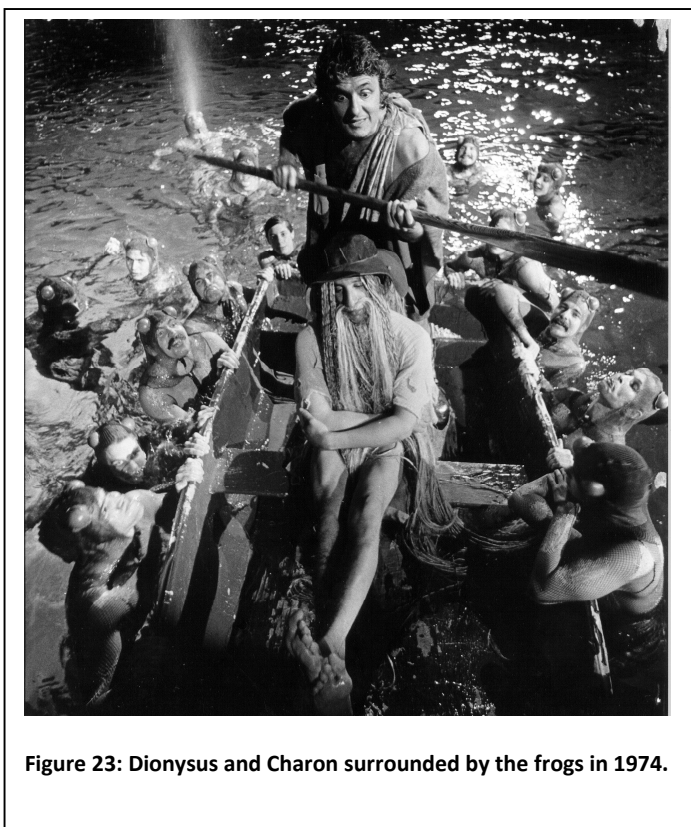
⁸⁹¹ Gamel 2007: 213; see Chapter Two, p.172 for more on *Shakes versus Shav*.

⁸⁹² Gamel 2007: 212.

⁸⁹³ Figures for the 405 version are based on lines, for 1974 and 2004 they are based on pages.

To begin with, the opening dialogue between Dionysus and Xanthias is itself greatly expanded, increasing from a tiny 2% of the Aristophanes play to over 12% of the 1974 musical. This gives Dionysus and Xanthias a chance to shine, with a large portion of this given over the opening song ‘Invocation and Instructions to the Audience’.

The image of Dionysus and Charon rowing across the lake surrounded by the eponymous Frogs was the central inspiration for Shevelove’s original production and the whole point of performing in a swimming pool. Therefore it should come as no surprise that the Frog Chorus in the 1974 version takes up twice as much of the play as in the Aristophanes script. Taken with the scenes in the boat between Dionysus and Charon, it means that



nearly 10% of the musical takes place on or in the water, compared to only 4% in the original.

Despite the cutting of the innkeeper and Plathane, the section of the script from Dionysus disembarking the boat to the start of the contest occupies almost exactly the same proportion in both

versions. In the 1974 version this includes expanded use of the two maids, Charisma and Virilla, as well as a greatly expanded parabasis featuring Hierophantes and the chorus of Dionysians, which now occupies ten times as much of the play as it did before.

Several of these changes are designed to give Dionysus and Xanthias the spotlight. They are given more dialogue with each other and other characters. This can be seen markedly by the extension of their scenes prior to meeting Charon. A lot of the time that has been cut from the contest can be found here.

The use of the pool and auditorium, ostensibly the inspiration for the entire production, was questioned. One critic said, 'Frogs frolic for a few stanzas then disappear. We are left with that pool staring at us. The aquashow returns to being a proscenium production and the expected accident – Alvin Epstein falling into the water – is gratuitous. The audience realizes too soon it has been deceived by false advertising' and added of the music that 'most all is lost in an acoustical blur, an echo chamber that defies human ears'.⁸⁹⁴

Metatheatre is increased and plays an important part. Metatheatrical references appear throughout the script, with Dionysus saying Hades is 'not unlike earth...The lighting is different' (p.164). Just as Aristophanes begins with Xanthias asking 'Shall I make one of the usual cracks, master, that the audience always laughs at?' (1-2),⁸⁹⁵ so the 1974 Xanthias stares out at the audience and begins 'I suppose I should say something screamingly funny' (p.141).

Before the action of the play can begin Dionysus and Xanthias must first sing Sondheim's prologus, 'Invocation and Instructions to the Audience'. Most of the song instructs the audience on how to behave while at the theatre. Dionysus introduces them with:

Yes, but first...

⁸⁹⁴ Sears 1974.

⁸⁹⁵ Gamel 2007: 216.

Some do's and don'ts,

Mostly don'ts (p.142)

The advice covers a multitude of the sins of theatrical audiences:

Please don't cough.

It tends to throw the actors off. (p.142)

.....

Don't say, "What?"

To every line you haven't got. (p.144)

Sondheim also makes fun of the production. Firstly, he directs attention to the swimming pool and the difficulties with echo:

DIONYSUS: As for applause, please,

When there's a pause, please,

Although we welcome praise,

The echo sometimes lasts for days.

CHORUS: Days...days...days...days... (p.143)

Secondly, a joke is made on the production as a whole:

And if you're in a snit because you've missed the plot

(Of which I must admit there's not an awful lot),

Still don't

Say, "what?" (p.144)

And finally on himself and common criticisms of his work:⁸⁹⁶

If by a sudden miracle,

A tune should appear that's lyrical,

⁸⁹⁶ Gamel 2007: 216.

Don't hum along. (p. 144)

Right from the start the idea that there will be a message is introduced, though it can be missed in all the comedy. Dionysus and Xanthias offer 'Bacchanales and social comment' (p.142) as well as promising to 'signal... when they're serious', saying 'It's in the second half' (p.144).⁸⁹⁷

Despite this promise, *Frogs* of 1974 seems to lack much of the thematic stakes that Aristophanes' version had. There is no political advice, no reference to contemporary figures and no equating of modern society with the denizens of Hades. 1974 was the year Nixon resigned and the US was still involved in Vietnam, so political comment would not have been unexpected or unusual.⁸⁹⁸ The lack of commentary seems to follow the pattern of *Forum* as Burt Shevelove seems to have had very little interest in making such comments. However Sondheim very much has, and in 1974 the much higher-profile⁸⁹⁹ composer could not be forced to give up his predilections by Shevelove. Therefore we can see some of Sondheim's inclination towards social commentary in his Chorus songs, culminating in the extended parabasis. The three main Chorus songs occupy the same place as in Aristophanes, but with some changes to their purpose.⁹⁰⁰

The Frogs are given more character in this version. They are happy with the world the way it is and reject groups that try to change things. Mary-Kay Gamel calls them 'happy Philistines' who 'spell out a philosophy of complacency and conservatism'.⁹⁰¹ They

⁸⁹⁷ Gamel 2007: 216.

⁸⁹⁸ Gamel 2007: 214.

⁸⁹⁹ By this time Sondheim had written *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971) and *A Little Night Music* (1973) winning three consecutive Tony awards for Best Original Score and two grammys.

⁹⁰⁰ Gamel 2007: 216.

⁹⁰¹ Gamel 2007: 216.

aren't interested in 'hoity-doity intellectuals' or 'hippy-dippy homosexuals' (p.159).

They try to persuade Dionysus to share their acceptance of the world:

Whaddaya care the world's a wreck?

Leave 'em alone, send 'em a check,

Sit in the sun and what the heck,

Whaddaya wanna break your neck for? (p.160)

The chorus of Dionysians, instead of singing their ode to Dionysus, are singing mainly about wine. Drinking the wine brings about a different type of complacency to the Frogs, but complacency nevertheless:

Wine helps the edges blur,

Wine lets the mind escape,

Wine settles all dissension,

Pour the wine! (p.168)

In partial contrast there comes the parabasis. It takes the form of a song performed by the chorus, interspersed with dialogue aimed at the audience from Hierophantes. In each mini-speech Hierophantes describes a character from the play, explaining their personality and their actions. After each bit of dialogue the chorus sing a verse echoing some of the points in the speech, ending each time with 'It's only a play'.

Hierophantes starts by describing Dionysus, saying 'He's not a practical man. He's a dreamer. But he's trying to make his dreams come true' (p.181). He then goes on to say, 'Dionysus believes you lack passion. He may be right. He sees your outrage turning to disapproval. He sees your love turning into affection. He sees your involvement fading

away. He has waited the long time you take to do something, anything'. The message is that humanity is slipping into a state of apathy and a loss of emotion, just like the complacent Frogs and the drunken Dionysians. Dionysus is trying to change this, despite the attempts by the Frogs to stop him. But the chorus replies:

It doesn't really matter.

Don't worry, relax.

What can one person do?

After all, you're only human.

And it's all been said before,

And you've got enough to think about.

Besides...

It's only a play.

Dionysus has already been dismissed as a dreamer and we are now told he cannot achieve his aims himself because 'He's only half a god and nothing of a hero' (p.182). However, he does have Xanthias, whom Hierophantes describes as 'a practical man' who 'seeks peace at any price'. Yet like Dionysus, Xanthias fails at his task: 'He never gets around to doing anything, but he means well...I hope'. Heracles is the next target, described as not 'very bright, but he's bright enough to see that things are in a terrible shape'. And so Heracles 'tries to be of help,' but, as the chorus points out:

Too bad.

He doesn't exist.

He never was real.

He's only a myth. (pp.182-3)

Next we have a description of Pluto, a ‘generous leader’ who ‘lets us do as we please’ but ‘demands order and justice and honesty’ (p.183); a seemingly perfect ruler and the dead are ‘pleased to live under his rule’. Hierophantes concludes with ‘Funny, isn’t it, how we always get the leaders we deserve’. When the chorus chips in with ‘And a leader’s a useful thing to curse’, we can see the implication behind this. We blame our leaders for everything and as a result we get bad leaders, the vicious circle of politics.

Finally Hierophantes mentions someone who is not in the musical, Chaos, and warns the audience. He says ‘The great god Chaos, father of darkness, once ruled the earth. He was overthrown. He could return’. But the chorus reply with:

Well, words are merely chatter,

And easy to say.

It doesn’t really matter,

It’s only a play.

The underlying message of the parabasis is clear. Though the chorus might be saying it is only a play, these are real issues facing the world. The apathy described will lead the audience into acting like the Frogs or the Dionysians and ignoring the message; the audience themselves will go away thinking ‘It’s only a play’. The chorus is mocking the attitude of mankind and to this end their lines read like a list of common excuses:

He’ll do it for you. (p.181)

After all you’re only human. (p.181)

Things fix themselves. (p.182)

Let the leaders raise your voices for you.

Let the critics make your choices for you. (p.183)

Musically, the parabasis has an ethereal quality to it; Stephen Banfield describes it as having a ‘curiously narcotic arioso structure’.⁹⁰² Each line is sung by a different voice on stage, with ‘It’s only a play’ being repeated by the whole chorus. This imparts to the sequence an almost dreamlike quality, giving the effect of the chorus hypnotising the audience into their way of thinking. Each of the characters described makes an effort to fix things, but for one reason or another fails at that task. Therefore it is up to the audience to solve their own problems. Essentially the writers are saying ‘stop making excuses for your problems and go sort them out’. But unfortunately, as the chorus say at the end of the song:

It really doesn’t matter

What somebody writes.

You can turn off the lights

And on alternate nights,

You can pray.

Don’t worry.

Relax.

On with the play. (p.184)

The implication is that the writers can write the message and the audience will hear it, but ultimately it will not change anything, and this apathy will lead to Chaos returning to the world. Mary-Kay Gamel suggests the parabasis has a double-meaning; as well as the one described it can be interpreted as suggesting ‘from the perspective of death, lived reality is evanescent and not worth getting excited about’.⁹⁰³

⁹⁰² Banfield 1993: 53.

⁹⁰³ Gamel 2007: 218.

The contest, the most important part of the Aristophanes play, loses much of its impact in Shevelove's script. Stephen Banfield states that the production 'tails off with a diminishing dramatic perspective' during this segment.⁹⁰⁴ Mary-Kay Gamel criticises the choice of Shakespeare and Shaw, as they are not as close to the audience as Aeschylus and Euripides were to the Athenian audiences.⁹⁰⁵ She also states that the use of actual quotations from the writers made it less funny than the 'hilarious parodies' of Aeschylus and Euripides.⁹⁰⁶ In fact there is seemingly no attempt to make a parody of the two poet's actual personalities as there may have been in Aristophanes; instead they are merely made stock comedy characters in their own right. Daniel Mendelsohn makes a good point when he suggests that the choice of poet only makes sense in the context of Shevelove's lack of interest in politics, since the contest is now one of style: 'Did people want socially edifying, but perhaps the tiniest bit boring, straight drama, or did they want something to catch their emotions'.⁹⁰⁷ The sequence was criticised at the time by reviewers, one saying 'Mr. Shevelove has forgotten that Aristophanes was playing critic' and 'The whole point of the exercise thus went flat by the evening's end: we were heading for a scalping and barely got fingers into hair or beard'.⁹⁰⁸

There are a number of jokes about other playwrights, however, during the scene between Xanthias and Aeacus (pp.185-6). Each joke requires more than a passing acquaintance with the biographies and works of the victim; with all the references coming in the space of a few minutes it would be impossible to catch them all. Thus Bertolt Brecht is described as a 'trouble-maker', perhaps stemming from the social commentary in his plays, which preceded his departure from Nazi Germany and subsequent blacklisting as a suspected

⁹⁰⁴ Banfield 1993: 52

⁹⁰⁵ Gamel 2007: 213.

⁹⁰⁶ Gamel 2007: 214.

⁹⁰⁷ Mendelsohn 2004: 53.

⁹⁰⁸ Kerr 1974.

communist by the House Un-American Activities Committee during the Cold War. Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine are described as having gone 'home early', presumably a reference to the fact that both retired from the theatre during their lives. Of Luigi Pirandello it says 'A sweet man, but you can't trust him. First, he's somebody, then he's somebody else', a reference to the exploration of identity in his plays. The Stuart playwrights Frances Beaumont and John Fletcher are also referenced and how they are 'always together', a pun on how the two became so synonymous with each other that even plays they did not write together were attributed to their partnership. Finally there is a mention of Oscar Wilde being 'naughty but...nice' and Eugene O'Neill being 'really funny' when he 'didn't used to be'.

Ultimately what wins the contest for Shakespeare is his sung version of the speech beginning 'Fear No More the Heat o' the Sun' from *Cymbeline*. Dionysus justifies his decision by saying to Shaw 'you are not a poet' (p.205). Dionysus concedes that Shaw is wise and witty, but that there are other wise and witty men on earth. He says to Shaw 'Perhaps wiser, but surely not so witty. No one listens to *them*. Not many listened to you. Wise men shout their words into the wind'. Later when Dionysus is trying to persuade Pluto to let Shakespeare return from earth he states 'The theatre needs a *poet*' (p.207). Shevelove's Dionysus is not interested in the sage advice Aeschylus offers in Aristophanes' play, he needs a poet to 'lift (the audiences) out of their seats'. What this will achieve is never made clear, but the change from the original is striking. The musical ends with Dionysus introducing Shakespeare to the audience in mime. As the two stand there smiling at the audience, the lights fade to black.

The difference in approach between Sondheim and Shevelove creates a tension in the 1974 version. While the script contents itself by being a series of jokes, the songs are

where the social and political parts are. It would be interesting to know how far the two men collaborated on what they were doing. I suspect that the script is the same one that was used in 1941, with the only changes being the odd line to help introduce the new songs.

Frogs Revived (1975 to 2003)

There were very few performances of this musical version of *Frogs* between 1974 and the Broadway production of 2004. Although alternative lyrics are available to make the production suitable for performance without a pool, most productions have taken place in them.⁹⁰⁹ Perhaps aware of the criticisms of the Yale version, some other American productions made more use of the swimming pool. One production, by the Pegasus Players in Chicago in 1988, had the conductor begin the performance on a diving board. At the end of the first scene he dived into the water and swam around, emerging from another part of the pool to conduct the next song. During ‘It’s Only a Play’, images of civil rights figures and human tragedies were projected onto the floor of the pool, accentuating the song’s message of the danger of ignoring what is going on in the world. Finally for the contest scene Shakespeare and Shaw were floated out onto the pool standing on miniature rafts.

The British premiere production was put on in 1990 at the Old Brentford Baths.⁹¹⁰ This production also used the pool to a much greater extent, with the bulk of the action happening in the water.⁹¹¹ The director, John Gardyne, found an appropriate metaphor to describe the complacent Frogs: ‘In the swimming pool they are the people who are obsessed with safety; the ones with the armbands, the rubber hats so their hair won’t get

⁹⁰⁹ Gamel 2007: 219.

⁹¹⁰ Sondheimguide.com [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁹¹¹ Ramond 1990: 35.

wet, the rubber rings, the goggles. We've all seen those people – their appearance is subhuman, it's reptilian, it's almost froggy'.⁹¹² For Gardyne the musical explores the idea of the impact of an artist on society and he cites 'events in Czechoslovakia', presumably referring to theatres going on strike as an element in the Velvet Revolution and the dissolution of the communist government there. It is striking that, although we might question the idea of a playwright changing the world, this production can point to a real example of the arts making a difference in politics. Despite this, Michael Billington, writing in the *Guardian*, stated 'where the original assumes a great dramatist has the power to redeem the city, the revised version is more about saving a moribund theatre'.⁹¹³ Yet he does go on to say that 'it says something moving about society's need for the wisdom and power of great poetry'.

Aside from this, its only appearance on the British stage seems to be a four-production 'partly-staged reading' at the Barbican Theatre in 1998 as part of the work of the 'Lost Musicals Charitable Trust'.⁹¹⁴ A production was planned at the National Theatre in 2002, but the upcoming 2004 Broadway production caused performance rights complications.⁹¹⁵

Frogs on Broadway (2004)

The established Broadway actor Nathan Lane first became involved in *Frogs* when he performed a concert version of the musical at the Library of Congress in 2000, a production which was recorded the following year. Inspired, Lane began to work on expanding Shevelove's script. Susan Stroman agreed to direct and also spoke to

⁹¹² Quoted in Green 1990.

⁹¹³ Billington 1990: 25.

⁹¹⁴ Playbill.com [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁹¹⁵ Paddock 2002 [online, accessed 23rd June 2012].

Sondheim about revising some of the songs, which Sondheim agreed to. On the poster the production was billed as a ‘new musical’, ‘a comedy written in 405 b.c. by Aristophanes’, ‘freely adapted by Burt Shevelove’ and ‘even more freely adapted by Nathan Lane’.

Lane altered the script significantly to bring the production closer to traditional Anglo-American musical theatre by separating it into two acts.⁹¹⁶ A significant change from both the 1974 and the Aristophanes version is the addition of extra motivation for Dionysus’ trip to Hades. He wants to see his love, Ariadne, who appears later as the only additional

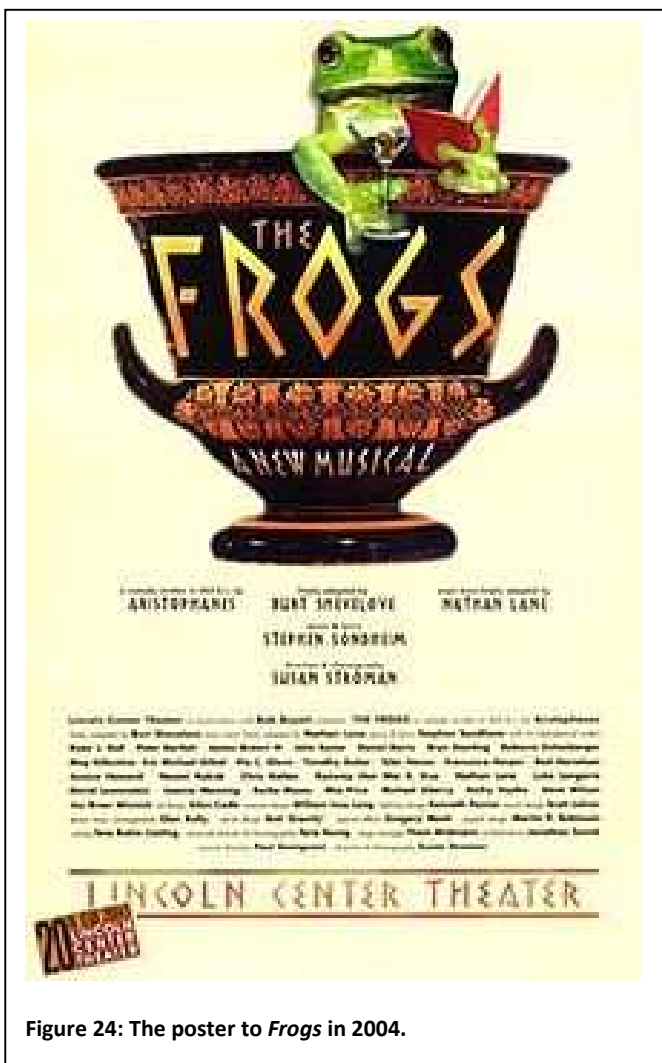


Figure 24: The poster to *Frogs* in 2004.

character to previous versions. Mary English called her addition ‘intrusive’⁹¹⁷ while another reviewer liked her inclusion, but was so scathing of the rest of the production that he described it as being ‘like a harp in an oompah band’.⁹¹⁸ The addition of Ariadne and the cutting of Hierophantes are the only changes from the 1974 dramatis personae. A lot of music is added, with 19 songs compared to eight in the 1974 version. Most of these are given to small groups of soloists, another move to make

⁹¹⁶ Gamel 2007: 219.

⁹¹⁷ English 2005: 132.

⁹¹⁸ Brantley 2004: 20.

the musical more like a traditional Broadway show.⁹¹⁹ Altogether the new material made the production over an hour longer than Shevelove's original script.⁹²⁰

The metatheatrical opening scene is increased by having Dionysus and Xanthias appear as two unidentified actors at the very start. Xanthias then suggests they tell the story 'where the man kills his father and sleeps with his mother' (p.1). Dionysus instead asks for something upbeat and suggests 'the story of the god and the slave who go on a journey to help mankind'. Xanthias asks if he can play the god, to which Dionysus replies he is not dressed for it and 'could only be the slave or the down on her luck cocktail waitress' (p.2). The 'Invocation and Instructions to the Audience' are altered to remove any reference to the university swimming pool setting of the 1974 version. Replacing them are more instructions not to commit the regular foibles of theatre audiences, such as:

No smokes, no chow –

Unwrap the candy wrappers now. (pp.4-5)

In order to bring the production into the present Lane included plenty of references to modern culture. The prologos now contains the line:

And we'd appreciate

Your turning off your cell phones while we wait. (p.4)

At which point Xanthias' phone does go off and the audience is treated to a classic 'Can you hear me now?' monologue. There are plenty of modern musical theatre references. When Dionysus puts on Heracles' lionskin and asks Xanthias how he looks, Xanthias' reply references the *Lion King*: 'Like the circle of life has stopped' (p.26).⁹²¹ Heracles

⁹¹⁹ Gamel 2007: 220.

⁹²⁰ English 2005: 130.

⁹²¹ Gamel 2007: 220.

tells Dionysus he is ‘Too Fosse’ (p.25) and Dionysus paraphrases *42nd Street* (film 1933, musical 1984) when he says to Xanthias ‘You’re going out there a slave, but you’ve got to come back a god’ (p.71). Other modern references include Charon and Xanthias sharing marijuana (p.40) and Xanthias quoting the film *Jaws* after Dionysus is swallowed by the giant Frog, saying ‘I think we’re gonna need a bigger boat’ (p.54).

Purely as a piece of theatre the production presents mixed outcomes. The staging was almost universally praised, described as ‘bold, ambitious and very good-looking’.⁹²² However it has been noted that the energetic movements of the frog chorus is at odds with their conservative, laid-back outlook.⁹²³ Their elaborate dance sequence includes all

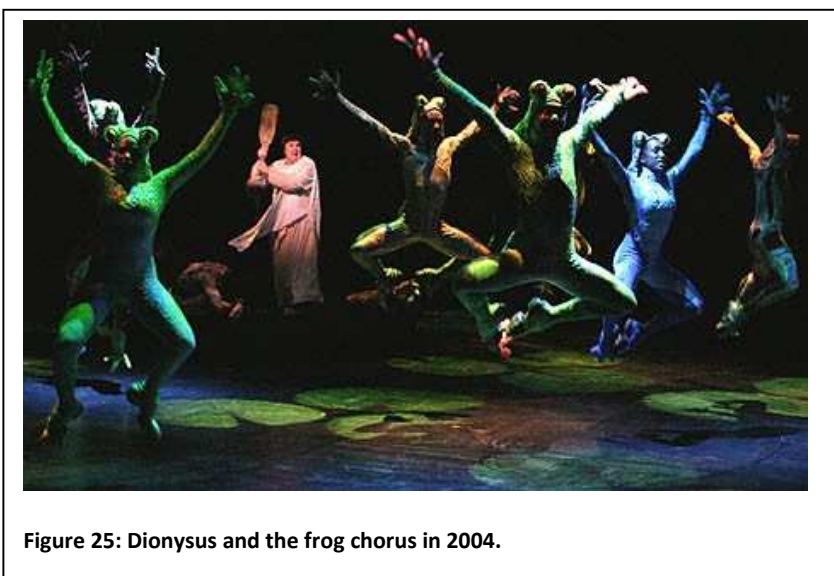


Figure 25: Dionysus and the frog chorus in 2004.

manner of acrobatics including the use of trapezes. The production is filled with ‘Broadway’ spectacle, such as the revolving stage and Pluto being lowered from the proscenium

in his boat.

The score also gains mixed reviews. One reviewer stated that Sondheim’s change of style between 1974 and 2004 meant that ‘his early *Funny Thing* manner rubs uneasy shoulders with his darker and more complex later mode’.⁹²⁴ Another said that ‘while the music isn’t

⁹²² Barnes 2004: 47.

⁹²³ Gamel 2007: 223.

⁹²⁴ Simon 2004: 56.

top-drawer Sondheim, it will surely be amongst the best scores of the season'.⁹²⁵ The three chorus songs are a strong addition and their representation of each different group opposed to change gives them renewed purpose in the modern world. 'It's Only A Play' in particular drew praise, described as 'a beauty'.⁹²⁶ As entertainment, the opening 'Invocation and Instructions to the Audience' is very strong and cannot help but resonate with any regular theatre goer who has had similar experiences. It also shows that Sondheim has a sense of humour, even when responding to criticism of his own work. It is a testament to the song's enduring quality that it was chosen to open Sondheim's second review show, *Putting it Together* (1992) and the *Sondheim at 80* BBC Prom at the Royal Albert Hall in 2010. 'Dress Big' and 'Hades' are amusing songs, but 'All Aboard' is underwhelming. The song 'Ariadne' is pleasant enough, but weak compared to some of Sondheim's showstopping arias, lacking the impact of, for example, 'Marry Me a Little' (from *Company*) and 'Epiphany' (*Sweeney Todd*). Musically, however, 'Ariadne' does something clever. It uses a 'suspended dominant' chord, where a note in the chord is replaced to create a slight dissonance in the sound. Traditionally in a melody a chord of this type would 'resolve' and the replacement note revert to the original, because that is what the human ear expects to happen. In 'Ariadne' this never happens, which gives the song no musical resolution, just as there can be no resolution for Dionysus' loss of his love.⁹²⁷

⁹²⁵ Barnes 2004: 47.

⁹²⁶ Brantley 2004: 20.

⁹²⁷ McDonald 2014: 332.

With Lane's influence over the show, it comes as no surprise that the role of Dionysus becomes much more of a star vehicle, gaining much more stage time than before. Roger Bart as Xanthias also benefits from these changes. The scenes before landing in Hades are greatly expanded, in order that the first act can end with Dionysus being swallowed by a giant Frog. Whereas this segment only took up about a fifth of the 1974 and Aristophanes versions, it now takes up just under half of the production. The parodos song is kept the same and extra songs involving Dionysus and Xanthias are added: firstly with the chorus ('I Love to Travel') and then Heracles ('Dress Big'). Charon is given a solo, 'All Aboard'. The Frogs actually occupy the same percentage of the play as in 1974. These changes seem to add little to the plot; it seems more like they were included purely

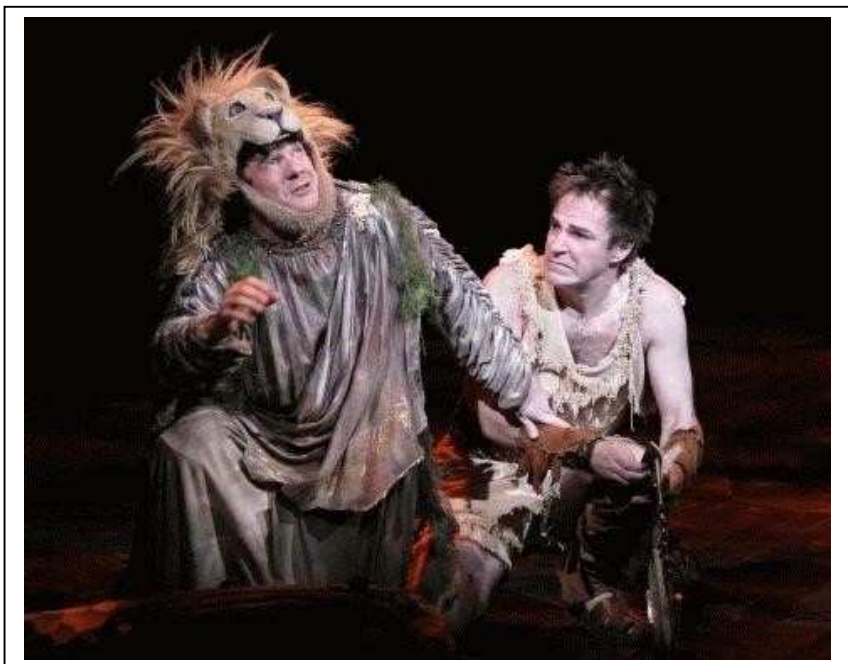


Figure 26: Nathan Lane and Roger Bart as Dionysus and Xanthias.

to bulk up the opening scenes in order to close the act with the Frogs. This may well have led the audience to find the opening scenes repetitive.

The second act runs similarly to the

1974 version, with the addition of a song for Pluto in which he tells Dionysus how nice it is in Hades ('Hades') and a scene between Xanthias and Charisma. Dionysus also sings the song 'Shaw' along with a chorus of Shavians. The song is more than reminiscent of 'You Did It' from the musical *My Fair Lady*, a clearly deliberate Shaw reference. The song has already been briefly referenced in 'Dress Big' (p.28) and a running joke is that

Xanthias is convinced Shaw wrote *My Fair Lady*. The contest is further cut down, with the scenes between Shaw and Shakespeare occupying only approximately 13% of the total production and is interrupted for Dionysus' reunion with Ariadne. Mary English applauds this as the right decision, since the modern audience is not familiar enough with Shaw and Shakespeare's works to appreciate the full version. Despite this she still brands it 'anticlimactic'.⁹²⁸ One critic also says of the contest 'This, though central to the plot, could have been trimmed'.⁹²⁹ and another states that it is 'a middlebrow quote-fest that condenses vast talents into shrink-wrapped platitudes'.⁹³⁰ With Shaw having been dead for over 50 years, the contest also lost the contemporary feel that the recently deceased Shaw or Euripides would have for audiences in 1974 and 405BC.⁹³¹ Daniel Mendelsohn says of it 'one awful irony of the decision to leave Shevelove's stale choices in place is that it makes the climactic contest of his *Frogs* into precisely what it wasn't in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, or even in Shevelove's: the property of the "cultural minority"'.⁹³²

This version was very much written to be post-9/11 with all the emotion that entails. Susan Stroman stated, 'There was nowhere to go, and there would be nowhere to go for a very long time. No one was stepping forward who could truly speak about what had just happened. No one could find words to comfort us or explain these images we were overwhelmed with daily. There was no one to ease our hearts'.⁹³³ She equates this to the background of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where no one is speaking to the population during the Peloponnesian War. Nathan Lane states that 'When I listened to it, I started to think how resonant the show seemed to me, regarding what was going on in the country after

⁹²⁸ English 2005: 131.

⁹²⁹ La Sourd 2004: 1E.

⁹³⁰ Brantley 2004: 20.

⁹³¹ Gamel 2007: 227.

⁹³² Mendelsohn 2004: 54.

⁹³³ Artman 2004: 15.

9/11'.⁹³⁴ Speaking of the Aristophanes version he states, what moved him was a feeling that people would turn to the arts in time of trouble: 'It's a very romantic and idealistic notion that art matters, that it can affect people'.⁹³⁵

To this end the message, as stated in the parabasis of the 1974 version, remains largely the same. But there are some significant changes to the parabasis and the song 'It's Only a Play'. Hierophantes is removed and most of the dialogue previously attributed to him now goes to Dionysus and Pluto. As the lights go down on Dionysus the lights come up on the chorus for their lines, and at no point did the chorus interact with Dionysus. The description of characters is left out, in order to include some overt criticism of contemporary but nameless leaders. Yet while Dionysus is full of bluster and indignation, Pluto is the voice of pragmatism tinged with pessimism. Right at the beginning he states 'I admire your idealism, even though it's incredibly naive' (p.83). When Dionysus complains 'Basically we have two kinds of leaders – ineffectual and corrupt', Pluto is the one to reply 'Funny isn't it? How we always get the leaders we deserve?' (p.84) The dialogue comes to its conclusion when Dionysus is talking, as in the 1974 script, about the possibility of Chaos returning. At this Pluto states 'The question is – what if he already has?' (p.85). The new line is a depressing addition in what was fast becoming a depressing age.

Politics are added, though references are subtle.⁹³⁶ The most explicit is probably when Charon is listing dangerous frogs and mentions 'the Happy Go Lucky Bush Frog that makes pre-emptive strikes and then forgets why it attacked in the first place' (p.42). This is a reference to George W. Bush and the Iraq War. There is also possibly another jibe at

⁹³⁴ Quoted in Rothstein 2004: 12.

⁹³⁵ Quoted in Rothstein 2004: 12.

⁹³⁶ Gamel 2007: 220.

Bush and his inarticulateness when Dionysus is describing their leaders and saying ‘Words seem to fail them. Even the simplest words’ (p.8). A reviewer described the political message as being ‘clearly intended to be anti-Bush and yet so diffuse it could be also read as anti-Kerry’.⁹³⁷ In actual fact the anti-war theme jars with the contest outcome, as Shaw was a known pacifist while Shakespeare is asked to recite the Battle of Agincourt speech from *Henry V*, as opposed to in 1974 when he instead spoke the ‘All the world’s a stage’ speech from *As You Like It*.⁹³⁸

At the very end of the show, Lane has made a significant change from the 1974 script. Instead of fading to black as Shakespeare is about to begin speaking, Dionysus asks the melancholy bard to say something. Shakespeare replies only with a few lines from *King Lear*, suggesting a new play that must ‘Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say’ (p.115). Mary-Kay Gamel suggests that he says nothing more ‘perhaps because he feels there is no hope’.⁹³⁹ Dionysus, however, seems happy with this and turns to the audience to remind them to take action themselves. But even now he expects the audience not to pay attention and in an echo of the parados tells them:

No, please, don’t nod,
Agreeing with me just ‘cause I’m a god. (p.115)

And

But, citizens of Athens,
If you’re smart,
Don’t sit around while Athens
Falls apart. (p.116)

⁹³⁷ Barnes 2004: 47.

⁹³⁸ Gamel 2007: 222.

⁹³⁹ Gamel 2007: 221.

Alternatively, one might draw a far more depressing meaning from the play. Shakespeare's 'Fear No More' speech almost glorifies the notion of death, or at least states that it is nothing to be feared. This has a thematic echo with Pluto's song 'Hades', which states how wonderful life is in the underworld. Pluto states:

Where you're not afraid to die,
When you're not afraid to die,
Then you're not afraid to live. (p.78)

The combination of the two perhaps implies a message that the modern world is so bad that being dead might be a more favourable alternative.⁹⁴⁰

Frogs after Broadway (2005 to today)

Sondheim's *Frogs* remains one of the least performed of his musicals. There have been a few isolated performances across North America, including at the site of one of the first performances of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, at the University of Trinity College, Toronto, in 2013.⁹⁴¹ The Broadway version had its first performance in the UK at Anglia Ruskin



Figure 27: *Frogs* at the Jermyn Street Theatre.

University in 2014, mounted by performing arts students as a piece of coursework. In 2017 it made its British professional debut, at the Jermyn Street Theatre in London. Reviews were mixed, but addressing the role of the poet in society

⁹⁴⁰ McDonald 2014: 332.

⁹⁴¹ They performed *Frogs* in the original Greek in 1902, see Chapter Four, pp.246-7.

stated, 'it can never recapture the Aristophanic belief that it is the paramount duty of the artist to make people better citizens'.⁹⁴²

Conclusion

In general, the social and political commentary of Lane's *Frogs* was poorly received, both in the academic and theatrical community. Taking up arguments over elite culture and the educative power of theatre,⁹⁴³ Gamel says 'The idea that a *playwright* could actually make a difference in the real world made sense in 405 Athens, and it still made some sense in 1941 and 1974 USA. In 2004, when *Frogs* played only to audiences who could afford \$95 tickets, it made almost no sense'.⁹⁴⁴ Mary English agrees, saying 'that a dramatic poet...can save the world from its present woes (or at least help it along), seems unlikely to satisfy an audience whose cultural memory is all too transient to be of much comfort'.⁹⁴⁵ Critics too have found the production, and its underlying message, underwhelming: 'While the jokes are amusing and the dancers are fun to watch, "The Frogs" is not likely to stick with the audience long after it has left the theatre'.⁹⁴⁶

Daniel Mendelsohn, writing in *The New York Review of Books*, is particularly scathing of the production. He states that, in contrast to the criticism of Euripides and politicians alike in Aristophanes, the production 'failed most egregiously in its attempt to be meaningful about the two principal themes of Aristophanes' play: theater and politics'.⁹⁴⁷ Mendelsohn also criticises Sondheim's score, particularly Dionysus' new solo 'Ariadne'. In an effort to make Dionysus into a 'real' character by introducing this love subplot, according to Mendelsohn the play has missed the point that his preoccupation with drama

⁹⁴² Billington 2017 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁹⁴³ See Introduction, p.20.

⁹⁴⁴ Gamel 2007: 225.

⁹⁴⁵ English 2005: 129.

⁹⁴⁶ Schwiff 2004: 11.

⁹⁴⁷ Mendelsohn 2004: 52.

and politics already made him 'real'.⁹⁴⁸ Furthermore, Mendelsohn states, the few 'political' lines regarding the frogs are wasted owing to the targets not being explicitly named, citing Lane's need for audience approval: 'Lane, an insecure actor whose palpable craving for audience affection invariably leads him to play comic grotesques as adorable mischief-makers...shouldn't do political comedy, because he's afraid to alienate even his victims'.⁹⁴⁹ For Mendelsohn, this version is not political enough.

However, as I argued in Chapter One, while Aristophanes' *Frogs* contains some specific advice, in general it was meant to provoke debate and raise questions. I would suggest that Lane's *Frogs* has done something similar. Whilst there is an anti-Bush, anti-war message, it is treated very lightly. When Shakespeare is chosen at the end he has no specific advice, echoing the fact that the political advice of Aeschylus at the end of *Frogs* is not actually useful. If one were to agree with Mendelsohn's assessment, the uncharitable way to explain this is that it is because Lane fears causing offence or that he doesn't have a message beyond being anti-Bush. But I prefer to suggest that, unlike those versions which include a heavy-handed political message, Sondheim, Shevelove and Lane's *Frogs* emulates Aristophanes' thematic complexity far more closely.

This aim to inspire debate fits in well with most of Sondheim's works, which as I stated are always political but rarely specific. It has been pointed out that Sondheim shares some similarities with Aristophanes; Gamel remarks that, as a lyricist, 'Sondheim is one of the very few able to equal Aristophanes' linguistic and poetic brilliance',⁹⁵⁰ to which I would add that his approach to the combination of comedy and politics is similar also.⁹⁵¹ In the

⁹⁴⁸ Mendelsohn 2004: 52-3.

⁹⁴⁹ Mendelsohn 2004: 53.

⁹⁵⁰ Gamel 2007: 218.

⁹⁵¹ Though in choice of subject matter Sondheim is perhaps closer to Euripides or Sophocles (Walton 2009: 208-9). Note for example tragic revenge in *Sweeney Todd* (1979), subversion of mythical

words of Aristophanes' *Frogs* (389-90), Sondheim always offers 'much that's amusing |
And much that's serious'.

characters in *Into the Woods* (1986), sympathetic treatment of outsiders in *Assassins* (1990) and
destructive love in *Passion* (1994).

Chapter Seven

Frogs in Africa and Australasia

Across the two continents included in this chapter I have found evidence of only 27 productions: 19 in Australasia and eight in Africa. Whilst the two continents, both as a whole and within their individual countries, have disparate cultural and theatrical heritages, they nevertheless share many of the same contextual approaches to classical theatre and *Frogs*. Despite the small number of productions, the distance, both literal and figurative, that these two continents have from the shared heritage of Britain and North America has given rise to a number of noteworthy productions. These productions, particularly the South African and Malawian versions, indicate that *Frogs* only really begins to find itself as biting satire in times of political and social crises which recreate a similar atmosphere to 405BC.

In light of all the above I have combined the two continents, where British influence is strong as a result of colonial history and English is widely spoken, into a single chapter. As with the North American chapter, what evidence there is can be separated into recurring thematic contexts. Many of these themes are the same or similar to those seen in British and North American productions, showing that within the reception of *Frogs* there are contextual echoes that span the English-speaking world.

Academically, there has been little written about the performance of Aristophanes in these two continents. Such discussion of the performance of ancient drama as exists mainly concerns itself with tragedy, either in the form of individual performances or individual countries. Of particular note in this area is Kevin J. Wetmore's *The Athenian Sun in an African Sky* (2002), although this devotes only two pages to comedy. Other texts that

cover classical stage adaptations in Africa, such as *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora*,⁹⁵² *African Athena: New Agendas*,⁹⁵³ *The Politics of Adaptation: Contemporary African Drama and Greek Tragedy*⁹⁵⁴ and *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939*⁹⁵⁵ do not reference Aristophanes at all. Individually, South Africa has drawn considerable attention, for example in the research of scholars such as Betine van Zyl Smit and the late Margaret R. Mezzabotta.⁹⁵⁶ Often the focus is on productions with a political or social element, where themes such as race or post-colonialism have been addressed. The reception of *Frogs* also crosses over into these issues and I will engage with them where relevant in the text below. As far as I can ascertain there has been no attempt at a general survey of Greek theatre in Australasia or within its constituent countries.

Chronology

I will begin this survey with a brief overview of the chronology of the performance of *Frogs* in these two continents. The earliest evidence I have found relates to one in 1884 at Sydney Grammar School. This production is significant as it occurs prior to Oxford University's 1892 landmark production and prior to the increase in the popularity of performing *Frogs* in Britain and North America that followed. Very little can be ascertained about this production, but the programme is available and suggests that only the scenes up to and including the frog chorus were performed. The school has always had a strong relationship with classics, dating back to its incorporation in 1854. The Act of Parliament that created the school stipulated that one of the 12 trustees of the school

⁹⁵² Goff & Simpson 2007.

⁹⁵³ Orrells, Bhambra & Roynon (eds) 2011.

⁹⁵⁴ Van Weyenberg 2013.

⁹⁵⁵ McConnell 2013.

⁹⁵⁶ For example Mezzabotta 1994 and van Zyl Smit 2007 and 2011.

would be the ‘Principal Professor of Classics’ at Sydney University.⁹⁵⁷ In the same year as *Frogs*, students of classics at Sydney Grammar School were praised for their ‘power of lucid expression, the finish of style, and the felicity in composition’⁹⁵⁸ by external examiner and lecturer of classics at Melbourne, W.G. Carroll. To this day classics and ancient history form part of the curriculum.

Following this there was a 1901 production at the University of Melbourne and then a gap of nearly 40 years until a production at the University of Sydney in 1940. I have not found evidence of a performance of *Frogs* in Africa until 1957, when there was a production at Franklin D. Roosevelt Girls’ High School in Harare, Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia). It is in the 1950s that performances seem to become more popular, with 24 of the 27 performances occurring since 1951.

Geography

Whilst this chapter covers two entire continents, the productions I have found evidence of originate from only five countries: Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Australia and New Zealand. There is no indication of any productions in other countries. Of those five, Zimbabwe has only mounted a single production and for Malawi *Frogs* is the only classical performance for which I have found evidence. Aside from Malawi, the four countries all have a rich heritage of classical performance.

The notable link between these five countries is that they are all former British colonies. To take this one step further, each of the cities involved, i.e. Cape Town, KwaZulu-Natal,

⁹⁵⁷ The only other subject represented in the 12 trustees was Mathematics. legislation.nsw.gov.au [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁹⁵⁸ Turney 1989: 86.

Harare,⁹⁵⁹ Sydney, Wellington, were all British settlements at one time. Many of them are popular destinations for British expatriates. Just as the early North American productions were influenced by Britain, the performance of *Frogs* in Africa and Australasia was also perhaps influenced by British productions. As mentioned in the Introduction,⁹⁶⁰ I have found multiple instances of classical performances in African countries that were not British colonies but no recorded productions of *Frogs*. It seems there is something about *Frogs* that appeals uniquely to English-speaking countries or those with a British heritage, where educational establishments look to the former motherland for pedagogical models. Whilst former French or Spanish colonies (for example) fall outside of the scope of this thesis, the fact the *Frogs* has so little performance reception there does invite further exploration in future research.

Indeed the history of education in these countries reflects their colonial heritage, with the curriculum in the twentieth-century and earlier following the British model. The importance of classics at Sydney Grammar School was discussed above, and the oldest universities of Australia and New Zealand all had a Chair of Classics from their foundation.⁹⁶¹ Coincidentally the four oldest universities in Australasia, Sydney (founded 1852), Melbourne (1855), Otago (1871) and Canterbury (1873), are the four that have performed *Frogs*. In the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries there were very close links between these universities and their British counterparts and it was a source of some prestige for a Australasian student to be selected to continue study in Britain or for one to receive a chair at a British institution.⁹⁶² Teaching staff were

⁹⁵⁹ The production was in 1957, when the country was still a British colony – albeit self-governing. At the time Harare was named Salisbury and Zimbabwe was Southern Rhodesia. The western influence can also be seen in the fact that the production was performed at ‘Franklin D. Roosevelt Girls’ High School’.

⁹⁶⁰ p.13.

⁹⁶¹ Dyer 1965: 555.

⁹⁶² Dyer 1965: 555-6.

encouraged to spend one year in every six at an institution in Britain, Europe or the US⁹⁶³ and, as late as 1965, 45% of teaching staff in Australasian classics departments were British.⁹⁶⁴

In Africa the involvement of missionaries in the earliest schools meant an emphasis on Latin, with the first 'Latin school' in South Africa opening in 1714,⁹⁶⁵ although Greek was also studied.⁹⁶⁶ The influence of the classics in South Africa is seen in studies of the names given to slaves in the Cape of Good Hope from 1652-1762, with 27.3% deriving from the classical world.⁹⁶⁷ At university level, the study of the classics was particularly prevalent at the English-speaking universities,⁹⁶⁸ two of which, KwaZulu-Natal and Cape Town, account for four out of the five university productions of *Frogs* in South Africa.⁹⁶⁹ These English-speaking universities were heavily influenced by an influx of scholars educated at British institutions, particularly Oxford.⁹⁷⁰ In a similar fashion to British universities of the time, prospective students of any degree wanting to go to university in South Africa had to have a qualification in Latin and Greek up to 1883. At this time Greek was removed as compulsory and Latin followed by 1909.⁹⁷¹ In Malawi the first school was not opened by Christian missionaries until 1940, but its curriculum was based on that of an English Grammar School and Latin was one of the core subjects until the country's independence in 1964.⁹⁷² Today classics is still studied at the University of Malawi campus in Zomba.

⁹⁶³ Dyer 1965: 557.

⁹⁶⁴ Dyer 1965: 559.

⁹⁶⁵ Lambert 2011: 25.

⁹⁶⁶ Lambert 2011: 26.

⁹⁶⁷ Lambert 2011: 24.

⁹⁶⁸ Cape Town, Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal), Witwatersrand and Rhodes.

⁹⁶⁹ The fifth was at the University of Stellenbosch. See below, pp.325 and 329.

⁹⁷⁰ Lambert 2011: 67-8.

⁹⁷¹ William 1909: 177.

⁹⁷² Chirwa, Naidoo and Chirwa: 339-40.

Frogs In the Context of Aristophanic Performance

Just as it is in North America and Britain, *Frogs*, alongside *Lysistrata*, *Birds* and *Clouds*, is amongst the most popular Aristophanes for performance in Africa and Australasia. However, as a whole performance of Aristophanes is not very popular throughout the two continents. Within Africa, South Africa has seen the most performances, mainly in universities. The 1970s was a popular time for significant productions of Aristophanes, with Afrikaans adaptations of *Birds* and *Frogs*, a Zulu adaptation of *Birds* and an adaptation of *Lysistrata*.⁹⁷³

Kevin J. Wetmore suggests that the lack of interest in Aristophanes is perhaps because African drama already has a rich tradition of parody and comedy, and so Aristophanic plays are not needed to fill a theatrical gap. By contrast, tragedy is utilised to ‘critique colonialism from a distance or through the medium of Western culture’.⁹⁷⁴

Pedagogical Interest

As seen in all of the previous chapters, the most prominent place of performance for *Frogs* is in educational establishments, both schools and universities. Of the 27 productions, 19 took place in a school or university. Many of the universities have undertaken multiple performances of *Frogs*, for example the University of Sydney in Australia has performed *Frogs* six times⁹⁷⁵ and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa three times. In Africa there have been only three productions, two in Malawi⁹⁷⁶ and one in South Africa, outside schools and universities and in Australia there has been just one.⁹⁷⁷ New Zealand

⁹⁷³ Wetmore 2002: 50; van Zyl Smit 2007: 239-40.

⁹⁷⁴ Wetmore 2002: 50.

⁹⁷⁵ In 1940, 1951, 1962, 1972, 1983 and 1994.

⁹⁷⁶ The second was a revival of the first.

⁹⁷⁷ Although the performance, in 2003 by Omniprop Productions, did take place in a lecture theatre of the University of Melbourne.

is the only country to have seen multiple different performances outside educational establishments.

A few productions have incorporated participants from outside their respective universities and schools. A 1993 production at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand, utilised two Theatre Studies graduates then working as professional actors in the roles of Dionysus and Xanthias. The director and composer, whilst also both being faculty members in Classics and Music, were working in professional theatre as well.⁹⁷⁸

Language, Script and Adaptation

A number of the universities of Australasia have performed *Frogs* in ancient Greek, though none that I have found in Africa. It cannot be definitely ascertained in what language the earliest performance, at Sydney Grammar School in 1888, was performed. However a complete and detailed synopsis of the play appears in the programme, which implies that it was performed in the original language. The University of Sydney performed in ancient Greek in 1962 and 1972. In 1987 the University of Adelaide Footlights joked in the programme that the production is ‘in the original Greek with Australian accents’, but a review of the production described it as using ‘a conservative translation’.⁹⁷⁹ Although no translator is named in the programme or review, I find it unlikely that the review would not have mentioned the Greek dialogue.

Adaptations of Aristophanes, and of Greek drama in general, have very rarely been performed in the local languages of Africa. A production by Nanzikambe Arts in Malawi in 2009 was in both English and Chichewa,⁹⁸⁰ whilst Kevin J. Wetmore tells us that in

⁹⁷⁸ Tatham 2001 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁹⁷⁹ Goers 1987.

⁹⁸⁰ See below, pp.326-7 and 330-1 for further details on the script for this production.

South Africa ‘there are...no Zulu, Xhosa, or Sotho adaptations [of Aristophanes]...only English and Afrikaans’.⁹⁸¹ Betine van Zyl Smit has done extensive research on Greek theatre in Africa and, writing before Nanzikambe’s version had been performed, had only found one Aristophanes in an indigenous African language.⁹⁸² There were however numerous published translations and performances in Afrikaans throughout the twentieth century, since this was seen as adding legitimacy to the newly recognised language.⁹⁸³ Only one production of *Frogs* has been performed in South Africa in a language other than English, a 1977 Afrikaans production named *Die Paddas*.

Die Paddas was performed in Afrikaans in a translation by Merwe Scholtz. Scholtz did not adapt *Frogs* from the original Greek, but instead from several English and German



Figure 28: Xanthias, Dionysus and the donkey in *Die Paddas*.

translations. Translating from modern languages instead of the original was common for Greek theatre in South Africa.⁹⁸⁴ It was, however, intended to be a translation and not an adaptation, and showed a significant reverence to the

Aristophanic text. To this end, the playscript was looked over by an unknown classicist for accuracy. It was intentionally not modernised, although a number of pieces of explanation were added and Scholtz also incorporated some of the parabasis of

⁹⁸¹ Wetmore 2002: 51.

⁹⁸² This was *Birds* in Zulu in 1974. See van Zyl Smit 2007: 239-40.

⁹⁸³ van Zyl Smit 2014: 987.

⁹⁸⁴ van Zyl Smit 2014: 993.

Acharnians,⁹⁸⁵ which he felt conveyed the same message in a simpler way.⁹⁸⁶ Sadly the production did not have the intended impact on the audience and it was pointed out in a letter from a Dr A. Blumer that the reviews, whilst they were extremely positive, did not mention any sort of message the play may have had. Acting, set and costume were all praised, but it seems by not modernising the play the creators had not allowed their adaptation to speak to a modern audience. It would not have been hard to incorporate a topical message, about a troubled state needing guidance, to a 1970s South Africa beset by all manner of extreme political and social problems.⁹⁸⁷

The use of published translations is very common in Africa and Australasia. The various universities have used a wide range of published scripts, more so perhaps than in Britain and North America. The first production that was definitely performed in English was at the University of Sydney in 1940; this used the translation of Benjamin Bickley Rogers (1902).⁹⁸⁸ A student newspaper praised the translation, without mentioning the production itself, saying ‘the translation is of particular excellence, being very faithful to the original, even to the extent of preserving its metres, and yet possessed of a freshness and swing seldom found in such works’.⁹⁸⁹ Other productions used the translation of Dudley Fitts, David Barrett and Richmond Lattimore.⁹⁹⁰ Unlike in Britain and North America, I have found no evidence of a performance of Gilbert Murray’s translation – perhaps slightly paradoxically given the fame of his translation and that Murray, the most famous

⁹⁸⁵ A distant example of the ‘Intruded Gloss’ from the Michigan Aristophanes series, see Chapter Two, pp.136-7, and Parker 1992.

⁹⁸⁶ van Zyl Smit 2007: 240-1.

⁹⁸⁷ van Zyl Smit 2007: 242.

⁹⁸⁸ See Chapter Two, pp.120-4 for further details on Rogers’ translation.

⁹⁸⁹ Union Recorder 12th September 1940: 222.

⁹⁹⁰ Fitts in 1965 at the Globe Theatre, Dunedin, New Zealand; Barrett in 1977 by the University of KwaZulu-Natal and in 2003 by Omniprop Productions in Melbourne; Lattimore in 1993 at the University of Otago. Lattimore’s translation was only used for the basis of a script which was heavily edited by the performers themselves – see below, p.324.

Hellenist of his generation, was born in Australia⁹⁹¹ and was well-known as an opponent of British involvement in the Boer War.⁹⁹²

Original translations are also commonplace in the performances in these countries, and a number of universities have performed scripts translated by members of the faculty. These

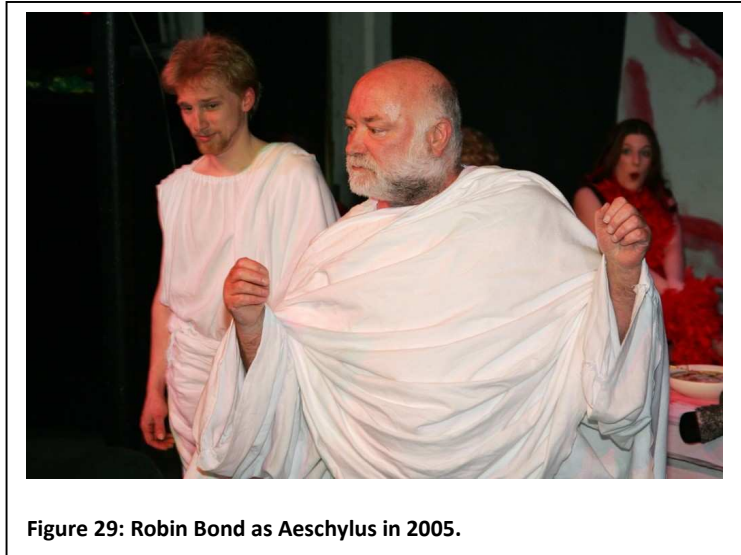


Figure 29: Robin Bond as Aeschylus in 2005.

include performances at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, in 1986 and 1988 with a script by Professor Mervyn McMurtry and at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, in 2005 with a script by

Professor Robin Bond. Unusually, Bond's script was a complete and literal translation of Aristophanes, with no modern references or changed names at all. It even went as far as to preserve the line numbers of the original. It does, however, not shy away from the use of obscenity, with the opening scene in particular featuring more profanity than many versions:

XANTHIAS: Shall I crack one of the usual jokes, boss,
one that always makes the punters laugh?

DIONYSUS: Crack any you like, by Zeus, apart from "*I'm fucked!*"

Beware of that – I get aroused at that.

⁹⁹¹ A number of his other translations have been produced across Australasia and Africa.

⁹⁹² He was very much in the minority with these views (Ceadel 2007: 222; Stray 2007: 321). His translation of *Trojan Women* evoked the Boer War as analogous to the Athenian attack on Melos (Hall & Macintosh 2005: 508-11).

XANTHIAS: What about another gem?

DIONYSUS: All right, but not, “*I need a shit!*”

XANTHIAS: Why’s that? What about one of the wittier ones...

DIONYSUS: By Zeus,

be bold – there’s only one that I forbid.

XANTHIAS: Which one?

DIONYSUS: Do not then repeat yourself and then declare you’ve “*shat yourself!*”

XANTHIAS: What about – “I’m carrying such a load upon my back,
I’ll fart to bust, unless someone *relieves* the *crap!*” (1-10)

The script for the production at the University of Otago in 1993 was a collaborative effort between cast and crew, at least as far as a dialogue scenes were concerned. Whilst the cast looked at several translations and used Richmond Lattimore’s as a starting point, they were given guidance from the director as to how each scene should unfold and encouraged to alter the language to fit with their reading of the characters. The aim was ‘to retain the broad humour and elements of fantasy found in the original Greek, but expressed in New Zealand idiom and colloquialisms’.⁹⁹³ To fit with this idea, the character of the ‘Pedantic Lecturer’ was introduced to provide some exposition for references, such as the Initiates, that might be unknown to a modern audience. The script for the sung sections of the production were, by necessity, more regulated and the director collaborated with a Greek specialist, a musicologist and a composer on the lyrics.⁹⁹⁴

⁹⁹³ Tatham 2001 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁹⁹⁴ For further details, see below under Music, pp.335-6.

Localising references within the play is a common occurrence, even within those productions that used an existing script. A 1994 performance at the University of Cape Town used David Barrett's translation, but replaced some of the names of Greek figures. Instead names such as Terre'blanche, Rajbansi, Verwoerd and Mangope were referenced.⁹⁹⁵ For the remainder of the ancient references, an extensive note was included in the programme.⁹⁹⁶ Similarly the University of Sydney Classical Society's 1994 production used Barrett's script as a starting point, but felt free to adapt it as necessary.⁹⁹⁷

In 1996 the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa mounted a brand new version of *Frogs*, entitled *Paradox*.⁹⁹⁸ It was written and directed by Chris Vorster, who would go on to act and write for several popular South African television series. Dionysus was not named explicitly, but instead portrayed as a divine figure simply referred to as 'W'. Heracles was shortened to Herac and Pluto was described as the 'Bitch Goddess'. The cast was predominantly female and so the Dionysus, Xanthias, Heracles and Pluto figures were all played by actresses. The script also added a narrator character, described as the 'Master of Ceremonies'. It was in the contest that the biggest changes occurred. Instead of just two poets this contest had input from multiple actors, who quoted everything from the Bible to modern jokes. Within the programme Vorster had printed five declarations about what poetry should be and the audience were asked to vote for the winner. Owing to this the Dionysus-figure was essentially stripped of his power over theatre, and that power handed to the audience.⁹⁹⁹

⁹⁹⁵ See below under Politics, p.330 for further details.

⁹⁹⁶ Mezzabotta 1994 [online, 17th February 2018].

⁹⁹⁷ Unknown 1994 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

⁹⁹⁸ The title *Paradox* comes from a pun on 'paddas', the Afrikaans for frogs, which is often pronounced more like 'parras'. See van Zyl Smit 2007: 246n59.

⁹⁹⁹ van Zyl Smit: 244.

A 2000 production by the Bacchanals theatre group in Wellington, New Zealand, used a completely new version which was a combination of four translations plus the director's own input. Despite it being a brand new version and the director David Lawrence initially being in favour of modernising the names and references, he decided, after a reading of the David Barrett's translation, that 'comedy and not topicality was the reason the play text had survived over 2000 years'.¹⁰⁰⁰ Even so, ad libbing was prevalent throughout the production.

One particular production adapted the script to local mythology almost entirely. This was the 2009 production and 2011 revival by the Nanzikambe Arts group,¹⁰⁰¹ who are based in Lilongwe, Malawi. Originally adapted by William le Cordeur and rewritten for the revival by Taonga Khonjera, this version mixes ancient Greek and Chichewa. The plot centres on Professor Dionysus and his servant Xanthias as they travel to Ku Midima (the underworld) to bring back someone to help save the art of performance in Malawi. Once they get there Professor Dionysus finds himself having to choose between the conservative, religious figure of Makewana, a goddess of motherhood and rainmaker, and Du Chisiza Jnr, playwright and 'Father of Malawian Theatre'.¹⁰⁰² On his journey Professor Dionysus meets other culturally significant Malawian figures such as Evison Matafale, Gertrude Kamkwatira and Zwangendaba. Evison Matafale (died 2001) was a poet, musician and political activist who died under suspicious circumstances whilst in police custody.¹⁰⁰³ Gertrude Kamkwatira (died 2006) was an actress and playwright who was one of the first successful female playwrights in Malawi. Her popularity coincided with an increasing interest in the role of women and their influence on theatre across

¹⁰⁰⁰ Lawrence 2000 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰⁰¹ Nanzikambe is Chichewan for 'chameleon'.

¹⁰⁰² Frogs Programme 2009.

¹⁰⁰³ BBC.co.uk [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

Southern Africa.¹⁰⁰⁴ Zwangendaba (c.1785-1848) was the king of the Ngoni people from 1815 until his death. He led the Ngoni from modern Swaziland to Tanzania, where they settled as one of the most powerful groups in East Africa. Following his death the kingdom became fractured and today the Ngoni are an ethnic group found across Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia.¹⁰⁰⁵

Of all the productions of *Frogs* in this thesis this one probably comes the closest to capturing the multifaceted aspects of Aristophanes' play. As the programme states, Professor Dionysus and Xanthias 'discover that performance culture is more than just entertainment...it can also involve ritual, education and political satire'. It is certainly the only production I have come across to add a ritual aspect to a modern *Frogs*, whether this was an intentional response to the perceived ritual element in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, or whether this was something they were adding to fit with their own belief of what theatre *should* be, is unknown.

Aside from *Paradox* and Nanzikambe Arts' production, the only other that replaces Aeschylus and Euripides was Mervyn McMurry's 1986 and 1988 productions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. These used the familiar pairing of William Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw.¹⁰⁰⁶ As far as can be ascertained, every other production has retained the two Greek poets, and as a result had found similar problems in representing the contest scene for a modern audience. The 1987 production by the Adelaide University Footlights was generally praised as being 'snappy, up-to-date' and an 'Aristophanic panic of gags', but the contest scene was not as well-received. A review of the play states, 'After

¹⁰⁰⁴ Kerr 2004: 305.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Zwangendaba: Encyclæpedia Britannica (online, accessed 17th February 2018).

¹⁰⁰⁶ See, in particular, Sondheim's version in Chapter Five, *passim*, or the link between Shaw and Euripides in Gilbert Murray's translation in Chapter Two, pp.117-8.

a boisterous hour of comedy that is lower than a snake's belly, lofty argument begins to pall'.¹⁰⁰⁷

Politics

In Australia the political aspect of the production has largely been glossed over or, at least, not addressed specifically. A newspaper article about the 1940 University of Sydney production explains that 'the political situation in Athens was in some ways similar to that in which the British Empire finds itself today, though the comparison must not be pressed too far'.¹⁰⁰⁸ The article was written by Arthur Dale Trendall, then Chair of Greek at Sydney. His comment presumably draws a link between the British and Athenian Empires as two powers who had recently been involved in a damaging war and were gradually losing their overseas territories. He may also have referred in part to the rise of fascism in Britain, similar to the tyrants who were put in power in Athens. Trendall would have had first hand experience of fascism in Britain, since he was previously at Cambridge when Oswald Mosley was invited to speak at the Cambridge Union in 1933 and when violent clashes between pro and anti-fascists led to the passing of the Public Order Act in 1936.¹⁰⁰⁹

Passing references to contemporary political events, however, were common. The University of Sydney's 1972 production, coming the same year as a federal election in Australia, contained several mentions of political parties.¹⁰¹⁰ Similarly Bard Productions' 2009 production *Frogs Under the Waterfront* contained reference to the 2008 New

¹⁰⁰⁷ Goers 1987.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Trendall 1940: 11.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Boardman 1995 [online, accessed 17th February 2018]; Waterson 2009 [online, accessed 17th February 2018]. See also Chapter Two, p.128-9 for Lucas and Cruso's translation of *Frogs*, which may have been influenced by these events.

¹⁰¹⁰ *Frogs* Programme 1972.

Zealand election, and criticism of how the conservative National Party successfully incorporated Barack Obama's 'change' message into their own rhetoric.¹⁰¹¹

In Africa, however, *Frogs* is often returned to its political roots. It is likely that the creators of these adaptations find the play appropriate to address the extreme political situations that the African nations find themselves in the post-colonial time period. Just like the Athenians of 405BC, questions of what happens next and what role theatre and the arts might play in this would be paramount. This fits in with the general reception of Greek theatre in Africa, where political adaptations are commonplace. The most famous is perhaps Athol Fugard's *The Island*, a 1973 adaptation of *Antigone* that criticised the apartheid regime in South Africa and the imprisonment of political opponents on Robben Island. *Antigone* was also performed by the prisoners themselves on Robben Island in the 1960s, featuring Nelson Mandela as Creon.¹⁰¹²

The apartheid regime in South Africa had, and still has, a profound effect on drama in the country, and *Frogs* has been no exception to that. Coming just two years after the end of apartheid, *Paradox*, written by Chris Vorster, was a significant adaptation occurred in 1996 at the University of Stellenbosch. It included comment on the recently restructured South African Broadcasting Corporation, affirmative action and the abolition of the death penalty.¹⁰¹³ And by having the audience choose the winner of the poetic contest,¹⁰¹⁴ Vorster brought democracy to the theatre not long after it had been brought to the country.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰¹¹ Stephanus 2009 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰¹² For further details on these productions, see in particular Wetmore 2002: 169-212.

¹⁰¹³ van Zyl Smit 2007: 244.

¹⁰¹⁴ See above under Language, Script and Translation, p.325.

¹⁰¹⁵ van Zyl Smit 2011: 381.

Even productions in South Africa that do not explicitly seek to be political cannot help but feel intrinsically linked. The 1994 University of Cape Town production named figures such as Terre'blanche (a White extremist) and Verwoerd (an apartheid supporter previously assassinated) in place of Athenian politicians. It was however the parabasis that garnered most notice, as the appeal for reconciliation and political engagement by all was reminiscent of Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech, which occurred just three days prior to the first performance.¹⁰¹⁶

One particular version of *Frogs* had a political impact that went well beyond simple theatre. The 2009 production by Nanzikambe Arts in Malawi and its 2011 revival contained an abundance of political commentary. The group are political in nature and incorporate a political or social element in most of their productions, in particular highlighting issues such as HIV and AIDS in Malawi. *Frogs* is a fitting play for them, as the programme affirms their wish to create 'positive social change through the Arts' and that they 'want to call upon Malawian audience to voice their opinions openly, and [they] offer theatre as a platform for such expression'.

The Malawian production criticised a government that did not learn from previous problems within the country and had presided over fuel and food shortages.¹⁰¹⁷ In this production the frogs themselves represented the ordinary people of Malawi, 'people who cannot be kept quiet'.¹⁰¹⁸ To add to the political dimension, the deceased Malawians mentioned above as appearing in the play, Evison Matafale, Gertrude Kamkwatira and Zwangendaba, all had a political as well as cultural significance. Whilst the original production passed by without much impact, a revival of the production in 2011 saw the

¹⁰¹⁶ Mezzabotta 1994 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰¹⁷ Baxter 2013: 211.

¹⁰¹⁸ Frogs Programme 2009.

political message fall foul of the authorities in Malawi. The creators were called to appear before the Malawian Censorship Board owing to the content of the play. A Censorship Board official stated that it was because ‘the organisers of the Malawi Cultural Festival asked [them] to check...the plays which some groups were to perform’.¹⁰¹⁹ Nanzikambe claimed that it was because ‘the play is hitting the nail on the head using the dramatic metaphors’.¹⁰²⁰

The production was eventually allowed to go ahead, but it was not Nanzikambe’s only interaction with the Censorship Board in 2011. After *Frogs* the group were performing a play named *Semo*, which explored the failure of Christian governments. The main character was being played by Thlupegho Chisiza.¹⁰²¹ During this production a Censorship Board official led armed police onto the stage and arrested the actor mid performance. He was eventually charged with performing the play without the permission of the Board and fined 5,000 kwacha.¹⁰²²

Paradox and Nanzikambe’s *Frogs* successfully portray a political element in a way that has not been seen elsewhere. Whereas British and American productions find more success with subtler political comment, the African productions seem to resonate more by including direct and explicit political content. Whilst the situations in South Africa and Malawi were not completely analogous to that of ancient Greece, there were extreme social and political problems of a different nature. Perhaps in order to work properly this element of *Frogs* needs to revolve around a political and social situation that affects ordinary lives every bit as much as it did in Aristophanes’ Athens.

¹⁰¹⁹ Quoted in Malawi Today 2011 [online, accessed 15th April 2015].

¹⁰²⁰ Quoted in Malawi Today 2011 [online, accessed 15th April 2015].

¹⁰²¹ Son of Du Chisiza Jnr, who appeared as a character in Nanzikambe’s *Frogs*, see above under Language, Script and Adaptation, pp.326-7.

¹⁰²² Nyasa Times 23 December 2011 [online, accessed 30th April 2015]. 5,000 kwacha is around £4.90 as of February 2018, but equivalent to 9 days work at minimum wage in Malawi.

Staging

Performance of *Frogs* in Africa and Australia has been on the whole conservative. Simple theatre spaces and traditional ancient costume have been prevalent throughout. Some productions attempted to make their version as authentically ‘Grecian’ as possible. It is recorded, for example, that in 1940 the University of Sydney had great trouble finding appropriately classical looking chairs for their production. They eventually settled on some folding canvas chairs which ‘are exactly right if the striped canvas is changed for plain material!’¹⁰²³ Other productions staged *Frogs* with a more modern twist, for example in 1994 the University of Sydney portrayed the Underworld as a 1970s nightclub and in 2003 Omniprop Productions in Melbourne staged their production in a classroom.

The 1977 production of *Die Paddas* in Cape Town seems to have gone to the extreme as far staging was concerned. Although it was performed in a conventional theatre space, it was reported that nearly a ton of earth and plants were used to form the swamp on stage. In fact, three rows of the seating had to be removed to make room for all of it.¹⁰²⁴

Wellington, New Zealand, is seemingly the only place where *Frogs* has been staged outdoors. The production by the Bacchanals in 2000 took advantage of Victoria University’s Greek theatre, which previously had never been used for public performance. Everything else was kept relatively simple, with the only set being a cloth to create an offstage area. Costume was also simple, consisting of jeans and t-shirts. The actors did however sport the traditional Aristophanic phalli,¹⁰²⁵ and this production is the

¹⁰²³ Mayfair 1940: 15.

¹⁰²⁴ van Zyl Smit 2007: 242.

¹⁰²⁵ Lawrence 2000 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

only *Frogs* amongst the English-speaking adaptations where I have heard reference made to this authentic ancient addition.

Wellington has also played host to what is perhaps the most unusual of productions and

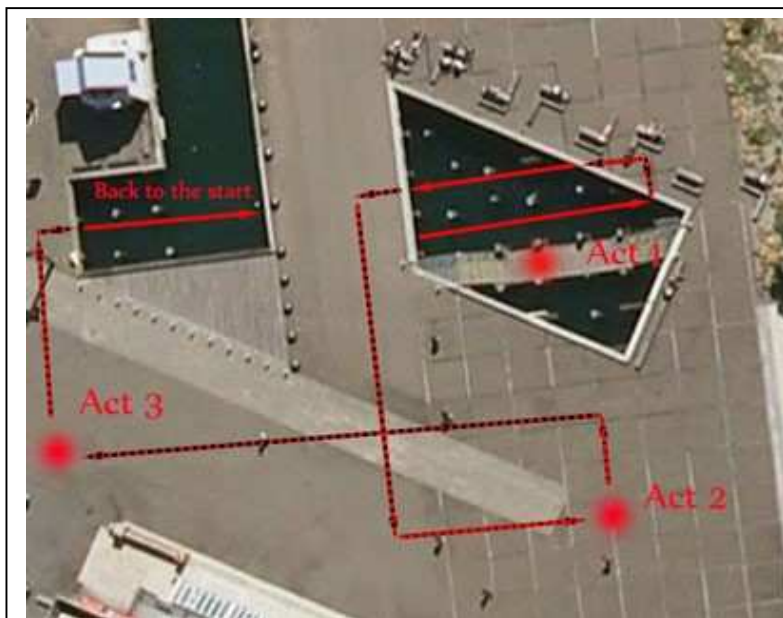


Figure 30: The route the audience took in *Frogs Under the Waterfront*.

one in which the staging is unique as far as I have seen. Performed by Bard Productions and adapted by Paul Stephanus, it was entitled *Frogs Under the Waterfront*. The production was

performed, as the name suggests, in and around Wellington's waterfront. The action was split into three acts and audience members would be relocated between each one with the first scene played in the open air. This would often draw the attention of non-audience members as well. For the second act, the 25 members of the audience who had paid for a ticket were loaded into pedal boats and followed Dionysus to the next performance area, which was actually underneath the waterfront itself. The third section, in another area again, featured the throne of tragedy represented by a reclining armchair suspended from the rafters of the waterfront. These sections underneath the waterfront were, by necessity, lit entirely with open flame lanterns. Amongst the unique problems this production faced were heavy waves caused by the tides, children swimming nearby and interruptions from curious penguins.¹⁰²⁶

¹⁰²⁶ Stephanus 2009 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

The production was very successful, selling out after initial reviews, although performances were limited by the tide and the lowering temperature of the water towards the end of summer.¹⁰²⁷ Whilst the staging was, unsurprisingly, universally praised, there were some criticisms of the production itself. Reviewers commented that it could have



been shortened by 30 minutes¹⁰²⁸ (including travelling time it ran at two hours with no interval) and in particular that the actors struggled with the acoustics of the unusual performance space, often resorting to

shouting.¹⁰²⁹ Some reviews also came with the sound advice to ‘wrap up warm and bring a cushion’.¹⁰³⁰ Nevertheless the staging and the commitment of the actors was praised. Bard Productions themselves evidently regarded it as successful, as they were considering reviving the production as of 2015.¹⁰³¹

¹⁰²⁷ Stephanus 2009 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰²⁸ Nixon 2009 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰²⁹ Smythe 2009 [online, accessed 17th February 2018]; Atkinson 2009 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰³⁰ Nixon 2009 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰³¹ Personal communication from Paul Stephanus, founder and artistic director of Bard Productions and adapter/director of *Frogs Under the Waterfront* on 16th April 2015. At the time of writing a repeat performance has not happened.

Music

There is very little mention of music in what has been written about *Frogs* in Africa and Australasia, other than to say that in virtually every case there was some. Many productions used existing music or styles of music for their productions. For example *Paradox* at the University of Stellenbosch in 1996 used Verdi's *La Traviata*,¹⁰³² 1970s disco music was used for the University of Sydney's 1994 production¹⁰³³ and the 1994 production at the University of Cape Town used, amongst other things, Gregorian Chant for the corpse scene.¹⁰³⁴

In 1993 *Frogs* was performed at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand. Their solution to the sometimes alienating presence of the chorus was to treat the production more as a musical comedy than a traditional play. Chorus members were auditioned primarily on the strength of their singing, and the composer, who also acted as musical director, wrote the music specifically for the singers in the production. According to the programme the composer 'made use of ancient musical modes to evoke a mood which is Greek in spirit'. The music was performed live by a small band playing flute, guitar and synthesizer. Whilst they were guided by the composition, the lyrics were an important part of the music in their own right. Input was given by Matt Neuburg, a musicologist, who had previously demonstrated how 'it is possible to retain the sense, mood and also the original metre in translation',¹⁰³⁵ and Professor Andrew Barker, expert on ancient music. The final composition of the lyrics was undertaken by Elizabeth Duke, lecturer in Greek at Otago. The collaborative effort that went into the chorus songs was evidently

¹⁰³² van Zyl Smit 2007: 244.

¹⁰³³ Unknown 1994 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰³⁴ Mezzabotta 1994 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰³⁵ Tatham 2001 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

worthwhile, as a review of the production states that ‘The strength of [the] production is the use of the chorus to the accompaniment of original music’.¹⁰³⁶

Conclusion

Whilst I have been able to identify very few productions occurring across these two continents and material on them is scarce, the production history of *Frogs* across Africa and Australasia has brought to light a number of interesting versions. The most significant productions are *Paradox*, *Frogs Under the Waterfront* and Nanzikambe Arts’ *Frogs*. Within the performance contexts of politics and staging, each of these productions offers something unique not seen in the reception of *Frogs* elsewhere. Nanzikambe’s *Frogs* in particular is an important production due to its seemingly unique incorporation of all the themes present in the Aristophanic original – such as political and cultural criticism, as well as the ritual aspect that has not been seen in any other version that I have encountered. In many ways this stems from Malawi’s own contemporary troubles and perhaps goes some way to explaining why the political dimension rarely works when performed in relatively stable countries such as Britain and the US.

The productions examined in this chapter have been some of the most interesting in the entire thesis, despite a lack of accessible material relating to them. This is notable, since they occur in an atmosphere with a comparative lack of academic and commercial theatrical frameworks that the UK and North America provide. Despite the links between *Frogs* and former British colonies, it does indicate that the further productions are from the imperial centres and the educational structures that formed it, the more Aristophanic productions are.

¹⁰³⁶ Quoted in Tatham 2001 [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

Chapter Eight

Conclusions

Throughout this thesis we have seen many elements in Aristophanes' *Frogs* that transcend borders, both geographical and chronological. They are seen again and again in every production from Oxford in the 1890s to Malawi in the twenty-first century. This conclusion therefore returns to the central question of the thesis, 'How has Aristophanes' *Frogs* been received in English-speaking performance culture, and what can an archival study tell us about which elements from the original play can successfully be transferred to a later audience?' I will begin with a brief summation of the major themes, the two discussed in Chapter One as the most prominent in the academic reception of the play, politics and literary criticism. I will then go on to address the sub-question of 'What does it mean to be authentic to Aristophanes' *Frogs*?', whilst discussing what future adaptation of *Frogs* might learn from this research. Finally I will suggest various research directions that I have not taken, but that might inform future research related to this thesis.

Politics

As discussed in Chapter One, the politics of *Frogs* has been a central part of the academic debate. Whilst there are those that speak against a political reading, the evidence of its performance history indicates that it is seen to be primarily a political play in most cases. There have been a number of approaches to the inclusion or exclusion of politics, which can broadly be divided into three methods:

- an explicit political message or references;
- subtle political references without saying anything explicit;
- complete removal of all political content.

The most obvious example of the first approach would be the 2012 *Frogs* at Theatro Technis,¹⁰³⁷ which incorporated a heavy-handed anti-US aspect to its adaptation. It also tried to liken this to the politics of the original, a comparison which proves to be misguided, not least because the politics of the original cannot be agreed on. The approach was more successful in Nanzikambe Art's production in Malawi,¹⁰³⁸ which was openly critical of the government and called for positive social change inspired by the arts.

Most adaptations fall into the second group, although there is a large range of treatments and arguably some overlap with the first category. Sondheim's version¹⁰³⁹ for example, contained some clear criticisms of George W. Bush, but these were individual lines and the ending contained no specific advice, instead suggesting the audience should work towards change themselves. A number of productions take the step of replacing the names of Greek politicians with contemporary ones, implying criticism. The Cambridge University production in 2012¹⁰⁴⁰ had the Empusa turning into David Cameron and Nick Clegg, but comedically emphasised the omission of the political questions at the end of the contest because they couldn't think of an appropriate question for the contemporary setting.

At the other end of the spectrum in this second category come productions of which the content was not explicitly political, but nevertheless were viewed that way by audience members. Of particular note are the parabases in the Theatro Technis (1967)¹⁰⁴¹ and Cape Town (1994)¹⁰⁴² productions, which audiences linked to the political situations in Greece and South Africa respectively.

¹⁰³⁷ Chapter Four, pp.220-8.

¹⁰³⁸ Chapter Seven, pp.330-1.

¹⁰³⁹ Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Chapter Four, pp.228-32.

¹⁰⁴¹ Chapter Four, pp.204-6.

¹⁰⁴² Chapter Seven, p.330.

The third approach is to leave politics out entirely. This is not a common approach for commercial productions, but most productions in Ancient Greek have done this, until the Cambridge production in 2013. A handful of isolated commercial productions have done this as well, notably *Almost Nothing to do with Frogs*¹⁰⁴³ and Hecate Theatre's production.¹⁰⁴⁴ The former focused on pure comedy, whilst the latter was more interested in the literary aspect of their adaptation.

Literary Criticism

The contest sequence and the literary criticism contained within it have been a problematic element of the play from the very first recorded performance, with adaptations finding it difficult to sustain the comedy begun during the first half. Most adaptations cut the scene down radically in size; only one adaptation I know of kept it at more than half the length of the play, as it is in Aristophanes' script.¹⁰⁴⁵ A number of school productions in particular have simply left the scene out altogether, and none has staged the contest and nothing else. Nevertheless, it is an integral part of *Frogs*, as implied by the emphasis on it in the academic reception of the play, and by its considerable influence on other plays.

Replacing the two poets has been experimented with in many productions. The most popular choice has always been William Shakespeare, which makes some sense but causes problems of its own. The Bard's unique position in the English-language ensures that audience members will always be far more knowledgeable of his works than those of his adversary. Also on account of his primacy in the history of English-language drama,

¹⁰⁴³ Chapter Three, pp.214-6.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Chapter Three, pp.232-6.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Hecate Theatre in 2015. See Chapter Three, pp.232-6.

we could never realistically believe that he might not win the contest. In the history of the performance reception of *Frogs*, we have seen Shakespeare win out against George Bernard Shaw (repeatedly), Harold Pinter and Jane Austen. It is rumoured that Dudley Fitts even considered using Shakespeare for his ‘translation’,¹⁰⁴⁶ setting him up opposite John Dryden.¹⁰⁴⁷

Some isolated productions have taken a completely different approach, altering the basic poet versus poet structure to do something else. Chris Vorster’s 1996 *Paradox*¹⁰⁴⁸ presented artistic manifestos instead of individual artists. The final decision was then made by the audience themselves rather than by Dionysus (or at least his equivalent in *Paradox*). David Greenspan’s *Frogs* in 2008¹⁰⁴⁹ took yet another approach. It retained Aeschylus and Euripides, but they spent the contest taking on the personas of several modern playwrights, poets and authors. These different approaches to the contest are very much isolated and unique, however.

Aside from these unusual productions, no one has chosen to replace Aeschylus and Euripides with figures from outside literature and only once with a figure who wasn’t a playwright.¹⁰⁵⁰ Several academics have made suggestions over the identity of these contestants, from both inside and outside theatre. Edith Hall, in her review of Fiona Laird’s mobile production of *Frogs* for the National Theatre in 1996, argued that the nearest equivalent in modern culture to Athenian drama was cinema, and that when Aristophanes produced *Frogs*, tragic theatre was not much more than a century old, making our temporal relationship with cinema, invented in the 1890s, strikingly similar.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Discussed in Chapter Two, pp.133-5.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Walton 1987: 375-6.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Chapter Seven, p.325.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Chapter Five, p.262.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Jane Austen in Hecate Theatre’s version. See Chapter Four, pp.232-6.

She suggested that the equivalent to Aeschylus, in terms of their ‘foundational’ role in classic cinema, would be Orson Wells or Alfred Hitchcock, who could be pitted against Quentin Tarantino.¹⁰⁵¹ Mary English suggested that the modern equivalents to Aeschylus might be John Ford, Pier-Paolo Pasolini, John Wayne or Marlon Brando.¹⁰⁵² She stated that in this version all of the most obvious equivalents to Euripides are still living,¹⁰⁵³ naming Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal. Mary-Kay Gamel also made a number of suggestions, for example between ‘playwrights who do political theater in different ways’, naming Tony Kushner against Tim Robbins or Alan Bennett against David Hare. She also suggested not using playwrights, hypothesising instead a contest between a right-wing singer and Bruce Springsteen or between filmmakers with differing approaches such as Michael Moore, Oliver Stone and Stephen Spielberg.¹⁰⁵⁴

Pedagogy

This thesis has demonstrated how the majority of the performances of *Frogs*, for the first one hundred years, occurred in educational settings. Of all the productions identified, around three quarters were performed by a school or university, with many more having strong links to education.¹⁰⁵⁵ As stated in the Introduction,¹⁰⁵⁶ this has manifested itself in practical ways, through the inclusion of characters or situations explicitly or implicitly reminiscent of educational ones, but also through the exploration of deeper themes of pedagogy.

¹⁰⁵¹ Broadcast on BBC Radio 4’s *Kaleidoscope*, 28th February 1996.

¹⁰⁵² English 2005: 131.

¹⁰⁵³ At the time of writing. Norman Mailer has since passed away.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Gamel 2007: 225.

¹⁰⁵⁵ For example: *Almost Nothing to do with Frogs* (2012) was performed by former Eton students; Hecate Theatre (performed *Frogs* in 2015) is made up of Bristol University alumni; the National Theatre’s *Frogs* (1996) was part of a programme aimed at young people; US productions in Arkansas (1989), St Croix Falls (2014) and Seattle (2017) were part of children’s summer camps.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Pp.18-20.

If we return to the pedagogical themes picked out in the Introduction, we can examine some of the ways in which these were addressed by productions:

- **Canon:** any production that elects to change the identities of Aeschylus and Euripides is making its own judgement on canon and so Shakespeare, Shaw, Pinter and Austen can all be seen as canonical writers. In these circumstances Shakespeare always wins, because he is *the* canonical writer in English-speaking world. Versions of *Frogs* in other settings provide their own canon: for example Target Margin's 2008 *Old Comedy After Aristophanes' Frogs* gave us an American one, with Aeschylus, Euripides and Dionysus taking on the roles of James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville. *Filthy Frogs* in 2000 was written for a drama department and so featured Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud, whilst Tony Keen's planned production at a Science Fiction convention was meant to include writers relevant to that audience.
- **Elite culture:** excepting the Fleeming Jenkin production in 1873, the earliest performances of *Frogs* were all at private schools and elite universities. During the twentieth century, however, this changed and *Frogs* was brought to a different audience. This democratisation of *Frogs* began with a production at the appropriately named People's Theatre, Newcastle, in 1937. Since then university and private school productions have still dominated, but performance of *Frogs* outside these has increased dramatically. The Sondheim version has played a large role in this, since it brought *Frogs* to both Broadway and Central London.¹⁰⁵⁷

¹⁰⁵⁷ Even if the Broadway production 'played only to audiences who could afford \$95 tickets' (Gamel 2007: 225).

Another production which stands out is Douglas Young's Scots-language *Puddocks* (1958), which both railed against the perceived elitism of English-language theatre and attempted to place itself amongst the elite of Scottish theatre. Also relevant is the 1996 National Theatre production, which toured to areas of the country which had not otherwise seen *Frogs*. 2014 also saw the first university production at a former polytechnic, when the Sondheim version was performed at Anglia Ruskin. Despite this, *Frogs* still has an elite status amongst schools, as I have not been able to find any evidence of any productions in a UK state school.

- **The educative power of literature and drama in particular:** many of the productions embrace the idea of the poet as a teacher, by attempting to convey some kind of message through their performance. As stated above, I argued in Chapter One that the primary lesson of *Frogs* was to inspire debate, in the same way productions such as those of Sondheim, the Almeida Theatre and Nanzikambe Arts, whilst containing clear criticism of their respective governments, avoided specific advice in lieu of inspiring debate. Additionally, one of the reflections on *Frogs*, *Crisis in Heaven*, deals with this issue directly by having Robert Burns and Alexander Pushkin debate the 'The Poet and His Responsibility', chaired by Aristophanes.

- **The link between theatre and citizenship:** in *Crisis in Heaven*, one of the debating positions is that a poet 'is a man like the rest of us, with the obligations and duties common to all in any civilised community' (p.6). In those productions that do provide advice, it is often political and therefore demonstrates the link between theatre and citizenship. The principal approaches taken to the political content of the plays were summarised above; however it is worth additionally

highlighting Karolos Koun's *Frogs*, which was particularly resonant with Greek citizens on both the left and right side of politics at a time of social and political turmoil in their home country.

Authenticity and Adapting *Frogs* Today

As I stated in the introduction, authenticity is a problematic and often underexamined aspiration. The adaptations discussed have ranged from outdoor productions in Ancient Greek with Greek-style costumes, to plays that are not recognisable as a version of *Frogs*. Productions such as *Red Frogs*¹⁰⁵⁸ and *Almost Nothing to do with Frogs*¹⁰⁵⁹ are not claiming any authenticity, but I would agree with David Wiles when he says directors and adapters 'have touched on something authentically Greek which is worth bringing to the present'.¹⁰⁶⁰ However, since I argued in Chapter One that the main aim of Aristophanes' *Frogs* was to encourage people to think, perhaps it is 'authentic' for a modern production to do the same.

Leaving aside the idea of authenticity, it seems clear that a successful production of *Frogs* has to be created for its own time and place, just as Aristophanes' play was. The Aristophanic references do not make sense to a modern audience not educated in classics, and so too topical references in any of the productions discussed would make less sense the further we move from their original performance. It is not just time, but also place that influences an adaptation. Graham Ley's version,¹⁰⁶¹ featuring numerous references to figures in the world of drama, was appropriate because it was aimed at those with knowledge of this world. Similarly when Michael Ewans¹⁰⁶² states he 'oppose[s]

¹⁰⁵⁸ Chapter Five, pp.256-7.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Chapter Four, pp.214-6.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Wiles 2000: 179.

¹⁰⁶¹ Chapter Four, pp.212-3.

¹⁰⁶² Whose translation was discussed in Chapter Two, pp.159-61.

“modernized” scripts’,¹⁰⁶³ that is fine for a performance in an academic setting, but the claim is harder to defend in a commercial one. The most effective productions I have seen use an original script which is adapted for their particular time and place.

Future Research

There are several potential directions in which research stimulated by this thesis might develop. In Chapter Two I suggested that there is much research to be done into the sudden interest in translating Aristophanes that occurred during the late eighteenth century, but there are also new avenues which have opened up within the sphere of theatrical performance reception.

Firstly on the more general, theoretical level, throughout the thesis I have mentioned several areas that are under-theorised and that such theory as does exist tends to neglect Aristophanes. Performance, as well as related ideas such as authenticity, the success of a production, and performability in translation, are difficult to theorise because there is such a subjective element to them. Nevertheless attempts have been made, and I would like to see this taken further, perhaps with more of an emphasis on Aristophanes. A follow-up to *Theorising Performance* might be appropriate.

With regard to *Frogs* itself, a more international overview of the play’s performance reception might achieve much. I have pointed out that *Frogs* is seemingly not as popular in countries that do not have a strong British influence. An in-depth survey of *Frogs* and other Aristophanic performance in countries such as France, Germany and Italy could discover whether this hypothesis is indeed true and go some way to explaining why that might be. There are also a number of interesting productions of *Frogs* for which I have

¹⁰⁶³ Ewans 2010: 29.

found evidence but have not been able to research further.¹⁰⁶⁴ There is probably enough material so far uninvestigated for an entire research project focused solely on British productions.

Within the geographical boundaries of this thesis, it is clear there is room for additional research on Aristophanes in Australasia and Africa. This is particularly true of Australia, where there has been no concentrated research on ancient Greek theatrical reception. This is despite the presence of a large Greek expatriate community and a number of scholars who might take an interest in this sort of research.¹⁰⁶⁵ Within Africa as well there is room for further research. South African theatre is well-documented, but the rest of that enormous continent is comparatively neglected. Given how important the African productions have proved to be in interpreting the performance reception of *Frogs*,¹⁰⁶⁶ they could prove to do the same for other Greek plays.

Finally, of particular interest to me would be research into the wider relationship between the ancient world and modern musical theatre. Although classical themes in opera have been investigated,¹⁰⁶⁷ the currently more widely enjoyed popular art form of the 'musical' has been neglected. I gave a brief survey of the uses of Greek and Roman Classics on Broadway in Chapter Five, and John Given has written on Aristophanes and American musical theatre,¹⁰⁶⁸ but there are many more interesting examples from across the world.

¹⁰⁶⁴ For example: one of the few Irish productions, (*The Making of) The Frogs after Aristophanes* (2012), which involved actors and directors with learning difficulties; *The Frogs (Extended Dance Remix)*, performed at the University of Leeds in 1991; and *Last Stop on the Circle Line*, an adaptation the APGRD records as having occurred sometimes between 2001 and 2004.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Graham Ley of the University of Exeter for example, has published on both Australian and ancient Greek theatre, but never together.

¹⁰⁶⁶ And indeed the same might be argued for *Antigone*, see Chapter Seven, p.329.

¹⁰⁶⁷ See for example McDonald 2001; Brown and Ograjenšek 2010; Hall 2013: Chapter 9.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Given 2015.

Stephen Sondheim would be the most appropriate starting-point for this, given the high-profile nature of both *Frogs* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

Final Conclusion

For the final conclusion I return to Nathan Lane's question that opened the thesis: 'Wouldn't it be amazing if this play, which comes from the very origins of theatre, from where it all started, could say something to people today?' I believe this thesis has comprehensively demonstrated that the answer to Lane's question is that, yes, the play can say (or, as I said in Chapter One,¹⁰⁶⁹ 'can...be *made* to say') something to a contemporary audience. Its particular strength as a piece of performance lies in how it can reflect on the role and value of theatre from a multitude of perspectives: from the political, literary and pedagogical perspectives highlighted in this conclusion, which interact both with one another and with a wider range of tensioned issues summarised in the Introduction.¹⁰⁷⁰ Ultimately it invites us to ask what is, and what should be, the place of theatre in society. At the same time, *Frogs* can use theatre to reflect on those perspectives directly, addressing both their place within the wider community and their relationship to the past. In this way it continues to invite its audiences to question the purpose of literature, of pedagogy, of history, of canon, in the 21st Century.

Frogs is at its best as an object of reception when used to ask questions, provoke debate and entertain, rather than preach or give specific advice. This is very much what I argue Aristophanes' version was intended to do, to do what *Frogs*' Euripides claims he has done: to have 'encouraged these people to think' (971). This neatly returns us to

¹⁰⁶⁹ p.44.

¹⁰⁷⁰ p.12.

Aeschylus' and Euripides' defining characteristics of good poetry: δεξιότης and
νουθεσία, entertainment and inspiration. *Frogs* should, as Sondheim's lyrics put it:

Bring a sense of purpose,
Bring the taste of words,
Bring the sound of wit,
Bring the feel of passion,
Bring the glow of thought
To the darkening earth.

Appendix One

Frogs Outside the Theatre

This short appendix takes a different approach from the main body of the thesis, and looks at some of the ways in which *Frogs* has been received outside live theatrical presentations. In some cases there is a strong crossover between the theatrical reception and what is recorded here, and in other cases the mode of reception is completely distinct. Unlike some other Greek plays, *Frogs*, and in general the entire corpus of Aristophanic plays, has undergone very little interpretation and usage outside the theatre. There is nothing, for example, comparable to Freud's reading of *Oedipus Tyrannus*. However there are a number of isolated pieces of reception that use the play in some way, usually by invoking the frog chorus. This chapter is by no means exhaustive – and indeed such an undertaking could require a thesis of its own – but it does include as many significant instances as I have come across during my research.

Literature

There are a number of examples of *Frogs* being referenced across a broad spectrum of different literary genres. The oldest and most interesting is the 1937 crime novel *Come Away Death* by Gladys Mitchell. Mitchell (1901-83) was a crime novelist who invented the recurring character Mrs Bradley, similar to Agatha Christie's Miss Marple. Alongside Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, Mitchell was one of the three popular female crime writers of the early 20th century. Whilst her books were extremely popular at the time, this popularity did not endure in the same way as Christie's.

Come Away Death features Mrs Bradley travelling to Greece to take part in the experiments of Sir Rudri Hopkinson, an amateur archaeologist intent on recreating the

Eleusinian Mysteries in the hopes of summoning the gods. As is to be expected from a crime novel, the experiment goes awry and the severed head of one of the party is discovered. *Frogs* is involved indirectly since each of the chapters is headed with a quotation from the play. The play itself is not mentioned in the text, though Aristophanes is referenced when Mrs Bradley quotes him whilst in the archaeological museum in Athens. It does not say what lines she quotes or from which play (p.43). Often the chapter headings have only passing relevance to the chapter, such as Dionysus asking what he will pass on the way to Hades (*Frogs* 110-5) for Chapter Two (p.25) that features Mrs Bradley and her party travelling and ‘Iacchus, O Iacchus’ (*Frogs* 316-7) for Chapter Three (p.44) featuring cultic rites.

Mitchell was educated at Goldsmith’s College and University College London where she received a diploma in European history. Despite her success as a writer she continued a career as a teacher until her retirement in 1961.¹⁰⁷¹ For the latter part of her career she taught at the Matthew Arnold School in Staines, where she was known to have written a number of plays for the students. These included several based on classical myth and a translation of *Frogs*,¹⁰⁷² with which she was familiar as we have seen from her use of it in *Come Away Death*. She would later revisit Greece in the Mrs Bradley novel *Lament for Leto* (1971). Whilst not a direct sequel as such to *Come Away Death*, it does share some characters and references the murder from the previous novel. For the quotations in *Come Away Death* Mitchell uses the 1936 translation of *Frogs* by D.W. Lucas and F.J.A Cruso, the most recent translation published prior to the novel.¹⁰⁷³ Mitchell clearly had extensive knowledge of classical myth and literature, for as well as her detailed recreation

¹⁰⁷¹ Stringer 2004: ODNB [online, accessed 17th February 2018].

¹⁰⁷² Pike 1976: 250.

¹⁰⁷³ See Chapter Three, pp.128-30.

of the Eleusinian Mysteries she also quotes the *Iliad*¹⁰⁷⁴ and details from several other myths. Given Mitchell's interest in the classics and the fact that Lucas and Cruso's translation was written to accompany the 1936 performance at Cambridge, it is perhaps not inconceivable that she might have attended this performance and that it in turn may have inspired the use of *Frogs* in *Come Away Death*.

Other than this the references to *Frogs* that I have found are small isolated instances, all referencing the frog chorus themselves. The author Diana Gabaldon, in her bestselling *Outlander* series, has twice quoted the 'Brekekekex ko-ax ko-ax' of the frog chorus. The series combines history, romance, mystery and science fiction and features eight books (as of 2014). The first book in the series, *Outlander* (or *Cross Stitch* in the UK and Australia), tells the story of a Second World War British nurse, Claire Randall. After falling unconscious she awakens in eighteenth-century Scotland, where she meets and falls in love with a Scottish clansman, Jamie Fraser. Later novels feature the pair, their family and other characters and they continue their adventures across different time periods.

The fourth book in the series, *Drums Of Autumn*, was released in 1996 and features the first use of the frog chorus. In the book Claire and Jamie find themselves in colonial America, and in one chapter come across a frog on the road. After Jamie asks Claire if she hears the frogs singing, the following occurs:

He extended the toe of his shoe and gently prodded the squat dark shape.

“ ‘Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax,’ “ he quoted. “ ‘Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax!’ “ The shape hopped away and disappeared into the moist plants by the path.

¹⁰⁷⁴ In the translation by Peter Quennell.

“I always knew you had a gift for tongues,” I said, amused. “Didn’t know you spoke frog, though.”

“Well, I’m in no ways fluent,” he said modestly. “Though I’ve a fine accent, and I say it myself.” (p.257)

Following this there is no further mention of the frog. The fact that the text states ‘he quoted’ imply that the words are not being used as a realistic imitation of the frog’s sound. There is no mention of Aristophanes or *Frogs* explicitly, but Jamie was educated and attended university in Paris. In the 2011 novel *The Scottish Prisoner* – from the *Lord John* series, which is interconnected with the *Outlander* novels – it is stated that Jamie speaks ancient Greek and does have an awareness of Aristophanes.

The second use of the frog croaking occurs in the 2009 seventh novel of the series, entitled *An Echo in the Bone*. In one chapter a character named William Ellesmere, the son of Jamie but raised by an English lord, hears frogs and addresses them with the familiar ‘Brekekekex ko-ax ko-ax’. After which he thinks ‘The frogs seemed unimpressed with quotations from Aristophanes’ (p.496). This time Aristophanes is mentioned by name and as the adopted son of a lord, it is not inconceivable that William would also have come across the classics in his education.

The origins of these quotations is unknown currently. Gabaldon studied biology and ecology to PhD level and was a lecturer in environmental science at Arizona State University, so it is possible that she perhaps came across *Frogs* while studying the animals in the real world.

There is also another curious link between *Frogs* and the world of science. Two books written by physicists – although the two are from very different branches of physics – have referenced the frog chorus. The first by American biophysicist Harold J. Morowitz comes from his 1993 collection of essays *Entropy and the Magic Flute*. One particular chapter (pp.191-4) covers the subject of the waning global frog population and is entitled simply ‘Brekekekex, Ko-ax, Ko-ax!’. Morowitz states that he chose this title as ‘The relentless ‘brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax’ is perhaps symbolic of our great difficulty in dealing with environmental problems sensibly’ (p.194). The same collection of essays includes another classically inspired title ‘χάος, *Chaos chaos*, and Chaos’ (pp.208-11) which opens by explaining the origins of the word as it appears at Hesiod’s *Theogony* 114-6. Morowitz studied at Yale during the 40s and 50s, and so was no doubt familiar with ‘Brekekekex’ from Yale’s ‘Long Cheer’.¹⁰⁷⁵

The second reference appears in a 2014 fiction novel by the Indian Astrophysicist, C.V. Vishveshwara, entitled *Universe Unveiled: The Cosmos in My Bubble Bath*. The book follows a series of conversations between two characters, as they explore a history of science from the ancient world to today. Whilst this happens a number of fantasy situations are created by the bubble bath. In an early part of the book they meet Aristophanes, who explains to them the origins of the constellation of Orion. In order to help with this story, Aristophanes summons the chorus from *Frogs* who sing parts of the tale. As Aristophanes begins his story the frogs sing a new version of their chorus:

Brekekekex koax koax

Brekekekex koax koax

Oh, oh, Orion, hunter in the sky

You squashed a mighty dragon? Could you squat a fly?

¹⁰⁷⁵ See Chapter Five, p.268.

You own a club, eh? A night club you run?
Are you a bouncer? That must be fun!
Holding up a lion's skin, a lion that hardly bites
Cut it up into pieces, man, and wear them as tights
Oh, oh, Orion, hunter in the sky.
Brekekekex koax koax
Brekekekex koax koax (p.13-4)

The frogs continue to sing throughout the story after which Aristophanes disappears to be replaced with Aristarchus of Samos. Aristophanes and the frogs do not appear again in the novel. It is a short and suitably madcap appearance for the chorus.

Radio

There have been a number of radio performances of *Frogs* throughout the twentieth century. In 1947 a dramatized version of Gilbert Murray's translation was performed, introduced by Murray himself. Later in 1947 it was broadcast again and followed by scenes read in Greek by the cast of the University of Cambridge production that had also been performed that year.¹⁰⁷⁶ The scenes were introduced by the academic in charge of the Greek plays at Cambridge, J.T. Sheppard (1881-1968).¹⁰⁷⁷

The broadcasts were not, in Murray's mind at least, successful. Murray had rewritten part of his translation to remove visual jokes, to signpost character entrances and to change certain ancient references to more common language. The name 'Dionysus', for example, was replaced with 'Bacchus'.¹⁰⁷⁸ However, on listening to the broadcast, Murray did not

¹⁰⁷⁶ See Chapter Four, p.228-9.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Wrigley 2014: 853.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Wrigley 2014: 854.

feel they had gone far enough and was disappointed with the results.¹⁰⁷⁹ Despite this Murray has happy with the positive feedback he received personally, even if the press reception agreed with Murray's initial fears. A review by W.E. Williams in *The Observer* stated of the listener that, 'there is much which baffles him unless he enjoys a close knowledge of the local and topical objects of Aristophanes' satire'.¹⁰⁸⁰ It was evidently successful enough to warrant a repeat performance of Murray's script with a new cast in 1951.

Film and Television

Frogs and Aristophanes have failed to penetrate mainstream screen media deeply. Aside from a number of non-English films based on *Lysistrata* there have been no big-screen versions of Aristophanic comedies.¹⁰⁸¹ I have found no direct references to Aristophanes' *Frogs*, though there was one reference to the Sondheim version. In the television show *Smash*, a fictional series about the creation of a Broadway musical based on the life of Marilyn Monroe, there is a scene in the episode *The Movie Star*¹⁰⁸² where the composer of the musical, Tom Levitt, is having a discussion with his boyfriend. We join halfway through the conversation, but it is clear from the dialogue that they are discussing their favourite Sondheim musicals. Tom names *Frogs* as his favourite, to which his boyfriend reacts with surprise. *Frogs* here is used as the butt of a joke for those familiar with Sondheim's work: that a Broadway composer should choose the play as Sondheim's best is a statement to be met with incredulity.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Wrigley 2014: 855.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Quoted in Wrigley 2014: 856.

¹⁰⁸¹ Excepting a number of films inspired by *Lysistrata* such as *The Second Greatest Sex* (1955) and Spike Lee's 2015 *Chi-Raq*.

¹⁰⁸² Originally broadcast on NBC 16th April 2012 and written by Julie Rottenberg and Elisa Zuritsky.

Despite the absence of the play from mainstream media, we can find numerous examples of the use of the play in amateur filmmaking. The last ten years has seen an explosion of creativity that has given rise to a whole host of new material for study. Sadly these works are often seen as inappropriate for serious analysis, yet they can be just as valid in terms of cultural history as the theatrical productions I have already discussed. If nothing else, they are at least indicative of how *Frogs* has infiltrated the public consciousness to enough of an extent to be interesting to amateur filmmakers. All of the films discussed are available to view free on youtube.¹⁰⁸³

The most elaborate of the films was simply titled *The Frogs* and was made by All Around Films in 2007. Written and produced by W.A. Garrett Weaver, Alec Krongaard and Nathan Riddle, it is an animated version with a style reminiscent of *South Park*. They used an entirely new script which features the manager of a supermarket and his stereotypical Mexican assistant travelling to California to seek out help with advertising. Arnold Schwarzenegger appears in place of Heracles. Aeschylus and Euripides appear as the rival advertisers, with each giving a very simplistic summary of why their advertising is better. Euripides states his adverts are 'more true to life and logical' whilst Aeschylus states his are 'idealised and portray a heroic model of virtue'. After Dionysus can't decide, an unknown floating figure appears and tells the two advertisers to type their best adverts into a supercomputer, which then picks Aeschylus as the winner. The figure states 'if the machine says that Aeschylus is the best advertiser, then it must be true'.

The film includes a number of cross-references to moments in the Aristophanic original. For example, instead of rowing across the lake, Dionysus and Xanthias have to pass a border control point to enter California. Owing to the Xanthias character being Mexican,

¹⁰⁸³ Accessed 13th May 2015.

he is forced to walk around the control point, just as Xanthias was forced to walk around the lake because of his citizenship status. It is this Xanthias stand-in who encounters the frogs, although they do not attempt to hamper his progress and make traditional frog noises, instead of 'Brekekekex'. Whilst this could be an attempt by the filmmakers to make a point regarding Mexican immigration, it is not an obvious one.

The film is an interesting take on *Frogs*, one that manages to cram the entire play into six minutes and 14 seconds. It does not attempt to address any of the political and social concerns of the original, content only to reproduce the main plot points of Aristophanes. It does, however, perhaps touch on the idea that the choice between the two poets is essentially an arbitrary one, with Dionysus picking at random. In this instance the machine picks via an unseen mechanism, with the decision accepted simply because 'it must be true'.

There have also been several trailers to hypothetical versions of *Frogs* created. The first is pitched as a trailer for the original 405 BC production, although filmed in a modern style. It promises a 'New Old Comedy' 'From the Dionysia-winning creator of *Lysistrata*'. The video is very cleverly directed to resemble a trailer for a modern comedy, even including a modern rock track as background music, appropriately entitled 'Highway to Hell'. There has been no attempt to make the action on the trailer look authentically Greek and the characters wear very basic costume over their normal clothes – a towel thrown over the shoulder, for example. The characters hold paper plates with faces drawn on them, in lieu of masks. No details of the creators are given; the name of the uploader is given as Aristophanes.

The commitment to the 405 BC setting goes beyond the video itself and into the youtube description and comments. The description asks ‘Please vote for our play in this years [sic] Dionysia competition.’ The creators have also made a number of youtube accounts, with names such as ‘Aristophanes Obsessed’, ‘Dionysia Fan’ and ‘Young Plato’, to comment on the video, parodying modern youtube comments as well as classical figures. One comment, for example, complains about Aristophanes making fun of Euripides’ death, saying ‘I still think it’s insensitive. Euripides just barely died.’ There is even a post that makes fun of ‘spam’ adverts in comments that says ‘I made over 500 drachmas a month working from home, painting pictures of drama on pottery. It may sound too good to be true, but trust me it’s all real! But you have to click now!’

A second trailer was created as part of a class assignment to create a modern trailer to an ancient Greek play, uploaded by Robbie Matthews. Instead of a straightforward comedy, this trailer portrays *Frogs* as more of an action adventure comedy. It uses Heracles’ description of the journey to Hades (136-64) as a voiceover, whilst showing clips of Dionysus’ and Xanthias’ journey. The two travellers are portrayed as politicians seeking a new speech-writer. To fit with the genre, greater emphasis is given to the Empusa, with plenty of footage of Dionysus and Xanthias running away.

A number of other amateur films take a simpler approach to reproducing *Frogs*. One, uploaded by youtube user ‘arklanbc’, uses graphics and characters from the video game *World of Warcraft* to recreate the underworld scenes of the first meeting of Aeacus and the maid. The words are subtitled rather than recorded and the translation used is Richmond Lattimore’s. In-game actions are used to portray parts of the action, such as Xanthias sponging Dionysus when he soils himself and the swapping of the clothes. Another version uses Benjamin Bickley Rogers’ translation to create a recording of the

entire of the play. It was uploaded as part of the Audiobook Encyclopedia created by Librivox, who make recordings of public domain texts using volunteer voice actors. The productions are a collaborative effort, where each voice actor records their lines separately, which are then edited into the right order. The end result is a mix of accents and recording quality, but gives us a free audiobook version of *Frogs* that otherwise wouldn't exist.

Other Instances

This section covers a selection instances that would not fit into any of the categories above and are too brief a mention to warrant their own segment. In many ways this is the most interesting section, demonstrating how *Frogs* has penetrated a number of disparate media and – to the best of my knowledge – only appeared in each of these media once.

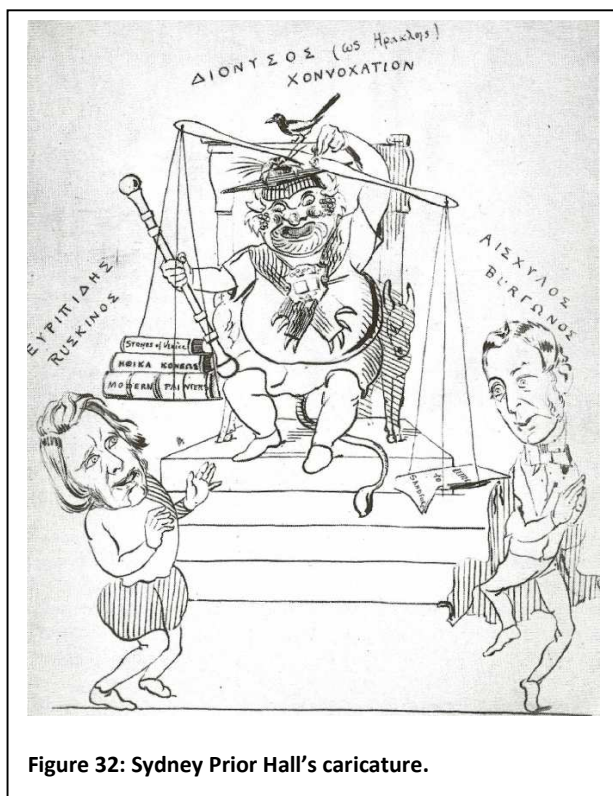


Figure 32: Sydney Prior Hall's caricature.

Perhaps the earliest use of *Frogs* outside the theatre was at the University of Oxford in 1867. A caricature drawn by Sydney Prior Hall and featured in the Oxford weekly magazine parodied the debate between prospective Professors of Poetry John Ruskin and John William Burgon. As part of the caricature the two were portrayed having their works weighed by Dionysus and the scales from the

play.¹⁰⁸⁴ This was well prior to Oxford's 1892 production of *Frogs*, but shows how familiar the play was already to the Oxford students and faculty.¹⁰⁸⁵

A German postcard from 1900 also featured the frog chorus. It appears to have been released by the 'Gesangsvereinigung der Disconto-Gesellschaft', a singing society attached to the Disconto-Gesellschaft



Figure 33: The German postcard featuring the frogs.

banking organisation, for Winterfest. The postcard shows a number of frogs playing instruments and singing. The text translates as 'And all day long the sound of their comical songs: Quak-quak-quak-quak-ureckeckeckeckeck'. The 'quak' sounds similar to 'coax' and the 'ureckeckeckeckeck' is perhaps inspired by 'brekekekex'.

Perhaps the most unusual appearance of the play is in the 2002 video game *Final Fantasy XI*. Made by Japanese developer Square Enix, the game is a 'massively multiplayer online role-playing game' in which players interact with each other and computer-controlled characters in an online world. The game has a fantasy setting and players complete quests in order to improve their characters. One such quest is 'Aht Urhgan Assault' which requires players to defeat four animals, one of which is a frog creature called the 'Brekekekex'. Appropriately, the Brekekekex is able to summon 'chorus Toads' to assist it in battle. The names are the same in the original Japanese version of the game. The

¹⁰⁸⁴ Wrigley 2007: 141.

¹⁰⁸⁵ It is likely *Frogs* was studied at Oxford at this time, and certainly was from 1872 onwards. See Chapter Three, p.15.



game seems to draw on all manner of sources in naming its characters, including disparate elements of real world mythology: one of the other animals involved in this quest is the 'Yalungur', a bird creature involved in aboriginal creation mythology.

Classical names from all backgrounds are well represented across the game, we see for example an Aurelian, a Cerberus, a Hades and a Juvenal.

Conclusion

These examples add little if anything to a discussion about a theatrical adaptation of *Frogs*. They do, however, prove to what extent the play has penetrated public consciousness and how often it is re-used in popular culture. Often viewers might come across these references without even realising where they are from. But the fact that creators from disparate fields, from cartoonists to astrophysicists, and from as far away as India and Japan, have used *Frogs* in their work shows just how broad the appeal of this play has been.

Appendix Two

List of *Frogs* Productions in Britain, North America, Australasia and Africa

Date	Title	Type	Country	Company	Theatre	Script	Notes	Chapter
1836	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	St Paul's School	St Paul's School, London	Ancient Greek		4
1873	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Fleeming Jenkin's Theatre	Fleeming Jenkin's Theatre, Edinburgh	John Hookham Frere		2,4
1874	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	King's College School	King's College School, London	Ancient Greek		4
1876	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4
1883	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		2,4
1884	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	Australia	Sydney Grammar School	Sydney Grammar School	Unknown		7
1888	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4

1891	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4
1892	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Harrow School	Harrow School	Ancient Greek		4
1892	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	UK	University of Oxford Dramatic Society	University of Oxford	Ancient Greek	Accompanying translation adapted from Frere's	2,4
1892	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	University of the South	University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee	Unknown		5
1894	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Eton School	Eton School	Ancient Greek		4
1895	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4
1895	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	UK	St John's School	St John's School, Leatherhead	Ancient Greek		4
1896	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	University of the South	University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee	Ancient Greek	No evidence from university of production	5

1897	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	UK	Downside College	Downside College, Bath	Ancient Greek	Accompanying translation adapted from A.L. Kynaston's	2
1898	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4
1899	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Eton College	Eton College, Windsor	Ancient Greek		4
1900	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Radley College	Radley College, Oxfordshire	Ancient Greek		4
1901	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	Australia	University of Melbourne	University of Melbourne	Unknown		7
1902	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	Canada	University of Trinity College	University of Trinity College, Toronto	Ancient Greek		2,5
1902	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Beloit College	Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin	Unknown		5
1904	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4

1905	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	USA	University of the South	University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee	Ancient Greek		5
1906	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Radley College	Radley College, Oxfordshire	Ancient Greek		4
1908	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4
1909	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Monmouth School	Monmouth School	Unknown		4
1909	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	UK	University of Oxford Dramatic Society	University of Oxford	Ancient Greek		4
1911	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Somerville College, University of Oxford	University of Oxford	Gilbert Murray		2,4
1911	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	University of Leeds	University of Leeds	Gilbert Murray		NA
1913	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4
1913	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	University of Cincinnati	University of Cincinnati	Joseph Edward Harry		5

1913	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	American International College	American International College, Springfield, Mass.	Gilbert Murray		5
1913	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Kenyon College	Kenyon College	John Hookham Frere		2
1913	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	University of Miami	University of Miami, Oxford, Ohio	English		5
1916	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Temple University	Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Unknown		5
1917	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	Alpha Kappa Chi sorority, Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusetts	Ancient Greek		5
1919	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4
1924	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Yale University Dramatic Association	Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut	Unknown		5
1927	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4

c.1927	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Experimental College, University of Wisconsin-Madison	Experimental College, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin	Unknown	No evidence from university of production	5
1929	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Oklahoma College for Women Department of Speech	Oklahoma College for Women	Gilbert Murray		5
1930	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	University of Pennsylvania Dramatic Club	University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia	Unknown		5
1930	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	St Edwards School	St Edwards School, Oxford	Unknown		4
1930	<i>Vatrachoi</i>	Original Language	UK	University of Edinburgh	University of Edinburgh	Unknown		NA
1931	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Balliol Players, University of Oxford	Touring	Gilbert Murray		2,4
1931	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4

1932	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	St Bartholomew's Grammar School	St Bartholomew's Grammar School, Newbury	Gilbert Murray		NA
1933	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Bates College Department of Speech	Bates College, Lewiston, Maine	Unknown		5
1933	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	University of California Department of Speech and Drama	University of California, Berkeley	Unknown		5
1935	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	University of California Department of Speech and Drama	University of California, Berkeley	Unknown		5
1935	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Lebanon Valley College Department of Greek	Lebanon Valley College, Annville, Pennsylvania	Unknown		NA
1936	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	UK	University of Cambridge	University of Cambridge	Ancient Greek	Accompanying text by D.W. Lucas and F.J.A. Cruso	2,4
1936	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Montana State University	Montana State University, Bozeman	Unknown		5

1936	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Providence College Department of Greek	Providence College	Unknown		NA
1936-7	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Sock and Buskin Dramatic Society, Brown University	Brown University, Rhode Island	Unknown		NA
1937	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Balliol Players, University of Oxford	Touring	Gilbert Murray		4
1937	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	People's Theatre	People's Theatre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Unknown		4
1938	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Winona State Teacher's College	Winona State Teacher's College, USA	Unknown		5
1940	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	Australia	University of Sydney	University of Sydney	Benjamin Bickley Rogers		2,7
1940	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusetts	Ancient Greek		5
1941	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Yale University Dramatic Association	Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut	Burt Shevelove		5,6
1945	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Sheffield Educational Settlement	Little Theatre, Sheffield	Unknown		NA

1945	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusetts	Ancient Greek		5
1946	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Somerville College, University of Oxford	University of Oxford	Gilbert Murray		2,4
1947	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	UK	University of Cambridge	University of Cambridge	Ancient Greek		4
1947	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Charterhouse School	Charterhouse School, Godalming	Ancient Greek		4
1948	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Balliol Players, University of Oxford	Touring	Ancient Greek		2,4
1949	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	USA	Randolph-Macon Women's College Department of Greek	Randolph-Macon Women's College, USA	Ancient Greek		5
1949	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusetts	Ancient Greek		5
1951	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	Australia	University of Sydney	University of Sydney	Unknown		7
1952	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	People's Theatre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	People's Theatre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Gilbert Murray		2,4

1953	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Balliol Players, University of Oxford	Touring	Gilbert Murray		2,4
1954	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusetts	Ancient Greek		5
1954	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	University of Michigan Department of Speech	University of Michigan	Unknown		NA
1956	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Marionette Theatre of Peter Arnott	Bangor	Gilbert Murray		NA
1957	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Balliol Players, University of Oxford	Touring	Unknown		4
1957	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	Zimbabwe	Franklin D. Roosevelt Girls' High School	Franklin D. Roosevelt Girls' High School, Harare	Unknown		7
1958	<i>The Puddocks</i>	Translation	UK	The Reid Gouns, University of St Andrews	University of St Andrews	Douglas Young		4
1958	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Merton College and Wadham College, University of Oxford	Touring	Dudley Fitts		2

1958	<i>The Puddocks</i>	Translation	UK	Sporranslitters	Edinburgh	Douglas Young		4
1960	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	New Zealand	Rosalie & Patric Carey Productions	Unknown	Unknown		NA
1960	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Iowa State University	Iowa State University	Peter Arnott		2
1960	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	University of Michigan	University of Michigan	Peter Arnott		2,5
c.1960-9	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	Ireland	High School of Dublin	High School of Dublin	Ancient Greek		4
1961	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusets	Ancient Greek		5
1962	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	Australia	University of Sydney	University of Sydney	Ancient Greek		7
1962	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	UK	King's College London	King's College London	Ancient Greek		NA
1963	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	UK	Dulwich College	Dulwich College, London	Ancient Greek		4

1964	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Balliol Players, University of Oxford	Touring	Chris Patten et al		4
1965	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	New Zealand	Rosalie & Patric Carey Productions	Globe Theatre, Dunedin	Dudley Fitts		2,7
1965	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Arts Theatre, University of Glasgow	Arts Theatre, University of Glasgow	Hubert Chalk		4
1966	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Duthy Hall	Duthy Hall, London	David Barrett		2,4
1966	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Oriel College, University of Oxford	Oriel College, Oxford	Dudley Fitts		4
1966	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	St Bartholomew's Grammar School	St Bartholomew's Grammar School, Newbury	Unknown		NA
1967	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	Canada	Odyssey Productions	Poor Alex Theatre, Toronto	Unknown		5
1967	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Theatro Technis of Karolos Koun, Greece	Aldwych Theatre	Karolos Koun	In demotic Greek with “simultaneous translation” into English. Performed at	4

							Aldwych Theatre, London	
1968	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusetts	Ancient Greek		5
1969	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Unknown	Unknown (Farnham)	Unknown		NA
1969	<i>The Frogs and Co...Axed!</i>	Adaptation	UK	Unity Theatre Group	Unity Theatre, London	Raymond Cross, Bert Bennett		NA
1970	<i>The Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Northcott Theatre	Touring	Unknown		NA
1971	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	UK	King's College London	King's College London	Ancient Greek		NA
1971	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	King's School	King's School, Canterbury	Unknown		NA
1971-2	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Oriel College	Oriel College, University of Oxford	David Barrett		NA
1972	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	Australia	University of Sydney	University of Sydney	Ancient Greek		7

1972	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Balliol Players, University of Oxford	Touring	Unknown		4
1974	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Yale University Repertory Theater	Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim		2,5,6
1975	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Medicine Show Theatre Ensemble	Medicine Show Theatre Ensemble, New York	Carl Morse		5
1977	<i>Die Paddas</i>	Translation	South Africa	Cape Province Performing Arts Board (CAPAB)	Nico Malan Theatre, Humansdorp	Merwe Scholtz	Performed in Afrikaans	7
1977	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	South Africa	University of KwaZulu- Natal	University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa	David Barrett		2,7
1977	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	USA	Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusetts	Ancient Greek		5
1978	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	East West Players	Los Angeles	Richmond Lattimore		5
1978	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford	Corpus Christi College, Oxford	Unknown		NA

1979	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Crimson Masque, Monmouth College	Little Theatre, Monmouth College, Illinois	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim		NA
1981	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Worcester College, University of Oxford	Worcester College, Oxford	Unknown		NA
1982	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	USA	Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusetts	Ancient Greek		2,5
1983	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	Australia	University of Sydney	University of Sydney	Unknown		7
1983	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Theatro Technis	Theatro Technis, London	George Savvides, Ted Creig, George Savvides, David Dearlove		4
1983	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Odyssey Theatre Ensemble	Odyssey Theatre Ensemble, Los Angeles, California	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim		NA
1983	<i>The Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Eccles College	Eccles College	Mike Billinge		NA
1985	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	Wellesley College	Wellesley College, Massachusetts	Ancient Greek		5

1986	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	South Africa	University of KwaZulu-Natal	University of KwaZulu-Natal	Mervyn McMurtry		7
1987	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	Australia	University of Adelaide Footlights	University of Adelaide	Ancient Greek		7
1987	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Wilson's School	Wilson's School, Wallington	David Barrett		NA
1988	<i>Frogs</i>	Original Language	UK	King's College London	New Theatre, King's College London	Ancient Greek		4
1988	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	Australia	University of Melbourne	University of Melbourne	Unknown		NA
1988	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	South Africa	University of KwaZulu-Natal	University of KwaZulu-Natal	Mervyn McMurtry		7
1988	<i>Frogs: An Aquatic Musical Comedy</i>	Adaptation	USA	Pegasus Players	Truman College, Chicago, Illinois	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim		6
1989	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Arkansas Arts Center Summer Theatre Academy	Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock	Unknown		5

1989	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	University of California, Santa Cruz	University of California, Santa Cruz	Audrey Stanley		5
1990	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Community Opera in Ealing Experience (COEX)	Old Brentford Baths, London	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim		6
1991	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Theatr Taliesyn / Waberi	Theatr Taliesyn, Cardiff	Unknown		4
1991	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	London Small Theatre Company	Shaw Theatre, London	Fiona Laird		4
1991	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Coventry Polytechnic	Coventry Polytechnic	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim		NA
1991	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Miracle Theatre Group	Portland, Oregon	Unknown		5
1991	<i>The Frogs (Extended Dance Remix)</i>	Unknown	UK	University of Leeds	University of Leeds	Alan Greaves		NA
1992	<i>The Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Manchester Grammar School	Manchester Grammar School	Unknown		NA

1992-3	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Wabash College	Wabash College, Indiana	Unknown		NA
1993	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation/ Adaptation	New Zealand	University of Otago	University of Otago	Richmond Lattimore		2,7
1993	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	Oxford University Classical Drama Society	Oxford Playhouse	Unknown	Double bill with Women of Trachis	2,4
1993	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Dunster House, University of Harvard	University of Harvard, Massachusetts	David Barrett		2
1993	<i>The Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	University College London	University College London	Unknown		NA
1994	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	Australia	University of Sydney	University of Sydney	David Barrett		2,7
1994	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	South Africa	University of Cape Town Drama Society	University of Cape Town	David Barrett		2,7
1995	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	Canada	Ancient Comic Drama Company	St Michael's College, Toronto	Unknown		5

1995	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Pilgrim Centre for the Arts	Pilgrim Centre for the Arts, Seattle, Washington State	Amy Sarno-Fradkin		5
1995	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Theatre Three, Dallas, Texas	Theatre Three, Dallas, Texas	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim		NA
1996	<i>Paradox</i>	Adaptation	South Africa	Universiteit Stellenbosch	Universiteit Stellenbosch	Chris Vorster		7
1996-7	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Royal National Theatre	Cottesloe Theatre, London	Fiona Laird	Also toured	4
1997	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	New Zealand	Nayland College	Nayland College, Nelson	Unknown		NA
1997	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Oregon State University	Oregon State University	Unknown		5
1997	<i>Frogs</i>	English	USA	Bridge Theatre Company	Bridge Theatre Company, Boston Centre for the Arts, Massachusetts	Dudley Fitts		NA
1997	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Westminster School	Westminster School, London	Unknown		NA

1998	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Gorilla Theatre Productions	Various	Unknown		5
1998	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Chandler Studio Theatre	Chandler Studio Theatre, Los Angeles, California	Unknown		5
1998	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Atlanta Shakespeare Players	Atlanta Shakespeare Players, Georgia	Doug Kaye		NA
1999	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Conestoga Valley High School	Conestoga Valley High School, Lancaster, Pennsylvania	Unknown		NA
2000	<i>Filthy Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	University of Exeter	University of Exeter	Graham Ley		4
2000	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	New Zealand	Bacchanals	Studio 77 amphitheatre, Wellington	David Lawrence		7
2000	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	Canada	University of Victoria	University of Victoria	Jennifer Wise		5
2001	<i>The Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	JACT	Repton School	Unknown		NA

2001	<i>The Frogs</i>	Unknown	Australia	Sydney Grammar School	Sydney Grammar School	Unknown		NA
2001	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	University College London	University College London	Robert Ireland		NA
2001	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Leeds Grammar School	Leeds Grammar School	Unknown		NA
c.2001-4	<i>Last Stop on the Circle Line</i>	Adaptation	UK	Unknown	Unknown	Pippa Meeks		NA
2002-3	<i>The Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Hereford Cathedral School	Hereford Cathedral School	Unknown		NA
2003	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	Australia	Omniprop Productions	University of Melbourne	David Barrett		2,7
2003	<i>The Squirrels</i>	Adaptation	USA	Bryn Mawr College Department of Greek	Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania	Rianna Ouellette		5
2004	<i>Frogs: A New Musical</i>	Adaptation	USA	Lincoln Center (Repertory Theatre)	Lincoln Center (Repertory Theatre), USA	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim, Nathan Lane		2,4,5

2004	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	University of Harvard Classical Club	University of Harvard, Massachusetts	Unknown		NA
2005	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	New Zealand	University of Canterbury Department of Classics	University of Canterbury, Christchurch	Robin Bond		7
2007	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Hampton Court House School	Hampton Court House School, London	Unknown		NA
2007	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	USA	Greek Cultural Center	Greek Cultural Center, New York, USA	Unknown		5
2008	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Target Margin Theater	Target Margin Theater, New York, USA	David Greenspan		5
2008	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Iris Project	University College London	Unknown		NA
2009	<i>Frogs Under the Waterfront</i>	Adaptation	New Zealand	Bard Productions	The Waterfront, Wellington	Paul Stephanus		7
2009	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	University College London	University College London	Unknown		NA

2010	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	Canada	Queen's University	Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario	Unknown		5
2011	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	Malawi	Nanzikambe Arts	Nanzikambe Arts	William le Cordeur, Tawonga Nkhonjera		7
2011	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Freefall Theatre	Freefall Theatre, Tampa Bay, Florida	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim, Nathan Lane		NA
2011	<i>Red Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	P.S. 122 and Hourglass Group	Performance Space 122, New York	Ruth Margraff		5
2011	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Fault Line Theatre	Fourth Street Theatre, New York	Unknown		NA
2011	<i>The Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Bolton School	Bolton School	Unknown		NA
2012	<i>Almost Nothing To Do With Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Double Edge Drama	Underbelly, Edinburgh	Dan Byam Shaw, Dan Clark		4
2012	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	JACT	JACT	Unknown		4

2012	<i>(The Making of) The Frogs after Aristophanes</i>	Adaptation	Ireland	Equinox Theatre Company	KCAT Arts Centres, Callan	Unknown		4
2013	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	Canada	University of Trinity College	University of Trinity College, Toronto	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim, Nathan Lane		6
2013	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	UK	JACT	JACT	Judith Affleck, Clive Letchford		2,4
2013	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Bedales School	Bedales School	Katy Walker		4
2013	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Theatro Technis	Theatro Technis, London	George Savvides, Ted Creig, George Savvides, David Dearlove		4
2013	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	University of Cambridge	Cambridge Arts Theatre	Ancient Greek	Double bill with Prometheus	4
2013	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	USA	Tisch School of the Arts	Tisch School of the Arts, New York	Unknown		NA

2014	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Anglia Ruskin University	Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim, Nathan Lane		6
2014	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Zero Hour Theatre Company, Wessex Academy of Performing Arts	Berkoff Studio, Weston super Mare	Unknown		NA
2014	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	St Croix Festival Theatre	Franklin Square Black Box, St Croix Falls	Unknown		NA
2014	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Alma Theater	Alma Theater, Cain Park, Cleveland Heights	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim, Nathan Lane		NA
2015	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	Hecate Theatre Company	Touring	Charles Scherer		4
2015	<i>Frogs</i>	Rehearsed Reading	UK	Almeida Theatre	Almeida Theatre, London	Unknown		4
2015	<i>Frogs</i>	Unknown	UK	Bedford School	Bedford School	Unknown		NA

2015	<i>The Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Athenian Players	McCandless Hall, Athens State University	Francis Blessington		2
2016	<i>The Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Randolph College	Randolph College, Lynchburg	Mike Lippman, Diane Arnson Svarlien		NA
2016	<i>The Frogs</i>	Translation	USA	Elmira College	Elmira College, New York	Unknown		NA
2017	<i>Frogs</i>	Adaptation	UK	House on the Hill Productions	Jermyn Street Theatre	Burt Shevelove, Stephen Sondheim, Nathan Lane		6
2017	<i>Frogs</i>	Extracts	USA	Bayfest Youth Theatre	Bayfest Youth Theatre, Seattle	Robert Shampain		NA
2017	<i>Frogs</i>	Translation	Ireland	Dublin University Classical and Archaeological Society	Trinity College Dublin	Unknown		4

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Figure 1: Photograph originally from Bieber (1920), pl.80; reproduced from Taplin (1993), pI.13.7.

Figure 2: Drawing originally from Panofka (1849), 17-20; reproduced from Taplin (1993), 46.

Figure 3: Friends of the Harold B. Lee Library.

Figure 4: Lanchester Marionettes.

Figure 5: Mark Roussel.

Figure 6: Dulwich College Archives.

Figure 7: Bodleian Library, Oxford (John Johnson Collection: OUDS box 1).

Figure 8: APGRD.

Figure 9: Theatro Technis, Athens.

Figure 10: Michael Silk.

Figure 11: Theatro Technis, London.

Figure 12: Nick Rutter/University of Cambridge.

Figure 13: Hecate Theatre.

Figure 14: University of Toronto.

Figure 15: Springfield College Archives (LANT-03-31).

Figure 16: Wellesley College Archives

Figure 17: Ruth Margraff.

Figure 18: Joe Dore.

Figure 19: Wellesley College Archives.

Figure 20: Oregon Multicultural Archives.

Figure 21: Yale Alumni Magazine.

Figure 22: L. Van Nest

Figure 23: Yale Repertory Theatre.

Figure 24: Lincoln Center Theater.

Figure 25: Paul Kolnick.

Figure 26: Paul Kolnick.

Figure 27: David Ovenden.

Figure 28: Artscape Theatre Archive.

Figure 29: Robin Bond.

Figure 30: Bard Productions.

Figure 31: Bard Productions.

Figure 32: Bodleian Library, Oxford (G.A. Oxon 4°4 44, vol.ii, fo.55).

Figure 33: Original image by GH Thompson, published by Theo Stroefler. Found at pennypostcards.com

Figure 34: Square Enix.

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