From Words to Action

Ambiguity of Speakers and Stage Action in Aristophanes' Comedies

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ὠ Φοίβ’ Ἀπόλλων καὶ θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες
καὶ Ζεῦ, τί φής; ἐκεῖνος ὄντως εἶ σὺ;

ναί.

ἐκεῖνος αὐτὸς;

αὐτότατος.

Wealth 81-83a
Robert Emil Berge

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Abstract

The ancient dramatic texts consisted of the words spoken by the characters and nothing else. There were no stage directions and the names of the characters were not written before their lines. This has lead to some problems determining who the speakers are in some passages, especially in comedies. The dramatic texts were written for the purpose of theatre production. Because of the lack of stage directions in the texts and little evidence that the dramatic texts were read as literature by contemporary readers, it can be questioned whether the authors had any reason to include information about the stage action in the texts. There are different positions held towards what kind of texts the ancient dramatic texts should be considered to be. Some hold that the stage action which is not part of the text must be interpolated in order to make sense of the texts. Others are convinced that the texts convey all the necessary information for readers to understand the essential stage action. In most cases the stage action needed to make sense of the drama is given by the text. The many passages where it is difficult or impossible to determine who the speakers are in Aristophanes' comedies, however, could be taken as an argument against treating the dramatic texts as self-sufficient texts. In this thesis I will discuss comments by scholars concerning distribution of text to speakers in Aristophanes' comedies in order to investigate some of the possible approaches to the dramatic texts. I will discuss if the different approaches indicate anything about the hermeneutic status of the dramatic text. I will also conduct an experiment, where I distribute text to speakers in the prologue of Frogs by Aristophanes in order to discover challenges to the position that the stage actions of the dramatic texts can be determined based on the text alone.

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Oslo, 22.12.2015

R.E.B
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1 Introduction

The Ancient Greek dramatic texts consisted of the words spoken by the characters of the dramas and nothing else. Stage directions were virtually non-existent, but still we expect to be able to interpret the stage action by reading the texts. Could we assume that the authors also had readers in mind when writing them? The performances were usually directed by the author himself, or if another director was employed, he would probably have the author at hand, so the actors did not need the text to inform them about the stage action. There would be no need for such information in the text for the audience either, since they themselves would be able to see the action being performed.

There are various opinions concerning what type of texts the ancient dramatic texts are. O. Taplin holds that the texts contain the information needed for the significant stage action to be established, but he doubts that the authors had readers in mind when writing. Wiles on the other hand states that no good dramatist lets the actors say what is evident to the audience. These three assumptions are difficult to align. If the dramatic texts were written for the performance with no thought given to the readers, and the authors would refrain from including anything the audience would not need in order to understand the stage action, it is difficult to see how the information required for readers could be part of the texts. The best source for finding a solution to this problem is to look at the dramatic texts themselves. If we in most cases do understand the stage action by reading the text, we might be justified in believing that we should expect to understand it. Despite Taplin's assurance that in Ancient Greek drama the significant stage action is indicated in the texts, there is no lack of discussion concerning the stage action in commentaries to the texts. The question, then, is whether or not the problems discussed are significant for the dramas. This also leads to the question about how to distinguish between significant and insignificant stage action.

Some problems of determining the stage action occur in passages where it is not clear who the speakers are. When the spoken text is the only source to the stage action, it is necessarily problematic when it is difficult to distinguish who the speakers of the text are. The focus of

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this thesis will be the passages were the distribution of text to speakers can be debated. Most of these passages are found in comedies, and the object of research will therefore be the comedies of Aristophanes. The example passage in Appendix A illustrates the uncertainty involved when distributing text to speakers, and some of the different ways it is possible to disagree. The first thing to notice is that the two manuscripts listed do not have the same distribution of text to speakers. The second thing is that none of the editions follow any of the manuscripts completely. There are several more manuscripts and one papyrus fragment containing this passage, and none of these are followed systematically by any of the editors. The third thing to notice is that the editions divide the text differently. The editions disagree about where one speaker stops and the other begins to speak. The fourth is that where the division of the text is the same, sometimes the attribution of speaker is consistently different, so that the actual difference between the editions is that a character named “Μυ” in one edition is named “Κα” in the other and vice versa (2 and 5). In other cases there is a more substantial difference of distribution, where “Λυ” steals one or more of the lines from from “Μυ” (e.g. 4 and 6).

In 1962 J. C. B Lowe published an article where, after a thorough investigation of evidence concerning Aristophanes' comedies, he concluded that the original texts most likely did not indicate names of speakers. It is possible that a system for marking change of speaker was in place, either by a dicolon in the text or a dash in the margin, called a paragraph, where the new speaker would start. This system was so prone to error in the textual transmission that it is not possible to know which of the indications are preserved correctly. They should therefore not have any authority where there is doubt about the distribution of text to speakers. If this is correct, all the attributions of speakers in the manuscripts are suggestions made by scribes and scholars throughout the textual transmission. Accordingly, neither the attributions nor the indications of change of speaker can be used for determining the distribution of text to speakers in Aristophanes' comedies, except as valuable scholarly interpretations.

This also means that most of the ambiguities of speakers we find in the transmitted texts must also have been there in the original texts. It seems reasonable that understanding who is saying the text is a significant part of the stage action in most cases. Does the existence of these ambiguities of speakers mean that we should not expect to be able to construct the stage action from the text of Aristophanes' comedies? This would have some fundamental consequences for how we interpret the texts. Zielinski's view is that in several passages the

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dramatic texts did not contain sufficient information for making sense of the stage action. He therefore formulates a principle: “If a certain passage is logically incomprehensible or psychologically implausible without the assumption of a certain piece of accompanying stage business, then that stage business is to be assumed.” This strategy poses a problem, however. If we allow the interpolation of stage action which is not grounded in the text for these passages where they seem to be needed, there is no good reason to deny this for any passage of the text. In that case the dramatic text can not be considered a reliable source for determining the stage action. The strategy for interpreting the dramatic text would then be very different from the one which is based on a view that the stage action which is significant for the drama can be understood from the text. Having the trust that the stage action can be read from the text, one would accordingly attempt to find meaning by searching for the stage action there. Without such trust it would seem reasonable and necessary to search for any stage action which could make sense accompanying the text.

These conclusions which Lowe made in his article are in accordance with earlier observations made by J. Andrieu who arrives at similar views for all genres of ancient dialogue. In the case of Aristophanes' comedies, Lowe's article is the study referred to in most later discussions I have encountered about distribution of text to speakers, and I have not been able to find any scholars who dispute the claims made in the article. In this thesis I will investigate the discussions concerning distribution of text to speakers in the commentaries to critical editions. The main focus will be on articles and commentaries to editions published after Lowe's article, but some earlier scholarly works will also be consulted. I will look at the different approaches taken in connection to the different types of problems which arise when attempting to determine who the speaker is. Through discussion and analysis of these commentaries, I will investigate the different positions and attitudes to the dramatic text which either can be read implicitly or explicitly from the reasoning contained in the commentaries. The aim is to determine to which degree the recent scholarly discussion of distribution of text to speakers in Aristophanes' comedies expresses doubt about the sufficiency of the texts for establishing the stage action of the performances, and if such doubt exists, which strategies the commentators have employed for the interpretation of the texts.

The thesis has three main parts. In chapter 2 I will give a short historical account of the positions held towards the dramatic text by ancient readers and scholars. I will also present

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some of the relevant developments of literary theory in the 20th century, and how they may have affected editors' attitudes towards the dramatic texts. In chapter 3 I will discuss comments in critical editions of Aristophanes' comedies with arguments concerning the distributions of text to speakers. By looking at the strategies used to solve different types of problems concerning speakers, I will attempt to determine how these strategies reflect the commentators' positions regarding interpretations of the stage action from the dramatic text. In chapter 4 I will conduct an experiment. I will distribute text to speakers in the prologue of *Frogs* (lines 1-207) considering every part of the text without leaning on the indications in the manuscripts or the distributions previously printed. For the experiment I will assume the position that it is possible to establish the stage action required for understanding the drama by reading the text.

The interpretation of dramatic text has some complexity which should be clarified. Normally the reader will be engaged in several layers of interpretation simultaneously. In this thesis I will distinguish between two layers only. The first is the stage action, which is the account of exactly what is happening on stage. The second layer I will call dramatic situation, which I will use when I need to refer to the actual sense that the stage action, including the words, conveys in the fictional world of the drama.

All translations from Greek are my own. The Greek texts of Aristophanes cited are from Wilson's OCT edition,\(^8\),\(^9\) except the prologue of *Frogs* in Appendix B, which is copied from the Perseus Project\(^10\), since I do not have access to electronic texts of newer editions. The punctuation and attributions of names of the Greek texts are often altered according to the needs of the discussions. Transliteration of Greek words and names uses the the romanization tables of American Library Association – Library of Congress.\(^11\)

## 2 Historical and Theoretical Overview

If the authors of the dramatic texts expected that the texts would be read by a substantial number of people, this would be an incentive for them to make the texts intelligible outside the context of their performance. Although the authors of the texts were dependent on writing for constructing the plots of the dramas, they were performed orally,\(^12\) and most Athenians

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would experience them by attending the performances, and not by reading the texts.\textsuperscript{13} There is not much evidence that the dramas were made available for the public to read after the performances.\textsuperscript{14} The first indication that drama was read at all can be found in Aristophanes’ \textit{Frogs} 52–54, where the god Dionysos, here portrayed as an Athenian citizen, describes reading a tragedy to himself on a ship.\textsuperscript{12} Pfeiffer finds it unlikely that the audience would see the point of the paratragic passages in comedy without having read the tragedies being parodied. Taplin argues that the audience was not required to have such an exact recollection of the words of the tragedy in order to appreciate the parody, but that it would have been sufficient to have attended the performance.\textsuperscript{16} Therefore it does not seem to be enough conclusive evidence for holding that the dramatists had a general readership which would have incited them to consider the readers when writing the texts. Nevertheless, Aristophanes must have had access to copies of the tragedies in order to cite them. It is therefore reasonable to assume that he also expected to be read by at least some of his contemporary dramatists and other people with special interest in drama. These readers, however, could have been interested in the texts foremost for the analysis of the poetic techniques of their colleagues, and would perhaps not have been expected to need accommodation of the text for this need.

Although it is difficult to say anything conclusive about whether the dramatists had motivation for accommodating readers when they wrote the dramatic texts, there are some comments from ancient readers that could indicate something about the expectations they had to the texts. Aristotle writes “\textit{γαὶ ρ τῆς τραγωδίας δύναμις καὶ ἄνευ ἀγώνος καὶ ὑποκριτῶν ἔστιν}” – “For the effect of a tragedy exists even without performance and actors” (1450b18–19)\textsuperscript{17} This statement could mean that Aristotle expected to understand the stage action in the tragedies by reading the text. Plutarch, when he is comparing Menander with Aristophanes, is accusing Aristophanes of not making it clear through the way the characters speak what kind of persons they are. He writes “… ἀλλ’ ὀσπερ ἀπὸ κλήρου ἀπονέμει τοῖς προσώποις τὰ προστυχόντα τῶν ὁνομάτων, καὶ οὐκ ἀν διαγνοῖς εἶθ’ υἱός ἐστιν εἶτε πατήρ εἶτ’ ἄγριοις εἶτε θεὸς εἶτε γραῦς εἶθ’ ἡρῴς ὁ διάλεγόμενος.”\textsuperscript{18} – “… but he distributes as if by lots what expressions he happens to think of to the characters, and you would not be able to distinguish if it is a son, a father, a farmer, a god, an old woman or a hero who is speaking.” From this it

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Csapo and Slater, \textit{The Context of Ancient Drama}, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{15} K. J. Dover, ed., \textit{Aristophanes: Frogs} (New York: Clarendon Press, 1993), 121.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Taplin, \textit{The Stagecraft of Aeschylus}, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Rudolf Kassel, \textit{Aristotelis de Arte Poetica Liber} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 13.
\end{itemize}
seems that at least Plutarch considered it an important part of the dramatic art to be able to build vivid characters, which can be distinguished by their choice of words. This does not say anything directly about whether Plutarch expected the texts to make the stage action clear. Still, if the dramatists were expected to make the characters distinguishable by the way they speak, this would no doubt be helpful for readers. This could indicate that the dramatists cared about the reading experience, since the actors would be able to give different characteristics to their characters even if this were not imbedded in their speech. Of course, because of the distance in time between Aristophanes and Plutarch, and even Aristotle, we can not make any definite conclusions about what was expected from the texts by the first readers of Aristophanes' comedies. Still, this art of building characters might be the kind of workmanship Aristophanes himself refers to in *Frogs* 837, 842 and 846, where he lets Euripides and Aischylos criticise each other over the type of characters they were makers of in their tragedies.

Whatever the authors had intended for the dramatic texts, someone found them worthy of being copied and circulated. Exactly how this happened in the beginning is not clear, but from the 3rd century B.C. scholars in Alexandria collected the texts and made commentaries to them. Pieces of these commentaries have survived because parts of them were transferred as comments written in the margins of the manuscripts during the Byzantine period. Some of these comments, which are called scholia, were concern the distribution of text to speakers. This is one of the reasons for Lowe to think that there were no reliable attributions of speakers in the texts which came to the scholars in Alexandria. Some scholia also give general advice about how to distinguish who the speaker is when it is not clear. One example is a quite rare discussion of attribution in tragedy, from Sophocles' *Ajax* 354:

> οἷ' ὡς ἕοικαι: ὁ χορός ἐστιν ὁ λέγων· οὐ γὰρ εὐπρεπές τὴν Τέκμησαν τὸν λόγον ὑφαρπάζειν λεγόμενον πρὸς τὸν χορόν. ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἀμφιβολίαις τῶν προσώπων δεῖ τοῦ ἥθους στοχάζεσθαι καὶ διαστέλλειν τὸ πρόσωπον.

I think that you seem...: The chorus is the speaker, since it is not fitting that Tecmessa snatches up the speech spoken to the chorus. When there is ambiguity about characters, one should endeavour to make a guess at the characteristics and

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21 Ibid., 7.
22 Ibid., 52.
determine the character.

The instruction is to analyse the text and determine what kind of person is saying the words, and based on this to determine who the speaker is. This indicates that it was taken for granted that the dramatic texts, even tragedy, had ambiguities when it came to speakers. This comment would be superfluous, of course, if there were no ambiguities and the commentator had texts which included enough information about who the speakers were. This scholion also shows that despite the ambiguities of speakers found, the scholar was optimistic about the possibility to determine the distribution of text to speakers by analysing the text.

Aristophanes is known to have written forty-four comedies, and eleven of these have survived\textsuperscript{25} in more than one hundred handwritten manuscripts dated from the 10th to the 16th century.\textsuperscript{26} Some of these contain only parts of plays, and others are collections containing several or all eleven plays. Because of the manual copying some errors would always occur and therefore no two manuscripts are the same. Not long after the printing press was invented, and printed editions of the comedies were produced, the manual text transmission for the most part ended. The first edition consisting of nine of Aristophanes' comedies was printed by Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1498. He was the first to print most of the important Greek authors.\textsuperscript{27} Already from the first edition several, at least four, manuscripts were compared in an attempt to select the best readings where they diverged. During the next centuries scholars developed methods for textual criticism, which culminated in the 19th century with the stemmatic method.\textsuperscript{28} This is a method where all the manuscripts are analysed in order to create a stemma, a tree structure showing the relationships between the manuscripts and their ancestors. If each manuscript is copied directly from another manuscript without consulting other manuscripts from different parts of the tree, it is possible to construct an archetype, which is an approximation of the common ancestor of all the extant manuscripts.

The reason for developing the methods for textual criticism was the wish to restore the original ancient texts as closely as possible.\textsuperscript{29} During the 20th century there was much development in philosophy of language and literary theory which has changed how most scholars think about dramatic texts and their authors. The linguistic turn of formalism and

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Reynolds} Reynolds and Wilson, \textit{Scribes and Scholars}, 155–7.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid., 208–11.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid., 239.
\end{thebibliography}
structuralism changed the focus of interpretation from the author to the text itself.  

Also the conceptions of how meaning is formed from the text and the role of the reader in this process has changed. The positivistic approach to text where one correct meaning is expected to be attained by the reader which corresponds with the meaning intended by the author is no longer unproblematic. In post-structuralists theory the very possibility for language to convey absolute meaning is denied. Roland Barthes questions the author's status as the creator of the literary work, since he is not in control of the the cultural circumstances on which the work depends. No text is original, since it depends on everything which enables the author to write it, like the existence of language and all other texts which everything written will be a part of. The assigning of an authorial intention to a text is to limit it, and freeing the text from the author is to liberate the reader who will be free to explore the multiplicity of meaning in the text. Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic theories also deny that a text can provide a complete meaning intended by the author, and he holds that the interpreter takes part in generating meaning. During interpretation an agreement about the matter at hand must occur, and in the case of a written text, the reader must do her share of the suggesting. Gadamer develops the ancient concept of a hermeneutic circle which says that the whole must be understood by its parts and the parts by the whole. He combines this concept with the notion that any understanding must begin with prejudices concerning the matter which is to be understood. The process of interpretation will then consist of a constant revision of the hypotheses in order to attain coherence. This view of interpretation can be quite relevant in relation to some of the problems discussed in this thesis, where for example the understanding of the stage action is dependent on what each of the characters are saying, while at the same time it is necessary to have understanding about the stage action in order to determine the distribution of text to speakers. Nevertheless, I will limit the discussion about literary and theory, since this is a distraction from the the specific topics of the thesis. I have mentioned these theorists here since it is impossible not to be affected by them when working with literature. Although the form of critical editions has not changed much since the 19th century, it is important to recognise that editors' attitudes towards the texts have changed considerably.

Two disciplines which have applied structuralist approaches and have influenced the research

33 Ibid., 126.
on ancient drama greatly are anthropology and performance studies. Anthropological research into myth and ritual has lead classical scholars, mainly from what is called “the Cambridge Ritualists”, to form theories which claim that the ancient dramatic performances must be studied as rituals, and they have attempted to analyse the dramatic texts based on this assumption. Although this approach has been discredited, it has influenced the development of classical scholarship. Theatre studies and approaches towards performance analysis is one field of research which has been inspired by anthropological studies of theatre as social drama.

One of the scholars who has attacked the approaches of the Cambridge Ritualists, is E. Rozik who also has conducted theoretical work on performance analysis based on semiotic theories. He is concerned that dramatic texts as scores for more complex texts, the performance-texts, do not qualify as literary texts.

... in contrast to the performance-text, the play-script is a deficient text: it is only a notation of the verbal components of the eventual dialogue, lacking all the additional non-verbal components necessary to disambiguate its component speech acts.

By performance-text Rozik means “... a text generated by the theatre medium, which describes a specific fictional world for a specific audience at a specific time and place. It is the actual text that a spectator is expected to read, interpret and experience.”

I am not convinced that there is a fundamental difference between the interpretative act of a director or a reader of a dramatic text and a member of the audience to a performance, which would justify calling the dramatic text and not the performance-text deficient. The director has to realize one of the many possible interpretations inherent in the dramatic text and turn it into one performance. The audience members must also interpret their impressions and each of them will have different interpretations and experiences, each only one of the multitudes of possibilities inherent in the performance.

Some scholars argue that even though we should not expect the authors to have taken readers of the drama into consideration when composing the texts, it is possible to interpret them and recreate at least the stage action which is important to understand the drama. One such scholar...
is C. F. Russo. His view is that the study of ancient comedy as a literary genre is a mistake. The performative aspect of the ancient dramatic genre was so essential to it, that trying to read it meaningfully without regard to that aspect would be a failed endeavour.

Every comedy is indeed a 'libretto', or rather a work of thought designed for theatrical execution. … Whereas these comedies simply confound the desk-bound reader, they reward anyone who takes their theatrical properties into account …

Although Russo is convinced that Aristophanes did not write with a reader in mind, he is able to give rich and complete accounts of the stage action for all the comedies of Aristophanes. Since he does not trust that the text contains the information required for doing this, he extrapolates all knowledge we have in order to infer the stage action, and often vivid imagination contributes to the picture, at least this is the judgement of MacDowell in his review of the Italian original: “Sometimes the reason why he goes wrong is that he lets his imagination run on beyond anything for which there is evidence in the text.” I would argue that this is both a valid and necessary approach if one holds that the stage action can not be extracted from the dramatic text.

O. Taplin is another scholar who holds that the study of drama should and can be conducted from the point of view of performance. His main work concerns Greek tragedy, but his reasoning about interpretation of stage action seems to be valid for comedy as well. Taplin's view is that the study of the performance qualities of the ancient drama can be a compliment to the study of the text. Ignoring any of these is a loss to the appreciation of the dramatic work. As Russo he holds that the dramatists concerned themselves minimally with potential readers when they wrote the texts, and that the texts were primarily aimed at the production of the performance. Contrary to Russo, he is optimistic about the possibility of establishing the stage action from information given in the text. He argues against the notion that there was any action going on in the performances which is not indicated in the text. Such action would either have to take place in silence or while characters were speaking their lines. To this he writes:

42 Ibid., 38.
43 Ibid., 33–233.
45 Taplin, The Stagecraft of Aeschylus, 1–2.
46 Ibid., 31 n. 1.
47 Ibid., 2.
48 Ibid., 18.
In the former case, why should the dumb actions not be accompanied by words? In the latter, this would be a serious distraction from the words, for if the action is sufficiently conspicuous and important, then the words, if they are not to be mere mouthings, ought to reflect it, and should not be about something else. Both these alternatives are, I suggest, sufficiently objectionable to leave us still with a fair working hypothesis that there was no important action which was not also signalled in the words.49

Both arguments Taplin uses here are problematic. There is no reason silent action can not be both meaningful and more effective than action accompanied by speech in some circumstances in a performance. It is also very difficult to see any reason why it should be necessary for the important actions to be somehow commented on by the characters, if it is only for the sake of the audience. My opinion is that Taplin here presents one of the strongest arguments in favour of the authors accommodating readers in the dramatic texts, since the characters, as Taplin concedes, in fact do comment much on the stage action which is supposed to accompany their speeches. An important concept Taplin introduces is “significant stage action”. Taplin's position is that much of what happened on stage during the performance is not recorded in the text, but if it was significant for the drama, then it would be part of the text. He also holds that the significant stage action can be determined correctly from the text, as the author had visioned it, although somewhat more loosely for comedy than for tragedy. His argument for this is that he does not know of any passages where stage action which is not indicated in the text has to be introduced in order to make sense of the drama.50 This is not a reason for holding that the one correct construction of the stage action can be attained, however. Although one has found one meaningful account of the stage action, it does not exclude other interpretations. The questions about how something happening on stage is significant for the drama or not is a complex question which will be touched upon further in this thesis.

3 Challenges and Approaches

In this chapter I will investigate how scholars have related to the question of distribution of text to speakers in Aristophanes' comedies. I will look at the choices editors of the texts have made and at the arguments they give in the commentaries which accompany the editions of

49 Ibid., 29–30.
50 Ibid., 30–1.
the comedies. The object is to see how this can elucidate the scholars’ positions towards the understanding of the dramatic texts, and how and if their positions are affected by the problems of distribution of text to speakers. Most of the texts I will discuss are commentaries to critical editions of Aristophanes' comedies, and other articles discussing distribution of text to speakers published after Lowe's article. In relation to these, some comments by scholars prior to Lowe's article will also be consulted. There are no systematic criteria for the selection of texts, other than an attempt to find the comments which can give insight into positions the commentators can take towards the dramatic text and the problem of distributing text to speakers.

The following discussion will be divided into eight sections where different aspects of the problem of distributing text to speakers will be treated. First I will look at the different ways editors use the manuscript evidence when dealing with distribution. I will discuss some of their stated views and how they have used the manuscripts in their arguments. In the second section there will be a discussion concerning corruption of texts and how this could affect our attitude towards the texts. The next section will deal with how different understanding of the Greek language can influence the distribution. The fourth section will be about cases where the actual stage action is unclear and the distribution of text to speakers is involved in determining what is happening. Then I will look at passages where text is given to different characters in an attempt to rectify inconsistencies. The sixth section will discuss instances where assumed social or theatrical conventions are used as arguments for who the speakers can or can not be. Then there will be discussion concerning passages where editors have used arguments about the dramatic quality to determine the speakers. The last section will look at some comments where editors either explicitly or implicitly have introduced stage action which might be considered not deriving from the text. One aspect I will not discuss is the distribution of text within the chorus. I will only mention here that the available information about this is very limited. Characteristic of the treatment of this topic in commentaries is the section in Pickard-Cambridge's reference work, where he is describing the theories of division of lines for the chorus using expressions like “almost certainly” and “doubtless”, citing no ancient sources, after which he concludes: “It may be added that the modern literature on the subject of the methods of delivery in Greek drama is as immense as the evidence is slight and inconclusive.”51

In the following I will look at selected statements by scholars and discuss the possible

implications of these statements for which positions they could hold towards the ancient
dramatic texts. The purpose of this is not to give an account of any scholar's actual position
towards these questions, but rather to extract the possible positions and see how these can
give insight into how the ancient dramatic texts work.

3.1 Manuscripts

It would have been interesting to investigate if there are any change in the way editors and
scholars relate to the attributions of speakers given by the manuscript tradition after Lowe's
conclusion that they do not have roots in texts which existed in antiquity. Although the
implications of this conclusion is the main concern of this thesis, such a systematical study is
not within its scope. The general trend, however, which can be discerned from reading
commentaries of editions before and after Lowe's article, is that not much seems to have
changed in the approaches to distribution of text to speakers. Despite the lack of any
challenges against Lowe's conclusions, the strategies for distributing text to speakers have
been based on using the manuscript tradition and the choices made in earlier editions, which
also base their distribution on the manuscripts. As will be discussed below, some later editors
are more willing to disregard the manuscript tradition than others are, but this can also be said
about the earlier editors. There are examples of editions before Lowe's article, even the very
first printed edition,\(^{52}\) that contradict the manuscripts when it is not strictly necessary. One
instance of this can be found for Frogs 1184–6.

\[\text{δντενά}\ \text{γε}\ \text{πρίν}\ \text{φύναι}\ \text{μὲν}\ \text{Ἀπόλλων}\ \text{ἐφή} \quad \text{someone who Apollo, before he was born, said}
\]
\[\text{ἀποκτενεῖν}\ \text{τὸν}\ \text{πατέρα},\ \text{πρίν}\ \text{καὶ}\ \text{γεγονόναι}:} \quad \text{would kill his father, even before he existed,}
\]
\[\text{πως}\ \text{oτός}\ \text{ήν}\ \text{τὸ}\ \text{πρῶτον}\ \text{εὐδαίμων}\ \text{ἀνήρ};} \quad \text{how was he a fortunate man in the beginning?}
\]

In the manuscripts this is all given to Aischylos, while van Leeuwen suggests giving “πρίν καὶ
γεγονόναι” – “even before he existed?” as a question to Dionysos. He argues: “Haec verba,
quaes Aeschylo vulgo continuantur et propter inficetam tautologiam sic ingrata sunt, dedi
Dionyso, adscripto signo interrogationis.”\(^{53}\) – “These words, which normally are continued to
Aischylos and are unpleasant in this way because of the coarse tautology, I have given to
Dionysos, with a question mark added.” Here Dover, well aware of Lowe's conclusions,
argues against him on account of the lack of any indication of change of speaker in the

\(^{52}\) Hellfried Dahlmann and Reinhold Merkelbach, eds., *Studien zur Textgeschichte und Textkritik* (VS Verlag
für Sozialwissenschaften, 1959), 14.
\(^{53}\) J. van Leeuwen, ed., *Aristophanis Ranae: Cum Prolegomenis et Commentariis* (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff,
1896), 178.
Some of the later editors do give an account of their attitude towards the manuscript attributions of speakers. Opposite positions can be attributed to N. G. Wilson and N. Dunbar. Wilson, the editor of the new OCT edition containing all of Aristophanes' comedies, is quite clear that no authority should be given to the manuscripts when it comes to distribution of text to speakers. In the introduction he writes: “The apparatus criticus deliberately excludes mention of the way in which the manuscripts attribute lines to speakers. Commentators are still far too inclined to give weight to the evidence of the manuscripts in these matters. *Ratio et res ipsa* must be the basis for decisions.” This view is followed up in his commentary to the OCT, *Aristophanea*, where he never refers to manuscripts when he discusses the distribution of text to speakers, except when he rejects argumentation made by other editors based on the distribution in the manuscripts. Concerning the passage in *Frogs* 1185 mentioned above, he agrees with Dover's rejection of van Leeuwen's suggestion, but he points out that Dover's argumentation based on manuscript evidence is not valid. He writes: “… I think he is probably right. But he argues from the absence of any hint in the MSS of a change of speaker, which is dubious, since the MSS are not authoritative in this matter.” This extreme position, however, has not lead Wilson to see the need of a total re-evaluation of the distribution of speakers in Aristophanes' comedies, one which is not based on the authority of the manuscripts. The distribution in his editions clearly has earlier editions and ultimately the manuscripts as a starting point. Nor does he discuss many of the passages where there is ambiguity, only a few where he discusses other editors' choices. For some of the comedies (*Wasps*, *Clouds*, *Lysistrate* and *Thesmophoriazousai*) there are no or almost no comments regarding distribution of text to speakers. The passages which are discussed are mostly ones which have been discussed by other editors because of difficulties with the attributions in the manuscripts.

Compared to Wilson, N. Dunbar is on the more conservative side in this matter. She also acknowledges the conclusions in Lowe's article, but she is not willing to ignore the manuscripts' distribution of text to speakers, since some of it might derive from indications of change of speaker in the original texts. She is determined to keep intact as possible the structure of speaker changes found in the manuscripts, despite being aware that these have

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been prone to error in the transmission of the texts.\textsuperscript{57} Lowe does acknowledge that some of the indications of change of speaker in the manuscripts might derive correctly from indications in Aristophanes' texts, but he thinks they are few and that we can not determine which ones they are.\textsuperscript{58} In her commentary to \textit{Birds} Dunbar discusses the distribution of text extensively, and the distribution in her edition diverges from the manuscripts in many places. In almost all cases she makes an effort to justify the divergence even when the change only affects who the speaker is and not the positions of indications of change of speaker.

In a handful of passages (10, 24, 576) the content has led me to assume that a paragraphos has been added, and in some others I have followed earlier edd. in assuming that one has been lost, e.g. 297–8, 663; but in most of the disputed cases the doubt is only as to which speaker was indicated by the original paragraphos.\textsuperscript{59}

This is a remarkable achievement, and could in itself be considered a strong argument for treating indications for change of speaker in the manuscripts as more reliable than most editors regard them to be. No other recent editor that I know of has, however, created an edition of any of the other of Aristophanes' comedies which follows the manuscript indications of change of speaker as closely as Dunbar's edition of \textit{Birds} does. I do not think this particular approach has been attempted by any other editors. It is an interesting response to the conclusions in Lowe's article, to try by any means necessary to keep the structure of changes of speaker as intact as possible, while sacrificing the attributions of speaker names in the manuscripts where it is needed. Dunbar's approach does, however, result in some choices which might be considered unfortunate, especially given that she admits the uncertainty of the transmission of the indications for change of speaker.\textsuperscript{60} She rejects some good suggestions for distribution of the text for the sake of not contradicting the manuscripts' "paragraphoi". One example is in \textit{Birds} 302–4. Here the names of eighteen birds are recited while they are entering. Reiske suggests letting Peisetairos and Euelpides alternately discover them and shout their names. Dunbar rejects this with this comment: "Reiske's attribution of the whole of 302–4 to Eu. and Peis., each alternately identifying a bird, improbably presupposes loss of eighteen paragraphoi."\textsuperscript{61} Of course, accepting this suggestion would have destroyed her project of retaining the structure of change of speakers of the manuscripts, and this shows that her approach also could have a self-fulfilling quality. In another example, \textit{Birds} 812–15,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{58} Lowe, 'The Manuscript Evidence for Changes of Speaker in Aristophanes', 38.
\bibitem{59} Dunbar, \textit{Aristophanes: Birds}, 133.
\bibitem{60} Ibid., 132.
\bibitem{61} Ibid., 245.
\end{thebibliography}
Dunbar argues well for a distribution of text which she then rejects in order to avoid inserting one change of speaker not found in the manuscripts. By seeing that it is possible that the indications in the manuscripts could be correct, it is easy to reach the opinion that they for the most part are correct.

All modern editions of Aristophanes' comedies I have looked at choose to contradict the indications of speakers in the manuscripts to some degree, but none of them have chosen to disregard them altogether. Most of the discussion about distribution of text to speakers in the commentaries to critical editions concerns passages where the manuscripts either disagree or their consensus obviously is problematic. There are examples of editors suggesting alternative distributions even where they acknowledge that the manuscript distribution could be equally valid, but this is rare, and most often in these cases they print the version from the manuscripts, like Olson in Peace 615–18 and 628–31, commenting “This is the traditional assignment of speakers and could conceivably be reversed.”

Ussher, in the introduction to his edition of Assemblywomen, is close to proposing a distribution of text to speakers based on the text alone, without regard to the manuscripts or the distribution in earlier editions. He writes: “The manuscripts, in fact, on this point have no authority: how then do we discover who is speaking? Quot homines, tot sententiae: the answer here will largely be subjective.” He then goes on to establish the distribution of text to speakers in the opening of the play by interpreting the situation given by the text alone. This is a passage where the manuscripts are particularly unclear, and he does not follow up this strategy for the rest of the text. In comments to the distribution of text to speakers in other passages he often refers to what is indicated in the manuscripts. (In comments to lines 43, 54–6, 102–4, 328–31, 348–9, 365–6, 380–2, 926–7, 969–75, 1151–2, 1163–6, 1177–9)

From this it is evident that editors have used the manuscript indications of speaker as a starting point for determining the distribution of text to speakers in their editions despite the knowledge that these indications did not occur in the ancient manuscripts. Of course, including names before every line as the editions do can be regarded as a help for the reader, like punctuation, accents and spaces between words. The manuscripts are also used as starting points for determining these, although they were not part of the ancient texts. Nevertheless, the status given to the manuscript indications of speakers could be understood as a leaning

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62 Ibid., 489.
away from the positivistic project of establishing a text as close to the original as possible and
towards a view of the text as a result of all its contexts, including its history of transmission
and the sum of scholarly work invested in it.

3.2 Corruption

How can we know that the difficulties of determining the speakers in a dramatic text is not
due to errors which has occurred during the textual transmission? Even more problematic is
the possibility that an original text had ambiguity which has been remedied by scholars or
scribes at some time in history in order to make the text more intelligible for readers. If we
can not trust that the text we have is a reliable source to the original text, then it is problematic
to use the state of the text as an argument for whether or not the text is expected to be
understood by readers. There are instances where commentators of critical editions are unable
to find a satisfactory distribution of text to speakers without emending the text itself to
accommodate the proposed distribution. In *Birds* 833, Peisetairos, according to the
manuscripts, mentions a bird “ὦφ' ἡµῶν”, “from among ourselves”.
T. Kock emends the text so it says “ὦφ' ἡµῶν”, “from among yourselves” instead. Sommerstein agrees with this
change, explaining that he does not find it plausible that Peisetairos, who is a man, would
include himself among the birds. He points out, however, that the problem can be avoided by
distributing the text between Peisetairos and the Chorus leader.

Coulon, retaining the mss.’ wording, divided up the line thus:

PEISETAIRUS: A bird.
CHORUS-LEADER: From among us? Of what breed?
PEISETAIRUS: Of the Persian breed …

Neither Henderson in his Loeb edition or Dunbar finds it necessary to emend the text or use
Coulon’s distribution of text to speakers. Dunbar argues that Peisetairos probably sees himself
as a bird at this stage.

It seems likely that that such emendations also have been made during the textual
transmission before printed editions were made, and that corruptions have occurred because a
copyist has not been able to understand the distribution of text to speakers or thought that one

66 Sommerstein’s translation.
distribution was preferable to such a degree that he meant modifying the text in order to accommodate this distribution was justified. In the commentary to lines 618–19 in his edition of *Acharnians* S. D. Olson describes an example of how this has happened at least once.\(^7^0\) By comparing the texts of three different manuscripts with the same text passage he discovers that an ancestor must have lacked an indication of change of speaker. This caused a copyist to read a statement where there actually was a question, which again lead him to insert an οὐκ (not), in an attempt to give sense to the text. Of the three manuscripts copied from the one with this corruption, two of them were checked against a correct manuscript, so that the change of speaker was inserted at the right place, and the οὐκ which now was superfluous was accordingly deleted. In light of this example it should be expected that there are several similar cases of corruption based on the copyist's mistaken opinion about who the speaker is, and these might have taken place at any time during the transmission of the text. This attempt was quite poorly carried out, since it failed to provide for the metre, and this might be one reason why the mistake was discovered and fixed in some of the manuscripts. Other changes made to accommodate misunderstandings might have been more successful, and since the text therefore makes good sense, it is impossible to know where in the text this could have happened. Dover has written an article, however, where he identifies several such corruptions already in ancient times.\(^7^1\)

It is easier to keep track of such changes to the manuscripts made after printed editions appeared. *Wasps* 152 is an instance where scholars have had great trouble making sense of the words. Several suggestions of emendations have been used by different editors. The situation is that Bdelycleon and his slave Xanthias are trying to keep Bdelycleon's father Philocleon inside the house. Bdelycleon is on top of the roof, having just prevented Philocleon from climbing out through the chimney, and Xanthias is watching the door. Then the line comes as follows: “παῖ. τὴν θύραν ὅθει. πίεζέ νυν σφόδρα.” – “Slave! He pushes the door. Press hard now!” Since Bdelycleon is on the roof, and only Xanthias is in a position where he can know what is happening around the door, editors have agreed that he must be the one reporting to Bdelycleon that Philocleon is pushing at the door. But then παῖ makes no sense here. Therefore editors have suggested that this word should be emended. Hermann proposed δῶς (this man), while Rogers proposed νῦν (now).\(^7^2\) One of these would probably in time have become generally accepted, and παῖ would have been degraded to the apparatus of future

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editions, if MacDowell had not discovered a way to distribute the text which both makes satisfactory sense and does not need any emendation of the text, stating that “attribution of παἰ to Philokleon, shouting from inside, makes further alteration unnecessary”. Sommerstein agrees with this proposition and explains more precisely how it works. It is Philocleon who shouts παἰ from inside, as if he were calling for the slave from outside the house to open the door. It was customary that guests would call for a slave to came and open the door for them. Philocleon is seemingly hoping he can trick Xanthias to do the same for him, although he is on the inside of the door. Xanthias sees through the trick, of course, and shouts up to inform Bdelycleon that Philocleon has come down and is pushing at the door, and Bdelycleon accordingly shouts back that Xanthias has to hold the door shut.

This illustrates some of the risk involved when emending the text. It is not unlikely that there have been many erroneous emendations to the texts of Aristophanes in the course of the textual transmission due to some difficulty which could have been resolved. It is of course difficult or impossible to discover where this might have happened, since the changed text is likely to be easier to interpret than the correct text. Sometimes, however, it is difficult not to be convinced that there is something wrong with the manuscripts. Frogs 800 is an example of text which has been emended to accommodate for a change of speaker where the text otherwise seems to be without any sense. Hades' slave is giving Xanthias an account of how the tragedy competition between Aischylos and Euripides is prepared by providing all kinds of tools for measurement. The text of Frogs 799-800 before the change looks like this:

Θε: καὶ κανόνας ἐξοίσουσι καὶ πῆχες ἐκόν
καὶ πλαίσια ξύμπτυκτα πλινθεύσουσι γε,

Sl: They will bring out standards and rulers for words, and they will actually make bricks of foldable moulds.

Kock suggested to change “γέ” – “actually” into “γάρ” – “so, therefore”, and let Xanthias say “πλινθεύσουσι γάρ;” as a question, which makes the whole line mean “and foldable moulds. Xa: So they'll make bricks?” This conjecture has been printed by all editors I have checked after Kock. This reading seems to be much better than the one found in the manuscripts, but we have no way of knowing if this has just brought the text even further from the author's text. Fortunately, all the changes suggested to the texts, printed or not, can now be traced so that no earlier reading will be lost. Even if we change the texts, none of the old readings will be lost in the way they would have been before the printing press. In the future there will always be possible to offer a better solution than the one proposed here. Nevertheless, it is

73 Ibid.
clear that caution has to be used when approaching ambiguities in ancient texts and drawing conclusions from them concerning how the texts were expected to be read by the ancient readers, since we can not know exactly how the texts have changed through time.

3.3 Language

Since there are no native speakers of the Ancient Greek language, ambiguities sometimes arise because of uncertainty about the exact meaning of words or expressions. Sometimes the distribution of text to speakers is debated because words are interpreted differently. In other cases there seems to be markers in the language which either suggest or exclude a change of speaker, but we lack comprehensive knowledge about where this is the case. It is possible, however, to infer from analysis of usage many of the instances where language is used in such a way. I will look at some examples where the distribution of text to speakers has been interpreted differently because of a deviating understanding of how the Greek language in the particular context works.

Sometimes the problem arises because of uncertainty about the meaning of a single word. In Wealth 1081 an old woman has accused a young man who she has supported of rejecting her now the he does not need her anymore. Chremylos asks the young man if this is true. Then someone asks the question “δὲ ἐπηρεάσων ἐστὶ τίς;”. Sommerstein discusses the distribution of this question in his edition of Wealth, where it depends on how we should understand the verb ἐπηρέασσω.75 One alternative is to give it the sense which the same word has just three lines before: to allow. The meaning of the question would then be “And who is the one who will allow this?”, and the speaker must be either Chremylos or the old woman, implying “who would allow the young man to leave the old woman?” Sommerstein argues, however, that it is absurd for anyone to ask such a question, since it is obvious that most men, at least young and middle-aged, would find it very reasonable that a young man would leave the old woman. The alternative meaning of ἐπηρέασσω here, suggested by Holzinger, is “to order”. This sense gives the question “And who will order it?”, said by the young man. Although this meaning makes good sense in this situation, and Sommerstein chooses to use it in his edition, he has two misgivings. First, this is then the first known use of this sense of ἐπηρέασσω, the next being in Xenophon’s Anabasis 6.5.11. Secondly, using this sense of the word, just a few lines after using the same word in a very different sense “is not only clumsy but damaging to intelligibility.” Another solution Sommerstein mentions, but does not print in his text, is to use

van Leeuwen's emendation of ἐπιτρέψων to ἐπιτάξων, giving it to the young man with almost the same meaning, but using a word which more commonly carries this sense.

This type of problem, where the meaning of a word or expression is in doubt, causes difficulty for the interpretation of any type of text, of course, and is not only a concern for dramatic texts or where there is a question about how to distribute text to speakers. In this example, if these words were what Aristophanes wrote, a contemporary reader would probably also know the meaning and who the speaker had to be. Here the distribution of text is therefore a problem for modern readers only, and the ambiguity can therefore not be used as a reason not to trust that the dramatic situation was expected to be understood. It is more a case which urges us to come to a deeper understanding of the Greek language.

The feature of the Greek language most discussed in connection with distributing text to speakers, is the notion that there are certain particles or combinations of particles which indicate a change of speaker. The arguments based on particle usage often give a list of similar examples in Greek literature or in other passages from Aristophanes, and they frequently refer to what is said about the particle in *The Greek Particles* by J. D. Denniston. The particle most discussed in connection with change of speaker is γέ. Denniston describes this article as concentrating attention on a single idea, either in a determinative, limitative or intensive manner. He does not explicitly say it can indicate a change of speaker, but much of the use described concerns answers, interruptions and continuing the previous speaker's sentence in dialogue. This word is of course used in many different ways, but editors have extensively used its presence as an argument for interpreting a change of speaker. A simple example can be found in *Wasps* 822–3.

**Bd:** Οδούλσερ ᾦμιν φαίνεται Κλεώνυμος.  
**Ph:** Ο κουν χεὶ γ' ο δ' ατο ρως ν πλα.  
**Bd:** He looks much like Kleonymos to me.  
**Ph:** He is also without his gear, and still a Hero.

Here MacDowell had determined that line 822 belongs to Bdelycleon and comments “… 823, where γ' implies that the line is a comment on 822 by a different speaker, is Philokleon's …” In another comment to *Wasps*, in line 903, MacDowell does not interpret the particle in this way, but comments “γ' just emphasizes ἁγαθός and does not mark a change of speaker.” The fact that MacDowell sees the need to mention that γέ does not imply a change of speaker in

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77 Ibid., 114–115.  
78 Ibid., 130–8.  
80 Ibid., 252.
this instance, indicates that the expectation of this connotation is strong.

In addition to scholars taking γέ as a marker indicating a change of speaker, the absence of this particle is sometimes used as an argument against change of speaker. Sommerstein has made such a consideration when discussing a passage in *Peace*. He prints the text of lines 548–50 without punctuation “in order not to prejudge the question at issue.”

ο δὲ δρεπανουργὸς οὐχ ὃρᾶς ὡς ἤδεται καὶ τὸν δορυξόν οἶδον ἐσκιμάλασεν ἵθι νῦν ἀνείπο τοῦς γεωργοὺς ἀπέναντι. And don't you see how happy the sickle-maker is and how he showed the spear-maker the finger come now and call upon the farmers to go home.

The situation is that Peace has been restored, and Hermes has asked Trygaios to look at the faces in the audience and guess their occupations. First Sommerstein argues that Hermes is saying line 548 and 550 (550 is given to Trygaios by Olson82). Then he rejects a change of speaker before line 549 printed by earlier editors because he is certain that had there been a change of speaker, there would have been a γέ there. He proposes to emend the line “καὶ τὸν δορυξόν γ’ …”, which he thinks might be right, but he chooses to let Hermes say all three lines in his edition. He stresses that although the line fits Trygaios' character well, “if he is to have the line, it needs that γ’”. Henderson seems to agree, so in his Loeb edition of *Peace* he gives line 549 to Trygaios with Sommerstein's conjecture.83 Sommerstein also notes that “There are nine other passages in Peace where metre and/or sense strongly support the insertion of a γ’ or γε absent from the paradosis.” Olson sees no need for a change of speaker in line 549, but if there should have been one, he would have emended it in this way: “καὶ τὸν <γε> δορυξόν”.84

This line of thought has been employed in connection with particles besides γέ. For instance in *Peace* 41, which starts with “οὐ μὴν”, Wilson argues against a change of speaker which Olson has in his text, since then other particles would have been used. He suggests “οὐδ’ αὖ”85 Wilson refers to Denniston's article about “μὴν”86 to support this, although I can not see that this is conclusive. I have found four instances of “οὐ μὴν” in tragedy where there must be a change of speaker,87 although none in Aristophanes. The two other occurrences of “οὐ μὴν”,

82 Olson, Aristophanes: Peace, 29.
84 Olson, Aristophanes: Peace, 189.
85 Wilson, Aristophanea: Studies on the Text of Aristophanes, 100.
87 None in Aischylos, in Euripides: *Alkestis* 518 *Helena* 571, *Rhesos* 175, in Sophocles: *Philoctetes* 811
in \textit{Clouds} 53 and \textit{Wasps} 268, must continue the previous speech. Nevertheless, it seems then that the occurrence of “οὐ μὴν” can not be the complete reason to deny a change of speaker here, but other concerns must be part of the consideration.

Understanding the functions of particles in the dramatic text will always primarily depend on sensitivity to the language. If certain patterns of usage can be recognized, however, this can sometimes be helpful to determine the distribution of text to speakers. It would also be interesting to investigate if some of these markers implying change of speaker are used in a more systematic way, where a reader would have problems determining whether there is a change of speaker or not. If that were the case, it would be a reason to think that the text was written with readers in mind.

\section*{3.4 Dramatic Situation}

The heart of the discussion in this thesis is how and if we can determine the stage action from the words meant to be spoken in the dramatic text. In this section I will look at two passages where the dramatic situation is difficult to determine. MacDowell discusses the probability of various distributions of text to speakers in a comment to the action scene in lines 457–60 in his edition of \textit{Wasps}.

\begin{quote}
\begin{verbatim}
Ξα: ἀλλὰ δρῶ τοῦ! Βδ: ἀλλὰ καὶ σὺ τόσο πολλῷ τῷ καπνῷ.
Ξα: οὐχὶ σοῦθ' ὢν ἐς κάρακας; οὐκ ἄπιτε βδ: παῖς τῷ ἔλξῳ. \\
καὶ σὺ προσθεὶς Λησσήνη ἑπτὼς τῶν Σελλαρτίου.
Ξα: ἂρ' ἐμελλομέν οἰκθ' ὡμής ἀποσφήθησεν τῷ χρόνῳ
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

He starts by pointing out the impossibility of being certain of the distribution. Then he continues:

Perhaps the likeliest guess is that all the orders are given by Bdelykleon and all the other words are spoken by Xanthias. But it is quite possible that the other slaves join in the shouting, and that the slaves call out orders and encouragement to one another. It is also possible that one or more further slaves, Sosias for instance, appear at 455, and indeed VTJ attribute 458 to Sosias; but there is no clear indication in the text that this is right.\footnote{MacDowell, \textit{Aristophanes: Wasps}, 195.}

There are three suggestions being proposed here. The first is that orders are given by the master while the slave says the rest of the text. The second is that several slaves are shouting orders to each other, and the third is that Sosias enters and the lines are shared between him,
Xanthias and perhaps Bdelykleon. What makes the first proposition the likeliest guess? MacDowell does not explain his reasoning, but we might find some clues by looking at the proposals themselves. The second proposition might be inspired by the “καὶ σύ”, “you too”, in 457, which could imply at least one other addressee. We know that there are other slaves present, and if they all run around trying to get rid of the wasps, the short desperate sentences could fit them well in this hectic scene. It is not easy to see what makes the first proposition more “likely” than this one. The third alternative, letting Sosias re-enter the stage to assist Xanthias and Bdelycleon with chasing away the wasps, is an attractive solution and it would have a good dramatic effect. There is nothing in the text which contradicts this interpretation. It does, however, introduce something to the situation which the text does not contribute any information about. The fact that MacDowell mentions that this is the case could be a sign that he is reluctant to allow this. Accepting this way of interpreting the dramatic situation is either an acknowledgement that we can not expect the information needed to determine who the speaker is to be included in the text, or that there is no correct distribution of text, and that any distribution which does not contradict the text is valid.

In lines 569-70 of *Frogs* Dionysos (disguised as Heracles) and his slave Xanthias have encountered two innkeepers who want to punish Heracles because he ran away without paying the bill the last time he visited them. Then two orders are given by two different persons, to one or most likely two persons:

θὲ δὴ κάλεσον τὸν προστάτην Κλέωνά μοι.

Go now, and summon my patron Kleon!

σὺ δ’ ἔμοιγ’, ἐὼνπερ ἐπιτόχης, Ὡπέρβολον-

 Summon my patron Hyperbolos too if you should meet him,

ι’ αὐτῶν ἐπιτρήσωμεν.

so we can crush that guy.

The problem is to determine who gives each of these orders. The first notion is to give them to each of the two innkeepers, but then it is difficult to understand who receives the orders. A suggestion is that there must be some slaves present. Until this point, however, there has been no mention of slaves. But if both inn-keepers order each other to leave, then it is difficult to explain why they seem to stay afterwards.

Van Leeuwen suggests giving the second order, line 570–571a, as an aside from Xanthias.89 Tucker proposes that Dionysos interrupts the innkeeper and in answer to being threatened by Cleon threatens back with a patron “who can out-Cleon Cleon”.90 Both of these suggestions require that one of the innkeepers leave. It must then be resolved who responds to the remaining innkeeper in line 574. Van Leeuwen gives the line to Xanthias as another aside.

89 van Leeuwen, *Aristophanis Ranae: Cum Prolegomenis et Commentariis*, 94.
Tucker gives it to Dionysos as a response to the innkeeper. Dover recognizes the problem of having slaves turning up without further indication in the text. He is, however, content neither with van Leeuwen's nor Tucker's solution. He argues that Dionysos must be too terrified to be sarcastic in this scene, and that sarcasm does not fit the attitude Xanthias has adopted in lines 563–5 and 568.91 He suggests that one solution could be that the innkeepers are flustered by their agitation and give each other a command to fetch their own patron. Then they both start to run away in compliance, but soon realizing that no one will be left to revile their enemy, they turn back to continue their harangue. Dover decides against this solution as well, since he does not perceive the innkeepers as flustered, but in full control of the situation. He does not mention that this suggestion involves much action not indicated in the text, and it is difficult to see why he would accept this and not the unmentioned slaves. Maybe this is why he accepts the introduction of the slaves in the end. He justifies this by assuming that the Athenian audience would expect to see slaves accompanying the innkeepers (which I suppose he means to extend to the Athenian readers, since the presence of slaves would be obvious to the audience), and he gives an equivalent example from Thesmophoriazousai 279–81, where “the Old Man” commands a slave woman to accompany him, even though she has not been referred to earlier.

It is clear from the comments concerning this passage, where it is difficult to determine what is actually taking place, that the editors will spend a substantial amount of effort on constructing a satisfactory account of the situation. The reluctance expressed against accepting the sudden appearance of the slaves is notable, since it shows that the editors here resist introducing anything into the situation which is not directly inferable from the text. When Dover accepts to introduce the two slaves, he sees the need to justify it by noting that the slaves would not need to be introduced by the text, because their presence would have been expected, and because it was common practice in the theatre to have slaves at hand without needing to introduce them. The way the editors discuss this passages is also an indication that they are not exclusively concerned with an interpretation of the dramatic situation which would have made sense in the performance situation. The audience of this scene would not have been perplexed by the lack of verbal indications for the presence of the two slaves they had seen coming together with the two innkeepers. The reason for editors not to accept the necessity of assuming stage action which has not been mentioned in the text therefore seems to be an expectation that also the reader of the text should be given a

91 Dover, Aristophanes: Frogs, 266.
sufficient account of the dramatic situation. In the next sections several other cases with different kinds of ambiguity will be discussed, where other strategies have been suggested in order to solve the problem.

3.5 Coherence

Sometimes it seems clear who the speaker is, but there is something which does not add up. The disturbance could be very subtle, like the “ineptness”, noted by Dunbar, of Euelpides asking Peisetairos if he would be able to find his way home in line 10 of *Birds*, just after Peisetairos in line 9 has assured him that he does not know where they are. For Dunbar this is disagreeable to such a degree that she makes one of her very few changes to the manuscript indications of change of speaker and lets Peisetairos continue and ask the question in line 10. Another example where the distribution of text seems to be contrary to the given state of affairs can be found in *Frogs* 564–5, right before the passage discussed in section 3.4. In line 564 the innkeeper says that Heracles, when he had been to Hades long ago, had drawn his sword, seeming to be crazy. Then, in 565a someone says “νη Δία τάλανα” – “Yes, poor you!” Dover gives this to Xanthias, but makes this comment: “it is hard to see what exactly Xanthias is agreeing with – he wasn't there ... but perhaps, 'Yes, he does act crazy! You poor thing, (sc. I can just imagine)'.” Sommerstein finds this unacceptable since “Xanthias cannot confirm the accuracy of an event at which he was not present” and gives the response to the other innkeeper. Here it seems Dover has sacrificed consistency for keeping the distribution of text in the manuscripts, while Sommerstein does not consider this a good enough reason.

Sometimes consistency is sacrificed with the justification that the comedies of Aristophanes should not always be considered realistic. In *Peace* 258 Sommerstein does not distribute a text asking War about the garlic in his punch to War's servant Cydoimos, since the servant had not been present when the connection between War and garlic was made in line 246–7. Olson, however, thinks that there are good reasons for giving this text to Cydoimos, despite the inconsistency:

Nor is the fact that Κυδοὶμος mentions War's garlic (258) despite not having been on stage at 246–9 when it was displayed sufficient grounds for emendation; this is

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a regular stage-convention, and if a naturalistic explanation for Uproar's knowledge of his master's business need be sought, one might simply note that he has been inside the house with him previously.\(^{96}\)

Accepting that the comedies of Aristophanes might not be fully coherent could pose a threat to the expectation that it should be possible to understand the stage actions from the text. If absurdity and inconsistency are allowed, how can we know the difference between incoherence which could be accepted and real problems of interpretation? Sommerstein redistributes the text to another speaker, and thereby avoids the inconsistency altogether. This reluctance to admit any inconsistency indicates support for the view that the texts should be coherent, and not require external explanations. Olson accepts the inconsistency, but not unconditionally. He offers two strategies for accommodating it. First he argues that this specific type of inconsistency is a stage-convention in comedy. Secondly, the inconsistency could be explained by the fact that Cydooimos has been inside with War earlier, and therefore might have seen him with the garlic. The second strategy poses a problem, since it implies that the reader (as well as the audience in this case) would need some information not stated by the text in order to get an adequate understanding of the situation. The first strategy, however, is comparable to the approaches which will be discussed in the next section about conventions. Determining whether or not such a stage-convention actually is inferrable from the extant comedies, however, would need its own investigation.

### 3.6 Conventions

One prerequisite for understanding a text is a certain proficiency in the language in which it is written, but this is not sufficient. It is necessary to have knowledge about the many different contexts of the text. One type of knowledge needed concerns the rules which apply for the text's genre. If a reader does not recognise that the ancient dramatic text should be read as part words spoken by different characters and part words sung by a chorus, it would be difficult to make any sense of the text. There are many such conventions and other pieces of knowledge which form the background on which authors write texts and readers read them. Modern readers must, however, always be aware of the distance in time and culture to the ancient texts. The ancient readers and the authors of the ancient dramatic texts were part of the same cultural context. Part of interpreting the text is to discover the underlying cultural assumptions and also the conventional codes which applied to the dramatic art forms. Through scholia and

\(^{96}\) Olson, *Aristophanes: Peace*, 122.
other historical and archaeological sources we have much knowledge which makes it possible for us to better interpret the text.\(^97\) Still, much needed information must be discovered within the text itself. Of course this is the core of the whole discipline of interpreting ancient texts, and here I will discuss some of the proposed conventions which editors have used to determine the distribution of text to speakers.

Assumed conventions which restricted what slaves plausibly could say or do are often used as arguments when distributing text. In *Frogs* 312 E. Fraenkel decides to keep the manuscript distribution of text because “[im] Folgenden ist es viel besser wenn οὁρος von dem Herrn, und nicht von dem Diener, gesagt wird.”\(^98\) (Although Fraenkel's book was published before Lowe's article, Fraenkel had access to Lowe's research which was nearly finished.\(^99\)) Both Dover and Sommerstein discusses Fraenkel's misgivings, but both still decide to give “οὁρος” – “hey you!” to the slave. Dover argues that, since there is no doubt that the slave addresses his master in this way in line 479, there is no reason to reject it here.\(^100\) Sommerstein also refers to other similar instances, and he remarks that οὁρος might not be improper for the slave to say, but rather a way to get the master's attention.\(^101\) Here we see that part of the source material available for making judgements is the text itself, and there is therefore some danger of circular argument. If slaves are not assigned text which is assumed improper for them to say in comedies, what is improper could easily be affirmed by the fact that slaves do not say such things in comedies. There is also the question of what degree of realism one can expect from comedies. Even if there were sources giving information about what was or was not proper for slaves to do, this might not be valid in the context of Aristophanes' comedies.

Another type of cultural knowledge sometimes needed to understand who the speakers are and exactly what is happening, is knowledge about how certain business was performed in the Athenian society, whether it concerned everyday tasks or special cultural phenomena. Much which was common knowledge when the dramas were written is now open to speculation. There are cases where scenes in ancient drama are difficult to understand because information which we need, but contemporary readers would not have needed is left out of the text. In *Peace* 1052–1126 Trygaios is performing an offering which is disturbed by a the oracle-monger Hierocles. Here knowledge about how these offerings were performed is necessary in order to understand exactly what is happening, and having first-hand experience would

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99 Ibid., 63 n. 1.
perhaps have made the action obvious. The discussion is about who calls out a libation (“σπονδή”) in line 1110, after Trygaios already has poured libations in line 1104. The complicating matter is of course the interference by Hierocles. There are three candidates present: Trygaios, Hierocles and the slave. If it is the slave who does it, it has to be a conventional thing, since Trygaios is not protesting. Hierocles, however, is begging to have some wine and meat, something Trygaios denies him. The traditional distribution, which both Sommerstein and Olson reject, is to give it to the slave. The reason for rejecting it according to Sommerstein is that “the libation on the altar after a sacrifice was normally poured by one person only, the person in charge of the sacrifice.”102 Olson argues similarly that “Since sacrifice is nowhere else accompanied by separate libations by the various participants, and since nothing in the text points to the elaborate exchange of vessels that [it] would require, … that staging also should probably be rejected.”103 Despite the similar argumentation Sommerstein and Olson choose to distribute the word differently. Sommerstein gives it to Hierocles as an unauthorized libation, while Olson gives it to Trygaios, citing a papyrus fragment from one of Menander's comedies (Men. Kol. fr. 1) where a speaker is calling out “σπονδή” three times with interruptions in between. The fact that we lack much of the background knowledge available to the contemporary readers of the ancient dramas makes it difficult to know whether the problem with a passage which is difficult to comprehend is due to this ignorance or if for example the problem has occurred because the text would be intelligible together with the stage action for an audience, and the author did not consider the reader when writing the text.

In addition to conventions of social life there are also the conventions connected with theatre and the comedy of Aristophanes itself. One proposed convention which has been widely discussed is a rule determining the maximum number of speaking actors which were allowed to be employed in one performance. Aristotle writes in his Poetics (1449a13–19)104 that the tragic art had attained its own nature after Sophocles had introduced a third actor. This, and the fact that most tragedies need no more than three actors to be performed,105 has lead to the assumption that the tragic competitions had a rule limiting the number of speaking actors used in one performance to three. This has caused many scholars to believe that there was such a rule which applied to comedy as well. The problem with this is that many of Aristophanes' comedies seem to need at least four speaking actors to be performed, and some of them.

102 Sommerstein, Aristophanes: Peace, 186.
103 Olson, Aristophanes: Peace, 280–1.
104 Kassel, Aristotelis de Arte Poetica Liber, 8.
105 Pickard-Cambridge, The Dramatic Festivals of Athens, 133–49.
according to Henderson, need five.\textsuperscript{106} MacDowell and Marshall investigate the evidence and discuss the rules which might have existed concerning the number of speaking actors in comedies in two articles where they come to different conclusions. MacDowell finds that all of the eleven comedies of Aristophanes need four speaking actors, but no more than four.\textsuperscript{107} Marshall, however, is able to explain how all of the comedies except \textit{Lysistrata} could have been performed with only three actors. The main device Marshall introduces to accommodate this is ventriloquism. He suggests that in most cases where a fourth speaking actor seems to be needed, the text can actually be spoken by one of the three speaking actors so that the voice seems to come from either a mute actor or a puppet.\textsuperscript{108}

The distribution of text to speakers can sometimes decide how many speaking actors are needed. In line 1204 of \textit{Knights}, MacDowell insists that there must be a change of speaker which requires four speakers in the scene,\textsuperscript{109} while Marshall, with support from Sommerstein's edition,\textsuperscript{110} argues that no change of speaker is necessary, and that three actors therefore are sufficient for the scene.\textsuperscript{111} This is of course not a distribution of text made for a critical edition, but a suggestion made during an investigation into whether there could have been a three actor rule for Aristophanes' comedies. MacDowell also claims to find indications in the texts that Aristophanes has changed the action in order to avoid having to use a fifth actor.\textsuperscript{112} From these findings he concludes that there was a rule restricting the number of actors to four. I can see that these findings do not exclude such a rule, but I am unable to see how they confirm that it actually existed. There could be many other reasons for not having more than four speaking actors besides an official rule.

How editors have treated scenes which require four actors depends not only on their position regarding the three actors rule. Some editors have thought that although it is necessary to allow four (or five) actors in some scenes, the fourth actor would not be full members of the troupe, but extras who should only be given a few lines of text to say.\textsuperscript{113} This notion might come from a comment given by the 2nd century A.D. grammarian Pollux, stating “\textit{ι}ποτε μεν

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item MacDowell, ‘The Number of Speaking Actors in Old Comedy’, 329.
\item Marshall, ‘Comic Technique and the Fourth Actor’, 82.
\item MacDowell, ‘The Number of Speaking Actors in Old Comedy’, 335.
\item Pickard-Cambridge, \textit{The Dramatic Festivals of Athens}, 153.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Whenever, instead of a fourth actor, one from the chorus must speak in song, this is called “parascenic”, like in Aischylos' Agamemnon. If, on the other side, a fourth actor would say something, this is named “parachoregema”, and they say this is done in Aischylos' Menon.”

This could be taken to imply that a speaking fourth actor generally was avoided. This was written a few centuries after Aristophanes' comedies were written, and although Pollux had more information available concerning the Ancient Greek theatre than we have, we should not be surprised if he also was influenced by theatre conventions in the travelling troupes of the actors' guilds in times much later than Aristophanes, when the norm was to have no more than three actors in a theatre company.\(^{115}\) Dunbar seems to adhere to the view that a fourth actor should be considered an “extra”, since she uses the term “parachoregema” for the fourth actor needed to say the few lines of Triballian in Birds, and does not assign any more lines to this actor.\(^{116}\) Austin and Olson in their edition of Thesmophoriazousai do acknowledge the need for four actors in one scene in lines 923–44. Nevertheless, they are so determined to keep the use of this fourth actor to a minimum that they consider using only three actors in the scene spanning lines 295–382 instead of using him.\(^{117}\) Here a fourth actor is needed to play the part of heraldess, and avoiding this would result in “an awkward and ill-motivated exit followed by an equally awkward and ill-motivated entrance, neither of them signalled in the text.”\(^{118}\) In the end they decide to assign the role of heraldess to the coryphaios. MacDowell is not convinced to the view that a fourth actor should be used sparingly and writes: “… there is no evidence contemporary with Aristophanes which distinguishes three actors from the others in this way, and it is probable that writers of later periods who mention three actors are referring to their own times and did not have authentic information about the fifth century.”\(^{119}\) Dover is sceptical to the arguments for minimizing the fourth actor's part. He point out that even if all but one of the extant comedies of Aristophanes can be played with three actors and an extra with only a few lines, this way of distributing the roles is our construction. He concludes that “[the] comparative rarity of scenes in which the simultaneous presence of four actors is

\(^{115}\) Pickard-Cambridge, The Dramatic Festivals of Athens, 155.
\(^{116}\) Dunbar, Aristophanes: Birds, 15.
\(^{118}\) Ibid., 150.
\(^{119}\) MacDowell, ‘The Number of Speaking Actors in Old Comedy’, 325.
demonstrably necessary is not significant, for the compositions of four-cornered dialogue is not easy and we should not expect to see it often.”  

Henderson also argues that it would be surprising if Aristophanes did not use a fourth actor as needed, and recommends distributing the roles to the actors more evenly.

One convention related to the three actors rule, and maybe one of the sources for the idea that a fourth actor must be an extra, is the convention of dividing the three speaking actors of a performance into the protagonist, deuteragonist and tritagonist. There is no evidence that such a technical division of the actors of each performance existed in the theatre of 5th–4th century B.C. Athens. There was a division of professional actors into three classes in the third century A.D. theatre. Then the terms protagonist, deuteragonist and tritagonist were used about which class of actor someone belonged to, not which position he held in a particular play.

Nevertheless, these terms are often used in editions when discussing how the speaking parts were assigned to each of the actors. A connection between this use and the view that the fourth actor should say as few lines as possible is evident by the fact that the editors in favour of this view also use the terms protagonist, deuteragonist and tritagonist when assigning roles to the actors, while the fourth actor is not assigned any such term. (Dunbar calls him “parachoregema”, as mentioned.) The editors not favouring this view assign roles to actors merely by numbers.

Conventions about which actors should have which roles do not necessarily affect how text is distributed to characters, although there are examples where this at least have been used as part of the argumentation, like the example already mentioned from *Thesmophoriazousai* 295–382, where a role is given to the chorus leader instead of the fourth actor. Another example can be found in the prologue of *Lysistrate*. Here Sommerstein naturally establishes Lysistrate as the leader and then argues accordingly concerning the distribution of text between Calonice and Myrrhine in the prologue:

I assume with Henderson that once the initial interest in Myrrhine, generated by her entrance, has worn off, she is as it were «recessive» and Calonice «dominant», so that (i) when Lysistrata has only one Athenian interlocutor, it is Calonice, and (ii) when both Calonice and Myrrhine speak, Calonice shows herself the more forceful character.

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It is difficult to see how Calonice has been established as dominant, other than by the presumption of her dominance over Myrrhine, and thereby the assignment of more lines to her. It is also not justified to claim that high status characters should have more lines to say. This notion seems reasonable from the perspective of a reader of the drama, but in a performance setting a character does not automatically establish its high status by speaking more than the other characters. On the contrary, silence can be an effective technique to attract the attention of the audience. Aristophanes clearly knew of this device, since in *Frogs* 911–920 he lets Euripides criticize Aischylos for exaggerated use of this technique. Later in the same play he applies the same technique himself, when he lets Plouton sit silent on his throne during most of the competition between Euripides and Aischylos. Although Sommerstein does not state it explicitly, the convention concerning the hierarchical status of the actors might be a contributing factor for the reasoning here, and not only the conceived status of the characters. In Henderson's distribution of actors to roles, Lysistrate is performed by the first actor, Calonice by the second, Lampito by the third, and Myrrhine by the fourth actor.

Such proposed conventions concerning Aristophanes' comedies, whether they existed or not, have influenced how the stage action of the performances has been perceived both traditionally and now. There is good reason to believe that theatrical conventions from different time periods have anachronistically been applied to the ancient Athenian drama. In most cases this would only lead to strange interpretations or inability to make sense of the stage action. There is a danger, however, that changes have been made to the texts in order to reconcile them with the expected conventions.

### 3.7 Dramaturgical Considerations

Sometimes the arguments related to distribution of text to speakers are not concerned with making sense of the situation, restoring coherence or applying knowledge about the social contexts or the dramatic conventions, but rather with determining which one of the possible distributions of text will be the more dramatically effective or which creates the more satisfactory stage action or development of characters. I have already mentioned in chapter 2 how one ancient scholar has suggested that ambiguities of speakers should be solved by determining the characteristics of the speakers from the text and then distributing the text based on this. Modern editors do also use this strategy in their argumentation for distributing the text. A very simple example can be found in Dover's comment to line 1130 in *Frogs*: “One

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& Phillips, 1990), 158.
MS gives the line to Aeschylus, but it seems to me too plaintive and incompatible with his pride.” This must mean, of course, that the property of pride is established for Aischylos elsewhere in the text. There is another example in Birds 1616. A peace negotiation is taking place between the gods and the birds. Poseidon has just agreed to Peisetairos’ suggestion, and so does Heracles in this line, so if only Triballos agrees, peace will be settled. Someone asks him “τί δαὶ σὺ φήξ;” – “What do you say, then?” Triballos answers something unintelligible and then someone says “ὁρᾶς; ἐπανεῖ χοῦτος” – “You see? Also he agrees!” Sommerstein gives the question and interpretation of the answer to Heracles, since he “is most eager for a settlement”, while acknowledging that also Peisetairos could say these lines. This decision seems to be based on knowing the personality of Heracles in comedy, where he usually is portrayed as most concerned with food, and from this Sommerstein finds that it is Heracles who is the most motivated to come to an agreement, so they can go on to the celebration.

I will look at three additional cases from Birds where the text itself gives little help as to how the distribution of text to speakers should be, and the editors have used different types of dramaturgical considerations in their judgements. In the conversation between the Athenians and Tereus in Birds 92–161 it is clear which parts of the text Tereus says, but there are few indications which could distinguish which of the two Athenians says which lines, except that the Athenian speaking in 128–134 can not be the same who says 136–142. Peisetairos is given most of the lines by Fraenkel[124] and Marzullo[125] in order to further his dominant role. Dunbar proposes instead that Peisetairos becomes silent in thoughts from line 134, and then he bursts out with his suggestion in line 162. This gives the outburst of Peisetairos the most surprising effect, and this is what Dunbar prints. She does suggests, however, that it would be “dramatically most effective” if Peisetairos shows interest in the answer to the question in line 155, about how life among the birds is. She does not print this, probably because it would have required her to alter the manuscript’s structure of change of speakers.

In Birds 267 Sommerstein mentions two solutions for distributing the bird call “τοροτὶς τοροτὶς”. Either it could be given to Tereus as a last attempt to make the birds come, or the Flamingo could utter it when it enters.[126] The first option creates a comic routine where, after Tereus has performed an extravagant calling and the audience's expectations have been excited, nothing happens. Then he makes a very simple call, and surprisingly, the bird appears. Also in the other option suspense is created, and then it is broken by the Flamingo

124 Fraenkel, Beobachtungen Zu Aristophanes, 64.
126 Sommerstein, Aristophanes: Birds, 214.
appearing, diverting the attention from the actors with its cries. The first option is more
humorous, but the second makes the entrance of the Flamingo more spectacular. Both options
seem equally usable.

There are cases where the distribution which seems most natural can be changed and a more
interesting or comic situation emerges. In line 301–3 of *Birds* the chorus of birds enter while
Euelpides and Peisetairos watches. Suddenly in line 307a one of them asks “Debe ἄπειλοδσίν γε
νῶν;” – “Say, are they threatening us?”, and someone answers in 307b–8a “οἶμοι, κεχήνασίν
γέ τοι καὶ βλέπουσιν εἰς σὲ κάμε.” – “Oh no! They are watching us with their beaks open!”

Here the first notion would be to give the question to one of the Athenians and the response to
the other, and this is what Sommerstein does in his edition.127 Dunbar, however, in accordance
with the manuscripts assigns both question and answer to the same person, Peisetairos, noting
that this “is very effective, with Peis. seeing the threatening attitude of the birds at first only as
a possibility but then as a dreadful fact.”128 This distribution of text seems to have a stronger
comic effect than the more predictable one. There are, however, no indications in the text
itself suggesting that this distribution should be preferred, except a subjective judgement that
it has a superior dramatic effect.

In the first example Dunbar uses the silence of Peisetairos as a preparation to give more
weight to the proclamation which will be the central theme of the play from this moment. In
the second example, the choice of distribution depends on favouring either the humour of the
situation or making the arrival of the flamingo as spectacular as possible. In the third example
a passage where the distribution of text seems straight-forward is shown to become more
humorous by distributing the text in a less intuitive way. One problem with this way of
determining the speakers is that even if there ever were something which could be called a
correct distribution, either the one intended by the author while writing the comedy or the one
actually employed in the performance of the play, we have no reason to expect that this
correct distribution always corresponds with the one we, or even the Athenian audience,
would consider to be the best one. These modes of argumentation also seem to be applicable
only where more than one distribution of the text seems equally plausible and the ambiguity
can not be resolved by other means. The question, then, is whether or not the many passages
where several distributions of text to speakers are equally meaningful constitute a strong
argument for the view that the stage action can not be established from the information given
in the text. The answer to this depends on whether or not the difference inflicted upon the

127 Ibid., 52.
drama as a whole by the possible variants of stage action is considered to be significant. It also depends on whether the requirement for considering the stage action established is to reconstruct how it must have been in the performance, or if it is sufficient to find at least one way to imagine the stage action which makes sense.

3.8 Spectator's Viewpoint

In chapter 2 I have mentioned the conviction of Taplin and Russo that the ancient dramatists did not consider the readers when writing the dramatic texts since they were mainly concerned with how the texts would be used for the theatrical productions. In this section I will discuss one example where this position towards the text is used in the argument for distributing text to speakers. Ussher, in the commentary to his edition of Assemblywomen where he discusses the distribution of text between two unnamed women, states that since the dramatic text is written for performance and not for reading, nothing should be interpreted as help to a reader for establishing the stage action. He then uses this as an argument to disregard a potential indication to the reader about the speaker. If the audience had no need for such an indication, the author would not need to include it in the text, is his reasoning. The situation is Praxagora testing her fellow women in the art of speaking as men in the assembly. Woman A has earlier in the play (line 76–78) displayed, for some humorous effect, the stick of Lamios. In the scene in question (lines 130–155) Woman A and B are presenting a speech in turn. When the second woman is about to start speaking, Praxagora orders her to speak well and manly, and lean her figure on her stick. Van Leeuwen has proposed that the first woman to speak is Woman B, and accordingly the second is Woman A, probably so that the joke about Lamios' stick can be brought up again. Ussher rejects this suggestion because “(a) that joke is long over, (b) the play was written for seeing, not for reading: if Lamius' stick is in evidence, it does not need a mention in the text.” The second observation is not really an argument against van Leeuwen's suggestion, but more a statement about whether it is justified to infer something about the stage action from incidental information in the text. Van Leeuwen apparently interprets the mentioning of a stick as a hint from the author that we are dealing with Woman A here. Ussher's reasoning seems to be that, since it would be obvious for any spectator which stick was leaned on, Praxagora mentioning a stick should not be taken as anything more than an encouragement to whoever was about to speak that she should lean on her stick, and not a background signal from the author to a reader about who the speaker is.

130 Ussher, Ecclesiazusae, 96.
His reason for this view is as he says, that the text is not written for readers, but to be spoken by actors in a performance.

Ussher does not apply the full implications of this reasoning to his interpretation of the text. If nothing should be considered implied by the text that would be apparent to a spectator, then nor should we expect any hints about who the speaker of the text is, nor treat anything that could be considered as such as valid. The speaker is of course always apparent to the audience, and there would never be a reason to give them any hints about who the current speaker is. If Ussher would follow the principle he suggests to its extreme, it seems likely that he would have considerable problems determining the distribution of text to speakers and a great part of the stage action. He does acknowledge that the original texts did not have any attributions of speakers.\(^{131}\) It seems Ussher is making a strange distinction between what is possible for a reader to understand from the text, and what is possible for a scholar to discern about the text through analysis. This is evident in a comment about a character entering (line 746) unannounced and unnamed. “A reader will not recognize him (he is unnamed, like many in the play), but the audience (as I understand, with Rogers) are seeing Woman B’s husband …”\(^{132}\) If a reader could not recognize the newcomer, then of course neither Ussher nor Rogers would be able to know who it was, since non of them were in the audience so they could see the mask of Woman B’s husband entering.

It is clear that Ussher is not implying that readers are unable to understand the dramatic situations represented in ancient dramatic texts. I suspect that what he means by saying that a reader will not recognize who is entering, is that it would not be obvious to him, and that some amount of analysis would be required in order to come to a solution, analysis which Rogers and himself has conducted, and which has left them with a suggestion to the problem of distributing this passage of text to a speaker. This raises one more question about what is meant by being able to interpret the stage action from the text. Does it mean that it is possible to understand the stage action intuitively from the text as one reads, or must the interpretation consist of a deeper reading, back and forward, collecting all threads until the puzzle is solved?

In this chapter I have looked at the problem of distributing text to speakers from eight different angles by discussing relevant comments by editors of critical editions and other scholars. I will defer the summing up of what has been found until the conclusion, after I have conducted a small experiment.

\(^{131}\) Ibid., xxxv.
\(^{132}\) Ibid., 180–81.
4 Experiment

In the following I will read the prologue of *Frogs*, ignoring established punctuation and distribution of text to speakers. I will comment on the passages where there is some problem or ambiguity concerning who the speakers are, and discuss how I come to the decisions I make. I will adopt the position towards the dramatic text that the significant stage action, and thereby also the distribution of text to speakers, should and can be deduced from information given in the text. The purpose of the experiment is first to discover if this position can be held throughout the reading of the passage without having to concede that the interpretation suffers from it, or if there are cases where there seems to be a need for interpolation with stage actions not based on the text in order to make sense of the dramatic text. Secondly it is a goal to investigate how the concept of “significant stage action” needs to be formulated in order to make it possible to hold this position. In Appendix B the text is printed with the distribution of text to speakers which is established through the reading. The passages discussed are marked. Unfortunately I have not included a translation of the text, since it would not be to much help for following the discussion.

1–27: These lines make it clear that a slave and his or her master are talking. It is also clear who is saying which parts of the text. The situation is somewhat complex, since the speakers are aware of being characters in the theatre, and are acting out the the scene of two actors discussing the scene they are in the process of presenting and simultaneously taking on the role of master and slave. This situation is clear from the text, however, and is not difficult to comprehend. In line 7 the participle reveals that the slave is a man. From lines 8–15 we learn that the slave is carrying a lot of luggage. In line 22 we understand that the master is the god Dionysos. Despite the comic epithet “son of Wine-bottle” we do not get the impression that this is an imposter or someone else with the name Dionysos, but the actual god. In line 23 we learn that the slave is riding, in line 27 that it is on a donkey.

28: The “οὐ” at the end of the line could either be an emphatic “No!” said by the slave to underline his denial that the donkey is carrying his burden, or it could be Dionysos responding to his denial with “No?”. These two possibilities do not affect the situation much, except for a small shift in rhythm. I have found no other instances of “οὐ” alone as a question. As a statement, however, it often stands alone, so it should also be possible to use as a question. Since “οὐ” in the end of a sentence after the denial “μὴ τὸν Δί” does not occur elsewhere either, I prefer letting Dionysos say it as a confrontational question.
29–37: There are no apparent ambiguities of speakers in these lines. In lines 33–34 there is an example of a passage where historical information is needed to understand the meaning, and therefore also to determine the speaker. We need to know about the sea battle of Arginusai, after which the slaves who had fought were given their freedom.\textsuperscript{133} In line 37 it could be either the slave or the master shouting and knocking on the door. It must be the master, however, since otherwise there is no sense in lines 40–41.

38–39: We understand that a third speaker emerges from the door. This is Heracles, but no information has been given to identify him yet.

40–41: Dionysos is talking with his slave without Heracles hearing them. It is not completely straightforward to determine the meaning or speaker of the last words of line 41, "μὴ μαίνοι γε" – "may you not go crazy". Both Dionysos and Heracles are mythologically connected to madness. This fact alone could make this comment funny, whoever says it. It could be Xanthias expressing fear that Dionysos is going mad, or a sarcastic comment to his unlikely belief that Heracles is afraid of him. Another possibility is that Dionysos says this to Heracles after noticing that he is laughing. The problem with the last option is that it seems a bit abrupt to start the conversation with "please don't go mad", especially since Dionysos greets Heracles politely just afterwards, in line 44. On the other hand, it might not be necessary to require this scene to have the structure of a regular meeting. This has already been broken when Dionysus refrains from answering Heracles' question "εἰπέ μοι τουτὶ ὃ ἦ," – "tell me, what was that?" in line 39, even if this might have been an aside and not directed towards Dionysos. Strict realism can not be expected in comedy and the function of these lines is to create a succession of small situational jokes out of the meeting between Heracles, Dionysos and Xanthias. This is achieved regardless of which of these possibilities are used. I am choosing to let Xanthias say this, however, because it fits with his sarcastic remark coming in line 51 (although this could also not be his) and requires somewhat less interpretative effort.

42–50: These lines have no apparent ambiguities. We get learn that Dionysos has a lion skin on and have a club with him, from which we can understand that he is dressed up as Heracles, at least if we have some knowledge about Heracles.

51: "κἂν ἔγωγ ἐξηροῖμην" – "and then I woke up" could be said by any of the three present characters, sceptically by Heracles, sarcastically as an aside by Xanthias, or by Dionysos exposing that the story about him fighting a naval battle is a joke. The choice of speaker here

\textsuperscript{133} Dover, \textit{Aristophanes: Frogs}, 194.
does not change anything regarding the plot or the situation in general, but giving it to Xanthias will contribute to his sharp character. Therefore I choose to let Xanthias come with this remark.

52–54: These lines said by Dionysos contain no ambiguity of speaker.

55: “μικρός” – “small” could be another sarcastic aside from Xanthias, Heracles following up his question or Dionysos being ironic. From Xanthias this sounds somewhat inane and lacking of humour. It also seems strange that Heracles would ask “is it small?”, since it is already clear that Dionysos' longing is strong. An ironic remark like this is also not something to be expected from Dionysos. I suspect there is an obscure joke hidden here, probably concerning Molon, which would have been clear with information which was common knowledge in Athens when the comedy was written. Here the misgivings for letting either Xanthias or Heracles say the word make me assign it to Dionysos.

56–57: Here it could be Heracles asking three questions about who Dionysos is longing for, a woman, a boy or a man, and Dionysos denying the first two, and then getting upset when Heracles suggests that he would long for a man. The other possibility is that Heracles asks the first two questions, but Dionysos goes on after denying that it is a boy and reveals that it is a man he longs for. Then Heracles teases Dionysos and acts upset, pretending that he thinks that his brother has fallen in love with the infamous Kleisthenes. The choice between these distributions does not matter much for the progress of the play, but for some modern readers, for instance someone researching gender relations in Ancient Athens, it is probably useful to know that the distribution of speakers is unsure here, since it would be significant if Dionysos actually get upset by being asked if he were longing for a man. The “ἀπαναί” does not need to be interpreted as an upset exclamation, it could also express joy or the actual longing. The choice of distribution here could be based on knowledge about the contemporary Athenian attitude towards male homoeroticism. I am content with observing that it seems strange that Dionysos would react so strongly to the suggestion that he longs for a man, when that, in fact, is what he does. Accordingly I use the last alternative.

58–65: The distribution of text is clear in these lines. We learn that the unknown speaker is Dionysos' brother. It could be possible to guess that we are having to do with Heracles from this, but it could also be Hermes or Apollo. Of course, theoretically it could be any of Zeus' many sons. When food comes into the picture in lines 62–3, Heracles is quite securely identified.
66–67: Either both these lines are said by Dionysos, or Heracles breaks in and asks “καὶ ταῦτα τοῦ τεθνηκότος;” – “and that, after one who is dead?”. I choose to let Heracles say it, since I can not see what is contributed by Dionysos saying it. It becomes at least somewhat humorous when Heracles says it.

68–70: I have found no ambiguities in these lines.

71: “τί βουλόμενος” – “with what objective?” could be a rhetorical question from Dionysos, or an interested question from Heracles. I find nothing to speak for either one of the possibilities, but it is simpler that the asker of a question is someone else than the one who answers it. Therefore I let Heracles ask the question.

72–83: These lines seem to be without ambiguity of speaker.

84: The remark in this line could belong to either Heracles or Dionysos, or even be an aside by Xanthias again. There is probably a lost joke here and I can not see how it matters who says it. I give it to Heracles, since this stresses how lines 83 and 84 start with the same sounds.

85–119: These lines are without ambiguity of speaker. In line 87 it is strange that Dionysos does not answer Heracles' question after Xanthias' aside. It is tempting to think that Dionysos shows what he thinks about Pythangelos non-verbally. In line 109 we are informed that Dionysos is disguised as the person he is talking to, so anyone who has missed that he is Heracles, will understand it now.

120:φέρε δή: There can be found examples of emphatic or impatient imperative + δή before change of speaker in drama. It could be possible that Dionysos is ending his question with this, impatiently urging Heracles to answer. This would fit well with Heracles dragging out his answer afterwards. If this were a possible use of φέρε δή, then I would have preferred giving it to Dionysos here. But I have found no other examples of φέρε δή before change of speaker or ending a sentence. It is always placed at the beginning, normally before a question or a command. I think this is reason enough to exclude an ambiguity here and assign the words to Heracles without reservation.

121–157: I find no ambiguity of speakers in these lines.

158–61: Here Dionysos could follow up on his own question, and suggest the correct answer:

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134 ἄνωθεν δή: Aischylos, Prometheus Bound 630; φρόντιζε δή: Euripides, Medea 1311; εἰπὲ δή: Aristophanes, Clouds 652, 683, 778; ἐπιθέτον δή: Frogs 190; κατακέλευε δή: Frogs 207; ἀποδούσθη δή: Frogs 641; μένε δή: Menander, Samia 582.
the initiates. Then Heracles answers affirmatively before Xanthias breaks in with his complaint. This would be the better solution. There is a problem with the relative sentence in 161, though, which requires Heracles to have been broken off in 158. In one manuscript, however (K' in Dover)\textsuperscript{135}, the line starts οὐτοί instead of οἱ σοὶ, and with that reading, this distribution would work. I will not use this alternative reading of the text, but let Heracles answer the question, and give the affirmative oath to Xanthias.

162–163: These two lines are clear.

164–65: Who says farewell first? It does not matter much for the situation, of course, except the rhythmical difference. In line 58 Dionysos addresses Heracles with “ὦ δελφέ” – “brother”, while Heracles uses “ὦ δελφίδὶον” – “little brother” when addressing Dionysos in line 60. This does not decide the matter, but I have chosen to let Dionysos speak first, since the command to Xanthias seems somewhat abrupt coming directly after saying good bye to Heracles.

166–169: I find no ambiguity of speakers in these lines.

170–178: There is no doubt about which words the corpse is saying here, but it is very uncertain which parts are spoken by Dionysos and which parts Xanthias says. Either of them could say all of the texts which does not belong to the corpse, or it could be divided between them. The decision depends on how one pictures the negotiation. It seems more natural that Dionysos discovers the corps in line 170. He is the one who is supposed to find one, and “καὶ γὰρ” in his mouth gets a nonchalant sense similar to “And what do you know!”, which might contain a meta-theatrical comment about how things one wish for just seems to appear in the theatre, and also seems more humorous than the happy or surprised sense it gets if Xanthias says it. The next line, however, fits Xanthias better, since it is quite rude: “Hey you! Yes, I mean you, the dead one!” It might also have been customary to send a slave in order to get the attention of people on the street, like Polemarchos does in order to get Socrates' attention in the beginning of The Republic.\textsuperscript{136} Line 172, with its polite request, fits Dionysos better. It is more difficult to decide who should do the actual bargaining. Despite the fact that slaves could be sent to exact economical transactions on behalf of their masters,\textsuperscript{137} it seems somewhat forced to have Xanthias do that here. I therefore let Dionysos do the bargaining, but I give “ταυτί” – “this here” in line 173 to Xanthias, since I picture him still being in charge of the luggage. The comments said after the corpse has left in line 178 are also difficult to

\textsuperscript{135} Dover, Aristophanes: Frogs, 126.
\textsuperscript{136} Plato. Republic, book 1, 327b.
\textsuperscript{137} Steven Johnstone, A History of Trust in Ancient Greece (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 16.
distribute. Any combination is possible. I choose to give Xanthias the first part, “ὡς σεμνός ὁ κατάρατος” – “How pompous he was, the accursed one”, as he sees his master is about to go into a frenzy. Then “οὐκ οἰμώξεται;” – “I wish he'll rot!” comes as an angry outburst from Dionysos, which scares Xanthias into agreeing to come along and carry the luggage in the next line.

179: This is clear.

180: Who says this line depends on whether Xanthias or Dionysos should take the leading part. It could fit Xanthias to be the man of action here, but it gives a better dynamic in the play between the two if Dionysos takes that role in this situation. When Xanthias agrees to come, Dionysos has a sudden turn from anger to an exaggerated positive mood, since he got what he wanted. He starts walking while Xanthias is still busy lifting up the luggage.

181–183: In this exchange where Dionysos and Xanthias discover the lake, the boat and Charon. The boat with Charon is already on stage when the exchange starts. The distribution depends on who asks the first question: “What is that?” The one who answers will be the one who seems knowledgeable. I give the question to Dionysos since Xanthias will be the one explaining things also when they arrive at the other side. It is also more natural that Dionysos who goes in front discovers the lake first. This creates a more dynamic and comic situation if Dionysos who has just started to walk in high spirits stops abruptly, turning back to Xanthias who has just lifted up the luggage.

184: Charon is greeted three times. This could all be said in unison by Xanthias and Dionysos, or any other combination. I choose to give the first to Dionysos, the second to Xanthias and the third to both, for no other reason than the cumulative effect. I give Dionysos the first greeting, since Xanthias has just spoken.

185–187: These lines are clear.

188–189: The questions could be asked by either Xanthias or Dionysos. The stupidity of the question seems to fit Dionysos better. Charon would also contradict himself here if this answer were to Xanthias, since he will not come with the boat. This inconsistency, however, would not have been decisive if there had been some other reason for Xanthias to ask the question. The question is not there for consistency's sake, but for a short joke on the pun.

190–192: These lines are clear.

193–195: The suggestion that Xanthias can run around the lake could be asked either by
Charon or Dionysos. It is an absurd suggestion, and therefore it would fit Dionysos. But since it would imply a sudden knowledge about the geography of the underworld which Dionysos has not displayed before and will not display later in the performance, I let Charon ask the question, and also tell Xanthias where to wait. The question “Do you understand?” I give to Dionysos.

196–207: There are no problems of distribution of text to speakers in these lines.

In this passage of little over two hundred lines of dramatic texts there are evidently many types of problems concerning distribution of text to speakers. There are difficulties depending on language uncertainty (28, 120), cultural knowledge (33–34, 171), expectation of coherence (37, 188-189, 193–195), understanding the dramatic situation (41, 173), properties of the characters (51, 171, 172), knowledge of social conventions (56–57), whether or not the text is correctly established (158–161), expectation that the text should have a function (66–67), humour (170) and other dramaturgical considerations (164–65, 178, 180, 181–183, 184). None of these problems have challenged the possibility of establishing a meaningful account of the stage action. Only one place opens itself to a suggestion of stage action not inferable from the text. This is in line 87 where Dionysos does not answer Heracles' question and one solution is to assume that Dionysos makes a gesture of disgust in place of a verbal response. There does not seem to be any way to distribute the text differently to avoid the problem. One way to solve it, although it is somewhat speculative, is to claim that Dionysos' previous responses to Heracles' suggestions of proper tragedians, with increasing disapproval, in fact constitutes an indication in the text for a gesture, where he fails to give his last disapproval.

If the goal is to find one correct distribution of text to speakers, this does not seem to be possible. For many of the passages it might be argued that one of the possible distributions is more likely to be correct than the others, and although one can not be absolutely sure that it is the one used when the comedy was first performed, the possibility to identify the most likely distribution could be satisfactory. For some of the problems related to cultural knowledge, difficulty finding coherence, establishing traits of characters and social conventions and difficult language use, sometimes one option seems more likely than the others. Line 37 is one very clear example. Giving Charon the suggestion of running around the lake in line 193 seems almost necessary, but not as clearly as that of Dionysos knocking on Heracles' door in line 37. For other types of problems, however, where I have used dramaturgical considerations or arguments about which option seems more humorous to establish the distribution of text to speakers, there often does not seem to be any good reason to consider
the choices more likely than the alternatives. Line 178 will work well however it is distributed, and so will line 170. There are also some passages where, although they give meaning, there does not seem to be any reason for choosing one distribution over another. One example of this is line 84. It is difficult to see how the distribution of this line can affect the stage action in a significant way. If the ambiguity of speakers does not pose a threat to the possibility of establishing a significant stage action, it does not challenge the position that one correct account of the stage action can be determined from the text. The question of significance is complex, and here I will only make a few remarks based on the experiment. It is easy to agree that no significant change to the stage action occurs whoever says line 84. Reluctantly I would agree to this for lines 178 and 184 too. But it is not equally easy to say the same about lines 181–183. Many alternatives of distribution exists, but I would say that it is significant if it is Xanthias who is hurrying ahead with the luggage and discovers the lake, or if it is Dionysos who walks ahead while Xanthias lifts the luggage. And how should we consider the passages where different distributions of text result in different humorous effects, like in line 170? Is not humour a significant part of comedy? What this experiment has demonstrated, therefore, is that holding the position that it is possible to infer an unambiguous and correct account of the significant stage action from the dramatic text results in considerable strain on what should be considered significant. If the question concerns the possibility of establishing one or more meaningful accounts of the stage action from the dramatic text, the reading of this text has not exhibited any serious challenges to this possibility.

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to elucidate some of the issues concerning interpretation of ancient dramatic texts, specifically the comedies of Aristophanes. The object of inquiry has been whether or not the stage action should be expected to be readable from the text when interpreting the dramatic texts, and the hermeneutical consequences of different positions towards this question. Since this is a wide and complex object of study, I have narrowed the scope of the research to specific problems of distributing text to speakers. I have pursued two approaches in order to unravel some of the issues and problems concerning this topic. The main approach has been to select and discuss comments by editors of critical editions of Aristophanes' comedies and other scholars related to various problems of distributing text to speakers. From these comments I have sought to extract possible views and perspectives
related to the determination of stage action from the dramatic texts. As a complement to the
discussion concerning the scholarly comments, I have conducted an experiment where I have
approached the prologue of *Frogs*, adopting a position where I expect that the significant
stage action can be understood from the text. I have distributed the text to speakers for this
passage based on the content of the text itself without using earlier scholarly suggestions as a
starting point. The purpose of this experiment has been to bring to light the some of the
problems encountered when distributing the text to speakers from a different angle than most
of the discussions in comments to the critical editions take. The comments normally concern
passages where the distributions found in the manuscripts are problematic. Finally, I have
identified and discussed challenges and support for positions towards the ancient dramatic
texts which have turned up through this approach. In the following I will extract some general
assertions from the discussions of different editors' positions towards the texts. These
assertions are meant to reflect what can be extracted from the discussions, and are not
representing any views held by specific scholars.

In section 3.1 I have discussed how the manuscripts' indications of speakers are used as
starting points for the distribution of text to speakers in all of the recent editions of
Aristophanes' comedies I have investigated. Although some editors are more open to diverge
from the manuscripts, in most cases they offer argument for the changes, even when they
claim that the manuscript indications have no authority in the matter. I see this as an
indication that the editors, in addition to the goal of establishing texts which are as similar to
the authors' texts as possible, they are concerned with reflecting the scholarly work which
through the manuscript tradition is responsible for the existence of the texts. Despite using the
manuscript indications as starting points for distribution of text to speakers, all the editors I
have checked give the dramatic text as it is established a higher status than the manuscripts'
indications of speakers when this is needed for the dramatic situation to make sense. This
implies that the editors generally expect the texts to convey the dramatic situations in an
intelligible way, and therefore also the stage action significant to the drama.

From the discussion in Section 3.2 about the corruption the manuscripts have suffered through
the textual transmission, I have observed that despite the editors' general trust in the
transferred texts, they are willing to emend them if they are unable to find satisfactory
meaning in them as they have been received. This gives additional force to the editors' trust
that the dramatic texts should be complete pieces of art, and therefore not be in need of
external interpolation in order to make sense. This trust, however, could be undermined by the
very act which here has displayed it, the emendation in order to make sense of the text. If there is a chance that many passages have been emended in order to give a good meaning through the textual transmission, we can not use the fact that the texts mostly do make sense as an argument for claiming that the texts were meant to be understood in this way. Aristophanes could have written the texts with no regard for readers, resulting in many passages where the stage action would not be comprehensible for readers. These passages could then have been emended to make sense through time, until they are in the state in which we find them now.

In section 3.3 some passages where there is disagreement or uncertainty related to the Greek language are discussed. If our understanding of the language is not trustworthy, this could be an obstacle for making claims about how texts are supposed to be read. If certain markers are used to indicate change of speaker, it could be interesting to investigate if this feature is used in a systematic way which would be redundant for the audience. If that were the case, it would be a strong indication that the dramatists had readers in mind when writing.

Section 3.4 displays examples where the stage action does not seem to be inferrable from the text alone. Here the editors are shown to use a considerable amount of effort in order to solve the problem without introducing stage action not inferred from the text. When no such solution seems possible, the editors attempt to explain why the stage action introduced would be self-evident for the contemporary readers. The fact that this effort is made although the introduced action would be obvious for the theatre audience, indicates that the editors expect the dramatic action to be inferrable from the text alone.

The expectation that the dramatic texts should be coherent is discussed in section 3.5. In most cases the editors endeavour to explain the distribution of speakers and the stage action in a way that avoids inconsistency. Some editors, however, accept some inconsistency because they expect some of the action to be introduced for the comic effect, and not in order to contribute to the plot. This could be a problematic approach since we would not know if we have met a real inconsistency or if it is the joke that we are not able to understand.

Even if we expect the dramatic text to convey the significant stage action so that it is not necessary to invent any stage action not mentioned in order to make sense of the dramatic situation, there is much information needed which is not given by the texts. This is the information which the spectators or readers would have been expected by the author to possess. Some of this information would be about conventions of the Athenian society and of
the dramatic performances. In section 3.6 I have looked at some of the conventions assumed by editors and other scholars, and found that the distance in time between us and the writing of the texts does not only give rise to uncertainty based on our lack of information. In the time between the authors of the texts and us, many assumptions have been made in order to establish the information needed to understand the texts. Some of these assumptions are likely true, but some are probably not. The problem is that when some of these assumptions have become ancient they could attain the status of being true, even though they have been made without direct knowledge of the context in which the texts were written.

It is clear that there are passages in Aristophanes' comedies where there are several meaningful ways of distributing the text to speakers. In many cases it is possible to argue that one of the options is better than the others, often with reference to the superior dramatic effect. Of course, proposing to know what would be considered dramatically effective by the ancient dramatists is somewhat daring, but the argumentation is frequently convincing. In section 3.7 I have discussed some comments that argue based on how the distribution of text contributes to the development of characters, the dramatic situation or the humour. Although the editors always make a choice, it is clear that in some cases the choice can not be said to be more likely to be the one which was in the original text or performance than some of the other options. Unless the different options of stage action in these cases are not significant for the drama, this finding seems difficult to align with the position that the significant stage action should be unambiguously deducible from the text. Moreover, what is significant stage action seems to be severely limited if the choice between the spectacular or the humorous option should not be considered significant for comedy.

In section 3.8 I have included an instance where an editor uses his conviction that the dramatist did not have the reader in mind when writing as an argument when distributing the text to speakers. For this example I find that the consequence of this line of argument would be that the dramatic texts should not be considered intelligible for someone not acquainted with the actual performance. This does not necessarily help us determine whether the dramatists had readers in mind or not when writing. This is also not a main point of interest. The point is that even scholars holding that the dramatists did not have readers in mind expect the stage action to be inferrable from the texts.

This expectation is also confirmed in the experiment in chapter 4. There are no serious difficulties of determining the stage action in a meaningful way. If the object is to determine an unambiguous account of the stage action, however, the observations made both in the
scholarly discussions in chapter 3 and in the experiment indicates that this is an endeavour unlikely to succeed.

The main points which can be extracted from these observations are as follows:

1. A complicating factor when discussing what type of texts the ancient dramatic texts are, is the uncertainty whether we are talking about the author's text, the text performed or some other construct based on scholarly work on the text and the manuscript tradition.

2. Despite the uncertainty of the textual transmission, the lack of relevant knowledge about the ancient conventions and some of the nuances of the Greek language which could have been significant for the interpretation of stage actions in the ancient dramas, the scholars show a strong expectation that the dramatic texts should convey the stage action needed to make sense of the drama and vigorously avoid introducing any stage action not mentioned in the texts.

3. There are many passages where several accounts of the stage action are meaningful for the drama, and it is not possible to choose one which is superior to the other options. In some cases the different options also seem to constitute significantly different meaning for the dramatic situation. This could imply that the dramatic texts can not be a source for determining an unambiguous account of the stage action.

Studying the question of dramatic texts and stage action by discussing scholarly comments concerning the distribution of text to speakers in Aristophanes' comedies could seem somewhat artificial and limiting. I think this way of limiting the question, however, has contributed some valuable insights into possible ways of approaching the problem. Still, this is a preliminary study, and more far-reaching research is needed in order to make any more definite conclusions concerning what type of texts the ancient dramatic texts should be considered to be.
6 Literature


———. ‘The Number of Speaking Actors in Old Comedy.’ *Classical Quarterly* 44, no. 02


Zielinski, T. ‘Marginalien.’ Philologus 64 (1905).
Appendix A

| Speakers |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Λυ / Ly: Lysistrate  | Κα / Ca: Calonice | dic: Diclon |
| Μυ / My: Myrrhine  | Λα / La: Lampito | X: No change of speaker |

Lysistrate 186b-194

Number indicates manuscript or edition. Following the number is the speaker indicated. The text follows verses, so the speeches start mid-line where the previous speaker stops.

1: dic 2: Μυ 3: Κα 4: Μυ 5: Κα 6: Κα

Λυσιστράτη, τίν’ ὁρκον ὁρκώσαις ποθ’ ἡμᾶς;


dιντα;

εἰς ἀσπιδ’, ἀσπερ, φασίν, Αἴσχυλος ποτέ, μηλοφαγούσας.

1: dic 2: Μυ 3: Κα 4: Μυ 5: Κα 6: Κα

μὴ σὸ γ’, ὥ Λυσιστράτη, εἰς ἀσπιδ’ ὀμόσης μηδὲν εἰρήνης πέρι.


tίς ἄν οὖν γένοιτ’ ἄν ὁρκός;

1: dic 2: Μυ 3: Κα 4: Μυ 5: Χ 6: Κα

εἰ λευκών ποθὸν ἰππὸν λαβοῦσα τόμοι ἐνεπεμβέθα –

1: Λυ 2: Λυ 3: Μυ 4: Κα 5: Κα 6: Λυ

ποὶ λευκῶν ἰππὸν;

1: Χ 2: Μυ 3: Λυ 4: Μυ 5: Λυ 6: Κα

ἀλλὰ πῶς ὀμούμεθα

1: Λυ 2: Λυ 3: Μυ 4: Λυ 5: Χ 6: Λυ

ήμεῖς;

1: Λυ 2: Λυ 3: Μυ 4: Λυ 5: Χ 6: Λυ

ἐγὼ σοι νὴ Δί’, ἢν βούλῃ, φράσω.

1: Ly 2: Ly 3: Ly 4: Ly 5: Ly 6: Ly

Which oath will you make us swear?

1: Ly 2: Ly 3: Ly 4: Ly 5: Ly 6: Ly

Which one?

1: Ly 2: Ly 3: Ly 4: Ly 5: Ly 6: Ly

Over a shield, like they say Aeschylus once sacrificed an animal.

1: Ly 2: Ly 3: Ly 4: Ly 5: Ly 6: Ly

No, Lysistrate, don't swear concerning peace over a shield!

1: Ly 2: Ly 3: Ly 4: Ly 5: Ly 6: Ly

So, what should the oath be?

1: Ly 2: Ly 3: Ly 4: Ly 5: Ly 6: Ly

What if we take a white horse from somwhere and cut its parts –

1: Ly 2: Ly 3: My 4: My 5: My 6: Ly

A white horse? What's the point?

1: My 2: My 3: My 4: My 5: My 6: My

But how will we swear?

1: Ly 2: Ly 3: My 4: Ly 5: X 6: Ly

I will tell you, by Zeus, if you like.

Manuscript / Edition


2: MS. Leidenis Vossianus Gr. F. 52 (c. 1325) 5: Coulon (1928)

8 Appendix B

Frogs 1-207:

1 Διὸ διαμόλυνε πρόσπελθε: δόξας γιάρ τί σου.
2 Ἡρᾶλλα' ὤν οἶδ' τ' εἴη' ἀποσφήνια τὸν γέλιον
3 ὥραν λεοντὴν ἐπὶ κρόκωτοι κεμένην.
4 τῆς ὁ νοῦς: τῇ κάθορνοικας καὶ βάπαλον ξυνηθέτην;
5 τοῖς ἀπεδίδημα: Δι: εἰπέταινεν Κλεισθένει;
6 Χρηκάννωμεροις: Δικαίω κατεσκέιμεν γε ναις
7 τῶν πολεμῶν ἡ δεδέκ' ἤ τρείς καὶ δέκα.
8 Χριστόφορου τὸν Ἀπάλλον Ἐκκ' ἔρχετ' ἐξαπράψιμην.
9 Δικαίω δῆτ': εἰπὲ τῆς νεᾶς ἀναγγείονευτικι μου
10 τὴν Ανθρωπείαν πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν ἐξαιρέσας πόθος
11 τὴν καρδίαν ἐπάπτας πῶς οἷς ὀφόρας.
12 Προθύσος: πόσος τ' Διμήκος θάλαξι Μόλιον.
13 Χρηκαννοικοι: Δικαίω δῆτ': Περικλῆς-Διοιδαμίως,
14 ἀλλ' ἀνυδρος: Χριστόφορου τὸν Κλεισθένει;
15 Δικαίω δῆτ': ἐπὶ τῆς νεᾶς ἀναγγείονευτικι μου
16 τὴν Ανθρωπείαν πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν ἐξαιρέσας πόθος
17 τὴν καρδίαν ἐπάπτας πῶς οἷς ὀφόρας.
18 Δραπάτως: καὶ τοῦ ἐμαυτὸν ἐξαιρέσας πόθος
19 τὴν καρδίαν ἐπάπτας πῶς οἷς ὀφόρας.
20 Δραπάτως: καὶ τοῦ ἐμαυτὸν ἐξαιρέσας πόθος
21 τὴν καρδίαν ἐπάπτας πῶς οἷς ὀφόρας.
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στί; Ξα: το το; λίμνη νη 
Δία ἔ ῦ α τη 'στὶ 
πλο όν γ' ρ . ἢ ἔ ῖ ὁ ῶ 
Δί' ο  γα 
γώ.Χά:ταχέως μβαὶνε.Δὶ:πα  δε ρο.Χά:δο λον ο κ γω,
πα  δε ρο.Χά:δο λον ο κ γω,
ς το 
μανθάνεις; 
μανθάνω.
ομοι κακοδαίμων, τῷ ξυνέτυχον ἐξιόν;
Χά:κάθιζ' ἐπί κόσπην. εἶ τις ἐπὶ πλεί, σπευδέτω. 
ούτος τι πουεἰς;Δι:δ τι ποιώ; τί δ' ἄλλο γ' ἢ 
ἐμπο  σχήσειν δοκε ς; 
κόρακας ντως; 
Χά:ναὶ 
πραγμάτων; 
Ἱ ἀ ἐ ῶ τίς ς το 
Λήθης πεδίον, σ' νου πόκας,
ἐ ἔ 
Χά:ο κουν περὶθρέξει δτα τη 
λίμνην κύκλ ; ἔ ῆ ῳ 
Πα  δ τ' ναμεν ; ἔ ῆ ἀ 
Χά:παρα 
ο μοὶ κακοδαίμων, τ  ξυνέτυχον ξὶών; ἵ ῷ ἐ 
Χά:κάθιζ' πὶ 
κώπην. ε  τὶς τὶ πλε , σπευδέτω. ἐ ἴ 
Χά:ο κουν καθεδε  δ τ' νθαδὶ 
χε ρε κ κτενε ς; 
Χά:ο μη 
φλυαρήσεις χων λλ' ντὶβα 
λ ς προθύμως;Δἰ:κ τα π ς δυνήσομαὶ 
πεὶρος θαλάττωτος σαλαμίνὶος 
νετ' λαύνειν;Χά: στ'· κούσεὶ γα 
κατακέλευε δή.
Χά:βατράχων κύκνων θαυμαστά.Δἰ:κατακέλευε δή.