

Teaching upper-division seminars on Greek literature in a small liberal arts college inevitably diminishes the distance between professor and students and enables higher-level discussions than are possible in the traditional lecture-theatre. Yet this intimacy brings with it a degree of complexity in discussing and translating the parts of Aristophanes in which an apparent degree of animus against same-sex relationships among men is evident, such as the extended joke on the εὐρύπρωκτοι at Aristophanes (*Clouds*, 1084ff.). All five of my young men are, as far as I am aware, heterosexual – indeed, one is married, another engaged – and they are encouragingly keen to create their own accurate but idiomatic translations, as I have consistently encouraged them to do throughout the semester. But at this point, the suggested translations fly – words whose use, as they know, would horrify me if they used them in any other context than this.

Two central questions arise at this point: first, what is the connection between these derogatory terms of 21<sup>st</sup> century US English and these apparently derogatory terms of 5<sup>th</sup> century Attic Greek? Are they condemning the same thing? If so, how can I let my young men collude in this sort of unpleasant language? And how can I let them not collude in it if we are to be true to Aristophanes' meanings? If they are not, then are we not really able to translate in any authentic sense at all? Second, and more fundamentally, the questions speak to the very nature of what we are doing as Classicists. For our students, a major attraction of our discipline is, at least initially, that they are fascinated by how the ancient world appear to resemble their own, *mutatis mutandis*. They can use the words, situations and feelings expressed in the texts as models and examples and a kind of virtual reality. At any rate, at least at an undergraduate level, if we are not allowing them to do this to some extent, even including all the usual caveats, we run the risk of offering a rather dry, bloodless subject that is unlikely to appeal to the next generation. So if the use of derogatory terms is acceptable within the context of the classroom do we then deny a certain reality to the class and text? Does what they say within the class somehow matter less than it would in the “real” world? Does what Aristophanes says to some degree tap into and confirm vestiges of homophobia in them? But how do I know that they have any homophobia at all?

Perhaps the only way to handle this is the bloodless, detached way, after all. Close analysis of the term εὐρύπρωκτοι combined with an analysis of the implications of their possible translations, should produce a set of characteristics and implications that may cause students to reflect on the assumptions behind these derogatory terms and return to them with at least a deepened understanding of why they, or others, use them. Yet I remain slightly uneasy, all the same, that I have unwittingly colluded with them to reinscribe any prejudices they might have.