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ARISTOPHANES

FROGS
ASSEMBLYWOMEN
WEALTH

Edited and Translated by
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FROGS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Frogs was produced by Philonides[1] at the Lenaea of 405 and won the first prize; Phrynichus was second with *Muses* (whose title suggests an artistic, and perhaps literary, theme) and Plato third with *Cleophon* (a leading politician of the time attacked also in *Frogs*). According to the Hypothesis, citing Aristotle's pupil Dicaearchus, *Frogs* was (uniquely) restaged "because of its parabasis," and the ancient *Life* (T 1.35–39), probably also deriving from Dicaearchus, informs us that Aristophanes was "officially commended and crowned with a wreath of sacred olive, considered equal in honor to a gold crown, for the lines he had spoken in *Frogs* about the disenfranchised [686 ff.]." The decree that awarded the commendation and restaging must have been passed after the autumn of 405, when by the decree of Patrocleides the Athenians enacted the measure for which Aristophanes had appealed (Andocides 1.73–79), but before the overthrow of the democracy in the spring of 404, when an appeal for equal civic rights would have been ill received, so that the play will have

[1] He had produced Lenaean plays for Aristophanes in 422 (either *Wasps* or *The Preview*) and 414 (*Amphiaraus*); presumably the provision of a second producer, which was in effect at the City Dionysia two months later (405 n.), did not (or not yet) apply to the Lenaea.

been restaged at the Lenaea of 404. For the restaging Aristophanes probably made only a few minor changes: lines 1251–60, 1431a-b, and 1437–53 seem to contain alternative versions of the text, but passages that would have been inappropriate at the time of the restaging remain, and there are no references to the events of early 404.

In *Frogs* Dionysus, disguised as Heracles, travels to the underworld with his cheeky slave, Xanthias, in order to retrieve his favorite tragic poet, the recently deceased Euripides. The first part of the play (1–673) chronicles their *katabasis* (descent to the underworld): a meeting with the real Heracles to obtain directions; Dionysus' voyage across the lake that leads to the underworld, ineptly rowing Charon's skiff and engaging in song with a chorus of frogs; comic terrors illustrating Dionysus' cowardice; the entry of the main chorus of Eleusinian Initiates, who live near the palace of Pluto, god of the underworld; several scenes of the sort that typically occur in the second part of a comedy, after the parabasis, in which Dionysus attempts to avoid the predicaments that await him upon arrival by exchanging his disguise with Xanthias; and finally Dionysus' admission into Pluto's palace.[2]

After the parabasis (674–737), there is a conversation between Xanthias and a slave of Pluto's that amounts to a second prologue introducing a new situation: Dionysus has been recruited by Pluto to judge a contest for the underworld Chair of Tragedy between Aeschylus, its longtime incumbent, and Euripides, who upon arrival has laid claim to preeminence in the art. Much of the ensuing con-

[2] The anti-heroic and burlesque portrayal of Dionysus in the first part of the play was long familiar in comedy and satyr drama.

test focuses on the rivals' poetic techniques, with detailed critiques of actual passages from their plays and parody of their characteristic styles. But Aeschylus and Euripides also emerge as representatives of the character, both poetic and civic, of their respective eras, and the decisive test turns on which poet is more able to effect "the salvation of Athens and the continuation of her choral festivals" (1418–19). On this criterion Dionysus chooses Aeschylus, and Pluto tells him that he may take Aeschylus with him back to Athens; Sophocles, also recently deceased, will hold the Chair of Tragedy in his absence. The Chorus of Eleusinian Initiates lead Dionysus and Aeschylus off in a torchlight procession recalling the inspirational finale of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.

Beyond being a landmark in the history of literary criticism, *Frogs* embraces two transcendent issues, the decline of Athens as a great power and the decline of tragedy as a great form of art, and connects them by portraying tragic poets as both exemplifying and shaping the moral and civic character of their times. His solution to both issues, the resurrection of Aeschylus from the dead, is both pessimistic and optimistic: if there were no longer any living poets who could inspire the Athenians to greatness, at least the works of Aeschylus lived on, and might inspire the Athenians to recapture the virtues that had made their city preeminent in his day.

The decline of Athens and its musical culture were hardly new themes in the comedies of Aristophanes and his contemporaries, and the remedy of resurrecting great men of the past had recently figured in at least two of them: in Eupolis' *Demes* (412) the hero Pyronides brings back four great leaders (Solon, Miltiades, Aristeides, and

Pericles), and in Aristophanes' *Gerytades* (*c.* 408) the poets of Athens send an embassy to the underworld, presumably to resurrect the goddess Poetry (cf. fr. 591.85–86); Pherecrates' *Crapataloi* (date unknown but probably before *Frogs*) may have been similar, since Aeschylus' ghost is a character, and someone is told what to expect in the underworld (frs. 86, 100). But these themes had taken on a special urgency at the time of *Frogs*, for a shortage both of reliable manpower and trustworthy leadership threatened Athenian prospects for surviving the war, and both Euripides and Sophocles had recently died.

The Athenians' military and political situation had not improved since the Sicilian disaster of 413 and now threatened to deteriorate. The naval victory at Arginusae the previous summer had given Athens control of the Aegean but came at a crippling cost: after all available manpower had been mobilized, including slaves enlisted as rowers on the promise of freedom and even citizenship,[3] twenty-five ships and some five thousand men were lost, and in the subsequent recriminations all eight commanders were rashly condemned to death by the Assembly; in their ensuing remorse the Athenians compounded this mistake by denying commands to those they held responsible for the condemnations, including two exceptionally qualified captains, Theramenes and Thrasybulus. Alcibiades, who had capably led the Athenian naval effort since 411, had gone into voluntary exile in 407, and the question of his recall figures prominently in the decision between Aeschylus

[3] This extraordinary action was no doubt a factor in the unusually prominent and complex characterization of Xanthias (cf. esp. 33, 693–99).

and Euripides (1422–32); and the men who had been disenfranchised for their association with the oligarchy of 411, and on whose behalf Aristophanes appeals in the parabasis, were still debarred from civic life. Meanwhile, the Peloponnesians had finally begun to receive significant financial support from Persia, while the Athenians' financial situation steadily worsened: they were unable to restore their fleet to its pre-Arginusae strength, and their traditional silver coinage, augmented by an emergency issue of gold coins made by melting down the plating on the Victory statues in the Parthenon, had to be spent abroad to pay military expenses, and to be replaced at home by an issue of silver-plated bronze coins.

But even in this perilous situation, the popular leader Cleophon managed to persuade the Athenians to reject the chance of a negotiated peace offered by Sparta after Arginusae ([Aristotle], *Constitution of Athens* 34.1). No wonder the Athenians responded so warmly to the parabasis of *Frogs*, where the Chorus aptly upbraids them for choosing as leaders and fighters not the best men but the worst, just as they have traded their gold and silver coinage for base metal (686–705, 717–37).

The situation on the tragic stage was comparable, for Euripides had died early in 406 in his late seventies, and Sophocles a few months later in his early nineties. Both were international celebrities, and had long been considered the preeminent living masters of the art, with Aeschylus (who had died in the mid-450's) as the third member of the great tragic triad. But whereas the Athenians could redeem their political and military situation if they turned to the best people, who were still living among them and eager to serve (cf. 699), no such choice was available in the

case of tragic poets, for Dionysus can think of no worthy successors among those who remained (71–97), so that the redemption of tragedy could only be found beyond the grave. There seems to have been some justice in this appraisal of the prospects for tragedy, for even if the poets left in Athens were not as inferior as Dionysus claims, the fact remains that when revivals became part of the program at the City Dionysia in the early fourth century, only revivals of plays by Euripides and Sophocles are attested; Aeschylus had already (and uniquely) enjoyed this status during the fifth century.

The play assumes that Sophocles is dead, but that he is mentioned in only three detachable passages (76–82, 786–94, and 1515–19) suggests that he died too late to be incorporated more fully into the plot. Presumably the play was conceived and largely completed when he was still alive, and Aristophanes added these passages to adjust for his death. He may well have had to remove some passages as well, for the original script would somehow have acknowledged the presence of the still-productive Sophocles among living poets. But this acknowledgment need not have been very involved: in view of Sophocles' advanced age alone, Dionysus could simply have said, "there are no worthy poets left except Sophocles, and he won't be with us much longer." It is unlikely that Sophocles would have figured in the poetic contest even had he died at the same time as Euripides. In contrast to Euripides, Sophocles had never been an attractive target in comedy for either personal caricature or poetic parody, whereas the contrast between Aeschylus and Euripides personally, poetically, and as representatives of their eras ideally suited Aristophanes' purposes.

The poetic contest in *Frogs* assumes that the spectators are familiar not only with dramatic literature (as distinct from performances of drama) but also with literary criticism, and that this familiarity was relatively recently acquired: as the Chorus says, "if you're afraid of any ignorance among the spectators, that they won't appreciate your subtleties of argument, don't worry about that, because things are no longer that way: they're veterans, and each one has a book and knows the fine points" (1108–14). Critiques of poets and their poetry, including metaphorical descriptions of their qualities and techniques, had long been a feature the Greek poetic tradition, and during the latter half of the fifth century became increasingly refined, as did the study of language and its communicative powers generally: the portrayal of poets and criticism of their works, both formal and through parody, was a staple subject of comedy; the language, style, and persuasive techniques of oratory and poetry were among the principal interests of sophistic thinkers and writers; and the increasing circulation and study of books had begun to create a more sophisticated awareness of poetry as literature, and of criticism as a formal approach to it. *Frogs* both reflects this development and contributed to it.

Text

Four papyri preserve parts of 165 lines of *Frogs*, and lines 454–59 are inscribed on a Hellenistic statue base from Rhodes (cf. G. Pugliesi-Carratelli, *Dioniso* 8 [1940] 119–23). Eighty-six medieval MSS (only *Wealth* and *Clouds* are better attested) contain the whole or the greater part of the play, about half of them entirely or

partly Triclinian, the rest exhibiting no consistent affiliations. Nearly all of the ancient variants not found in R or V are found in one or more of just eleven pre-Triclinian MSS (A E K M Md1 [1–959] Np1 P20^{ac} U Vb3 Vs1 Θ), which in this edition (following Dover's) are represented by A and K. The Aldine *editio princeps* (1498) derived its text from the Triclinian MS L (Oxon. Bodl. Holkhamensis 88, early XIV), with additional readings from E (Estensis gr. 127 = a.U.5.10, late XIV).

Sigla

I	Rhodian inscription, lines 454–59
Π1	*POxy.* 1372 (V), lines 44–50, 85–91, 840–61, 879–902
Π2	*PBerol.* 13231 (V/VI), lines 234–63, 272–300, 404–10, 607–11
Π3	*POxy.* 4517 (IV), lines 592–605, 630–47
Π4	*POxy.* 4518 (V), lines 1244–48, 1277–81
R	Ravennas 429 (*c.* 950)
V	Venetus Marcianus 474 (XI/XII)
S	Readings found in the Suda
A	Parisinus Regius 2712 (XIII/XIV)
K	Ambrosianus C222 inf. (XIII/XIV), lines 1–1197, 1251-end
a	consensus of R V A K
t	Triclinian readings

Annotated Editions

F. H. M. Blaydes (Halle 1889).
J. van Leeuwen (Leiden 1896).
B. B. Rogers (London 1902), with English translation.

T. G. Tucker (London 1906).
L. Radermacher, rev. W. Kraus (Vienna 1954²), commentary only.
W. B. Stanford (London 1963²).
D. del Corno (Milan 1985), with Italian translation.
K. J. Dover (Oxford 1993).
A. H. Sommerstein (Warminster 1996), with English translation.

ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΡΑΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ, *οἰκέτης Διονύσου*
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ
ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ
ΝΕΚΡΟΣ
ΧΑΡΩΝ
ΑΙΑΚΟΣ
ΘΕΡΑΠΑΙΝΑ *Φερρεφάττης*
ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ
ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ
ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ *Πλούτωνος*
ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ
ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ
ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ΧΟΡΟΣ *βατράχων*
ΧΟΡΟΣ *μυστῶν*

ΚΩΦΑ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΟΝΟΣ *Διονύσου*
ΑΝΔΡΕΣ *τὸν νεκρὸν φέροντες*
ΘΕΡΑΠΑΙΝΑΙ *τῶν πανδοκευτριῶν*
ΟΙΚΕΤΑΙ *Πλούτωνος*
ΔΙΤΥΛΑΣ *καὶ* ΣΚΕΒΥΛΑΣ *καὶ* ΠΑΡΔΟΚΑΣ *τοξόται*
ΜΟΥΣΑ *Εὐριπίδου*

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

XANTHIAS, slave of Dionysus
DIONYSUS
HERACLES
CORPSE
CHARON
AEACUS
MAID of Persephone
INNKEEPER
PLATHANE
SLAVE of Pluto
EURIPIDES
AESCHYLUS

CHORUS of Frogs
CHORUS of Initiates

SILENT CHARACTERS
DONKEY of Dionysus
PALL BEARERS
MAIDS of Innkeepers
SLAVES of Pluto
DITYLAS, SCEBYLAS, PARDOCAS, Archers
MUSE of Euripides

ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ·

εἴπω τι τῶν εἰωθότων, ὦ δέσποτα,
ἐφ' οἷς ἀεὶ γελῶσιν οἱ θεώμενοι;

ΔΙΟΝΤΣΟΣ

νὴ τὸν Δί' ὅ τι βούλει γε, πλὴν "πιέζομαι."
τοῦτο δὲ φύλαξαι· πάνυ γάρ ἐστ' ἤδη χολή.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

μηδ' ἕτερον ἀστεῖόν τι;

ΔΙΟΝΤΣΟΣ

πλήν γ' "ὡς θλίβομαι."

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τί δαί; τὸ πάνυ γέλοιον εἴπω;

ΔΙΟΝΤΣΟΣ

νὴ Δία
θαρρῶν γε· μόνον ἐκεῖν' ὅπως μὴ 'ρεῖς—

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τὸ τί;