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The Court of Comedy

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Tongues, *Frogs*, and the Last Stand

That's the basis of some humor: tragedy plus time.

—Lenny Bruce, ca. 1959¹

Aristophanes' plays being ever topical, the breakneck pace of change in Athens after 411 B.C.E. is crucial for understanding the drive behind, context for and reception of *Frogs*. From 411 to the first production of *Frogs*, in 405, the stability of the democracy and role of tragedy for democracy became increasingly critical topics, with the survival of each at stake in very real ways. Despite the surreptitious advice Aristophanes dramatized in his plays of 411, over the ensuing months, an oligarchic revolution unfolded. Although democracy was restored the next spring, the dramatic festivals of the winter of 410 were held under the auspices of the oligarchy. What impact this had on the program is far from clear. No known play, tragic or comic, can be assigned securely to the schedule for this season. One bit of evidence, however, does suggest that the proceedings retained a lingering taint of the oligarchy. The litigant (unnamed) of Lysias 21 some twenty-one years later is defending himself in a democratic court. He epitomizes the balancing act that more than a few families tried to pull off in the years when Athens

1. Recorded as part of his appearance on KPIX TV, San Francisco; available on *Let the Buyer Beware* (2004) CD 1, track 3. Carol Burnett is credited with later saying more exactly that comedy equals tragedy plus time, but the general truism seems to have been established already when Bruce makes passing use of the idea.

lurched from democracy to oligarchy and back again.² Like a typical wealthy litigant, he lists his liturgies and service to the democracy, but he has to be cautious about referring to his contributions under the oligarchy of 411/10 and the tyranny of the Thirty in 403. He begins his litany of liturgies (21.1), ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐδοκιμάσθην μὲν ἐπὶ Θεοπόμπου ἄρχοντος, καταστάς δὲ χορηγὸς τραγωδοῖς ἀνήλωσα τριάκοντα μνᾶς, “I passed my audit in the archonship of Theopompus and, assigned as *choregus* for tragedy, I spent thirty minas.” He dodges the oligarchic associations of the timing of his liturgy by saying only the amount he spent, although he must have been assigned the liturgy under the oligarchy, whether it was in the form of the Four Hundred or the Five Thousand at the time.³ He is more expansive when describing his efforts the next year under the restored democracy (21.1–2): ἐπὶ δὲ Γλαυκίππου ἄρχοντος εἰς πυρρῆχιστὰς Παναθηναίους τοῖς μεγάλοις ὀκτακοσίαις. ἔτι δ’ ἀνδράσι χορηγῶν εἰς Διονύσια ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἄρχοντος ἐνίκησα, καὶ ἀνήλωσα σὺν τῇ τοῦ τρίποδος ἀναθέσει πεντακισχιλίας δραχμάς, “And under the archonship of Glaucippus [411, I was victorious] in the Pyrrhic dancing at the Greater Panathenaea, spending eight hundred drachmas and then in the men’s chorus at the City Dionysia, under the same archon, and I spent, including the tripod, five thousand drachmas.” He emphasizes his two liturgies in this year, his victories in both (whereas he is silent on this point about his tragic liturgy in 410), and the amounts he spent make it clear he spent more during the democratic year than the previous year (5,000 plus 800 drachmas versus 3,000 in the competitions of 410).

He had good reason to associate himself with the City Dionysia of 409, for it was more than just another festival under the democracy. Peter Wilson makes the case that this City Dionysia, and the tragic competition in particular, was a crucial ritual signaling the newly restored democracy at Athens.⁴ Prior to the tragic competition that year, Thrasybulus, assassin of the oligarch Phrynichus, was prominently honored with a golden civic crown

2. See *Lys.* 25 for a pragmatic or cynical (depending on one’s perspective) presentation of this sort of maneuvering from a litigant, tainted by involvement with oligarchy, now undergoing a *dokimasia*.

3. He names Theopompus, appointed by the Five Thousand but later reckoned as legitimate by the democracy, as the archon associated with his audit, rather than Mnasilochus, who was eponymous archon under the Four Hundred (*Arist. Ath. Pol.* 33.1). He similarly dodges naming the archon Pythodorus for his service in 404/3 (21.2), and in this he conforms to the democratic practice of not naming the archon of that year (*Xen. Hell.* 3.1.1).

4. P. Wilson (2009). Rhodes (2011b) challenges many of Wilson’s conclusions but agrees broadly that the City Dionysia of 409 was distinctive for the restored democracy. Shear (2011, 141–54) surveys the importance of this Dionysia for the newly reempowered *Demos*.

by the Demos (*IG* 1³ 102). There could well have been a mass swearing of the oath of Demophantus, which called on citizens to kill those attempting to subvert the democracy.⁵ Two years earlier, in the same theater, Aristophanes had dramatized the Assembly urgently invoking curses on would-be tyrants, and it takes little imagination to see the actions of the Demos in the spring of 409 as an embodiment of the reminder embedded in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (see Chapter 5). Aristophanes' involvement in the festivals of 410 and 409, if any, is unknown now, but he must have been aware of how crucial tragedy was to the restored democracy. As Wilson further observes, the crowning of Thrasybulus is the earliest in an important tradition of the Demos recognizing civic benefactors, and the specific selection of the tragic performances at the City Dionysia as the occasion for this presentation emphasizes the importance of tragedy as symbolic of the democracy's civic identity and return to power. By the time of *Frogs*, then, tragedy was established as of central civic importance for the Demos in this critical, tumultuous time, so questions of tragedy's civic value were of immediate relevance. That Aristophanes himself would be awarded a civic crown for service connected with a play on this very topic should also be interpreted in this ideological environment.

At that crucial tragic competition in 409, Sophocles took first place with a tetralogy that included *Philoctetes*, which points to another potentially remarkable feature of the proceedings. If Sophocles was in fact one of the Probouloi who had made the vote that enabled the oligarchic constitution two years earlier, his presence and prominence on this occasion are striking.⁶ This, along with the litigant of Lysias 21 spending lavishly on a volunteer liturgy at the same festival, suggests there were options for at least some of those wishing to redeem themselves in the eyes of the democracy. In this context, *Philoctetes'* story of a diseased exile, broken oaths, betrayal and the struggles of a heroic war orphan may have resonated broadly, deeply and personally with the spectators.⁷ Scholars have also looked to *Oedipus at Colonus* a few years later for Sophocles' reflection on his troubled experience at this time.⁸ Sophocles' mournful presentation of wounded and morally compromised characters seeking redemption may well have contributed to his reputation for being affable, including the charitable references to him in *Frogs*.

5. For text of the oath, see Andoc. 1.97. Cf. Shear (2011, 136–41), who argues for the oath being sworn in the Agora.

6. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1419a26–30.

7. Shear (2011, 154–59).

8. Markantonatos (2007, 30–40). Compton-Engle (2013) argues that Aristophanes incorporates the staging of the old, blind Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* into *Wealth* in 388 B.C.E.

However *Philoctetes* fit into the precise ideological environment of 409, scholars have analyzed how Sophocles here explores issues associated with the construal of knowledge, democracy, the intellectual precepts fostered by the Sophists and the problematic role of speech and language in a community.⁹ In the play, Odysseus relies on his “tongue” (96–99, 407–9; cf. 440, of Thersites; see Chapter 2 and the Appendix for the term’s use in comedy), and his character embodies the means a manipulative speaker uses to lead a well-intentioned audience to destructive action. Such a character easily has parallels with individuals criticized by Aristophanes for swaying the Demos away from its intrinsic better judgment. For his last play before the democracy is again supplanted, this time by external forces, for oligarchy in the form of the Thirty Tyrants, Aristophanes again makes this issue central, as well as how tragedy itself approaches these same issues. But it is not Sophocles so much as another playwright who becomes the flashpoint for this controversy. If Sophocles went from being an instrument that supported the oligarchic insurgency to a prominent figure publicly wrestling with his conscience, simultaneously defending his decision and acknowledging the rueful consequences, Euripides seems to have gone down quite a different path, from a beloved supporter of the democracy to someone unworthy of the trust of the Demos.

Aristophanes had long bundled Euripides with issues of tragedy, speech and democracy.¹⁰ Twenty years earlier, Euripides is the resource for Dicaeopolis as he prepares for his speech to the Acharnians, but this support consists of dramaturgical tools, and the scene is silent about the tragedian’s ideological or political orientation. That Dicaeopolis can appropriate the style without the substance of Euripides is consistent with other passages where Aristophanes distinguishes the two. When Pheidippides sings a passage from Euripides, Strepsiades complains about its scandalous content, not its aesthetic quality (*Clouds* 1371–72). *Peace* sounds a further note of ambivalence. Trygaeus says that Peace herself is redolent of songs of Sophocles and “wordies of Euripides” (ἐπυλλίων Εὐριπίδου, 532), but Hermes reports that Peace objects to the association with Euripides (532–34)¹¹:

9. Rose (1976); Carlevalle (2000); Goldhill (2009).

10. The bibliography on Aristophanes’ treatment of Euripides is large. Schwinge (2002) probes the cultural tensions and contradictions embedded in Aristophanes’ criticism of Euripides. Hunzinger (2000), Voelke (2004) and Foley (2008, with helpful references) focus more on literary or genre appropriation. For tragedy incorporating comedy, see the survey in Seidensticker (1982) and then Schwinge (1997), and on Euripides in particular, Gregory (1999/2000).

11. For another contrast between the two playwrights, see fr. 682, where Euripides’ skill is στρεψιμάλλος, “wool-tangled,” and fr. 598, where beeswax sits on Sophocles’ lips. For the range of associations of the stem στρεψ-, see Marzullo (1953, 110–24).

κλαύσᾶρα σὺ
ταύτης καταψευδόμενος· οὐ γὰρ ἦδεται
αὕτη ποιητῆ ῥηματίων δικανικῶν.

Oh, you'll regret
lying about her that way: she doesn't enjoy
a poet of forensic speeches.

In a very compressed form, Aristophanes sets Euripides and litigation in opposition to peace but acknowledges the appeal of Euripides' style. The courts are the democratic institution for which Aristophanes shows the least support (cf. Chapter 3), and aligning Euripides with language there is consistent with the idea that the courts are inevitably sites of discontent and wrangling.¹² On the other hand, the words or style of Euripides is sufficiently consistent with peace that Trygaeus can make the association. Along these lines, an undatable fragment has Aristophanes, apparently in his own voice, characterize his relationship to Euripides this way (fr. 488):

χρῶμαι γὰρ αὐτοῦ τοῦ στόματος τῷ στρογγύλῳ,
τοὺς νοῦς δ' ἀγοραίους ἤττων ἢ κείνος ποιῶ.

I use the round smoothness of his mouth,
But I create cheap ideas less than he does.¹³

Another fragment might rely on a similar contrast. A passage on papyrus from Satyrus' biography of Euripides draws on a lost comic scene where someone wants to measure Euripides' tongue which generated speeches (ῥήματ') in some fashion (fr. 656). The implied scenario indicates recognition of the effectiveness of Euripides' speech but resistance to it as well.¹⁴

In 411, *Thesmophoriazusae* found Aristophanes engaging in a much more extensive reflection on Euripides, taking appraisal of his plays from his

12. On Aristophanes' *Wasps*, courts and democracy, with reference to Euripides' *Suppliants*, see Mirhady (2009).

13. Note the use of στόμα, "mouth," rather than γλῶττα, "tongue," on which see Chapter 2 and the Appendix.

14. Wilamowitz' supplement, <έξεσ>μήχετο, followed by K-A, would make the metaphor "polishing" speeches, which fits well. Friedrich Leo (1960, 2.370) suggests that the imperfect tense implies Euripides is dead by the time of this statement, but such a conclusion is unwarranted. A variety of scenarios could explain the tense. For example, a character could be reporting an incident where someone used a quote from Euripides, and now the speaker says he wanted to measure out and cut Euripides' tongue for supplying it.

poorly received tetralogy of 415, *Palamedes* in particular, to his subsequent more romantic fare.¹⁵ As in the brief reference in *Peace*, legal trouble and the effectiveness of Euripides' speech drive the plot of *Thesmophoriazusae*, and Aristophanes puts him at the nexus of democratic speech and tragedy, for his plays get him into legal trouble and prompt the women's Assembly to convene in the play. While the content of Euripides' plays, specifically their misogyny, spawns trouble, his style, as presented in the series of parodies, is entertaining. Aristophanes' other play of 411, *Lysistrata*, while mentioning Euripides only in passing, may have set up the triangle that is central to *Frogs*. Elizabeth W. Scharffenberger finds Euripides recasting the reconciliation scene from *Lysistrata* into his own scene of negotiation in *Phoenician Women*, between Polynices and Eteocles under the presiding Jocasta.¹⁶ In turn, T. Davina McClain finds Aristophanes in *Lysistrata* engaging repeatedly with Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*.¹⁷ If Aristophanes is invoking Aeschylus here, the specter of the venerable playwright would provide extra grist for Euripides' mill in his reaction in *Phoenician Women*.

Still, none of this, especially the silly but ultimately innocuous role in *Thesmophoriazusae*, accounts for Euripides as the villainous antagonist of *Frogs* who is entirely unworthy to make a grab for the throne of tragedy, who must be routed by Aeschylus (and is to be stomped by Sophocles should somehow Aeschylus not succeed, 792–94), and condemned to popularity among only the criminal deviants of the underworld. Given this sharp contrast between the portrayal of Euripides in *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411 and in *Frogs* of 405, it is reasonable to believe that Aristophanes was prompted to reappraise Euripides during the intervening years, and it is worth exploring what might have motivated Aristophanes to depict him as a villain. My particular answer to this problem will see it as a natural continuation of Aristophanes' abiding interest in rhetoric, public speech, and his support for the deliberative power and sovereignty of the Demos. My argument develops in three stages: (1) a reconstruction, within the limits of the evidence, of the plays Euripides produced since *Thesmophoriazusae* to which

15. The parody of *Telephus* (438 B.C.E.) might be the exceptional "golden oldie" in the set, but I wonder if *Auge*, which, on the basis of its metrical characteristics and content, belongs to Euripides' late period, dates to 414–412 and could have made the story of Telephus seem more recent, since the infant Telephus was a focus of the plot of *Auge*. *Auge* might even belong to the season of 411, and then Aristophanes might be parodying *Telephus* to match Euripides' then-current output, since he could not have parodied *Auge* itself. A fragment of *Auge* against tyranny (fr. 275, and see below) would be especially striking at this same time and parallel with Aristophanes' stance.

16. Scharffenberger (1995). On the date of *Phoenician Women* and political language in this scene, see discussion in the next section.

17. McClain (1998).

Aristophanes could have reacted; (2) an exploration of what, in terms of rhetoric and the democratic politics of 411–406, could have piqued Aristophanes' interest in what Euripides says about these matters in the plays since *Thesmophoriazusae*; (3) the conclusion that, while there can be no guaranteed simple answer for what prompted Aristophanes' harsh appraisal of Euripides in 405, evidence from *Frogs* and Euripides' late production is entirely consistent with Aristophanes now looking at Euripides as someone who had been appealing in his language but has betrayed the support of the Athenian democracy, just when tragedy was of paramount importance to the Demos. In this sense, in Aristophanes' estimation, Euripides is a figure comparable to Cleon or any other despicable demagogue.

EURIPIDES AND THE RHETORIC OF DEMOCRATIC ATHENS, 411–406

In *Thesmophoriazusae*, Aristophanes parodies two of Euripides' plays from the previous year (412 B.C.E.), *Helen* and *Andromeda*. With Euripides dead by the season of 405, there were, at the absolute maximum, six seasons (411, 410, 409, 408, 407, 406) during which new plays could have been performed, plays that Aristophanes could not have known when he composed *Thesmophoriazusae* but could have had access to when he composed *Frogs*. Only one play has a precise date within this interval, *Orestes* in 408. This at least confirms that Euripides put on a trilogy during this period. The other plays of 408 are a matter of speculation. A scholiast on *Frogs* 52 seems to list three plays "produced more recently" (τῶν πρὸ ὀλίγου διδαχθέντων), that is, later than *Andromeda* of 412, and so these should fall into the period 411–406: *Hypsipyle*, *Phoenician Women* and *Antiope*. Given that the scholiast had access to records with dates to be able to give the year of the *Andromeda* and was also able to cite three subsequent tragedies (not satyr plays), this note suggests that, adding in *Orestes*, Euripides had at least two tetralogies during this time frame, which is not unreasonable. Three tetralogies would have to represent an outside limit of Euripides' productivity during this time frame, since it would entail nine new tragedies and three new satyr plays, averaging a production every other year, which, while not impossible, is a formidable number. In any case, there seems to be no particular reason to doubt that *Phoenician Women* and *Hypsipyle* belong to this period, whatever the number and makeup of the tetralogies.¹⁸ *Frogs* suggests familiarity with

18. Cropp and Fick (1985, 74–76) show that metrical criteria point to *Antiope* dating to earlier than 418, and some plot elements like the lurid revenge are familiar from the 420s. The characteriza-

three of these late tragedies. Aristophanes mocks the poor actor Hegelochos (*Frogs* 304), who mispronounced a line of *Orestes* (279) at its performance, and part of Aeschylus' parody of Euripidean lyric invokes lines from the Phrygian's bizarre song (1347–49; cf. *Or.* 1431–33). Independently, Scharffenberger and Ann C. Suter further argue that Aristophanes drew extensively on *Orestes* in composing *Frogs*.¹⁹ E. K. Borthwick picks through the mashed-up references to Euripides' *Hypsipyle* embedded in *Frogs* 1320–28.²⁰ Dover notes that, although the play under debate is Euripides' *Oedipus* (*Frogs* 1184f.), there are similarities between Aeschylus' characterization of Oedipus and that in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (1595–1614, delivered by Oedipus of himself).²¹ Taken together, these references give some sense of which among the recent plays were available to Aristophanes.

Euripides' late plays have marked metrical features and repeated motifs, so several fragmentary plays are legitimate candidates for these final years as well. Of these, only *Antigone* and *Polyidus* can be securely identified as cited in *Frogs* (1182–87 – fr. 157–58, from *Antigone*, 1391 < fr. 170 from *Antigone*; 1476–78 allude to fr. 638 from *Polyidus*).²² In terms of topicality, Christiane Zimmerman suggests that issues of exile and lack of burial would resonate in the years following 411. Thucydides associates the recall of exiles with the Five Thousand, the best Athenian government in his view (8.97.3), and recall of exiles remained a lively enough issue for Aristophanes to address it in *Frogs*. Zimmerman further points to provisions regarding the treatment of the oligarchic conspirators Archeptolemus and Antiphon for the controversy about burial.²³ Although she raises the issue with regard to

tions of speech come closest to what Aristophanes does in *Clouds* (see discussion of fr. 189 and 206 in Chapter 3), and the instances of political rallying are similar to those of *Suppliant Women*. I suspect that the routine confusion of *Antiope* and *Antigone* is at work here. Cf. note 22 below.

19. Scharffenberger (1998) and Suter (1997–98).

20. Borthwick (1994, 29–37). Cf. the half-line quote from the *Hypsipyle* (fr. 763) at *Frogs* 64. A fragment of Aristophanes' *Lemnian Women* (fr. 373) mentions Thoas, father of Hypsipyle, and seems to allude to Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 30–33, and so could easily belong to this late period. For recent discussion of the date of *IT*, see Marshall (2009).

21. Dover (1993, 336). Compare also Dionysus' addled quotation of Euripides at *Frogs* 105 with *Phoen.* 602. If the fragments of Aristophanes' *Phoenician Women* (fr. 570–76) were more helpful, we might be able to chart his response to Euripides' play better. Similarly, while it is also easy to imagine, given the relative rarity of treatments of the title character, that Aristophanes' own *Polyidus* (fr. 468–76) parodied or at least referenced Euripides' play (fr. 634–45), the remains are even sparser and of little help.

22. I believe that *Antigone* is in fact the play named in Σ Fr. 52, noted above, following the frequent confusion of the two plays. The fragments of *Antiope* point to a play in the 420s (see note 18 above and Chapter 3), and the fragments of *Antigone* point to a late play.

23. Zimmerman (1993, 189–90). [Plut.] *Mor.* 833a (Lives of Ten Orators) says that they were executed and denied burial.

Polynices in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, certainly Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and *Antigone* would be stronger candidates as plays that address the issues, and closer in time. The fragments of Euripides' *Antigone* do not provide any evidence for what the play may have said about Polynices' exile or burial, but one passage does testify, unsurprisingly, that tyranny was a topic (fr. 172):²⁴

οὔτ' εἰκὸς ἄρχειν οὔτ' ἐχρῆν ἄνευ νόμου
 τύραννον εἶναι· μωρία δὲ καὶ θέλειν
 < . . . >
 ὃς τῶν ὁμοίων βούλεται κρατεῖν μόνος.

It's not appropriate to rule, nor without laws should
 there be a *tyrannos*. It's stupid even to want
 < . . . >
 who wishes to have power alone over his peers.

How this fragment fit into Euripides' play is unrecoverable, although it likely refers to Creon. For commentary within *Phoenician Women*, however, context is available for a story about this same family and from this time period, although interpretation is still fraught with difficulty. Nevertheless, I will argue that, despite many inevitable uncertainties, on the core tenets of the Athenian democracy as Aristophanes defends it against the looming oligarchy, Euripides' *Phoenician Women* is easily and reasonably read as supportive. At key points in the play, Euripides promotes sagacious deliberation as good and tyranny as bad. These stances should not be taken for granted, for Euripides' subsequent plays are not reticent about criticizing democratic deliberation.²⁵

Phoenician Women does not provide anything like a simple allegory of the Demos versus tyrants, but all the uses in the play cast the term *tyrannos* in a decidedly unfavorable light.²⁶ In the prologue, when Jocasta narrates the family's troubles, Laius is invoked among *tyrannoi* (40), when Laius' chariot runs over Oedipus' feet, leading to the patricide. The context certainly does not suggest that the appellation reflects well on the doomed ruler. Jocasta

24. I adopt Badham's emendation at the end of the first line, for εἶναι νόμον in the MSS.

25. For purposes of my thesis, of course, I posit this only from the ideological perspective projected in Aristophanes' plays, whether Euripides and his audiences, ancient and modern, intend or agree with this perspective.

26. On *Phoenician Women* against the backdrop of terms associated with tyranny in tragedy more broadly, see Seaford (2003, 110–11).

later uses the term of Oedipus taking power at Thebes (51).²⁷ Later the chorus of Phoenician women refers to the “tyrannical” line of Agenor as both their own ancestors and of the ruling house of Thebes (291–92).²⁸ The remaining (much more pointed) uses come in the debate between Polynices and Eteocles. As Scharffenberger has observed, Euripides here invokes the victorious reconciliation (διαλλαγή) scene from Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*. Although the meeting will turn out to be acrimonious and unsuccessful, the chorus calls on Jocasta to preside, as over an occasion of reconciliation between the two (καὶ μὴν Ἐτεοκλῆς ἐξ διαλλαγᾶς ὄδε / χωρεῖ . . . διαλλάξεις τέκνα, 443–45; invoked again by the chorus at 468).²⁹ The attempt at reconciliation plays out in terms of Eteocles’ tyrannical rule versus Polynices. When Polynices registers his complaint that Eteocles has not handed over power as they agreed, he says Eteocles is holding onto his tyranny (τυρρανίδ[α], 483). Polynices refers to his own turn at governing with the comparatively unmarked term ἀνάττειν (477; cf. *Suppliants* 406, where it refers positively to governance by the Demos). By contrast, Eteocles is blunt in defending his desire for tyranny, saying he will pursue it high and low and considering it a very great benefit (503–8). He concludes by saying that he will hold onto his tyranny and is quite willing to do so by unjust means (523–25). Whereas Polynices’ speech garners praise from the chorus (497–98), Eteocles’ rant earns their condemnation (526–27) and a reproach from Jocasta that he should not pursue tyranny at the risk of his city (560–61). Instead he should pursue equality (ἰσότης), since it fosters lawfulness (535–42; cf. *Suppliant Women* 430–37).³⁰ Such sentiments would surely play well with a resurgent democracy.³¹

27. Diggle, like many editors, deletes this line, but the case against it is not very strong. See Mastrorarde (1995, 157–59). Deleting the line does not alter my broader argument.

28. Diggle, like many editors, deletes these lines, and I am inclined to follow them. Nonetheless, Mastrorarde (1995, 231–32) makes a case for retaining the couplet, so I include the lines here. As with line 51, deleting the line does not alter my broader argument.

29. Scharffenberger (1995). Eteocles later refers to the negotiations as a failed reconciliation (515, 701). Line 375 would have Polynices also refer to reconciliation, but the line is certainly spurious.

30. On the Sophistic intellectual currents in Jocasta’s speech, see Egli (2003, 198–202).

31. For a survey of the history of how scholars have characterized Euripides’ relationship to the Athenian democracy throughout his career, see Michelini’s (1987, 28–30) overview of the topic prior to 1987; the work surveyed by Michelini is the relevant backdrop for Holzhausen (2003). The topic of Euripides’ and tragedy’s place in the sociopolitical environment of fifth-century Athens has produced lively debate. Gregory (2002) provides useful perspective on Goldhill (1990, revised from 1987), Griffin (1998) and Seaford (2000). Michael Mendelson (2002, 1–49) focuses on ways that gender permeates Euripides’ depiction of political issues and how it impinges on modern debates. Versnel (1995), Rhodes (2003) and David Carter (2004) each critique Goldhill along similar lines, that the institution of the City Dionysia was bound to the *polis* but not necessarily to a democratic *polis*.

Polynices also comes in for criticism, but in terms amenable to patriotic Athenian democrats. Jocasta questions the sanctity of Polynices attacking his native land (568–85), hoping to avert such “glory” among the Greeks (576–77). The problem of Polynices’ awkward alliance with another city is earlier muted by his laments. It was only the gods or luck that brought him to Argos (413), he says. He is miserable and poor in exile (388–407; contrast the cowardly and wealthy Eteocles in 597) and misses free speech most of all (παρρησία, 391).

Ultimately, the attempt at reconciliation fails (443–637), so disasters result. In a sense this is a tragic inverse of the dynamic that Aristophanes dramatizes. In comedy, successful deliberation or reconciliation leads to success and prosperity. In *Phoenician Women*, failed deliberation and reconciliation lead to death and destruction. While tyranny fades from the play as an explicit point of discussion, deliberation does not. Creon says victory consists entirely in good deliberation (καὶ μὴν τὸ νικᾶν ἐστὶ πᾶν εὐβουλία, 721), and pushes to get a skeptical Eteocles to consider all his options (722–23), but with limited success, and soon Creon again implores him to deliberate (βουλεύου δ’, ἐπεὶ περ εἶ σοφός, 735). The subsequent scene with Tiresias underscores that the tyrannical Eteocles, who would not deliberate, is not fit to rule. Tiresias has just assisted Athens to victory against the Thracians (852–57), but he does not consider Eteocles worth helping (865–66). Ultimately, he finds that the tyrannical line of Oedipus should not rule and does not even merit citizenship (τῶν Οἰδίπου/ μηδένα πολίτην μηδ’ ἄνακτ’ εἶναι χθονός, 886–87).³²

Such hostility to tyranny is not unique here in Euripides. A passage from the *Auge*, another late play, would also fit well in an environment of the democracy under pressure from the looming oligarchy or under the restored democracy (fr. 275):³³

κακῶς δ’ ὄλοιντο πάντες, οἳ μοναρχία
χαίρουσιν ὀλίγων τ’ ἐν πόλει τυραννίδι·
τούλευθερον γὰρ ὄνομα παντὸς ἄξιον,
κᾶν σμίκρ’ ἔχη τις, μεγάλ’ ἔχειν νομιζέτω.

Burian (2011) and David Carter favor the broad engagement of tragedy with political issues, although Carter (2007, 82–83) partitions Euripides’ late plays from discussion. All agree that Aristophanes in *Frogs* takes it for granted that Euripides’ tragedy was a cultural force. It is the specifics of Euripides’ impact that Aristophanes takes to task.

32. Diggle and many editors delete these lines, but the grounds are ultimately weak. See Mastrodarde (1995, 400–406).

33. See above, note 15, on *Auge* possibly belonging to 414–411.

Everyone should die cruelly who enjoys
 monarchy or a tyranny of the few over the city.
 The word “freedom” is worth everything.
 Even if someone has little, let them believe they have much.

Anthemical crowd-pleasing passages like these are in evidence for Euripides’ career at least as far back as the 420s (e.g., *Suppliants*),³⁴ so they are not distinctive enough criteria for dating or assessing Euripides’ reaction to the particular environment after 411. Nor is there any evidence that Aristophanes highlighted such material. While *Frogs* does have a decidedly explicit political component in assessing Euripides, nowhere does Aristophanes seize on such political cheerleading. He does seize on statements that came across as morally outrageous (on which, more in the next section), but not ones patently for or against democracy.

Conversely, Euripides was experienced in offending the sensibilities of Athenian audiences. The revision of *Hippolytus* in the early 420s is perhaps the earliest documented example, but the best-attested case is his tetralogy of 415. While best documented today for its one surviving play, the closing tragedy, *Trojan Women*,³⁵ it is *Palamedes* that receives the only direct comment of evaluation of any single play by Aristophanes, and it is negative, for in *Thesmophoriazousae* Inlaw refers to it as tedious and shameful (848).³⁶ When Dionysus sarcastically calls Euripides a Palamedes in *Frogs* (1451), he characterizes Euripides’ ideas as clever but useless. While the fragments of *Palamedes* are few, the reception of the play in antiquity suggests that Euripides construed Palamedes much as the character is found among intellectual and “Sophistic” writings. Gorgias’ defense speech of Palamedes, Alcidas’ complementary prosecution speech by Odysseus, and other references treat him as an intelligent benefactor who did not suffer fools, was framed by a ruthless Odysseus and convicted by the duped masses.³⁷ The ancient account (introduction to Isocrates’ *Busiris* 24–30) that the death of Palamedes recalled the execution of Socrates is historically impossible, but it does reflect the sense of ancient readers that the character of Palamedes in the play came across as a persecuted intellectual. The few surviving lines

34. Seaford (2003). Cf. Sophocles fr. 14 (sometimes attributed to Euripides), 201b, 873.

35. For a full treatment of *Trojan Women* in this context, see Croally (1994) and David Carter (2007, 130–39).

36. For comparison and context of this sort of insult toward tragedians, see Kaimio and Nykopp (1997, 26–31).

37. See Scodel (1980, 43–63, 90–93) on Euripides’ *Palamedes* within the tradition of Palamedes as intellectual and Sophist. Cf. Sutton (1987, 111–13, 133–42), who sees the play as supportive of Protagoras.

cannot indicate how justified the designation of “frigid” was for the play (although the heavy-handedness of *Trojan Women*, for all its other merits, perhaps gives some idea what a chore the experience of the entire trilogy might have been), but it is not self-evident what could be “shameful” except the most noted travesty: that his death resulted from the vote, the collective judgment, of the foolish masses. For Aristophanes certainly, vigorous debate was one thing, but dramatizing the unfit collective judgment of the Demos would be quite another.

It can seem facile to say that Euripides reacted to the poor reception of his tetralogy of 415 with a series of crowd-pleasing lighthearted dramas, but it is a characterization congruent with the plays, extant and fragmentary, as we know them and with Aristophanes’ reaction. If, after 415 and before 411, Euripides produced just one tetralogy, that of 412 including *Helen* and *Andromeda* (and more so if he produced two tetralogies during these years, both dominated by similar fare), it is easy to read *Thesmophoriazousae* as celebrating the rehabilitation of one of Athens’ favorite sons. After years of harsh dramas, Aristophanes and the rest of the Athenian audience will forgive his misogyny, he has put the ugliness of 415 behind him, and now everyone can enjoy his light touch, which Aristophanes had always acknowledged, without the ickiness. It may not speak well of Aristophanes as a literary critic, but there is no sense of irony in *Thesmophoriazousae* in this regard. But it does bring our search full circle back to the problem of why his portrayal of Euripides in *Frogs* is so different.

If for Aristophanes and some substantial contingent of the Athenian theater-going public, with its heavy overlap with the constituency of the Athenian Demos, Euripides was enjoying a vogue by 412 and still some celebrity in 411, with the restoration of the democracy and its coming-out party in 409, it would be surprising if there was not expectation and hope of Euripides turning up with another set of crowd-pleasing hits. And he may have done so. The presentation in *Phoenician Women* of the plain-spoken Polynices driven to arms to cast out the tyrannical Eteocles would be a welcome pat on the back to the democratic forces, even as it acknowledges the pain of fighting kin. The play as a whole, while modern scholars are right to explore its intricacy and sophistication, can be enjoyed as a creative wild ride. The extensive remains of *Hypsipyle* seem comparably innocuous.

But not all of Euripides’ late output is so appealing. *Orestes* has a quick line where Orestes praises Pylades’ loyalty over tyranny (1156),³⁸ but, while the tragedy can again play as a fun romp, the curmudgeonly Euripides is evi-

38. The Phrygian’s celebrated report refers to “tyrants’” homes (1456), which may or may not be especially marked, but at the very least there is nothing positive in the designation.

dent. Scholars have rightly been frustrated in making sense of the demented *deus ex machina* by Apollo, the de-heroicizing of most of the characters and the simple nastiness and brutality of the action. Fred Naiden puts the trial of Orestes in this play in the context of Assembly trials in Athens.³⁹ Such trials were extraordinary, but the decade prior to *Orestes* included high-profile Assembly trials following the mutilation of the herms and the coup of 411. Thus the brutal and dysfunctional proceedings in Orestes' trial spill over into critique of the Athenian Demos' handling of such trials. Such a depiction of public deliberation and the mass judgment of the Demos (only nominally of Argos) once again would cross Aristophanes' sensibilities. In the play, Tyndareus bluntly plans, before the "assembled mob of Argives" (εἰς ἔκκλητον Ἀργείων ὄχλον, 612), to provoke them to stone Orestes and Electra to death. Menelaus is himself morally compromised, but he offers a characterization of the Demos that is not refuted in the play (696–701):⁴⁰

ὅταν γὰρ ἡβᾶ δῆμος εἰς ὄργην πεσῶν,
 ὅμοιον ὥστε πῦρ κατασβέσαι λάβρον·
 εἰ δ' ἡσύχως τις αὐτὸν ἐντείνοντι μὲν
 χαλῶν ὑπέικοι καιρὸν εὐλαβούμενος,
 ἴσως ἂν ἐκπνεύσειεν: ἦν δ' ἀνῆ πνοάς,
 τύχοις ἂν αὐτοῦ ῥαδίως ὅσον θέλεις.

When the Demos feel their vim and vigor but fall into a rage,
 it is like a raging fire to quench.
 But if someone, when it stretches out,
 relaxes and yields, they can seize the moment,
 and he might be able to blow on it.
 Then, when you approach the blasts,
 you can easily get whatever you want.

Aristophanes had long acknowledged the volatile temper of the Demos, but he always dramatizes the judgment of the Demos as ultimately sound and a path to success and prosperity. Worse yet, Menelaus' characterization is

39. Naiden (2010). Silva (2010) offers more general thoughts on the tensions in the trial. Barker (2011) analyzes the play in terms of political free speech and dissent in democratic deliberation.

40. References to the δῆμος in Euripides are certain only here and in the political debate between Theseus and the Theban herald in *Suppliant Women* (351, 406, 425 and 442). The passage in which δῆμος appears in *Andromache* (700) is deleted by Diggle and most editors since Busche. The appearance of the word at *IA* 450 is uncertain (against the MS reading, Diggle and most editors follow a version quoted in Plutarch with ὄγκον instead). The two sententious fragments where it appears (fr. 92, 626) come from Stobaeus without context.

flattering compared to what happens when the Demos actually meets. The messenger reporting the proceedings portrays the assembly as a mob (884) initially divided about what was proper to do, but ultimately manipulated and subject to irrationality (866–956). Along the way, the messenger discourses, with no sense of hope or optimism, on what a leader of the Demos should be like.⁴¹ The messenger is explicit that, at the Assembly, the sensible speaker (εὖ δοκῶν λέγειν, 943) failed to persuade, and the evil speaker won (νικᾷ δ' ἐκεῖνος ὁ κακὸς ἐν πλήθει λέγων, 944).⁴² At no point in the play does Euripides follow up with a corrective or counterbalance to this characterization and account. Nothing in *Phoenician Women* matches this decidedly cynical depiction, and there is not enough in the remains of the fragmentary plays, but such cynicism is not without parallel in Euripides' late plays. *Iphigenia at Aulis* dramatizes a similarly grim view of collective decision making in action.⁴³ Although this play would not have been known or available to Aristophanes, it confirms that Euripides' thought was leaning in this direction, so it is quite possible other plays staged with *Orestes*, or in this interval, contained similar affronts to the Demos.

I have deferred the most problematic and controversial matter to the last: Euripides' connection to Macedon and his composition for its monarch, *Archelaus*. The notoriously unreliable biographical tradition from antiquity says Euripides left Athens, discouraged after the tetralogy of 408, and spent his last years in the court of Archelaus, producing a play that boosted the king's genealogical credentials. Although modern scholars have mostly accepted the core of the narrative, S. Scullion has developed the argument that the story is bald fiction.⁴⁴ Moreover, he argues that *Archelaus* was performed in Athens and recognizably quoted in *Frogs* (1206–8). Scullion considers it crucial for demolishing the story of Euripides leaving Athens and dying in Macedon that Aristophanes is silent about any such turn of events

41. From this passage, Hartung deleted lines 904–13 entirely, and in this he is followed by Diggle. Willink deprecates the whole passage but deletes only 907–13. The passage is old enough for 907–10 to end up quoted in Stobaeus, although this is of scarcely any value for determining authenticity. The decision to excise the lines is purely aesthetic, and while editors have legitimate reason to feel that the lines are a bloated addition, I am ambivalent and undecided about whether they are genuine Euripides. A discourse on the proper role and characteristics of a προστάτης (911) is not out of place here. This and the reference to the unrestrained tongue (903; cf. the reference to Tantalus in line 10) make it feel just close enough to fifth-century usage that I do not feel confident that the passage is a later interpolation.

42. Diggle adopts Wecklein's χερῶν here, but, with Willink, I retain the MSS λέγων.

43. See Michelakis (2006, 73–82) for a survey of the issues.

44. Scullion (2003). Cf. Scullion (2006), where he argues further that the play was produced in a trilogy with *Temenus* and *Temenidae*; and Lefkowitz (2012, 99–100).

in *Frogs*. If, however, as Scullion envisions, Euripides was commissioned by the Macedonian king to produce a laudatory trilogy, to be staged in Macedonia, and Euripides also had it staged in Athens, one could just as reasonably expect some jab in *Frogs* about such a move. Indeed, there are many questions about how and why Aristophanes presents Euripides just as he does in *Frogs*. The argument from silence is not as strong as Scullion insists, and his scenario, while possible, is not necessarily any better a fit for the evidence than the traditional one.

The remains of *Archelaus* itself do seem to confirm that Euripides made an effort to manipulate mythological genealogy to benefit the Macedonian monarch. Some sort of commission and performance in Macedonia seems logical even to Scullion. As for political content, extant fragments do include sententious comments mentioning the evils of poverty and tyranny on a level with the gods (fr. 248 and 250; cf. Sophocles fr. 88 on godlike tyranny and the corruption brought on by money), as well as the potential dangers of clever speaking (fr. 253).⁴⁵ Without context, however, it is impossible to determine if these sentiments belong to a sequence favorable to the Demos, as in *Phoenician Women* (where Eteocles also says tyranny is godlike, 506) or unfavorable, as in *Orestes* (where clever speaking brings victory to the evil man).⁴⁶ I posit, however, that whether Scullion is right or not about his scenario, Euripides by this time represented something hostile ideologically for Aristophanes. If Euripides left for Macedon and wrote a tragedy celebrating the aristocratic genealogy of a monarch, when for the last several years he had been a celebrated favorite son and, at least looked upon as, a cheerleader for the democracy, such a move would certainly ring of a stinging reversal and betrayal. If Scullion is right, Euripides staged a play, maybe a trilogy, before the Athenians themselves, with this positive portrayal of a monarch, and the play was familiar enough for Aristophanes to make its opening lines the first to be demolished by the “little bottle of oil” (*Frogs* 1206–8). The combination of the cynical portrayal of the Demos in *Orestes*, favoritism toward a Macedonian monarch and inference from *Iphigenia in Aulis* that Euripides’ bitterness toward democratic rule still held in his last days all suggest that in the years when the Athenian Demos ramped up its civic identification with tragedy, Euripides unpalatably turned on the Demos. Thus Euripides would have gone from hero to traitor in these years, and, to compound matters, the younger star of *Thesmophoriazusae*, Agathon, also

45. Duncan (2011, 78–82).

46. Frs. 643–44 from *Polyidus*, on bad leadership of the city, present a similar problem, but the similarity makes me inclined to suspect it is a strong candidate to be parallel to the *Orestes* scenario.

had departed Athens for Macedon (*Frogs* 83–84). This chronological progression explains one of most vexed problems of *Frogs* as well as the perplexing emotional dynamic at the play's climax.

EURIPIDES IN *FROGS*

τὰ μὲν οὖν μνημονευτὰ ἡδέα ἐστὶν οὐ μόνον ὅσα ἐν τῷ παρόντι, ὅτε παρῆν, ἡδέα ἦν, ἀλλ' ἔνια καὶ οὐχ ἡδέα, ἂν ἢ ὕστερον καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο: ὅθεν καὶ τοῦτ' εἴρηται, “ἀλλ' ἡδύ τοι σωθέντα μεμῆσθαι πόνων.”

Memories are sweet not only of things that were sweet when they happened, but also some things that were not sweet, if later, after the fact, it is beautiful and good. Whence it is said, “As you know, it's truly sweet to remember pain after escaping it.” Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.11.8.1370b1–4, quoting Euripides' *Andromeda* (fr. 133)

In *Frogs*, Aristophanes seems to be taking a fresh account of Euripides' career with, I will argue, more topicality and immediacy than has usually been granted.

Early in the play, Aristophanes establishes the time frame for the progressive emotional dynamic he is going to present with regard to Euripides. Dionysus, in order to explain to Hercules why he is heading to the underworld, speaks of his intense desire for Euripides, prompted by his reading Euripides' *Andromeda* (52–54). The passage led a scholiast to ask, “Why not another of the more recently produced beautiful dramas, *Hypsipyle*, *Phoenician Women*, *Antiope*?” (διὰ τί μὴ ἄλλο τι τῶν πρὸ ὀλίγου διδαχθέντων καὶ καλῶν Ὑψιπύλην, Φοινίσσας, Ἀντιόπην;), since *Andromeda* was produced six years earlier. The question encapsulates what has become the most regularly debated problem of *Frogs*: why and how does Dionysus go from being an ardent admirer of Euripides to presiding ineffectually over a debate between Euripides and Aeschylus to finally choosing Aeschylus and rejecting Euripides? This transformation is the central movement of the entire play, so discussion most often embraces the idea of the unity of the play as a whole.⁴⁷ Most scholars have sought this unity in the character of Dionysus himself, both as the character in Aristophanes' play, usually merged with the ideal of comedy as a genre, and the broader multivalent

47. Segal (1961).

associations of the god in Athenian cultural and religious life.⁴⁸ Others have responded to the scholiast's query by finding the story and drama of *Andromeda* an integral part of the unfolding of *Frogs*.⁴⁹ Such readings expose much richness in the play and provide valuable observations about the interface between Aristophanes' comedy and the vibrant emotional and political life of the Athenian *polis*.

What I propose here does not supplant what Pavlos Sfyroeras and others have contributed to our understanding of *Frogs*. Rather I argue that the fecundity of Aristophanes' intertextuality with Euripides, tragedy more broadly and the ideology of the Athenian *polis* both broadly and deeply is anchored in a straightforward emotional trajectory, from carefree pleasure to confused disappointment to rejection, a trajectory with which the Athenian Demos would already have been familiar on account of Euripides. Aristophanes' dramatization extends beyond reenacting this emotional trajectory, for he sanctions the Demos' rejection of Euripides in favor of reviving a playwright associated with Athens' greatness, and does so in such a way that the resurrection of Aeschylus is not resorting to a figure from the remote past, but to a contemporary assertion of the Demos' judgment about Athens' civic identity. Aristophanes' democratic credentials prime him to chart the Demos' emotional progress in this way. Moreover, the political capital Aristophanes has established over the decades with the Demos means that he can also address the vexed problem of the Athenians exiled for their involvement in the coup of 411. Aristophanes can appeal for their recall, and he will be crowned by the Demos for this, but in the context also of validating and reassuring the Demos of their judgment.

As in nearly every reference by Aristophanes to Euripides, in *Frogs* there is a disjunction between the appeal of Euripides' words and the icky content of what he says. The *Andromeda* prompts a desire in Dionysus' heart (52–54, 66–67), but Hercules insists that the Euripides that Dionysus praises (in the form of references to *Alexander*, *Melanippe the Wise* and *Hippolytus*) is dreck (100–106). Dionysus even acknowledges that Euripides is bereft of moral reasoning (πανούργος, 80), in contrast to Sophocles, who is associated with good humor (εύκολος, 82).⁵⁰ So far, this is the Euripides of days past. If Euripides had betrayed the Demos before his recent death, the desire for Euripides from the days of *Andromeda* makes sense. The *Andromeda*

48. Lada-Richards (1999); Habash (2002); Silva (2007).

49. Sfyroeras (2008) finds *Andromeda* providing a tragic counterpoint to comedy in the play and also bound up with the crucial issue of desire (πόθος) both in drama and in Athenian civic life.

50. Bonanno (2005) suggests that adesp. 480 (Μουσῶν εύκόλων ἀνθρήμιον), also of Sophocles, is in fact a quotation from Aristophanes.

belonged to a period of Euripides' popularity and before the horrific upheavals of 411–410. Hercules represents the perspective that Euripides was just terrible. Dionysus does not deny this, but he represents the appeal Euripides had, especially at the spike of his popularity ca. 412.

After this initial exchange, there is much other comic business before Euripides again becomes the focus of attention, but once he is, the *agon* between him and Aeschylus consumes the remainder of the play (755–1533).⁵¹ What topical political commentary there is in the play apart from the *agon*, then, comes in these intermediate acts. Two politicians stand out for the attention they receive in this part of the play: Archedemus and Cleophon. In a section of the second *parodos*, the chorus of initiates mocks Archedemus (416–21), who was prominent politically at the time (Xen. *HG* 1.7.2) and noted here as leading the Demos (ὄννι δὲ δημαγωγῶγῆϊ, 419). The attack is brief and general. Archedemus is “premiere in rottenness” (κάστιν τὰ πρῶτα τῆς ἐκεῖ μοχθηρίας, 421), but this is far from the harshest comment Aristophanes makes about political leaders.⁵² Archedemus had prosecuted the general Erasiniades after the battle of Arginusae (for embezzlement, before the scandal over the aftermath of the battle arose). Opposition to Erasiniades, who had solid democratic credentials, would alone categorize Archedemus as someone who did not have the best interests of the Demos at heart, so the swipe here is not surprising.⁵³ If Archedemus also participated in the prosecution of the generals, Aristophanes might have had additional motivation to swipe at him, given the positive references to the battle elsewhere in the play (693–96).

The *parabasis* begins with a difficult passage satirizing another prominent political leader, Cleophon. The chorus invokes a Muse to attend (676–85):

τὸν πολὺν ὀφομένη λαῶν ὄχλον, οὗ σοφαί
 μυρίαί κἀθῆνται
 φιλοτιμότεραι Κλεοφῶντος, ἐφ' οὗ δὴ χεῖλεσιν ἀμφιβάλοις
 δεινὸν ἐπιβρέμεται
 Ἐρηκία χελιδῶν
 ἐπὶ βάρβαρον ἐζομένη πέταλον,
 κελαδεῖ δ' ἐπὶ κλαυτὸν ἀηδόνιον νόμον, ὡς ἀπολεῖται,
 κἂν ἴσαι γένωνται.⁵⁴

51. Arai (2004) reads the intervening scene of Dionysus and the Frog chorus (209–68) as an analogy for Athenian spectators in the Theater of Dionysus acting as judges.

52. See, for example, *Lys.* 1160, where μοχθηρία means pathetic, obstructionist behavior, which would suit Archedemus as well.

53. Cf. the brief swipe at Cleon and Hyperbolus in 569–70.

54. I follow Dover, Sommerstein and others in printing κελαδεῖ from V et al. in 683, rather than

. . . to see the great mob of folks whose wisdom
 sits numbering in the thousands,
 more worthy of honor than Cleophon, on whose double-babbling lips now
 a Thracian swallow
 rages fearsomely,
 perched on a foreign leaf,
 and cries a tearful nightingale's tune, that he will die,
 even if it's a tie.

In part, the image incorporates the comic abuse that Cleophon's mother was Thracian (cf. Plato Comicus fr. 61, from *Cleophon*; and Aeschines 2.76). Despite some uncertainties, the imagery certainly suggests Cleophon speaking before the judgment of the collected Demos. Euripides and others use ὄχλος pejoratively of a mob not using intelligent judgment (see on *Orestes* above), but in Aristophanes the word can range from unmarked or neutral to implicitly negative. In this instance, however, Aristophanes expands the expression by explicitly filling his ὄχλος with wisdom, not just collectively but distributively, and superior to that of Cleophon, so he insures the term ὄχλος does not carry negative connotation here. Indeed, this is part of the point of the expression, using a term otherwise used disparagingly of the Demos, but casting it as part of a characterization that articulates the intelligence of its members and its civic identity as a whole. By contrast, Cleophon fits the mold of many who influence the Demos in a bad way. The incongruity of a bold noise from a swallow (δεινὸν ἐπιβρέμεται) is comic, but the image of an abrasive speaker is a familiar one from comic attacks on Pericles, Cleon, Hyperbolus (also with non-Greek speech) and others. In the climactic line, ἴσαι seems certain to refer to equal votes, but the context of the voting is not certain. Since Plato Comicus was competing against *Frogs* with his own demagogue comedy on Cleophon (fr. 57–64), a reference to the voting for comedies cannot be discounted. The statement that he will die in the event of a tie, if it is an ultimatum, also has parallels, such as Cleon's threat not to speak anymore if the jury does not vote with him (*Wasps* 926–30), so perhaps the image plays on a sort of threat Cleophon would make in his public delivery. Such a threat would fit an address either before the Assembly or in a court trial. If the reference is to the Council, a rather different scenario may be intended.

Sommerstein has argued that the encore performance of *Frogs* in 404 was near in time to Cleophon's trial before the Council and subsequent

Fritzsche's τρύζει, adopted by Wilson.

execution.⁵⁵ He further suggests that calls for Cleophon's death in this passage and at the end of the play (1504) were at a minimum congruent with the desires of oligarchic activists to have Cleophon killed on the path to the next oligarchy and that it is worth considering whether Aristophanes could have been complicit in this movement. Sommerstein does give good reasons to suspect that the references to Cleophon in *Frogs*, especially the image of Aeschylus returning to Athens and insuring Cleophon's execution (1504), fit the cultural moment when Cleophon was on or near trial, or convicted and awaiting execution. The cry for Cleophon's death was not, though, as Sommerstein characterizes it, an exclusively oligarchic one. Two accounts survive of the machinations leading to Cleophon's trial and execution, both from speeches ca. 399 regarding the prosecution of offenders for their role in the atrocities under the Thirty. One speech attempts to lay out a case against an informant named Agoratus, a prosecution that requires making as tight a connection as possible between the defendant and the oligarchs. The prosecutor is at pains to argue that the Council of 405/4 was not a democratic body but dominated by oligarchs plotting the overthrow of the democracy (Lys. 13.20). To make this argument, the prosecutor describes the actions of the Council in that year in terms of their contrasting responses to Cleophon and Theramenes.⁵⁶ In this version of events, Theramenes was abroad plotting to bring home peace terms that would lead to the undermining of the democratic government. Cleophon opposed the peace, and so the oligarchic conspirators framed him and, after convicting him by irregular means, had him executed in order to remove one of the prominent advocates for the Demos (τοὺς τοῦ δήμου προεσθηκότας, Lys. 13.7). On the basis of this narrative, it is easy to see Aristophanes' hostile characterization in *Frogs* as an oligarchic skill. The other speech of 399 to narrate these events muddies the waters considerably, however. Another speech (Lys. 30) prosecutes a certain Nicomachus, another oligarchic activist. According to this speech, Nicomachus crafted the legal language that enabled the oligarchic Council to judge Cleophon jointly with a jury and thus insure Cleophon's conviction (30.11). To a reader of *Frogs*, this is surprising, because Aristophanes calls for death for both Cleophon and Nicomachus in the same passage (1504–6). If Aristophanes' smears of Cleophon reflect oligarchic motivations, it is not evident why he simultaneously condemns one of their key operatives. The speech against Nicomachus also provides a broader perspective on Cleophon. The speaker says there is universal agreement that Cleophon was

55. Sommerstein (2009, revised from 1993).

56. On Theramenes in *Frogs*, see below.

targeted by oligarchic forces for removal to further their own ends (30.12). The speaker is also aware, however, that members of the democratic jury still may not have a favorable opinion of Cleophon and so argues that, even if Cleophon was rightly condemned, the complicity of Nicomachus should not be forgiven (30.13):

εἰκὸς τοίνυν, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, ἐνθυμεῖσθαι καὶ ὁπόσοι ὑμῶν ἐνόμιζον Κλεοφῶντα κακὸν πολίτην εἶναι, ὅτι καὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ ὀλιγαρχίᾳ ἀποθανόντων ἴσως τις ἦν πονηρός, ἀλλ' ὅμως καὶ διὰ τοὺς τοιοῦτους ὠργίζεσθε τοῖς τριάκοντα, ὅτι οὐ τῶν ἀδικημάτων ἕνεκα ἀλλὰ κατὰ στάσιν αὐτοὺς ἀπέκτειναν.

It is proper, gentlemen of the jury, to take this to heart, all of you who thought Cleophon was a bad citizen: that, although among those who perished under the oligarchy there was perhaps a criminal, nevertheless on account of even these sorts of men, you were angry at the Thirty, because they performed executions not on account of any crimes, but in the interests of their faction.

The prosecutor here is acutely aware of the ambivalence of Cleophon's reputation in 399.⁵⁷ On the one hand, as democratic Athenians tried to make sense of the rise of the Thirty, they recognized Cleophon as their last staunch defender and a victim of the machinations of the oligarchs. On the other hand, even with this rehabilitation of his reputation, some still reckoned him as deserving of his fate. He seems to have been in the unfortunate position of having been reckoned better off dead by both oligarchs and democrats. Later references indicate his reputation did not improve. A speech from a decade later or so cites him for his influence, and because his heirs inherited nothing of his estate (Lys. 19.48), but there is no attempt to invoke his heroic defense of democracy or his victimization. Decades later Aeschines cites him as someone who led Athens to destruction at a time of crisis (2.76).

Aristophanes composed *Frogs* without the benefit of hindsight, of course. As with the Sicilian expedition, Aristophanes was on the wrong side of history but consistent in his own position.⁵⁸ The abuse of Cleophon could still

57. On Nicomachus' career, see Shear (2011, 73–74, 79–84). Cf. Carawan (2010) on details of the charge in Lys. 30 against Nicomachus, esp. 89–93, which indicate that he was involved only with the oligarchy of the Thirty, not the oligarchic governments of 411.

58. As it happens, Aeschines (2.76) pairs just these two failings (the Sicilian expedition and Cleophon) in Athenian history. Both mistakes would require broad-enough democratic support and also be ones the democracy acknowledged in retrospect. This would make Aristophanes a fairly typical democrat, though still an utterly singular author of comedy.

in fact belong to *Frogs*' initial performance in 405, rather than the revival in 404, as Sommerstein argues, and simply be ironically prescient in retrospect. Plato Comicus' play *Cleophon*, in the same cohort with *Frogs* in 405, although the fragments are too meager for any meaningful reconstruction of its content, at least indicates there were grounds for ridicule and abuse already. If the comments about Cleophon do date to the encore of *Frogs* in 404, when Cleophon was facing imminent execution, the simple fact of the Council being aligned against him may have been enough for Aristophanes. As I hope I have shown, Aristophanes is unwavering in his faith in the Council, and even if he was on the wrong side of history this time, it is not surprising that he would be aligned with the Council's position.

A swell of resentment against Cleophon would also make the passage satirizing him rhetorically effective in its place. Since Aristophanes' bold advice in the *parabasis* immediately follows, the satire on Cleophon serves, not in any technical, formal way, but in function, as a *captatio benevolentiae* for the spectating Demos.⁵⁹ Aristophanes sides with the Demos' anger toward Cleophon, establishing that he recognizes the proper punishment of those who do not serve the Demos' best interest. Then he can most effectively launch into advice that the Demos might at first not find readily acceptable.

To begin his case in the *parabasis*, Aristophanes sounds the refrain in favor of good advice (686–87):

τὸν ἱερὸν χορὸν δίκαιόν ἐστι χρηστὰ τῇ πόλει
 ξυμπαραινεῖν καὶ διδάσκειν.

It is just that a sacred chorus offer recommendations and
 useful instruction to the *polis*.

Aristophanes itemizes his central recommendations in two sections (πρῶτον οὖν 687 . . . εἶτ', 692). First he calls for the removal of "fears" (δείματα, 688), presumably of prosecution and punishment for those under the stigma of the oligarchic coup of 411. Aristophanes shrewdly characterizes these men as those who slipped up because of the tricks of Phrynichus, who was a prominent democrat prior to his sudden prominent role with the

59. With good reason, no scholar has argued that the *parabasis* here conforms to canonical rhetorical practice. Neither Murphy (1938) nor Sousa e Silva (1987–88) even attempts to place any speech from *Frogs* into a schema, and Hubbard (2007) limits *Frogs* to claims about technical vocabulary (on which, see the Introduction). That said, in technique this *parabasis* does exemplify how Aristophanes can employ methods of persuasion that were later catalogued and systematized. Lines 686–87 below also follow a general principle the substance of which would suit a formal *proimion*.

oligarchy. Hence it is easy to envision these men as those who were lured by Phrynichus' democratic credentials to participate in the oligarchy. Their allegiances could thus more easily appear to have been to the democracy at heart.⁶⁰ The slipperiness of political allegiance is a constant theme among prominent Athenians between 411 and 405 and then in the aftermath of the Thirty. The wrath of the Demos against those perceived as disloyal could be lethal. Aristophanes had been aware of, and had commented on, the destructive anger of the Demos as far back as *Acharnians*, and he carefully calibrates his comments on complicated issues throughout *Frogs*. He satirizes Cleophon, touches on Theramenes, who perhaps more than anyone played both sides of the fence during these years (533–41), and, even with these acknowledgments, praises inclusiveness. He praises the decision to grant slaves citizenship for fighting in the navy and asks that Athenians who could serve the *polis* at least as well have the opportunity to do so (692–96). The chorus calls on the Demos to cast aside its anger, in the name of its sage nature (ἀλλὰ τῆς ὀργῆς ἀνέντες, ὦ σοφώτατοι φύσει, 700), and says shared struggle should be enough to recognize mutual kinship and citizenship (701–2; cf. *Lys.* 1129–34 for another statement of shared kinship among adversaries).⁶¹ The judgment of the Demos is wiser than Cleophon or any other popular leader, after all, and should be able to distinguish good citizens (τῶν πολιτῶν τοὺς καλοὺς τε κάγαθούς, 719) from the rotten (τοῖς πονηροῖς, 725) as they do coins, and posterity will recognize the Demos' sanity (705), and the wise will recognize even the Demos' suffering accordingly (735–37).

This *parabasis* has received much attention ever since antiquity because of the notice that it garnered Aristophanes a civic crown bestowed upon

60. See Shear (2011, 64) for the use of Phrynichus as a posthumous scapegoat for the oligarchy of 411.

61. The antode (706–17) makes an attack, the understanding of which is hampered by uncertain identification of its target. The verses mock a certain Cleigenes as a disgusting bath attendant, doomed to meet a bad end. The rareness of this name increases the likelihood that this man is to be identified with the Cleigenes of Halae (*PA* 8488; *LGPN* 1), who served as secretary on the Council in 410/9 (*JG* P³ 375.1). In this capacity, his name appears at Andocides 1.96, in the quotation of a law that made legal the killing of officeholders under an oligarchic regime at Athens. Circumstantially this would associate him with the harsher elements of the restored democracy. In addition, Schwartz and others have emended the name “Cleisthenes” (MSS) to Cleigenes at *Lysias* 25.25. The defendant in this speech cites Cleisthenes/Cleigenes as an opportunistic prosecutor, i.e., a sycophant, who enriched himself in the aftermath of 411. On the context for such statements, see Christ (1998, 72–117). If these plausible, but not certain, identifications are correct, Aristophanes singles out a notorious sycophant who took advantage of the Demos' pain and anger in the aftermath of 411. In this way, the attack on Cleigenes would be a logical interlude between *epirrhema* (686–705) and *anteperirrhema* (718–37), both of which advise the Demos to follow its better instincts rather than an aggressive manipulator like Cleigenes.

him by the Athenian Demos. One of the strands of this notice is preserved in the *Life*, and while there are many reasons for suspecting the content of the *Life*, Sommerstein has shown that the notice all but certainly goes back to an authentic Athenian decree.⁶² The passage specifically quotes the lines from the *parabasis* about advising the city and says Aristophanes received the crown for support for the Demos against tyranny (32–35). The *Life* routinely extrapolates material from the plays to create biographical narrative, but the words of the *parabasis* and the play in general are hardly so blunt as to prompt this sort of statement, so it must rely on either the text of the decree or statements elsewhere in lost plays. At a minimum, it vitiates claims that Aristophanes reads like a supporter of oligarchy.⁶³

As noted, *Frogs*, and the *parabasis* in particular, acknowledge the slipperiness of political allegiances and the anger of the Demos, as well as its capacity for making a sound judgment over the long run. Issues of betrayal and the need for the Demos to make a sound judgment about its future direction bring us back to the central conundrum of the play, reintroduced in the scene immediately following the *parabasis*: what is one to make of Euripides?

Immediately following the *parabasis*, and after some banter between Xanthias and another slave, comes the setup for the *agon*.⁶⁴ When bustle, shouting and verbal wrangling are heard (θόρυβος καὶ βοή / χῶ λουδορησιμός, 757–58), the cause turns out to be Aeschylus and Euripides. There is factional strife (στάσις, 760) among the dead. All these terms are consistent with the image of verbal wrangling in the political arena (see the Appendix), so the description paves the way for the ensuing debate to be one of central significance for the Demos. It turns out that there is a throne for tragedy in the underworld, and its resident is supported in the Prytaneum (764), the latter component a direct parallel to an honor a living citizen of Athens can receive. Aeschylus holds this honor, and Sophocles, when he arrives, graciously acknowledges Aeschylus' place there (788–89). Euripides, however, stakes a claim, but the narrative reflects the ambivalent response to Euripides everywhere in Aristophanes. The criminal element in the underworld (a crowd, πλῆθος, 774, not the Demos) is taken in by Euripides'

62. Sommerstein (2009, revised from 1993) suspects it is awarded by the oligarchic Council for comments against Cleophon, and on balance he finds Aristophanes' portrayal of the *polis* as inimical to the democracy. Cf. Sommerstein (2005) and Lefkowitz (2012, 104–10).

63. Sidwell (2009, 41–44) argues that the decree was not prompted by the *parabasis* in particular but in recognition of Aristophanes' longtime service to the democracy, and prefers the recognition of Aristophanes and the encore of *Frogs* to have taken place in 403. Cf. Pritchard (2012, 24–26).

64. On the identity of Xanthias' interlocutor here, see Dover (1993, 50–55).

verbal gymnastics (τῶν ἀντιλογιῶν καὶ λυγισμῶν καὶ στροφῶν, 775) and in their madness (ὑπερεμάνησαν) reckons him very wise (κάνόμισαν σοφώτατον, 776). Now bolstered in this way, Euripides makes for the throne, as if somehow he did not initially consider himself so worthy but was motivated by the reaction of his fans.

The political terminology resumes. Xanthias immediately expects that the Demos will react angrily and stone Euripides (κούκ ἐβάλλετο, 778), just as the angry chorus of Acharnians intends to do to Dicaeopolis when they hear of his treason (*Ach.* 236), and as Tyndareus plans to inspire the Assembly to do in Euripides' *Orestes* (612–14). Instead of venting their notorious anger, however, the Demos calls for a referendum on the matter (779–80):

μὰ Δί', ἀλλ' ὁ δῆμος ἀνεβόα κρίσιν ποιεῖν
ὀπότερος εἶη τὴν τέχνην σοφώτερος.

Not at all. Instead the Demos called out for a judgment about which one was the wiser in their profession.

Aristophanes thus acknowledges but subverts the harsh appraisal of the Demos' judgment dramatized in *Orestes* (and which he dramatized himself two decades earlier). The surface appeal of Euripides is once again not to be denied, but conflict arises when it comes to the content, the wisdom, of what he says. The contest will play on this disjunction repeatedly, but there is more to be explicated from this passage. While there is always ambivalence about Euripides, the harshness of the scenario here is unique. In *Acharnians* and *Thesmophoriazusae*, Euripides is a distinctive and bizarre artist, but ultimately innocuous. In *Frogs* he is a villain, an antagonist to the rightful ruler, Aeschylus, and additionally opposed by Sophocles, who serves as a sort of second to Aeschylus. At the concept of Euripides taking the throne, the Demos is expected to vent its rage as it would toward a traitor. Why? I argued earlier in this chapter that the harsh view of Euripides results from a perception that Euripides turned traitor against the democracy subsequent to the season of 409, when tragedy was so important to the Demos' renewal following the coup of 411. In the past, Euripides had been overtly patriotic about Athens (e.g., in *Heracleidae* and *Suppliants* of the 420s). The *Thesmophoriazusae* indicates that, following the poor reception of his tetralogy in 415, Euripides rose to popularity again by 412. It is this rehabilitation that Dionysus happily remembers early in the play, when he is reading *Andromeda*. Since then, whether it was *Orestes*, *Archelaus* or

more likely some combination of these plays, statements and actions (some of which are not recoverable now), Euripides betrayed the Demos in the sense that he was supposed to celebrate the restored democracy as a favored son but offered satirical critique instead and even praise of a non-Greek monarchy. Accordingly, Aristophanes refers to the expected response from the Demos: anger. His faith and support of the Demos, however, mean that he dramatizes instead debate and deliberation about Euripides and about what tragedy means to the Demos under these circumstances. The lengthy *agon* tackles many technical and superficial qualities of tragedy, and undermining Euripides' appeal in these regards is key to insuring his loss in the contest, but overall the contest reads effectively as a referendum before the Demos, exploring the issues set before the Athenian democracy, about what tragedy will mean, and what composer of tragedy will represent them. That author will prove to be Aeschylus, but Aristophanes also knows that this is a problematic proposal. Much of what Aristophanes says about Aeschylus and Euripides makes sense, if the Athenian Demos is in 405 wrestling with how best to promote a tragedian and tragedy as the face of its civic identity. Broadly, Euripides has superficial appeal, but ultimately the content of his plays lets the Demos down. Aeschylus is imperious at a superficial level, but ultimately the proper choice because he pulls the Demos in the direction of Athens' greatness.

Aristophanes had incorporated the nucleus of this contrast between the two authors already in *Clouds*. When Strepsiades asks his son to recite a passage from Aeschylus, Pheidippides describes Aeschylus as a premiere poet, but bombastic and incoherent (1364–67). Pheidippides follows up by reciting Euripides instead, a speech reportedly about incest (1371–72). That Aeschylus is difficult to comprehend and that Euripides can be shocking and subversive seems to be uncontroversial, and it is hardly a problematic statement even among modern admirers. Aristophanes' project in *Frogs* is more problematic, however. Aeschylus will need to be politically appealing, and the undeniable appeal of Euripides' technique must be put in its place.

Making Aeschylus politically palatable is a not unproblematic process that Aristophanes makes unfold over the course of the *agon*. He seems to recognize that Aeschylus is perceived as inaccessible, so he begins with this problem and steadily brings Aeschylus to the fore as the *agon* goes along. So, when the contest is first being set up, Aeschylus rejects the Athenian Demos as judges (οὔτε γὰρ Ἀθηναίοισι συνέβαιν' Αἰσχύλος, 807), but later passages will bring him ever closer to the contemporary world of the

Demos. Still, back when the contest begins, Aeschylus refuses to speak at all, and, once he does, after being provoked by Euripides, Dionysus has to talk him down off of his anger (856–59):

σὺ δὲ μὴ πρὸς ὀργήν, Αἰσχύλ', ἀλλὰ πραόνως
 ἔλεγχ', ἐλέγχου: λοιδορεῖσθαι δ' οὐ πρόπει
 ἄνδρας ποιητὰς ὥσπερ ἄρτοπώλιδας·
 σὺ δ' εὐθύς ὥσπερ πρίνος ἐμπρησθεῖς βοᾷς.

Aeschylus, not so angry. Just gently
 question and cross-examine. It's not appropriate for poets to wrangle
 like some bread sellers.
 You shout right away like an oak tree on fire.

Shouting (βοᾷς) and wrangling (λοιδορεῖσθαι) are typical of political debate that does not constitute meaningful deliberation (see the Appendix), and suggest the demagoguery of a leader like Cleon. In calming Aeschylus down, then, Dionysus is treating him the way Aristophanes treats the Demos, acknowledging the anger but pushing him toward calmer discussion. As it is, the Demos in the play is already calling for rational debate and judgment, so Dionysus is encouraging Aeschylus to participate on the Demos' terms, which in turn makes Aeschylus more palatable and acceptable to the real-life Demos, present in the form of the spectators in the theater. By the end of the *agon*, this appeal is successful, and Aeschylus is the better adviser and deliberator. By contrast, at the start of the *agon* Euripides identifies himself as the “stronger” of the two (κρείττων, 831) and Aeschylus calls him a “collector of mouthings” (στωμυλιοσυλλεκτάδης, 841), but to no particular effect.⁶⁵ As the *agon* unfolds, Aristophanes makes Aeschylus more and more a figure suitable to represent the democratic Demos and edges Euripides outside the realm of acceptability.

The change begins in the initial exchanges between the two contestants. Euripides begins by characterizing Aeschylus' dramaturgy as deceptive and hollow (908–13). When Dionysus interjects that he enjoys Aeschylean silence over modern chatter (τῆ σιωπῆ . . . νῦν οἱ λαλοῦντες, 916–17), Euripides calls him stupid (ἡλίθιος, 918), but the implicit defense of chatter foreshadows the weakening of Euripides' position. Aeschylus in the mean-

65. Cf. Chapter 3 on κρείττων and the more positive “mouth,” rather than a tongue, at the root of this word.

time again stews in silence and barks out occasionally, replicating his earlier anger. By contrast, Euripides is still able to lay claim to the rational refutation the Demos and Dionysus called for (922).

As the focus shifts to Euripides' own dramaturgy, however, the momentum shifts, as do the politics. Euripides makes an unrefuted claim about how he slims down bloated tragedy, but then there is trouble. He trumpets the characters who speak for him (949–50):

ἀλλ' ἔλεγεν ἡ γυνή τέ μοι χῶ δοῦλος οὐδὲν ἦττον,
τοῦ δεσπότητος χῆ παρθένος χῆ γραῦς ἄν.

And more the woman spoke for me, and the slave no less
than the master, and the girl and the old woman.

Such inclusiveness, in and of itself, is a virtue in Aristophanes. His plays have all these characters speaking out prominently and often with benefit for the *polis*, but Euripides' following claim, that he acted democratically (δημοκρατικὸν γὰρ αὐτ' ἔδρω, 952) gets him in trouble, and Dionysus rebukes him (953–54):

τοῦτο μὲν ἔασον, ὦ τᾶν.
οὐ σοὶ γάρ ἐστι περίπατος κάλλιστα περί γε τούτου.

Now sir, let that one go.
In your case, it's not the best idea to pursue that.

If Aristophanes had any desire to, he could easily have incorporated quotes from Euripides from various stages of his career that trumpet the virtues of democracy. As I have argued, however, at this particular time Euripides was suffering the reputation of having betrayed the democracy, and Aristophanes was not inclined to dispute the point. With this crucial barrier quickly but solidly established, Euripides' credentials continue to erode. He immediately claims another problematic achievement, teaching people to babble (λαλεῖν ἐδίδαξα, 954), which he had implicitly defended a little earlier. Aristophanes has Aeschylus readily assent to his claim, of course, because this is the sort of unhelpful talk that consumes public discourse without helping the Demos render its better judgment. Euripides digs himself deeper as he takes credit for having people question and pursue trivialities in a passage that culminates in taking credit for the politicians Cleitophon and Theramenes (967). Dionysus spins out a joke about Theramenes' uncanny

knack for coming up like a rose no matter the smelliness of his surroundings (968–70). Theramenes' history with the Four Hundred could hardly make him seem democratic, even if he managed to avoid serious trouble up to this point.⁶⁶ Likewise, Cleitophon's efforts to further the coup of the Four Hundred (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 29.3) could not give him a reputation as a useful advocate for the Demos, even if he managed to avoid outright condemnation. No ancient reference to Cleitophon suggests any democratic sympathies.⁶⁷ And yet the sort of duplicity that enables men like Theramenes and Cleitophon to be oligarchic supporters and yet survive under the restored democracy is what Aristophanes links to Euripides, for, after Dionysus' interjection, Euripides immediately takes credit for teaching them this type of reasoning (971–74).

With Euripides' democratic credentials shredded, the next exchange focuses on poets' ability to make better citizens (1009–10). This round (1010–98) goes easily to Aeschylus, who cites plays that fostered the warriors of the days of Athens' greatness in empire. Euripides is reduced to offering feeds that allow Aeschylus to expound on the superiority of his position. Aeschylus comes off as the one who inspires greatness in citizens, while Euripides' characters lead to immoral behavior and difficulties for the democratic government, such as the wealthy finding ways to dodge liturgies (1065–66). Again among the charges is λαλιά, the empty babble that takes up time and distracts even the rowers in the fleet from their duties (1069–73; cf. the Appendix).

The choral interlude that follows offers a reminder that the stakes in this choice are high (1099–1100) and reiterates the faith in the spectators (τοῖς θεωμένοισιν, 1110) to make wise decisions. In setting up the contest, there was the expectation that the Demos would proceed with a vengeance, but they called for judgment about the wisdom of the two playwrights. Aeschylus was skeptical about the Athenians' capacity to judge the poets, but now the chorus assures Aeschylus that the spectators are themselves wise (θεατῶν γ' οὐνεχ', ὡς ὄντων σοφῶν, 1118). Thucydides once made his Cleon chastise the Demos in the Assembly for being mere "spectators of speeches" (see the Introduction), but now Aristophanes appropriates the image, as he does for the *ochlos* (mob). They *are* spectators of speeches, but they have the wisdom to handle sophistication and will make the right judgment.

66. See Harding (1974) for the vicissitudes of Theramenes' reputation in the fourth century.

67. Cleitophon later belonged to the oligarchic faction that supported the Thirty (*Ath. Pol.* 34.3), and Plato (*Rep.* 340a–b) has him attempt to support Thrasymachus' contention that justice consists of the weak obeying the will of the stronger. Cf. [Plato,] *Clit.* 410e.

With the basic political point made, the next three stages of the debate maintain suspense by turning to technical aspects of dramaturgy: prologues (1119–1250), lyrics (1261–1364) and the “weight” of their verses (1371–1410). Although Aristophanes normally acknowledges the superficial and stylistic appeal of Euripides, in these contests Euripides at best comes off at a draw (prologues and lyrics) or at a loss (the weighing), thereby negating his greatest asset. When Dionysus returns to the matter of making judgment, he is divided, because he reckons one playwright wise and enjoys the other (τὸν μὲν γὰρ ἠγοῦμαι σοφὸν, τῶ δ’ ἠδομαι, 1413). Since wisdom was the original criterion for judgment (766, 776, 780), the contest should be over, but Aristophanes wants to explicate on the nature of this wisdom at issue, so Dionysus recapitulates the situation (1418–21):

ἐγὼ κατῆλθον ἐπὶ ποιητήν. τοῦ χάριν;
 ἴν’ ἡ πόλις σωθεῖσα τοὺς χοροὺς ἄγῃ.
 ὁπότερος οὖν ἂν τῇ πόλει παραινέσειν
 μέλλει τι χρηστόν, τοῦτον ἄξειν μοι δοκῶ.

I came down for a poet. What for?
 So the city can be saved and put on its choruses.
 So, whichever one will provide the city
 some useful advice, I think I’ll take.

The merging of the purpose of saving the *polis* and putting on its festivals makes all the more topical sense, since the democracy invested heavily in its identity through the production of tragedy. Aristophanes returns explicitly to the substantive political advice to be gleaned from each tragedian. Dionysus first asks about Alcibiades. After each contestant gives answers, Dionysus finds himself in the familiar quandary of one speaking wisely and one clearly (ὁ μὲν σοφῶς γὰρ εἶπεν, ὁ δ’ ἕτερος σαφῶς, 1434), although wisdom is still supposed to be the criterion.⁶⁸ The second round of questioning finds Dionysus sarcastically referring to Euripides as a wise Palamedes, which would relegate him back to his unpopularity in 415. Despite extended interrogation, Aeschylus actually does not give out his exact wisdom for saving the city, but it is not necessary. Aeschylus has long been the winner.

68. Lines 1431–32 are a notorious crux, in that either Aeschylus’ lines appear in doublet form (probably reflecting different versions in the original performance and in the encore) or the lines represent the marginal intrusion of a quotation from a similar line from Eupolis’ *Demes*. Neither solution affects my reading, but see note 70 below on the indirect association with Pericles. See Dover (1993, 372) for the best overview of the issue.

It has just been Aristophanes' suspense that has dragged it out. To cap off the choice, Euripides protests, and Dionysus rebukes him with his notorious line, "My tongue swore" (ἡ γλῶττ' ὀμώμοκ', 1471), once again, and for the final time, invoking the tongue as the sophistic vehicle of unhelpful speech. Euripides has effectively been no more than a demagogue who fills up time with, at best, innocuous verbiage and, at worst, socially subversive ideas.

The chorus now celebrates the victory of substance over style. Blessings come to the man who benefits his citizens, family and friends (1482–90). There is in fact no graceful appeal (χαρίεν, 1491) in composing tragedy using the babble (λαλεῖν) of Socrates, a reference to Euripides' style.⁶⁹ Preferring such drivel to art is insane (παραφρονοῦντος, 1498). Ultimately, Aeschylus wins on both style and content. Aeschylus is to rise to modern Athens to save it with the content of his ideas (γνώμας, 1502), while Euripides remains in the underworld, a moral nitwit, liar and clown (ὁ πανοῦργος ἀνὴρ / καὶ ψευδολόγος καὶ βωμολόχος, 1520–21), forever blocked from the throne of tragedy by Sophocles. The chorus echoes the blessings, including peace, that Aeschylus will bring to the city.

With this resurrection, Aristophanes completes the emotional journey he initiated early in the play, when Dionysus was reading *Andromeda* and yearning for Euripides, longing for the time, years earlier, before the oligarchic revolution, when Athens and its drama seemed more confident and enjoyable. In the dark days that followed, comprising revolution, bloody restoration of the democracy, the vicissitudes of the Peloponnesian War, the losses of Agathon, Euripides and Sophocles, the Demos reacted, often rashly, to the difficulties as the Athenians struggled militarily, politically, and with the future of its treasured cultural creation, tragedy. Aristophanes gives the Demos its due in recognizing the tumult and pain of these years, naturally looking back at better days, but he uses his decades of political clout to advise the Demos to settle down, render sensible judgments as spectators and find better models than Euripides to aspire to. While the *agon* of *Frogs* shares many formal characteristics with that of *Clouds*, the resurrection of Aeschylus here has its closest parallel in the rejuvenation of Demos in *Knights*, and they share the return of Athens' golden, pre-Periclean age of successful imperialism, peace and wisdom.⁷⁰ This is the cultural ideal in

69. Cf. Aristophanes fr. 392 and Callias fr. 15, as well as Teleclides fr. 41–42, which link Socrates and Euripides.

70. Sidwell (2009, 44, 293–95) tries to maintain a chain of associations from Aeschylus to Pericles to Eupolis, all ironically satirized as antidemocratic. Even though there has been, ever since antiquity (notably at Valerius Maximus 7.2), a tradition associating Aeschylus with Pericles, Aristophanes

all of Aristophanes' plays, and, although there is a foreboding awareness in *Frogs* of the looming catastrophe, there is nothing ironic or less than idealistic in restoring Aeschylus. Aeschylus himself was some fifty years dead, but the revival of productions of his plays provided cultural continuity, and, for Aristophanes, a sustained link to the best of democratic Athens.

never praises Pericles or the Periclean age. For Aristophanes, Athens' greatness lay in its pre-Periclean empire. Aeschylus is victorious, but the metaphor of the lion cub alone is sufficient to invoke Aeschylus (*Ag.* 717–36), and Dionysus' response (1434) that Aeschylus spoke wisely (σοφῶς) and Euripides clearly (σαφῶς) indicates that there is little or nothing to be gained from trying to generate specific policy from Aeschylus' enigmatic profundity, to say nothing of aligning him with Periclean war policy from twenty-five years earlier, which Aristophanes was quite willing to mock in other plays (see Chapters 2 and 3).