

suggestion that the previously disenfranchised should be given their rights back precisely on condition that they fight in the navy (701–2). How could a re-performance in early 404 have *celebrated* such ideas, when by that stage all attempts to sustain Athens' war effort had been tried and failed? If we want to believe that *Frogs* received a second performance, it is safer to infer that this was some time later, well after the end of the war (when the play's originally topical references could be received from a historical 'distance'), and that the supposed linkage with the parabasis was the result of idle later speculation.²⁸

Frogs is an Aristophanic masterpiece, composed and performed during a period when Athenian fortunes in the long Peloponnesian War were threatening to become desperate. The play acknowledges that historical background by some of its references to contemporary circumstances and the perilous 'survival' of the city. But that does not warrant us in treating *Frogs* as itself somehow purporting to have the key to that survival (which, as Aristophanes well knew, depended on ships, manpower, money, and complex diplomacy), still less as issuing an invitation to think of comedy as a genre properly suited to solve such problems. What Aristophanes offers his fellow-Athenians instead is a dazzling fiction in which fantasized versions of past and present, gods and humans, poetry and politics are melded together into a world that no one could inhabit outside the imagination of the theatre. Comedy cannot make much difference to the course of a military conflict, but it can lift the spirits of its audience with temporary exhilaration, and perhaps some consolation, even in the dark days of war.

²⁸ The claim about Aristophanes' olive crown (n. 27 above) is part of conspicuously flimsy generalizations about how he was cherished by the Athenians for his pro-democratic sentiments.

FROGS

Speaking Characters

- XANTHIAS: slave of DIONYSOS
 DIONYSOS: god of theatre, wine, and ecstasy
 HERAKLES: famous hero and brother of DIONYSOS
 CORPSE: anonymous, recently deceased person
 CHARON: ferryman of the Acherousian lake in Hades
 FROGS: singing/dancing group in amphibian costumes
 CHORUS (24 dancers/singers): of Eleusinian initiates in Hades
 LEADER: of the CHORUS
 DOORKEEPER: of PLOUTON's palace
 SLAVE^A: of PLOUTON and Persephone (Pherrephatta)
 INNKEEPER (female): in Hades
 PLATHANE: a second Innkeeper
 EURIPIDES: tragic playwright
 AISCHYLOS: tragic playwright
 PLOUTON: god of the underworld
 SLAVE^D: another slave of PLOUTON

Silent Characters

- CARRIERS: of the CORPSE's bier
 SLAVES^B and ^C: accompanying INNKEEPER and PLATHANE
 ATTENDANTS: under the command of the palace DOORKEEPER
 EURIPIDES' MUSE: a castanet-playing female figure

[The stage building has a single central door which will serve at 35 ff. as the house of HERAKLES and later as the palace of PLOUTON in Hades. The two side entrances (eisodoi) connect the on-stage scenes with loosely defined off-stage locations, both on earth and in the underworld. From one eisodos enter DIONYSOS and XANTHIAS, the former leading a donkey on which the latter, holding assorted baggage on a pole over his shoulder, is riding. The god, a portly and elderly figure, is dressed in long boots and a saffron dress, with, à la Herakles, a lion-skin on top and a large club in his hand. The two characters make their way falteringly towards the centre of the orchêstra.]

XANTHIAS [*nonchalantly*]. Shall I tell them some of the usual gags then, master,

The things spectators *always* find so funny?

DIONYSOS [*wearily*]. Say what you like—except ‘I’m all hard-pressed’.*

Steer clear of *that*: it’s trite and makes my gorge rise.

XANTHIAS. But something else that’s witty?

DIONYSOS. Except ‘I’m squashed’.

XANTHIAS. Well then, should I tell them an excellent joke?

DIONYSOS. Go ahead,

Feel free. But avoid that old routine—

XANTHIAS. Which one?

DIONYSOS. Where you shift your load and say that you need a shit!

XANTHIAS. But can’t I say that I’m carrying such a weight

That unless it’s removed I’ll release an explosive fart? 10

DIONYSOS. Please don’t, I beg you—unless you want me to vomit!

XANTHIAS. Well what was the point of making me carry this baggage

If I can’t make the jokes you hear in Phrynichos’ plays

Or the kind that Lykis and also Ameipsias writes?*

Their comedies always have these baggage-slave scenes.

DIONYSOS. But just don’t do it. I know that when I’m watching

And see that kind of ‘sophisticated’ humour,

I’ve aged by more than a year when I leave the theatre.*

XANTHIAS. This neck of mine is damned to perdition in that case.

It’s getting *squashed* but is being denied its jokes. 20

[DIONYSOS halts and looks up at XANTHIAS in disgust before delivering the following lines directly to the audience.]

DIONYSOS. But look at this outrage here—just look how he’s pampered!

I’m the god Dionysos himself, the son of Wine-jar,

Yet here I’m struggling on foot while letting him *ride*,

To make sure he’s not worn out by the weight of his load.

XANTHIAS. But aren’t I carrying still?

DIONYSOS. Not when you’re riding!

XANTHIAS [*pointing to his pole*]. I’m carrying this!

DIONYSOS. How come?

XANTHIAS. Because it’s so heavy!

DIONYSOS. But isn’t the donkey bearing the weight that you’ve got?

XANTHIAS. Not the weight that I’m carrying here, no he’s certainly not.

DIONYSOS. But how can you carry a thing when you’re being carried?

XANTHIAS. I really don’t know—except that this shoulder’s *hard-pressed!* 30

DIONYSOS. Well if you’re saying the donkey is lending no help

Try picking it up yourself and see what that’s like!

XANTHIAS. Oh misery me! If only I’d served in that sea-fight*—

I’d tell you to go and get stuffed, I really would!

DIONYSOS. Dismount, you rogue. This door you can see over here

Is the very first place this journey of mine was meant

To bring me to. [*Knocking*] Hoy, slave, open up, open up!

[While XANTHIAS gets down from the donkey and leads it to the corner of the stage building, where it disappears from view, the door of the stage building opens abruptly and HERAKLES, also wearing a lion-skin, steps out aggressively—but soon starts to crack up at what he sees.]

HERAKLES. Who battered the door just now? Like a violent

Centaur,*

Whoever it was who crashed—[*seeing DIONYSOS*] oh, what have we here?

DIONYSOS [*to XANTHIAS*]. Look, slave.

XANTHIAS. What is it? 40

DIONYSOS. Well didn't
you see?

XANTHIAS. See what?

DIONYSOS. The way he took fright at me.

XANTHIAS. Yes, in case you were mad!

HERAKLES. In Demeter's name, I just can't stop myself laughing.
I'm biting my lip but it's just no use—I must laugh! [*Guffaws.*]

DIONYSOS [*to HERAKLES*]. Old chap, please come over here.
I need a favour.

HERAKLES. But I just can't stifle this laughter that's overcome me
At the sight of this lion-skin here with your saffron dress.*
[*In mocking tone*] What's your state of mind? Why these boots and
club combined?*

Where on earth have you been?

DIONYSOS [*blustering*]. I was sailing on Kleisthenes' boat.*

HERAKLES. You were in the sea-fight?

DIONYSOS. That's right, and we must
have sunk
A dozen or more of the enemy's fleet of ships.* 50

HERAKLES. The pair of you?

DIONYSOS. That's right!

XANTHIAS [*sarcastically*]. And then I woke up!

DIONYSOS. In fact it was on board ship as I read to myself
That play *Andromeda*, all of a sudden it happened:*

The most intense desire took hold of my heart.

HERAKLES. A desire? How strong exactly?

DIONYSOS [*cooly*]. Quite small—like
Molon!*

HERAKLES. Desire for a woman?

DIONYSOS. No, no.

HERAKLES. Then a boy?

DIONYSOS. Not at all.

HERAKLES. For a man?

DIONYSOS [*shuddering*]. Oh dear!

HERAKLES. Ah, you *did* it with Kleisthenes!

DIONYSOS. Don't mock me, brother. I'm really not feeling too well.
It's a terrible longing that's piercing me through and through.

HERAKLES. What kind, little brother? 60

DIONYSOS. It's rather hard to describe.

I'll have to explain in a somewhat roundabout way.
Have you ever been struck by a sudden desire for—soup?*

HERAKLES. For soup? You bet! At numerous times in my life.

DIONYSOS. Am I making my point quite clear? Do you need more
hints?

HERAKLES. Not as far as soup's concerned. I know it too well.

DIONYSOS. Well it's just as strong a desire that cuts right
through me
For Euripides!

HERAKLES. *Euripides*, dead and buried?

DIONYSOS. Yes, no one at all could persuade me not to go
And bring him back.

HERAKLES. You intend to go down to Hades?

DIONYSOS. By Zeus I do, and further down too, if need be. 70

HERAKLES. But what's your motive?

DIONYSOS. I need a skilful poet.
The best are all now dead and the rest are no good.

HERAKLES. Isn't Iophon still alive?

DIONYSOS. That's the only bit
Of quality left, and even then there's some doubt.
I'm not quite sure what to make of Iophon's case.*

HERAKLES. Well don't you want to bring Sophokles back instead
Of Euripides—if you really *must* fetch someone?

DIONYSOS. I can't do that till I've tested Iophon more
To see how he writes now Sophokles can't give help.
And Euripides, what's more, he's such a rogue 80
He'd be happy to try to escape back here with me,
While even-tempered Sophokles won't mind death.*

HERAKLES. And Agathon—where's he now?

DIONYSOS. He's gone and left
me—
He's a good poet, true, and someone his friends all miss.

HERAKLES. But *where's* the poor thing gone?

DIONYSOS. To a land of plenty!*

HERAKLES. And what about Xenokles then?

DIONYSOS. He can go and hang!

HERAKLES. Pythangelos?* [*DIONYSOS shrugs.*]

XANTHIAS [*aside*]. But no one cares
about *me*,

While my shoulder chafes and chafes beneath this burden.
 HERAKLES. Aren't there lots of other young kids around the
 place
 Composing tragic plays—huge numbers of them, 90
 And all with more gift of the gab than Euripides has?
 DIONYSOS [*animated*]. But they're shrivelled grapes, producers of
 empty prattle,
 And haunts of twittering swallows. They damage the art,
 And as soon as they've staged a single play they vanish,
 Content to have pissed on tragedy just the once!
 You'll search in vain for a poet of *fertile* mind,
 The kind who's able to voice great noble expressions.
 HERAKLES. What d'you mean by 'fertile'?
 DIONYSOS. The sort whose language
 contains
 Such bold, ambitious utterances as these:
 [*airily*] 'Aither, bedroom of Zeus', 'the foot of time', 100
 Or 'a mind that refuses to swear a sacred oath
 But a tongue that perjures itself without the mind'.*
 HERAKLES. You actually *like* this stuff?
 DIONYSOS. It sends me crazy!
 HERAKLES. It's a great big con-trick: you know very well that it is.
 DIONYSOS. Don't try to inhabit my mind—just live in your own.
 HERAKLES. Everyone can see these things are a load of rubbish.
 DIONYSOS. I'll take your advice on *food*.
 XANTHIAS [*aside*]. But what about me?
 DIONYSOS. Well, the reason I came here wearing these clothes
 you see,
 In impersonation of you, was so you could tell me
 The names of people whose help I could call upon, 110
 The ones you used when you went to fetch Kerberos.*
 So tell me the hosts you stayed with, the harbours, the
 bread-shops,
 The brothels, the resting-places, the springs, the roads,
 The cities, accommodation, and the women whose inns
 Have the fewest bedbugs.
 XANTHIAS [*aside*]. But no one cares about *me*!
 HERAKLES. Are you really fearless enough to make the descent?
 DIONYSOS. Don't try to object. Just tell me the fastest road

By which I'll find my way right down to Hades.
 And I don't want a route that's hot, nor too cold either.
 HERAKLES. Let's see then, which is the way that I'd recommend
 first? 120
 [*Ponders.*] There's one that starts with a rope and a bench to
 stand on.
 You could hang yourself!
 DIONYSOS. No more of that—too stiffling!
 HERAKLES. There's another path that's direct and widely used.
 You pound it in a mortar.
 DIONYSOS. You mean drink hemlock?
 HERAKLES. I certainly do!
 DIONYSOS. That's too chilly and wintry a way:
 It immobilizes your legs by freezing them cold.*
 HERAKLES. Do you want me to tell you a quick and downhill
 route?
 DIONYSOS. By Zeus, yes please! I'm not very good at walking.
 HERAKLES. Then take a stroll to the Kerameikos.*
 DIONYSOS. What then?
 HERAKLES. Climb up the tower, that high one. 130
 DIONYSOS. And what after that?
 HERAKLES. Look down from there when they're going to hold
 a torch-race.*
 Then when you hear the spectators all shout 'Go then!',
 At that point go yourself.
 DIONYSOS. Go where?
 HERAKLES. Straight down!
 DIONYSOS. But that would make mincemeat of both halves of my
 brain!.*
 That's not the way I want to go.
 HERAKLES. Which one then?
 DIONYSOS. The route you took yourself.
 HERAKLES. That involves a long
 voyage.
 Right at the start you'll come to a very large lake
 Of unfathomed depth.
 DIONYSOS. Then how will I manage to cross it?
 HERAKLES [*gesturing*]. In a boat no bigger than this, a very old man
 Will take you across if you pay him a fare of two obols.* 140

DIONYSOS [*sighing*]. Good gracious!

How much two obols will buy wherever one goes!

How come this price reached Hades?

HERAKLES. It came with Theseus.*

After that you'll see great numbers of serpents and beasts,

The most frightening kinds.

DIONYSOS. But don't try to scare me like that:

You won't put me off.

HERAKLES. Then you'll come to a huge stretch of mud*

And a river of shit. That's where you'll see submerged

Any person who's ever done terrible wrong to a guest,

Or has screwed a boy and stolen his money as well,

Or has thrashed his mother or broken his father's jaw,

Or has sworn an oath and perjured himself in the act— 150

[*with mock horror*] Or has had a speech copied out from

Morsimos' plays!*

DIONYSOS. By all the gods they ought to add to those

Any person who's learnt Kinesias' military dance!*

HERAKLES. After that the breath of pipes will waft around you

And you'll see the most beautiful light, just like on earth.

There'll be myrtle groves and groups of men and women

Ecstatic in celebration with clapping hands.

DIONYSOS. But who are *they*?

HERAKLES. Initiates of the Mysteries.

XANTHIAS [*aside*]. Well *I'm* the proverbial donkey in the

Mysteries!*

I refuse to hold this baggage a moment longer. 160

[XANTHIAS starts belatedly to take the various bundles off his pole, and has almost finished by line 165.]

HERAKLES. These people will tell you everything else that you need.

They live right next to the road that you'll walk along

And close to the doors of Plouton's palace itself.

Goodbye, my brother. [*Exits into house.*]

DIONYSOS. Many thanks. Take care of yourself

As well. [*To XANTHIAS*] And you pick up this bedding again.*

XANTHIAS. Before I've put it all down?

DIONYSOS. And make it sharpish.

XANTHIAS. But please don't make me. Why not hire one of the people

Who are joining the dead—there's surely someone who'll do it?

DIONYSOS. Suppose I can't find one?

XANTHIAS. Then use me again.

DIONYSOS. It's

a deal.

They're actually bringing a corpse along here now. 170

[*From one of the eisodoi two CARRIERS come into view with a CORPSE on a bier. They start to make their way across the orchêstra. DIONYSOS watches for a moment then hails the CORPSE as the group comes near.*]

Hey you! Yes it's you I mean, the one who's dead.

My man, are you willing to carry my baggage to Hades?

CORPSE [*sitting up*]. How much do you have?

DIONYSOS [*pointing*]. This much.

CORPSE. Will you

pay two drachmas?*

DIONYSOS. I certainly won't. Much less.

CORPSE [*to CARRIERS*]. Please move on quickly.

DIONYSOS. Just wait a moment, my fellow—let's reach agreement.

CORPSE. If you won't pay the fee that I've stated, you're wasting your breath.

DIONYSOS. I'll offer nine obols.

CORPSE [*sarcastically*]. I'd rather come back to life!

[*The CORPSE is carried away and off by the opposite eisodos.*]

XANTHIAS. What an arrogant bastard he was! Good riddance to him!

[*Picking up the baggage*] I'll do the job.

DIONYSOS. You're an absolute gentleman then.

Let's head to the boat. 180

[DIONYSOS and XANTHIAS resume their journey. As they do so, CHAIRON on his ferry-boat (on wheels, pulled by a rope mechanism) starts to come into view from the same eisodos by which the CORPSE has just left. The boat moves into the orchêstra.]

CHARON. Pull in, bring her up to the jetty!
 DIONYSOS. What's this?
 XANTHIAS. Do you need to ask? It's the lake, by Zeus,
 The one that Herakles mentioned—[*pointing*] I see the boat!
 DIONYSOS. So do I, by Poseidon! It's Charon himself right here.
 [*Giddily*] Hello, Charon! Hello, Charon! Hello!
 CHARON. Is there anyone here for the resting-place from troubles?
 Anyone for the Plain of Forgetting or Hopeless Task,
 Or Kerberos Town, Crows' End, or Tainaron Point?*

DIONYSOS. Yes me!
 CHARON. Get on board then quickly.
 DIONYSOS. But where are you
 heading?
 CHARON. To the crows!
 DIONYSOS. What, really?
 CHARON. As far as *you're* concerned!
 Get onto the boat.
 DIONYSOS [*to* XANTHIAS]. Slave, over here! 190
 CHARON. No slaves!
 Not unless he took part in the sea-fight to save our bacon.*
 XANTHIAS [*shiftily*]. Not me, I couldn't—my eyes were giving me
 trouble.
 CHARON. Get on with it then, you'll have to run round the lake.
 XANTHIAS. But where shall I wait?
 CHARON. By the stone of Shrivelling
 Place.
 There's a resting-point there.
 DIONYSOS. Understand?
 XANTHIAS. Yes, only too well.
 [*As* XANTHIAS *starts to trudge off and exits by the nearest eisodos,*
 DIONYSOS *moves towards* CHARON'S *boat.*]

What a wretched existence! I was cursed by someone today.
 CHARON [*to* DIONYSOS]. Sit down at the oar. [*Calling.*] If there's
 anyone else, hurry up.
 What the heck are you doing?
 DIONYSOS. What's wrong? I've done what you
 said.
 I've sat on the oar—that's where you told me to sit.

[CHARON *now moves* DIONYSOS *so that he is sitting in a position to row*
the boat while CHARON *steers it from the stern.*]

Get up and sit here instead, pot-belly! 200
 DIONYSOS. Okay then,
 CHARON. Now stretch out both of your hands in front.
 DIONYSOS. Okay then.
 CHARON. Stop fooling around! You have to *push* with your feet
 And pull the oar with real force.
 DIONYSOS. But how can I do it?
 I'm not a sailor, still less a Salamis type,*
 And yet you expect me to row?
 CHARON. It's easy: you'll hear
 Some beautiful songs when you start.
 DIONYSOS. Whose songs are those?
 CHARON. The frog-swans' amazing songs.
 DIONYSOS. Then give me my
 stroke!
 CHARON. Pull—up—push! Pull—up—push!

[*As* DIONYSOS *starts to row and the boat moves back in the direction*
it came from, the FROGS *appear from both sides of the stage, jumping*
in comically amphibian fashion and croaking loudly around DIONYSOS,
who struggles to fit his rowing rhythm to their sounds and sings in compe-
tition with them.]

[PARODOS I: 209–67]

FROGS. Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax!
 Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax! 210
 You children of marshes and springs,
 With the pipe-tuned cries of our hymns
 Let's proclaim our fine-voiced song,
 Ko-ax ko-ax!
 The same song which for Dionysos,
 Son of Zeus and god of Mount Nysa,
 We cried out in the marshes
 When the hungover revellers
 On the sacred day of Pots
 Go in crowds through my precinct.*
 Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax! 211

- DIONYSOS. But *I'm* beginning to feel an ache
Right under my arse, ko-ax ko-ax!
- FROGS. Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax!
- DIONYSOS. But *you*, I suppose, don't care at all.
- FROGS. Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax!
- DIONYSOS. I hope you rot with your croak 'ko-ax'!
This croak 'ko-ax' is your constant refrain.
- FROGS. Why be surprised, old busybody?
I'm adored by the Muses who love good music
And by goat-hoofed Pan, who plays the reed-
pipes. 230
Apollo the phorminx-player delights in me too
For the reed-stalks which strengthen the frame of the
lyre
And grow in my watery marshes.*
Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax!
- DIONYSOS. But *I'm* developing blisters here
And my anus has long been oozing sweat.
Any moment now it will peep out and say—
- FROGS. Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax!
- DIONYSOS. But o you song-loving species, 240
Please stop these sounds.
- FROGS. On the contrary
We'll raise our voices, the way in the past
On sun-drenched days
We leapt through galingale
And tufty reeds, taking great pleasure
In songs of copious splashings,
Or when to escape the rain from Zeus
We performed deep-water dances
With brilliant flashes of sound
And bubbling, spluttering poppings.
- DIONYSOS. Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax! 250
I've borrowed this cry from you.
- FROGS. In that case now we're heading for trouble.
- DIONYSOS. Not as much as *I* am, if rowing like this
I split myself asunder!
- FROGS. Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax!
- DIONYSOS. You can go and hang. Just see if I care.

- FROGS. Well then we'll continue to shriek
As much as our throats
Can manage the whole day long.
- DIONYSOS. Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax! 260
You'll never defeat me this way.
- FROGS. And nor will *you* defeat us either!
- DIONYSOS. And nor will *you* defeat me either!
You'll never do it. I too will shriek
All day if I have to, until I succeed
In proving supreme with my own ko-ax!
Brékekekex ko-ax ko-ax!

[*In what follows, as CHARON's boat reaches the edge of the orchestra, the FROGS hop back off-stage. After DIONYSOS has disembarked, the boat continues till it is out of sight. Shortly afterwards XANTHIAS reappears from the opposite eisodos to the one by which he left. The piper stops playing here and we return to spoken dialogue.*]

- DIONYSOS [*shouting*]. I knew I was bound to stop your croaking at
last.
- CHARON. Stop rowing, stop rowing. Steer in to the shore with
the oar.
Get out now. Pay me your fare. 270
- DIONYSOS. Right, here are two obols.*
- [*Looking round*] Now, Xanthias! Where's Xanthias! Hey, Xanthias!
- XANTHIAS [*appearing*]. Ho there!
- DIONYSOS. Come over here!
- XANTHIAS. Hello then,
master.
- DIONYSOS. Well where exactly is this?
- XANTHIAS. It's darkness and mud.
- DIONYSOS. So *did* you see the father-beaters round here
And the perjurers too, the way he described?
- XANTHIAS. Didn't *you*?
- DIONYSOS. By Poseidon I certainly did—[*peering at audience*] and
I still see them now!
Right, what are we going to do?
- XANTHIAS. It's best to move on,
Since this is the place where he told us that beasts are lurking,
The frightening ones that he mentioned.

DIONYSOS. He'll pay for such talk!
 That was all pure bluster in order to make me afraid. 280
 He's knows I'm a fighter but feels he needs to compete.
 [*Loftily*] 'There's nothing as self-important as Herakles is!'^{*}
 I actually wish I could face a foe down here
 And achieve some feat that's worthy of the journey.
 XANTHIAS [*ironically*]. Of course you do! And indeed I can hear
 a noise.

[*In the following lines XANTHIAS peers and points, with mock-terror, into the supposed darkness, while DIONYSOS becomes increasingly agitated.*]

DIONYSOS [*startled*]. Where, where?
 XANTHIAS. Behind you.
 DIONYSOS. Then get behind
 me quickly!
 XANTHIAS. No, it's now in front.
 DIONYSOS. Then get in front of me quickly!
 XANTHIAS. In fact I can see, by Zeus, a very large beast!
 DIONYSOS. What kind?
 XANTHIAS. A terrible kind. It's changing shape.
 It was first a cow, then a mule, and now it's—a woman, 290
 A ravishing beauty.
 DIONYSOS. *Where?* Let me go and approach her.
 XANTHIAS. She's no longer a woman. She's now turned into a dog.
 DIONYSOS. It's Empousa then!*

XANTHIAS. There's a fire that's lighting up
 The whole of her face.
 DIONYSOS. Does she have a bronze leg too?
 XANTHIAS. By Poseidon she does! And the other is made of dung.
 It's true.
 DIONYSOS [*panicked*]. Then where should I run?
 XANTHIAS. I'm thinking the
 same!
 DIONYSOS [*towards front row*]. O priest, protect me—I want to
 drink with you later!*

XANTHIAS [*as if to DIONYSOS*]. We're going to die, lord Herakles!
 DIONYSOS. Don't call *me*,
 I beg you please, good fellow, or mention my name.
 XANTHIAS. Dionysos, then. 300

DIONYSOS. That's even worse than the other!
 XANTHIAS [*as if to beast*]. Avaunt thee now! [*To DIONYSOS*]
 Come over here, my master.
 DIONYSOS. What for?
 XANTHIAS. Take heart. It's all turned out okay.
 We can say, just like the actor Hegelochos did:
 'After stormy waters I see once more—a weasel!'^{*}
 Empousa's vanished.
 DIONYSOS. Do you swear it's true?
 XANTHIAS. By Zeus!
 DIONYSOS. And swear again.
 XANTHIAS. By Zeus!
 DIONYSOS. Once more.
 XANTHIAS. By Zeus!
 DIONYSOS. What a wretched business; the sight of her made
 me pale.
 XANTHIAS [*pointing behind DIONYSOS*]. But this part here has
 turned a dark brown colour!
 DIONYSOS. Well how have I found myself in so much trouble?
 Which god's to blame for trying to ruin my life? 310
 XANTHIAS. Blame 'Aither, bedroom of Zeus' or 'the foot of time!'^{*}
 [*Abruptly*] But hey!
 DIONYSOS. What's wrong?
 XANTHIAS. Well didn't you hear?
 DIONYSOS. Hear what?
 XANTHIAS. The breath of pipes.
 DIONYSOS. Oh yes! And I feel warm air
 That wafts from torches with mystic atmosphere.
 Let's stand back over here out of sight and listen.

[*As DIONYSOS and XANTHIAS move back and stand at a corner of the stage building, the CHORUS processes in from an eisodos and starts to dance at 323 ff. They are a mixture of male and female: though dressed in ragged costumes, they represent ecstatic Eleusimian initiates who are celebrating in Hades in a similar manner as in the Mysteries themselves.*]

[PARODOS II: 316–459]

CHORUS. Iakchos, hail Iakchos!*

Iakchos, hail Iakchos!

XANTHIAS. Ah, now I know, o master. This must be where
 The initiates that he mentioned are celebrating.
 It's the Iakchos' chant they sing in the Agora too.* 320

DIONYSOS. You're right, that's who they are. Our best plan then
 Is to keep entirely quiet and find out more.

CHORUS. Iakchos, venerable lord who dwells in this place, *Strophe*
 Iakchos, hail Iakchos!
 Come join our dance in this meadow,
 Come among the pious followers of your cult,
 Toss wildly a head that's crowned
 With a wreath luxuriant in fruit
 Of myrtle berries, and stamp your foot 330
 In rhythms bold for this unbridled
 Dance-loving act of worship,
 An occasion full of the Graces,
 A sacred dance for pious initiates.

XANTHIAS [*excited*]. O mistress venerable, daughter of
 Demeter,
 What a lovely odour of pig flesh wafted this way!

DIONYSOS. Keep still then, please, if you want to get some
 sausage.*

CHORUS. Arouse the flaming torches you *Antistrophe* 340
 brandish aloft,
 Iakchos, hail Iakchos,
 Our light-bringing star for nocturnal rites!
 The meadow blazes with flames of gleaming torches.
 Even old men's knees flex in dance.
 They shake off all their cares
 And the heavy weight of copious years
 To join the sacred worship.
 Lighting the way with your torch 350
 Lead on to the flowering marshy ground,
 O blessed one, our dance of rejuvenation.

[*The CHORUS halts in the centre of the orchêstra and their LEADER steps forward to chant the following section.*]*

LEADER. I proclaim ceremonial silence now and demand all those
 should depart
 Who have no knowledge of what's said here or whose minds are
 far from pure,
 Or who've never seen our noble Muses' rites or joined in their
 dances
 Or those who remain outside the cult of Kratinos the
 bull-eating god,*
 Or who take great pleasure in vulgar jokes at a time when
 they're out of place.
 And likewise with those who fail to avoid all forms of divisive
 faction
 But stoke it up and fan the flames for the sake of private profit, 360
 Or when the city's enduring a storm take bribes while hold-
 ing office
 Or betray our defences on land or at sea, or export contraband
 goods
 From Aigina the way that Thorykion did, that damnable
 tax-collector,*
 Transporting oar-pads and flax and pitch to enemy land,
 Epidaurus.
 Or the person who plots to furnish funds for the fleets of the fees
 that we're fighting,
 Or the one who shits in Hekate's shrines yet composes dithyramb
 lyrics,*
 Or the politician who tries to reduce the fees of dramatic poets*
 Just because he's been mocked in the ancient rites that belong to
 the god Dionysos.
 To all these people I now proclaim for a second and third time too:
 Depart from our Eleusinian dances. But you who remain raise
 your song 370
 And prepare to perform the nocturnal revels that suit our
 festival here.

[*The CHORUS moves into position for a further sequence of dance-songs.*]

CHORUS. Advance, each one of you, boldly *Strophe*
 Into the blossoming bosoms
 Of the meadowland. Stamp feet,
 Aim shafts of ridicule,

Make merry with mocking humour.
We have eaten enough for the task.

Follow the dance-steps and raise *Antistrophe*
A noble cry for our Saviouress*
With voices of unison song,
For she promises us 380
She'll protect our land for ever,
Whatever Thorykion's wishes!

LEADER. Come now, undertake further hymns of joy for our grain-bearing queen herself,
The goddess Demeter. In loudest songs of worship give glory to her.

CHORUS. Demeter, mistress of holy rites, *Strophe*
Come stand amidst our ranks yourself,
Safeguard this chorus that is your own,
And grant that all day long in safety
We'll celebrate in play and dance.

And may we utter many jokes *Antistrophe*
But many serious things as well, 390
And may we serve your festival
In a worthy spirit of playful humour*
And win the ribbons of victory!

LEADER. Come again, I say,
And summon in song the handsome god to join us,
The one who makes this choral procession with us.

CHORUS. Iakchos the venerable, inventor of loveliest song *Strophe*
For this festival, accompany us
On our path to the goddess. 400
Show us how effortlessly
You complete this lengthy journey.
Iakchos, friend of dancers, escort me onwards!

It's you who to make us laugh (and keep *Antistrophe A*
things cheap)

Gave us tattered sandals to wear
And nothing but rags.*
You found a cost-free way
For us to play and dance.
Iakchos, friend of dancers, escort me onwards!

I took a glance just now at a young girl *Antistrophe B*
here:
She had the prettiest face you've seen, 410
And was dancing beside me.
Her dress was ripped down the side
And a tit bobbed out!
Iakchos, friend of dancers, escort me onwards!

[For some time DIONYSOS and XANTHIAS have been becoming visibly excited by the CHORUS's songs. They can now no longer restrain themselves but jump forward to make their own contributions to the increasingly high-spirited singing and dancing.]

DIONYSOS. Well I myself like joining in!
I'd like to meet this girl
And play and dance with her.

XANTHIAS. Me too!

CHORUS. Would you like us then together
To lampoon old Archedemos,*
Who had neither teeth nor kin by the age of seven?

Yet now he leads the people
Up among the earthly corpses, 420
And holds first place in depravity up there.

I hear that Kleisthenes' son
Was seen among the tombstones
When plucking the hairs from his anus and
tearing his cheeks.

He flailed away, bent double,
And wailed and shrieked aloud
For someone called Fuck-you from Anaphlystos.*

And Kallias, it's rumoured,
The son of one Horse-fucker,
Fought naval battles with cunts while dressed in
lion-skin.* 430

[*The rhythms and steps of the preceding song continue even as DIONYSOS turns to more practical matters.*]

DIONYSOS. Could you give us some information?
We're looking for Plouton's palace.
We're visitors here who arrived not long ago.

LEADER. You don't have far to travel
And won't need to ask me again.
That's his very door you've reached just over there.

DIONYSOS. Get lifting then once more, slave.
XANTHIAS. What's that? You mean to say
It's the same old story again with all this baggage.*

[*DIONYSOS waits for XANTHIAS to pick up all the bags one last time. During the following lines they make their way round the orchêstra towards the door of the stage building.*]

LEADER [*to* CHORUS]. Advance then 440
Through the goddess's sacred precinct, the flowery grove,
In playful spirits, participants in festivities that please
the gods.
I'll go to join the young girls and the women
In the goddess's all-night worship, and brandish this
sacred torch.

CHORUS. Let's make our way to the rose-filled *Strophe*
Blooming meadows,
With our usual customs 450
Of lovely dances
In playful spirits, which the blessed
Fates organize.*

On us alone shine sunlight's *Antistrophe*

Sacred beams,
On us the initiated,
Who led pious lives
Attentive always to needs of strangers
And to ordinary folk.

[*The CHORUS, as though moving onwards in the underworld, now retires to the sides of the orchêstra. DIONYSOS and XANTHIAS have reached the door of the stage building.*]

DIONYSOS [*nervously*]. Let me think, what way shall I bang on this
door before me? 460

I wonder how the locals round here do this.

XANTHIAS. Stop hesitating and just lay into the door

The way that Herakles would. Show some of his mettle!

DIONYSOS [*knocking*]. Hey, slave!

DOORKEEPER [*opening door abruptly*]. Who's this?

DIONYSOS. It's Herakles, the
tough guy.

DOORKEEPER. You nauseating, shameless, audacious man,
You're loathsome—more than loathsome—as loathsome as hell!
It's you who kidnapped Kerberos, our dog.
You rushed away with your hands locked round his throat.
I was guarding him myself. But now I've caught you!

[*DIONYSOS collapses in a terrified heap; the DOORKEEPER declaims in melodramatic triumph over him.*]

The black-hearted rock of the river Styx itself 470
And the blood-dripping crag that looms over Acheron
Prevent your escape, with Kokytos' hotfoot hounds
And the hundred-headed viper who'll rend your guts
To pieces, while an eel from Tartessos
Will clamp itself on your lungs, and as for your kidneys
And the rest of your innards, they'll all be pulped to blood
And torn apart by Gorgons from Teithras demel*
[*Stiltedly*] I'll guide my hasty foot to fetch them now.

[*The DOORKEEPER turns and rushes back into the stage building.*]

XANTHIAS. What's the matter with you?

- DIONYSOS. I've shitted myself: call
a god!
- XANTHIAS. You ridiculous thing! Get back on your feet at once 480
Before a stranger sees you.
- DIONYSOS. I can't, I'm fainting!
Please give me a sponge; I need it—[*cooly*] to cool down my heart.
- [XANTHIAS takes a sponge from the luggage; DIONYSOS starts to rub
between his legs.]
- XANTHIAS. Here, take it and rub.
- DIONYSOS. Where is it?
- XANTHIAS. O golden gods!
Is *that* where you keep your heart?
- DIONYSOS. It was so afraid
That it made its way right down—to my lower bowel.
- XANTHIAS. You're the biggest coward among gods and men.
- DIONYSOS. What,
me?
How come I'm a coward? I managed to ask for a sponge.
No one else would have done such a thing.
- XANTHIAS. Well what would they
do?
- DIONYSOS. A coward would just have stayed on the ground with
the smell.
But *I* stood up and wiped myself down, what's more. 490
- XANTHIAS. What courage, I say, by Poseidon!
- DIONYSOS. Well that's what
I think.
But weren't you frightened yourself by his booming words
And the threats that he made?
- XANTHIAS. Didn't give them a moment's
thought.
- DIONYSOS. Right then, since you're keen to prove yourself so
nerveless,
Let's see you play *my* role: you can take this club
And this lion-skin too, if you're such a fearless-guts!
Meanwhile I'll take your part and carry the bags.
- XANTHIAS. Well hand me your things at once; I'm happy with that.

[*They exchange costumes and accessories.*]

- And look at me now—this Herakles-Xanthias!
You'll soon see if I'm a coward and spineless like you. 500
- DIONYSOS [*sarcastically*]. You'll serve as Herakles' double—and
ready for whipping!
All right, I suppose it's my turn to carry this luggage.
- [*As they prepare to move on, the skênê door opens and SLAVE^A enters
from the palace of the underworld gods, mistakenly rushing to embrace the
disguised XANTHIAS.*]
- SLAVE^A. You've returned, o dearest Herakles! Come on inside.
As soon as the goddess learnt you'd arrived down here,
She arranged for loaves to be baked and had several pots
Of pea soup boiled for you, got a whole ox roasted,
And had various cakes and breads prepared. Come on in!
- XANTHIAS [*embarrassed*]. That's terribly kind, do thank her. By
- SLAVE^A.
Apollo, I won't
Just let you decline like this. She's also been stewing
Fine pieces of bird-meat and toasting lovely snacks 510
And mixing the sweetest wine for you to drink.
You really must join us inside.
- XANTHIAS. No thanks.
- SLAVE^A. Don't be silly!
I simply won't let you go. There's a pipe-girl as well
In here, such a gorgeous young thing, and some other girls too
All ready for dancing.
- XANTHIAS [*excited*]. What's that, some *dancing-girls*?
- SLAVE^A. They're in perfect youthful prime—[*gesturing*] and they've
trimmed themselves!*
So come on inside. When I left just now, the cook
Was finishing off the fish and the table was laid.
- XANTHIAS. Go on then, tell the dancing-girls in there
The important man they're expecting is now on his way. [*Exit*
SLAVE^A.]
[*To DIONYSOS*] Pick up the baggage then, slave, and follow me in. 520
- DIONYSOS. Hey, hold on there! You can't be serious now.

It was only a joke to dress you in Herakles' clothes.

So stop this fooling around now, Xanthias.

Pick up the luggage again and carry it all.

XANTHIAS. What d'you mean? You surely don't intend to take back

All the things you gave me before?

DIONYSOS. Just watch me now!

Take the lion-skin off.

XANTHIAS. I call the gods to witness

And ask them to lend me their help.

DIONYSOS. The gods? How funny!

You must be out of your mind to suppose that *you* 530

A mortal slave could become Alkmene's son!*

XANTHIAS. Okay, I suppose you win. Take them back. But remember

There may come a time, who knows, when you'll need me again!

[DIONYSOS takes back the lion-skin and club and resumes the identity of HERAKLES. The CHORUS's dance involves gestures/motions towards DIONYSOS, who responds by contributing to the song himself.]

CHORUS. This is the way a man should act whose *Strophe*

Mind and wits are all alert and

One who's sailed the seas a lot:

Always go with the list of the ship,

Keep to the side where things are safer,

Don't just stand like a painted image

Fixed in a pose that can't be changed,

Switch your side instead and always

Occupy the cushier station.

That's the role of a clever fellow— 540

Let's be blunt, it's *Theramenes!**

DIONYSOS. Picture how ludicrous the scene if *Antistrophe*

Xanthias, the merest slave, should

Find himself on Milesian bedding,*

Supine and kissing a dancing-girl, then

Called for a chamber-pot while I was

Watching his antics and all the time was

Jerking away with my own little winkle!*

Say this scoundrel caught sight of me, he'd

Smash his fist right into my jaw and

Strike a blow that would knock right out

All the teeth from the front of my mouth!*

[From one of the *eisodoi* two female figures enter: INNKEEPER and her colleague PLATHANE, accompanied by SLAVE^B and SLAVE^C. They immediately spot DIONYSOS's lion-skin and club and approach him aggressively.]

INNKEEPER. Plathane, Plathane, over here! Here's the scoundrel himself,

The person who came to our inn some time ago 550

And devoured those sixteen loaves without paying.

PLATHANE. By Zeus,

It's the very same man all right.

XANTHIAS [ironically]. Here's trouble for someone!

PLATHANE. There was more besides—all that stewed meat he managed to eat,

Twenty portions no less.

XANTHIAS. Then someone will pay for his crime!

INNKEEPER. And huge chunks of garlic.

DIONYSOS. Just stop all this prattle, you woman!

You're making no sense.

INNKEEPER. Yes I am! And you didn't expect

That I'd recognize you while you're wearing these boots on your feet.*

And I haven't yet mentioned the piles of fish that you ate!

PLATHANE. No you haven't, my dear. And what about all the fresh cheese

That he gorged himself on, even eating the baskets as well? 560

INNKEEPER. And when I tried to get him to settle the bill

He gave me the sourest look and started to bellow.

XANTHIAS. That sounds just like him! It's always the way he behaves.

PLATHANE. He started to pull out his sword—we thought he was mad!

XANTHIAS. I can just imagine, poor thing.

PLATHANE. We were so alarmed

That the pair of us jumped right up onto one of the roof-beams While *he* rushed out, purloining some mats for good measure.

XANTHIAS. Oh yes, that's typical too.

INNKEEPER. Now it's time to act.

[*to SLAVE^B*] Hurry up and ask my patron, Kleon, to come.

PLATHANE [*to SLAVE^C*]. And you must fetch Hyperbolos, if you can find him, 570

To help us destroy this man.* [*Exit SLAVE^B and SLAVE^C*]

INNKEEPER [*to DIONYSOS*]. You filthy gullet,

How I'd love to take a stone and smash your molars,

The ones you used to devour all that food of mine!

PLATHANE. And I'd like to hurl you down in the criminals' pit!*

INNKEEPER. And I'd like to take a sickle and cut out your throat,

The one with which you gobbled my sausages down!

I'm off to get Kleon. He'll come back here today

And issue a summons and tear this man to pieces.

[*The two women exit in haste.*]

DIONYSOS. I swear on my life, I love Xanthias more than the world.

XANTHIAS. Ah yes, ah yes, I see your ploy! Just stop it. 580

I refuse to wear Herakles' outfit again.

DIONYSOS [*wheedling*]. Please don't,

Sweet Xanthias!

XANTHIAS [*sarcastically*]. But how could a 'mortal slave'

Like me become 'Alkmene's son'? No chance.*

DIONYSOS. I know that you're angry, I know it. You're right to be so.

I would even allow you to hit me—I couldn't object.

[*DIONYSOS starts to hand over the lion-skin and club a second time.*]

If I ever attempt to take back these things again,

I wish utter destruction for me and my wife and my kids—

And damnation on blear-eyed Archedemos to boot!*

XANTHIAS. All right, I accept your oath on the terms you've stated.

[*XANTHIAS exchanges costumes again with DIONYSOS while the CHORUS re-enters the orchêstra to sing and dance, this time gesturing towards*

XANTHIAS, who responds by contributing to the song himself.]

CHORUS. Now's the time for further action, *Strophe** 590

Now you're wearing once again the

Costume that you had before.

Start to recover your dynamism,

Fix your face in a fearsome look that

Suits that hero, turned to a god, whose

Likeness you're adopting.

Don't betray yourself with nonsense or

Utter a word that suits a coward.

Any such lapse will mean one thing:

Lifting those bags on your back once more!

XANTHIAS. Wise advice you're offering, men. *Antistrophe*

Just this very same train of thought had

Formed itself inside my mind.

Even so it's clear to me that

Once he thinks it's in his interests, he'll 600

Try to take this costume back.

Nonetheless I'll do my best to

Let the world think I'm a hero and

See a menacing look in my eyes.

Time to adopt my pose—I hear the

Door behind me creaking open.

[*The skène door opens and the DOORKEEPER enters again, this time with two ATTENDANTS carrying a rope. In the by-now familiar way, he inevitably identifies XANTHIAS by his costume as HERAKLES.*]

DOORKEEPER [*gesturing*]. Tie him up straightaway, this dog-thief over here.

He'll pay for his crime. Hurry up!

DIONYSOS [*chortling*]. Here's trouble for someone!

XANTHIAS [*waving his club*]. To hell with you! Keep off!

DOORKEEPER. So you'll put up a fight?

[*Calling inside*] Hoy there, Ditylas, Skeblyas, and Pardokas,

Come straight out here and use as much force as you like.*

[*Enter three more ATTENDANTS. XANTHIAS uses his club to resist arrest.*]

DIONYSOS. Well isn't this quite outrageous, to see this man 610

Using blows when he's caught as a thief?

DOORKEEPER. It's beyond the pale!

DIONYSOS. It's outrageous in the extreme.

XANTHIAS [*to DOORKEEPER*]. But I swear by Zeus

I've never been down here before—if I have, let me die—

Nor stolen a single thing of yours, not one crumb.

In fact I'll make you a rather generous gesture:

You can take and subject to torture this slave of mine.*

If you find I've committed a crime, you can put me to death.

DOORKEEPER. What way should I torture him then?

XANTHIAS. *Every way: on
a ladder,*

Strung up, with bristle-whip lashings, or flaying alive,
Or tight on the wheel, pour vinegar into his nostrils 620

And crush him with bricks—any method you like! Just don't

Let him off with a smack from a leek or an onion-plant.

DOORKEEPER. What you say is fair. And if by using blows

I maim your slave, I'll promise you compensation.

XANTHIAS. No need to bother; just take him away for torture.

DOORKEEPER. I'll do it right here: you can see him answer the
questions.

[*To DIONYSOS*] Put down your stuff at once. Make sure you don't
Try to tell any lies to me.

DIONYSOS. I hereby declare

You can't torture *me*: I'm a god. If you dare to try,

You'll have only yourself to blame. 630

DOORKEEPER. What nonsense is this?

DIONYSOS. I'm a *god*, I assure you: Dionysos, Zeus's son.

And this is my slave.

DOORKEEPER. Do you hear?

XANTHIAS. I certainly do.

That's all the more reason to give him a really good whipping.

If it's true he's a god, then he won't even feel the pain.

DIONYSOS. Well since you claim yourself that *you're* a god,

Why not accept a beating the same as mine?

XANTHIAS. That makes good sense. [*To DOORKEEPER*]

Whichever of us you see

Start to shed tears first or flinching at all at the blows,

You'll be able to tell that this one can't be a god.

DOORKEEPER. That's very fair-minded of you, I can't

deny it. 640

You're prepared to follow what's right. Well, both of you strip.

[*DIONYSOS and XANTHIAS both remove their upper garments to bare*

*their backs. The DOORKEEPER takes a rope or whip from one of the
ATTENDANTS with which to deliver the blows in what follows.]*

XANTHIAS. Now how will you test us fairly?

DOORKEEPER. That's easily done—

By giving alternate blows.

XANTHIAS. That sounds just fine.

[*DIONYSOS and XANTHIAS move slightly apart and bend forward in
preparation.*]

Right then. Now wait and see if I flinch at all.

Have you struck me already?

DOORKEEPER. Not yet. [*He strikes now.*]

XANTHIAS [*faking*]. That's why

I feel nothing.

DOORKEEPER. Well I'll strike the other one now. [*He hits DIONYSOS.*]

DIONYSOS [*also faking*]. Will

you tell me when?

DOORKEEPER. I've done so already!

DIONYSOS [*nonchalantly*]. Then why did I not even sneeze!

DOORKEEPER. I can't explain. But I'll try the one here again.

XANTHIAS. Well hurry up please. [*The DOORKEEPER strikes
harder.*] Agh, agh!

DOORKEEPER. Well what's that cry?

You surely weren't in pain? 640

XANTHIAS. Just getting excited

About the Herakles festival at Diomeia.*

DOORKEEPER. This man's got the gods on his side. Now to *this one*
again.

[*He moves back to DIONYSOS and strikes a harder blow than before.*]

DIONYSOS. Eee, eee!

DOORKEEPER. What's wrong?

DIONYSOS. I'm cheering the sight of
horsemen.

DOORKEEPER. But why are you crying?

DIONYSOS. There must be some onions
round here.

DOORKEEPER. So you're not concerned by the blows!

DIONYSOS. Not the
slightest concern.
DOORKEEPER. In that case I'll have to go back to
this other one here.

[*He now strikes XANTHIAS again even harder.*]

XANTHIAS. Aagh, aagh!
DOORKEEPER. What's wrong?
XANTHIAS. I've trod on a thorn—pull
it out.
DOORKEEPER. What's happening here? Back again to the other
one then.

[*He takes his time and delivers the hardest blow yet to DIONYSOS.*]

DIONYSOS. Apollo, help!—[*solemnly*] 'from your home in Delos or
Pytho'.

XANTHIAS. He yelped with pain! You must have heard. 660

DIONYSOS. No I didn't.

I was simply quoting a satire by Hipponax.*

XANTHIAS [*to DOORKEEPER*]. You're indecisive. What about
a good whack to his ribs?

DOORKEEPER. I'll go one better—[*to DIONYSOS*] let's see that
belly of yours. [*Hits him.*]

DIONYSOS. Poseidon, help!

XANTHIAS. There's someone in pain.

DIONYSOS [*suddenly singing*]. 'O you

Who control the Aegean headland
And rule in the grey sea's depths'.*

DOORKEEPER. In Demeter's name I'm quite unable to tell
Which one of you is a god. So come inside.

The master himself will know how to recognize you,
And Pherrephatta as well, since they're gods themselves.* 670

DIONYSOS. That's a good suggestion you've made. I only wish
You'd thought of it sooner, before I suffered these blows.

[*All the characters exit into PLOUTON's palace.*]

[PARABASIS: 674–737]*

CHORUS. Muse, join us in our sacred dance-steps,

Come to be part of our song's delight,
Come where you'll behold great throngs of people,
Many thousands seated in their wisdom,
Every one more honourable than Kleophon*
On whose lips of muddled speech
Is heard the raucous sound
Of a Thracian swallow
Perched amid barbarian branches.
It shrieks a mournful nightingale's song,
Announcing Kleophon's destruction—
Even if the votes are equal!

LEADER. Right and proper it is for us, a sacred chorus, to give
the city
Best advice and best instructions. First of all we think you
should
Treat all citizens now the same and take away the fears of some.
Those who may have done some wrong when tripped in
Phrynichos' wrestling-bouts,*
Now's the time to let them leave their previous lapses in
the past,
Let them shed their former guilt and wipe away their old
mistakes.
Next, we think no one should live amongst us with their rights
curtailed.
That seems shameful when compared with those who fought
in one sea-battle yet
Now, just like those old Plataians, are no longer slaves but
masters instead.*
Not that we're purporting to say there's anything wrong with
that, of course.
Praise we're happy to give you there: it's the only sensible thing
you've done!
Surely, though, you should be fair to others who've fought in
many sea-battles,
Those whose fathers did the same, whose families form ancestral
stock?
They're the ones who ask your pardon: forgive them their misfor-
tune now.

Come, relent, give up your anger, all you whose natures make
 you wise. 700
 Let's agree to band together and count as kinsmen every one,
 Give them all full citizen rights, provided they man our ships
 and fight!
 Pride and hard disdain won't serve us well while things stand as
 they do.
 'Tossed on stormy waves' our city's affairs hang in the
 balance now.*
 Follow this good advice or else the future will show how foolish
 we were.

CHORUS. 'If my eye is a steady judge of the cast of life'*
 And character of a man who's in for big trouble,
 A certain monkey's mischief won't last much longer—
 Kleigenes the diminutive,*
 Foulest of all bath-keepers 710
 Who mixing their washing-powders control
 Adulterated soda
 And earthy detergent.
 He'll soon be done for! And knows it too,
 Which makes him full of aggression,
 Afraid he may be mugged when drunk
 If he goes without a big stick!

LEADER. Many's the time we've noticed something strange about
 the city's ways,
 Namely, how it treats those citizens who deserve to be thought
 the best
 Just the same as it treats old coins as well as the recent gold ones
 too. 720
Those were coins of solid value, no counterfeits of them were found.
 Nowhere has there ever been a finer currency, all agree.
 Only they were minted pure and always proved their worth when
 tested;
 All the world could count on them, Greeks and barbarians both
 alike.
 Now, however, they're obsolete, replaced by lousy coins of
 bronze,

Recently minted, of no long standing, and stamped in the ugliest
 fashion as well.*
 Just the same with citizens too: those we know to be true-born
 and decent,
 Those whose conduct is always just, the ones who deserve to be
 thought the best,
 Men brought up in wrestling-schools and taught to dance and
 play music too,
They're despised. Instead the ones of 'bronze', the foreign and
 flaming-haired, 730
 Those who lack all breeding in every respect, it's *those we choose*
 to employ,
 Recent arrivals of just the sort the city would once have
 rejected outright—
 Even to play the part of scapegoats would once have been too
 good for them!
Please, you idiots listening now, it's not too late to change
 your ways.*
 Choose to use the best men once again. If all then turns out
 well,
 Praise will come your way. And if you fail, at least the wise will
 think
 Swinging from a high-grade tree is consolation for the hanged!

[*The stage-door opens and XANTHIAS and SLAVE^D enter in mid-
 conversation.*]

SLAVE^D. By Zeus the Saviour, what a decent man he must be,
 That master of yours.
 XANTHIAS. But how could he fail to be decent?
 He's the type who knows nothing except for drinking and
 fucking. 740
 SLAVE^D. I'm amazed he gave you no beating despite the fact
 That you, the slave, purported to be the master.
 XANTHIAS. A beating? He would have been sorry!
 SLAVE^D. Yes, that's the
 talk,
 That's real slave spirit—the kind I like showing myself.
 XANTHIAS. Do you really enjoy such things?
 SLAVE^D. It's a kind of rapture

When I'm able to curse my master behind his back.
 XANTHIAS. And what do you feel as you mutter your private complaints
 When he hits you then sends you outside?
 SLAVE^D. Oh I love that too!
 XANTHIAS. And what about making *mischievous*?
 SLAVE^D. There's nothing quite like it!
 XANTHIAS. You're my own flesh and blood! And when you hear your masters
 In private conversation? 750
 SLAVE^D. I'm crazy with joy!
 XANTHIAS. Then dishing the dirt about them to others?
 SLAVE^D. Oh yes!
 That's such a thrill it makes me ejaculate!
 XANTHIAS. O Phoibos Apollo, please give me your hand to shake.
 Let's kiss each other as well. [*Turns round.*] Please tell me now,
 By Zeus who's the god of whipping-boys like us,
 What's all this uproar and shouting I hear inside
 Like a quarrel?
 SLAVE^D. It's Aischylos and Euripides.
 XANTHIAS. Well I never!
 SLAVE^D. It's really a quite momentous affair
 That's erupted among the dead in an outbreak of strife. 760
 XANTHIAS. But what's the reason?
 SLAVE^D. A law exists down here
 That for all the great sophisticated arts
 The person who holds the highest esteem in his group
 Should have special dining rights in the Prytaneion*
 And a throne right next to Plouton.
 XANTHIAS. I understand.
 SLAVE^D. Until, that is, a superior artist arrives,
 Someone who's better than him. Then he has to give way.
 XANTHIAS. But why's that caused any trouble for Aischylos?
 SLAVE^D. He held the throne for tragic drama, that's why.
 He was deemed the best poet at that.
 XANTHIAS. But who is it *now*?
 SLAVE^D. When Euripides came down to Hades, he started
 To harangue the criminals here—the muggers and thieves,

The ones who'd beaten their fathers, the burglars as well:
 There's a crowd of them all in Hades. And when they heard
 His debating speeches, his verbal twists and turns,
 They went quite crazy about him and called him the best.
 He was so puffed up that he laid his claim to the throne
 Where Aischylos sat.
 XANTHIAS. But wasn't he pelted for that?
 SLAVE^D. Not at all, the crowd cried out for a competition,
 To decide which one has the finer poetic art. 765
 XANTHIAS. The crowd of riff-raff you mean?
 SLAVE^D. Yes, their shouts
 thundered out.
 XANTHIAS. But weren't there others who sided with
 Aischylos then?
 SLAVE^D. Superior taste's in short supply—[*gestures at audience*]
 like here!
 XANTHIAS. Well tell me now what Plouton intends to do.
 SLAVE^D. He's going to stage a contest and reach a judgement
 By putting their artistry to the test.
 XANTHIAS. But why
 Didn't Sophokles too assert his right to the throne?
 SLAVE^D. He's not like that.* He gave Aischylos a kiss
 When he came down here, and grasped him by the hand.
 He made it clear that he laid no claim to the throne. 770
 But he said he was ready, just like Kleidemides,*
 To wait as reserve: if Aischylos prevails,
 He'll stay in his place; if not, he'll enter the contest
 And pit his art against Euripides then.
 XANTHIAS. So it's really going to happen?
 SLAVE^D. It is, quite soon.
 The whole tremendous commotion will take place here.
 They'll actually weigh their art in a pair of scales.
 XANTHIAS. What, you mean weigh tragedy just like
 chunks of meat?*
 SLAVE^D. They'll bring out rulers and rods to measure their verses
 And folding builders' frames—
 XANTHIAS [*baffled*]. For making bricks?
 SLAVE^D. Set-squares and wedges as well. Euripides says
 He'll scrutinize word by word his opponent's plays.

XANTHIAS. I imagine that Aischylos must be fuming with rage.
 SLAVE^D. With lowered head he glowered in bull-like aggression!
 XANTHIAS. But who will *judge* these things?
 SLAVE^D. An awkward

question.

There's a shortage of expert men for them to choose from.

The Athenians weren't at all to Aischylos' liking—

XANTHIAS. I suppose he thought too many of them were scum!

SLAVE^D. And he took the view that the rest of the people were
 useless

At judging poets. So then they picked your *master*: 810
 The tragedian's art is one that he knows very well.
 Let's go back inside. Whenever our masters are busy,
 It's bound to mean there's trouble in store for *us*.

[*They go back into the palace through the central stage door.*]

CHORUS. Fearsome the wrath the loud-thundering one will feel
 inside

When he sees his antagonist sharpening all his
 loquacious teeth.

At that moment a surge of terrible madness will make
 His eyes start to swivel around in their sockets!

Great flashing-helmeted strife will follow among
 horse-crested words,

And screeching chariot axles will split into slivers of
 wood,

While one of these mortals, a craftsman of intellect,
 fights 820

Against the other's horse-galloping utterances.

Bristling the shaggy-necked hair of the mane flowing
 down from his head,

Contracting the fearsome skin of his forehead, he'll
 roar and release

Great bolt-fastened words which he's torn up like
 pieces of timber

With the force of a storm of gigantic proportions.

Then the mouth-manipulating assessor of verses, the
 smooth

Curling tongue that controls the horse's bit with envy,
 Will dissect words and subtly reduce to nothing
 The heaving efforts of the other's lungs.

[*The stage door opens: enter PLOUTON, who will observe from one side
 till 1414; behind him come a haughty AISCHYLOS and an overwrought
 EURIPIDES, rushing on in mid-conversation with DIONYSOS.*]

EURIPIDES [*to DIONYSOS*]. I refuse to let go of the throne,
 stop lecturing me.* 830

I claim that I'm better than him in this art of ours.

DIONYSOS. Why this silence, Aischylos? You hear what he says.

EURIPIDES. He'll start with this supercilious pose! It's like

The kind of pretentious bluster he used in his plays.

DIONYSOS. I suggest, my man, that you tone down your words
 a little.

EURIPIDES. I know what he's like; I saw through him long ago.

He's a poet who makes his characters wild and wilful,

His style's uncurbed, unruly, without any limits,

Devoid of slickness, verbosely vaunting its garbage.

AISCHYLOS. How dare you, 'son of a goddess who lives in the
 fields'!* 840

You abuse me like that, you collector of chatterbox talk,

Creator of beggars and rag-costume-stitcher to boot?*

You won't get away with such words.

DIONYSOS. Stop, Aischylos,
 'Don't let your intestines become inflamed with cholera!'

AISCHYLOS. I've no intention of stopping before I've shown

The effrontery of this poet whose heroes are cripples.*

DIONYSOS [*melodramatically*]. Bring out black sheep, my
 slaves, bring out black sheep!*

A whirlwind's on the point of bursting upon us.

AISCHYLOS [*to EURIPIDES*]. You collector of monodies written
 in Cretan style,

And polluter of tragic art with stories of incest*— 850

DIONYSOS. Please stop, o Aischylos, revered by many.

And you, o wretched Euripides, hide from this hailstorm,

Pull back, keep out of the way, if you've got any sense:
 There's a risk he'll strike your head with a word of anger
 So it splits wide open and out pours—*Telephos!**
 And Aischylos, don't yield to anger, be mild.
 Pose questions, be questioned in turn. But swapping abuse
 Is not for poets but only for female bread-sellers.
 You're roaring away like an oak-tree that's been ignited.

EURIPIDES. Well *I'm* quite ready—you won't see *me* pulling
 back—

86o

To bite and be bitten in turn. If he wants, I'll go first.
 There's tragedy's verses and songs and sinews to test.*
 And by Zeus I'll offer my *Peleus* and *Aiolos* too,
 And my *Meleager*—and on top of those, *Telephos!**

DIONYSOS. And what do *you* propose, tell us, Aischylos?

AISCHYLOS. I'd prefer this quarrel to take place somewhere else.
 The contest isn't on equal terms.

DIONYSOS. Why's that?

AISCHYLOS. In my case what I composed hasn't died with me,
 But *his* has died with him, so he'll have it to hand.

Nonetheless, since it's what you want, we must do these things. 87o

DIONYSOS. Very well. [*Calling.*] Please bring me incense and
 fire to burn.

Before the clever exchanges begin I'll pray
 That I'm able to judge this contest with expert finesse.
 [*To CHORUS*] While I do, I'd like you to sing a song to the Muses.

[*An ATTENDANT brings out a small altar, on which DIONYSOS burns
 some incense while he makes gestures of prayer.*]

CHORUS. Nine maiden daughters of Zeus, you sacred
 Muses, who look down on the subtly reasoning,
 intelligent minds
 Of these shapers of thought, when they come
 together in strife
 Pitting speech against speech in wrestling bouts
 of cogitation,
 Come here to behold the power
 Of mouths so formidable at producing
 Words an artist's tools have cut to size.
 Now's the moment for wisdom's great contest

88o

To move into action.

DIONYSOS. You two must pray as well before you speak.

AISCHYLOS [*adding incense*]. Demeter, goddess who nourished
 my mind and thought,
 Please make me worthy of what your Mysteries teach.*

DIONYSOS [*to EURIPIDES*]. You too must burn some incense.

EURIPIDES. I'd rather not.

There are different gods to whom I make my prayers.

DIONYSOS. You have personal gods, a new coinage?*

EURIPIDES. I certainly do!

DIONYSOS. Go on then, make your prayers to your private gods.

EURIPIDES. O Aither, where I pasture, and Pivoting Tongue,
 Astuteness, Nostrils keen to follow the scent,*
 Help me refute my opponent in all that he says.

[AGON: 895–1008]

CHORUS. We feel the most intense desire
 To hear from both these clever men
 Their finely choreographed words,
 Begin to launch your verbal assaults!
 Your tongues are ready for violent combat,
 You both possess courageous spirit,
 Your minds are primed for agile moves.
 Our expectation is of course
 That one will speak in elegant style
 And language polished to finest finish,
 While the other will tear up words like trees
 From their roots and falling upon his foe
 Will fill the air with a horse's thick dust-clouds of
 verses.*

LEADER. It's time to deliver your speeches now. Be sure to
 adopt a manner
 That's full of wit and straight to the point and avoids
 repeating clichés.

EURIPIDES. As regards myself and the kind of poet my work
 reveals me to be,

I'll come to that at the end of my speech, but begin by
exposing *him*.

I want to show what a charlatan and a fraudster he was in the
theatre.

He kept on duping those stupid spectators who'd grown
up with Phrynichos' plays.* 910

At the start of each work he liked to produce a veiled figure to
sit on the stage,

For example Achilles, or Niobe too: he wouldn't reveal their mask
But used them for purely showy effect, just stuck there
brooding in silence.*

DIONYSOS. I swear that's true!

EURIPIDES. But instead the chorus would
dump great chains of songs,
Four lyric sequences strung together, with the characters stuck
there in silence.

DIONYSOS. But I rather liked that silence, you know. It gave me
just as much pleasure

As the figures who jabber in modern plays.

EURIPIDES. But *that's* because
you were mindless,
No doubt about that.

DIONYSOS. Well I rather agree! But why did this so-
and-so do it?

EURIPIDES. Pure charlatanry! He wanted spectators to sit
there on tenterhooks,
Not sure when Niobe's voice would emerge. And meanwhile
the play plodded on. 920

DIONYSOS. The wicked old crook! And there was I, taken in
by his fraudulent tricks!

[*To AISCHYLOS*] But why all this twitchy and peevish movement?

EURIPIDES. Because

I'm exposing his faults!

[*Resuming*] Then when he'd finished with all this nonsense and
half the play had passed,

He'd give his character twelve huge words, each one as large as
an ox,

And all of them shaggy with eyebrows and crests, like frightening
bogey faces.

They were words that nobody understood.

AISCHYLOS [*roaring*]. I can't take any more!

DIONYSOS. Keep
quiet!

EURIPIDES. His language was never remotely clear—

DIONYSOS [*to AISCHYLOS*]. Will you

please stop grinding your teeth!

EURIPIDES. But perpetual talk of Skamander rivers and ditches and
emblems on shields

Of griffin-eagles in beaten bronze.* His words were enormous
crags

That were hard to interpret at all. 930

DIONYSOS. By the gods, I can certainly
vouch for that!

I once lay awake the whole night long unable to sleep while
I puzzled

Over what kind of bird he might have meant by his phrase
the 'tawny horse-cock'.*

AISCHYLOS. It's a sign they painted on prows of ships—your
ignorance knows no bounds!

DIONYSOS. Did they really? I thought that it must have meant
Eryxis, Philoxenos' son.*

EURIPIDES. Well why was it right to mention cocks in dignified
tragic verse?

AISCHYLOS. You god-forsaken wretch, what about the things
that *you* composed?

EURIPIDES. But I never mentioned horse-cocks for sure, nor
goat-stags either, like you—

The sorts of things you see depicted on fabrics imported from
Persia.

When *I* took over the tragic art from you, I found her condition
Unhealthily bloated from constant bombast, all swollen with
ponderous language. 940

So straight away I made her diet and removed that excess
weight:

I slimmed her down with versicles and walks and lots of
white beet.

I gave her the juice of babbling speech which I squeezed from
the books I own.

Then I fed her up on monodic songs and mixed
Kephisophon in.*

I didn't just talk any nonsense I liked nor heedlessly jumble my
words.

Instead, the character first on stage would start with a direct
statement

Of the ancestry of the plot.

AISCHYLOS. Which was bound at least to be better
than *yours!*

EURIPIDES. From the opening lines I would never allow any charac-
ter just to be idle.

It made no difference what sort they were: so wives and slaves
as well,

And masters and maidens and old women too—they all
spoke the same. 950

AISCHYLOS. Then surely
You deserved to die for such recklessness.

EURIPIDES. Not at all, in Apollo's
name!

This way of writing was *democratic*.

DIONYSOS. Don't pursue this line, old
chap.

It's not a direction of argument that promises well for you.*

EURIPIDES [*points at audience*]. Moreover I taught these people
here to chatter away –

AISCHYLOS. Too true!

But before you'd managed to teach them that I wish you'd been
split down the middle!

EURIPIDES. And how to apply to language itself fine measuring-
rods and set-squares,

And to think, to observe, to comprehend, to wriggle and always be
crafty,*

To cultivate a suspicious mind, to ponder all things—

AISCHYLOS. Yes, too
true!

EURIPIDES. And I staged *domestic* affairs of the kinds we all habit-
ually live with,

The sorts of things spectators know well. So *if* I'd got anything
wrong, 960

They would have found fault with my artistry. But I didn't, like
you, employ bluster

To distract their minds from serious thought, nor did I cause
frissons of horror

With Kyknos-type figures or Memnons as well, whose horses
have bells on their harness.*

You can tell us apart by the kinds of men who are products of *his*
plays and mine.

Phormisios belongs to him, and Megainetos the Phrygian:
All trumpets and lances and long beards they are, the sort who rip
trees with their teeth.

But *my* disciples are Kleitophon and nimble Theramenes too.*

DIONYSOS. Theramenes, hey? He's certainly clever and quick-
witted too in all things.

If ever he finds himself in trouble or even comes anywhere
near it,

He always escapes with a lucky throw—for him, nothing dicey
goes wrong!*

EURIPIDES. Well, that's the sort of cogitation
I introduced in the lives of these people,
By making reasoning part of my art
And enquiry too, which means they now ponder
And thoroughly grasp all manner of things,
Especially how to improve the way
They organize their domestic affairs
And constantly ask 'Well how's this going?',
'Where's such and such?', and 'Who took that?'

DIONYSOS. I swear by the gods we've reached the point
Where every Athenian enters his house
And shouts at the top of his voice to the slaves
With urgent demands: 'Now where's that pot?
Who's eaten up the head of that fish,
The sprat I mean? That bowl of mine
I bought last year is finished for good,
And where's that garlic from yesterday?
Who's nibbled away at the olives as well?'
Yet in the past they were mindless dimwits
Who gaped as helpless as tiny babies
And sat there like nincompoops.

[While singing and dancing the following, the CHORUS gestures in the direction of AISCHYLOS.]

CHORUS. 'Beholdest thou this, noble Achilles?''* *Antistrophe*
 Come then, what answer will you give?
 Be sure of this one thing:
 Don't let your anger seize hold of you
 And sweep you outside the chariot-tracks.
 Terrible charges he's brought against you.
 But even so, magnanimous man,
 Don't let your reply be driven by anger.
 Instead reduce your vessel's canvas,
 Make use of merely the tips of the sails, 1000
 Then gradually, gradually gather your speed
 While watching out for the moment when
 You catch a wind that's smooth and steady behind
 you.

LEADER. O first of all Greek poets who built a tower of mighty words
 And adorned a realm of tragic nonsense, be bold and spout your
 speech.

AISCHYLOS. These circumstances fill me with rage, my guts are
 wrenched with anger.

To think that *I* must respond to *him*! But in case he should say
 I'm confounded—

[To EURIPIDES] Just answer me this: what kinds of things should
 prompt our praise for a poet?

EURIPIDES. Sophistication and moral advice. And because it's our
 task to improve

All the people who live in the cities of Greece. 1010

AISCHYLOS. So if you have
failed to achieve that

And you took good people of noble mind and turned them
 instead into rabble,

What penalty will you agree you deserve?

DIONYSOS. He should die! No
 need to ask *him*.

AISCHYLOS. Consider then whether the sorts of people I passed
 on to him at the start

Were of noble mind and stood tall and proud, not turn-and-run
 cowards in battle

Nor vulgar loafers nor dirty tricksters nor rogues like people today.
 They breathed the spirit of lances and spears and headgear
 with flashing white plumes

And helmets and greaves and mighty mettle of seven full ox-
 hides in strength.*

EURIPIDES. Here we go, as I thought, with this awful stuff. He'll
 grind me down hammering helmets.

What actions of *yours*, could you please explain, taught the people
 to be quite so noble?

DIONYSOS. Answer him, Aischylos. Don't keep brooding in arro-
 gant, wilful rage. 1020

AISCHYLOS. I composed a play that was full of *Ares*.

DIONYSOS. Which one?

AISCHYLOS. The

Seven against Thebes.*

Every man who saw that play performed would have longed for
 a warlike spirit.

DIONYSOS. Well that's a terrible thing that you did! You made the
 Thebans become

Far braver in war than they'd been before. And for that you
 deserve to be beaten.

AISCHYLOS. You Athenians too could have trained more for war,
 it's your fault, not mine, you chose not to.

Later on when I staged the *Persians* too I taught people always
 to want

To defeat their opponents, and at the same time I glorified what
 we'd achieved.*

DIONYSOS. Yes, it gave me a thrill when the dead Darius
 delivered a speech in that play

And the chorus immediately clapped their hands and chanted
 'iaoui', 'iaoui'.

AISCHYLOS. We expect our poets to do these things. Go back
 to the earliest times 1030

And consider how all the noble poets have helped us to lead
 our lives.

We were taught by Orpheus mystic rites and how to abstain
 from killing.

Musaïos taught us cures for disease, and oracles too, while Hesiod
 Taught working the land, the seasons of crops, when to plough.

As for Homer divine,*

Why else did he win such honour and fame if not by teaching
 so well

About army formations and valour and armour?

DIONYSOS. But he failed
 to teach Pantakles that,*

The clumsiest man in the whole wide world. He was recently in
 a procession

And was trying to fasten his helmet on first before fixing the
 crest on the top!

AISCHYLOS. But he taught many other fine men nonetheless—
 brave Lamachos, just to name one.*

My mind in turn was moulded by Homer; I wrote about
 heroes like his, 1040

The lion-heart types like Patroklos and Teukros. My aim was
 to rouse every man

To emulate great figures like them when the trumpet of war
 sounded out.

But I never created a whore like Phaidra, nor that other one
 too, Stheneboia,*

And no one can name a woman of mine who suffers from
 sexual passion.

EURIPIDES. But that's because your work lacks Aphrodite's allure.

AISCHYLOS. A good
 thing!

Whereas you and yours fell victim to her in a quite spectacular
 way:

She crushed you down with all her force.

DIONYSOS. By Zeus, she certainly did!
 All the things you'd written about other women afflicted your
 very own life.*

EURIPIDES. What harm, you blackguard, was done to the city
 by women like my Stheneboias?

AISCHYLOS. You persuaded noble women, the wives of noble hus-
 bands as well, 1050

To poison themselves with hemlock, ashamed by *your*
 Bellerophon story.*

EURIPIDES. But didn't the story I wrote about Phaidra exist
 already before me?

AISCHYLOS. It did, but still it's the poet's duty to draw a veil over
 evil

And not to stage or teach such matters. For just as smaller children
 Have a teacher who tells them things, so poets are teachers to
 those who are adults.

We've a serious duty to say what's best.

EURIPIDES. So when *you* use
 mountain-sized words,

Lykabettos in size or as big as Parnassos, *is that* then teaching
 what's best?*

A poet should speak in a human voice.

AISCHYLOS. But we poets, you wretch,
 have to strive

To give birth to words that match the greatness of all our
 thoughts and ideas.

With characters too who are semi-divine you expect that
 they'll use bigger words, 1060

In the very same way that the clothes they wear are far more
 majestic than ours.*

I set the standards in all these ways but *you* defiled them.

EURIPIDES. Just how?
 AISCHYLOS. For one thing you dressed your kings in rags. You

wanted to make them seem

More pitiful in the spectators' eyes.*

EURIPIDES. What harm did I do by that?

AISCHYLOS. It's because of these things that nobody rich is
 willing to pay for a warship.*

Each one of them wraps himself in rags and laments and
 claims to be poor.

DIONYSOS. By Demeter, they do, while wearing a thick woollen
 tunic beneath their rags!

When they've managed to take people in with their fraud, they're
 seen buying fish in the market.

AISCHYLOS. You've also taught people to cultivate bad habits of
 blather and chatter.

It's this which has emptied the wrestling-schools and worn
 away the buttocks 1070

Of all the young men immersed in their chatter.* It's
 persuaded the Paraloï too
 To dare to argue with those in command: when *I* was alive, by
 contrast,
 They only knew how to call for bread and to shout 'yo-ho' from
 their benches.*

DIONYSOS. By Apollo, not half, though they also knew how to
 fart on the rowers below them
 And to smear their messmates' faces with shit and to nip onto
 shore for some crime.
 These days they argue and hardly row. The ships wander
 round on their sails.

AISCHYLOS. What evils *hasn't* he helped to cause?
 He's shown us women as go-betweens
 And women in childbirth in sacred places 1080
 And women who sleep with their very own brothers
 And women who say that life is death.*
 The consequence of all these things
 Is our city's now teeming with minor officials
 And buffoons who serve as public monkeys
 Deceiving the people at every turn,
 And nobody's able to carry a torch*
 Since nobody trains in gymnasia now.

DIONYSOS. How true! I laughed myself dry of tears
 At last year's Panathenaia. I saw 1090
 A runner all hunched and moving so slowly,
 White-faced and fat and lagging behind
 In a desperate state. At the Kerameikos*
 The people standing there by the gate
 Slapped his stomach and ribs and sides and
 buttocks,
 And feeling the smacks from the palms of their
 hands
 He started farting
 And ran off while blowing his torch.

CHORUS. Momentous the issue, immense the strife, *Strophe*
 intense the approaching war.
 A difficult task to decide between them 1100

When one exerts its massive force
 While the other can wheel around and resist with
 vigour.
 The pair of you mustn't remain in your camps.
 Many the openings still for further attacks of clever
 ideas.
 So whatever resources you have for competing,
 Speak now, advance now, anatomize
 These subjects ancient and modern,
 Both take the risk of speaking some subtle and clever
 thoughts.

In case you're both afraid stupidity may *Antistrophe*
 prevent the minds
 Of these spectators watching here 1110
 From grasping subtleties that you speak,
 Feel no anxiety on that score—the situation's
 changed.
 These people are all old soldiers now,
 Each of them has a book and understands
 sophistication.*
 Their natures are strong in other respects
 And now their wits are whetted.
 So have no fear about that.
 Launch an all-out attack in confidence that these are
 clever spectators.

EURIPIDES [*to AISCHYLOS*]. Very well, I'm going to turn to your
 prologues now.

[*To DIONYSOS*] I intend to take the opening part of a play 1120
 And put to the test his supposedly skilful work.
 He was always obscure in explaining dramatic events.

DIONYSOS. Which prologue of his will you test?

EURIPIDES. A very large
 number.

[*To AISCHYLOS*] But start by reciting that one from the
Oresteia.*

DIONYSOS. Let everyone else keep quiet. Speak, Aischylus!

AISCHYLOS. 'Hermes below, watching over the father's power,

Become my saviour, my ally in time of need.

I come back to this land, returning from exile I come.'

DIONYSOS. Do you find any fault with these lines?

EURIPIDES. Yes, more than
a dozen!

DIONYSOS. But the lines themselves don't add up to more than
three. 1130

EURIPIDES. But each of the lines contains some twenty mistakes.

[AISCHYLOS starts to make rumbling sounds of indignation.]

DIONYSOS. Keep quiet, I warn you, Aischylos. If you don't,
I'll fine you more than these three iambic lines.

AISCHYLOS. I'm supposed to keep quiet for *him*?

DIONYSOS. If you take my
advice.

EURIPIDES. He starts straightaway with an error as broad as
daylight.

AISCHYLOS. You see what nonsense you speak.

EURIPIDES. I don't care what you
think.

AISCHYLOS. What error d'you claim I made?

EURIPIDES. Recite it again.

AISCHYLOS. 'Hermes below, watching over the father's power—'

EURIPIDES. Well doesn't Orestes say this at the tomb
Of his father after he's died? 1140

AISCHYLOS. I don't deny it.

EURIPIDES. Is the point he's making that when his father had died
A violent death at the hands of his very own wife

In a secret plot, Hermes was 'watching over'?

AISCHYLOS. That wasn't his point. He called Eriounian Hermes*
As protector of souls in the earth, and his words explained
That Hermes possesses this role as a gift from his father.

EURIPIDES. Then you made an even bigger mistake than I
thought.

If Hermes possesses this underworld role from his father—

DIONYSOS. It would mean on his father's side he's a robber of
tombs!

AISCHYLOS. Dionysos, the wine you drink has a nasty stench.* 1150

DIONYSOS. Recite some more, [to EURIPIDES] while *you* watch out
for the flaws.

AISCHYLOS. 'Become my saviour, my ally in time of need.

I come back to this land, returning from exile I come.'

EURIPIDES. He said the same thing twice, clever Aischylos!

DIONYSOS. How twice?

EURIPIDES. Consider the words, and I'll explain.

'I come back to this land', he says, and 'return from exile.'

But 'come back' and 'return' just mean the very same thing.

DIONYSOS. It's as if, by Zeus, someone should say to his neighbour

'Please lend me a kneading-trough—or a trough for kneading.'

AISCHYLOS. Not at all—you've been overwhelmed by his blather,
you have! 1160

The two things don't mean the same. It's poetic phrasing.

EURIPIDES [*sarcastically*]. How's that? Do please enlighten me
what you mean.

AISCHYLOS. 'Come back' is something that any inhabitant does.

It applies when no special circumstances exist.

But a man who's been in exile 'comes back and returns'.

DIONYSOS. I like it! But what do you say then, Euripides?

EURIPIDES. I flatly deny that Orestes returned to his home.

He came back secretly and without permission.

DIONYSOS. I like that too! But I don't really know what you mean.

EURIPIDES [to AISCHYLOS]. Continue the next bit then. 1170

DIONYSOS. You do.

continue,

Keep going, Aischylos. [To EURIPIDES] *You* watch for faults.

AISCHYLOS. 'Upon the mound of this tomb I beseech my father

To hearken, to hear—'*

EURIPIDES. Another example again!

'To hearken, to hear', it's blatant they both mean the same.

DIONYSOS. It's because he was calling the dead, you stupid
bonehead!

We can't even make them hear if we call *three* times.

But how did *you* compose your prologues?

EURIPIDES. You'll see.

If you catch me ever repeating myself or find padding

That doesn't belong to the plot, you can spit on my work.

DIONYSOS. Come on then, speak. I really need to listen. 1180

To the standards of diction your prologues exemplify.*
 EURIPIDES. 'A time there was when Oedipus was happy.'*
 AISCHYLOS. Completely false! He was damned when he came into being!
 He must have been, since even before he was born
 Apollo foretold he was going to murder his father.
 So how could a man like this have ever been happy?
 EURIPIDES. 'His fortunes changed: he became most wretched of mortals.'*
 AISCHYLOS. Completely false! He was wretched right from the start.
 It must have been the case, since when he was born
 They put him inside a jar and exposed him in winter, 1190
 To make sure that he didn't grow up to murder his father.
 He came to Polybos' court with his swollen feet.*
 Later still, he married a woman much older than him—
 And not just a woman, his very own mother in fact!
 He eventually blinded himself.
 DIONYSOS [*sarcastically*]. Ah, happy indeed—
 Provided he served alongside Erasinides!*
 EURIPIDES. What nonsense you're talking. My prologues are beautifully written.
 AISCHYLOS. I can't bear to continue this word-by-word dissection
 Of every verse. With the help of the gods on my side
 I'll use a miniature oil-jar to rubbish your prologues.* 1200
 EURIPIDES. A miniature *oil-jar* to deal with my prologues?
 AISCHYLOS. Just one.
 Your style of writing means any old object will fit—
 A fleecet, a miniature oil-jar, a little old sack—
 The iambic lines you compose. I'll show you at once.
 EURIPIDES. Oh you will, will you?
 AISCHYLOS. Yes.
 EURIPIDES. All right then, listen to this.
 'Agyptos, so prevailing tradition relates,
 With fifty sons traversed the sea by oar,
 Put in to Argos and—'*
 AISCHYLOS. lost his miniature oil-jar!
 DIONYSOS. What's the point of the miniature oil-jar? It's damned annoying.

Recite him a further prologue—let's see what it means. 1119
 EURIPIDES. 'Dionysos, equipped with thyrsos and wearing
 fawnskins,
 Among the pine-trees down Parnassos's slopes
 Went leaping in dance and—'*
 AISCHYLOS. lost his miniature oil-jar!
 DIONYSOS. Oh no, he's struck us again with this miniature
 oil-jar!
 EURIPIDES. I'm not concerned by that. Now *here's* a prologue
 To which he won't be able to tag on an oil-jar.
 'No man exists who's happy in all respects,
 Perhaps born noble he falls in penury's way.
 Or low by birth—'*
 AISCHYLOS. he loses his miniature oil-jar!
 DIONYSOS [*confidentially*]. Euripides— 1210
 EURIPIDES. What's wrong?
 DIONYSOS. Let's lower
 the sails.
 This miniature oil-jar's about to blow a huge gale.
 EURIPIDES. I swear by Demeter I'm not remotely troubled.
 I'll show you now—I'll knock the thing from his hand.
 DIONYSOS. Well recite another, but please avoid his oil-jar.
 EURIPIDES. 'In ancient times, departing from Sidon his city,
 Kadmos, Agenor's son—'*
 AISCHYLOS. lost his miniature oil-jar!
 DIONYSOS [*to EURIPIDES*]. I beg you, friend, please *purchase*
 the oil-jar from him,
 To stop him from tearing your prologues to pieces.
 EURIPIDES. You what?
 You think I should buy this from *him*?
 DIONYSOS. If you take my advice—
 EURIPIDES. I certainly won't. There are numerous prologues of
 mine 1215
 To which he won't be able to tag on an oil-jar.
 'When Pelops, the son of Tantalos, came to Pisa
 With his dashing horses—'*
 AISCHYLOS. he lost his miniature oil-jar!
 DIONYSOS. You see? He's managed to tag on the oil-jar again.
 Please pay him his price, my good man—it's not too late.

You'll be getting a very fine oil-jar for only an obol.*

EURIPIDES. I certainly won't, not yet. I've lots more prologues.

'Oineus once from the land—'

AISCHYLOS. lost his miniature oil-jar!

EURIPIDES. Allow me first to get to the end of the line!

'Oineus once from the land took abundant crops 1240

And making first sacrifice—'*

AISCHYLOS. lost his miniature oil-jar!

DIONYSOS. What, in the act of sacrifice? Who filched it?

EURIPIDES. Ignore him, please. Let him try to respond to *this*.

'Zeus, as we're told by the truth of ancient reports—'*

DIONYSOS. You'll finish me off! He'll say 'lost his miniature oil-jar'.

This oil-jar's now a wart on the face of your prologues,
Just like the styes that grow on people's eyelids.

Turn instead, in the name of the gods, to his choral songs.

EURIPIDES. I *will*! What's more, I'll prove that he's no good as well

At composing songs: he always writes the same thing. 1250

CHORUS. What's about to happen next?

Perplexed I am, I cannot imagine

What kind of faults he'll find

With a man who's composed so many songs,

The most beautiful ones of those we know

From all tragic poets who've lived.

Astounded I am and wonder how

He'll try to fault this man,

The bacchic master himself,

For whom I feel afraid.* 1260

EURIPIDES [*sarcastically*]. Amazing songs indeed! We're about to find out.

I intend to condense all his different songs into one.

DIONYSOS. I'll take some pebbles and count the number you use.

[EURIPIDES *gestures to the aulos-player to accompany him, adopts a suitably parodic pose, and proceeds to sing a jumble of Aeschylean lyrics in a ludicrously portentous manner.*]

EURIPIDES. Phthian Achilles, why, when you hear the man-slaying,

Alas, alas, toil of battle, comest thou not to our aid?

Hermes our ancestor we worship, we the people round
the lake.

Alas, alas, toil of battle, comest thou not to our aid?

DIONYSOS. That's two toils, Aischylos, for you.

EURIPIDES. Most glorious of Achaians, wide-ruling son of Atreus,
hear me. 1270

Alas, alas, toil of battle, comest thou not to our aid?

DIONYSOS. A third toil, Aischylos, that was.

EURIPIDES. Sacred silence! Bee-keepers approach to unlock

Artemis's temple.

Alas, alas, toil of battle, comest though not to our aid?

I speak with authority of the destined power of men as
they start their journey.

Alas, alas, toil of battle, comest though not to our aid?

DIONYSOS. Zeus king of the gods! I'm losing count of these toils.

The only thing I want is to go to the baths:

These toils have given me swellings around the kidneys. 1280

EURIPIDES. Don't go till you've heard another collection of songs,

This one constructed from nomes meant for kithara music.*

DIONYSOS. Very well, continue, but please leave toil aside.

[EURIPIDES *continues in much the same manner, but this time introduces exaggerated vocal imitations of the strumming of a kithara-lyre.*]

EURIPIDES. When the twin-throned power of the Achaians, of
Greece's youth,*

Thrum-splat, thrum-splat, thrum-splat,

Sends the Sphinx, the dog that presides over evil days,

Thrum-splat, thrum-splat, thrum-splat,

With spear and avenging hand a furious bird,

Thrum-splat, thrum-splat, thrum-splat, 1290

Leaving prey for dauntless, air-traversing hounds,

Thrum-splat, thrum-splat, thrum-splat,

The throng converging on Ajax,

Thrum-splat, thrum-splat, thrum-splat.

DIONYSOS [*to AISCHYLOS*]. What on earth's this 'thrum-splat'
sound and where did you hear it?

In Marathon's fields or the songs of a rope-hauling man?

AISCHYLOS. Not at all. My finest plays used the finest sources.

My poetic flowers were not those that Phrynichos culled:*

I went to a different part of the Muses' meadows. 1300

[*Gesturing*] But *he* takes stuff from high and low: whores' ballads,
 Meletos' drinking songs, plus Karian pipe-tunes*
 And dirges and dances as well. I'll show you right now.
 Bring any old lyre—though come to think of it, why?
 I'll dispense with that. But call that woman who plays
 The potsherd castanets—Euripides' Muse!
 She's just the right person to go with these songs that I'll sing.

[*Enter from the stage building EURIPIDES' MUSE, a down-market female performer with a pair of ceramic castanets in each hand. She writhes around in a louche manner during the parody of Euripidean lyrics delivered by AISCHYLOS.*]

DIONYSOS. Well here's a Muse who never found work on
 Lesbos!*

AISCHYLOS [*singing parodically*].

Halcyons, who by the sea's ever-flowing
 Waves mouth all your blather, 1310
 Dipping your wings in the moist
 Liquid, bedewing their skin,
 And you who in angles beneath the rafters
 Sp-i-i-i-i-i-in with your fingers, o spiders,
 Your loom-taut spool-threads,
 A singing shuttle's exercises,
 Where the pipe-loving dolphin gambols
 Near prows with dark-blue ramming rods
 In oracular fashion and in competition.
 Gleaming glory of the vine's wine-flower, 1320
 Grape-cluster's toil-ending tendril,
 Throw your arms around, o child.
 Do you see this dance-step?*

EURIPIDES. I do.

AISCHYLOS. Well then, and this one too?

EURIPIDES. I do.

AISCHYLOS. And though you compose such things
 You dare to find fault with *my* songs,
 When your lyrics use a dozen contortions

That would suit Kyrene the courtesan?*

Well that will do for your choral songs. But I want
 To take to pieces the style of your monodies too.* 1330

[AISCHYLOS *starts to sing again, producing another mishmash of pastiche and partial quotations. EURIPIDES' MUSE continues to cavort.*]

AISCHYLOS. O Night's black-gleaming darkness,
 What is this anguished dream
 You send me, emerging from invisible Hades
 With a soul that is no soul,
 Black Night's shuddering child,
 Apparition horrendous,
 Draped corpse-like in black,
 Blood-filled, blood-filled look in its eyes,
 Possessing huge talons.
 Come, attendants, light me a lamp,
 Scoop dewy liquid in pitchers from rivers
 And heat the water,
 So I may ablate this god-sent dream. 1340
 Hail deity of the sea!
 Just what I expected. Occupants of the house,
 Behold these portents! My cock's
 Been snatched by Glyke, who's fled.
 Mountain-born Nymphs!
 O Mania, help me to catch her.*
 Poor woman that I am
 I happened to be concentrating
 On my work, a spindle full of flax
 I was sp-i-i-i-i-i-ining in my hands,
 Producing thread, so that 1350
 At dawn I might go to the Agora
 And take it with me to sell.
 But my cock has flown, has flown up high
 On the lightest extremities of his wings,
 He's left woes, woes for me
 And tears, tears from my eyes
 I've shed, I've shed in my misery.

Come Cretans, children of Mount Ida,*
 Take your bows and come to my defence,
 Agitate your limbs
 As you surround her house.
 And with you may Diktyнна, lovely child,*
 Bring her pack of delicate bitches and come
 Through the palace in every direction. 1360
 And you, daughter of Zeus, brandishing
 Twin-flamed, blazing torches in your hands,
 Hekate, light my way into Glauke's house
 To guide my search for the stolen goods.

DIONYSOS. You must both now stop these lyrics.

AISCHYLOS. I've had enough
 too.

I want to make him come to the weighing-scale challenge.

This alone will fully assess our talents as poets.

It's the *weight* of our words that will prove the definitive test.

DIONYSOS. Come here then, both, if I really have to do this
 And treat the art of poets like cheese for sale!*

[*During the following ode one of the ATTENDANTS brings out an enormous pair of scales and DIONYSOS starts to examine them before making the two tragedians take up position on either side of the equipment.*]

CHORUS. How meticulous clever people are! 1370
 Here's yet another prodigious thing,
 Unprecedented, full of absurdity—
 Who else could have thought of it?
 Upon my word, if anyone else
 Had told me this, there isn't a chance
 I would have believed him. I'd simply suppose
 He was talking pure balderdash.

DIONYSOS. Right then, both stand beside the scales.

AISCHYLOS AND EURIPIDES. Okay.

DIONYSOS. Both hold a pan and utter a verse in turn

And don't let go till I give you the cuckoo's call. 1380

AISCHYLOS AND EURIPIDES. We're holding now.

DIONYSOS. Then say your
 words in the scales.

EURIPIDES. 'If only the Argo's hull hadn't winged its way—!'

AISCHYLOS. 'O river Spercheios and grazing lands of cattle—!'

DIONYSOS. Cuckoo!

AISCHYLOS AND EURIPIDES. We've let go.

DIONYSOS. Well well, the
 scales have dropped

On Aischylos' side.

EURIPIDES. But what's the reason for that?

DIONYSOS. It's because he put in a whole river! just like
 wool-sellers

He made his verse weigh more by making it moist,

While *you* put in a verse that was winged and light.

EURIPIDES. Well, let him quote something else and compete again.

DIONYSOS. Then hold the pans once more. 1385

AISCHYLOS AND EURIPIDES. Okay.

DIONYSOS. Now speak.

EURIPIDES. 'Persuasion has no shrine but speech itself!'

AISCHYLOS. 'Alone among the gods Death craves no gifts!'

DIONYSOS. Let go.

AISCHYLOS AND EURIPIDES. We've done so.

DIONYSOS. It's tilting to *him* again.

He put death in the scale, the heaviest evil we know.

EURIPIDES. But *I* put in persuasion—my verse is perfect.

DIONYSOS. But persuasion is something light and lacking in
 thought.

Try one more time to find a ponderous weight

Whose size and mass will tilt the scales on *your* side.

EURIPIDES. Now where, oh where can I find such a thing?

DIONYSOS. I'll tell you.

[*Facetiously*] 'Achilles threw—three dice, two ones and
 a four!'

[*To both*] Please speak again, since this is the final weighing

EURIPIDES. 'Hefted with the iron the club he grasped in his
 hand—'

AISCHYLOS. 'Chariot piled on chariot, corpse on corpse—'

DIONYSOS [*to EURIPIDES*]. He's managed to fool you again.

EURIPIDES. But how's he doing it?

DIONYSOS. By placing in two chariots and two corpses,

'Too much for even a hundred Egyptians to lift!'

- AISCHYLOS. Let him stop putting into the scales just lines of verse,
 Let him, his children, his wife, Kephisophon too
 All sit in the scales, let him take in his books as well.*
 I'll still outweigh him with any two verses of mine. 1410
- DIONYSOS [*despairingly*]. These men are both my friends: I can't
 choose a winner!
 I've no intention of being at odds with either.
 I think that one of them's wise, the other I like.*
- PLOUTON [*stepping forward*]. So it seems you won't achieve what
 you came here to do.
- DIONYSOS. But suppose I decide?
- PLOUTON. You'll leave with one of these
 men,
 Whichever you choose—so your journey won't prove to be
 wasted.
- DIONYSOS. Such kindness! I wish you well. [*To the poets*] Now
 listen to me.
 I came down here to find a poet. And why?
 To save the city and safeguard its festival plays.
 So whichever of you is able to give the city 1420
 The best advice, it's *him* I've resolved to take back.
 Tell me first the view that each of you holds about
 Alkibiades.* The city's in pangs over him.
- AISCHYLOS. Well what's the view of the city?
- DIONYSOS. You want to know?
 It pines for him yet loathes him but wants to *have* him.
 But I need you both to tell me your thoughts about him.
- EURIPIDES. I hate a man who'll always prove to be
 Reluctant to help his homeland but quick to harm it—
 A man who advances himself but hinders the city.
- DIONYSOS. Hurrah for that, by Poseidon! [*To AISCHYLOS*] And
 what's your view? 1430
- AISCHYLOS. Don't rear the whelp of a lion inside the city. 1431a
 Ideally don't rear a lion inside the city, 1431b
 But if one's bred, be sure to tend to its needs.*
- DIONYSOS. By Zeus the Saviour, I just can't choose between them!
 The one spoke wisely, the other in lucid style.
 [*Thinking*] Look, each of you give me a single further idea
 Which you think would help to promote the city's survival.*

- EURIPIDES. Suppose Kleokritos flew with Kinesias—wings*
 And he soared on currents of air out over the sea—
- DIONYSOS. What a ludicrous sight it would be! But what's the
point?
- EURIPIDES. If they took with them vinegar jars, during naval
 battles 1440
 They could spray the vinegar down in our enemies' eyes—
- [DIONYSOS *seems about to interrupt, but EURIPIDES is determined to
 continue.*]
- I know the solution. I'd like to explain it.
- DIONYSOS. Go on then.
- EURIPIDES. As soon as we start to trust what's now untrusted
 And to lose our trust in what's trusted—
- DIONYSOS. I'm baffled already!
 Explain yourself in a clearer, less crudite way.
- EURIPIDES. I mean the citizens whom we currently trust
 If we lost our trust in these but used instead
 The ones we don't use now, we might be saved.
 If our present leaders are bringing us close to ruin,
 We'd surely be saved if we switched to the opposite ways! 1445
- DIONYSOS. You're a true Palamedes, a genius, what a fine thought!
 Who's idea was this: your own or Kephisophon's then?*
- EURIPIDES. It was mine—though Kephisophon thought of the
 vinegar jars.
- DIONYSOS [*to AISCHYLOS*]. Well what about *you*?
- AISCHYLOS. Tell me first
 what kind of leaders
 The city has now. Are they really the best?
- DIONYSOS. You're joking!
 It simply loathes such people.
- AISCHYLOS. And *likes* bad leaders?
- DIONYSOS. Well, not exactly—she has no choice but to use them!
- AISCHYLOS. Then how could anyone save a city like this
 When it doesn't know whether a cloak or a goatskin will fit?*
- DIONYSOS. That's the problem for *you* to solve, if you want to get
 back! 1450
- AISCHYLOS. I'll say what I think back there, but not down here.

- DIONYSOS. No, no, you can't. You must send up your help from down here.
- AISCHYLOS. As soon as they start to believe that the enemy's land Belongs to themselves, while their own is their enemy's land, And believe that the fleet is their wealth, all their other wealth void.*
- DIONYSOS. I agree—though our juries consume all the wealth that we have.*
- PLOUTON. It's time for you to judge.
- DIONYSOS. Well here's my judgement.
[*Solemnly*] I'll choose the one my soul desires to have.
- EURIPIDES. Remember the oath you swore by the gods before That you'd take me home. Be sure to choose your friends. 1470
- DIONYSOS. 'It's my tongue that swore'—but Aischylos is my choice!*
- EURIPIDES. What on earth have you done, you revolting person?
- DIONYSOS. What, me?
- I've judged that Aischylos wins—and what's to stop me?
- EURIPIDES. Can you look me in the eye after being so shameless?
- DIONYSOS. 'What's shameful if those watching don't think it's so?'
- EURIPIDES. You brute, you mean you'll leave me to die like this?
- DIONYSOS. 'Who knows if life is really the same as death',*
If breathing is eating, if sleeping is merely a blanket?
- PLOUTON. Go inside, Dionysos, with Aischylos too.
- DIONYSOS. What for?
- PLOUTON. I'd like to feast you before you sail back. 1480
- DIONYSOS. That's kind,
By Zeus, I don't object to an offer like that.
- [DIONYSOS leads AISCHYLOS back into the stage building, followed by PLOUTON and, skulking behind them, EURIPIDES.]
- CHORUS. Happy indeed the man who has *Strophe*
Sharp astuteness in his grasp.
Many the things that make this clear.
Now his intelligence can be seen,
Aischylos is the one who'll go home
Bringing good to the citizens,

- Bringing good, what's more, to his own
Kith and kin and friends as well,
All because he's astute in mind. 1490
- Pleasing, then, not to sit around *Antistrophe*
Talking hot air with Sokrates,*
Treating the Muses' work with contempt,
Spurning the most important things
About the art of tragic drama.
As for pretentious arguments,
Quibbles of nit-picking drivel:
Devoting an idle life to *those*
Is the mark of someone crazy!
- [PLOUTON, carrying a sword, some nooses, and a mortar and pestle, reappears from the palace door, leading out AISCHYLOS and DIONYSOS.]
- PLOUTON. Depart then, Aischylos, farewell! 1500
Your task is now to preserve our city
With good ideas. And educate
The stupid folk—no shortage of them!
Take this sword and give it to Kleophon,
And these nooses here for the revenue board,
For Myrmex and Nikomachos too,
And give this hemlock to Archenomos.*
Tell them all to rush down here to me
Without delay. If they don't come quickly,
I swear by Apollo I'll treat them like slaves! 1510
I'll brand them and shackle them up together
With Adeimantos, son of Leukolophos,
And dispatch them to Hades at once.
- AISCHYLOS. I'll do as you say. And you meanwhile
Please place my throne in Sophokles' care.*
He must keep it safe, in case I return
Back here. He's the poet I judge to be
Next best in artistry to me.
But be sure the *other*—that scoundrel I mean, 1520
The peddler of lies who plays the fool—
Can't occupy that throne of mine
Not even by accident!

PLOUTON [*to* CHORUS]. Now light the way for him, you people,
 With your sacred torches. Escort him onwards
 With songs belonging to plays of his own
 And resounding chants.

[ATTENDANTS *have brought torches for the* CHORUS, *which sings its final song as it prepares to depart.*]

CHORUS. Grant as our first prayer a prosperous journey for this
 departing poet
 As he rises back up to the world of light, o deities
 beneath the earth,
 And grant to the city good thoughts productive of
 great benefits. 1530
 In this way we hope for a final end to our great
 afflictions
 And the grievous clashes of battle. Let Kleophon
 fight,
 Together with anyone else who wants, in his *own*
 ancestral fields.*

[*Exit* CHORUS.]

APPENDIX

THE LOST PLAYS OF ARISTOPHANES

THE purpose of this appendix is to give general readers an impression of the scope of Aristophanes' oeuvre as a whole by providing a brief account of what we know about each of the lost plays, together with a small selection of some of the more notable fragments. The numbering of fragments follows the standard edition of Kassel and Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci*; the same numbering is used in Henderson's bilingual Loeb, *Aristophanes: Fragments* (for both works see Select Bibliography, 'Fragments'). The plays are listed in alphabetic order of their Greek titles. Incompleteness in the original is indicated by . . . , omissions from the translation by [. . .]. Abbreviations for the surviving plays of Aristophanes are the same as in the notes to the translation.

Aiolosikon (Aiolos-Sikon)

There were two versions of the play, the later staged near the end of Aristophanes' life (c.388–385) in the name of his playwright son Araros; cf. on *Kokalos* below. It is possible that at least the second version, like the surviving *Assembly-Women* and *Wealth*, had a diminished choral element and no parabasis, though fr. 9 shows that there was a chorus of women in at least one of the versions, and fr. 8 too is choral. The title (as the protagonist's name) is a compound of Aiolos (guardian of the winds; cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 10.1 ff.) and Sikon, possibly here a cook's name; the protagonist presumably had something in common with both identities. There were certainly references to food: a bakery (fr. 1), shopping in the Agora (fr. 2), boiled pig's trotters (fr. 4), onions (fr. 5), cooking utensils (fr. 7). A glutinous Herakles (see note on *F.* 62) was either mentioned or brought onto stage (fr. 11). It is likely that there was some relationship to Euripides' tragedy *Aiolos* (cf. n. on *C.* 1372), in which Makareus and Kanake committed brother-sister incest and later (after they failed to be paired in a lottery for incestuous marriages of all Aiolos' children) killed themselves. But nothing remotely like a plot can be reconstructed. There are several references to the world of women: in addition to frs. 8 and 9 there was a reference to a woman's 'perfume-cass' (fr. 16); fr. 8 (choral, probably referring to a woman, possibly to diaphanous attire; cf. *L.* 48):

And we see gleaming through,
 Just as with a new lamp,
 Everything (beneath?) the off-the-shoulder dress