Transactions of the American Philological Association 134 (2004) 295-322

Aristophanes' *Frogs* and the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*

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SUMMARY: Dionysus' unexpected decision at the end of the play is generally thought to reflect the notion that poets such as Aeschylus and Euripides had practical moral insight to offer their audiences and to promote an "Aeschylean" over a "Euripidean" approach to life. I argue, however, that this ending offers a curiously offbeat combination of aesthetic insight and intertextual playfulness that ultimately relieves the Aristophanic Aeschylus and Euripides of the moralizing burden they have had to shoulder for so long. My reasons for suggesting this arise from consideration of the relationship between *Frogs* and another literary text that featured a high-profile poetic contest, namely, the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*.

Of all the questions raised by aristophanes' *frogs*, one of the most enduring—and one with broad interpretative ramifications—is why Dionysus decides at the end of the play that he should return to Athens with Aeschylus rather than Euripides. As he famously declared at the opening of the play, after all, he had worked up a strong "longing" (53 πῶθος) for Euripides while reading his *Andromeda* on board ship (52–54), and had determined to retrieve that poet from the underworld, not Aeschylus. The plot from that point on is well known: when he arrives in the underworld, Dionysus encounters both Aeschylus and Euripides, discovers that there is a controversy even in Hades about which

is the better poet, and ends up adjudicating an extended contest of poetic skill between the two. Dionysus' putative criterion for determining each poet's respective value eventually shifts from one of simple pleasure to how each might save a war-weary and politically unstable Athens. When the choice is framed in this way, Dionysus feels he must choose Aeschylus instead of Euripides.[1]

Whether or not the end of the play reflects Dionysus' growth from something of an irresponsible hedonist to a more mature polis-minded cultural critic (thereby implying Aristophanes' endorsement of Aeschylus over Euripides), as has been argued by many recent scholars,[2] all would agree that the outcome of the contest exposes a complex contemporary debate about the relationship between poets and their audiences. By the end of the play, the audience must assimilate not only Dionysus' unexpected decision but also its larger significance within the context of this debate. Through it all, a simple question persists: did Aristophanes really just want us to think that Aeschylus was a "better" poet than Euripides—more beneficial to the polis in its current precarious situation, better at providing moral edification for his audience—and that Euripides composed socially dangerous, even immoral, drama?

While there may not be a complete consensus on this question, most critics assume that Aristophanes himself took seriously the notion that poets such as Aeschylus and Euripides had practical moral insight to offer their audiences, and that the end of *Frogs* actively promoted an "Aeschylean" over a "Euripidean" approach to life.[3] Dionysus' unexpected decision at the end of the play is routinely seen as the culmination of such a moral trajectory. I will be arguing in this study, however, that the ending of *Frogs* is considerably more subtle than is generally allowed, and that it offers a curiously offbeat

combination of aesthetic insight and intertextual playfulness that ultimately relieves the Aristophanic Aeschylus and Euripides of the moral burdens they have been forced to bear for so long. My reasons for suggesting this arise from considering the relationship between *Frogs* and another literary text that featured a high-profile poetic contest, namely, the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (*Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*).[4] That the *Certamen*, or, more precisely, a work very similar to the extant *Certamen*,[5] might have served as a model for the *agôn* in *Frogs* has been casually proposed over the years, but the ramifications of such a connection for an interpretation of the play itself have never been adequately explored. As I shall argue here, the evidence suggests that the influence of the *Certamen* on *Frogs* was considerably more profound and far-reaching than has previously been thought, and is potentially capable of altering our reading of the comedy's famous ending.

I. BACKGROUND

In 1944 Franz Dornseiff, reviewing Schadewaldt's 1942 German translation of Wilamowitz's edition of the Homeric and Hesiodic *Vitae*, registered surprise that practically no one had considered a connection between the *Certamen* and the *agôn* in *Frogs*. As he noted, except for Ludwig Radermacher, who had taken brief note of such a connection in his 1921 commentary on *Frogs*, no one had fully realized the striking structural and thematic resemblances between the two works.[6] Dornseiff proceeded as far as he could with the topic within the scope of a book review, but his discussion does not seem to have made much of an impression at the time. Konrad Heldmann, in his 1982 monograph on the *Certamen*, built on Dornseiff's observations and discussed further

structural parallels between the two works as *agônes sophias*, but the focus of his project did not allow him to dilate on *Frogs*.[7] Moreover, although Heldmann does hypothesize an early *certamen*-tradition (what he calls an *Urcertamen*) that might have been known to Aristophanes, he felt that many of the details of the extant *Certamen* were variations or revisions of a later date; thus his own notion of how the *Certamen* evolved limited what he could say about its relationship to *Frogs*. Neil O'Sullivan too flagged a relationship between the *Certamen* and *Frogs* in his 1992 study, *Alcidamas, Aristophanes and the Beginnings of Greek Stylistic Theory*, but it was beyond his focus there to address this topic at any length.[8]

Despite at least a passing interest among *Certamen* scholars in the notion that the treatise in some form or another may have had some influence on *Frogs*, their work has not had much impact within the mainstream of critical commentary on *Frogs*.[9] It deserves a much more thorough treatment than it has yet received, one that focuses particularly on how a putative connection with the *Certamen* (or a *certamen*-tradition) might be useful as an interpretive guide to the Aristophanic *agôn*, and thus to the significance of Dionysus' decision and Aeschylus' victory.[10]

One reason why a connection between *Frogs* and the *Certamen* took so long to be recognized is surely the chronological problem. Since the *Certamen* as we have it is evidently a composition of the 2nd century A.D. (confirmed by a reference to the emperor Hadrian at the beginning, l. 33),[11] it obviously could not have influenced Aristophanes. Many scholars have long suspected, however, that the extant version reflects a tradition of much greater antiquity. Friedrich Nietzsche, in a pair of foundational articles from 1870 and 1873, proposed an early history of the *Certamen*, arguing that the treatise as we

have it derived ultimately from Alcidamas' *Mouseion*, written in the fourth century B.C.[12] In subsequent decades two papyri were discovered that, it is now generally agreed, corroborate his suggestion. As O'Sullivan has put it, the evidence is "most easily explained by the assumption that Alcidamas, in his *Mouseion*, wrote a version of the *Certamen* essentially the same as the extant one, and that the papyri are part of this version."[13]

As a figure of the fourth century, Alcidamas is also too late to have influenced *Frogs*, so one would like to know whether the sophist was himself incorporating a still earlier *certamen*-tradition into his own work. The case for such a pre-Alcidamantine tradition has been argued persuasively by others,[14] and we need not rehearse all the arguments here, but a few general points will serve to orient our subsequent discussion. As is often pointed out, the *Certamen*'s organizing principle of the *agôn sophias* has numerous early parallels in Greek culture and is clearly traditional. Often such contests involved the kind of riddling competition between *sophoi* that we find in the *Certamen*.[15] It is indeed difficult to imagine that Alcidamas would have had to invent the story of a contest between Homer and Hesiod when the two poets had assumed the roles of eminent *sophoi* long before.[16] O'Sullivan has discussed at length the evidence that Homer and Hesiod were viewed in the fifth century as representatives of rival literary styles and competing world-views—and these were precisely the sort of topics that Alcidamas would have been interested in highlighting in his own version of the *Certamen*.[17] It seems more likely that a *Certamen* would have arisen early as a treatise emblematic of such a rivalry than that Alcidamas would have had to concoct it himself. Finally, it is worth mentioning that we find in a passage from Aristophanes' *Peace* (421 B.C.), lines 1282–83, two verses

from one of the riddle passages in the extant *Certamen* (107–8). It is hard to know what to make of such a short quotation, but it does seem easier to suppose that Aristophanes was quoting a pre-existing text of the *Certamen* than that Alcidamas appropriated the lines from Aristophanes for a newly composed *certamen*-story in his *Mouseion*.[18]

Even if it is impossible to pinpoint early versions of *Certamen*, the kernel of the story seems readily discernible in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (650–62), where the poet alludes to his participation at Chalcis in a poetic competition at the funeral games for king Amphidamas.[19] Hesiod won the prize at this festival, and although the rival whom he bested is not mentioned by name, the language of the entire passage has been seen to suggest that he regarded his victory there as a victory of his poetic style over that of Homeric epos.[20] The available evidence, in short, does seem to indicate that some tradition of a formal contest between the two epic poets pre-dated the production of *Frogs* at the end of the fifth century.

A brief summary of the extant *Certamen* will be useful here as a reference point for the argument that follows. This short work (338 lines), despite its traditional title, is actually a truncated *vita* of both poets; that is, it opens with a discussion of their respective parentage and the problem of chronological priority, spends most of its time on the alleged contest between the two at Chalcis, then follows them both to their respective deaths. Just under half of the work deals with the contest itself, which culminates in the victory of Hesiod over Homer. Homer and Hesiod had come to Chalcis in response to the open invitation by Amphidamas' son, Ganyktor, to celebrate the king's death with athletic and poetic competitions, and they evidently put on quite a show (70–71 ὐμφοτῆρων δὲ τ]ν ποιητ]ν θαυμαστ]ς ὐγωνισαμῆνων "the two poets competed

wonderfully"). Hesiod, however, then comes forward and administers a series of tests to Homer, first two general questions (to which Homer responds by quoting his own verses), then some lines that make no sense by themselves but that Homer must in his turn complete with lines that make them sensible. Further questions of both a specific and a general nature ensue, with Hesiod once again posing the questions and Homer extemporizing successful answers. The Greeks in the audience judged that Homer was the winner (176–77). But King Panedes was not ready to end the contest, and asked each of them to recite what he considered his best passage. Again the audience was amazed at Homer (205–6 θαυμἵσαντες … τῷν ὶΟμηρον οᄀ ὶΕλληνες ἔπΰνουν), and demanded that he take the prize. The text continues, however (207–10),

> ἵ δὲ βασιλεῆς τῷν ῳΗσἐοδον ἕστεφἳνωσεν ε Γπ¯ν δἐκαιον εᅳναι τῷν ἕπά γεωργἐαν καά ε Γρὼνην προκαλοὤμενον νικὺν, οὼ τῷν πολῆμους καά σφαγἶς διεξιῷντα.
>
> But the king crowned Hesiod instead, saying that it was right for the one who encouraged farming and peace to win, rather than the one who recounted wars and slaughters.

So much for the will of the people!

There are many curiosities about this work that we cannot address here, but it should be apparent by now why earlier scholars suspected a connection between the *Certamen* and *Frogs*. As classic *agônes sophias* both works follow a structure in which two prominent *sophoi* are subjected to tests of self-quotation and riddling, with a third individual serving as judge.[21] Just as Homer and Hesiod vie for superiority in the

Certamen in front of King Panedes, so Aeschylus and Euripides compete in *Frogs* in the presence of Dionysus. Moreover, the last incident of the contest proper in the *Certamen*, where Panedes demands one further test of the contestants' verses, is undeniably similar to the final scene in *Frogs*, where Dionysus postpones his decision until he hears what each poet has to say about Alcibiades. Connections such as these, as others have noticed, seem close enough to suggest that Aristophanes modeled his *agôn* in *Frogs* on a text resembling the extant *Certamen*, but what the significance of such a literary affiliation is has been less adequately addressed. The question that will concern us here, therefore, is whether the portrait of Homer and Hesiod in the *Certamen* had any specific influence on how and why Aristophanes represented Aeschylus and Euripides as he did in his own work. Answering this question is, of course, complicated not only by the fact that our only text of the *Certamen* post-dates *Frogs* but also by the need to determine first what the contest of Homer and Hesiod might have meant for its putatively "original" author, Alcidamas, and second what cultural valence the story might have had in its earlier, fifth-century incarnations.

O'Sullivan has a made strong case that Alcidamas included his version of the *Certamen* in his work not just because it contrasted the extemporaneous, oral style embodied by a Homer—a style that Alcidamas himself embraced—with the more rigid, written style of a Hesiod, but also because it reflected a nexus of other oppositional rhetorical strategies in which he would have had an interest, such as βραχυλογὲα and μακρολογὲα, or notions of καιρῷς. Moreover, O'Sullivan has shown that framing such polarities in terms of an opposition between Homer and Hesiod was almost certainly not Alcidamas' own invention but rather the legacy of the fifth-century sophists who had

already begun to exploit the two poets for their own literary, educational, and rhetorical polemics.[22] One may conclude, therefore, that the specific poetic, ethical, and even metaphysical, associations of Homer and Hesiod that undergird the *Certamen* would have been available to Aristophanes, and, even more significantly, that he could have understood them as elements in a literary debate of the sort he dramatized in *Frogs*.

II. THE *CERTAMEN* AND *FROGS*

With this background in mind, we may return to our initial question about Dionysus' change of heart in *Frogs*. Why did he choose Aeschylus, when we expected Euripides? One simple, if rather unilluminating, answer now might be that there was a similarly unexpected change at the end of the *Certamen*, brought about, likewise, by the judge of the contest. Despite Homer's brilliant performance throughout the contest, and the universal approval of the audience, Panedes imperiously contravenes public sentiment at the last minute and awards the victory to Hesiod, offering an excuse that, within the context of the story itself, seems as contrived and tendentious as anything we find in the *agôn* between the two tragedians in *Frogs*. Indeed the *Certamen* gives such mixed messages throughout: it begins with Hesiod in complete control of the proceedings, implying that the narrative "favors" him, but as Homer answers all challenges with flair and modesty, Hesiod grows irritable and the balance shifts towards Homer; twice the narrator tells us that the people acclaimed Homer the winner, but Panedes holds out. Panedes' excuse elicits no commentary from the narrator, as if he too was persuaded that the poet of peace must be superior to the poet of war. But the matter does not rest there, for in the concluding section about the poets' deaths, as Lefkowitz notes, we are left with

the "impression that Hesiod is the lesser of the two poets because he gives proportionately more space to Homer,"[23] and as O'Sullivan expands, "… Hesiod is dispatched so quickly that he writes no more poetry … and his death was a sordid one in the version that the *Certamen* tells us was in Alcidamas' *Mouseion*" (he is murdered and thrown into the sea).[24] O'Sullivan sensed Alcidamas' dilemma: he wanted Homer to be the hero of his *Certamen*, but the story of the contest itself, which must have originated in the *Works and Days* passage mentioned earlier, demanded that Hesiod be the victor. Alcidamas, therefore, could not avoid the fact of a Hesiodic victory, but he could at least make every attempt to downplay the significance or merit of Hesiod's victory.[25]

The close relationship I am suggesting between the *Certamen* and *Frogs* implies, of course, the existence of a Panedes-figure in a pre-Alcidamantine *Certamen*. The origin of Panedes and his role in the treatise have been matters of some dispute among scholars, but a third-century B.C. papyrus has convinced most that Panedes appeared reasonably early and made an appearance in Alcidamas' version.[26] It is a more complex matter to argue that Panedes, or at least a figure playing the role of a capricious judge, appeared even earlier than that, in fifth-century versions of the *Certamen*, since this elicits the larger question of what significance the *Certamen* would have had for Greek audiences before Alcidamas. Would they, for example, have found a Hesiodic victory over Homer unproblematic? If not, there would have been no need for a Panedes-figure to appear to repudiate a popular sentiment with a minority decision; Hesiod could simply be acclaimed the winner by the people and the judges on the basis of his poetic skill. This is always possible, of course, but it seems unlikely, given that the very point of the story of the contest depends on the tension between Homer's profound and enduring cultural

capital and the inescapable fact that Hesiod—a poet of high stature, but nothing compared to Homer—had to win the contest.[27] Rather, the end of the contest is given an exciting twist: the victory of Hesiod is so problematic that only the unexpected intercession of an outsider such as Panedes, someone evidently out of touch with public sentiment about Homer, could account for it. Indeed, without the detail of the judge who tenders an unexpected and unwelcome decision, I would venture to say that there would effectively be no *Certamen*. For these reasons, it seems likely that a Panedes-figure was known to Aristophanes at the end of the fifth century.

To return, then, to the question of Dionysus' decision in *Frogs*: is Dionysus simply playing the role of Panedes? Dionysus' behavior, of course, does not replicate Panedes' action precisely (Panedes reverses a public decision, while Dionysus reverses an earlier one of his own), but it is easy to characterize the *Frogs agôn*, as Martin West observed of the *Certamen*, as belonging to a type of story "much favored by the Greeks in that a man does the opposite of what is expected, and justifies himself with an original and by no means contemptible analysis of the situation."[28] I would suggest that Aristophanes, in fact, had very much on his mind some form of the *Certamen* story when he composed the *agôn* of *Frogs*, and that Dionysus' change of heart at the end can be at least partially explained by this connection. But in itself this explanation does not address the more revealing question of why Aristophanes would want to model his contest on a *Certamen* story; that is, what elements of a contest between Homer and Hesiod might have resonated with him as he contrived his own contest between Aeschylus and Euripides? These are the questions that will occupy us for the rest of this study, in which I will argue that the stylistic and poetico-ethical controversies that underlay the *Certamen* were

manipulated in a variety of ways by Aristophanes for his own purposes. Just what his "purposes" were at the end of *Frogs*, of course, has long been a matter of spirited debate, both substantively and methodologically, but as I will suggest below, a full understanding of the play's relationship with the *Certamen* goes far in clarifying many of them.

While we may never know what inspired the original story of a *Certamen*, its history shows that it was typically invoked in order to contrast the poetic styles of Homer and Hesiod. Hesiod, as we have seen, wins the contest, but Homer performs brilliantly, and the work itself demonstrates the difficulties inherent in deciding which one is "better."[29] Likewise, the competition between Aeschylus and Euripides was explicitly cast as a contrast of styles, and as an attempt to determine the "better" poet. *Frogs* is a comedy, of course, and neither poet is spared a drubbing, but each is also given moments in the play when he is allowed to shine at the expense of the other. Dionysus' famous *aporia* at the end of the play is sufficient testimony that the choice between their respective styles was not straightforward, despite the fact that one of them had to win.

It seems likely, then, that at the end of *Frogs*, Dionysus' verdict and the stylistic debate that leads up to it are linked to the *Certamen* and the stylistic debate that so interested Alcidamas.[30] It seems, in fact, that in this scene Aristophanes parodies the *Certamen* quite pointedly by assimilating into his own *agôn* the *Certamen*'s criteria for poetic excellence, along with their stylistic and moral by-products, and then *inverting* the terms of the final decision. We may put it this way: in the *Certamen*, Homer—clearly the favored poet—loses the contest to Hesiod because the judge Panedes preferred, as he claims, a poet of peace to a poet of war; in *Frogs*, Dionysus (despite his professed inability to decide) chooses the poet of war, Aeschylus—the one who describes his drama

as "full of Ares" (1021) and advocates the recall of Alcibiades. Moreover, as we have seen, Aeschylus was the tragedian associated with Homer both stylistically and in terms of his interest in martial themes. The Hesiodic poet Euripides, on the other hand, whose style was less elevated and whose didactic program included the very Hesiodic topic of *oikonomikê*,[31] must lose. In each contest, that is, the favored poet ends up losing the contest, but for opposite reasons. The narrative movement in the *Certamen* goes from Homer to Hesiod, while in *Frogs* it is reversed, from a Hesiodic figure (Euripides) to a Homeric one (Aeschylus).

The remarkably similar structures of the last scenes of each contest further strengthen the connection between the two works. From *Frogs* 1378 to 1406 the two poets engage in the famous weighing scene, in which each speaks short selections of his work into a scale. At 1407 Aeschylus has had enough: "I'll have no more line-by-line stuff now!" (καά μηκῆτ᾽ ἧμοιγε κατ᾽ ἧπος). At this point, the contest is drawing to a close and Dionysus is on the verge of deciding the winner, but he laments that he is unwilling to alienate either of his "friends" (1411–12 ὔνδρες φἐλοι, κὐγ¯ μὲν αὠτοῖ̧ς οὠ κριν]. | οὠ γῖρ δι᾽ ἧχθρας οὠδετῆρ᾽ γενὼσομαι·). "For," he says at 1413, "the one I find *sophos*, but the other gives me pleasure."
(τῷν μὲν γῖρ δγοὤμαι σοφῷν, τᾆ δ᾽ ἑδομαι). These are, of course, famously ambiguous lines that could only be clarified (if ever) by a performed gesture,[32] but it is at least clear that Dionysus' allegiances have been thrown into turmoil. However we decide to attribute the μῆν … δῆ clauses, the delay in choosing is surprising and the consequent tension effective. As Sommerstein has put it (1996: 283), "Since Aeschylus has had the last word in every round of the contest, and has plainly won the weighing test, the

audience will certainly have been looking to hear him declared the victor; to their surprise Dionysus refuses to make any decision at all, and when as a result of this Plouto breaks his long silence … the contest unexpectedly enters a fifth round." This final round of testing requires an answer to the single question: "What do you recommend to save Athens from its current troubles?" In contrast to the back and forth of the verse-weighing scene, this test allows each poet to state a position on flashpoints of the day, namely, the Alcibiades question and current Athenian military strategy. The text of this section has been a problem since antiquity, in particular because as transmitted it seems peculiarly to allow Euripides to offer a second opinion instead of just the one that was announced for each poet (1435–36); what is more, his second opinion seems not unreasonable.[33] But for our purposes we need only keep in mind that right up to the very end, the eventual winner of the contest is not clear. Sommerstein summarizes the situation well (1996: 289): "It is … unexpected that in the very last round of the long contest Euripides, the destined loser, should be made to offer advice that the audience are presumably expected to judge good." In the roller-coaster ride that the audience's sympathies have undergone throughout the play, we are for a moment at the end faced with the distinct possibility that Euripides will be judged the most sensible and effective savior of Athens. The critical moment, however, occurs when Aeschylus has the last word, and endorses an aggressive buildup of the navy (1463–65), for this seems to be the reason why Dionysus finally chooses him. The deliberately delayed decision, the tense, ambiguous final contest in which each poet offers cogent advice, and the ultimate decision that *certainly* goes against what the audience had expected at the beginning, and quite possibly against what the audience might have expected just before Aeschylus' final bit of advice—all these

elements at the end of *Frogs* can be readily explained by analogous events in the *Certamen*.

When the first opportunity arises for King Panedes to judge between Homer and Hesiod in the *Certamen*, the two poets have just completed their fourth round[34] of sparring at lines 161–75, and, like the weighing scene in *Frogs*, this scene too consists of a line-by-line exchange (Hesiod asks a question in one verse, Homer responds in kind). At line 176, the narrative unambiguously notes that in the eyes of the audience Homer was the clear winner:
ῥηθῆντων δὲ καά τοὤτων,ο⌉ μὲν ̀Ελληνες πἳντες τῷν ̀Ομηρον ἔκῆλευον στεφανοώ̈ν ("When these things were spoken, all the Hellenes ordered Homer to be crowned"). Clearly the king is uneasy about this, and has a prejudice against Homer that he needs to pursue, for he delays the decision by asking for a final test. In each work the "Homeric" poet (Homer, Aeschylus) is made to win the contest at hand, but the judge remains unconvinced, holding on to a predetermined choice: Panedes really wants Hesiod to win, Dionysus Euripides. There then follows in the *Certamen* a final round similar to that in *Frogs*. Homer and Hesiod are both given the chance to recite one passage that they regard as their "finest"; in *Frogs*, as we have seen, each poet is asked to offer his one best piece of advice for Athens. As in *Frogs*, the responses by Homer and Hesiod in the *Certamen* offer no particular help in deciding the winner. Hesiod begins by reciting ten lines from *Works and Days* (383–92); it is a passage of considerable elegance, but it deals with the unelevated, domestic topic of agriculture, purporting to offer useful advice on ploughing, sowing, and harvesting. We are easily reminded of Euripides' claims in *Frogs* (e.g., 971–79, quoted n. 30 above) that his own poetry encouraged rational thought and

offered practical advice. Homer counters with an amalgam of two passages from *Iliad* 13 (126–33, 339–44). It is a bristling war passage that reads more as a critique than as an exaltation of a military ethos—cf., e.g., 343–44 μΐλα κεν θρασυκΐρδιος εῒη | ἐς τῷτε γηθὼσειεν ᒥδ¯ν πῷνον οὠδ᾿ ὐκΐχοιτο "he would be hard–hearted, who could enjoy seeing such hardship and not feel pain"—but, as we shall soon see, this is not how the king claims to have understood it.

Once again, the people prefer Homer, finding his verses extraordinary (205–7):

> θαυμΐσαντες δὲ καά ἕν τοὤτ᾿ τῷν ὶΟμηρον οᒣ ὶΕλληνες ἔπῦνουν, ῞ς παρῖ τῷ προσ κον γεγονῷτων τ]ν ἔπ]ν, καά ἔκῆλευον διδῷναι τῷν νἐκην.
>
> At this performance the Greeks were again amazed at Homer and praised him, finding his poetry to be well beyond the norm, and they demanded that he be given the prize.

This scene functions analogously to the moment at the end of *Frogs* (1443–44) when Euripides offers the kind of advice, as is often noted, that had already been proposed in the play's parabasis, advice that the "people," i.e., the audience, would almost certainly have endorsed.[35] As in *Frogs*, however, the judge makes an unexpected choice: Panedes chooses Hesiod rather than Homer, and his reasons are, on the face of it, about as unconvincing as Dionysus' at the end of *Frogs* (207–10, quoted in section I above). The two contests, therefore, follow parallel lines, although with one revealing discrepancy. Insofar as each contest dramatizes a rivalry between poetic styles, it can be said that the contests end up with opposite types of winners: in *Frogs* Aeschylus—with all the Homeric baggage that we discussed earlier—is victorious over the "Hesiodic" Euripides,

while the *Certamen* judges Hesiod, and the stylistic associations of Hesiodic poetry, to be "better" than Homer and Homeric poetry.

This discrepancy raises some interesting questions. To begin with the most obvious: Why would Aristophanes' contest end in the opposite manner to its putative model? Is this a commentary on the *Certamen* itself—its social ethos, or its poetic hierarchy, for example? Perhaps the simplest reading of the differences between the works might be to say that Aristophanes reverses the outcome of the *Certamen* to show that the times have changed so much since that legendary setting that *now*, in fifth-century Athens, a *martial* poet—a Homer—is exactly what is needed. Dionysus may not be happy about having to choose between two poets he admires, but the fact remains that a decision has to be made, and he opts for the one who seems most capable of answering Athens' immediate political needs. This is straightforward enough, offering as it does an uncomplicated moral reading that more or less accords with traditional interpretations of the ending. The *Certamen*, however, offers a similar resolution to the contest—the poet is chosen who is alleged to suit current cultural needs best—but that ending is anything but uncomplicated, for the narrative strongly implies that the *wrong* person was chosen.[36] In light of the close parallels we have already seen between the *Certamen* and *Frogs*, it seems highly likely that Aristophanes would have been well attuned to the ramifications of Panedes' decision as he crafted his own final scene of *Frogs*. If we suppose, then, that Aristophanes followed closely the analogue of the Panedes decision in the *Certamen*, the end of *Frogs* becomes considerably more ironic and un-resolved than most readings—which typically see the choice of Aeschylus as teleologically necessary—would allow.

To put the crucial question most directly: If Panedes is seen as a bad judge working against popular opinion, can the same be said of Dionysus in the Aristophanic contest? In the *Certamen*, as we have seen, there is no question that Homer is the people's favorite in the contest, and that Hesiod himself knew it. Twice Hesiod is described as annoyed at Homer's success. At line 94, Hesiod is "irritated" (ὐχθεσθε΄ς) at Homer's fine performance, and at line 149, he feels jealousy (φθον]ν) of Homer after he had ably answered Hesiod's mathematical questions in 140–45. The assembled Greeks on several occasions registered their *thauma* at Homer (90, 205) and, as we have already noted, when Panedes chooses Hesiod instead, at 207, it can only come off as an egregiously minority opinion with decidedly autocratic overtones. Does Dionysus likewise ignore popular opinion in choosing Aeschylus at the end of *Frogs*? Or put another way, would his initial intention to retrieve Euripides be more in line with what "the people" would endorse, if themselves confronted with a choice between him and Aeschylus? This is, of course, a difficult question to answer, since it involves an assessment of Euripides' reputation in fifth-century Athens, and such an assessment is irretrievably mediated by the complex, but largely fictional, *vita*-tradition that grew up around him.[37] As Lefkowitz has well shown, however, despite the malicious or simply absurd stories that eventually accreted to his biography, the evidence suggests that at least as early as the fourth century Euripides enjoyed virtually heroic status.[38] It may be true that Euripides won fewer victories in his career than Sophocles, but it is dangerous to extrapolate from this that he was unpopular.[39] Once we discount the many obvious fictions of the *Vitae* that turn Euripides into an eccentric and embittered character, it becomes clear that he was in fact popular and influential in his own time. The simple fact that Euripidean tragedy could be

represented, even if comically, as something of a social "problem" in at least two Aristophanic plays, testifies to the fact that audiences were drawn to him, and that some people, at least, seriously worried about his potentially pernicious moral influence on the public.[40] Indeed, when Dionysus speaks of his *pothos* for Euripides at the beginning of the play, and the *hêdonê* he feels for Euripidean poetry at the end, he uses what amounts to the vocabulary of a true "fan," drawn in (to the dismay and disapproval of Aeschylus; cf., e.g., 1039–44) by the poet's treatment of topics that remain irresistibly engaging to audiences even today, such as incest, madness, voyeurism, and transvestitism, to name only a few.

Aristophanes, in fact, is quite explicit in characterizing Euripides' and Aeschylus' respective attitudes toward popularity in *Frogs*. In the scene beginning at 907, Euripides consistently portrays Aeschylus as retiring, dyspeptic, arrogant, self-indulgent, and enigmatic. His characters are emblematic of the man and his style, as Euripides notes in ridiculing Aeschylus' Achilles and Niobe (911–13):

> πρΗτιστα μὲν γἷρ ἱνα τιν᾽ ὓν καθᾄσεν ἕγκαλῴψας,
> ὡΑχιλλῆα τιν᾽ ἢ Νιῷβην, τῷ πρῷσωπον οὠχά δεικνὤς,
> πρῷσχημα τ ς τραγ᾽δἐας, γρὤζοντας οὠδὲ τουτἐ.
>
> First he made a single figure sit down, an Achilles or Niobe, say, covered them and didn't even show their face—the mere façade of a tragedy—and they didn't make so much as a grunt.

Euripides continues by ridiculing the unintelligibility of Aeschylus' language (930 … ὕ ξυμβαλεᾄν οὠ ῥόδι᾽ ◀ν). Dionysus too has to agree that he has spent many sleepless

nights trying to figure out what a “tawny horsecock” was (931–32). The contrasting portrait Euripides paints of himself is well known: he put tragedy on a diet, reduced the swollen diction and ambiguity, and had everyone talking, including wives, slaves, girls, and old women (948–50). Aeschylus, of course, finds this criminal, but Euripides describes his approach as “democratic” (952 δημοκρατικῷν γἶρ αὦτ’ ἧδρων), and he continues in his famous speech at 959-62 by claiming to have introduced οἰκεᾷα πρἶγματα onto the stage: now his audiences understand all his characters’ lines, and they can offer reasoned critique of his art if they choose (960–61 ξυνειδῷτες γἶρ οἵτοι | ελεγχον ὑν μου τῷν τῆχνην). In Aeschylus’ response to Euripides’ characterization, he confirms that he has no interest in pandering to the masses or compromising his dramaturgy for the sake of easy popular acclaim. It is no wonder that the arrival of Euripides in the underworld, as described by Plouto’s slave at 771–78, created a real uproar: when the reprobates in Hades heard Euripides’ *epideixeis* of his plays, they went crazy over the newcomer and thought he was the cleverest of all:

> ΟΙ. ᾇτε δῷ κατ λθ’ Εὠριπὲδης, ἕπεδεὲκνυτο
>
> τοᾷς λωποδὤταις καά τοᾷσι βαλλαντιοτῷμοις
>
> καά τοᾷσι πατραλοὲαισι καά τοιχωρὤχοις,
>
> ᾇπερ ἧστ’ ἕν ἰΑιδου πλ θος, οἳ δ’ ὑκροΗμενοι
>
> τ]ν ὑντιλογι]ν καά λυγισμ]ν καά στροφ]ν
>
> ὢπερεμἶνησαν κὐνῷμισαν σοφΗτατον·
>
> κὐπειτ’ ἕπαρθεάς ὑντελἶβετο τοῶ θρῷνου,
>
> ἧν’ Αἰσχὤλος καθ στο.

> When Euripides came down here, he began giving display performances to the clothes-snatchers and cutpurses and father-beaters and burglars who abound in Hades, and when they heard his argumentative speeches and his twistings and weavings, they went quite mad over him and thought he was the greatest; and then he got so fired up that he laid claim to the chair where Aeschylus was sitting. (tr. Sommerstein).

It is easily missed that this skirmish in fact furnished the pretext for the contest in the play,[41] and it is noteworthy that this little vignette both replicates in miniature the outcome of the *Certamen* and presages the outcome of the contest in *Frogs*. That is, the "people" (here the petty criminals mentioned in lines 772-73, who are jocularly said [774] to make up the πλ θος of Hades) clamor for the one poet,[42] but the less popular one holds sway at the end of the contest. Indeed, when Xanthias asks ingenuously whether Aeschylus had any supporters (782) down in Hades, Plouto's slave has to admit that the "good sort of people," who would naturally have sided with him, were very few (783 ῷλἐγον τῷ χρηστῷν ἕστιν).

It seems safe to say, therefore, that Euripides in *Frogs*, like Homer in the *Certamen*, is the "people's favorite," and the fact that they both lose their respective contests implies that the decision was a direct repudiation of the people's will.[43] This notion certainly creates some intepretative dilemmas for *Frogs*, for the end of the play now appears considerably more unstable than is usually supposed. A reasonably straightforward reading of Dionysus' "unpopular" decision is to assume that he has himself learned during the course of the play that what is "popular" is not necessarily what is morally or politically desirable. Sometimes a leader, he might be imagined to say, even in a

democracy, must take matters into his own hands and go against popular opinion in the interest of the polis. Certainly at this point in Athenian history the military fixation and unreflective moral stance of the Aristophanic Aeschylus would be more useful to society than the give-and-take of Euripidean intellectualism and discourse, despite the latter's immediate aesthetic allure. On this reading, one might imagine that Aristophanes has Dionysus "correct" Panedes' decision in the *Certamen* by having him choose the "Homeric" figure that Panedes did not, but should have (i.e., if Panedes were to respect the will of the audience in the *Certamen*'s narrative).

This explanation is attractive *prima facie* for its simplicity, but does not hold up well if we assume that Aristophanes was modeling the *Frogs* contest on the *Certamen* with some care. If, for example, he intended to replicate the structural and moral details of the *Certamen* with reasonable fidelity, it is likely that Dionysus' decision also shares in some of the *negative* flavor of Panedes' decision and that, in a conspicuously intertextual move, Aristophanes inverts the *Certamen* decision (choosing the *Homeric* Aeschylus, while Panedes chooses *Hesiod*) as a kind of corrective commentary on that text. Dionysus, after all, chose the "Homeric" poet (Aeschylus) when he could have chosen the Hesiodic one ("Euripides"); Panedes chose Hesiod when he could have chosen Homer. In other words, Dionysus chose for himself the poet that Panedes *should* have chosen, but since the figure of Panedes in the *Certamen* is a negative exemplum of a "bad judge," and since Dionysus adopts the Panedes-role in *Frogs*, this would seem to imply that, in Aristophanes' eyes, Panedes chose the poet that *Dionysus* should have chosen (i.e., the Hesiodic one—Euripides). Each judge, it seems, chooses wrongly for his own narrative, but correctly for the other.

III. *FROGS* AND LITERARY EVALUATION

If intertextuality of this sort is operative in the final scene of *Frogs*, the play ends on a rather impishly ironic note instead of descending into the sort of tedious moralizing that critics have routinely ascribed to it. But if Aristophanes was not particularly interested in championing Aeschylus as a "superior" poet to Euripides, neither does he seem especially eager to "rehabilitate" Euripides after raking him over the coals, or to undermine the victory of Aeschylus. In fact, I rather doubt that he was trying to convey a genuine preference for either one in the play. When considered in a strictly literal, pedestrian sense, there is little question that Aristophanes makes a reasonable case for Aeschylus as the best "savior" of Athens. Aeschylus did deploy larger-than-life heroic characters, often in military situations, and Athens was in need of a sound war policy, preferably one that was decisive and aggressive. But in view of the play's relationship with the *Certamen*, it strikes me that Aristophanes was more intrigued by the absurdity of supposing that two great but very different poets might be taken out of their artistic spheres and imagined as serious political forces than he was moved by any desire to influence public policy or inculcate moral values. This seems to be the essential point of the *Certamen* that Aristophanes internalized while composing the *Frogs agôn*. For Panedes' decision ultimately reveals that in a contest between two great poets, any attempt to determine which is "better" according to non-poetic criteria is doomed to be capricious. Homer loses that contest because Panedes assesses his verses out of their context, applying as a criterion only whether the verses quoted were consonant with the values of his own society, and concluding that they were an endorsement of an anti-

social, military ethos. Panedes makes no attempt to understand the sample in relation to the larger work or its immediate setting, no attempt to evaluate poetics as such (e.g., skill in diction or meter), and the clash between what the people think and Panedes' criterion only reveals how misdirected his decision was in the eyes of the *Certamen*'s author, at least as an evaluation of poetic skill.[44] Both contests claim to be tests of *sophia*, but that term has such a broad semantic range that the decision of each judge cannot help but be idiosyncratic.

The elaborate contest in *Frogs* drives this point home: Aristophanes does have the two tragedians compete over what we might call "poetics" *stricto sensu*, but this part of the contest ends up inconclusively. Neither poet can be said to have "won" those tests, and Dionysus simply revels in their different styles, appreciating the good and forgiving the bad in each, as his mood dictates, if only as part of the fast-paced comic repartée. Rather, his final test of *sophia*—the question about Alcibiades and Athenian public policy—is something quite removed from Aeschylus' and Euripides' poetics and irrelevant to their respective oeuvres. It performs exactly the same function as Panedes' call for a final comparison between Homer and Hesiod, for implicit in that scene is a question similar to the one posed explictly to Aeschylus and Euripides by Dionysus in *Frogs,* i.e., "what can you perform that will do the most good for contemporary society?" Whether or not their respective authors were fully conscious of it, in fact, there lies behind these scenes a highly nuanced critique of the uses of poetry, and of the criteria traditionally used to assess it. In *Frogs*, despite all the talk of didacticism put into the mouths of Aeschylus and Euripides, Aristophanes seems to have understood the near futility of articulating exactly what it meant to say that an artistic phenomenon as

complex as poetry could "teach," especially, at least, when one starts with the assumption that the subject of poetic teaching must be that which is "morally beneficial."

There is no warrant, of course, to turn Aristophanes into a systematic literary theorist, but at the same time, not far beneath Dionysus' aesthetic dilemma in *Frogs* lies a monumental problem of literary theory that remains unresolved to this day, namely, whether "moral benefit" is a legitimate criterion in the evaluation of poetry. Scholars traditionally assume that at the end of *Frogs* Aristophanes, through the character of Dionysus, takes the first rudimentary steps towards formulating an aesthetic theory most forcefully set out a few decades later by Plato in the *Republic*. Like Plato's famous denunciation of "immoral" poetry in his ideal polis (e.g., in *Rep*. 3.386–98) and his strict demand that poetry represent only what is true and good, the victory of Aeschylus in *Frogs* is typically seen to be suffused with self-righteousness.[45] Like Dionysus, Plato was himself well aware of the seductive, but potentially "amoral," allure of poetry (*Rep*. 10.607c6–7), and it is interesting that he has Socrates situate the aesthetic dilemma of controversial poetry as part of an "age-old disagreement between philosophy and poetry" (607b5 παλαιῗ μῆν τις διαφορῗ φιλοσοφὲᾳ τε καά ποιητικᾇ). By this he evidently refers to a broader tension between what we might call "formalism" and "didacticism" in the interpretation of literature, where the criteria for evaluating a poetic work derive either from its distinguishing formal elements or from its less tangible "thought" or subject matter. Plato was obviously less impressed by a poem's form, however charming it might be, than by its moral character: for him, at least, a poem could have no real excellence in the absence of a demonstrable moral benefit to an audience.[46] As Plato's allusion to a παλαιῗ διαφορῒ implies, however, he was not the first person to weigh in

on this debate, and despite the dominant notion in fifth- and fourth-century Athenian culture that poetry should be in some sense didactic, there is every reason to suppose that some took an opposing view on the matter.

Whether or not the *Certamen* was written originally as a work of literary theory is unknowable, but the very idea of a contest between Homer and Hesiod presupposes a fundamental theoretical question of literary axiology ("how can one evaluate and rank different poets?"), and king Panedes' decision is an undeniably theory-laden gesture. His rationale for the decision—that the subject of Hesiod's quotation was more desirable for society than Homer's—anticipates Plato's censorious approach to poetry, and Dionysus follows suit at the end of *Frogs*. But, as we have seen, the conclusion of each contest is unsettling because it is shown to run counter to what the audience has been led to expect, with the result that each work seems at least to broach the debate over what really constitutes "good" poetry; the apparent intertextual relationship between the two works brings the debate into even higher relief.

It is, perhaps, rather alarming to suppose that Aristophanes himself was offering in *Frogs* a critique of an excessively didactic approach to the evaluation of poetry, especially since virtually no other representative of this side of that "ancient debate" has survived from the fifth century. But there is considerable evidence beginning in the Hellenistic period that the problem of literary evaluation was discussed with vigorous sophistication, and the complex evolution of the debate may reassure us that it had a history reaching at least as far back as the fifth century. The seeds of the debate—whether we can distinguish the formal elements and structures of poetry from subject and

thought—are visible enough already in *Frogs*, and the later evidence, for all its complexity, can consistently trace an intellectual lineage back to this dichotomy.

One example from the Hellenistic tradition is worth citing here because of the way in which it articulates literary-critical attitudes that I have argued are at play in *Frogs* and the *Certamen*. While this later evidence obviously cannot be used to prove that such attitudes existed in earlier periods, it does make it easier to imagine that they did. In his critique of Heraclides of Pontus, Philodemus makes a charge that one could easily imagine the Greek audience leveling against Panedes in the *Certamen*, namely that by insisting on the moral benefit of a poet, one runs the risk of repudiating the work of the finest poets:

…διῷτι τἶ κὶ[λ-

λιcτ[α] ποἐηματα τ]ν [δο-

κιμ[ω]τἳτων ποιητ][ν

διἶ τῷ μηδὡ δντινοὥν

ῇφελἐαν παραcκευ[ἳ-

ζειν, ἕνἐων δὲ καά [τἶ

πλ[εᾄ]cτα, τιν]ν δὲ πἳ[ν-

τα [τ] c ὐρετ c ἕκρ[απ]ἐ-

ζει. (Col. 4 10-18 Mangoni)

…because he expels from excellence the finest poems of the most esteemed poets because they don't offer any benefit; [in the case of] some poets [he expels] most of their poems, with others, all of them.

The alternative to applying a moral yardstick to poetry was an extreme “formalistic” approach, as represented, for example, by Crates of Mallos, for whom “sound” (φωνὼ) was the primary criterion of good poetry. But Philodemus argued against this approach as well, and held that poetry could in fact benefit or harm an audience. What he seems to have objected to, rather, is the idea of applying “moral benefit” as the sole criterion in judging whether or not a poet was good.[47] One fragment from Book 2 notes that in earlier times “Greece” (*Hellas*) admired as a matter of course poets who portrayed “bad” (*ponéra*) subjects or people. Presumably, his point here is that the criterion for poetic assessment involves other things than the moral quality of the characters or actions represented in a given work:

…τῷ̣ν ῳ̣Ελ-

λἲδα. ὐλλώ ἕξώ ᾆτου τῷ̣ν[48]

ώΑρχὲλοχον ἔθαὤμαζε

καά τῷ̣ν ῳ̣Ιππωνἳκτα

καά τῷ̣ν Cιμωνὲδην,

καά τ]ν παρώ ῳ̣Ομὼρωι

καά Εὼρειπὲδει καά τοᾆc

ὑλλοιc ποιηταᾆc ἧνια,

πονηροᾆc προcΗποιc

περικεὲμενα καά περά

πονηρ]ν πραγμἳτων

γεγραμμῆνα... (*P.Herc*. 1074 fr. F col. iii 1-12 Sbordone)

…Greece. But ever since [Greece] used to admire Archilochus, Hipponax, Semonides, and some things in Homer, Euripides and other poets that are associated with base characters and are written about base deeds. (Tr. Asmis, modified).

This passage has remarkable relevance for the contests in *Frogs* and the *Certamen*, in that it articulates the kind of hypothetical response to the controversial decision of each contest's judge which, as I have argued, seems implicit in the very structure of each contest. As we have seen, each work highlights conspicuously the very process of judging the value of poets, and the potential injustice in store for any poet judged according to a strictly moral calculus. We are doubtless meant to imagine that the Greek audience in the *Certamen* (a constituency analogous to Philodemus' ῳἘλλἀς in the passage above) was impressed enough by Hesiod's performance in his contest, and would have regarded him as a "good" poet.[49] But the work also makes it clear that *their* criterion for poetic excellence (as opposed to Panedes') was not whether Hesiod's work offered any explicit "benefit" to contemporary society. The implication of their imagined response to Panedes is one that would have surely pleased the likes of Philodemus, who held that there were plenty of "completely beautiful" (παγκἆλα) poems "without benefit" (ὐνωφελ).[50] This was Dionysus' dilemma as well in *Frogs*, for he clearly loved Euripides but was ultimately constrained by what he perceived as a need to judge him according to the arbitrary aesthetic criterion of moral benefit.[51] There may not be any "Greek audience" at the end of the contest in *Frogs* (as there was at the end of the one in

Certamen) to point out to Dionysus that he had abandoned the decidedly non-utilitarian criterion for judging good poetry that he announced at the beginning of the play,[52] but one might well imagine that the crowd who greeted Euripides with wild enthusiasm on his arrival in Hades (774-76), would have had a considerable list of objections of their own to Dionysus' decision.

Frogs is no more a work of literary theory than *Clouds* is of philosophy, or *Wasps* of jurisprudence, yet few would disagree that Aristophanes worked in revealing ways with abstract ideas within those fields. The technical vocabulary for discussing the theoretical foundation of literary value may have been inchoate in Aristophanes' time, but the plot of *Frogs* itself and its central theoretical question—of two poets, how does one determine which is "better"?—indicate that the basic terms of this aesthetic debate were already well established. Because *Frogs* ends by testing the propaedeutic worth of each contestant, and because Aristophanes, like most poets who deploy satire, routinely claims (however disingenuously) to instruct his audience, critics have traditionally assumed that Dionysus' choice of Aeschylus ends the play with a didactic flourish.[53] But the other side of debate was clearly in the air, and just because *we* have had to wait for Hellenistic thinkers to decouple moral benefit from aesthetic merit, does not mean that such approaches were unavailable to Aristophanes. The end of *Frogs* is hardly a solemn and systematic theoretical disquisition about poetry, but its intertextual relationship with the *Certamen*, as I have argued above, makes it easy to see that the victory of Aeschylus over Euripides raises as many questions about the nature of poetry as it pretends to resolve.[54]

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NOTES

[1] For the historical background of Athens at the time of *Frogs*' production see Dover 69–76 and Sommerstein 1996: 1–9. It is often noted (e.g., MacDowell 297) that Dionysus claims that his decision to resurrect Aeschylus was still an act of basic hedonism (he chooses "the one my soul likes," 1468), but this is only after each poet answers his final political questions and he finds himself scrambling for a decisive criterion. See discussion below, section iii, on the significance of Dionysus' behavior at the end of the play.

[2] There are many variants of this approach. See, for example, Bierl 27–44, esp. 41–43, Padilla, Bowie 352 (who sees Dionysus' development as a kind of Eleusinian initiation), Sommerstein 1996: 18 ("His experiences can be seen as leading him … to understand and internalize the civic significance of dramatic poetry"), and Lada-Richards in her study of Dionysus and Dionysian elements in *Frogs*, which argues (9) for "the various stages of Dionysus' itinerary … as the dramatic re-enactment of the god's original advent and mythical incorporation into the Athenian *polis.*"

[3] Recent discussions include Hubbard 213–19 and von Möllendorff.

[4] Greek citations from the *Certamen* are taken from vol. 5 of the Oxford Classical Text of Homer, ed. T. W. Allen (Oxford 1912). For *Frogs*, I use Dover's 1993 edition of the play.

[5] On the chronological problems see section <sc>i<sc> below.

[6] Dornseiff 136: "Die beiden Schriften sind sehr ähnlich gebaut, und Aristophanes schützt so den überlieferten Text des Agon."

[7] Heldmann posited, based on the testimony of Plut. *Mor*. 153f-154a, an "*Urcertamen*," composed probably some time in the fifth century, that, like *Frogs,* featured a contest of riddles at the end as a means of determining the winner of the *agôn*. See also Richardson 1981: 2, who had suggested the year before Heldmann's monograph appeared that the placement of the riddling scene in *Frogs* might be invoked as an argument in favor of an early version of the *Certamen* along the lines of Plutarch's account: "… the order of the contest in Aristophanes' *Frogs* is similar (discussion of prepared passages followed by political questioning and riddling answers), and this episode makes better sense if seen against the background of an existing story of a contest of Homer and Hesiod." See further n. 25 below.

[8] Cf. O'Sullivan 87 n. 143 and 95 n. 183. As will become clear below, O'Sullivan's discussion of fifth-century literary and rhetorical stylistics provides an important backdrop for the argument I pursue in this paper. Lardinois 184 also briefly notes a connection between the *Certamen* and *Frogs* in his discussion of the Homeric *gnômai* embedded in the *Certamen*. See also Griffith 189, with n. 19.

[9] Dover and Sommerstein, to name just the most recent commentators, pay no attention to the notion.

[10] Cavalli has recently taken the first steps in this direction. Although her treatment of the chronological problems inherent in supposing that the *Certamen* influenced *Frogs* is somewhat cursory, she offers a usefully detailed commentary on the specific points of contact between them. In the end, however, Cavalli sees the influence of the *Certamen* on *Frogs* as essentially superficial. She notes a "volontà aristofanea di riprodurre i temi e i

moduli espressivi di una *sophía* antica, che il suo pubblico ben conosceva," but finds in the final scene of *Frogs* a great gulf between the two works, and suggests that the pains Aristophanes takes to establish a relationship with the *Certamen* really serve only to highlight its essential meaninglessness and the *Certamen*'s "assoluta incompatibilità con le esigenze contemporanee più urgenti e reali" of *Frogs* (105). Cavalli is correct to draw attention to the poetico-ethical ambiguity at the end of *Frogs*, though, as I argue below, Aristophanes seems to have found such questions of literary aesthetics well articulated in the *Certamen*. Ford 282 also offers some brief remarks about parallels between the *Certamen* and *Frogs*.

[11] 32–34

ᾇπερ δὲ ὐκηκῴαμεν ἔπά τοῴ θειοτἳτου αὠτοκρἳτορος ῴΑδριανοῴ ε ϝρημῆνον ὣπῷ τ ς Πυθἐας περά ῳΟμὠρου ἔκθησῴμεθα.

[12] Nietzsche's interest was piqued by the fact that towards the end of the *Certamen* Alcidamas is cited fleetingly as a source for a detail in the story of Hesiod's death. For a discussion of Nietzsche's approach to the *Certamen* see now Porter 239–41 and 318 n. 164. See also Mariss 21–24.

[13] O'Sullivan 64, who summarizes the evidence, with relevant bibliography. O'Sullivan reflects a general consensus, though one should be aware that the significance of the papyri and the attribution of a *Certamen* to Alcidamas has been the subject of considerable debate since Nietzsche's day. Cf., e.g., Kirk, West, Koniaris, and Renehan. See also Mandilaras for discussion of a more recently discovered papyrus fragment from the 1st century <sc>b.c.<sc> that preserves 14 lines of the *Certamen*.

[14] The clearest exposition can be found in Richardson 1981, who responds to West's view that the story was invented by Alcidamas himself. See also Vogt 219–21 and more recently Cavalli 90–92.

[15] See Radermacher 30 and Griffith, esp. 188–92. The myth of Mopsus and Calchas is sometimes cited in this regard (it is noteworthy that Hesiod seems to have composed a poem on this subject himself; cf. frr. 278–79 Merkelbach-West). Several versions exist, but in every case the story ends in Calchas' death, either because he was unable to answer Moschus' riddles or because Moschus could answer the riddles posed by Calchas and so was proven the better seer. Cf. Gantz 702 for the variants and sources.

[16] Heraclitus, among others, provides ample testimony to the early reputation of Homer and Hesiod as *sophoi* (despite Heraclitus' own desire to repudiate their alleged *sophia*); cf. frr. 22 B 40, 42, 56, 57, 105, 106 Diels-Kranz.

[17] O'Sullivan 66–79 and see section <sc>ii<sc> below.

[18] West 440–41 regarded the recurrence of the lines in Alcidamas as the repetition of lines from a riddling "party game" that he would have found current. West could not see any sign that Aristophanes associated his lines with Homer and Hesiod, but this was astutely addressed by Richardson 2, who noted that the *Peace* passage highlights two themes closely paralleled in the *Certamen*: in each we find "rejection of war poetry, and the praise of feasting (*Cert*. 80ff.)." See also Schadewaldt 56 and 66–67, Compton-Engle 327–29, and Graziosi 2001: 66.

[19] *WD* 654–57

ἦνθα δ᾽ ἔγ¯ν ἔπ᾽ ὑεθλα δαἡφρονος ὡΑμφιδῖμαντος | Χαλκἐδα [τ᾽] εΓσεπῆρησα·

τῖ δὲ προπεφραδμῆνα πολλῖ | ὑεθλ᾽ ἥθεσαν παᾴδες μεγαλὼτορες· ἥνθα μῆ φημι | ὦμν᾽ νικὼσαντα φῆρειν τρὲποδ᾽ ῆ̣τΗεντα. On the importance of this passage for the extant *Certamen* see Arrighetti 168, O'Sullivan 96–105, and Graziosi 2002: 168–74.

[20] See Nagy 66, Thalmann 152–53, and Rosen.

[21] For other structural parallels see Heldmann 59–63 and Cavalli, esp. 93–97.

[22] See esp. O'Sullivan 66–95.

[23] Lefkowitz 7–8.

[24] O'Sullivan 98.

[25] See Vogt 199, who says of the narrator: "Er zeigt eine besondere Vorliebe für Homer und hätte, wie es scheint, am liebsten ihn, den grossen Improvisator, siegen lassen, war aber andererseits durch eine auf den Versen *Erga* 654ff. beruhende Tradition an einen feststehenden Ausgang des Kampfes gebunden." West 443 argued strongly, but unpersuasively, against this: "It is Hesiod who wins the prize, not Homer, and it is no good saying that he wins it only through the perversity of the adjudicator; … there is not a word to suggest that the decision was unjust." It is true that the narrator himself never explicitly claims that Panedes' verdict was unjust, but the narrator's palpable sense of wonder at Homer's dazzling performance, and the contrast he draws between the universal acclaim of the people and Panedes' repudiation of their verdict leaves little doubt where his ultimate sympathies would lie. See now Graziosi's discussion 2002: 168–84, esp. 173–74.

[26] The Flinders-Petrie papyrus, printed in the fifth volume of the Homer *OCT*, p. 225. Lines 3–4 have [ ]τρο[πον | [ ]απαντων | [ ]των κριτων | [π]ανηδου. Given

the proximity of the word κριτων in line 3, the supplement in the next line to π]ανηδου (i.e., giving the name of one of the κριταὲ) is convincing. *Contra*: Heldmann 12–14 and 85–90, who believed that the Panedes scene was a later addition contemporary with the extant text and that the original contest was not decided by a king. For criticisms of Heldmann's thesis see Richardson 1984.

[27] See n. 18 above on the necessity for a Hesiodic victory. See also Graziosi 2002: 101–10, who suggests another reason why Hesiod must win the contest, namely because he was regarded in antiquity as chronologically earlier than Homer.

[28] West 443, who, however, makes this point in arguing that the narrator finds nothing particularly reprehensible about Panedes' decision (see discussion in preceding paragraph). It is true that neither Panedes' decision in the *Certamen* nor Dionysus' in *Frogs* can accurately be described as "contemptible" *per se* (each judge, after all, offers a rationale for his decision), but given the fact that in each contest tensions slowly mount between a "popular" and an "autocratic" verdict, the final decision is problematic, to say the least. See Graziosi 2002: 178–80, who argues that the *Certamen* reflects a tension between a popular, "democratic" Homer (possibly with democratic Athens particularly in mind), and a Hesiod who appeals more to a king, such as Panedes. Ford 277 finds the *Certamen* less concerned with "literary sophistication" than "kingship," and contrasts this autocratic approach to that of democratic Athens (see 276–82).

[29] See discussion in Graziosi 2001: 71–72.

[30] The fact that Homer ultimately loses the contest in the *Certamen* has long been problematic for those who see Alcidamas as a champion of Homer; for discussion see

O'Sullivan 96–105, who stresses the pervasively negative treatment of Hesiod in the work, and the concomitant positive—and extensive—treatment of Homer. See also n. 27 above.

[31] See, e.g., *Frogs* 971–77: τοιαῦτα μὴντοὠγ¯ φρονεᾷν |τοὤτοισιν εΓσηγησὶμην, | λογισμᾧν ἔνθεάς τ ᾆ τῆχν | καά σκῆψιν, ᾗστ᾽ εδη νοεᾷν | ὔπαντα καά διειδῆναι | τὶ τ᾽ ὑλλα καά <u>τῖς οΓκὲ</u><u>ας | οΓκεᾷν ὑμεινον ἢ πρῷ τοῶ</u> …

[32] For discussion see del Corno 241–47, Dover 19 and ad loc. p. 369, and Sommerstein 1996: 283 ad loc. I incline towards taking the ἑδομαι as referring to Euripides, indicating that Dionysus' inexplicable craving for Euripides still holds strong, even if Aeschylus is now appealing for other reasons; but there is no denying the ambiguity of the passage.

[33] Here I follow those who attribute to Euripides lines 1442–50 (*pace* Dover), where he advises that the Athenians no longer trust the present leaders but rather reinstate those currently out of favor. See Sommerstein 1996: 289 ad loc. For discussion of the textual problems of 1435–66 see Sommerstein 1996: 286–92 with Dover 373–78.

[34] It is a striking coincidence indeed that the decisive contest between poets in both the *Certamen* and *Frogs* constitutes in each case the fifth round of competition. Whether there is more than coincidence at work here is, of course, impossible to say for sure.

[35] The advice in 1443, namely, to trust a different set of leaders than those they currently trust (… ᾇταν τῖ νῶν ὑπιστα πὲσθ᾽ δγΗμεθα) is humorously enigmatic in its phraseology, but essentially in line with the advice of the parabasis (674–737); see Sommerstein 1996: 289 ad loc. That the Athenians approved of the political "advice" of

the parabasis is clear from the evidence pointing to second performance of *Frogs,* probably the following year; see Sommerstein 1996: 21. Two testimonia mention the re-performance of the play, and it is curious that when each mentions the Athenians' praise of Aristophanes for his parabasis the wording resembles the public acclaim of Homer in the *Certamen.* Hypothesis Ic (Dover) to *Frogs*, citing Dicaearchus as source, says: οὧτω δὲ ἔθαυμἵσθη τῷ δρὺμα διΐ τῷν ἔν αὠτἅ παρἵβασιν ἧστε καά ὐνεδιδἳχθ η ..., and the Aristophanes *Vita* (Aristophanes Test. 1.35 Kassel-Austin), which also mentions Athenian accolades for the parabasis, notes that Aristophanes was "praised" and "crowned" by the Athenians: … ἔπ νῆθη καά ἔστεφανΗθη; cf. *Certamen* 205 θαυμἵσαντες δὲ καά ἔν τοὧτ᾽ τῷν ὶΟμηρον οͳ ὶΕλληνες ἔπὖνουν. But in this story, of course, it is Hesiod who gets the victory crown: ἵ δὲ βασιλεῆς τῷν ῳΗσὲοδον ἔστεφἳνωσεν. If the public "universally" approves what Aristophanes proposed in his parabasis, and if Euripides is shown to espouse the same views at the end of the play, then it is legitimate to see Euripides here as taking a popular position.

[36] In later antiquity, Panedes became a proverbial "type," representative of the powerful person who makes a foolish decision; see O'Sullivan 96.

[37] See Stevens for one of the first discussions of the problems of evaluating the biographical evidence about Euripides. He characterized the traditional view of Euripides "… spending the last twenty-five years of his life in Athens … in an atmosphere of increasing isolation, unpopularity, and persecution" as greatly exaggerated, and understood better than most scholars at that time that comic ridicule—our main source

for attitudes about Athenian attitudes towards Euripides—need hardly have implied disapprobation. See esp. 92–93.

[38] See Lefkowitz 88–104. She notes that ignominious stories were also attached to Sophocles and Aeschylus, and that they seemed to be part of the pattern of "heroic" biographies of literary figures. See also Stevens 90.

[39] See Lefkowitz 103; Stevens 92 finds it significant that Euripides seems never to have been denied a chorus: "… if we think of his career as one in which he could practically count upon production, in which on three occasions at least and probably many more he won the second prize, and on four occasions won the first prize, should we regard this as a failure?" On the procedures for judging dramatic competitions, see Csapo and Slater 157-60 and Wilson 101-102.

[40] See Stevens 92: "… [I]f anything emerges clearly from the *Frogs* … it is, I believe, the background assumption of the whole play that among contemporary dramatists Sophocles and Euripides were undoubtedly the best."

[41] See Ford 282, who notes that this scene reflects a "populist passion" behind the contest, and perhaps a mild satire of the pitfalls of democratic judging of art.

[42] The fact that Euripides' fans in the underworld are portrayed as criminals need not be taken as a serious comment on Euripides' fan-base in the real world. Given Euripides' evident popularity at Athens, Aristophanes here essentially characterizes most Athenians as criminals. But this kind of banter is no different from other examples in Aristophanes of benign mockery of the audience; cf., e.g., the end of the *agôn* in *Clouds* (1094–97)

where Worse Logos convinces Better Logos that the majority of the audience were εὠρυπρΗκτοι.

[43] See Graziosi 2002: 178–80 and n. 27 above.

[44] No doubt Aristophanes would have been similarly skeptical about the possiblity of evaluating poetry adequately even using "poetic" criteria. Certainly the explicitly literary *agôn* of *Frogs* does not make Dionysus' task of deciding between the two poets much easier or more informed in the end.

[45] See, for example, Hubbard 216: "Like Aeschylus [Euripides] professes to aim at the betterment of citizens through his drama (vv. 1009–10); yet he seems rather unconcerned with the effects of his plays on the audience and the future behavior of its members."

[46] Plato was not unaware of the diversity and power of poetic form, but his analysis and evaluation of formal elements were usually put in terms of how such components enhanced the poem's moral value. See, for example, the discussion of the different forms of narrative style in *Rep*. 3.392d–403c, where Socrates argues that the various kinds of mimesis, as well as rhythm and musical mode, have different moral characters. At 403c, he sums up their discussion by saying simply that the end of the poetico-musical arts should always be the desire for the good (δεᾆ δῆ που τελευτὺν τῖ μουσικῖ ε Γς τῖ τοῶ καλοῶ ἔρωτικὶ). In general see Halliwell 72–97.

[47] See Asmis. For Philodemus, as Asmis summarizes (p. 165), "what makes a poem good is appropriate thoughts expressed in appropriate diction." Moral content seems part of the critical mix for Philodemus (in opposition to some of his

"opponents"), but as an Epicurean, he would have privileged even more the amount of pleasure a poem could bring, though pleasure seen as a function of a synthesis of meaning, thought and expression. See Asmis 1995a, with Sider, and Porter.

[48] I replace Sbordone's reading of this phrase (ἢξω τοὤτων) with Degani's, printed in his testimonia to Hipponax; cf. Degani 18, ad *Testim*. 48.

[49] Neither the Aristophanic Dionysus nor the *Certamen*'s Panedes, of course, ever explicitly states that the poet who loses in their respective contests is a "bad" poet, and in the case of Dionysus, he obviously is struggling to make a decision between two poets whom he likes and respects for different reasons. Each judge, however, in the end assesses the worth of the contestants relative to each other and establishes which one should be considered "better" by using the sole criterion of social benefit. Philodemus evidently would object not so much to the fact that the didactic import of a poet entered into the evaluative process at all, but that it would be the deciding factor in making a decision about an entire poet's work.

[50] See Cols. xxxii 9-17, as printed in Asmis 154.

[51] In the context of current Athenian needs, of course, Dionysus' criterion (the perceived notion that Aeschylus had better advice to offer) was certainly not "arbitrary," but when regarded strictly as a mechanism for evaluating the worth of a poet and his work, it certainly was, especially in view of the many other "tests"

that were administered throughout the *Frogs* agon, and which were subsequently ignored in favor of a single "non-poetic" criterion.

[52] See, e.g. the interview with Heracles, 53-105, in which Dionysus describes his passion for Euripides in entirely personal terms. It is revealing also that at line 97, Dionysus emphasizes that one of the essential qualities that made Euripides so great was his ability to "belt out a 'real' expression" (ᾇστις ῥ μα γενναᾆον λἴκοι). Dionysus' focus on the poetic expression (as opposed to the poem's thought) anticipates the Hellenistic concept of "euphony," associated with (among others) Crates of Mallos and criticized by Philodemus. See Sbordone and Asmis 152.

[53] See, in general, Sommerstein 1992: 27–30, who would even go so far as to say that an interest in didaxis and paraenesis may be limited among poets of Old Comedy to Aristophanes. Heiden proposes an ironic reading of the play's ending, with which I am in basic sympathy, although I would not go so far as to imagine, as Heiden implies, that Aristophanes actually disapproved of both Aeschylus and Euripides: "… Aristophanes does not endorse the character Aeschylus, as most intepreters have assumed, nor could he have endorsed the character Euripides, for each of them gives voice to an idea of theater and its civic function that is deeply opposed to the Old Comedy of Aristophanes."

[54] This study had its origin as a paper delivered at a symposium honoring Professor W. Geoffrey Arnott at the University of Leeds in November 2000. It is a great pleasure to dedicate this expanded version to him, a scholar who has inspired *komoidistai* in so many ways for half a century. I owe sincere thanks to the anonymous referees for their

trenchant reading of this article, as well as to many friends and colleagues for helpful remarks and suggestions on earlier versions, especially Barbara Graziosi, Richard Janko, André Lardinois, James I. Porter, and Alan Sommerstein.