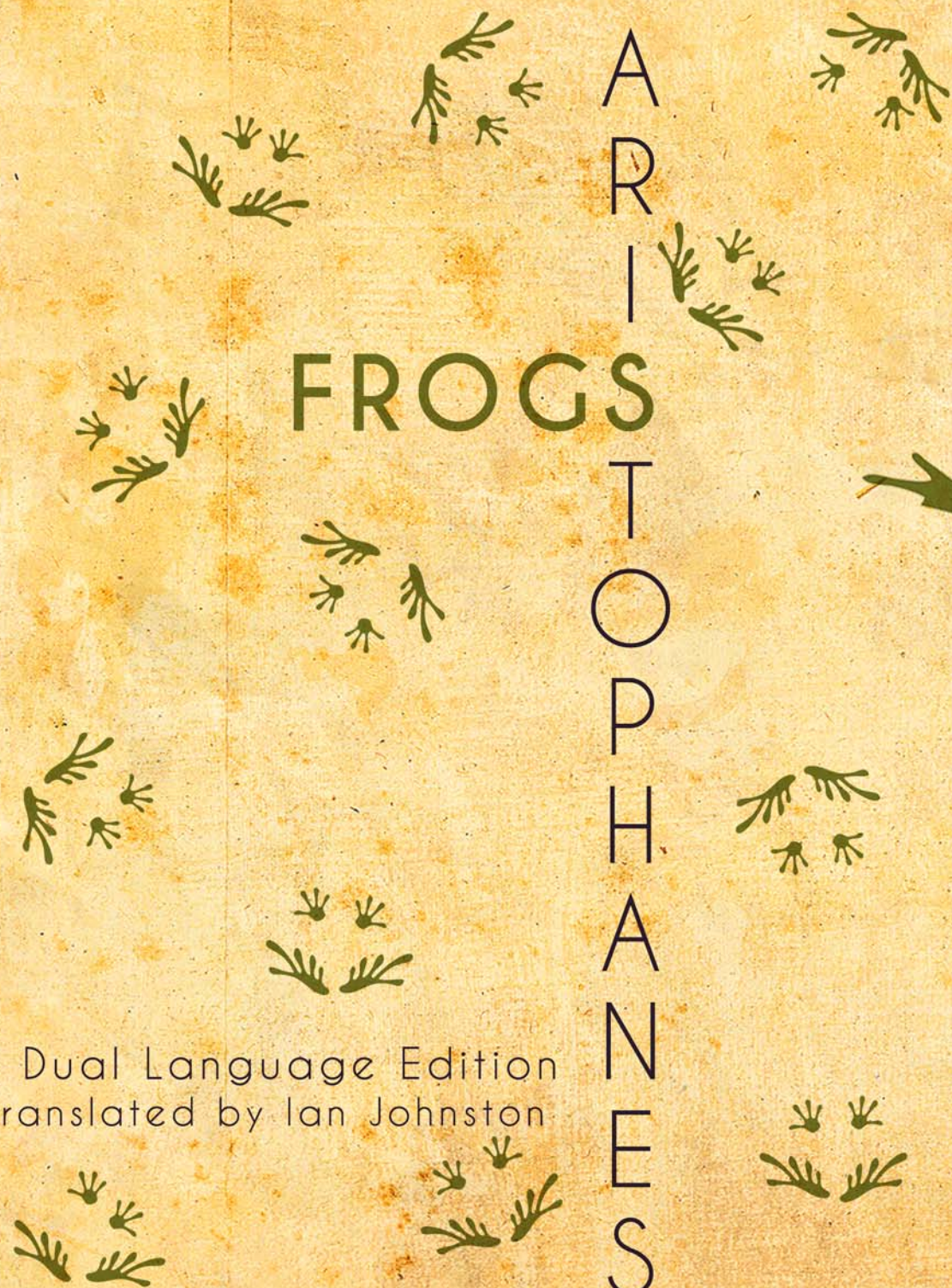


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A Dual Language Edition  
translated by Ian Johnston

**Fænum**  
Publishing



ἈΡΙΣΤΟΦΑΝΟΥΣ ARISTOPHANES'

Βάτραχοι *Frogs*

A Dual Language Edition

*Greek Text Edited by*

F. W. Hall and W. M. Geldart

*English Translation and Notes by*

Ian Johnston

*Edited by*

Evan Hayes and Stephen Nimis

FAENUM PUBLISHING

OXFORD, OHIO

*Aristophanes' Frogs: A Dual Language Edition*  
First Edition

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*For Annie*

*in whom the best spirit of Aristophanes still lives on.*

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## EDITORS' NOTE

This book presents the Greek text of Aristophanes' *Frogs* with a facing English translation. The Greek text is that of F. W. Hall and W. M. Geldart (1907), from the Oxford Classical Texts series, which is in the public domain and available as a pdf. This text has also been digitized by the Perseus Project ([perseus.tufts.edu](http://perseus.tufts.edu)). The English translation and accompanying notes are those of Ian Johnston of Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, BC. This translation is available freely online ([records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/](http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/)). We have reset both texts, making a number of very minor corrections, and placed them on opposing pages. This facing-page format will be useful to those wishing to read the English translation while looking at the Greek version, or vice versa.

Note that some discrepancies exist between the Greek text and English translation. Occasionally readings from other editions of or commentaries on Aristophanes' Greek text are used in the translation, accounting for some minor departures from Hall and Geldart.

BATPAXOI

FROGS

## ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΡΑΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
ΝΕΚΡΟΣ  
ΧΑΡΩΝ  
ΠΑΡΑΧΟΡΗΓΗΜΑ ΒΑΤΡΑΧΩΝ  
ΧΟΡΟΣ ΜΥΣΤΩΝ  
ΑΙΑΚΟΣ  
ΘΕΡΑΠΙΑΝΑ ΠΕΡΣΕΦΟΝΗΣ  
ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ  
ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ  
ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝΟΣ  
ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ  
ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ  
ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

XANTHIAS: a slave  
DIONYSUS: the god, appearing in human form as a middle-aged man  
HERCULES: the legendary hero  
CORPSE: a dead man being carried off to Hades  
CHARON: the ferry man transporting the dead to Hades  
CHORUS OF FROGS  
CHORUS OF INITIATES: worshippers of the gods of the underworld  
AEACUS: a gatekeeper in Hades  
SERVANT OF PERSEPHONE  
FIRST HOSTESS (PANDOKEUTRIA)  
SECOND HOSTESS (PLATANE)  
SERVANT OF PLUTO  
EURIPIDES: the playwright  
AESCHYLUS: the playwright  
PLUTO: king of Hades  
VARIOUS ATTENDANTS

## Βάτραχοι

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Εἶπω τι τῶν εἰωθότων ᾧ δέσποτα,  
ἐφ' οἷς αἰεὶ γελῶσιν οἱ θεώμενοι;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Δί' ὅ τι Βούλει γε, πλὴν «πιέζομαι,»  
τοῦτο δὲ φύλαξαι· πάνυ γάρ ἐστ' ἤδη χολή.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

μηδ' ἕτερον ἀστεϊόν τι;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

πλὴν γ' «ὡς θλίβομαι».

5

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τί δαί; τὸ πάνυ γέλοιον εἶπω;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ Δία  
θαρρῶν γε· μόνον ἐκεῖν' ὅπως μὴ ῥεῖς,

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τὸ τί;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μεταβαλλόμενος τἀνάφορον ὅτι «χεζιτιᾶς».

## Frogs

*SCENE: The play opens on a street leading to Hades, with a door in the centre of the backstage area. Enter Dionysus, appearing as a middle-aged man with a noticeable paunch, wearing a yellow tunic and over that a lion skin. He's carrying a huge club, one commonly associated with Hercules. On his feet he wears soft leather lace-up boots. Behind him comes his slave Xanthias riding on a donkey and carrying a huge amount of luggage. Xanthias notices the audience*

XANTHIAS

Look, master, an audience! Shouldn't I say something?  
Tell them one of those jokes they always fall for?

DIONYSUS

O, all right—say what you like. Only no jokes  
about how you're dying to piss. I can't stand those—  
they're all so stale.

XANTHIAS

What about my other jokes?

DIONYSUS

Go ahead—just nothing about your bladder,  
about how it's going to burst.

XANTHIAS

What? You mean I can't tell  
that really funny one . . .

DIONYSUS

I suppose so—  
but don't say anything about the bit.

XANTHIAS

What bit?

DIONYSUS

The bit about how you need to shift your load  
to take a piss.



ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ	μηδ' ὅτι τοσοῦτον ἄχθος ἐπ' ἑμαυτῷ φέρων, εἰ μὴ καθαιρήσει τις, ἀποπαρδήσομαι;	10
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	μὴ δῆθ', ἰκετεύω, πλήν γ' ὅταν μέλλω ἔξεμειν.	
ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ	τί δῆτ' ἔδει με ταῦτα τὰ σκευὴ φέρειν, εἴπερ ποιήσω μηδὲν ὦνπερ Φρύνιχος εἴωθε ποιεῖν καὶ Λύκισ κάμειψίας;	14
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	μή νυν ποιήσης· ὡς ἐγὼ θεώμενος, ὅταν τι τούτων τῶν σοφισμάτων ἴδω, πλεῖν ἢ ἵναυτῷ πρεσβύτερος ἀπέρχομαι.	16
ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ	ὦ τρισκακοδαίμων ἄρ' ὁ τράχηλος οὔτοσί, ὅτι θλίβεται μέν, τὸ δὲ γέλοιον οὐκ ἐρεῖ.	20
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	εἶτ' οὐχ ὕβρις ταῦτ' ἐστὶ καὶ πολλὴ τρυφή, ὅτ' ἐγὼ μὲν ὦν Διόνυσος υἱὸς Σταμνίου αὐτὸς βαδίζω καὶ πονῶ, τοῦτον δ' ὀχῶ, ἵνα μὴ ταλαιπωροῖτο μηδ' ἄχθος φέροι;	
ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ	οὐ γὰρ φέρω ἰγώ;	
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	πῶς φέρεις γὰρ ὅς γ' ὀχεῖ;	25
ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ	φέρων γε ταυτί.	
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	τίνα τρόπον;	

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ	Not even this one— “Here I am transporting such a load if I get no relief I may explode.”	[10]
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	Please, please, don't say that one— not unless I'm sick and need to throw up.	
ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ	Then what's the point of my being here like this? Why do I get to carry all the heavy baggage if I can't tell the usual porter jokes—you know, the ones Ameipsias and Phrynichus and Lycias, too, in all their comedies provide the slave who carries all the bags. <sup>1</sup>	
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	Just don't. Those jokes are all so feeble— when I have to watch a play and hear them by the time I leave I've aged at least a year.	
ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ [ <i>striking a heroic tragic pose</i> ]	Alas, for my neck beneath this triply damned yoke. I suffer all this pressure and can't tell my joke.	[20]
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	It's an outrage, sheer insolence, that I, Dionysus, son of Winejar, have to walk like this, sweating along so he can ride at ease without a care and carrying no load.	
ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ	What!?	
	Aren't I carrying the load?	
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	How can you be? You're riding on your ass.	
ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ	I'm loaded down. All this stuff . . .	
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ	What do you mean by that?	

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Βαρέως πάνυ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὔκουν τὸ Βάρος τοῦθ' ὃ σὺ φέρεις ὄνος φέρει;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οὐ δῆθ' ὃ γ' ἔχω ἄγὼ καὶ φέρω μὰ τὸν Δι' οὔ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

πῶς γὰρ φέρεις, ὅς γ' αὐτὸς ὑφ' ἑτέρου φέρει;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οὐκ οἶδ'· ὃ δ' ἄμμος οὔτοσι πιέζεται.

30

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

σὺ δ' οὖν ἐπειδὴ τὸν ὄνον οὐ φῆς σ' ὠφελεῖν,  
ἐν τῷ μέρει σὺ τὸν ὄνον ἀράμενος φέρε.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οἴμοι κακοδαίμων· τί γὰρ ἐγὼ οὐκ ἐναυμάχουν;  
ἦ τᾶν σε κωκύειν ἂν ἐκέλευον μακρά.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

κατάβα πανοῦργε. καὶ γὰρ ἐγγὺς τῆς θύρας  
ἤδη βαδίζων εἰμὶ τῆσδ', οἱ πρῶτά με  
ἔδει τραπέσθαι. παιδίον, παῖ, ἡμί, παῖ.

35

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

τίς τὴν θύραν ἐπάταξεν; ὡς κενταυρικῶς  
ἐνήλαθ' ὅστις· εἰπέ μοι τουτὶ τί ἦν;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὁ παῖς.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

What I just said carries lots of weight.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Isn't the donkey carrying our load?

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

No, no way. Not the load I'm holding.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

How come?

How can you be carrying anything at all  
when someone else is carrying you?

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

I've no idea.

But my shoulder's falling off.

[30]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

All right, then.

Since you claim the donkey's useless to you,  
why not take your turn and carry it?

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

What a wretched life!

I should have gone away to fight at sea—  
then I'd be free and I'd have told you straight  
what you could do with that ass of yours.<sup>2</sup>

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Get down, you useless idiot! We're there—  
by the door I'm aiming for, my first stop.*[Dionysus knocks very aggressively on the door and calls out in a very imperious tone]*

Hey, in there! Doorman! I'm summoning you.

*[The door opens and Hercules steps out, wearing a lion's skin and carrying a club. He's amazed that someone is dressed up to resemble him]*

HERCULES

Who's banging on this door—smashing at it  
like some wild centaur. My god, what's this?*[Hercules inspects Dionysus' outfit and starts to laugh uproariously]*

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Hey, my boy . . .

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
τί ἔστω;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
οὐκ ἐνεθυμήθης;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
τὸ τί; 40

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
ὡς σφόδρα μ' ἔδεισε.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
νῆ Δία μὴ μαίνοιο γε.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
οὐ τοι μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα δύναμαι μὴ γελᾶν  
καίτοι δάκνω γ' ἐμαυτόν· ἀλλ' ὅμως γελῶ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
ὦ δαιμόνιε πρόσελθε· δέομαι γάρ τί σου.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
ἀλλ' οὐχ οἶός τ' εἴμι' ἀποσοβῆσαι τὸν γέλων 45  
ὀρώων λεοντῆν ἐπὶ κροκωτῶ κειμένην.  
τίς ὁ νοῦς; τί κόθορνος καὶ ρόπαλον ξυνηλθέτην;  
ποῖ γῆς ἀπεδήμεις;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
ἐπεβάτευον Κλεισθένει —

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
κἀναυμάχησας;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
καὶ κατεδύσαμέν γε ναῦς  
τῶν πολεμίων ἢ δώδεκ' ἢ τρεῖς καὶ δέκα. 50

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
σφῶ;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
νῆ τὸν Ἀπόλλω.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
What?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
Didn't you see?

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
See what? [40]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
How scared he was of me?

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
Yes, by god, he was,  
scared you're nuts.

HERCULES [*doubling up with laughter*]  
By holy Demeter,  
I can't stop laughing. I'll try biting my lip.  
No, no use. I can't stop laughing at him.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
Come here, my good man. I need something from you.

HERCULES [*still laughing out of control*]  
I can't help myself—he's so ridiculous.  
Seeing that lion skin above that yellow dress.  
What's going on? Do people with large clubs  
now walk around in leather booties?  
Where on earth do you think you're going?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
I've done naval service under Cleisthenes.<sup>3</sup>

HERCULES  
At that sea battle?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
Yes—and sunk enemy ships,  
twelve or thirteen of them. [50]

HERCULES  
Just the two of you?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
Yes, by Apollo, we did.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

κατ' ἔγωγ' ἐξηγγρόμην.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

καὶ δῆτ' ἐπὶ τῆς νεῶς ἀναγινώσκουτί μοι  
τὴν Ἀνδρομέδαν πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν ἐξαίφνης πόθος  
τὴν καρδίαν ἐπάταξε πῶς οἶε σφόδρα.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

πόθος; πόσος τις;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μικρὸς ἡλίκος Μόλων. 55

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

γυναικός;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὐ δῆτ'.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἀλλὰ παιδός;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὐδαμῶς.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἀλλ' ἀνδρός;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀπαπαί.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ξυνεγένου τῷ Κλεισθένει;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μὴ σκῶπτέ μ' ὠδέλφ'. οὐ γὰρ ἀλλ' ἔχω κακῶς·  
τοιούτος ἵμερός με διαλυμαίνεται.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ποιός τις ὠδελφίδιον;

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Then I woke up.

DIONYSUS

I was on board with Euripides' *Andromeda*,  
reading to myself aloud, when suddenly  
a huge urge seized my heart. You've no idea how strong.

HERCULES

An urge? How big was it?

DIONYSUS

The size of Molon — tiny.<sup>4</sup>

HERCULES

For a woman?

DIONYSUS

No, no.

HERCULES

A young lad, then?

DIONYSUS

Certainly not.

HERCULES

Well, then, a man?

DIONYSUS

Ugh!

HERCULES

Did you grab hold of your Cleisthenes?

DIONYSUS

Don't mock me, brother.<sup>5</sup> I'm not doing so well,  
tormented by such hot desires.

HERCULES

Tell me,  
my little brother, what's it like?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 οὐκ ἔχω φράσαι. 60  
 ὅμως γε μέντοι σοι δι' αἰνιγμάτων ἔρω.  
 ἤδη ποτ' ἐπεθύμησας ἐξαίφνης ἔτνους;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
 ἔτνους; βαβαιάξ, μυριάκις γ' ἐν τῷ βίῳ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 ἄρ' ἐκδιδάσκω τὸ σαφὲς ἢ ἄτερα φράσω;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
 μὴ δῆτα περὶ ἔτνους γε· πάνυ γὰρ μανθάνω. 65

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 τοιοῦτοσὶ τοίνυν με δαρδάπτει πόθος  
 Εὐριπίδου.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
 καὶ ταῦτα τοῦ τεθνηκότος;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 κοῦδεῖς γέ μ' ἂν πείσειεν ἀνθρώπων τὸ μὴ οὐκ  
 ἐλθεῖν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνον.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
 πότερον εἰς Ἄιδου κάτω;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 καὶ νῆ Δι' εἴ τί γ' ἔστιν ἔτι κατωτέρω. 70

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
 τί βουλόμενος;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 δέομαι ποιητοῦ δεξιῶ.  
 οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὐκέτ' εἰσίν, οἱ δ' ὄντες κακοί.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
 τί δ'; οὐκ Ἴοφῶν ζῆ;

DIONYSUS  
 I can't explain. [60]  
 But I'll try to show you by analogy.  
 Have you ever had a craving for some stew?<sup>6</sup>

HERCULES  
 For stew? In my life maybe ten thousand times.

DIONYSUS  
 Is that explanation clear enough to you?  
 Or shall I try some other way?

HERCULES  
 Not about stew!  
 That I understand completely.

DIONYSUS  
 Well then,  
 that's how much I'm eaten up with my desire  
 for Euripides.

HERCULES  
 Even when he's dead?<sup>7</sup>

DIONYSUS  
 So no one's going to talk me out of it—  
 I have to find him.

HERCULES  
 Right down in Hell?

DIONYSUS  
 Or even lower,  
 by god, if there's such a place. [70]

HERCULES  
 What's the point of that?

DIONYSUS  
 I need a clever poet. There's none around.  
 The ones we've got are all so lousy.

HERCULES  
 What? Isn't Iophon still up there?<sup>8</sup>

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τοῦτο γάρ τοι καὶ μόνον  
 ἔτ' ἐστὶ λοιπὸν ἀγαθόν, εἰ καὶ τοῦτ' ἄρα·  
 οὐ γὰρ σάφ' οἶδ' οὐδ' αὐτὸ τοῦθ' ὅπως ἔχει.

75

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

εἴτ' οὐχὶ Σοφοκλέα πρότερον Εὐριπίδου  
 μέλλεις ἀναγαγεῖν, εἴπερ ἐκείθεν δεῖ σ' ἄγειν;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὐ πρὶν γ' ἂν Ἴοφῶντ', ἀπολαβὼν αὐτὸν μόνον,  
 ἄνευ Σοφοκλέους ὃ τι ποιεῖ κωδωνίσω.  
 κἄλλως ὁ μὲν γ' Εὐριπίδης πανοῦργος ὢν  
 κἂν ξυναποδρᾶναι δεῦρ' ἐπιχειρήσειέ μοι  
 ὁ δ' εὐκόλος μὲν ἐνθάδ' εὐκόλος δ' ἐκεῖ.

80

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

Ἀγάθων δὲ ποῦ ἔστιν;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀπολιπὼν μ' ἀποίχεται,  
 ἀγαθὸς ποιητῆς καὶ ποθεινὸς τοῖς φίλοις.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ποῖ γῆς ὁ τλήμων;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εἰς Μακάρων εὐωχίαν.

85

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ὁ δὲ Σενοκλέης;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐξόλοιτο νῆ Δία.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

Πυθάγγελος δέ;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

περὶ ἐμοῦ δ' οὐδεὶς λόγος  
 ἐπιτριβομένου τὸν ὤμον οὕτωσι σφόδρα.

DIONYSUS

He's the only good one left—if he's any good.  
 I'm not really sure if that's the case.

HERCULES

If you've got to take a playwright back,  
 why not Sophocles? He's better than Euripides.

DIONYSUS

Not 'til I get Iophon all by himself,  
 without his father, Sophocles, so I can test  
 the metal of his poetry. Besides, Euripides  
 is such a rascal he may try to flee Hades  
 and come with me. But Sophocles was nice—  
 easygoing while on earth and down here, too.

[80]

HERCULES

What about Agathon? Where's he?

DIONYSUS

He's left us—  
 a fine poet lamented by his friends.

HERCULES

Where's he gone?

DIONYSUS

Off to feast with saints.<sup>9</sup>

HERCULES

And Xenocles?<sup>10</sup>

DIONYSUS

O by god, may he drop dead!

HERCULES

Well then, Pythangelos?

XANTHIAS

What about ME?  
 In pain all this time—my shoulder's sore as hell.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

οὐκουν ἔτερ' ἔστ' ἐνταῦθα μαιρακύλλια  
τραγωδίας ποιοῦντα πλεῖν ἢ μύρια, 90  
Εὐριπίδου πλεῖν ἢ σταδίω λαλίστερα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐπιφυλλίδες ταῦτ' ἐστὶ καὶ στωμύλματα,  
χελιδόνων μουσεῖα, λωβηταὶ τέχνης,  
ἂ φροῦδα θάττον, ἦν μόνον χορὸν λάβη,  
ἅπαξ προσουρήσαντα τῇ τραγωδίᾳ. 95  
γόνιμον δὲ ποιητὴν ἂν οὐχ εὖροις ἔτι  
ζητῶν ἄν, ὅστις ῥῆμα γενναῖον λάκοι.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

πῶς γόνιμον;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὠδὶ γόνιμον, ὅστις φθέγγεται  
τοιουτονί τι παρακεκινδυνευμένον,

αἰθέρα Διὸς δωμάτιον, ἢ χρόνου πόδα, 100  
ἢ φρένα μὲν οὐκ ἐθέλουσαν ὁμόσαι καθ' ἱερῶν,  
γλώτταν δ' ἐπιορκήσασαν ἰδίᾳ τῆς φρενός.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

σὲ δὲ ταῦτ' ἀρέσκει;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μᾶλλὰ πλεῖν ἢ μαίνομαι.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἦ μὴν κόβαλά γ' ἐστίν, ὡς καὶ σοὶ δοκεῖ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μὴ τὸν ἐμὸν οἶκει νοῦν· ἔχεις γὰρ οἰκίαν. 105

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

καὶ μὴν ἀτεχνῶς γε παμπόνηρα φαίνεται.

HERCULES

Surely you've other artsy-fartsy types —  
thousands of tragic poets — all of them 90  
way more wordy than Euripides?

DIONYSUS

No, no —

all chatterboxes, twittering swallows in a music hall,  
mere foliage — disgraces to the artist's craft.  
Once they get a chance to stage their plays,  
to crap all over tragedy, they disappear.  
If you looked you'd never find one playwright,  
someone creative who could well declaim  
a worthy sentiment.

HERCULES

That word "creative" —  
what's it mean?

DIONYSUS

Someone poetical enough  
to give utterance to something grand,  
something like

[Dionysus strikes a tragic pose]

"the sky, Zeus' pied-a-terre,"  
"the foot of time," or this — "a mind that will not swear 100  
on sacred offerings but a perjured tongue  
that's false with no sense of its perfidy."

HERCULES

You like that stuff?

DIONYSUS

Like it? I'm crazy about it.

HERCULES

I swear it's all bullshit — and you know it.

DIONYSUS

Now, now, don't try to tell me what to think,  
not with tragedy. You're no expert there.

HERCULES

I still say it sounds like total rubbish.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

δειπνεῖν με δίδασκει.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

περὶ ἐμοῦ δ' οὐδεὶς λόγος.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὠνπερ ἔνεκα τήνδε τὴν σκευὴν ἔχων  
 ἦλθον κατὰ σὴν μίμησιν, ἵνα μοι τοὺς ξένους  
 τοὺς σοὺς φράσεις, εἰ δεοίμην, οἷσι σὺ  
 110 ἔχρῳ τόθ', ἠνίκ' ἐπὶ τὸν Κέρβερον,  
 τούτους φράσον μοι, λιμένας ἀρτοπώλια  
 πορνεῖ ἀναπαύλας ἐκτροπὰς κρήνας ὁδοὺς  
 πόλεις διαίτας πανδοκευτρίας, ὅπου  
 κόρεις ὀλίγιστοι.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

περὶ ἐμοῦ δ' οὐδεὶς λόγος. 115

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ὦ σχέτλιε τολμήσεις γὰρ ἰέναι καὶ σύ γε;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μηδὲν ἔτι πρὸς ταῦτ', ἀλλὰ φράζει τῶν ὁδῶν  
 ὅπη τάχιστ' ἀφιζόμεθ' εἰς Ἅιδου κάτω  
 καὶ μήτε θερμὴν μήτ' ἄγαν ψυχρὰν φράσης.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

φέρε δὴ τίν' αὐτῶν σοι φράσω πρώτην; τίνα;  
 120 μία μὲν γὰρ ἔστιν ἀπὸ κάλω καὶ θρανίου,  
 κρεμάσαντι σαυτόν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

παῦε, πνιγηρὰν λέγεις.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἀτραπὸς ξύντομος τετραμμένη  
 ἢ διὰ θείας.

DIONYSUS

Why not teach me how to stuff my guts?

XANTHIAS

WHAT ABOUT ME??!!!!

DIONYSUS

That's the reason I've come here  
 and dressed like you—so you can fill me in,  
 in case I need to know, about this place—  
 who welcomed you down here, who'd you meet [110]  
 that time you went down after Cerberus.<sup>11</sup>  
 Tell me about the harbours, resting places,  
 bakeries and brothels, water fountains,  
 the cities, highways, all the detours,  
 the local customs and the fine hotels,  
 the ones with fewest bugs.

XANTHIAS

Still no word of me.

HERCULES

O you valiant heart! Are you man enough  
 to venture down below?

DIONYSUS

Forget my courage.  
 Show me the highway, the shortest one there is,  
 that takes me directly down to Hades.  
 Don't prattle on about the temperature—  
 and say it's way too hot or cold for me.

HERCULES

Let's see . . . what should I mention first of all?  
 Which one? Hmmm. You could try a stool and rope—  
 you could just hang yourself. [120]

DIONYSUS

Stop it right there.  
 That way gives me a choking feeling.

HERCULES

There's a straight short cut, well traveled, too—  
 with pestle and mortar . . .



ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἄρα κώνειον λέγεις;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

μάλιστά γε.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ψυχράν γε καὶ δυσχέμερον·  
εὐθύς γὰρ ἀποπήγνυσι τάντικνήμεα.

125

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

βούλει κατάντη καὶ ταχεῖαν σοι φράσω;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Δί' ὡς ὄντος γε μὴ βαδιστικοῦ.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

καθέρπυσόν νυν ἐς Κεραμεικόν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

κᾶτα τί;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἀναβάς ἐπὶ τὸν πύργον τὸν ὑψηλόν —

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τί δρῶ; 130

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἀφιμένην τὴν λαμπάδ' ἐντεῦθεν θεῶ,  
κᾶπειτ' ἐπειδὰν θῶσι οἱ θεώμενοι  
«εἶναι», τόθ' εἶναι καὶ σὺ σαυτόν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ποῖ;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

κάτω.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἀπολέσαιμι ἂν ἐγκεφάλου θρίω δύο.  
οὐκ ἂν βαδίσαιμι τὴν ὁδὸν ταύτην.

DIONYSUS

You mean hemlock.<sup>12</sup>

HERCULES

That's it!

DIONYSUS

Too cold—too much like winter. Right away  
the shins get frozen solid.

HERCULES

All right, then.

You want me to tell you how to get there fast.

DIONYSUS

Yes, by god. I'm not one to take a hike.

HERCULES

How about a stroll to Kerameikos<sup>13</sup> . . .

DIONYSUS

Okay, what then?

HERCULES

Climb up the tower there—  
right to the very top . . .

DIONYSUS

And then what?

[130]

HERCULES

Take a look at the torch race starting up—  
when the spectators all yell out “They're off!”  
then off you go as well.

DIONYSUS

Off? Where to?

HERCULES

Down.

DIONYSUS

No, I can't take that road. I'd pulverize  
both rissole wrappers of my brain.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
τί δαί; 135

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
ἦνπερ σὺ τότε κατήλθες.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
ἀλλ' ὁ πλοῦς πολὺς.  
εὐθὺς γὰρ ἐπὶ λίμνην μεγάλην ἤξεις πάνυ  
ἄβυσσον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
εἶτα πῶς περαιωθήσομαι;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
ἐν πλοιαρίῳ τυνονταί σ' ἀνὴρ γέρων  
ναύτης διάξει δὺ' ὀβολῶ μισθὸν λαβῶν. 140

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
φεῦ,  
ὡς μέγα δύνασθον πανταχοῦ τῶ δὺ' ὀβολῶ.  
πῶς ἠλθέτην κακέϊσε;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
Θησεὺς ἦγαγεν.  
μετὰ ταῦτ' ὄφεις καὶ θηρὶ ὄφει μυρία  
δεινότατα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
μή μ' ἔκπληττε μηδὲ δειμάτου·  
οὐ γάρ μ' ἀποτρέψεις.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ  
εἶτα βόρβορον πολλὸν 145  
καὶ σκῶρ αἰίνων· ἐν δὲ τούτῳ κειμένους,  
εἴ που ξένον τις ἠδίκησε πώποτε,  
ἢ παῖδα κινῶν τὰργύριον ὑφέιλετο,  
ἢ μητέρ' ἠλόασεν, ἢ πατρὸς γνάθον  
ἐπάταξεν, ἢ πίορκον ὄρκον ὤμοσεν, 150  
ἢ Μορσίμου τις ῥῆσιν ἐξεγράψατο.

HERCULES  
What's left?

DIONYSUS  
The road you used.

HERCULES  
O, an enormous journey.  
At the very start you come to a vast lake—  
immense and bottomless.

DIONYSUS  
How do I get across?

HERCULES  
In a tiny boat—miniscule—like this [*indicating the size*].  
An ancient sailor takes you for a fee—  
two obols. [140]

DIONYSUS  
Two obols? It's amazing  
what two obols can buy anywhere.<sup>14</sup>  
How come it's here in Hades, too?

HERCULES  
That was Theseus.<sup>15</sup>  
He started it. Once past the lake you'll find snakes.  
You'll see thousands of them, horrific monsters.

DIONYSUS  
Don't keep trying to scare me. That won't work.  
There's no way you'll get me to turn back.

HERCULES  
Then a huge sewer, always full of liquid turds—  
and lying in it anyone who harmed a guest  
or screwed a lad and then took back the cash,  
or smacked his mother, punched his father's jaw,  
or swore false oaths, or else had copied out  
a speech of Morsimus.<sup>16</sup> [150]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς ἐχρῆν γε πρὸς τούτοισι κεί  
τὴν πυρρίχην τις ἔμαθε τὴν Κωησίου.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἐντεῦθεν αὐλῶν τίς σε περίεισι πνοή,  
ὄφει τε φῶς κάλλιστον ὥσπερ ἐνθάδε, 155  
καὶ μυρρινῶνας καὶ θιάσους εὐδαίμονας  
ἀνδρῶν γυναικῶν καὶ κρότον χειρῶν πολύν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὔτοι δὲ δὴ τίνες εἰσίν;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

οἱ μεμνημένοι —

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

νῆ τὸν Δί' ἐγὼ γοῦν ὄνος ἄγω μυστήρια.  
ἀτὰρ οὐ καθέξω ταῦτα τὸν πλείω χρόνον. 160

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

οἷ σοι φράσουσ' ἀπαξάπανθ' ὦν ἂν δέη.  
οὔτοι γὰρ ἐγγύτατα παρ' αὐτὴν τὴν ὁδὸν  
ἐπὶ ταῖσι τοῦ Πλούτωνος οἰκοῦσιν θύραις.  
καὶ χαίρε πόλλ' ὠδελφέ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ Δία καὶ σύ γε  
ύγιαυε. σὺ δὲ τὰ στρώματ' αὐθις λάμβανε. 165

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

πρὶν καὶ καταθέσθαι;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

καὶ ταχέως μέντοι πάνυ.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

μὴ δῆθ', ἱκετεύω σ', ἀλλὰ μίσθωσαί τινα  
τῶν ἐκφερομένων, ὅστις ἐπὶ τοῦτ' ἔρχεται.

DIONYSUS

By god, with them in the shit  
should lie whoever learned a war dance by Cinesias.<sup>17</sup>

HERCULES

Next the breath of flutes will sound around you.  
You'll see the finest light, just like in Athens,  
and myrtle groves, with happy men and women  
gathered there to celebrate and clap their hands.

DIONYSUS

So who are they?

HERCULES

Those are the initiates,  
the ones who celebrate the mysteries.<sup>18</sup>

XANTHIAS

Then, by god, in these mysteries I play the ass.  
I'll not stand for this a moment longer. [160]

*[Xanthias dismounts and starts to unload the baggage he has been carrying]*

HERCULES

Those ones will tell you all you need to know.  
These initiates live closest to the road  
which takes you to the doors of Pluto's place.<sup>19</sup>  
And so, my brother, I bid you fond farewell.

DIONYSUS

Good bye—god keep you healthy, too.

*[Hercules exits back through the door. Dionysus turns to Xanthias, who has just about finished putting down all the luggage he has been carrying]*

You there—take up the baggage once again!

XANTHIAS

Before I've put it down?

DIONYSUS

Yes, and hurry up.

*[Enter a solemn funeral cortege parrying a dead man towards Hades]*

XANTHIAS

Come on, I'm begging you. Hire one of them—  
someone carrying the corpse. That's why they're here.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐὰν δὲ μὴ εὔρω;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τότε μ' ἄγειν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

καλῶς λέγεις.

καὶ γὰρ τιν' ἐκφέρουσι τουτονὶ νεκρόν,  
οὗτος, σὲ λέγω μέντοι, σὲ τὸν τεθνηκότα·  
ἄνθρωπε βούλει σκευάρι' εἰς Ἄιδου φέρειν;

170

ΝΕΚΡΟΣ

πόσ' ἄττα;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ταυτί.

ΝΕΚΡΟΣ

δύο δραχμὰς μισθὸν τελεῖς;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μὰ Δί' ἀλλ' ἔλαττον.

ΝΕΚΡΟΣ

ὑπάγεθ' ὑμεῖς τῆς ὁδοῦ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀνάμεινον ὦ δαμόνι', ἐὰν ξυμβῶ τί σοι.

175

ΝΕΚΡΟΣ

εἰ μὴ καταθήσεις δύο δραχμὰς, μὴ διαλέγον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

λάβ' ἐννέ' ὀβολούς.

ΝΕΚΡΟΣ

ἀναβιοίην νυν πάλιν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὡς σεμνὸς ὁ κατάρατος·

DIONYSUS

And if I don't find anyone?

XANTHIAS

I'll do it.

DIONYSUS

Fair enough. All right, they're bringing out a corpse  
You there . . . you stiff . . . I'm talking to you . . . Hallo!

[170]

*[The corpse suddenly sits up straight]*

You want to take a little luggage down to hell?

CORPSE

How much?

DIONYSUS

This stuff here.

CORPSE

Will you pay two drachmas?

DIONYSUS

My god, no. Less than that.

CORPSE

Then go away.

DIONYSUS

Hang on, my dear fellow. Can't we haggle?

CORPSE

If you don't pay two drachmas, forget it.

DIONYSUS

How about nine obols?

CORPSE

No bloody way!

I'd rather you shoved me back to life again.

*[Corpse lies down and the funeral procession moves away]*

DIONYSUS

What a pompous boor!

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οὐκ οἰμώζεται;

ἐγὼ βαδιοῦμαι.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

χρηστὸς εἶ καὶ γεννάδας.

χωρῶμεν ἐπὶ τὸ πλοῖον.

ΧΑΡΩΝ

ὠὸν παραβαλοῦ.

180

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τουτὶ τί ἔστι;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τοῦτο; λίμνη νῆ Δία

αὕτη ἔστιν ἣν ἔφραζε, καὶ πλοῖόν γ' ὄρω.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

νῆ τὸν Ποσειδῶ κάστι γ' ὁ Χάρων οὐτοσί.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

χαῖρ' ὦ Χάρων, χαῖρ' ὦ Χάρων, χαῖρ' ὦ Χάρων.

ΧΑΡΩΝ

τίς εἰς ἀναπαύλας ἐκ κακῶν καὶ πραγμάτων;

τίς ἐς τὸ Λήθης πεδῖον, ἢ σ' Ὀνου πόκας,

ἢ σ' Κερβερίου, ἢ σ' κόρακας, ἢ πὶ Ταίναρον;

185

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐγώ.

ΧΑΡΩΝ

ταχέως ἔμβαινε.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ποῖ σχήσειν δοκεῖς;

ἐς κόρακας ὄντως;

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

To hell with him—

I'll take the stuff myself.

*[Xanthias starts loading himself with the baggage once again]*

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

That's my good man—

a loyal and worthy slave. Let's get that boat . . .

*[Enter Charon rowing his small boat across the stage]*

CHARON

Ahoy there! Coming alongside.

[180]

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

What's this?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

This?

By god, it's the lake Hercules talked about.

And I see the boat . . .

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

You're right. Thanks to Poseidon.

This must be Charon.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Ahoy there, Charon . . .

Greetings, Charon . . . Charon, halloooo!

CHARON

Who's seeks a rest from work and trouble?

Who's heading for Fields of Forgetfulness,

Never-never land, the Cerberians,

the Ravens<sup>20</sup> and Tartarus.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

That's me.

CHARON

Then jump aboard.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Where do you put in?

The Ravens? Is that a stop?

ΧΑΡΩΝ  
ναὶ μὰ Δία σοῦ γ' οὔνεκα.  
ἔσβαινε δῆ.  
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
παῖ δεῦρο.  
ΧΑΡΩΝ  
δοῦλον οὐκ ἄγω, 190  
εἰ μὴ νευαυμάχηκε τὴν περὶ τῶν κρεῶν.  
ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
μὰ τὸν Δεῖ οὐ γὰρ ἀλλ' ἔτυχον ὀφθαλμῶν.  
ΧΑΡΩΝ  
οὔκουν περιθρέξει δῆτα τὴν λίμνην κύκλω;  
ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
ποῦ δῆτ' ἀναμενῶ;  
ΧΑΡΩΝ  
παρὰ τὸν Αὐαίνου λίθον  
ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀναπαύλαις.  
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
μανθάνεις;  
ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
πάνυ μανθάνω. 195  
οἴμοι κακοδαίμων, τῶ ξυνέτυχον ἐξιῶν;  
ΧΑΡΩΝ  
κάθιζ' ἐπὶ κώπην. εἴ τις ἔτι πλεῖ, σπευδέτω.  
οὔτος τί ποιεῖς;  
ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
ὅ τι ποιῶ; τί δ' ἄλλο γ' ἢ  
ἴζω 'πὶ κώπην, οὔπερ ἐκέλευές με σύ;  
ΧΑΡΩΝ  
οὔκουν καθεδεῖ δῆτ' ἐνθαδὶ γάστρων;

CHARON  
Yes, by god—  
a special stop just for you. Get in.  
DIONYSUS [*to Xanthias*]  
All right, my lad, hop in.  
CHARON  
I won't take the slave— [190]  
not unless he fought at sea to save his skin.  
XANTHIAS  
Not me, by god, no way. My eyes were bad.  
CHARON  
Then you must make a detour round the lake.  
XANTHIAS  
Where do I wait for you?  
CHARON  
At Wuthering Rock<sup>21</sup>—  
right by the rest stop.  
DIONYSUS  
You got that?  
XANTHIAS  
I got that.  
[*picking up the bags*]  
Why am I so unlucky? When we began  
I must've really pissed somebody off.  
CHARON [*to Dionysus*]  
Sit down there— at that oar.  
[*Dionysus sits on one of the oars*]  
Anyone else?  
Hurry up— all aboard! What are you doing?  
DIONYSUS  
What am I doing? I'm sitting on this oar.  
That's what you ordered me to do.  
CHARON  
Come on, fatso— park your butt right here.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 ἰδοῦ. 200

ΧΑΡΩΝ  
 οὐκ οὖν προβαλεῖ τῷ χεῖρε κάκτενείς;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 ἰδοῦ.

ΧΑΡΩΝ  
 οὐ μὴ φλυαρήσεις ἔχων ἀλλ' ἀντιβὰς  
 ἔλας προθύμως;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 κᾶτα πῶς δυνήσομαι  
 ἄπειρος ἀθαλάττωτος ἀσαλαμίνιος  
 ὦν εἶτ' ἐλαύνειν;

ΧΑΡΩΝ  
 ῥᾶστ' ἀκούσει γὰρ μέλη 205  
 κάλλιστ', ἐπειδὴν ἐμβάλῃς ἅπαξ,

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 τίνων;

ΧΑΡΩΝ  
 βατράχων κύκνων θαυμαστά.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 κατακέλευε δῆ.

ΧΑΡΩΝ  
 ὦ ὀπόπ ὦ ὀπόπ.

ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ  
 βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ,  
 βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ. 210  
 λιμναῖα κρηνῶν τέκνα,  
 ξύναυλον ὕμνων βοᾶν  
 φθεγξώμεθ', εὐγερυν ἐμὰν αἰοιδάν,  
 κοὰξ κοὰξ,  
 ἦν ἀμφὶ Νυσήιον 215  
 Διὸς Διόνυσον ἐν

DIONYSUS [*moving off the oar*]  
 There! [200]

CHARON  
 Can you pick up the oar? Stretch your arms.

DIONYSUS  
 Like this?

CHARON  
 Don't be such a fool. Set your foot there.  
 Now pull the oar with all your force.

DIONYSUS  
 How can I?  
 I've had no practice. I'm no sailor.  
 And besides, I'm not from Salamis.<sup>22</sup>  
 How'm I supposed to row a boat?

CHARON  
 It's not hard. You'll hear lovely melodies  
 once you make the effort.

DIONYSUS  
 Songs? Whose songs?

CHARON  
 The amazing music of the swan frogs.

DIONYSUS  
 All right, then. Get the tempo going.

CHARON  
 Yo ho, heave ho. Yo ho heave ho.

[*As the small boat begins to move, the Chorus of Frogs is heard from off stage*]<sup>23</sup>

CHORUS OF FROGS  
 Brekekekex koax koax  
 Brekekekex koax koax. [210]  
 Children of the marsh and lake  
 harmonious song now sweetly make,  
 our own enchanting melodies  
 koax koax.  
 The songs we sang for Nysa's lord,  
 for Dionysus, son of Zeus,

Λίμναισιν ἰαχήσαμεν,  
 ἤνιχ' ὁ κραιπαλόκωμος  
 τοῖς ἱεροῖσι Χύτροισι  
 χωρεῖ κατ' ἐμὸν τέμενος λαῶν ὄχλος.  
 βρεκεκεκέξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ. 220

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐγὼ δέ γ' ἀλγεῖν ἄρχομαι  
 τὸν ὄρρον ὦ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ·  
 ὑμῖν δ' ἴσως οὐδὲν μέλει.

ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ

βρεκεκεκέξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ. 225

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἐξόλοισθ' αὐτῷ κοᾶξ·  
 οὐδὲν γάρ ἐστ' ἀλλ' ἢ κοᾶξ.

ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ

εἰκότως γ' ὦ πολλὰ πράττων.  
 ἐμὲ γὰρ ἔστερξαν εὐλυροὶ τε Μοῦσαι  
 καὶ κεροβάτας Πάν ὁ καλαμόφθογγα παίζων· 230  
 προσεπιτέρπεται δ' ὁ φορμικτᾶς Ἀπόλλων,  
 ἔνεκα δόνακος, ὃν ὑπολύριον  
 ἔνυδρον ἐν λίμναις τρέφω.  
 βρεκεκεκέξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ. 235

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐγὼ δὲ φλυκταίνας γ' ἔχω,  
 χῶ πρωκτὸς ἰδίει πάλαι,  
 κᾶτ' αὐτίκ' ἐκκύψας ἐρεῖ —

ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ

βρεκεκεκέξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὦ φιλωδὸν γένος  
 παύσασθε. 240

in Limnai at the Feast of Jars<sup>24</sup>  
 as people in their drunken glee  
 thronged into our sanctuary.  
 Brekekekex koax koax. [220]

DIOYSUS [*still rowing*]

I'm starting to get a pain in the ass  
 from all your koax koax.

CHORUS OF FROGS

Brekekekex koax koax.

DIONYSUS

Not that you give a damn about it.

CHORUS OF FROGS

Brekekekex koax koax.

DIONYSUS

Piss off—and take that koax koax with you.  
 Nothing but koax koax.

CHORUS OF FROGS

Yes, and for us that's fine  
 you meddling fool—so asinine.  
 Music-loving Muses love us too  
 as does goat-footed Pan  
 playing music on melodious pipes. [230]  
 Apollo as he strums his lyre  
 loves us and what we sing,  
 for in the marshy waters here  
 we grow the reeds that bridge his string.  
 Brekekekex koax koax.

DIONYSUS [*still rowing*]

Well, I'm getting blisters and a sweaty bum.  
 Next time I bend down it's going to speak . . .

[*As Dionysus leans forward for the next stroke he lifts his rear end up in the air to fart at the Frog Chorus, but their next line drowns out the sound*]

CHORUS OF FROGS

Brekekekex koax koax.

DIONYSUS

Stop it, you music-loving tribe! [240]



ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ

μᾶλλον μὲν οὖν  
 φθελγζόμεσθ', εἰ δὴ ποτ' εὐηλίους  
 ἐν ἀμέραισιν  
 ἠλάμεσθα διὰ κυπείρου  
 καὶ φλέω, χαίροντες ὦδῆς  
 πολυκολύμβοισι μέλεσιν, 245  
 ἢ Διὸς φεύγοντες ὄμβρον  
 ἔνυδρον ἐν βυθῶ χορείαν  
 αἰόλαν ἐφθελγζάμεσθα  
 πομφολυγοπαφλάσμασιν. 249

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ.  
 τουτὶ παρ' ὑμῶν λαμβάνω. 251

ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ

δεινά τᾶρα πεισόμεσθα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

δεινότερα δ' ἔγωγ', ἐλαύνων  
 εἰ διαρραγήσομαι. 255

ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ

βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οἰμώζετ'. οὐ γάρ μοι μέλει.

ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ

ἀλλὰ μὴν κεκραζόμεσθά γ'  
 ὅποσον ἢ φάρυξ ἂν ἡμῶν  
 χανδάνη δι' ἡμέρας. 260

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ.  
 τούτω γὰρ οὐ νικήσετε.

ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ

οὐδὲ μὴν ἡμᾶς σὺ πάντως.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὐδὲ μὴν ὑμεῖς γ' ἐμὲ  
 οὐδέποτε κεκράξομαι γὰρ

CHORUS OF FROGS

No, no. We'll sing on all the more—  
 if we've ever hopped on shore  
 on sunny days through weeds and rushes  
 rejoicing in our lovely songs  
 as we dive and dive once more,  
 or as from Zeus' rain we flee  
 to sing our varied harmonies  
 at the bottom of the marsh,  
 our bubble-splashing melodies.

DIONYSUS

Brekekekex koax koax— [250]  
 from you I'm catching your disease!

CHORUS OF FROGS

If that's the case, you'll never please.  
 That's hard on us.

DIONYSUS

But worse for me—  
 I may blow up here as I row.

CHORUS OF FROGS

Brekekekex koax koax

DIONYSUS

Go on. Keep croaking. I don't care.

CHORUS OF FROGS

We'll croak on 'til our throats wear out.  
 We'll croak all day. [260]

DIONYSUS

Brekekekex koax koax  
 You never beat me in this play!

CHORUS OF FROGS

And you've no chance to win your way,  
 not matched with us.

DIONYSUS

And you've no hope outdoing me.  
 No, no. If I must I'll yell all day,

κἄν δέη δι' ἡμέρας  
βρεκεκεκεξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ,  
ἕως ἂν ὑμῶν ἐπικρατήσω τῶ κοᾶξ,  
βρεκεκεκεξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ.

ἔμελλον ἄρα παύσειν ποθ' ὑμᾶς τοῦ κοᾶξ.

ΧΑΡΩΝ

ὦ παῦε παῦε, παραβαλοῦ τὸν κωπίω,  
ἔκβαν', ἀπόδος τὸν ναῦλον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἔχε δὴ τῶβολώ. 270  
ὁ Ξανθίας. ποῦ Ξανθίας; ἦ Ξανθία.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἰαῦ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

βάδιζε δεῦρο.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

χαῖρ' ὦ δέσποτα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τί ἔστι τάντανθοῖ;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

σκότος καὶ βόρβορος.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

κατείδες οὖν που τοὺς πατραλοίας αὐτόθι  
καὶ τοὺς ἐπιόρκους, οὓς ἔλεγεν ἡμῖν;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

σὺ δ' οὔ; 275

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Ποσειδῶ ἴγωγε, καὶ νυνὶ γ' ὀρώ.  
ἄγε δὴ τί δρώμεν;

koaxing you to get my way—  
Brekekekex koax koax

[Dionysus listens for a response from the Chorus, but there is none]

You see. Sooner or later I was going to win—  
and make you stop your harsh koaxing din.

CHARON

Stop it. Ship that oar alongside here.  
Get out . . . and pay your fare.

DIONYSUS

Two obols? Here. [270]

[Dionysus pays Charon, who rows his way off stage. Dionysus starts looking around for Xanthias]

Xanthias! Hey, Xanthias!

XANTHIAS [offstage]

Over here!

DIONYSUS [still calling]

Come here!

[Xanthias appears with the baggage but without the donkey]

XANTHIAS

Greetings, master.

DIONYSUS

All right, what have we got?

XANTHIAS

Nothing but filthy muck—mud and darkness.

DIONYSUS

Did you see the men who beat their fathers—  
or perjurers—the ones he mentioned?

XANTHIAS

You mean you don't?

DIONYSUS [looking at the audience]

By Poseidon, yes I do!  
Now I see them. So what do we do next?

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

προϊέναι βέλτιστα νῶν,  
ὡς οὗτος ὁ τόπος ἐστὶν οὐ τὰ θηρία  
τὰ δαίμ' ἔφασκ' ἐκεῖνος.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὡς οἰμώζεται.  
ἤλαζονεύεθ' ἵνα φοβηθεῖν ἐγώ, 280  
εἰδώς με μάχιμον ὄντα φιλοτιμούμενος.  
οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτω γαῦρόν ἐσθ' ὡς Ἡρακλῆς.  
ἐγὼ δέ γ' εὐξαίμην ἂν ἐντυχεῖν τι  
λαβεῖν τ' ἀγώνισμ' ἄξιόν τι τῆς ὁδοῦ.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

νῆ τὸν Δία καὶ μὴν αἰσθάνομαι ψόφου τινός. 285

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ποῦ ποῦ ἔστω;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἐξόπισθεν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐξόπισθ' ἴθι.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἀλλ' ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ πρόσθε.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

πρόσθε νυν ἴθι.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

καὶ μὴν ὀρώ νῆ τὸν Δία θηρίον μέγα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ποῖόν τι;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

δεινόν· παντοδαπὸν γούν γίνεται  
τοτὲ μὲν γε βοῦς, νυνὶ δ' ὀρέυς, τοτὲ δ' αὖ γυνὴ 290  
ὠραιοτάτη τις.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

We'd better get away from here.  
Hercules mentioned to us it's the place  
where wild beast prowls.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

To Hell with him!

He was talking big to make me scared. [280]  
He saw I was a fighter, and he's jealous.  
No one's more full of it than Hercules.  
But I'm keen now for some adventure,  
some exploit worthy of this expedition.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Of course you are. What's that? I hear a noise.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

What? Where is it?

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Behind us.

Dionysus [*pushing Xanthias*]

Get behind me.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

No, it's up ahead.

Dionysus [*pushing Xanthias again*]

You get in front.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

My god!

Now I see it. Ooooh, a monstrous beast!

Dionysus [*cowering behind Xanthias*]

What's it like?

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

It's weird—all sorts of shapes.

Now it's an ox—no, no, a jackass—  
now it's a woman—what a gorgeous babe!

[290]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ποῦ ᾽στι; φέρ' ἐπ' αὐτήν ἴω.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἀλλ' οὐκέτ' αὖ γυνή ᾽στιν, ἀλλ' ἤδη κύων.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Ἔμπουσα τοίνυν ἐστί.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

πυρὶ γοῦν λάμπεται

ἅπαν τὸ πρόσωπον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

καὶ σκέλος χαλκοῦν ἔχει;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

νῆ τὸν Ποσειδῶ, καὶ βολίτινον θάτερον,  
σάφ' ἴσθι.

295

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ποῖ δῆτ' ἂν τραποίμην;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ποῖ δ' ἐγώ;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἱερεῦ διαφύλαξόν μ', ἵν' ὦ σοι ξυμπότης.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἀπολούμεθ' ὦναξ Ἡράκλεις.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὐ μὴ καλεῖς μ'

ὠνθρωφ', ἱκετεύω, μηδὲ κατερεῖς τοῦνομα.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Διόνυσε τοίνυν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τοῦτό γ' ἦττον θατέρου.

300

ἴθ' ἦπερ ἔρχει.

DIONYSUS

Where is she?

I'll go say hello.

XANTHIAS

Hold on a minute!

She's not a woman any more. Now she's a bitch!

DIONYSUS [*terrified*]It's Empusa!<sup>25</sup>

XANTHIAS

Her whole face is on fire!

DIONYSUS

Her legs—does she have one made of bronze?

XANTHIAS

Yes!

By Poseidon, yes! The other's made of cow shit.  
And that's no lie.

DIONYSUS

Where can I run?

XANTHIAS [*imitating Dionysus*]

Where can I run?

DIONYSUS [*appealing the audience*]O holy man, save me—so we can drink together.<sup>26</sup>

XANTHIAS

We're screwed! Oh, lord Hercules!

DIONYSUS

Don't call me that!

I'm begging you, my man—don't say that name!

XANTHIAS

Then Dionysus . . .

DIONYSUS

That's worse than Hercules.

[300]

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 δεῦρο δεῦρ' ὦ δέσποτα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 τί δ' ἔστι;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 θάρρει· πάντ' ἀγαθὰ πεπράγαμεν,  
 ἕξεστί θ' ὥσπερ Ἡγέλοχος ἡμῖν λέγειν,  
 «ἐκ κυμάτων γὰρ αὐθις αὖ γαλήν ὄρω».  
 ἤμπουσα φρούδη.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 κατόμοσον.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 νῆ τὸν Δία. 305

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 καὐθις κατόμοσον.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 νῆ Δί.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 ὄμοσον.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 νῆ Δία.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 οἴμοι τάλας, ὡς ὠχρίασ' αὐτὴν ιδών.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 ὀδὶ δὲ δείσας ὑπερεπυρρίασέ σου.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 οἴμοι, πόθεν μοι τὰ κακὰ ταυτὶ προσέπεσεν;  
 τί ν' αἰτιάσομαι θεῶν μ' ἀπολλύναι; 310

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 αἰθέρα Διὸς δωμάτιον ἢ χρόνου πόδα;

XANTHIAS [*to the imaginary monster*]  
 Beat it! Shoo! Come on, master.

DIONYSUS  
 What's going on?

XANTHIAS  
 Cheer up—we've come through everything just fine.  
 Now like Hegelochus we can recite  
 "After the storm I see the seals are calm."<sup>27</sup>  
 Empousa's left.

DIONYSUS  
 You swear?

XANTHIAS  
 Cross my heart.

DIONYSUS  
 Swear again.

XANTHIAS  
 Yes, by Zeus.

DIONYSUS  
 Swear it one more time.

XANTHIAS  
 By Zeus, I swear.

DIONYSUS  
 That was a close shave—  
 looking at her almost made me puke.

XANTHIAS  
 You were so terrified you stained your pants.

DIONYSUS [*in a tragic tone*]  
 Woe, woe, why do such ills afflict me so?  
 Which god shall I accuse of thus destroying me? [310]

XANTHIAS  
 How 'bout Zeus' airy pied-a-terre or the foot of time?

[*The sound of music being played on the pipes comes from inside the house*]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
οὗτος.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
τί ἔστω;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
οὐ κατήκουσας;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
τίνος;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
αὐλῶν πνοῆς.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
ἔγωγε, καὶ δάδων γέ με  
αὔρα τις εἰσέπνευσε μυστικωτάτη.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
ἀλλ' ἤρεμι πτήξαντες ἀκροασώμεθα. 315

ΧΟΡΟΣ  
Ἰακχ' ᾧ Ἰακχε.  
Ἰακχ' ᾧ Ἰακχε.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
τοῦτ' ἔστ' ἐκεῖν' ᾧ δέσποθ'. οἱ μεμνημένοι  
ἐνταῦθά που παίζουσιν, οὐς ἔφραζε νῶν.  
ἄδουσι γοῦν τὸν Ἰακχον ὄνπερ Διαγόρας. 320

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
κάμοι δοκοῦσιν. ἡσυχίαν τοῖνυν ἄγειν  
βέλτιστόν ἐσθ', ἕως ἂν εἰδῶμεν σαφῶς.

ΧΟΡΟΣ  
Ἰακχ' ᾧ πολυτίμητ' ἐν ἔδραις ἐνθάδε ναίων,  
Ἰακχ' ᾧ Ἰακχε,  
ἐλθέ τόνδ' ἀνὰ λειμῶνα χορεύσων  
όσίους ἐς θιασώτας,  
πολύκαρπον μὲν τινάσσω  
περὶ κρατὶ σῶ βρῦοντα

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
Listen!

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
What is it?

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
You don't hear that?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
What?

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
A tune played on the flute.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ [*continuing his tragic rant*]  
Ah yes, and now  
the scent of torches just came wafting o'er me,  
torches of mystery . . .

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ [*interrupting*]  
Shhhh. Let's squat down here—  
keep quiet and pay attention.

[*The Chorus of Initiates is heard offstage*]

CHORUS OF INITIATES  
Iacchus, O Iacchus,  
Iacchus, O Iacchus.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
Master, this is it—the initiates  
doing their chant, the ones he talked about—  
Diagoras' hymn to Iacchus.<sup>28</sup> [320]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
It sounds like that to me. We'd best shut up,  
so we find out for sure.

CHORUS OF INITIATES  
Iacchus, living here  
in your highly honoured shrines—  
Iacchus, O Iacchus  
in this meadow come to dance  
with partners in your mystery.  
Shake the garland round your head,

στέφανον μύρτων, θρασεῖ δ' ἐγκατακρούων 330  
 ποδὶ τὰν ἀκόλαστον  
 φιλοπαίγμονα τιμάν,  
 χαρίτων πλείστον ἔχουσαν μέρος, ἀγνάν, ἱερὰν 335  
 ὁσίοις μύσταις χορείαν.

## ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ὦ πότνια πολυτίμητε Δήμητρος κόρη,  
 ὡς ἡδύ μοι προσέπνευσε χοιρείων κρεῶν.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὔκουν ἀτρέμ' ἔξεις, ἦν τι καὶ χορδῆς λάβῃς;

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἔγειρε φλογέας λαμπάδας ἐν χερσὶ γὰρ ἦκει τινάσσων,

— Ἰακχ' ὦ Ἰακχε, 341  
 νυκτέρου τελετῆς φωσφόρος ἀστήρ.  
 φλογὶ φέγγεται δὲ λειμών·  
 γόνυ πάλλεται γερόντων· 345  
 ἀποσείονται δὲ λύπας  
 χρονίους τ' ἐτών παλαιῶν ἐνιαυτοῦς  
 ἱερᾶς ὑπὸ τιμᾶς. 350  
 σὺ δὲ λαμπάδι φλέγων  
 προβάδην ἔξαγ' ἐπ' ἀνθηρὸν ἔλειον δάπεδον  
 χοροποιὸν μάκαρ ἦβαν.

— εὐφημεῖν χρὴ καξίστασθαι τοῖς ἡμετέροισι χοροῖσιν,  
 ὅστις ἄπειρος τοιῶνδε λόγων ἢ γνώμη μὴ καθαρεύει, 355  
 ἢ γενναίων ὄργια Μουσῶν μῆτ' εἶδεν μῆτ' ἐχόρευσεν,  
 μηδὲ Κρατίνου τοῦ ταυροφάγου γλώττης Βακχεῖ ἔτελέσθη,  
 ἢ βωμολόχοις ἔπεισεν χαίρει μὴ ν' καιρῶ τοῦτο ποιούσιν,

the fruit-filled myrtle, come and tread [330]  
 our playful rite's unbridled steps  
 where the Graces join in, too—  
 our pure and sacred dance and song,  
 the chant of your initiate throng.

## XANTHIAS

O holy noble daughter of Demeter,<sup>29</sup>  
 I just smelt roast pork—how sweet a smell that is.

## DIONYSUS

If you keep quiet, you may just get a slice.

[Enter the Chorus of Initiates carrying torches]

## LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Awake the blazing torches in your hands! [340]

## CHORUS OF INITIATES

O Iacchus, Iacchus—with us you stand  
 light-bearing star in our nocturnal rite.  
 For now the meadow blazes light,  
 old men's knees will move again  
 as they dance off their ancient pain,  
 the lengthy cycle of their aged plight  
 in this your ceremonial night.. [350]  
 As your radiant torches blaze  
 bring to this flowery marshy place,  
 the forward march of all the young  
 that constitute your choral throng,  
 O sacred one.

## CHORUS LEADER

Let all those stand in silence here  
 and keep their distance from our dance—  
 all those who have no sure command  
 of ritual words and purposes,  
 who have not purified their hearts,  
 the ones who've never seen or danced  
 the noble Muses' ritual songs,  
 or played their part in Bacchic rites  
 of bull-devouring Cratinus,<sup>30</sup>  
 or like words fit for foolish clowns  
 when such words are not suitable—

ἢ στάσιν ἐχθρὰν μὴ καταλύει μηδ' εὐκόλος ἐστί πολίταις,  
 ἀλλ' ἀνεγείρει καὶ ριπίζει κερδῶν ἰδίων ἐπιθυμῶν, 360  
 ἢ τῆς πόλεως χειμαζομένης ἄρχων καταδωροδοκεῖται,  
 ἢ προδίδωσιν φρούριον ἢ ναῦς, ἢ τὰ πόρρητ' ἀποπέμπει  
 ἐξ Αἰγίνης Θωρυκίων ὧν εἰκοστολόγος κακοδαίμων,  
 ἀσκώματα καὶ λῖνα καὶ πίτταν διαπέμπων εἰς Ἐπίδανρον,  
 ἢ χρήματα ταῖς τῶν ἀντιπάλων ναυσὶν παρέχειν τινὰ  
 πείθει, 365  
 ἢ κατατιλᾷ τῶν Ἑκαταίων κυκλίοισι χοροῖσιν ὑπάδων,  
 ἢ τοὺς μισθοὺς τῶν ποιητῶν ῥήτωρ ὧν εἶτ' ἀποτρώγει,  
 κωμωδηθεὶς ἐν ταῖς πατρίοις τελεταῖς ταῖς τοῦ Διονύσου·  
 τούτοις αὐδῶ καῦθις ἀπαυδῶ καῦθις τὸ τρίτον μάλ'  
 ἀπαυδῶ  
 ἐξίστασθαι μύσταισι χοροῖς· ὑμεῖς δ' ἀνεγείρετε  
 μολπὴν 370  
 καὶ παννυχίδας τὰς ἡμετέρας αἰ τῆδε πρέπουσιν ἑορτῇ.

— χώρει νυν πᾶς ἀνδρείως  
 ἐς τοὺς εὐανθεῖς κόλπους  
 λειμώνων ἐγκρούων  
 κάπισκώπτων 375  
 καὶ παίζων καὶ χλευάζων,  
 ἠρίστηται δ' ἐξαρκούντως.

— ἀλλ' ἔμβα χῶπως ἀρεῖς  
 τὴν Σώτειραν γενναίως  
 τῇ φωνῇ μολπάζων, 380  
 ἢ τὴν χώραν  
 σώζειν φήσ' ἐς τὰς ὥρας,  
 κἂν Θωρυκίων μὴ βούληται.

or anyone who just can't turn away  
 from fights and hateful party strife,  
 who cannot be a genial citizen,  
 easygoing with his countrymen,  
 but lights and fans the flames of war,  
 ambitious to advance himself, [360]  
 whoever guides our state through storms  
 and is corrupted by some bribe,  
 betrays our watch posts and our ships  
 or from Aegina smuggles goods,  
 like that wretch Thorycion,  
 our customs agent who shipped off  
 illicit stuff to Epidaurus<sup>31</sup> —  
 oar pads and cloth for sails and pitch,  
 or who persuades some other man  
 to send supplies to hostile ships,  
 or anyone opposing Hecate  
 in dithyrambic choruses,  
 or any politician setting out  
 to pare back pay our poets get  
 because they mock him in these rites,  
 ancient rites of Dionysus.

I say to all such people, and I say again —  
 and for a third time I state once more —  
 stand back from our choral mysteries. [370]  
 But those now here begin the songs,  
 the dances lasting all night long,  
 as fits our ceremonial throng.

## CHORUS OF INITIATES

Now each one boldly marches on  
 into the meadow's flowery lap,  
 and each one stamps the ground —  
 we joke, make fun, we mock,  
 our bellies crammed with breakfast food.

## CHORUS LEADER

Move on, now — but see you praise  
 the saving goddess in a noble way,  
 as you sing out our melodies.  
 She says she acts to save our land  
 from season unto season, [380]  
 against the wishes of Thorycion.



ἄγε νυν ἑτέραν ὕμνων ἰδέαν τὴν καρποφόρον βασιλείαν  
Δήμητρα θεὰν ἐπικοσμοῦντες ζαθέαις μολπαῖς κελαδεῖτε.

— Δήμητερ ἀγνῶν ὀργίων 386  
ἄνασσα συμπαρασάτει,  
καὶ σῶζε τὸν σαυτῆς χορόν,  
καὶ μὲ ἀσφαλῶς πανήμερον  
παῖσαί τε καὶ χορευσαί 390  
καὶ πολλὰ μὲν γέλοιά μ' εἰ-  
πεῖν, πολλὰ δὲ σπουδαῖα, καὶ  
τῆς σῆς ἑορτῆς ἀξίως  
παῖσαντα καὶ σκώψαντα νικήσαντα  
ταινιοῦσθαι. 395

— ἄγ' εἶα  
νῦν καὶ τὸν ὠραῖον θεὸν παρακαλεῖτε δεῦρο  
ὠδαῖσι, τὸν ξυνέμπορον τῆσδε τῆς χορείας.

— Ἰακχε πολυτίμητε, μέλος ἑορτῆς 400  
ἦδιστον εὐρών, δεῦρο συνακολουθεῖ  
πρὸς τὴν θεὸν  
καὶ δείξον ὡς ἄνευ πόνου  
πολλὴν ὁδὸν περαίνεις.

Ἰακχε φιλοχορευτὰ συμπρόπεμπέ με.

σὺ γὰρ κατεσχίσω μὲν ἐπὶ γέλωτι 405  
κάπ' εὐτελεία τόδε τὸ σανδαλίσκον  
καὶ τὸ ῥάκος,  
κάξηῦρες ὥστ' ἀζημίους  
παίζειν τε καὶ χορεύειν.

Ἰακχε φιλοχορευτὰ συμπρόπεμπέ με. 410

καὶ γὰρ παραβλέψας τι μειρακίσκης  
νῦν δὴ κατείδον καὶ μάλ' εὐπροσώπου  
συμπαιστρίας  
χιτωνίου παραρραγέντος τιθθίον προκύψαν. 415

Ἰακχε φιλοχορευτὰ συμπρόπεμπέ με.

Come now, cry aloud another chant  
for goddess Demeter, our harvest queen,  
a celebration made in sacred song.

## CHORUS OF INITIATES

O Demeter, queen of our sacred rites, stand with us here  
preserve us now, your chorus. Let me play in safety,  
let me dance all day, tell lots of really funny jokes,  
and offer many serious reflections, too. [390]  
Then, as befits your ceremonial rites, let me,  
with my ridicule and fun, take off first prize,  
let me wear the wreath, garland of victory.

## CHORUS LEADER

Come now, with your singing summon here  
that lovely god, our partner in this dance.

## CHORUS

Widely honoured Iacchus,  
creator of the sweetest joyful song, [400]  
come here with us to Demeter,  
show us how you move along  
this lengthy way with so much ease.

Iacchus, lover of the dance,  
escort me forward as I prance.

In your playful penny-pinching mood  
you've torn my tiny dancing shoes,  
you've ripped my dress to shreds—  
Iacchus, you've found a way  
for all of us to dance and play  
what more, we never have to pay.

O Iacchus, lover of the dance  
escort me forward as I prance.

What's more, as I just glanced aside  
around me here, I saw a girl, [410]  
a lovely partner in the dance—  
her scanty dress was ripped in two,  
I saw a nipple peeking through.

Iacchus, lover of the dance,  
escort me forward as I prance.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐγὼ δ' αἰέ πως φιλακόλουθός εἰμι καὶ μετ' αὐτῆς  
παίζων χορεύειν βούλομαι.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

κάγωγε πρόσ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

βούλεσθε δῆτα κοινῇ 420  
σκώψωμεν Ἀρχέδημον;  
ὃς ἐπτέτης ὢν οὐκ ἔφυσε φράτερας.  
νυνὶ δὲ δημαγωγεῖ  
ἐν τοῖς ἄνω νεκροῖσι,  
κάστιν τὰ πρῶτα τῆς ἐκεῖ μοχθηρίας. 325  
τὸν Κλεισθένους δ' ἀκούω  
ἐν ταῖς ταφαῖσι πρωκτὸν  
τίλλειν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ σπαράττειν τὰς γνάθους·  
κάκόπτειτ' ἐγκεκυφώς,  
κάκλαε κάκεκράγει 430  
Σεβίνον ὅστις ἐστὶν ἀναφλύστιος.  
καὶ Καλλίαν γέ φασι  
τοῦτον τὸν Ἴπποβίνου  
κύσθου λεοντήν ναυμαχεῖν ἐνημμένον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἔχουτ' ἂν οὖν φράσαι νῶν 435  
Πλούτων' ὅπου νῦν ἰσθὰς οἰκεῖ;  
ξένω γὰρ ἐσμεν ἀρτίως ἀφιγμένω.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

μηδὲν μακρὰν ἀπέλθης,  
μηδ' αὐθις ἐπανέρη με,  
ἀλλ' ἴσθ' ἐπ' αὐτὴν θύραν ἀφιγμένως. 440

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

αἶροί' ἂν αὐθις ὦ παῖ.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τουτὶ τί ἦν τὸ πρᾶγμα;  
ἀλλ' ἦ Διὸς Κόρινθος ἐν τοῖς στρώμασιν.

DIONYSUS

Hey, I'm always keen to enjoy myself.  
I'd like to dance with her.

XANTHIAS

Me, too.

CHORUS OF INITIATES

Would you like to join us now in making fun [420]  
of Archedemos, who at seven years old  
was toothless, no genuine Athenian teeth.<sup>32</sup>  
And now he plays big shot in politics  
among the dead above—the best there is  
at double dealing and corruption.  
And Cleisthenes, I hear, still picks his ass  
and rips his cheeks apart among the tombstones,  
blubbering over his dead lover Sabinos.  
And Callias, they say, son of the man  
who used to bugger his own horses,  
has fights at sea, naval entanglements,  
his arse hole covered by a lion skin. ` [430]

DIONYSUS [*approaching the Leader of the Chorus*]

Could you please inform the two of us  
where Pluto lives when he's at home down here?  
We're strangers in these parts. We've just arrived.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

No need to travel very far from here—  
so don't ask me again. You should know  
you're there—right at this very door. [440]

DIONYSUS [*to Xanthias*]

All right, lad, pick up the bags again.

XANTHIAS [*grumbling as he picks up the luggage*]

What's this all mean—the same old storyline,  
with Corinth, son of Zeus . . . all this baggage.<sup>33</sup>

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

χωρείτε  
 νῦν ἱερὸν ἀνὰ κύκλον θεᾶς, ἀνθοφόρον ἀν' ἄλλος 445  
 παίζοντες οἷς μετουσία θεοφιλοῦς ἑορτῆς·  
 ἐγὼ δὲ σὺν ταῖσι κόραις εἶμι καὶ γυναιξίν,  
 οὗ παννυχίζουσιν θεᾶ, φέγγος ἱερὸν οἶσων.  
 χωρῶμεν ἐς πολυρρόδους  
 λειμῶνας ἀνθεμῶδεις, 450  
 τὸν ἡμέτερον τρόπον  
 τὸν καλλιχωρώτατον  
 παίζοντες, ὃν ὄλβιαι  
 Μοῖραι ξυνάγουσιν.  
 μόνοις γὰρ ἡμῖν ἥλιος 455  
 καὶ φέγγος ἰλαρόν ἐστιν,  
 ὅσοι μεμυήμεθ' εὐσεβῆ τε διήγομεν  
 τρόπον περὶ τοὺς ξένους  
 καὶ τοὺς ιδιώτας.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἄγε δὴ τίνα τρόπον τὴν θύραν κόψω; τίνα; 460  
 πῶς ἐνθάδ' ἄρα κόπτουσιν οὐπιχώριοι;

## ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οὐ μὴ διατρίψεις, ἀλλὰ γεύσει τῆς θύρας,  
 καθ' Ἡρακλέα τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὸ λῆμ' ἔχων.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

παῖ παῖ.

## ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ

τίς οὗτος;

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Ἡρακλῆς ὁ καρτερός.

## ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ

ὦ βδελυρὲ κἀναίσχυντε καὶ τολμηρὲ σὺ 465  
 καὶ μιαρὲ καὶ παμμίαρε καὶ μιαρῶτατε,  
 ὅς τὸν κύν' ἡμῶν ἐξελάσας τὸν Κέρβερον  
 ἀπῆξας ἄγχων ἀποδρὰς ὄχου λαβῶν,

## CHORUS OF INITIATES

Keep up the dance  
 along the round path sacred to our goddess,  
 to the flower-bearing grove—let's play  
 with those who join this festival,  
 the one our goddess so adores.  
 I'll join the women and the girls  
 who dance to the goddess all night long,  
 the ones who bear the sacred light.  
 Let's move on into flowery meadows, [450]  
 the rose-filled fields, and worship there  
 the way we always do, with song and dance,  
 where blessed Fates assemble, too.

[The Chorus exits]

## DIONYSUS

Let's see—what style do I use at this point [460]  
 to knock upon the door? Which one to use?  
 What's the local style of knocking here?

## XANTHIAS

Stop wasting time. Try chewing on the door—  
 act like Hercules. You've got his height and might.

## DIONYSUS [knocking]

You in there! Doorkeeper!

## AEACUS [from inside]

Who is it?

## DIONYSUS

It's great Hercules!

[Aeacus bursts through the door and grabs Dionysus very roughly]

## AEACUS

O you abominable, you shameless reckless wretch—  
 villain, villain, damned smiling villain—  
 the man who made off with Cerberus my dog!  
 You grabbed him by the throat and throttled him,

ὄν ἐγὼ ἴφύλαττον. ἀλλὰ νῦν ἔχει μέσος·  
 τοία Στυγὸς σε μελανοκάρδιος πέτρα 470  
 Ἀχερόντιός τε σκόπελος αἵματοσταγῆς  
 φρουροῦσι, Κωκυτοῦ τε περιδρομοὶ κύνες,  
 ἔχιδνά θ' ἑκατογκέφαλος, ἢ τὰ σπλάγχνα σου  
 διασπαράξει, πλευμόνων τ' ἀνθάβεται  
 Ταρτησία μύραινα· τῶ νεφρῶ δέ σου 475  
 αὐτοῖσιν ἐντέροισιν ἡματωμένω  
 διασπάσονται Γοργόνες Τειθράσαι,  
 ἐφ' ἃς ἐγὼ δρομαῖον ὀρμήσω πόδα.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οὗτος τί δέδρακας;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐγκέχοδα· κάλει θεόν.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ὦ καταγέλαστ' οὔκουν ἀναστήσει ταχὺ 480  
 πρὶν τινά σ' ἰδεῖν ἀλλότριον;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὠρακιῶ.

ἀλλ' οἶσε πρὸς τὴν καρδίαν μου σφογγιάν.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἰδοὺ λαβέ, προσθοῦ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ποῦ ἴστιν;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ὦ χρυσοὶ θεοὶ

ἐνταῦθ' ἔχεις τὴν καρδίαν;

then took off on the run, while I stood guard.  
 Now you're caught—black-hearted Stygian rocks, [470]  
 and blood-dripping peaks of Acheron  
 will hold you down. Roaming hounds of Cocytus  
 will gnaw your guts to bits—Echnida, too,  
 and she's a hundred heads. The Tartesian eel  
 will chew your lungs, your kidneys bleed  
 from entrails Tithrasian Gorgons rip apart.  
 I'll set out hot foot in their direction.

[Aeacus lets go of Dionysus, who drops to the ground in terror. Exit Aeacus  
 back into the house. Dionysus lifts his tunic and inspects his underpants]

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

What have you done?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

I've made an offering. Call the god.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

You're being ridiculous. Get up. Move it, [480]  
 before some stranger spots you.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

I'm going to faint.  
 Bring the sponge here—set it on my heart.

[Xanthias rummages through the bags and finds a large sponge]

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

I've found the sponge! Here—you can do it.

[Dionysus takes the sponge and begins to clean up his crotch with it]

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Where are you putting that sponge? O golden gods,  
 you keep your heart in there?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

It was scared—  
 it ran off to my lower bowel.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Of all gods and men  
 no one's more cowardly than you.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

δείσασα γὰρ  
 ἐς τὴν κάτω μου κοιλίαν καθεῖρπυσεν. 485

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ὦ δειλότατε θεῶν σὺ κἀνθρώπων.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐγώ;  
 πῶς δειλὸς ὅστις σφογγιὰν ἤτησά σε;  
 οὐκ ἂν ἕτερός γ' αὐτ' ἠργάσατ' ἀνὴρ.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἀλλὰ τί;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

κατέκειτ' ἂν ὀσφραυνόμενος, εἴπερ δειλὸς ἦν·  
 ἐγὼ δ' ἀνέστην καὶ προσέτ' ἀπειρησάμην. 490

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἀνδρεῖά γ' ὦ Πόσειδον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οἶμαι νῆ Δία.  
 σὺ δ' οὐκ ἔδεισας τὸν ψόφον τῶν ῥημάτων  
 καὶ τὰς ἀπειλάς;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οὐ μὰ Δί' οὐδ' ἐφρόντισα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴθι νυν ἐπειδὴ ληματίας κἀνδρείος εἶ,  
 σὺ μὲν γενοῦ γὰρ τὸ ρόπαλον τουτὶ λαβῶν 495  
 καὶ τὴν λεοντῆν, εἴπερ ἀφοβόσπλαγχνος εἶ·  
 ἐγὼ δ' ἔσομαί σοι σκευοφόρος ἐν τῷ μέρει.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

φέρε δὴ ταχέως αὐτ'· οὐ γὰρ ἀλλὰ πειστέον·  
 καὶ βλέψον ἐς τὸν Ἡρακλειοξανθίαν,  
 εἰ δειλὸς ἔσομαι καὶ κατὰ σέ τὸ λῆμ' ἔχων. 500

DIONYSUS

Me?

How can I be when I asked you for the sponge?  
 Another man would not have asked, as I did.

XANTHIAS

What would he have done?

DIONYSUS

Well, a coward  
 would have lain there and stunk up the place.  
 But I stood up—what's more, I wiped myself. [490]

XANTHIAS

By Poseidon, a valiant act.

DIONYSUS

By Zeus. I think it was.  
 Weren't you scared shitless by his angry words,  
 by all those threats?

XANTHIAS

By Zeus, I never thought of them.

DIONYSUS

All right then, since you're so brave, so valiant,  
 you can be me. Take this club and lion skin.  
 If you're got the guts, I'll trade places with you.  
 I'll carry all the baggage.

XANTHIAS

All right.

I've got no choice. Quick, give me that.

[Xanthias takes the club and puts on the lion skin]

XANTHIAS [in the grand style]

Now gaze upon the Xanthian Hercules—  
 see if I turn coward and act like you. [500]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μὰ Δι' ἀλλ' ἀληθῶς οὐκ Μελίτης μαστιγίας.  
φέρει νυν ἐγὼ τὰ στρώματ' αἴρωμαι ταδί.

ΘΕΡΑΠΙΑΝΑ

ὦ φίλταθ' ἦκεις Ἡράκλεις; δεῦρ' εἴσιθι.  
ἦ γὰρ θεός σ' ὡς ἐπύθεθ' ἦκοντ', εὐθέως  
ἔπεπτεν ἄρτους, ἦψε κατερικτῶν χύτρας 505  
ἔτνους δὺ ἢ τρεῖς, βοῦν ἀπηνθράκιζ' ὄλον,  
πλακοῦντας ὄπτα κολλάβους. ἀλλ' εἴσιθι.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

κάλλιστ', ἐπαινῶ.

ΘΕΡΑΠΙΑΝΑ

μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω οὐ μὴ σ' ἐγὼ  
περιόψομάπελθόντ', ἐπεὶ τοι καὶ κρέα  
ἀνέβραττεν ὀρνίθεια, καὶ τραγήματα 510  
ἔφρυγε, κῶνον ἀνεκεράννυ γλυκύτατον.  
ἀλλ' εἴσιθ' ἄμ' ἐμοί.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

πάνυ καλῶς.

ΘΕΡΑΠΙΑΝΑ

ληρεῖς ἔχων  
οὐ γάρ σ' ἀφήσω. καὶ γὰρ αὐλητρίς γέ σοι  
ἦδ' ἔνδον ἔσθ' ὠραιότατη κῶρχηστρίδες  
ἔτεροι δὺ ἢ τρεῖς.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

πῶς λέγεις; ὀρχηστρίδες; 515

ΘΕΡΑΠΙΑΝΑ

ἠβυλλιώσαι κᾶρτι παρατετιλμένοι.  
ἀλλ' εἴσιθ', ὡς ὁ μάγειρος ἦδη τὰ τεμάχη  
ἔμελλ' ἀφαιρεῖν χῆ τράπεζ' εἰσήρετο.

DIONYSUS

No, by god, you'll well deserve a whipping.  
Come on, then, I'll pick up the bags.

[Dionysus starts to pick up a few of the smaller pieces. A Servant enters through the door]

SERVANT

Have you come back, my dearest Hercules?  
Come on in. Once the goddess heard you'd come  
she had us baking bread loaves right away,  
boiling up pea soup—two or three cauldrons full,  
roasting an entire ox, baking honey cakes  
and cookies. So do come in.

XANTHIAS

That's really nice,  
but I'm afraid . . .

SERVANT

I won't let you get away—  
by Apollo, no. She's stewing bird meat,  
toasting fresh desserts, mixing sweetest wines.  
Please come in. [510]

XANTHIAS

I appreciate it, but . . .

SERVANT

You can't be serious. I won't let you leave.  
There's a lovely flute girl in there, just for you—  
two or three dancing girls, as well.

XANTHIAS

What's that?

Did you say dancing girls?

SERVANT

Young and in full bloom—  
all freshly plucked. So come on in. Right now  
the cook's all ready to produce the fish.  
The table's being brought in.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἴθι νυν φράσον πρώτιστα ταῖς ὀρχηστρίσιν  
ταῖς ἔνδον οὔσαις αὐτὸς ὅτι εἰσέρχομαι. 520  
ὁ παῖς ἀκολουθεῖ δεῦρο τὰ σκεύη φέρων.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐπίσχεσ οὔτος. οὐ τί που σπουδὴν ποιεῖ,  
ὅτιή σε παίζων Ἡρακλέα ἔνεσκεύασα;  
οὐ μὴ φλυαρήσεις ἔχων ὦ Ξανθία,  
ἀλλ' ἀράμενος οἴσεις πάλιν τὰ στρώματα. 525

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τί δ' ἔστιν; οὐ τι πού μ' ἀφελέσθαι διανοεῖ  
ἄδωκας αὐτός;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὐ τάχ', ἀλλ' ἤδη ποιῶ.  
κατάθου τὸ δέρμα.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ταῦτ' ἐγὼ μαρτύρομαι  
καὶ τοῖς θεοῖσιν ἐπιτρέπω.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ποίοις θεοῖς;  
τὸ δὲ προσδοκῆσαί σ' οὐκ ἀνόητον καὶ κενὸν 530  
ὡς δούλος ὦν καὶ θνητὸς Ἀλκμήνης ἔσει;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἀμέλει καλῶς· ἔχ' αὐτ'. ἴσως γάρ τοι ποτε  
ἐμοῦ δεηθείης ἄν, εἰ θεὸς θέλοι.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ταῦτα μὲν πρὸς ἀνδρός ἐστι  
νοῦν ἔχοντος καὶ φρένας καὶ  
πολλὰ περιπεπλευκόςτος, 535  
μετακυλίνδεν αὐτὸν ἀεὶ  
πρὸς τὸν εὐ πρᾶττοντα τοῖχον  
μᾶλλον ἢ γεγραμμένην

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

You go on back.  
First, tell those dancing girls inside I'm coming.  
[to Dionysus]  
You, slave, follow me. And bring the baggage. [520]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Hey, hold on a minute. All this pretence,  
you can't be taking it so seriously.  
The fact I dressed you up as Hercules—  
that was just fun. Don't play the fool with me.  
Pick up these bags again and bring them in.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

What? You're not intending to take back from me  
what you gave in person?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

You bet I am.  
Take off that lion skin.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

I want witnesses—  
I entrust my law suit to the gods.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

What gods?  
To think that you, a slave and mortal, too, 530  
could play Hercules, Alcmena's son—  
so arrogant and stupid.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

All right, all right.  
Have it your way, then. Take the costume.  
Perhaps some day the gods'll make you need me.

[Xanthias hands the club and lion skin to Dionysus]

ΧΟΡΟΣ

There's a man with brains,  
with keen intelligence—  
someone who's sailed about a bit  
and always rolls himself around  
to the right side of the ship.  
He's not one to stand transfixed  
like some image made in paint

εἰκόν' ἐστάναι, λαβόνθ' ἐν  
 σχῆμα· τὸ δὲ μεταστρέφεσθαι  
 πρὸς τὸ μαλθακώτερον  
 δεξιῶν πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐστι  
 καὶ φύσει Θηραμένους. 540

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὐ γὰρ ἂν γέλοιον ἦν, εἰ  
 Ξανθίας μὲν δούλος ὢν ἐν  
 στρώμασιν Μιλησίοις  
 ἀνατετραμμένος κυνῶν ὀρχηστρίδ'  
 εἶτ' ἤτησεν ἀμίδ', ἐγὼ  
 δὲ πρὸς τοῦτον βλέπων  
 τοῦρεβίνθου ὄδραττόμην, οὗτος 545  
 δ' ἄτ' ὢν αὐτὸς πανοῦργος  
 εἶδε, κᾶτ' ἐκ τῆς γνάθου  
 πύξ πατάξας μούξέκοψε  
 τοῦ χοροῦ τοὺς προσθίους;

## ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

Πλαθάνη, Πλαθάνη δεῦρ' ἔλθ', ὁ πανοῦργος οὐτοσί,  
 ὃς ἐς τὸ πανδοκεῖον εἰσελθὼν ποτε 550  
 ἐκκαίδεκ' ἄρτους κατέφαγ' ἡμῶν.

## ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ

νῆ Δία

ἐκείνος αὐτὸς δῆτα.

## ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

κακὸν ἦκει τιμί.

## ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

καὶ κρέα γε πρὸς τούτοις ἀνάβραστ' εἴκοσι  
 ἀν' ἡμιβολιαῖα.

## ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

δώσει τις δίκην.

## ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

καὶ τὰ σκόροδα τὰ πολλά. 555

or frozen solid like a stone.  
 To move away from where one stands  
 to places much more comfortable —  
 that indicates a clever man,  
 a born Theramenes.<sup>34</sup> [540]

## DIONYSUS

Now that would be extremely funny  
 to see Xanthias, my slave, lying at ease  
 enjoying bed linen from Milesia,  
 as he smooches with some dancing girl.  
 He asks me for a pot to piss in —  
 but I, looking at him straight, grab him hard  
 right by his cucumber.

[Dionysus laughs at the thought, but then reconsiders]

But then he'd see me  
 and, being a rascal, sock me on the jaw.  
 He'd knock my front teeth out for sure.

[Pandokeutria, a landlady, enters through the door, looks at Dionysus, and  
 calls back through the doorway]

## PANDOKEUTRIA

Plathane, Plathane, come out here.  
 That fellow's back who came to our hotel  
 and ate up all our bread, all sixteen loaves. [550]

[Enter Plathane, another landlady]

## PLATHANE

My god, that's the one.

## XANTHIAS

Oh, oh. Someone's in trouble.

## PANDOKEUTRIA

And twenty boiled hams afterwards as well —  
 at half an obol each.

## XANTHIAS

Now he's in for it.

## PANDOKEUTRIA

And lots of garlic, too.



ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ληρεῖς ὦ γυναῖ

κούκ οἶσθ' ὅ τι λέγεις.

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

οὐ μὲν οὖν με προσεδόκας,

ὀπιη κοθόρνους εἶχες, ἂν γνῶναί σ' ἔτι;

τί δαί; τὸ πολὺ τάριχος οὐκ εἴρηκά πω.

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ.

μὰ Δί' οὐδὲ τὸν τυρόν γε τὸν χλωρόν τάλαν,

ὄν οὗτος αὐτοῖς τοῖς ταλάροις κατήσθιεν 560

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

κᾶπειτ' ἐπειδὴ τἀργύριον ἐπραττόμην,

ἔβλεψεν ἔς με δριμὺν κάμικᾶτό γε.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τούτου πάνυ τοῦργον· οὗτος ὁ τρόπος πανταχοῦ.

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

καὶ τὸ ξίφος γ' ἐσπάτο μαίνεσθαι δοκῶν.

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ

νῆ Δία τάλαινα.

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

νὼ δὲ δεισάσα γέ που 565

ἐπὶ τὴν κατήλιφ' εὐθὺς ἀνεπηδήσαμεν·

ὁ δ' ὄχετ' ἐξάξας γε τὰς ψιάθους λαβῶν.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

καὶ τοῦτο τούτου τοῦργον.

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ

ἀλλ' ἐχρῆν τι δρᾶν.

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

ἴθι δὴ κάλεσον τὸν προστάτην Κλέωνά μοι.

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ

σὺ δ' ἔμοιγ' ἐάνπερ ἐπιτύχῃς Ὑπέρβολον, 570

ἴν' αὐτὸν ἐπιτρίψωμεν.

DIONYSUS

My good women, you jest.

You don't know what you're saying.

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

O yes, we do.

You thought I wouldn't know you any more

because you've got those little booties on.

What else was there? I haven't said a word

about the pickled fish.

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ

You left out

all the fresh cheese, by god, the scoundrel ate.

He gobbled up the baskets, too. [560]

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

To top it all,

when I tallied up his bill, he just looked at me

and yelled, a massive roar right in my face.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

That's just like him. He does that everywhere.

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

Then he pulled out his sword—he looked insane.

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ

My god, you poor dear!

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

We were both terrified.

Somehow we ran up fast onto the shelf,

and he took off, grabbing up the mats.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Well, that's exactly how he operates.

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

We've got to deal with him somehow. I know—  
go call my patron Cleon.<sup>35</sup>

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ

If you meet him,

get Hyperbolos, as well. We'll fix this fellow. [570]

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

ὦ μαρὰ φάρυξ,  
ὡς ἡδέως ἄν σου λίθῳ τοὺς γομφίους  
κόπτοιμ' ἄν, οἷς μου κατέφαγες τὰ φορτία.

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ

ἐγὼ δέ γ' ἐς τὸ βάραθρον ἐμβάλοίμι σε.

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν λάρυγγ' ἄν ἐκτέμοίμι σου  
δρέπανον λαβοῦσ', ᾧ τὰς χόλικας κατέσπασας. 575

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ.

ἀλλ' εἴμ' ἐπὶ τὸν Κλέων', ὃς αὐτοῦ τήμερον  
ἐκπηνιέται ταῦτα προσκαλούμενος.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

κάκιστ' ἀπολοίμην, Ξανθίαν εἰ μὴ φιλῶ.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οἶδ' οἶδα τὸν νοῦν· παῦε παῦε τοῦ λόγου.  
οὐκ ἄν γενοίμην Ἡρακλῆς ἄν. 580

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μηδαμῶς  
ὦ Ξανθίδιον.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

καὶ πῶς ἄν Ἀλκμήνης ἐγὼ  
υἶος γενοίμην δοῦλος ἅμα καὶ θνητὸς ὢν;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οἶδ' οἶδ' ὅτι θυμοί, καὶ δικαίως αὐτὸ δρᾶς·  
κἂν εἴ με τύπτοις, οὐκ ἄν ἀντίποιμί σοι. 585  
ἀλλ' ἦν σε τοῦ λοιποῦ ποτ' ἀφέλωμαι χρόνου,  
πρόρριζος αὐτός, ἢ γυνή, τὰ παιδιά,  
κάκιστ' ἀπολοίμην, κἀρχέδημος ὁ γλάμων.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

δέχομαι τὸν ὄρκον κἀπὶ τούτοις λαμβάνω.

ΠΑΝΔΟΚΕΥΤΡΙΑ

You wretched greedy swine—I'd be so happy  
to smash your molars with a rock, those teeth  
which gobbled down my stuff.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

That's really nice—  
and I'd like to dump you in a deep ravine.

ΠΛΑΘΑΝΗ

I could take a sickle and slice that gullet  
which wolfed down all my tripe. Instead of that,  
I'll get Cleon to draw up a charge,  
so we can fish food out of him right here.

[Exit Plathane and Pandokeutria]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Now, may I die the nastiest of deaths,  
my little Xanthias, if I'm not fond of you . . .

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

I know what you're thinking. Just stop right there. [580]  
Don't say a word. I'm Hercules again—  
but I won't do it.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Dear little Xanthias,  
don't say such things.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

How could I be Hercules—  
remember I'm a slave and mortal, too.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

I know you're angry—you've a right to be.  
But even if you hit me, I won't criticize.  
And if in future I take anything from you,  
may I be chopped down root and branch.  
Let me die in the worst way possible—  
me, my wife, and kids—and Archedemus, too—  
the man with clammy eyes.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

On those conditions I accept your oath.

[Xanthias and Dionysus exchange the lion skin and club once again]

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

νῦν σὸν ἔργον ἔστ', ἐπειδὴ  
 590 τὴν στολὴν εἴληφας ἤνπερ  
 εἶχες ἐξ ἀρχῆς πάλιν,  
 ἀνανεάζειν . . .  
 καὶ βλέπειν αὐθις τὸ δεινόν,  
 τοῦ θεοῦ μεμνημένον  
 ᾧπερ εἰκάζεις σεαυτόν.  
 εἰ δὲ παραληρῶν ἀλώσει  
 595 κάκβαλεῖς τι μαλθακόν,  
 αὐθις αἴρεσθαί σ' ἀνάγκη  
 ἵσται πάλιν τὰ στρώματα.

## ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οὐ κακῶς ἄνδρες παραινεῖτ',  
 ἀλλὰ καὐτὸς τυγχάνω ταῦτ'  
 ἄρτι συννοούμενος.  
 ὅτι μὲν οὖν, ἦν χρηστὸν ἢ τι,  
 600 ταῦτ' ἀφαιρεῖσθαι πάλιν πειράσεταιί  
 μ' εἰ οἶδ' ὅτι.  
 ἀλλ' ὅμως ἐγὼ παρέξω  
 ἵμαυτὸν ἀνδρεῖον τὸ λῆμα  
 καὶ βλέποντ' ὀρίγανον.  
 δεῖν δ' ἔοικεν, ὡς ἀκούω  
 τῆς θύρας καὶ δὴ ψόφον.

## ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ

605 ξυνδέιτε ταχέως τουτονὶ τὸν κυνοκλόπον,  
 ἵνα δῶ δίκην· ἀνύετον.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἦκει τῷ κακόν.

## ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οὐκ ἐς κόρακας; μὴ πρόσιτον.

## ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ

εἶεν, καὶ μάχει;  
 ὁ Διτύλας χῶ Σκεβλύας χῶ Παρδόκας  
 χωρεῖτε δευρὶ καὶ μάχεσθε τουτῶν.

## CHORUS

Since you've taken up the skin,  
 [590] the one you had before,  
 your task is now to start again,  
 to reinvigorate yourself—  
 once more put on that dreadful stare,  
 recall the god you imitate.  
 If you get caught in foolish talk  
 or squeak out squeals of fear,  
 you'll be compelled a second time  
 to carry all the bags.

## XANTHIAS

Men, the advice you give me is not bad.  
 I was thinking the same thing myself.  
 What's more, if all this turns out a success,  
 he'll try to take this back from me again. [600]  
 I know that for a fact. But I'll make myself  
 a manly man—with a gaze like mustard.  
 I need to do that—for just as I thought  
 I hear the sound of scraping by the door.

[Enter Aeacus with servants]

## AEACUS

Tie up this dog thief. Get a move on, too—  
 so we can punish him. Be quick about it.

## DIONYSUS

Oh, oh. Someone's in trouble now.

## XANTHIAS

What the hell!

You stay away from me!

## AEACUS

O ho, you're fighting back!  
 [calling inside the house]  
 Ditylas, Sceblias, Pandocus—outside!—  
 come here and punch this fellow out.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 εἶτ' οὐχὶ δεινὰ ταῦτα, τύπτειν τουτονὶ  
 κλέπτοντα πρὸς τ' ἀλλότρια; 610

ἌΙΑΚΟΣ  
 μᾶλλ' ὑπερφυᾶ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 σχέτλια μὲν οὖν καὶ δεινά.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 καὶ μὴν νῆ Δία  
 εἰ πρόποτ' ἦλθον δεῦρ', ἐθέλω τεθνηκέναι,  
 ἢ κλειψα τῶν σῶν ἄξιόν τι καὶ τριχός.  
 καί σοι ποιήσω πρᾶγμα γενναῖον πάννυ· 615  
 βασάνιζε γὰρ τὸν παῖδα τουτονὶ λαβών,  
 κᾶν ποτέ μ' ἔλῃς ἀδικοῦντ', ἀπόκτεινόν μ' ἄγων.

ἌΙΑΚΟΣ  
 καὶ πῶς βασανίσω;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 πάντα τρόπον, ἐν κλίμακι  
 δήσας κρεμάσας ὑστριχίδι μαστιγῶν, δέρων,  
 στρεβλῶν, ἔτι δ' ἐς τὰς ρίνας ὄξος ἐγχείων, 620  
 πλίνθους ἐπιτιθείς, πάντα τᾶλλα, πλὴν πρᾶσσω  
 μὴ τύπτε τοῦτον μηδὲ γητείω νέω.

ἌΙΑΚΟΣ  
 δίκαιος ὁ λόγος· κᾶν τι πηρώσω γέ σου  
 τὸν παῖδα τύπτων, τὰργύριόν σοι κείσεται.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 μὴ δῆτ' ἔμοιγ'. οὕτω δὲ βασάνιζ' ἀπαγαγών. 625

ἌΙΑΚΟΣ  
 αὐτοῦ μὲν οὖν, ἴνα σοὶ κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς λέγῃ,  
 κατάθου σὺ τὰ σκεύη ταχέως, χῶπως ἐρεῖς  
 ἐνταῦθα μηδὲν ψεῦδος.

[Servants appear and begin to fight Xanthias]

DIONYSUS  
 It's shameful, a complete disgrace—  
 the way he hits them back—and more than that—  
 he steals. [610]

AEACUS  
 That's shocking.

DIONYSUS  
 It's even worse.  
 It's scandalous and dreadful.

XANTHIAS  
 Now, by god,  
 I'm prepared to die if I was ever here  
 before today, or stole a thing from you  
 that's worth a hair. What's more, I'll make an offer,  
 like a true gentleman—take this slave of mine  
 and torture him. If you find out from him  
 I've done wrong, then take me out and kill me.

AEACUS  
 How should I torture him?

XANTHIAS  
 All the ways there are.  
 Tie him to a ladder, hang him up,  
 whip him with nails, twist him on the rack, 620  
 strip off skin, fill his nose with vinegar,  
 load bricks on him—do everything you can.  
 Just don't flog him with fresh onions or a leek.

AEACUS  
 That offer's fair. So if I beat the slave  
 and cripple him, I'll pay for damages.

XANTHIAS  
 Not to me. Just take him off for torture.

AEACUS  
 No. I'll torture him right here, so he'll confess  
 before your very eyes.  
 [To Dionysus]  
 Put down that load.  
 And hurry up. Don't give me any lies.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀγορεύω τινὲ  
ἐμὲ μὴ βασανίζειν ἀθάνατον ὄντ'· εἰ δὲ μὴ,  
αὐτὸς σεαυτὸν αἰτιῶ.

ἌΙΑΚΟΣ

λέγεις δὲ τί; 630

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀθάνατος εἶναι φημι Διόνυσος Διός,  
τοῦτον δὲ δούλον.

ἌΙΑΚΟΣ

ταῦτ' ἀκούεις;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

φήμ' ἐγώ.  
καὶ πολὺ γε μᾶλλον ἔστι μαστιγωτέος·  
εἴπερ θεὸς γὰρ ἔστιν, οὐκ αἰσθήσεται.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τί δῆτ', ἐπειδὴ καὶ σὺ φῆς εἶναι θεός,  
οὐ καὶ σὺ τύπτει τὰς ἴσας πληγὰς ἐμοί; 635

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

δίκαιος ὁ λόγος· χεῖρότερόν γ' ἂν νῶν ἴδῃς  
κλαύσαντα πρότερον ἢ προτιμήσαντά τι  
τυπτόμενον, εἶναι τοῦτον ἡγοῦ μὴ θεόν.

ἌΙΑΚΟΣ

οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως οὐκ εἰ σὺ γεννάδας ἀνὴρ·  
χωρεῖς γὰρ ἐς τὸ δίκαιον. ἀποδύεσθε δῆ. 640

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

πῶς οὖν βασανιεῖς νῶν δικαίως;

ἌΙΑΚΟΣ

ῥαδίως·  
πληγὴν παρὰ πληγὴν ἐκάτερον.

DIONYSUS

I here proclaim no one should torture me.  
I'm an immortal god. If you do so,  
you'll have yourself to blame.

AEACUS

What are you saying? [630]

DIONYSUS

I'm saying I'm Dionysus, an immortal,  
a son of Zeus—this man here's a slave.

AEACUS

You hear that?

XANTHIAS

I hear what he claims to be—  
all the more good reason for flogging him.  
If he's a god, he won't feel a thing.

DIONYSUS

You're right.  
And since you also claim that you're a god,  
why don't you take as many blows as me?

XANTHIAS

Fair enough. Then whichever of the two  
you see bursting into tears or flinching  
as he's whipped—you'll know he's not the god.

AEACUS

You're a fine gentleman—that's obvious. [640]  
You stand for justice. All right—the two of you,  
take off your clothes.

*[Xanthias and Dionysus remove their clothes and get down on all fours in preparation for the whipping. Aeacus produces a massive whip]*

XANTHIAS

How will you judge this?  
How will you keep it fair?

AEACUS

That's easy.  
I'll alternate the blows.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
καλῶς λέγεις.

ΎΔΙΑΚΟΣ  
ἰδού.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
σκόπει νυν ἦν μ' ὑποκινήσαντ' ἴδης.

ΎΔΙΑΚΟΣ  
ἤδη ῥά πατάξά σ'. 645

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
οὐ μὰ Δί'.

ΎΔΙΑΚΟΣ  
οὐδ' ἐμοὶ δοκεῖς.  
ἀλλ' εἰμ' ἐπὶ τονδὶ καὶ πατάξω.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
πηνίκα;

ΎΔΙΑΚΟΣ  
καὶ δὴ ῥά πατάξα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
κᾶτα πῶς οὐκ ἔπταρον;

ΎΔΙΑΚΟΣ  
οὐκ οἶδα· τουδὶ δ' αἰθὶς ἀποπειράσομαι.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
οὔκουν ἀνύσεις τι; ἀτταταῖ.

ΎΔΙΑΚΟΣ  
τί τᾶτταταῖ;  
μῶν ᾠδονήθης;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
οὐ μὰ Δί' ἀλλ' ἐφρόντισα 650  
ὀπόθ' Ἡράκλεια τὰν Διομείους γίγνεται.

XANTHIAS  
A fine suggestion.

AEACUS [*striking Xanthias*]  
There!

XANTHIAS  
Watch closely if I flinch or not.

AEACUS  
But I just hit you.

XANTHIAS  
By god, I didn't feel a thing.

AEACUS  
All right. Now I'll lay into this one here.

[*Aeacus strikes Dionysus*]

DIONYSUS  
When are you going to start my whipping?

AEACUS  
I just did.

DIONYSUS  
Why didn't I sneeze?

AEACUS  
I haven't a clue.  
Back to this one again.

XANTHIAS  
Get on with it!

[*Aeacus strikes Xanthias much harder than the first time*]

XANTHIAS [*feeling the pain*]  
Ahhhh!!!

AEACUS  
What's that sound about? Did that blow hurt?

XANTHIAS  
No, by god. I was just remembering 650  
the feast for Hercules at Diomeia. [650]

ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ  
 ἄνθρωπος ἱερός. δεῦρο πάλιν βαδιστέον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 ἰοὺ ἰοῦ.

ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ  
 τί ἔστιν;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 ἰππέας ὄρω.

ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ  
 τί δῆτα κλάεις;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 κρομμύων ὀσφραίνομαι.

ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ  
 ἐπεὶ προτιμᾶς γ' οὐδέν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 οὐδέν μοι μέλει. 655

ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ  
 βαδιστέον τᾶρ' ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τονδὶ πάλιν.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 οἴμοι.

ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ  
 τί ἔστι;

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 τὴν ἄκανθαν ἐξέλε.

ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ  
 τί τὸ πρᾶγμα τουτί; δεῦρο πάλιν βαδιστέον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
 Ἄπολλον—ὅς που Δῆλον ἢ Πυθῶν' ἔχεις.

AEACUS  
 The man's a saint. All right, now this one's turn.  
*[Aeacus strikes Dionysus, again much harder than before]*

DIONYSUS  
 Ooooowww! Ahhh!!

AEACUS  
 What was that cry?

DIONYSUS  
 I see men on horseback.

AEACUS  
 Why are your eyes full of tears?

DIONYSUS  
 I smell onions.

AEACUS  
 You didn't feel a thing?

DIONYSUS  
 No, nothing—  
 nothing that bothered me.

AEACUS  
 All right, then,  
 back to this one here.  
*[Aeacus hits Xanthias really hard]*

XANTHIAS  
 Aiiieeee!!

AEACUS  
 What was that?

XANTHIAS *[pretending he has a thorn in his hand]*  
 A little prickle. Pull it out.

AEACUS  
 What's going on?  
 Now it's this one's turn.  
*[Aeacus strikes Dionysus very hard]*

DIONYSUS  
 Aaaaa!!! O Apollo,  
 who presides at Delphi and at Delos . . .

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἤλγησεν· οὐκ ἤκουσας;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὐκ ἔγωγ', ἐπεὶ 660  
ἴαμβον Ἰππώνακτος ἀνεμμηνησκόμην.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

οὐδὲν ποιεῖς γάρ· ἀλλὰ τὰς λαγόνας σπόδει.

ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ

μὰ τὸν Δι' ἀλλ' ἤδη πάρεχε τὴν γαστέρα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Πόσειδον

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἤλγησέν τις. 664

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὄς Αἰγαίου πρῶνας ἢ γλαυκᾶς μέδεις ἀλὸς ἐν βένθεσιν.

ἸΑΙΑΚΟΣ

οὐ τοι μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα δύναμαί πω μαθεῖν  
ὀπότερος ὑμῶν ἐστι θεός· ἀλλ' εἴσιτον·  
ὁ δεσπότης γὰρ αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς γνώσεται 670  
χὴ Φερρέφατθ', ἅτ' ὄντε κάκείνω θεῷ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὀρθῶς λέγεις· ἐβουλόμην δ' ἂν τοῦτό σε  
πρότερον νοῆσαι, πρὶν ἐμὲ τὰς πληγὰς λαβεῖν.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

Μοῦσα χορῶν ἱερῶν· ἐπίβηθι καὶ ἔλθ' ἐπὶ τέρψιν αἰοιδᾶς  
ἐμᾶς, 675  
τὸν πολὺν ὀψομένη λαῶν· ὄχλον, οὗ σοφίαι  
μυρίαί κάθηνται  
φιλοτιμότεραι Κλεοφώντος, ἐφ' οὗ δὴ χεῖλεσιν ἀμφιβάλοις  
δεινὸν ἐπιβρέμεται 680  
Θρηκία χελιδῶν

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

You hear that—the man's in pain.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

No, I'm not. [660]  
I was remembering some poetry,  
a verse from Hipponax.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

You're getting nowhere.  
Hit him on the ribs.

ΑΙΕΚΟΣ

A good idea, by god.  
Stick out that pot of yours.

[Aeacus hits Dionysus savagely on the ribs and stomach]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Aaaiii! O Poseidon . . .

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Someone's feeling pain.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ [continuing to recite poetry]

. . . you who command  
Aegean headlands and the green-grey sea . . .

ΑΙΕΚΟΣ

Holy Demeter, I can't sort this out.  
Which one's the god? You'd best come inside.  
My master Pluto will know who you are, [670]  
so will Persephone, his wife—they're gods.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Now you talking. I'd have liked it better  
if you'd thought of that before these whippings.

[Dionysus and Xanthias and Aeacus go into the house leaving the Chorus on stage]

ΧΟΡΟΣ

You Muses, enter now our sacred dance.  
Enjoy our songs and gaze upon  
the massive crowds of people here,  
thousands of clever thinkers in their seats,  
in love with honour more than Cleophon,  
on whose snarling lips a Thracian swallow sits, [680]  
making an awful din—on that foreign leaf



ἐπὶ βάρβαρον ἔζομένη πέταλον  
 κελαδεῖ δ' ἐπὶ κλαυτον ἀηδόνιον νόμον, ὡς ἀπολείται,  
 κὰν ἴσαι γένωνται. 685

—τὸν ἱερὸν χορὸν δίκαιόν ἐστι χρηστὰ τῇ πόλει  
 ζυμπαραινεῖν καὶ διδάσκειν. πρῶτον οὖν ἡμῖν δοκεῖ  
 ἐξιῶσαι τοὺς πολίτας κάφελειν τὰ δειμάτα,  
 κεῖ τις ἤμαρτε σφαλεῖς τι Φρυνίχου παλαιύμασιν,  
 ἐγγενέσθαι φημὶ χρῆναι τοῖς ὀλισθοῦσιν τότε 690  
 αἰτίαν ἐκθεῖσι λῦσαι τὰς πρότερον ἀμαρτίας.  
 εἴτ' ἄτιμόν φημι χρῆναι μηδέν' εἶν' ἐν τῇ πόλει·  
 καὶ γὰρ αἰσχρόν ἐστι τοὺς μὲν ναυμαχήσαντας μίαν  
 καὶ Πλαταιᾶς εὐθὺς εἶναι κἀντὶ δούλων δεσπότας.  
 κοῦδὲ ταῦτ' ἔγωγ' ἔχοιμ' ἂν μὴ οὐ καλῶς φάσκειν ἔχειν,  
 ἀλλ' ἐπαινώ· μόνα γὰρ αὐτὰ νοῦν ἔχοντ' ἐδράσατε.  
 πρὸς δὲ τούτοις εἰκὸς ὑμᾶς, οἳ μεθ' ὑμῶν πολλὰ δὴ  
 χοῖ πατέρες ἐναυμάχησαν καὶ προσήκουσιν γένει,  
 τὴν μίαν ταύτην παρεῖναι ζυμφορὰν αἰτουμένοις.  
 ἀλλὰ τῆς ὀργῆς ἀνέντες ὦ σοφώτατοι φύσει 700  
 πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἐκόντες συγγενεῖς κτησώμεθα  
 κάπιτίμους καὶ πολίτας, ὅστις ἂν ζυμναυμαχῇ.  
 εἰ δὲ ταῦτ' ὀγκωσόμεσθα κάποσεμννούμεθα,  
 τὴν πόλιν καὶ ταῦτ' ἔχοντες κυμάτων ἐν ἀγκάλαις,  
 ὑστέρω χρόνω ποτ' αὐθις εὖ φρονεῖν οὐ δόξομεν. 705

εἰ δ' ἐγὼ ὀρθὸς ἰδεῖν βίον ἀνέρος ἢ τρόπον ὅστις ἔτ'  
 οἰμώξεται,  
 οὐ πολὺν οὐδ' ὁ πίθηκος οὗτος ὁ νῦν ἐνοχλῶν,  
 Κλειγένης ὁ μικρός,  
 ὁ πονηρότατος βαλανεὺς ὅποσοι κρατοῦσι κυκησιτέφρου  
 ψευδολίτρου κονίας 711  
 καὶ Κιμωλίας γῆς,

she squawks her nightingale's lament,  
 for he'll soon be sentenced, sent to die  
 although the jury's votes create a tie.<sup>36</sup>

## CHORUS LEADER

It's just and proper in this city  
 our sacred chorus give advice and teach.  
 So first it seems appropriate to us  
 to free the citizens from inequalities—  
 to ease their fears. So if a man slips up  
 thanks to the wrestling tricks of Phrynicus,<sup>37</sup>  
 I say we should allow the ones who fall [690]  
 to state their case, reform their evil ways.  
 Besides that's no dishonour to our city.  
 It would bring benefits. It's scandalous  
 that those who fought a battle once at sea  
 should instantly become Plataeans,  
 masters instead of slaves.<sup>38</sup> I don't deny  
 this worked out well—in fact, I praise it.  
 It's the only well-intentioned thing you did.  
 But as well as this it stands to reason  
 we should forget the single blow of fortune  
 of those who fought so much at sea beside you,  
 just like their fathers, your ethnic kinsmen—  
 that's what they keep requesting. But you here,  
 whom nature made the wisest of all people, [700]  
 should drop your anger and make everyone  
 who fights alongside us at sea a kinsman,  
 a citizen. For if we are too proud,  
 too puffed up with self-worth, especially now,  
 when we're encircled by the sea's embrace,  
 in future time we'll look like total fools.

If I've a keen sense of the life and style  
 of someone who will someday cry in woe,  
 this tiny irritating ape Cleigenes,  
 the most corrupt of all our laundry types,  
 those noble men who cut the soap with ash,  
 dilute the mix, and use Cimolian earth,

χρόνον ἐνδιατρίψει· ἰδὼν δὲ τὰδ' οὐκ  
εἰρηνικὸς ἔσθ', ἵνα μὴ ποτε κάποδυθῆ μεθύων ἄνευ 715  
ξύλου βαδίζων.

πολλάκις γ' ἡμῖν ἔδοξεν ἢ πόλις πεπονθέναι  
ταῦτ' ὅν τε τῶν πολιτῶν τοὺς καλοὺς τε κάγαθοὺς  
ἔς τε τὰρχαίων νόμισμα καὶ τὸ καινὸν χρυσίον. 720  
οὔτε γὰρ τούτοισιν οὐδὲ οὐ κεκιβδηλευμένοι,  
ἀλλὰ καλλίστοις ἀπάντων, ὡς δοκεῖ, νομισμάτων  
καὶ μόνις ὀρθῶς κοπέισι καὶ κεκωδωνισμένοις  
ἔν τε τοῖς Ἑλλησι καὶ τοῖς βαρβάροισι πανταχοῦ  
χρώμεθ' οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ τούτοις τοῖς πονηροῖς χαλκίοις  
χθές τε καὶ πρώην κοπέισι τῷ κακίστῳ κόμματι. 726  
τῶν πολιτῶν θ' οὗς μὲν ἴσμεν εὐγενεῖς καὶ σώφρονας  
ἄνδρας ὄντας καὶ δικαίους καὶ καλοὺς τε κάγαθοὺς  
καὶ τραφέντας ἐν παλαιστραῖς καὶ χοροῖς καὶ μουσικῇ,  
προσελοῦμεν, τοῖς δὲ χαλκοῖς καὶ ξένοις καὶ πυρρῖαις  
καὶ πονηροῖς κακῶν πονηρῶν εἰς ἅπαντα χρώμεθα 731  
ὑστάτοις ἀφιγμένοισιν, οἷσιν ἢ πόλις πρὸ τοῦ  
οὐδὲ φαρμακοῖσιν εἰκῆ ῥαδίως ἐχρήσατ' ἄν.  
ἀλλὰ καὶ νῦν ἄνῳτοι μεταβαλόντες τοὺς τρόπους  
χρησθε τοῖς χρηστοῖσιν αὐθις· καὶ κατορθώσασι γὰρ 735  
εὐλογον, κἄν τι σφαλῆτ', ἐξ ἀξίου γοῦν τοῦ ξύλου,  
ἦν τι καὶ πάσχητε, πάσχειν τοῖς σοφοῖς δοκήσετε.

## ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

νῆ τὸν Δία τὸν σωτήρα γεννάδας ἀνὴρ  
ὁ δεσπότης σου.

## ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

πῶς γὰρ οὐχὶ γεννάδας,  
ὅστις γε πίνειν οἶδε καὶ βινεῖν μόνον; 740

won't be with us long. He knows it, too—  
that's why he's not a man promoting peace.  
He knows that someday in a drunken fit  
he may well lose his staff of office,  
and, more than that, be stripped of all his clothes.<sup>39</sup>

This city, it often seems to me  
treats our best and worthiest citizens  
the way it does our old silver coins, [720]  
our new gold ones, as well.<sup>40</sup> This money  
was never counterfeit—no, these coins  
appeared to be the finest coins of all,  
the only ones which bore the proper stamp.  
Everywhere among barbarians and Greeks  
they stood the test. But these we do not use.  
Instead we have our debased coins of bronze,  
poorly struck some days ago or yesterday.  
That's how we treat our finest citizens,  
the nobly born, our righteous men,  
our best and brightest, the ones well trained  
in music and the dance at the palaestra.<sup>41</sup>  
Instead we use foreign bronze for everything—  
useless men from useless fathers, red heads,<sup>42</sup> [730]  
men who've come here very recently—  
the sort the city at its most negligent  
would never use in earlier days,  
not even as a scapegoat.<sup>43</sup> But now,  
you silly fools, it's time to change your ways.  
Use worthy people once again. You'll see—  
if you're successful, then you'll merit praise.  
And if you fail, well, you'll be a fine match  
for the tree you're hanging from. At any rate,  
should you slip up, that's what the wise will say.

[Enter Xanthias with a servant from the house]

## SERVANT

By Zeus who saves us, that master of yours  
is a very cultured gentleman.

## XANTHIAS

Of course, he is.  
The only things he knows are how to drink [740]  
and dip his dink.

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

τὸ δὲ μὴ πατάξαι σ' ἐξελεγχθέντ' ἄντικρυς,  
ὅτι δοῦλος ὢν ἔφασκες εἶναι δεσπότης.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ᾧμωξε μέντ' ἄν.

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

τοῦτο μέντοι δουλικὸν  
εὐθύς πεποίηκας, ὅπερ ἐγὼ χαίρω ποιῶν.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

χαίρεις, ἱκετεύω;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

μᾶλλ' ἐποπτεύειν δοκῶ, 745  
ὅταν καταράσσωμαι λάθρα τῷ δεσπότη.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τί δὲ τοιθορύζων, ἤνικ' ἂν πληγὰς λαβῶν  
πολλὰς ἀπίης θύραζε;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

καὶ τοῦθ' ἤδομαι.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τί δὲ πολλὰ πράττων;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

ὡς μὰ Δί' οὐδὲν οἶδ' ἐγώ.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ὀμόγνιε Ζεῦ· καὶ παρακούων δεσποτῶν 750  
ἄττ' ἂν λαλώσι;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

μᾶλλὰ πλεῖν ἢ μαίνομαι.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τί δὲ τοῖς θύραζε ταῦτα καταλαλῶν;

SERVANT

But not to beat you on the spot  
when they proved that you're the slave — and one  
who claimed you were the master.

XANTHIAS

If he had,  
he'd have had regrets — and that's a fact.

SERVANT

What you just did is worthy of a slave,  
something I love to do.

XANTHIAS

Forgive my asking,  
but what is it you love to do?

SERVANT

It's more than love —  
almost ecstasy — when I can curse my master  
out of ear shot.

XANTHIAS

What about really bitching,  
whenever you've received a total thrashing  
and run outside?

SERVANT

Yes, I do like that, too.

XANTHIAS

What about sticking your nose in everything?

SERVANT

By god, there's nothing finer — that's for sure.

XANTHIAS

By Zeus, divine protector of our race,  
what about listening to our masters' chat  
when they spread gossip . . .

[750]

SERVANT

I'm even crazier for that!

XANTHIAS

. . . then passing on the gossip all around,  
to everyone outside the house?

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

ἐγώ;  
 μὰ Δὲ ἄλλ' ὅταν δρῶ τοῦτο, κάκμαιίνομαι.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ὦ Φοῖβ' Ἄπολλον ἔμβαλέ μοι τὴν δεξιάν,  
 καὶ δὸς κύσαι καὐτὸς κύσον, καί μοι φράσον 755  
 πρὸς Διός, ὃς ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ὁμομαστιγίας,  
 τίς οὗτος οὖνδον ἐστὶ θόρυβος καὶ βοή  
 χῶ λουδορησμός;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

Αἰσχύλου κεύριπίδου.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἦ.

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

πρᾶγμα πρᾶγμα μέγα κεκίνηται μέγα  
 ἐν τοῖς νεκροῖσι καὶ στάσις πολλὴ πάνυ. 760

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ἐκ τοῦ;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

νόμος τις ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶ κείμενος  
 ἀπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν ὅσαι μεγάλαι καὶ δεξιαί,  
 τὸν ἄριστον ὄντα τῶν ἑαυτοῦ συντέχνων  
 σίτησιν αὐτὸν ἐν πρυτανείῳ λαμβάνειν  
 θρόνον τε τοῦ Πλούτωνος ἐξῆς—

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

μανθάνω. 765

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

ἕως ἀφίκοιτο τὴν τέχνην σοφώτερος  
 ἕτερός τις αὐτοῦ· τότε δὲ παραχωρεῖν ἔδει.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τί δήτα τουτὶ τεθορύβηκεν Αἰσχύλον;

SERVANT

You mean me?  
 Every time I do that, I piss myself.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

By Phoebus Apollo, give me your hand,  
 let me kiss you, and you kiss me.

[Notices a noise from inside the house]

Tell me,  
 by Zeus, patron of all flogged slaves like us,  
 what's going on inside the house, that noise,  
 all that yelling and abuse?

SERVANT

Oh that—  
 that's Euripides and Aeschylus.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

Ah ha!

SERVANT

Big, big trouble's in the works down here  
 among the dead—a massive civil war.

[760]

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

What about?

SERVANT

There's a custom in these parts  
 that in the arts—the great and worthy ones—  
 the best man in his special area  
 gets all his meals for free at City Hall  
 in the chair of honour next to Pluto . . .

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

I get it.

SERVANT

. . . until someone else arrives  
 who has more skill than he does. At that point,  
 he has to yield his place.

ΧΑΝΘΙΑΣ

But why would this  
 get Aeschylus upset?

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

ἐκείνος εἶχε τὸν τραγωδικὸν θρόνον,  
ὡς ὢν κράτιστος τὴν τέχνην.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

νυνὶ δὲ τίς; 770

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

ὅτε δὴ κατῆλθ' Εὐριπίδης, ἐπεδείκνυτο  
τοῖς λωποδύταις καὶ τοῖσι βαλλαντιοτόμοις  
καὶ τοῖσι πατραλοῖασι καὶ τοιχωρύχοις,  
ὅπερ ἔστ' ἐν Ἄιδου πλήθος, οἱ δ' ἀκροώμενοι  
τῶν ἀντιλογιῶν καὶ λυγισμῶν καὶ στροφῶν 775  
ὑπερεμάνησαν κἀνόμισαν σοφώτατον  
κᾶπειτ' ἐπαρθεῖς ἀντελάβετο τοῦ θρόνου,  
ἦν' Αἰσχύλος καθῆστο.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

κοῦκ ἐβάλλετο;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

μὰ Δι' ἀλλ' ὁ δῆμος ἀνεβόα κρίσιν ποιεῖν  
ὁπότερος εἶη τὴν τέχνην σοφώτερος. 780

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

ὁ τῶν πανούργων;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

νῆ Δι' οὐράνιόν γ' ὄσον.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

μετ' Αἰσχύλου δ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἕτεροι σύμμαχοι;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

ὀλίγον τὸ χρηστόν ἐστιν, ὥσπερ ἐνθάδε.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

τί δῆθ' ὁ Πλούτων δρᾶν παρασκευάζεται;

SERVANT

Well, he had his chair,  
the one for tragedy, as the finest  
in that form of art.

XANTHIAS

Who's got it now? [770]

SERVANT

When Euripides came down to Hades  
he started showing off his rhetoric  
to thieves, bag snatchers, parricides,  
to all the ones who steal—and here in Hades  
that's most of us. Well, they listened to him,  
heard his counter-arguments, his twists and turns,  
and went nuts for him. So they then proposed  
he was the wisest of all men. With that,  
Euripides got so worked up he claimed  
that chair where Aeschylus sits down.

XANTHIAS

Didn't people throw stuff at him?

SERVANT

My god, no.  
Quite the opposite. They all cried out  
to have a trial set up which could find out  
which of the two men was the wiser poet. [780]

XANTHIAS

The crowd of scoundrels?

SERVANT

Yes, that bunch—  
they made a din, by god—right up to heaven.

XANTHIAS

Didn't Aeschylus get some support?

SERVANT

It's like this audience—too few good men.

XANTHIAS

So what's Pluto planning to set up?

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ  
 ἀγῶνα ποιεῖν αὐτίκα μάλα καὶ κρίσιν  
 κάλεχον αὐτῶν τῆς τέχνης. 785

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 κάπειτα πῶς  
 οὐ καὶ Σοφοκλέης ἀντελάβετο τοῦ θρόνου;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ  
 μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἐκεῖνος, ἀλλ' ἔκυσε μὲν Αἰσχύλον,  
 ὅτε δὴ κατήλθε, κἀνέβαλε τὴν δεξιάν,  
 κἀκεῖνος ὑπεχώρησεν αὐτῷ τοῦ θρόνου· 790  
 νυνὶ δ' ἔμελλεν, ὡς ἔφη Κλειδημίδης,  
 ἔφεδρος καθεδείσθαι· κἂν μὲν Αἰσχύλος κρατῆ,  
 ἔξεν κατὰ χάραν· εἰ δὲ μή, περὶ τῆς τέχνης  
 διαγωνιείσθ' ἔφασκε πρὸς γ' Εὐριπίδην.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 τὸ χρῆμ' ἄρ' ἔσται;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ  
 νῆ Δί' ὀλίγον ὕστερον. 795  
 κἀνταῦθα δὴ τὰ δεινὰ κινηθήσεται.  
 καὶ γὰρ ταλάντῳ μουσικῆ σταθμῆσεται—

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 τί δέ; μειαγωγῆσουσι τὴν τραγωδίαν;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ  
 καὶ κανόνας ἐξοίσουσι καὶ πήχεις ἐπῶν  
 καὶ πλαίσια ξύμπτυκτα—

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 πλιθεύσουσι γάρ; 800

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ  
 καὶ διαμέτρους καὶ σφήνας. ὁ γὰρ Εὐριπίδης  
 κατ' ἔπος βασανιεῖν φησι τὰς τραγωδίας.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ  
 ἦ που βαρέως οἶμαι τὸν Αἰσχύλον φέρειν.

SERVANT  
 A contest— there's going to be a trial right here,  
 a test of skill.

XANTHIAS  
 What about Sophocles—  
 how come he didn't claim the poet's chair?

SERVANT  
 My god, he wouldn't. When he first arrived  
 he kissed Aeschylus, shook him by the hand,  
 and kept his distance from the chair of honour. [790]  
 And now, according to Cleidemides,  
 he means to sit by as a substitute.  
 If Aeschylus wins out, he'll keep his place.  
 If not, in this contest of poetic skill  
 he says he'll fight on to the bitter end  
 against Euripides.

XANTHIAS  
 So this affair is on.

SERVANT  
 Yes, in a minute. In this very spot  
 some fairly weird things will be going on—  
 they're testing poetry with balance scales!

XANTHIAS  
 What?! They'll weigh tragedy in milligrams?

SERVANT  
 And they're bringing out some measuring sticks,  
 rulers for words, framed rectangles . . .

XANTHIAS  
 Will they be constructing bricks? [800]

SERVANT  
 . . . bevels, too,  
 and wedges—all because Euripides  
 says he'll test their tragedies, every word.

XANTHIAS  
 Well, my guess is that Aeschylus  
 isn't liking this at all.

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

ἔβλεψε γοῦν ταυρηδὸν ἐγκύψας κάτω.

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

κρινεῖ δὲ δὴ τίς ταῦτα;

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

τοῦτ' ἦν δύσκολον· 805  
σοφῶν γὰρ ἀνδρῶν ἀπορίαν ἠύρισκέτην.  
οὔτε γὰρ Ἀθηναίοισι συνέβαιν' Αἰσχύλος—

ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ

πολλοὺς ἴσως ἐνόμιζε τοὺς τοιχωρύχους.

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ

λῆρόν τε τᾶλλ' ἠγείτο τοῦ γνῶναι πέρι 810  
φύσεις ποιητῶν· εἶτα τῷ σῶ δεσπότη  
ἐπέτρεψαν, ὅτι τῆς τέχνης ἔμπειρος ἦν.  
ἀλλ' εἰσώμεν· ὡς ὅταν γ' οἱ δεσπότηται  
ἐσπουδάκωσι, κλαύμαθ' ἡμῖν γίγνεται.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἦ που δεινὸν ἐριβρεμέτας χόλον ἔνδοθεν ἔξει,  
ἠνίκ' ἂν ὀξύλαλον παρίδη θήγοντος ὀδόντα 815  
ἀντιτέχνου· τότε δὴ μανίας ὑπὸ δεινῆς  
ὄμματα στροβήσεται.  
ἔσται δ' ἵππολόφων τε λόγων κορυθαίολα νείκη  
σχινδαλάμων τε παραζόνια σμιλεύματά τ' ἔργων, 820  
φωτὸς ἀμυνομένου φρενοτέκτονος ἀνδρὸς  
ρήμαθ' ἵπποβάμονα.  
φρίξας δ' αὐτοκόμου λοφιᾶς λασιούχενά χαίταν,  
δεινὸν ἐπισκύνιον ξυνάγων βρυχώμενος ἦσει  
ρήματα γομφοπαγῆ πινακηδὸν ἀποσπῶν 825  
γηγενεῖ φυσήματι·  
ἔνθεν δὴ στοματοουργὸς ἐπῶν βασανίστρια λίσφη  
γλώσσ' ἀνελισσομένη φθονερούς κινουῦσα χαλινοὺς  
ρήματα δαιομένη καταλεπτολογήσει  
πλευμόνων πολὺν πόνον.

SERVANT

He just glared,  
lowering his head as if he were a bull.

XANTHIAS

Who's going to judge this trial?

SERVANT

That's difficult.  
Wise men are hard to find—in short supply.  
And Aeschylus didn't really hit it off  
with the Athenians . . .

XANTHIAS

Perhaps because  
he thought that most of them were criminals.

SERVANT

. . . and he considered other people  
worthless as judges of true poetry. [810]  
So at last they turned toward your master,  
since he's got some knowledge of that art.  
But let's go in. There's always trouble for us,  
every time our master's in a rush.

[Xanthias and the Servant go into the house]

CHORUS [in a parody of the tragic style]

Now the loud-roaring hero feels in full his fury—  
that valiant vehemence which surges up within,  
when he confronts his rival in poetic craft  
sharpening smooth-talking tusks, just like a boar.  
His frenzied passion's going to make those eyeballs roll.  
The battle's here at hand—helmet-glancing war,  
horse-crested words, while splintered axles break apart, [820]  
as the subtle chisel-worker tries to push and parry  
steed-prancing phrases from the man who builds our minds.  
The bristling crest erect there on his shaggy neck,  
his natural hair, a fearful scowl upon his brow,  
and bellowing, he'll launch his language fixed with bolts,  
like planking for a ship, he'll rip the words apart,  
blasting with his giant's lungs. The other man,  
the one who works his mouth, who tortures every word,  
unrolling his smooth tongue and shaking envy's rein,  
will dissect and parse those words, and, splitting hairs,  
refute all that large labour of the former's lungs.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἂν μεθείμην τοῦ θρόνου, μὴ νουθέτει.  
κρείττων γὰρ εἶναί φημι τούτου τὴν τέχνην. 830

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Αἰσχύλε τί σιγᾶς; αἰσθάνει γὰρ τοῦ λόγου.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀποσεμνυεῖται πρῶτον, ἅπερ ἐκάστοτε  
ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαισιν ἕτερατεύετο.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὦ δαιμόνι' ἀνδρῶν μὴ μεγάλα λίαν λέγε. 835

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐγῶδα τοῦτον καὶ διέσκεμμαι πάλαι,  
ἄνθρωπον ἀγριοποιὸν ἀνθαδόστομον,  
ἔχοντ' ἀχάλινον ἀκρατὲς ἀπύλωτον στόμα,  
ἀπεριλάλητον κομποφακελορρήμονα.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἄληθες ὦ παῖ τῆς ἀρουραίας θεοῦ;  
σὺ δὴ με ταῦτ' ὦ στωμυλιοσυλλεκτάδη  
καὶ πτωχοποιὲ καὶ ῥακιοσυρραπτάδη;  
ἀλλ' οὐ τι χαίρων αὐτ' ἐρεῖς. 840

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

παῦ' Αἰσχύλε,  
καὶ μὴ πρὸς ὀργὴν σπλάγχνα θερμῆνης κότῳ.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

οὐ δῆτα πρὶν γ' ἂν τοῦτον ἀποφίηνω σαφῶς  
τὸν χωλοποιὸν οἶος ὢν θρασύνεται. 845

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἄρν' ἄρνα μέλανα παῖδες ἐξενέγκατε·  
τυφῶς γὰρ ἐκβαίνειν παρασκευάζεται.

[Enter Aeschylus, Euripides, Dionysus, and Pluto, with attendants]

EURIPIDES

I'll not give up the chair—no more advice.  
I say I'm better in poetic skill. [830]

DIONYSUS

Why are you silent, Aeschylus? You hear  
the claim he's made.

EURIPIDES

His high-and-mighty pose—  
he does that at the start of every play,  
some hocus-pocus for his tragedies.

DIONYSUS

My dear fellow, that's too much big talk.

EURIPIDES

I know the man—and for a long time now  
I've studied him. He makes crude characters  
with stubborn tongues. As for his own mouth,  
it's unrestrained and uncontrolled, unlocked,  
no proper discourse, bombastiloquent.

AESCHYLUS

Is that so, you garden-goddess child?  
You say that of me, you gossip-monger,  
a beggar's poet who picks and stitches rags?  
You'll regret those words. [840]

DIONYSUS

Hey, Aeschylus,  
hold on. Don't fire up your heart so angrily,  
with such ill will.

AESCHYLUS

No, no, I won't hold back,  
'til I've exposed the man and clearly proved  
this cripples' poet is a boastful fool . . .

DIONYSUS [to the attendants]

Hey, boys, bring out a sheep—a black one, too.  
It looks as if a storm's about to break.<sup>44</sup>



ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ὦ Κρητικὰς μὲν συλλέγων μονωδίας,  
γάμους δ' ἀνοσίους ἐσφέρων ἐς τὴν τέχνην. 850

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐπίσχεσ οὔτος ὦ πολυτίμητ' Αἰσχύλε.  
ἀπὸ τῶν χαλαζῶν δ' ὦ πόνηρ' Εὐριπίδη  
ἄναγε σεαυτὸν ἐκποδῶν, εἰ σωφρονεῖς,  
ἵνα μὴ κεφαλαίῳ τὸν κρόταφόν σου ῥήματι  
θενῶν ὑπ' ὀργῆς ἐκχέῃ τὸν Τήλεφον· 855  
σὺ δὲ μὴ πρὸς ὀργὴν Αἰσχύλ' ἀλλὰ πραόνως  
ἔλεγχ' ἐλέγχου· λοιδορεῖσθαι δ' οὐ πρόπει  
ἄνδρας ποιητὰς ὥσπερ ἀρτοπώλιδας.  
σὺ δ' εὐθύς ὥσπερ πρῖνος ἐμπρησθεῖς βοᾷς.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔτοιμός εἰμ' ἔγωγε, κοῦκ ἀναδύομαι, 860  
δάκνειν δάκνεσθαι πρότερος, εἰ τούτῳ δοκεῖ,  
τᾶπη, τὰ μέλη, τὰ νεῦρα τῆς τραγωδίας,  
καὶ νῆ Δία τὸν Πηλέα γε καὶ τὸν Αἴολον  
καὶ τὸν Μελέαγρον κᾶτι μάλα τὸν Τήλεφον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τί δαὶ σὺ βουλεύει ποιεῖν; λέγ' Αἰσχύλε. 865

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἐβουλόμην μὲν οὐκ ἐρίζειν ἐνθάδε·  
οὐκ ἐξ ἴσου γάρ ἐστιν ἀγῶν νῶν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τί δαί;

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ὅτι ἢ ποιήσεις οὐχὶ συντέθνηκέ μοι,  
τούτῳ δὲ συντέθνηκεν, ὥσθ' ἔξει λέγειν.  
ὅμως δ' ἐπειδὴ σοι δοκεῖ, δρᾶν ταῦτα χρή. 870

AESCHYLUS

. . . collecting all those monodies from Crete,  
importing impure marriage into art . . .<sup>45</sup> [850]

DIONYSUS

Whoa, hold on there, much-honoured Aeschylus.  
And you, my poor Euripides, back off  
beyond this breaking storm—that would be wise,  
in case his anger cracks your skull in two,  
some heady phrase makes all your brain leak out  
your hero Telephos. And you there, Aeschylus,  
don't get so angry. Test him, but calmly—  
and then be tested, too. It's just not right  
for poets to engage in such abuse,  
like two women selling bread. You bellow  
as if you were a tree on fire.

EURIPIDES

I'm ready. [860]

I don't mind biting or being bitten first,  
whatever he prefers, about my diction,  
or the songs and sinews of my tragic plays—  
and by god, about Peleus, too,  
my Meleager or my Aeolos,  
or, even more about my Telephos.<sup>46</sup>

DIONYSUS

What do you want to do? Tell us, Aeschylus.

AESCHYLUS

I have no wish to enter battle here.  
The war we fight is not on equal terms.

DIONYSUS

Why's that?

AESCHYLUS

My poetry did not die with me,  
but his did once he died. So it's down here—  
he'll have it with him when he wants to speak.  
But nonetheless since it's what you want,  
we must go through with this. [870]

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴθι νυν λιβανωτὸν δευρό τις καὶ πῦρ δότω.  
ὅπως ἂν εὔξωμαι πρὸ τῶν σοφισμάτων  
ἀγῶνα κρῖναι τόνδε μουσικώτατα·  
ὕμεις δὲ ταῖς Μούσαις τι μέλος ὑπάσατε.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ Διὸς ἐννέα παρθένοι ἀγναὶ 875  
Μοῦσαι, λεπτολόγους ξυνητὰς φρένας αἰ καθορᾶτε  
ἀνδρῶν γνωμοτύπων, ὅταν εἰς ἔριν ὀξυμερίμοις  
ἔλθωσι στρεβλοῖσι παλαίσμασιν ἀντιλογοῦντες,  
ἔλθετ' ἐποψόμεναι δύναμιν  
δεινοτάτου στομάτου πορίσασθαι 880  
ρήματα καὶ παραπρίσματ' ἐπῶν.  
νῦν γὰρ ἀγὼν σοφίας ὁ μέγας χωρεῖ πρὸς ἔργον ἤδη.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εὔχεσθε δὴ καὶ σφῶ τι πρὶν τᾶπη λέγειν. 885

## ΑἴΣΧΥΛΟΣ

Δήμητερ ἢ θρέψασα τὴν ἐμὴν φρένα,  
εἶναί με τῶν σῶν ἄξιον μυστηρίων.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐπίθεες λαβῶν δὴ καὶ σὺ λιβανωτόν.

## ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

καλῶς·

ἕτεροι γὰρ εἰσιν οἷσιν εὔχομαι θεοῖς.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴδιοί τινές σοι, κόμμα καινόν;

## DIONYSUS [to the assembled group]

Come now,

someone bring an offering here, and fire as well,  
so I can pray before this contest starts,  
our battle of the brains, and judge the fight  
with maximum aesthetic expertise.

[addressing the Chorus]

Now for the Muses you should sing a song.

## CHORUS

O you nine sacred Muses  
mighty Zeus' virgin daughters,  
gazing down on subtle minds,  
you see intelligence at work  
in men who write our maxims.  
When such as these go out to fight,  
with counterarguments and tricks,  
with fiercely studied wrestling moves,  
with crooked throws, come to us here,  
observe the power of these mouths,  
their awesome skill in making words, [880]  
sawing phrases up like sawdust.  
Now our great contest in this art  
stands ready, let the business start.

## DIONYSUS

Before we have you two recite your lines,  
you ought to offer up your prayers.

## AESCHYLUS

O Demeter,

who nourishes my mind, make me worthy  
to be there in your mysteries.

## Dionysus [to Euripides]

It's your turn—

take some incense. Make an offering.

## EURIPIDES

All right—

but I pray to different gods.

## DIONYSUS

Personal ones?

Your very own? Freshly minted?

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ μάλα. 890

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴθι δὴ προσεύχου τοῖσιν ιδιώταις θεοῖς.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

αἰθὴρ ἐμὸν βόσκημα καὶ γλώσσης στρόφιγξ  
καὶ ξύνεσι καὶ μυκτῆρες ὄσφραντήριοι,  
ὀρθῶς μ' ἐλέγχειν ὧν ἂν ἄπτωμαι λόγων.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

καὶ μὴν ἡμεῖς ἐπιθυμοῦμεν 895  
παρὰ σοφοῖν ἀνδροῖν ἀκοῦσαι  
τίνα λόγων ἐμμέλειαν  
ἔπιτε δαΐαν ὁδόν.  
γλώσσα μὲν γὰρ ἠγρίωται,  
λῆμα δ' οὐκ ἄτολμον ἀμφοῖν,  
οὐδ' ἀκίνητοι φρένες.  
προσδοκᾶν οὖν εἰκός ἐστι 900  
τὸν μὲν ἀστεῖόν τι λέξειν  
καὶ κατερρινημένον,  
τὸν δ' ἀνασπῶντ' αὐτοπρέμνοις  
τοῖς λόγοισιν  
ἐμπεσόντα συσκεδᾶν πολλὰς  
ἀλινδήθρας ἐπῶν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα χρὴ λέγειν· οὕτω δ' ὅπως ἐρείτον 905  
ἀστεῖα καὶ μῆτ' εἰκόνας μῆθ' οἷ ἂν ἄλλος εἴποι.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ μὴν ἐμαυτὸν μὲν γε τὴν ποίησιν οἶός εἰμι,  
ἐν τοῖσιν ὑστάτοις φράσω, τοῦτον δὲ πρῶτ' ἐλέγξω,  
ὡς ἦν ἀλαζῶν καὶ φέναξ οἷοις τε τοὺς θεατὰς  
ἐξηπάτα μώρους λαβὼν παρὰ Φρυνίχῳ τραφέντας. 910  
πρώτιστα μὲν γὰρ ἓνα τιν' ἂν καθῖσεν ἐγκαλύψας,  
Ἀχιλλέα τιν' ἢ Νιόβην, τὸ πρόσωπον οὐχὶ δεικνύς,  
πρόσχημα τῆς τραγωδίας, γρύζοντας οὐδὲ τουτί.

EURIPIDES

That's right. [890]

DIONYSUS

Then pray away to those private gods of yours.

EURIPIDES

O air, my food, O pivot of my tongue,  
O native wit, O nose that smells so fine,  
whatever words I seize upon, let me  
refute them—let the victory be mine.

CHORUS

Now we're filled with great desire  
to hear from poets with such skill,  
the pathway in this war of words  
they'll walk along. Their tongues are wild,  
no lack of boldness in their mood,  
nor are their intellects asleep. [900]  
It looks as though we're going to see  
one man say something quite urbane  
and finely trimmed. The other one  
will seize him and his arguments,  
the roots and all, and then attack  
and scatter words around the place  
like wrestle-rolling on a mat.

DIONYSUS [*to Aeschylus and Euripides*]

You must speak at full speed. But see you talk  
this way—with elegance, no metaphors,  
and nothing someone else might say.

EURIPIDES

All right.

As for myself—the kind of poet I am—  
I'll say that in my final words. For first,  
I'll demonstrate this fellow's fraudulent,  
a cheat. I'll show just how he took them in,  
and fooled those idiots reared on Phrynichos.<sup>47</sup> [910]  
First, he'd wrap a person up and sit him down  
with his face hidden away—some character  
like Niobe or his Achilles—  
mere window dressing for the tragedy.  
They didn't speak or even mutter.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μὰ τὸν Δι' οὐ δῆθ'.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ὁ δὲ χορός γ' ἤρειδεν ὀρμαθοὺς ἄν  
μελῶν ἐφεξῆς τέτταρας ξυνεχῶς ἄν οἱ δ' ἐσίγων. 915

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐγὼ δ' ἔχαιρον τῇ σιωπῇ, καί με τοῦτ' ἔτερπεν  
οὐχ ἦττον ἢ νῦν οἱ λαλοῦντες.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἡλίθιος γὰρ ἦσθα,  
σάφ' ἴσθι.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

κάμαυτῶ δοκῶ. τί δὲ ταῦτ' ἔδρασ' ὁ δείνα;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ὑπ' ἀλαζονείας, ἦν' ὁ θεατῆς προσδοκῶν καθοῖτο,  
ὀπόθ' ἢ Νιόβη τι φθέγγεται· τὸ δράμα δ' ἄν διήει. 920

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὦ παμπόνηρος, οἷ ἄρ' ἐφenaκίζομην ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.  
τί σκορδινᾶ καὶ δυσφορεῖς;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅτι αὐτὸν ἐξελέγχω.  
κάπειτ' ἐπειδὴ ταῦτα ληρήσειε καὶ τὸ δράμα  
ἤδη μεσοίη, ῥήματ' ἄν βόεια δώδεκ' εἶπεν,  
ὀφρῦς ἔχοντα καὶ λόφους, δεῖν' ἄττα μορμωπά, 925  
ἄγνωτα τοῖς θεωμένοις.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

οἴμοι τάλας.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

σιώπα.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

σαφὲς δ' ἄν εἶπεν οὐδὲ ἔν—

DIONYSUS

That's right. They didn't.

EURIPIDES

And then his Chorus thumped their lyrics out—  
strings of them, four in a row without a break,  
the character just sat on stage in silence.

DIONYSUS

Well, I liked that they kept quiet. It pleased me.  
It wasn't any worse than those today  
who babble on and on.

EURIPIDES

You were a fool—  
no doubt of that.

DIONYSUS

I think so, too. But why so?  
Why did our friend here do that?

EURIPIDES

It was a trick  
designed to keep spectators in their seats,  
waiting for when Niobe might start to speak.  
So the play continued on and on and on . . . [920]

DIONYSUS

What a rascal! How he had me fooled!  
[to Aeschylus] Why are you fretting there and fidgeting?

EURIPIDES

Because I've caught him out. When he'd played this trick  
and half the play was done, someone would speak up,  
a dozen ox-like words—with eyebrows, crests,  
some fear-faced things full of the bogey man,  
which no one in the audience understood.

AESCHYLUS

How miserable I feel . . .

DIONYSUS

Stay quiet please.

EURIPIDES

Nothing he said was ever clear.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μὴ πρίε τοὺς ὀδόντας.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' ἢ Σκαμάνδρους ἢ τάφρους ἢ ἄσπιδων ἐπόντας  
 γρυπαιέτους χαλκηλάτους καὶ ῥήμαθ' ἰππόκρημα,  
 ἃ ξυμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥάδι ἦν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς ἐγὼ γοῦν 930  
 ἤδη ποτ' ἐν μακρῷ χρόνῳ νυκτὸς διηγρύπνησα  
 τὸν ξουθὸν ἰππαλεκτρύονα ζητῶν τίς ἐστὶν ὄρνις.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

σημεῖον ἐν ταῖς ναυσὶν ὠμαθέστατ' ἐνεγέγραπτο.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν Φιλοξένου γ' ὄμην Ἔρυξιν εἶναι.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

εἶτ' ἐν τραγωδίαις ἐχρῆν κάλεκτρύονα ποιῆσαι; 935

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

σὺ δ' ὦ θεοῖσιν ἐχθρὲ ποῖ ἅττ' ἐστὶν ἅττ' ἐποίεις;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐχ ἰππαλεκτρύονας μὰ Δι' οὐδὲ τραγελάφους, ἅπερ σύ,  
 ἂν τοῖσι παραπετάσμασιν τοῖς Μηδικοῖς γράφουσιν·  
 ἀλλ' ὡς παρέλαβον τὴν τέχνην παρὰ σοῦ τὸ πρῶτον εὐθὺς  
 οἰδοῦσαν ὑπὸ κομπασμάτων καὶ ῥημάτων ἐπαχθῶν, 940  
 ἴσχυανα μὲν πρῶτιστον αὐτὴν καὶ τὸ βάρος ἀφείλον  
 ἐπυλλίοις καὶ περιπάτοις καὶ τευτλίοις λευκοῖς,  
 χυλὸν διδοὺς στωμυλμάτων ἀπὸ βιβλίων ἀπηθῶν  
 εἶτ' ἀνέτρεφον μονωδίαις —

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Κηφισοφῶντα μινγύς.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

εἶτ' οὐκ ἐλήρουν ὅ τι τύχοιμ' οὐδ' ἐμπροσθὸν ἔφυρον, 945  
 ἀλλ' οὐξιών πρῶτιστα μὲν μοι τὸ γένος εἶπ' ἂν εὐθὺς  
 τοῦ δράματος.

DIONYSUS [to Aeschylus]

Don't grind your teeth.

EURIPIDES

He talked on about Scamanders, trenches,  
 shields with bronze enamelled griffon-eagles,  
 in horse-cliffed phrases hard to comprehend. [930]

DIONYSUS

Yes, by god, one long night I got no sleep  
 from worrying what kind of bird was called  
 the tawny clear-voiced horse cock.

AESCHYLUS

You idiot!

It was a symbol painted on the ships.

DIONYSUS

I thought it was Eryxis, Philoxenos' son.

EURIPIDES

Did you have to work a rooster in  
 just for the tragedy?<sup>48</sup>

AESCHYLUS

You god-forsaken wretch,  
 what sorts of plays did you create?

EURIPIDES

None like you —

no horse-cock monsters or goat-stags, by god,  
 the sort they paint on Persian tapestries.  
 When I first took this art of plays from you,  
 crammed with bombast to the gills, fustian stuff, [940]  
 at first I made it slim, reduced its weight,  
 with vesicles, and walks, and laxatives.  
 I gave a potion drawn from bookish chat,  
 and took care nursing it with monodies.

DIONYSUS

And you mixed in Cephisophon, as well.<sup>49</sup>

EURIPIDES

I wasn't fool enough to put in there  
 whatever stuff I chanced upon, or add  
 just anything I found. The character  
 who came out first would right away explain  
 on my behalf the background of the play.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

κρείττον γὰρ ἦν σοι νῆ Δι' ἢ τὸ σαυτοῦ.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων ἐπῶν οὐδὲν παρήκ' ἂν ἀργόν,  
 ἀλλ' ἔλεγεν ἢ γυνὴ τέ μοι χῶ δούλος οὐδὲν ἦττον,  
 χῶ δεσπότης χῆ παρθένος χῆ γραῦς ἄν. 950

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

εἶτα δῆτα

οὐκ ἀποθανεῖν σε ταῦτ' ἐχρήν τολμῶντα;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω·

δημοκρατικὸν γὰρ αὐτ' ἔδρων.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τοῦτο μὲν ἔασον ᾧ τᾶν.

οὐ σοὶ γάρ ἐστι περίπατος κάλλιστα περί γε τούτου.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔπειτα τουτουσὶ λαλεῖν ἐδίδαξα —

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

φημὶ καγώ.

ὡς πρὶν διδάξαι γ' ὄφελος μέσος διαρραγῆναι. 955

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

λεπτῶν τε κανόνων ἐσβολὰς ἐπῶν τε γωνιασμούς,  
 νοεῖν ὄρᾶν ξυνιέναι στρέφειν ἐρᾶν τεχνάζειν,  
 κάχ' ὑποτοπεῖσθαι, περνοεῖν ἅπαντα —

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

φημὶ καγώ.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

οἰκεία πράγματ' εἰσάγων, οἷς χρώμεθ', οἷς ξύνεσμεν,  
 ἐξ ὧν γ' ἂν ἐξηλεγχόμην· ξυνειδότες γὰρ οὗτοι 960  
 ἤλεγχον ἂν μου τὴν τέχνην· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκομπολάκουν  
 ἀπὸ τοῦ φρονεῖν ἀποσπάσας, οὐδ' ἐξέπληττον αὐτούς,

DIONYSUS

Which was better than your own, by god.

EURIPIDES

After those opening words I never set  
 anything superfluous in the play. No.  
 For me the woman spoke — so did the slave,  
 the master, maiden, the old woman, too. [950]

AESCHYLUS

Well, shouldn't you be killed for daring this?

EURIPIDES

By Apollo, no. I was doing my work  
 the democratic way.

DIONYSUS [to Euripides]

My dear chap,

I'd forget that — from your point of view  
 that's not the best line you could take.<sup>50</sup>

EURIPIDES [indicating the audience]

I taught these people here to speak their minds . . .

AESCHYLUS

I say so too — and before doing that  
 I wish you'd split apart — right down the middle.

EURIPIDES

. . . introducing subtle rules for words,  
 for verses nicely trimmed. I taught them to think,  
 to see, to understand, to love new twists  
 and double dealing, to suspect the worst,  
 to be too smart in everything . . .

AESCHYLUS

I agree.

EURIPIDES

. . . and I brought in domestic issues, too —  
 useful matters of things we understand,  
 things people here could challenge me about. [960]  
 They know their stuff — so they could test my art.  
 I didn't boast or lose my common sense.  
 Nor did I scare them all with characters

Κύκνους ποιῶν καὶ Μέμνονας κωδωνοφαλαροπῶλους.  
γνώσει δὲ τοὺς τούτου τε κάμους ἑκατέρου μαθητάς.  
τουτουμεινὶ Φορμίσιος Μεγαίνετός θ' ὁ Μανῆς, 965  
σαλπυγγολογχυπηνάδαι, σαρκασμοπιτυοκάμπται,  
οὔμοι δὲ Κλειτοφῶν τε καὶ Θηραμένης ὁ κομψός.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Θηραμένης; σοφός γ' ἀνὴρ καὶ δεινὸς ἐς τὰ πάντα,  
ὃς ἦν κακοῖς που περιπέσει καὶ πλησίον παραστῆ,  
πέπτωκεν ἔξω τῶν κακῶν, οὐ Χίος ἀλλὰ Κεῖος. 970

## ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

τοιαῦτα μέντουγὰ φρονεῖν  
τούτοισιν εἰσηγησάμην,  
λογισμὸν ἐνθεῖς τῇ τέχνῃ  
καὶ σκέψιν, ὥστ' ἤδη νοεῖν  
ἅπαντα καὶ διειδέναι 975  
τά τ' ἄλλα καὶ τὰς οἰκίας  
οἰκεῖν ἄμεινον ἢ πρὸ τοῦ  
κἀνασκοπεῖν, 'πῶς τοῦτ' ἔχει;  
ποῦ μοι τοδί; τίς τοῦτ' ἔλαβε;'

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς νῦν γοῦν Ἀθηναίων 980  
ἅπας τις εἰσιῶν  
κέκραγε πρὸς τοὺς οἰκέτας  
ζητεῖ τε, 'ποῦ ἔστιν ἡ χύτρα;  
τίς τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀπεδήδοκεν  
τῆς μαινίδος; τὸ τρύβλιον 985  
τὸ περυσινὸν τέθνηκέ μοι  
ποῦ τὸ σκόροδον τὸ χθιζινόν;  
τίς τῆς ἐλάας παρέτραγεν;  
τέως δ' ἀβελτερώτατοι

like Cynus and Memnon, who walk around  
with bells attached.<sup>51</sup> Look at our disciples,  
his and mine—you know them all quite well.  
Meganeitos and rough Phormisios  
are his—great long-beard-lance-and-trumpet men,  
flesh-rippers with the pine—whereas, for me  
there's neat Theramenes and Cleitophon.<sup>52</sup>

## DIONYSUS

Theramenes? Now, he's a clever man,  
expert in everything. When he meets trouble,  
when it hits him in the face, he gets away,  
no problem, by changing who he is—  
if being a Chian doesn't work for him,  
he claims that he's Achaean.<sup>53</sup> [970]

EURIPIDES [*rushing his concluding speech*]

I taught these people here  
to think about such things.  
I brought logic into art.  
I made them questioners.  
Now they see everything  
and understand it all.  
Their minds are more profound—  
they organize their homes  
much better than before.  
So now they ask "Where's this?"  
"How's it going?" "Who took that?"

DIONYSUS [*imitating Euripides speaking style here*]

Yes, by god, that's what they do. [980]  
Now each Athenian man  
goes home and starts to yell—  
to scream at his own servants,  
"Where's my pot? My sardine—  
who's bitten off its head?  
My bowl from bygone years,  
is it, too, dead and gone?  
And where's my garlic clove?  
I had it yesterday.  
Who's munching on my olives?"  
Before this, they'd just sit  
and gape there stupidly,

κεχηνότες Μαρμάκυθοι 990  
Μελιτίδαι καθήντο.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

τάδε μὲν λούσσεις φαίδιμ' Ἀχιλλεῦ·  
σὺ δὲ τί φέρε πρὸς ταῦτα λέξεις;  
μόνον ὅπως . . .  
μὴ σ' ὁ θυμὸς ἀρπάσας  
ἐκτὸς οἴσει τῶν ἐλαῶν 995  
δεινὰ γὰρ κατηγόρηκεν.  
ἀλλ' ὅπως ᾧ γεννάδα  
μὴ πρὸς ὀργὴν ἀντιλέξεις,  
ἀλλὰ συστείλας ἄκροισι  
χρώμενος τοῖς ἰστίοις, 1000  
εἶτα μᾶλλον μᾶλλον ἄξεις  
καὶ φυλάξεις,  
ἤνικ' ἂν τὸ πνεῦμα λείον  
καὶ καθεστηκὸς λάβῃς.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀλλ' ᾧ πρῶτος τῶν Ἑλλήνων πυργώσας ῥήματα σεμνὰ  
καὶ κοσμήσας τραγικὸν λήρον, θαρρῶν τὸν κρουνὸν  
ἀφίει. 1005

## ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

θυμοῦμαι μὲν τῇ ξυντυχίᾳ, καὶ μου τὰ σπλάγχν' ἀγανακτεῖ,  
εἰ πρὸς τοῦτον δεῖ μ' ἀντιλέγειν· ἵνα μὴ φάσκη δ' ἀπορεῖν  
με,  
ἀπόκριναί μοι, τίνος οὔνεκα χρὴ θαυμάζειν ἄνδρα ποιητήν;

## ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

δεξιότητος καὶ νοθεσίας, ὅτι βελτίους τε ποιούμεν  
τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι. 1010

## ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

τοῦτ' οὖν εἰ μὴ πεποιήκας,  
ἀλλ' ἐκ χρηστῶν καὶ γενναίων μοχθηροτάτους ἀπέδειξας,  
τί παθεῖν φήσεις ἄξιός εἶναι;

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τεθνάναι· μὴ τοῦτον ἐρώτα.

like little mummy's boys [990]  
and silly sweet-toothed fools.

CHORUS [*to Aeschylus*]

You see this, radiant Achilles,<sup>54</sup>  
Come now, what can you say to him?  
Don't let your anger take control  
and carry you beyond the track.  
He's charged you with some dreadful things.  
But now, you noble gentleman,  
respond to him, but not with wrath  
Haul in your sails—except the tips— [1000]  
then bit by bit bring in your ship.  
Keep watching for an easy wind.  
You just may get a gentle breeze.

## DIONYSUS

Now you who were first among the Greeks  
to raise the solemn towers of spoken words  
adorning them with tragic gibberish,  
be strong and spout forth eloquence.

## AESCHYLUS

This trial enrages me—it pains my spleen  
to have to answer such a man. But still,  
to stop your claim that I'm incompetent  
you answer this for me: Why should anyone  
admire the man who is a poet?

## EURIPIDES

For cleverness  
and good advice—and since we help improve  
the men who live within our cities.

## AESCHYLUS

So if that's something you didn't do, [1010]  
instead transforming fine and decent men  
to make them scoundrels, what would you say  
you'd then deserve by way of punishment?

## DIONYSUS

Death—but don't ask him.



ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

σκέψαι τοίνυν οἴους αὐτοὺς παρ' ἐμοῦ παρεδέξατο πρῶτον,  
εἰ γενναίους καὶ τετραπήχεις, καὶ μὴ διαδρασιπολίτας,  
μηδ' ἀγοραίους μηδὲ κοβάλους ὥσπερ νῦν μηδὲ  
πανούργους, 1015  
ἀλλὰ πνέοντας δόρυ καὶ λόγχας καὶ λευκολόφους  
τρυφαλείας  
καὶ πήληκας καὶ κνημίδας καὶ θυμοὺς ἑπταβοεῖους.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ δὴ χωρεῖ τουτὶ τὸ κακόν·

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

κρανοποιῶν αὐτὸν ἐπιτρίβει.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ τί σὺ δράσας οὕτως αὐτοὺς γενναίους ἐξεδίδαξας;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Αἰσχύλε λέξον, μηδ' αὐθάδως σεμνυνόμενος  
χαλέπαινε. 1020

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

δρᾶμα ποιήσας Ἄρεως μεστόν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ποῖον;

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

τοὺς ἑπτ' ἐπὶ Θήβας·  
ὁ θεασάμενος πᾶς ἂν τις ἀνὴρ ἠράσθη δάιος εἶναι.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τουτὶ μὲν σοι κακὸν εἴργασται· Θηβαίους γὰρ πεποίηκας  
ἀνδρειοτέρους ἐς τὸν πόλεμον, καὶ τούτου γ' οὕνεκα τύπτου.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὑμῖν αὐτ' ἐξήν ἀσκεῖν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐπὶ τοῦτ'  
ἐτρέπεσθε. 1025  
εἶτα διδάξας Πέρσας μετὰ τοῦτ' ἐπιθυμῖν ἐξεδίδαξα  
νικᾶν αἰεὶ τοὺς ἀντιπάλους, κοσμήσας ἔργον ἄριστον.

AESCHYLUS

Consider first  
the nature of the men he got from me—  
were they not nobly born and six feet tall?  
There were no runaways, no layabouts,  
no scoundrels like today, no ne'er-do-wells.  
No. Those men breathed spears and javelins,  
white-crested helmets, coronets, and greaves,  
with passions wrapped in seven oxhide folds.

EURIPIDES

This is getting bad.

DIONYSUS

His helmet-making

wears me down.

EURIPIDES

What exactly did you do  
to make these men so noble?

DIONYSUS

Aeschylus,  
speak up. Forget your pride and stubbornness. [1020]

AESCHYLUS

I wrote a play brim full of war god Ares.

DIONYSUS

Which one was that?

AESCHYLUS

My *Seven Against Thebes*.  
Every man who saw it fell in love with war.

DIONYSUS

But you did something bad there with the Thebans—  
you made them more courageous in the war.  
For that you should be spanked.

AESCHYLUS [to the audience]

You too,  
you could have trained yourselves for war as well,  
but you weren't so inclined. Then after that,  
by putting on my *Persians* I instructed them  
so they were always keen to beat their foes—  
thus honouring our finest act.<sup>55</sup>

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐχάρην γοῦν, ἤνικ' ἤκουσα περὶ Δαρείου τεθνεώτος,  
ὁ χορὸς δ' εὐθύς τῶ χεῖρ' ὠδὶ συγκρούσας εἶπεν 'ἰαυοί.'

ΑἲΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ταῦτα γὰρ ἄνδρας χρὴ ποιητὰς ἀσκεῖν. σκέψαι γὰρ ἀπ'  
ἀρχῆς 1030  
ὡς ὠφέλιμοι τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ γενναῖοι γεγένηται.  
Ὅρφεὺς μὲν γὰρ τελετὰς θ' ἡμῖν κατέδειξε φόνων τ'  
ἀπέχεσθαι,  
Μουσαῖος δ' ἐξακέσεις τε νόσων καὶ χρησμούς, Ἡσίοδος δὲ  
γῆς ἐργασίας, καρπῶν ὥρας, ἀρότους· ὁ δὲ θεῖος Ὅμηρος  
ἀπὸ τοῦ τιμῆν καὶ κλέος ἔσχεν πλὴν τοῦδ' ὅτι χρῆστ'  
ἐδίδαξεν, 1035  
τάξεις ἀρετὰς ὀπλίσεις ἀνδρῶν;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

καὶ μὴν οὐ Παντακλέα γε  
ἐδίδαξεν ὅμως τὸν σκαιότατον· πρῶην γοῦν, ἤνικ' ἔπεμπεν,  
τὸ κράνος πρῶτον περιδησάμενος τὸν λόφον ἤμελλ'  
ἐπιδήσειν.

ΑἲΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἄλλους τοὶ πολλοὺς ἀγαθοὺς, ὧν ἦν καὶ Λάμαχος ἥρωος·  
ὅθεν ἡμῆ φρῆν ἀπομαξαμένη πολλὰς ἀρετὰς ἐποίησεν,  
Πατρόκλων, Τεύκρων θυμολέοντων, ἕν' ἐπαίρομι' ἄνδρα  
πολίτην 1041  
ἀντεκτείνειν αὐτὸν τούτοις, ὅποταν σάλπιγγος ἀκούσῃ.  
ἀλλ' οὐ μὰ Δεῖ οὐ Φαίδρας ἐποιοῦν πόρνας οὐδὲ Σθενεβοίας,  
οὐδ' οἶδ' οὐδεὶς ἦντιν' ἐρώσαν πώποτ' ἐποίησα γυναῖκα.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

μὰ Δεῖ οὐ γὰρ ἐπῆν τῆς Ἀφροδίτης οὐδέν σοι. 1045

DIONYSUS

I was pleased  
when you cried out in sorrowful lament,  
“O child of Darius, who is dead,” and then,  
the chorus clapped its hands and all yelled out  
“Booo hooo.”

AESCHYLUS

Poets need to work on things like this. [1030]  
Look back—they've been useful from the start,  
the noble race of poets. There's Orpheus—  
he taught us rituals and not to kill,  
Musaeus showed us cures for sicknesses  
and oracles as well, and Hesiod  
taught farming, harvest times, and how to plough.  
As for divine Homer, where's his renown,  
his special fame, if not in what he taught,  
those useful facts about courageous deeds,  
and battle ranks and how men arm themselves.

DIONYSUS

Well, that may be, but Homer didn't teach  
a thing to Pantacles, that clumsy oaf.  
The other day while marching on parade,  
he clipped his helmet on, and then he tried  
to tie the crest on top.

AESCHYLUS

And brave men, too—  
Homer gave us lots—with them the hero  
Lamachos. I took Homeric warriors, [1040]  
and let my brain write many noble deeds  
about great lion-hearted fighting men  
like Patroclus and Teucer—in this way  
I urged our citizens to match themselves  
with them, when they heard the trumpet sound.  
But by god I never made a single whore  
like Phaedra or that Sthenoboa.<sup>56</sup>  
No one's ever known me as a man  
who writes about the way a woman loves.

EURIPIDES

No, by god. Whatever you possess,  
there's nothing there of Aphrodite.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

μηδέ γ' ἐπέιη.  
 ἀλλ' ἐπί τοι σοὶ καὶ τοῖς σοῖσιν πολλὴ πολλοῦ ἴπικαθήτο,  
 ὥστε γε καὐτόν σε κατ' οὖν ἔβαλεν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Δία τοῦτό γέ τοι δῆ.  
 ἃ γὰρ ἐς τὰς ἀλλοτρίας ἐποίεις, αὐτὸς τούτοισιν ἐπλήγης.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ τί βλάπτουσ' ὦ σχέτλι' ἀνδρῶν τὴν πόλιν ἅμαί  
 Σθενέβοιαι;

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ὅτι γενναίας καὶ γενναίων ἀνδρῶν ἀλόχους  
 ἀνέπεισας 1050  
 κώνεια πιεῖν αἰσχυνθείσας διὰ τοὺς σοὺς Βελλεροφόντας.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

πότερον δ' οὐκ ὄντα λόγον τοῦτον περὶ τῆς Φαίδρας  
 ξυνέθηκα;

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

μὰ Δι' ἀλλ' ὄντ'· ἀλλ' ἀποκρύπτειν χρῆ τὸ πονηρὸν τόν γε  
 ποιητήν,  
 καὶ μὴ παράγειν μηδὲ διδάσκειν. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ παιδαρίοισιν  
 ἔστι διδάσκαλος ὅστις φράζει, τοῖσιν δ' ἡβῶσι  
 ποιηταί. 1055  
 πάνυ δὲ δεῖ χρηστὰ λέγειν ἡμᾶς.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἦν οὖν σὺ λέγῃς Λυκαβηττοὺς  
 καὶ Παρνασσῶν ἡμῖν μεγέθη, τοῦτ' ἐστὶ τὸ χρηστὰ διδάσκειν,  
 ὃν χρῆν φράζειν ἀνθρωπέως;

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὦ κακόδαιμον ἀνάγκη  
 μεγάλων γνωμῶν καὶ διανοιῶν ἴσα καὶ τὰ ῥήματα τίκτειν.  
 καῶλλως εἰκὸς τοὺς ἡμιθέους τοῖς ῥήμασι μείζοσι  
 χρῆσθαι. 1060  
 καὶ γὰρ τοῖς ἱματίοις ἡμῶν χρώνται πολὺ σεμνοτέροισιν.  
 ἅμοῦ χρηστῶς καταδείξαντος διελυμίνω σύ.

AESCHYLUS

Let her stay away! But she took her seat  
 when she sat down hard on you and yours.  
 She really squashed you flat.

DIONYSUS

She sure did, by god.  
 What you wrote about the wives of other men  
 you had to suffer with your own.

EURIPIDES

You wretched man,  
 How has my *Stheneboia* harmed our state?

AESCHYLUS

Because you helped persuade the noble wives  
 of well-born men to drink down hemlock, [1050]  
 ashamed of those like your Bellerophon.

EURIPIDES

My *Phaedra* story—did I make that up?

AESCHYLUS

No—it was there. But it's a poet's task  
 to conceal disgrace— not put it on parade  
 front and centre and instruct men in it.  
 Small children have a teacher helping them,  
 for young men there's the poets— we've got  
 a solemn duty to say useful things.

EURIPIDES

When you spout on of Lycabettus  
 and subjects like magnificent Parnassus,  
 does this involve your teaching useful things?  
 We need to use the language people use.

AESCHYLUS

You pestering demon, don't you see  
 that noble thoughts and fine ideas perforce  
 produce a language of commensurate size?  
 Besides, it's fitting for the demi-gods  
 to speak in loftier terms— just as they wear [1060]  
 much finer robes than ours. But you besmirched  
 what I displayed with such nobility.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δράσας;

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

πρώτον μὲν τοὺς βασιλεύοντας ράκι' ἀμπισχῶν, ἔν' ἔλεινοι  
τοῖς ἀνθρώποις φαίνονται εἶναι.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῦτ' οὖν ἔβλαιψά τι δράσας;

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

οὐκ οὐκ ἐθέλει γε τριηραρχεῖν πλουτῶν οὐδεὶς διὰ  
ταῦτα, 1065  
ἀλλὰ ρακίους περιειλάμενος κλάει καὶ φησὶ πένεσθαι.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τὴν Δήμητρα χιτῶνά γ' ἔχων οὐλων ἐρίων ὑπένερθεν.  
κἂν ταῦτα λέγων ἐξαπατήσῃ, παρὰ τοὺς ἰχθύς ἀνέκυψεν.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

εἶτ' αὖ λαλιὰν ἐπιτηδεῦσαι καὶ στωμυλίαν ἐδίδαξας,  
ἢ ἔκενῶσεν τὰς τε παλαιστράς καὶ τὰς πυγὰς  
ἐνέτριψεν 1070  
τῶν μειρακίων στωμυλλομένων, καὶ τοὺς Παράλους  
ἀνέπεισεν  
ἀνταγορεύει τοῖς ἄρχουσιν. καίτοι τότε γ' ἠνίκ' ἐγὼ ζῶν,  
οὐκ ἠπίσταντ' ἀλλ' ἢ μᾶζαν καλέσαι καὶ «ῥυππαπαί»  
εἰπεῖν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Ἄπόλλω, καὶ προσπαρδεῖν γ' ἐς τὸ στόμα τῷ  
θαλάμακι,  
καὶ μινθῶσαι τὸν ξύσσιτον κάκβάς τινα λωποδυτήσαι·  
νῦν δ' ἀντιλέγει κούκέτ' ἐλαύνων πλεῖ δευρὶ καθῆθις  
ἐκέισε. 1075

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ποιῶν δὲ κακῶν οὐκ αἰτίος ἐστ';  
οὐ προαγωγὸς κατέδειξ' οὗτος,  
καὶ τικτούσας ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς, 1080  
καὶ μινυμένας τοῖσιν ἀδελφοῖς,

EURIPIDES

What did I do?

AESCHYLUS

First, you dressed your kings in rags,  
to make them pitiful to all who watched.

EURIPIDES

If I did that, what damage did it do?

AESCHYLUS

It's your fault no rich man any more  
is keen to pay out money for a ship.  
Instead he wraps himself in rags and weeps  
and whines about how poor he is.

DIONYSUS

Yes, by Demeter, that's true. But underneath  
he wears a tunic of pure wool. And then,  
if he deceives them with a speech like that,  
he pops up in the market by the fish.<sup>57</sup>

AESCHYLUS

And then you taught them how to babble on  
with stupid gossip—so the wrestling schools  
stood empty and the buttocks of our young,  
who chattered all the time, were quite worn out.  
You then convinced the Paralos' crew<sup>58</sup>  
to argue with their officers. In my day  
they were ignorant of this—all they knew  
was how to yell for food and cry "Yo ho."

[1070]

DIONYSUS

By Apollo, that's right—and how to fart  
straight in the faces of the rowers there, or shit  
on sailors down below, their mess mates.  
On shore they'd rob someone. Now they talk back—  
they never row—just sail out here and there.

AESCHYLUS [*rapidly summing up his opening argument*]

What crimes is he not guilty of?  
Did he not put up on display  
pimps and women giving birth  
in holy shrines and having sex  
with their own brothers, and then claim

[1080]

καὶ φασκούσας οὐ ζῆν τὸ ζῆν;  
 κᾶτ' ἐκ τούτων ἢ πόλις ἡμῶν  
 ὑπογραμματέων ἀνεμεστῶθη  
 καὶ βωμολόχων δημοπιθήκων 1085  
 ἔξαπατώντων τὸν δῆμον αἰεί,  
 λαμπάδα δ' οὐδεὶς οἴός τε φέρειν  
 ὑπ' ἀγυμνασίας ἔτι νυνί.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μὰ Δεῖ οὐ δῆθ', ὥστ' ἐπαφανάνθην  
 Παναθηναίοισι γελῶν, ὅτε δὴ 1090  
 βραδὺς ἄνθρωπός τις ἔθει κύψας  
 λευκὸς πίων ὑπολειπόμενος  
 καὶ δεινὰ ποιῶν· κᾶθ' οἱ Κεραμῆς  
 ἐν ταῖσι πύλαις παίουσ' αὐτοῦ  
 γαστέρα πλευρὰς λαγόνας πυγῆν, 1095  
 ὁ δὲ τυπτόμενος ταῖσι πλατεῖαις  
 ὑποπερδόμενος  
 φυσῶν τῆν λαμπάδ' ἔφευγεν.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

μέγα τὸ πρᾶγμα, πολὺ τὸ νεῖκος, ἀδρὸς ὁ πόλεμος ἔρχεται.  
 χαλεπὸν οὖν ἔργον διαιρεῖν, 1100  
 ὅταν ὁ μὲν τεῖνῃ βιαίως,  
 ὁ δ' ἐπαναστρέφειν δύνηται κάπερείδεσθαι τωρῶς.  
 ἀλλὰ μὴ ν' ταῦτῳ κάθησθον·  
 ἐσβολαὶ γάρ εἰσι πολλαὶ χᾶτεραι σοφισμάτων.  
 ὅ τι περ οὖν ἔχετον ἐρίζειν, 1105  
 λέγετον ἔπιτον ἀνά τε δέρετον  
 τὰ τε παλαιὰ καὶ τὰ καινὰ,  
 κάποκινδυνεύετον λεπτὸν τι καὶ σοφὸν λέγειν.  
 εἰ δὲ τοῦτο καταφοβείσθον, μὴ τις ἀμαθία προσῆ  
 τοῖς θεωμένοισιν, ὡς τὰ 1110  
 λεπτὰ μὴ γνῶναι λεγόντων,  
 μηδὲν ὀρρωδεῖτε τοῦθ'· ὡς οὐκέθ' οὔτω ταῦτ' ἔχει.  
 ἐστρατευμένοι γάρ εἰσι,  
 βιβλίον τ' ἔχων ἕκαστος μανθάνει τὰ δεξιὰ·  
 αἱ φύσεις τ' ἄλλως κρᾶτισται, 1115

that living is no life? So now,  
 because of him our city here  
 is crammed with bureaucratic types  
 and stupid democratic apes  
 who always cheat our people.  
 Nobody carries on the torch—  
 no one's trained in that these days.

## DIONYSUS

No, by god, they're not. That's why  
 while at the Panathenic games [1090]  
 I laughed myself quite pissless—  
 a slow, pallid, porky runner  
 went on by—head drooping down—  
 far behind the rest. In that race  
 he wasn't very good. Well then,  
 the folks at Keremeios gate  
 began to whack him in the gut,  
 to hit his ribs and sides and butt.  
 While their hands were slapping him,  
 he let rip a tremendous fart  
 which killed the torch. Then on he ran.

## CHORUS

The event is huge, the strife intense—  
 the mighty war goes on. It's hard to choose. [1100]  
 When one man presses hard, the other one  
 wheels round and launches the attack once more.  
*[addressing Aeschylus and Euripides]*  
 You two, don't you stay inactive where you sit.  
 For wit knows many varied ways to strike.  
 And so, no matter what you're fighting for,  
 speak out, set to, bring up your works—  
 the old and new. Put your daring to the test—  
 say something that's intelligent and deft.  
 Don't be afraid the people watching here  
 are just too ignorant and will not see [1110]  
 the subtle points in what you two may say.  
 Don't worry on that score, for it's not true.  
 They've served in wars—and each man owns a book.  
 He understands the witty parts. You see,  
 it's in their nature to possess strong minds,

νῦν δὲ καὶ παρηκόνηται.  
μηδὲν οὖν δείσητον, ἀλλὰ  
πάντ' ἐπέξιτον θεατῶν γ' οὔνεχ' ὡς ὄντων σοφῶν.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ μὴν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς τοὺς προλόγους σου τρέψομαι,  
ὅπως τὸ πρῶτον τῆς τραγωδίας μέρος 1120  
πρώτιστον αὐτοῦ βασανιῶ τοῦ δεξιῷ.  
ἀσαφῆς γὰρ ἦν ἐν τῇ φράσει τῶν πραγμάτων.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

καὶ ποῖον αὐτοῦ βασανιεῖς;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

πολλοὺς πάνυ.  
πρῶτον δέ μοι τὸν ἐξ Ὀρεστείας λέγε.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἄγε δὴ σιώπα πᾶς ἀνὴρ. λέγ' Αἰσχύλε. 1125

ΑἰΣΧΥΛΟΣ

Ἐρμῆ χθόνιε πατρῶ' ἐποπτεύων κράτη,  
σωτήρ γενοῦ μοι σύμμαχος τ' αἰτουμένω.  
ἦκω γὰρ ἐς γῆν τήνδε καὶ κατέρχομαι.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τούτων ἔχεις ψέγειν τι;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

πλεῖν ἢ δώδεκα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ πάντα ταυτά γ' ἔστ' ἀλλ' ἢ τρία. 1130

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔχει δ' ἕκαστον εἴκοσιν γ' ἀμαρτίας.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Αἰσχύλε παραινῶ σοι σιωπᾶν· εἰ δὲ μή,  
πρὸς τρισὶν ἰαμβείοισι προσοφείλων φανεί.

ΑἰΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἐγὼ σιωπῶ τῷδ'·

but now the whetstone's really sharpened them.  
So have no fears—examine everything—  
at least for the spectators' benefit  
since they've become so wise.

EURIPIDES

All right, I'll turn to the prologues you composed,  
so I can start off with a test to check 1120  
the first part of a clever poet's tragedy.  
In setting down just how events occurred  
this man was never clear

DIONYSUS

Which one will you test?

EURIPIDES

Quite a few. [to Aeschylus] But first, will you recite for me  
an opening from your *Oresteia*.

DIONYSUS

Let everyone keep quiet. Achilles, speak.

AESCHYLUS [quoting from the *Choephoroi*]

“O Hermes underground, who oversees  
my father's power, be my rescuer,  
my ally, answering the prayers I make.  
I've come back and returned unto this land.”

DIONYSUS

You see some flaws in this?

EURIPIDES

More than a dozen.

DIONYSUS

But the whole thing's only four lines long! 1130

EURIPIDES

And each of them has twenty errors.

DIONYSUS

I warn you, Aeschylus, keep quiet. If not,  
you'll forfeit these four lines and owe some more.

AESCHYLUS

Am I to remain silent just for him?

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐὰν πείθῃ γ' ἐμοί.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

εὐθύς γὰρ ἡμάρτηκεν οὐράνιον γ' ὅσον. 1135

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ὄρᾳς ὅτι ληρεῖς;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὀλίγον γέ μοι μέλει.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

πῶς φῆς μ' ἀμαρτεῖν;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

αὐθις ἐξ ἀρχῆς λέγε.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

‘Ἐρμῆ χθόνιε πατρῶ' ἐποπτεύων κράτη.’

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκουν Ὀρέστης τοῦτ' ἐπὶ τῷ τύμβῳ λέγει  
τῷ τοῦ πατρὸς τεθνεῶτος; 1140

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

οὐκ ἄλλως λέγω.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

πότερ' οὖν τὸν Ἐρμῆν, ὡς ὁ πατὴρ ἀπώλετο  
αὐτοῦ βιαίως ἐκ γυναικείας χερὸς  
δόλοισ λαθραίοις, ταῦτ' ἐποπτεύειν ἔφη;

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

οὐ δῆτ' ἐκείνον, ἀλλὰ τὸν Ἐριούνιον  
Ἐρμῆν χθόνιον προσεῖπε, κἀδήλου λέγων  
ὅτι ἡ πατρῶον τοῦτο κέκτηται γέρας— 1145

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔτι μείζον ἐξήμαρτες ἢ γὰρ βουλόμην·  
εἰ γὰρ πατρῶον τὸ χθόνιον ἔχει γέρας—

DIONYSUS

I think that's best.

EURIPIDES

Right at the very start  
he's made a huge mistake—as high as heaven.

AESCHYLUS

You do see you're talking rubbish.

EURIPIDES

If so,  
it doesn't bother me.

AESCHYLUS

You claim I'm wrong—  
well, where are my mistakes?

EURIPIDES

Recite the start again.

AESCHYLUS

“O Hermes underground, who oversees  
my father's power . . .”

EURIPIDES

Orestes says this  
at the tomb of his dead father, does he not?

AESCHYLUS

I won't deny it. [1140]

EURIPIDES

Since his father died  
a brutal death at the hands of his own wife  
and by a secret trick, how can he claim  
that Hermes watches over anything?

AESCHYLUS

That's not my sense—when he speaks, he means  
Hermes, god of luck, who watches all the dead.  
And his words clearly show that this Hermes  
obtained that office from his father Zeus.

EURIPIDES

So you've made an even bigger blunder  
than I thought—if this subterranean job  
comes from his dad . . .

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὕτω γ' ἂν εἴη πρὸς πατρὸς τυμβωρύχος.

ΑἴΣΧΥΛΟΣ

Διόνυσε πίνεις οἶνον οὐκ ἀνθοσμίαν. 1150

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

λέγ' ἕτερον αὐτῶ· σὺ δ' ἐπιτήρει τὸ βλάβος.

ΑἴΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἴσωτήρ γενοῦ μοι σύμμαχός τ' αἰτουμένω.  
ἦκω γὰρ ἐς γῆν τήνδε καὶ κατέρχομαι—'

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

δὶς ταῦτόν ἡμῖν εἶπεν ὁ σοφὸς Αἰσχύλος.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

πῶς δὶς; 1155

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

σκόπει τὸ ῥῆμ'· ἐγὼ δέ σοι φράσω.  
'ἦκω γὰρ ἐς γῆν,' φησί, 'καὶ κατέρχομαι.'  
'ἦκω' δὲ ταῦτόν ἐστι τῶ 'κατέρχομαι.'

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Δί' ὥσπερ γ' εἴ τις εἴποι γείτοιν,  
'χρηῆσον σὺ μάκτραν, εἰ δὲ βούλει, κάρδοπον.'

ΑἴΣΧΥΛΟΣ

οὐ δῆτα τοῦτό γ' ᾧ κατεστρωμλμένε 1160  
ἄνθρωπε ταῦτ' ἔστ', ἀλλ' ἄριστ' ἐπῶν ἔχον.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

πῶς δῆ; δίδαξον γάρ με καθ' ὅ τι δὴ λέγεις;

DIONYSUS

If that's the case,  
he's a grave robber on his father's side.

AESCHYLUS

That's cheap wine you're drinking, Dionysus,  
it lacks bouquet. [1150]

DIONYSUS

Recite another line for him.  
*[to Euripides]*  
And you, take care about the damage you inflict.

AESCHYLUS *[quoting again]*

“. . . my father's power, be my rescuer,  
my ally, answering the prayers I make.  
I've come back and returned unto this land.”

EURIPIDES

The skilful Aeschylus has just revealed  
the same thing twice.

DIONYSUS

How so?

EURIPIDES

Look at the verse.  
All right, I'll tell you—“I've come back”  
is followed by the word “returned”—coming back  
and returning—they mean the same.

DIONYSUS

Yes, by god—  
exactly like a man who says to someone,  
“Hey, lend me a baking dish or, if you like,  
a dish for baking.”

AESCHYLUS

You blithering idiot, 1160  
it's not the same at all. That line of verse  
has beautifully chosen words.

EURIPIDES

It does?  
Then show me what you mean.



ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

‘έλθειν’ μὲν ἐς γῆν ἔσθ’ ὅτῳ μετῆ πάτρας·  
χωρὶς γὰρ ἄλλης συμφορᾶς ἐλήλυθεν·  
φεύγων δ’ ἀνὴρ ἤκει’ τε καὶ ‘κατέρχεται.’ 1165

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εἶ νῆ τὸν Ἄπόλλω. τί σὺ λέγεις Εὐριπίδη;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐ φημί τὸν Ὀρέστην κατελθεῖν οἴκαδε·  
λάθρα γὰρ ἦλθεν οὐ πιθῶν τοὺς κυρίου.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εἶ νῆ τὸν Ἑρμῆν· ὅ τι λέγεις δ’ οὐ μανθάνω.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

πέραινε τοίνυν ἕτερον. 1170

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴθι πέραινε σὺ  
Αἰσχύλ’ ἀνύσας· σὺ δ’ ἐς τὸ κακὸν ἀπόβλεπε.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

‘τύμβου δ’ ἐπ’ ὄχθῳ τῷδε κηρύσσω πατρὶ  
κλύειν ἀκοῦσαι.’

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῦθ’ ἕτερον αὖθις λέγει,  
‘κλύειν ἀκοῦσαι,’ ταῦτὸν ὃν σαφέστατα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τεθνηκόσιν γὰρ ἔλεγεν ᾧ μόχθηρε σύ,  
οἷς οὐδὲ τρίς λέγοντες ἐξικνούμεθα. 1175

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

σὺ δὲ πῶς ἐποίεις τοὺς προλόγους;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐγὼ φράσω.  
κᾶν που δις εἴπω ταῦτόν, ἢ στοιβῆν ἴδης  
ἐνοῦσαν ἔξω τοῦ λόγου, κατάπτυσον.

AESCHYLUS

To come unto a land  
refers to someone with a native home—  
he’s come back—there’s nothing else implied.  
But when a man arrives who’s been an exile,  
he comes back and returns.<sup>59</sup>

DIONYSUS

By Apollo, that’s good!  
What do you say to that, Euripides?

EURIPIDES

I say Orestes didn’t “return” home.  
He came in secret, without permission  
from those in charge.

DIONYSUS

By Hermes, that’s good.  
But I don’t get what you mean.

EURIPIDES

Come on then, [1170]  
try another line.

DIONYSUS

Yes, let’s have some more.  
Get a move on, Aeschylus. And you,  
keep looking out for something bad.

AESCHYLUS [*reciting more lines*]

“On this heaped-up burial mound I pray  
my father hears and listens . . .”

EURIPIDES

It’s there again—  
he’s saying the same thing twice—  
to hear, to listen—obviously the same.

DIONYSUS

Well, you fool, he is speaking to the dead.  
And we don’t reach them even with a triple prayer.

AESCHYLUS

All right, how do you compose your prologues?

EURIPIDES

I’ll tell you. And if I say the same thing twice  
or you see extra padding there, some verse  
that doesn’t suit the plot, then spit on me.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴθι δὴ λέγ'· οὐ γάρ μοῦστω ἀλλ' ἀκουστέα  
τῶν σῶν προλόγων τῆς ὀρθότητος τῶν ἐπῶν. 1180

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἦν Οἰδίπους τὸ πρῶτον εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ'—

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

μὰ τὸν Δι' οὐ δῆτ', ἀλλὰ κακοδαίμων φύσει,  
ὄντινά γε πρὶν φῦναι μὲν Ἀπόλλων ἔφη  
ἀποκτενεῖν τὸν πατέρα, πρὶν καὶ γεγονέναι· 1185  
πῶς οὗτος ἦν τὸ πρῶτον εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔϊτ' ἐγένετ' αὐθις ἀθλιώτατος βροτῶν.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

μὰ τὸν Δι' οὐ δῆτ', οὐ μὲν οὖν ἐπαύσατο.  
πῶς γάρ; ὅτε δὴ πρῶτον μὲν αὐτὸν γενόμενον  
χειμῶνος ὄντος ἐξέθεσαν ἐν ὀστράκῳ, 1190  
ἵνα μὴ ἔκτραφείν γένοιτο τοῦ πατρὸς φονεῖς·  
εἶθ' ὡς Πόλυβον ἤρρησεν οἰδῶν τὴν πόδε·  
ἔπειτα γραῦν ἔγημεν αὐτὸς ὢν νέος  
καὶ πρὸς γε τούτοις τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μητέρα·  
εἶτ' ἐξετύφλωσεν αὐτόν. 1195

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εὐδαίμων ἄρ' ἦν,  
εἰ κάστρατήγησέν γε μετ' Ἐρασινίδου.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ληρεῖς· ἐγὼ δὲ τοὺς προλόγους καλοὺς ποιῶ.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

καὶ μὴν μὰ τὸν Δι' οὐ κατ' ἔπος γέ σου κνίσω  
τὸ ῥῆμ' ἔκαστον, ἀλλὰ σὺν τοῖσι θεοῖς  
ἀπὸ ληκυθίου σου τοὺς προλόγους διαφθερῶ. 1200

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀπὸ ληκυθίου σὺ τοὺς ἐμούς;

DIONYSUS

Come on, speak up. I need to clearly hear  
the language in your prologues working well. [1180]

EURIPIDES [*reciting from one of his plays*]

“Oedipus to start with was a lucky man . . .”

AESCHYLUS

By god, no he wasn't—his nature  
gave him a dreadful fate. Before his birth  
Apollo said he'd murder his own father—  
he wasn't even born! How could he be  
a lucky man right at the very start?

EURIPIDES [*continuing to recite*]

“Then he became most wretched of all men.”

AESCHYLUS

No, no, by god. He always was like that.  
And why? Because as soon as he was born,  
he was exposed out in the cold, in a pot, [1190]  
so he wouldn't grow into a murderer  
and kill his father. He dragged himself away  
to Polybus on mutilated feet.  
And after that he married an old woman,  
though he was young, and, as things turned out,  
she was his mother. So he poked out his eyes.

DIONYSUS

Then he'd have ended happy after all,  
if, like Erastinides, he'd been a general.<sup>60</sup>

EURIPIDES

You're being stupid. I make my prologues well.

AESCHYLUS

Is that so? Well, by god, I won't scratch  
each phrase word for word, but with help from the gods  
I'll kill your prologues with a little oil jug. [1200]

EURIPIDES

My prologues? With an oil jug?

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ένδς μόνου.

ποιεῖς γὰρ οὕτως ὥστ' ἐναρμόττειν ἅπαν,  
καὶ κωδάριον καὶ ληκύθιον καὶ θύλακον,  
ἐν τοῖς ἰαμβείοισι. δείξω δ' αὐτίκα.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἰδοῦ, σὺ δείξεις;

1205

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

φημί.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

καὶ δὴ χρὴ λέγειν.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

Ἄγυπτος, ὡς ὁ πλεῖστος ἔσπαρται λόγος,  
ξὺν παισὶ πεντήκοντα ναυτίλω πλάτη  
Ἄργος κατασχών' —

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τουτὶ τί ἦν τὸ ληκύθιον; οὐ κλαύσεται;  
λέγ' ἕτερον αὐτῷ πρόλογον, ἵνα καὶ γινῶ πάλιν.

1210

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

Διόνυσος, ὃς θύρσοισι καὶ νεβρῶν δοραῖς  
καθαπτὸς ἐν πεύκαισι Παρνασσὸν κάτα  
πηδᾶ χορεύων' —

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οἴμοι πεπλήγμεθ' αὖθις ὑπὸ τῆς ληκύθου.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐδὲν ἔσται πρᾶγμα· πρὸς γὰρ τουτουὶ  
τὸν πρόλογον οὐχ ἔξει προσάψαι λήκυθον.

1215

AESCHYLUS

Yes, just one.

The way you write, well, everything fits in—  
a little fleece, a little oil jug,  
a little bag—they all mesh nicely in  
with your iambs. Let me demonstrate.<sup>61</sup>

EURIPIDES

What this? You'll demonstrate?

AESCHYLUS

That's what I'm saying.

DIONYSUS

All right, Euripides, you've got to speak.

EURIPIDES [*reciting some more of his own lines*]

"Aegyptos, so many people say,  
with fifty children in a rowing boat,  
landing in Argos . . ."

AESCHYLUS

. . . lost his little oil jug.

EURIPIDES

What's this stuff about an oil jug?  
You'll regret this.

DIONYSUS

Recite another prologue  
so I can see the point again.

[1210]

EURIPIDES [*continuing to recite*]

"Dionysus clothed in fawn skins leaps  
among the torches on Parnassus,  
on that mount he waved his thyrsus—  
there he danced and . . ."

AESCHYLUS

. . . lost his little oil jug.

DIONYSUS

O dear,  
we've been stricken with an oil jug once again.

EURIPIDES

It's no big deal. In this next prologue  
he can't tie in his little oil jug.

‘οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις πάντ’ ἀνὴρ εὐδαιμονεῖ·  
ἢ γὰρ πεφυκῶς ἐσθλὸς οὐκ ἔχει βίον,  
ἢ δυσγενῆς ὢν’—

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

Εὐριπίδη—

1220

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

τί ἔσθ’;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὑφέσθαι μοι δοκεῖ·  
τὸ ληκύθιον γὰρ τοῦτο πνευσεῖται πολὺ.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐδ’ ἂν μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα φροντίσαιμι γε·  
νυνὶ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τοῦτό γ’ ἐκκεκόψεται.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴθι δὴ λέγ’ ἕτερον κατέχου τῆς ληκύθου.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

‘Σιδώνιον ποτ’ ἄστυ Κάδμος ἐκλιπῶν  
Ἀγήνορος παῖς’—

1225

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὦ δαιμόνι’ ἀνδρῶν ἀποπρίω τὴν λήκυθον,  
ἵνα μὴ διακναίση τοὺς προλόγους ἡμῶν.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

τὸ τί;

ἐγὼ πρίωμαι τῶδ’;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐὰν πείθῃ γ’ ἐμοί.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐ δῆτ’, ἐπεὶ πολλοὺς προλόγους ἔξω λέγειν  
ἵν’ οὗτος οὐχ ἔξει προσάψαι ληκύθιον.

1230

“Among all men there’s not one living  
who’s blessed in everything—if nobly born  
he lacks sufficient livelihood, or else,  
if basely born, . . .”

AESCHYLUS

. . . he’s lost his little oil jug.

DIONYSUS

Euripides . . .

EURIPIDES

What?

DIONYSUS

It seems to me  
you should haul in your sails. This little oil jug—  
it’s going to introduce a mighty storm.

[1220]

EURIPIDES

By Demeter, I won’t even think of it.  
Here’s one will knock that oil jug from his hand.

DIONYSUS

All right, recite another one—take care—  
keep your distance from that little oil jug.

EURIPIDES

“Abandoning Sidon city, Cadmus,  
Agenor’s son . . .”

AESCHYLUS

. . . lost his little oil jug.

DIONYSUS

My dear fellow, buy the oil jug from him,  
so he can’t shatter all our prologues.

EURIPIDES

What?

I should purchase it from him?

DIONYSUS

I think you should.

EURIPIDES

No way. I’ve got lots of prologues to recite—  
ones where he can’t stick in his little oil jug.

[1230]

‘Πέλοψ ὁ Ταντάλειος ἐς Πῖσαν μολῶν  
θραύσει ἵππους’—

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὄρας, προσῆψεν αὖθις αὖ τὴν λήκυθον.  
ἀλλ’ ὦγάθ’ ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἀπόδος πάση τέχνη·  
λήψει γὰρ ὀβολοῦ πάνυ καλήν τε κάγαθήν. 1235

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

μὰ τὸν Δι’ οὐπω γ’ ἔτι γὰρ εἰσί μοι συχνοί.  
‘Οἰνέυς ποτ’ ἐκ γῆς’—

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔασον εἰπεῖν πρῶθ’ ὅλον με τὸν στίχον.  
‘Οἰνέυς ποτ’ ἐκ γῆς πολύμετρον λαβῶν στάχυν  
θύων ἀπαρχάς’— 1240

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μεταξὺ θύων; καὶ τίς αὖθ’ ὑφείλετο;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔα αὐτὸν ὦ τᾶν· πρὸς τοδὶ γὰρ εἰπάτω.  
‘Ζεὺς, ὡς λέλεκται τῆς ἀληθείας ὑπο’—

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἀπολεῖ σ’ ἐρεῖ γάρ, ‘ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν.’  
τὸ ληκύθιον γὰρ τοῦτ’ ἐπὶ τοῖς προλόγοισί σου  
ὡσπερ τὰ σὺκ’ ἐπὶ τοῖσιν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἔφν.  
ἀλλ’ ἐς τὰ μέλη πρὸς τῶν θεῶν αὐτοῦ τραποῦ. 1245

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ μὴν ἔχω γ’ οἷς αὐτὸν ἀποδείξω κακὸν  
μελοποιὸν ὄντα καὶ ποιοῦντα ταῦτ’ αἰεί. 1250

“Pelops, son of Tantalus, arrived at Pisa,  
and riding his swift horses . . .”

AESCHYLUS

. . . lost his little oil jug.

DIONYSUS

You see—he stuck in that little oil jug  
once again. Look, my good man, pay his price—  
use all your means. You’ll get it for an obol.  
And it’s really nice—a good one.

EURIPIDES

Not yet—

I’ve still got plenty left: “Oeneus once  
from his own land . . .”

AESCHYLUS

. . . lost his little oil jug.

EURIPIDES

Let me at least recite the whole line first—  
“Oeneus once from his own land received  
a bounteous harvest—then while offering  
first fruits for sacrifice . . .” [1240]

AESCHYLUS

. . . lost his little oil jug.

DIONYSUS

In the middle of the service? Who stole it?

EURIPIDES

Back off, my dear man—let him speak to this:  
“Zeus, as truth reports . . .”

DIONYSUS

You’ll be destroyed—

For he’ll just say “lost his little oil jug.”  
These oil jugs pop up in your prologues  
the way warts grow on eyes. For god’s sake,  
change the subject. What about his lyrics?

EURIPIDES

All right. I’ll show how bad he is at them.  
His songs are awful—they all sound just the same. [1250]

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

τί ποτε πράγμα γενήσεται;  
 φροντίζω γὰρ ἔγωγ' ἔχω,  
 τίν' ἄρα μέμψιν ἐποίσει  
 ἀνδρὶ τῷ πολὺ πλείστα δὴ  
 καὶ κάλλιστα μέλη ποιήσαντι  
 τῶν μέχρι νυνί.  
 θαυμάζω γὰρ ἔγωγ' ὅπη  
 μέμψεται ποτε τοῦτον  
 τὸν Βακχεῖον ἄνακτα,  
 καὶ δέδοιχ' ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ.

1255

1260

## ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

πάνυ γε μέλη θαυμαστά· δείξει δὴ τάχα.  
 εἰς ἔν γὰρ αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ μέλη ξυντεμῶ.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

καὶ μὴν λογιῶμαι ταῦτα τῶν ψήφων λαβῶν·

## ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

Φθιώτ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, τί ποτ' ἀνδροδάκτον ἀκούων  
 ἰὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ' ἀρωγάν;  
 Ἐρμῶν μὲν πρόγονον τίομεν γένος οἱ περὶ λίμναν.  
 ἰὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ' ἀρωγάν;

1265

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

δύο σοὶ κόπω Αἰσχύλε τούτω.

## ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

κῦδιστ' Ἀχαιῶν Ἀτρέως πολυκοίρανε μάνθανέ μου παῖ.  
 ἰὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ' ἀρωγάν;

1271

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τρίτος ὠσχύλε σοὶ κόπος οὔτος.

## ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

εὐφαιμεῖτε· μελισσονόμοι δόμον Ἀρτέμιδος πέλας οὔγειν.  
 ἰὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ' ἀρωγάν;  
 κύριός εἰμι θροεῖν ὄδιον κράτος αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν.  
 ἰὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ' ἀρωγάν;

1275

## CHORUS

What's going to happen now?  
 I've got an idea how  
 he'll criticize and mar  
 the one whose lyrics are  
 our finest songs so far.  
 How will his censure ring  
 to a Dionysian king,  
 for me a fearful thing?

[1260]

## EURIPIDES

His songs are truly quite astonishing.  
 I'll give quick proof, for I'll condense them all  
 into a single song.

## DIONYSUS

All right, you do that.

I'll gather up some pebbles and keep score.

[Someone begins the accompaniment on a flute]

EURIPIDES [beginning his parody of Aeschylus]

Phthian Achilles, O, you hear the crash—  
 the loud man-slaughtering BASH, why don't you come,  
 come here to help us? As the primordial race,  
 we honour Hermes by the lake—BASH.  
 Why come you not to our assistance?

## DIONYSUS

That's two bashes for you, Aeschylus.

EURIPIDES [continuing the parody]

Most glorious of Achaean men, O Atreus,  
 who rules far and wide, learn of me—BISH BASH—  
 why come you not to our assistance?

[1270]

## DIONYSUS

There's a third bash for you, Aeschylus.

EURIPIDES [continuing the parody]

Be still! Attendants on the bee priestess  
 are nigh to open up Artemis' shrine—BASH.  
 Why come you not to our assistance?  
 I have authority to utter out in full,  
 to speak those fatal orders ruling us  
 and this our expedition—BISH BASH.  
 Why come you not to our assistance?

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τὸ χρήμα τῶν κόπων ὅσον.  
 ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ἐς τὸ βαλανεῖον βούλομαι·  
 ὑπὸ τῶν κόπων γὰρ τὰ νεφρῶ βουβωνιῶ. 1280

## ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

μὴ πρὶν γ' ἂν ἀκούσης χιτέραν στάσιν μελῶν  
 ἐκ τῶν κιθαρωδικῶν νόμων εἰργασμένην.

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴθι δὴ πέραινε, καὶ κόπον μὴ προστίθει.

## ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅπως Ἀχαιῶν δίθρονον κράτος, Ἑλλάδος ἦβας, 1285  
 τοφλαττοθρατ τοφλαττοθρατ,  
 Σφίγγα δυσαμεριῶν πρύτανιν κύνα, πέμπει,  
 τοφλαττοθρατ τοφλαττοθρατ,  
 σὺν δορὶ καὶ χερὶ πράκτορι θούριος ὄρνις,  
 τοφλαττοθρατ τοφλαττοθρατ, 1290  
 κυρεῖν παρασχὼν ἰταμαῖς κυσὶν ἀεροφοίτοις,  
 τοφλαττοθρατ τοφλαττοθρατ,  
 τὸ συγκλινές τ' ἐπ' Αἴαντι,  
 τοφλαττοθρατ τοφλαττοθρατ. 1295

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τί τὸ «φλαττοθρατ» τοῦτ' ἐστίν; ἐκ Μαραθῶνος ἢ  
 πόθεν συνέλεξας ἰμονιοστρόφου μέλη;

## ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἀλλ' οὖν ἐγὼ μὲν ἐς τὸ καλὸν ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦ  
 ἤνεγκον αὐτ', ἵνα μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν Φρυνίχῳ  
 λειμῶνα Μουσῶν ἱερὸν ὀφθειῖν δρέπων· 1300  
 οὗτος δ' ἀπὸ πάντων μὲν φέρει, πορνιδίων,  
 σκολίων Μελήτου, Καρικῶν ἀλλημάτων,  
 θρήνων, χορειῶν. τάχα δὲ δηλωθήσεται.  
 ἐνεγκάτω τις τὸ λύριον. καίτοι τί δεῖ  
 λύρας ἐπὶ τούτων; ποῦ ἔστιν ἢ τοῖς ὀστράκοις 1305  
 αὕτη κροτοῦσα; δεῦρο Μοῦσ' Εὐριπίδου,  
 πρὸς ἥνπερ ἐπιτήδεια ταῦτ' ἄδειν μέλη.

## DIONYSUS

By ruling Zeus, what a pile of bashes!  
 The toilet's where I want to be right now—  
 this bashing's swollen both my kidneys. [1280]

## EURIPIDES

Don't go, not before you listen to  
 another group of songs, compressed medlies  
 of this man's lyric melodies.

## DIONYSUS

All right then, go on.  
 But you can leave out all the bash and crash.

## EURIPIDES

[continuing his parody of Aeschylus]  
 How the Achaeans' twin-throned power, youth of Greece—  
 Tophlatto-thratto-phlilatto-thrat—  
 sent by the Sphinx, presiding she dog of unlucky days—  
 Tophlatto-thratto-phlilatto-thrat—  
 swooping bird with spear and with avenging hand—  
 Tophlatto-thratto-phlilatto-thrat— [1290]  
 granting eager sky-diving dogs to light upon—  
 Tophlatto-thratto-phlilatto-thrat—  
 the allied force assembled to assault great Ajax—  
 Tophlatto-thratto-phlilatto-thrat.

## DIONYSUS

What's this phlatto-thrat? Is it from Marathon?  
 Where did you pick up your rope-twisting songs?

## AESCHYLUS

I brought them to a noble place from somewhere fine,  
 lest I be seen to gather up my crop  
 from that same sacred meadow of the Muse [1300]  
 as Phrynichos. But this fellow over here  
 gets his songs anywhere— from prostitutes,  
 Meletus' drinking songs, flute tunes from Caria,  
 from lamentations or dance melodies,  
 as in a moment I will demonstrate.  
 Let someone bring a lyre here— and yet  
 who needs a lyre for this man? Where is she,  
 that girl who beats time with her castanets?  
 Come hither, you Muse of this Euripides—  
 for your style fits the songs we're going to sing.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

αὕτη ποθ' ἢ Μοῦσ' οὐκ ἐλεσβίαζεν, οὔ.

ΑἴΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἀλκύνες, αἶ παρ' ἀενάοις θαλάσσης  
κύμασι στωμύλλετε, 1310

τέγγουσαι νοτίοις πτερῶν  
ράνισι χροά δροσιζόμεναι  
αἶ θ' ὑπωρόφιοι κατὰ γωνίας  
εἰεἰεἰλιίσσετε δακτύλοις φάλαγγες  
ιστόπονα πηνίσματα, 1315

κερκίδος αἰοιδοῦ μελέτας,  
ἴν' ὁ φίλαυλος ἔπαλλε δελφῖς  
πρώραις κυανεμβόλοις  
μαντεία καὶ σταδίους,  
οἰάνθας γάνος ἀμπέλου, 1320  
βότρυος ἔλικα παυσίπονον.  
περίβαλλ' ὦ τέκνον ὠλένας.  
ὄρᾳς τὸν πόδα τοῦτον;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὄρῳ.

ΑἴΣΧΥΛΟΣ

τί δαί; τοῦτον ὄρᾳς;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ὄρῳ.

ΑἴΣΧΥΛΟΣ

τοιαυτὶ μέντοι σὺ ποιῶν 1325

τολμᾶς τὰμὰ μέλη ψέγειν,  
ἀνὰ τὸ δωδεκαμήχανον  
Κυρήνης μελοποιῶν;  
τὰ μὲν μέλη σου ταῦτα· βούλομαι δ' ἔτι  
τὸν τῶν μοναδιῶν διεξελθεῖν τρόπον. 1330

ὦ νυκτὸς κελαινοφαῆς  
ὄρφνα, τίνα μοι  
δύστανον ὄνειρον  
πέμπεις ἐξ ἀφανοῦς,

[Enter a very old and ugly woman who accompanies Aeschylus' parody by clicking her castanets and dancing very badly]

DIONYSUS [reacting to the old woman's appearance]

This Muse is hardly the most gorgeous babe  
we've ever seen from Lesbos, that's for sure.

AESCHYLUS [parodying Euripides]

You chattering kingfishers in the sea  
in the ever-flowing waves [1310]

who wet wing-tops with water drops  
like so much dripping dew,  
and spiders underneath the roof,  
your fingers wi-i-i-i-i-i-i-inding  
threads for stretching on the loom,  
work of tuneful weaving rods,  
where dolphins, those flute-loving fish,  
leap at the blue-peaked prows,  
at oracles and stadiums.

I joy in early budding vines, [1320]

the spiral cluster, killing pain.

O my child, hurl your arms about me . . .

You see this foot?

DIONYSUS

I see it.

AESCHYLUS

And the other one?

DIONYSUS

I see that too.<sup>62</sup>

AESCHYLUS [to Euripides]

You write this sort of bilge and then you dare  
to criticize my songs—you, who wrote your tunes  
to twelve-stringed music of Cyrene?<sup>63</sup> Bah!  
So much for his songs. I still want to check  
his solo melodies, their lyric style. [1330]

[parodying Euripides once more]

O Night, O darkly shining Night,  
what are you sending me,  
what dreams of woe,



Ἄϊδα πρόμολον,  
 ψυχὰν ἄψυχον ἔχοντα,  
 μελαίνας Νυκτὸς παῖδα, 1335  
 φρικώδη δεινὰν ὄψιν,  
 μελανοκεκνείμονα,  
 φόνια φόνια δερκόμενον,  
 μεγάλους ὄνυχας ἔχοντα.  
 ἀλλὰ μοι ἀμφίπολοι λύχνον ἄψατε  
 κάλπισί τ' ἐκ ποταμῶν δρόσον ἄρατε, θέρμετε δ' ὕδωρ,  
 ὡς ἂν θεῖον ὄνειρον ἀποκλύσω. 1340  
 ἰὼ πόντιε δαῖμον,  
 τοῦτ' ἐκεῖν' ἰὼ ξύνοικοι,  
 τάδε τέρα θεάσασθε.  
 τὸν ἀλεκτρονῶνα μου συναρπάσασα  
 φρούδη Γλύκη.  
 Νύμφαι ὄρεσσίγονοι.  
 ὦ Μανία ξύλλαβε. 1345  
 ἐγὼ δ' ἂ τάλαινα προσέχουσ' ἔτυχον  
 ἐμαυτῆς ἔργοισι,  
 λίνου μεστὸν ἄτρακτον  
 εἰεἰεἰεἰλίσσουσα χεροῖν  
 κλωστήρα ποιούσ', ὅπως  
 κνεφαῖος εἰς ἀγορὰν 1350  
 φέρουσ' ἀποδοίμαν·  
 ὁ δ' ἀνέπτατ' ἀνέπτατ' ἐς αἰθέρα  
 κουφοτάταις πτερύγων ἀκμαῖς·  
 ἐμοὶ δ' ἄχε' ἄχεα κατέλιπε,  
 δάκρυα δάκρυά τ' ἀπ' ὀμμάτων  
 ἔβαλον ἔβαλον ἂ τλάμων. 1355  
 ἀλλ' ὦ Κρήτες, Ἴδας τέκνα,  
 τὰ τόξα λαβόντες ἐπαμύνατε,  
 τὰ κῶλά τ' ἀμπάλλετε κυκλούμενοι τὴν οἰκίαν.  
 ἅμα δὲ Δίκτυννα παῖς Ἄρτεμις καλὰ  
 τὰς κυνίσκας ἔχουσ' ἐλθέτω διὰ δόμων πανταχῆ, 1360

from Hades' halls—  
 what souls without a soul,  
 the children of black night,  
 so horrible they raise my hair  
 in black corpse-clothes—  
 murder, murder—  
 such huge fingernails.

Now, servants, light my lamp for me,  
 haul river water in your pails  
 and warm it up, so I  
 may rinse away my dream,  
 O spirit of the sea. [1340]

That's it—oh all you  
 who share this house with me,  
 gaze here upon these portents.  
 My Glyce's fled away—  
 she stole my cock and ran.  
 You nymphs born on the mountain peaks,  
 and you, O Mania, aid me now.

There I was, poor wretched me,  
 at work with all my daily tasks,  
 my spindle full of thread,  
 my fingers wi-i-i-i-i-i-inding,  
 as I wove skeins of yarn  
 to carry off to market  
 for sale in early morning. [1350]

But now my bird has flown,  
 flown off into the atmosphere  
 its wing-tips oh so nimble.  
 It's left me woes, woes,  
 and in my eyes tears, tears—  
 they trickle, trickle down,  
 O miserable me.

O you Cretans, Ida's children,  
 seize your bows and rescue me.  
 Swiftly move your limbs,  
 make full circle round this house.  
 And child Diktyнна, Artemis,  
 so beautiful, by all means bring  
 your baby bitches to my home. [1360]

σὺ δ' ὦ Διὸς διπύρους ἀνέχουσα  
λαμπάδας ὄξυτάτας χεροῖν Ἑκάτα παράφηνον  
ἔς Γλύκης, ὅπως ἂν  
εἰσελθοῦσα φωράσω.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

παύσασθον ἤδη τῶν μελῶν.

ΑἲΣΧΥΛΟΣ

κᾶμοιγ' ἄλις.  
ἐπὶ τὸν σταθμὸν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀγαγεῖν βούλομαι, 1365  
ὅπερ ἐξελέγξει τὴν ποίησιν νῶν μόνον.  
τὸ γὰρ βᾶρος νῶν βασανιεῖ τῶν ῥημάτων.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴτε δευρό νυν, εἶπερ γε δεῖ καὶ τοῦτό με  
ἀνδρῶν ποιητῶν τυροπωλῆσαι τέχνην.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἐπίπονοί γ' οἱ δεξιοί. 1370  
τόδε γὰρ ἕτερον αὖ τέρας  
νεοχμόν, ἀτοπίας πλέων,  
ὃ τίς ἂν ἐπενόησεν ἄλλος;

...

μὰ τὸν ἐγὼ μὲν οὐδ' ἂν εἶ τις  
ἔλεγέ μοι τῶν ἐπιτυχόντων, 1375  
ἐπιθόμην, ἀλλ' ὠόμην ἂν  
αὐτὸν αὐτὰ ληρεῖν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἴθι δὴ παρίστασθον παρὰ τῶν πλάστιγγ',

ΑἲΣΧΥΛΟΣ καὶ ΕὐΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἰδοῦ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

καὶ λαβομένω τὸ ῥῆμ' ἑκάτερος εἵπατον,  
καὶ μὴ μεθῆσθον, πρὶν ἂν ἐγὼ σφῶν κοκκύσω. 1380

ΑἲΣΧΥΛΟΣ καὶ ΕὐΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐχόμεθα.

And you, oh Hecate, Zeus' child,  
with blazing fire-brands in both your hands,  
light my way to Glyke's place,  
so I can then reveal her theft  
and catch her in the act.

DIONYSUS

Stop the songs.

AESCHYLUS

All right. I've said enough.  
Now I want to bring him to the balance scale,  
the very thing to test our poetry—  
to check how much our phrases weigh.

DIONYSUS

Come here, then, if I have to do this—  
treating poets just like cheese for sale.

CHORUS:

Clever men like these take pains, 1370  
for here's a marvel once again.  
Devices new and strange they bring.  
Who else would think up such a thing?  
I'd not believe it—even though  
I met someone who told me so.

DIONYSUS

Come on. Stand beside the balance scales.

AESCHYLUS and EURIPIDES [*together*]

All right.

DIONYSUS

Now, each of you grab hold and don't let go  
until I yell at you—I'll say "Cuckoo!" 1380

AESCHYLUS and EURIPIDES: [*each one holding a scale pan*]

We're holding on.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
τοῦτος νῦν λέγεται ἐς τὸν σταθμόν.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ  
‘εἶθ’ ὄφελ’ Ἀργούς μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος.’

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ  
‘Σπερχιεὶ ποταμὲ βοννόμοι τ’ ἐπιστροφαί.’

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
κόκκυ, μέθεσθε· καὶ πολὺ γε κατωτέρω  
χωρεῖ τὸ τοῦδε. 1385

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ  
καὶ τί ποτ’ ἐστὶ ταῦτιον;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
ὅτι εἰσέθηκε ποταμόν, ἐριοπωλικῶς  
ὕγρον ποιήσας τοῦτος ὥσπερ τάρια,  
σὺ δ’ εἰσέθηκας τοῦτος ἐπτερωμένον.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ  
ἀλλ’ ἕτερον εἰπάτω τι κἀντιστησάτω.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
λάβεσθε τοῖνυν ἀῦθις. 1390

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ καὶ ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ  
ἦν ἰδοῦ.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
λέγε.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ  
‘οὐκ ἔστι Πειθοῦς ἱερὸν ἄλλο πλὴν λόγος.’

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ  
‘μόνος θεῶν γὰρ Θάνατος οὐ δώρων ἐρᾷ.’

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ  
μέθεσθε μέθεσθε· καὶ τὸ τοῦδε γ’ αὖ ῥέπει·  
θάνατον γὰρ εἰσέθηκε βαρύτερον κακόν.

DIONYSUS  
Speak your line into the scale.

EURIPIDES *[reciting]*  
“I wish that Argive ship had never flown . . .”

AESCHYLUS *[reciting]*  
“O river Spercheios, where cattle graze . . .”

DIONYSUS  
Cuckoo!!! Let go . . .

*[Dionysus inspects the scale pans and sees that Aeschylus' side has sunk more]*

The pan on this man's side  
has gone much further down.

EURIPIDES  
And why is that?

DIONYSUS  
Why? Because he put a river in it.  
He wet his words the way wool-sellers do—  
whereas you put in a word with wings.

EURIPIDES  
All right, let him speak again and match me.

DIONYSUS  
Grab hold again.

AESCHYLUS and EURIPIDES  
We're ready.

DIONYSUS  
So speak down. [1390]

EURIPIDES *[reciting]*  
“Persuasion has no temple except speech.”

AESCHYLUS *[reciting]*  
“The only god who loves no gifts is Death.”

DIONYSUS  
Let go. Let go. This one's going down again.  
He put death in—the heaviest of harms.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐγὼ δὲ πειθῶ γ' ἔπος ἄριστ' εἰρημένον. 1395

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

πειθῶ δὲ κοῦφόν ἐστι καὶ νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον.  
ἀλλ' ἕτερον αὖ ζήτει τι τῶν βαρυστάθμων,  
ὄ τι σοι καθέλξει, καρτερόν τε καὶ μέγα.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

φέρε ποῦ τοιοῦτον δῆτά μουστί; ποῦ;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

φράσω·  
'βέβληκ' Ἀχιλλεύς δύο κύβω καὶ τέτταρα.' 1400  
λέγοιτ' ἄν, ὡς αὕτη ὅτι λοιπὴ σφῶν στάσις.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

'σιδηροβριθές τ' ἔλαβε δεξιᾷ ξύλον.'

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

'ἐφ' ἄρματος γὰρ ἄρμα καὶ νεκρῶ νεκρός.'

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐξηπάτηκεν αὖ σὲ καὶ νῦν.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

τῷ τρόπῳ;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

δύ' ἄρματ' εἰσέθηκε καὶ νεκρῶ δύο, 1405  
οὐς οὐκ ἂν ἄραιντ' οὐδ' ἑκατὸν Αἰγύπτιοι.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

καὶ μηκέτ' ἔμοιγε κατ' ἔπος, ἀλλ' ἐς τὸν σταθμὸν  
αὐτὸς τὰ παιδί ἢ γυνὴ Κηφισοφῶν  
ἐμβὰς καθήσθω, συλλαβῶν τὰ βιβλία·  
ἐγὼ δὲ δύ' ἔπη τῶν ἐμῶν ἐρῶ μόνον. 1410

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἄνδρες φίλοι, κἀγὼ μὲν αὐτοὺς οὐ κρινῶ.  
οὐ γὰρ δι' ἔχθρας οὐδετέρῳ γενήσομαι.  
τὸν μὲν γὰρ ἡγοῦμαι σοφὸν τῷ δ' ἡδομαι.

EURIPIDES

But I put in persuasion—and my line  
was beautifully expressed.

DIONYSUS

Persuasion's light—  
she's got no brains at all. Say something else,  
a heavy line, immense and ponderous,  
to make you sink.

EURIPIDES

A heavy line like that,  
where can I find such lines in all my verse?

DIONYSUS

I'll tell you. "Achilles threw the dice—  
two snake's eyes and a four." You'd better speak—  
it's the last time the two of you get weighed. [1400]

EURIPIDES [*reciting*]

"His right hand grasped the heavy iron club . . ."

AESCHYLUS [*reciting*]

"Chariot piled on chariot, corpse on corpse . . ."

DIONYSUS

This time he got you once again.

EURIPIDES

How so?

DIONYSUS

He put in two chariots and two stiffs.  
A hundred Egyptians couldn't shift that load.<sup>64</sup>

AESCHYLUS

No more contest with me word for word—  
put him in the scale pan with his wife and kids,  
throw on Cephisophon. Let him step in,  
sit down—he can bring all his books. For me—  
I'll only speak two verses of my own. [1410]

DIONYSUS

These men are friends of mine, so I won't judge  
the two of them. I don't want to be at war  
with either man. One of them, I think,  
is really clever. The other I enjoy.

ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ

οὐδὲν ἄρα πράξεις ὦνπερ ἦλθες οὐνεκα;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἐὰν δὲ κρίνω;

ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ

τὸν ἕτερον λαβὼν ἄπει, 1415  
 ὁπότερον ἂν κρίνης, ἵν' ἔλθης μὴ μάτην.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εὐδαιμονοίης. φέρε πύθεσθέ μου ταδί.  
 ἐγὼ κατῆλθον ἐπὶ ποιητήν. τοῦ χάριν;  
 ἵν' ἡ πόλις σωθῆισα τοὺς χοροὺς ἄγη.  
 ὁπότερος οὖν ἂν τῇ πόλει παρανέση 1420  
 μᾶλλον τι χρηστόν, τοῦτον ἄξειν μοι δοκῶ.  
 πρῶτον μὲν οὖν περὶ Ἀλκιβιάδου τίς ἔχετον  
 γνώμην ἐκάτερος; ἡ πόλις γὰρ δυστοκεῖ.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔχει δὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ τίνα γνώμην;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τίνα;  
 ποθεῖ μὲν, ἐχθαίρει δέ, βούλεται δ' ἔχειν. 1425  
 ἀλλ' ὅ τι νοεῖτον εἴπατον τούτου πέρι.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

μισῶ πολίτην, ὅστις ὠφελεῖν πάτρην  
 βραδὺς πέφυκε μεγάλα δὲ βλάπτειν ταχύς,  
 καὶ πόριμον αὐτῷ τῇ πόλει δ' ἀμήχανον.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εὐ γ' ὦ Πόσειδον· σὺ δὲ τίνα γνώμην ἔχεις; 1430

PLUTO

Won't you fail to get the thing you came for?

DIONYSUS

What if I chose the other man?

PLUTO

Take one—  
 whichever one you wish, so you don't leave  
 and make your trip in vain.

DIONYSUS

May gods bless you.  
 Look, how 'bout this—I came here for a poet.

EURIPIDES

What for?

DIONYSUS

So I might save our city  
 and let it keep its choruses. Therefore,  
 whichever one of you will give our state  
 the best advice, well, that's the man I'll take. [1420]  
 So first, a question for each one of you—  
 What's your view of Alcibiades?<sup>65</sup>  
 This issue plagues our city.

EURIPIDES

The people there—  
 what do they think of him?

DIONYSUS

What do they think?  
 The city yearns for him, but hates him, too,  
 yet wants him back. But you two, tell me this—  
 what's your sense of him?

EURIPIDES

I hate a citizen  
 who helps his native land by seeming slow,  
 but then will quickly inflict injuries  
 which profit him but give our city nothing.

DIONYSUS

By Poseidon, that's well said. Now, Aeschylus,  
 what's your view on this? [1430]

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

μάλιστα μὲν λέοντα μὴ ν' πόλει τρέφειν,  
ἦν δ' ἐκτραφῆ τις, τοῖς τρόποις ὑπηρετεῖν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Δία τὸν σωτήρα δυσκρίτως γ' ἔχω  
ὁ μὲν σοφῶς γὰρ εἶπεν, ὁ δ' ἕτερος σαφῶς.  
ἀλλ' ἔτι μίαν γνώμην ἐκάτερος εἶπατον  
περὶ τῆς πόλεως ἦντιν' ἔχετον σωτηρίαν.

1435

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

εἴ τις πτερώσας Κλεόκριτον Κωησίαι,  
αἴροιεν αὔραι πελαγίαν ὑπὲρ πλάκα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

γέλοιον ἂν φαίνοιτο· νοῦν δ' ἔχει τίνα;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

εἰ ναυμαχοῖεν κᾶτ' ἔχοντες ὀξίδας  
ράινοιεν ἐς τὰ βλέφαρα τῶν ἐναντίων.  
ἐγὼ μὲν οἶδα καὶ θέλω φράζειν.

1440

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

λέγε.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅταν τὰ νῦν ἄπιστα πίσθ' ἠγάμεθα,  
τὰ δ' ὄντα πίστ' ἄπιστα.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

πῶς; οὐ μανθάνω.

ἀμαθέστερόν πως εἶπε καὶ σαφέστερον.

1445

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

εἰ τῶν πολιτῶν οἷσι νῦν πιστεύομεν,  
τούτοις ἀπιστήσαιμεν, οἷς δ' οὐ χρώμεθα,  
τούτοισι χρησαίμεσθ', ἴσως σωθίμεν ἄν.  
εἰ νῦν γε δυστυχοῦμεν ἐν τούτοισι, πῶς  
τὰναντί ἂν πράττοντες οὐ σωζοίμεθ' ἄν;

1450

AESCHYLUS

The wisest thing  
is not to rear a lion cub inside the city,  
but if that's what the citizens have done,  
we'd must adjust ourselves to fit its ways.

DIONYSUS

By Zeus the saviour, this decision's hard.  
One spoke with skill, the other was so clear.  
All right, each one of you speak up again.  
Tell me of our state—how can we save her?

EURIPIDES

Use Cinesias as Cleocritus' wings—  
then winds would lift them over the flat sea.<sup>66</sup>

DIONYSUS

A really funny sight. But what's the point?

EURIPIDES

In a sea fight, they'd take some vinegar,  
and dump the bottles in opponents' eyes.  
But I know the answer—let me speak.

[1440]

DIONYSUS

All right, say on.

EURIPIDES

When those among us  
who have no faith act faithfully, and things  
bereft of trust are trusted . . .

DIONYSUS

What's that?

I don't get what you're saying. Speak out  
more clearly—more matter with less art.

EURIPIDES

If we removed our trust from politicians  
on whom we now rely, and used the ones  
we don't use now, we could be saved. It's clear  
we're not doing well with what we're doing now,  
if we reversed our course, we might be saved.

[1450]

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εὖ γ' ὦ Παλάμηδες, ὦ σοφωτάτη φύσις.  
ταυτὶ πότερ' αὐτὸς ἠὔρες ἢ Κηφισοφῶν;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐγὼ μόνος· τὰς δ' ὀξείδας Κηφισοφῶν.  
τί δαὶ σύ; τί λέγεις;

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

τὴν πόλιν νῦν μοι φράσον  
πρῶτον τίσι χρῆται· πότερα τοῖς χρηστοῖς;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μισεῖ κάκιστα. πόθεν; 1455

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

τοῖς πονηροῖς δ' ἤδεται;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

οὐ δῆτ' ἐκείνη γ', ἀλλὰ χρῆται πρὸς βίαν.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

πῶς οὖν τις ἂν σώσειε τοιαύτην πόλιν,  
ἢ μήτε χλαῖνα μήτε σισύρα συμφέρει;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εὔρισκε νῆ Δι', εἴπερ ἀναδύσει πάλιν. 1460

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ἐκεῖ φράσαιμι ἄν· ἐνθαδὶ δ' οὐ βούλομαι.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

μὴ δῆτα σύ γ', ἀλλ' ἐνθένδ' ἀνίει τὰγαθά.

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

τὴν γῆν ὅταν νομίσωσι τὴν τῶν πολεμίων  
εἶναι σφετέραν, τὴν δὲ σφετέραν τῶν πολεμίων,  
πόρον δὲ τὰς ναῦς ἀπορίαν δὲ τὸν πόρον. 1465

DIONYSUS

Well put, O Palamedes,<sup>67</sup> you clever man.  
Did you come up with this idea yourself,  
or is it from Cephisophon?

EURIPIDES

It's mine alone.  
that bit about those jars of vinegar—  
Cephisophon's idea.

DIONYSUS [*to Aeschylus*]

Now you. What do you say?

AESCHYLUS

About our state—acquaint me first of all  
with those in her employ. Surely they're good men?

DIONYSUS

Of course they're not. She hates those worst of all.

AESCHYLUS

She loves the ne'er-do-wells?

DIONYSUS

Not really—  
but she's got no choice. She has to use them.

AESCHYLUS

How can one save a city like this one,  
which has no taste for woolen city coats  
or country cloaks of goat skin?

DIONYSUS

By Zeus,  
to get upstairs, you'd best come up with something. [1460]

AESCHYLUS

Up there I'd talk, but I don't want to here.

DIONYSUS

Don't be that way. Send something good from here.

AESCHYLUS

When they consider their foe's land their own  
and think of their land as the enemy's,  
and when they look upon their ships as riches  
and see their wealth as wretchedness . . .<sup>68</sup>

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εἶ, πλήν γ' ὁ δικαστῆς αὐτὰ καταπίνει μόνος.

ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ

κρίσεις ἄν.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

αὕτη σφῶν κρίσις γενήσεται·  
αἰρήσομαι γὰρ ὄνπερ ἡ ψυχὴ θέλει.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

μεμνημένος νυν τῶν θεῶν οὓς ᾤμοσας  
ἦ μὴν ἀπάξειν μ' οἴκαδ', αἰροῦ τοὺς φίλους.

1470

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

'ἡ γλώττ' ὀμώμοκ', Αἰσχύλον δ' αἰρήσομαι.

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δέδρακας ὦ μαρώτατ' ἀνθρώπων;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

ἔγω;  
ἔκρινα νικᾶν Αἰσχύλον. τὴ γὰρ οὔ;

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

αἴσχιστον ἔργον προσβλέπεις μ' εἰργασμένος;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τί δ' αἰσχρόν, ἦν μὴ τοῖς θεωμένοις δοκῆ;

1475

ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ σκέτλιε περιόψει με δὴ τεθνηκότα;

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τίς οἶδεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἐστι κατθανεῖν,  
τὸ πνεῖν δὲ δειπνεῖν, τὸ δὲ καθεῦδειν κώδιον;

ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ

χωρεῖτε τοῖνον ὦ Διόνυσ' εἴσω.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

τί δαί;

DIONYSUS

Yes, but jury members wolf down all the cash.

PLUTO

You should decide.

DIONYSUS

I'll make my choice between them.  
I'll choose the one who's pleasing to my soul.

EURIPIDES

Do not forget those gods by whom you swore  
to take me home. You have to choose your friends . . .

[1470]

DIONYSUS

My tongue made that oath, but I choose Aeschylus.

EURIPIDES

What have you done, you foulest of all men?

DIONYSUS

Me? I've picked Aeschylus to win. Why not?

EURIPIDES

Do you dare to look me in the face  
after you've done the dirtiest of deeds?

DIONYSUS

What's dirty if this audience approves?

EURIPIDES

You're heartless. Will you never think of me  
now that I'm dead?

DIONYSUS

What if living isn't really dying,  
or breathing dining, or sleep a pillow slip?<sup>69</sup>

PLUTO

Come inside now, Dionysus.

DIONYSUS

What for?



## ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ

ἵνα ξενίσω ἄγω σφῶ πρὶν ἀποπλεῖν. 1480

## ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

εὖ λέγεις  
νῆ τὸν Διῖ· οὐ γὰρ ἄχθομαι τῷ πράγματι.

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

μακάριός γ' ἀνὴρ ἔχων  
ξύνεσιν ἠκριβωμένην.  
πάρα δὲ πολλοῖσιν μαθεῖν.  
ὄδε γὰρ εὖ φρονεῖν δοκήσας 1485  
πάλιν ἄπεισιν οἴκαδ' αἶ,  
ἐπ' ἀγαθῶ μὲν τοῖς πολίταις,  
ἐπ' ἀγαθῶ δὲ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ  
ξυγγενέσι τε καὶ φίλοισι,  
διὰ τὸ συνετὸς εἶναι. 1490  
χαρίεν οὖν μὴ Σωκράτει  
παρακαθήμενον λαλεῖν,  
ἀποβαλόντα μουσικὴν  
τά τε μέγιστα παραλιπόντα  
τῆς τραγωδικῆς τέχνης. 1495  
τὸ δ' ἐπὶ σεμνοῖσιν λόγοισι  
καὶ σκαριφημοῖσι λήρων  
διατριβὴν ἀργὸν ποιεῖσθαι,  
παραφρονοῦντος ἀνδρός.

## ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ

ἄγε δὴ χαίρων Αἰσχύλε χώρει,  
καὶ σῶζε πόλιν τὴν ἡμετέραν 1500  
γνώμαις ἀγαθαῖς καὶ παιδείουσον  
τοὺς ἀνοήτους· πολλοὶ δ' εἰσίν·  
καὶ δὸς τουτὶ Κλεοφῶντι φέρων  
καὶ τουτὶ τοῖσι πορισταῖς 1505  
Μύρμηκί θ' ὀμοῦ καὶ Νικομάχῳ,  
τόδε δ' Ἀρχενόμῳ·  
καὶ φράζ' αὐτοῖς ταχέως ἦκειν  
ὡς ἐμὲ δευρὶ καὶ μὴ μέλλειν·

## PLUTO

So I can entertain you here, before you go.

## DIONYSUS

An excellent idea, by god. I won't say no. [1480]

## CHORUS

Blest is the man with keen intelligence—  
we learn this truth in many ways  
Once he's shown his own good sense  
he goes back home again.  
He brings our citizens good things  
as well as family and friends,  
with his perceptive mind. [1490]  
So to be truly civilized,  
don't sit by Socrates and chat  
or cast the Muses' work aside,  
forgetting the most vital skills  
of writing tragedies.  
Wasting time with pompous words,  
while idly scratching verbal bits—  
that suits a man who's lost his wits

## PLUTO

So now, farewell, Aeschylus—go, [1500]  
save our city with your noble thoughts,  
and educate our fools—we have so many.  
Take this sword, hand it to Cleophon.  
Present this rope to tax collector  
Myrmex and his colleague Nicomachos—  
this hemlock give to Archenomos.  
Tell them to come here fast without delay.

κἄν μὴ ταχέως ἤκωσιν, ἐγὼ  
 νῆ τὸν Ἀπόλλω στίξας αὐτοὺς  
 καὶ συμποδίσας  
 μετ' Ἀδειμάντου τοῦ Λευκολόφου  
 κατὰ γῆς ταχέως ἀποπέμψω.

1510

## ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΣ

ταῦτα ποιήσω· σὺ δὲ τὸν θᾶκον  
 τὸν ἐμὸν παράδος Σοφοκλεῖ τηρεῖν  
 καὶ διασώζειν, ἦν ἄρ' ἐγὼ ποτε  
 δεῦρ' ἀφίκωμαι. τοῦτον γὰρ ἐγὼ  
 σοφία κρίνω δεύτερον εἶναι.  
 μέμνησο δ' ὅπως ὁ πανοῦργος ἀνὴρ  
 καὶ ψευδολόγος καὶ βωμολόχος  
 μηδέποτ' ἐς τὸν θᾶκον τὸν ἐμὸν  
 μηδ' ἄκων ἐγκαθεδεῖται.

1515

1520

## ΠΛΟΥΤΩΝ

φαίνετε τοῖνυν ὑμεῖς τούτῳ  
 λαμπάδας ἱεράς, χᾶμα προπέμπετε  
 τοῖσιν τούτου τοῦτον μέλεσιν  
 καὶ μολπαῖσιν κελαδοῦντες.

1525

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

πρῶτα μὲν εὐοδίαν ἀγαθὴν ἀπιόντι ποιητῇ  
 ἐς φάος ὀρνημένῳ δότε δαίμονες οἱ κατὰ γαίας,  
 τῇ δὲ πόλει μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν ἀγαθὰς ἐπινοίας.  
 πάγχυ γὰρ ἐκ μεγάλων ἀχέων παυσαίμεθ' ἂν οὕτως  
 ἀργαλέων τ' ἐν ὅπλοις ξυνόδων. Κλεοφῶν δὲ μαχέσθω  
 κἄλλος ὁ βουλόμενος τούτων πατρίοις ἐν ἀρούραις.

1530

If they don't come soon, then, by Apollo, [1510]  
 I'll brand and cripple them, then ship them down  
 at full speed underground with Adeimantos,  
 Leucolophos's son.<sup>70</sup>

## AESCHYLUS

That I'll do. As for my chair of honour,  
 give it to Sophocles to keep safe for me  
 in case I ever come back here. He's the one  
 whose talent I would put in second place.  
 Bear in mind—the rogue right there, this clown, [1520]  
 this liar, will never occupy my chair,  
 not even by mistake.

## PLUTO [to the Chorus]

Let your torches shine,  
 your sacred torches light the way for him,  
 escort him on his way—and praise his fame  
 with his own songs and dances.

## CHORUS

First, all you spirits underneath the ground,  
 let's bid our poet here a fond farewell,  
 as he goes upward to the light. To the city  
 grant worthy thoughts of every excellence. [1530]  
 Then we could put an end to our great pain,  
 the harmful clash of arms Let Cleophon—  
 and all those keen to fight—war on their enemy  
 in their ancestral fields, on their own property.<sup>71</sup>

## NOTES

1. *Phrynichus, Ameipsias, Lycias*: comic poets, rivals of Aristophanes.
2. the fight at sea refers to the naval victory of *Arginusae*. Athenian slaves who had fought were freed (this is the first of a number of references to this action).
3. *Cleisthenes*: a well-known homosexual in Athens, a favourite target of Aristophanes.
4. *Molon*: a man remarkable for his size—either very large or very small. The joke would seem to demand something very small. Given the sexual innuendo, it may be the case that Molon was a very big man with (reputedly) a very small penis.
5. *brother*: Hercules and Dionysus are both sons of Zeus, hence brothers.
6. *stew*: Hercules was famous for his enormous appetite.
7. *dead*: Euripides had died in Macedonia the year before the first production of *The Frogs*.
8. *Iophon*: son of Sophocles and a writer of tragedies.
9. *Agathon*: an important and successful Athenian tragic playwright. He'd recently left Athens and was living in Macedonia.
10. *Xenocles* and *Pythangelos*: minor Athenian tragic playwrights.
11. *Cerberus*: in one of Hercules' most famous exploits, he went down into Hell and returned with the Cerberus, the watch dog of Hades.
12. *hemlock*: a lethal poison which begins by numbing the lower limbs.
13. *Kerameikos*: a district in Athens.
14. *two obols*: the standard amount for welfare payments or daily pay for soldiers and sailors.
15. *Theseus*: the legendary founder of Athens, who made his own journey to Hades and back, and hence (according to this comment) introduced Athenian customs into Hades.
16. *Morsimus*: an inferior tragic playwright.
17. *Cinesias*: an Athenian poet.
18. *the mysteries*: secret cult religious rituals for special groups of initiates.
19. *Pluto*: god of Hades.

20. *Ravens*: a reference to a curse invoking the ravens to pick someone's bones. Charon lists various regions of Hell like so many stop on a bus route.
21. *Wuthering Rock*: a part of the landscape of hell (possibly invented here by Aristophanes).
22. *Salamis*: an island close to Athens, famous for its sailors.
23. *Chorus of Frogs*: it's not clear whether this chorus remains off stage or not.
24. *feast of Jars*: a reference to an annual Athenian festival (the Anthesteria) held early in the year in the precinct of Dionysus "in the marsh" (Limnai). The festival involved a lot of drinking.
25. *Empousa*: a celebrated Athenian ghost-monster who could change her shape.
26. *so we can drink together*: Dionysus here appeals to the audience, specifically to the Priest of Dionysus who traditionally sat in the front row.
27. *Hegelochos . . . seals are calm*: Hegelochos was an actor in Euripides' plays who garbled a word and made the lines ridiculous (like changing "sea" to "seal").
28. *Iacchos* was a minor divine presence associated with Dionysian celebrations. *Diagoras* may refer to a notorious Athenian atheist.
29. *daughter of Demeter*: a reference to Persephone, wife of Pluto, king of Hades.
30. *Cratinus*: a well-known and successful comic poet before Aristophanes.
31. *Aegina . . . Thoracion . . . Epidauros*: Aegina was an island centre for illegal trade during the war. Thoracion was (one assumes) well known as a corrupt official. Epidauros was a naval centre close to Athens.
32. *Archedemos . . . teeth*: a complex joke about a prominent Athenian politician, alleging that he is not a genuine citizen (something that was determined at seven years of age).
33. *Corinth, son of Zeus*: an expression meaning (in effect) "always the same old stuff." People from Corinth were (by reputation) never tired of boasting about the divine origin of the founder of their city.
34. *Theramenes*: An Athenian politician famous for his political survival skills.
35. *Cleon . . . Hyperbolos*: Athenian politicians with a special interest in leading the common people.

36. *Cleophon . . . votes are equal*: Cleophon was an Athenian politician in favour of the war. The gibe here suggests he's not a true Athenian. Aristophanes' prediction that Cleophon would soon be sentenced to death came true a year later.
37. *Phrynichus*: Athenian politician who led the revolution in 411 BC.
38. *Plataeans . . . masters instead of slaves*: after the naval battle of Arginusae, the Athenians freed the slaves who had fought and gave them rights of citizenship equivalent to the rights of the Plataeans, important allies of Athens.
39. *Cleigenes . . . clothes*: Aristophanes here attacks the keeper of a public bath and laundry for cheating his customers, predicting that soon he will lose his political office.
40. *our new gold ones, as well*: a famous comparison between the political leaders and the debased coinage (one of the effects of the war).
41. *palaestra*: the traditional school in Athens, emphasizing physical fitness and the arts.
42. *red heads*: a reference to foreigners or slaves, not true Athenians.
43. *scapegoat*: once a year in Athens two condemned criminals were beaten out of the city and executed in a purification ritual to cleanse the city of its collective guilt.
44. *about to break*: Dionysus pretends he needs to offer a sacrifice to placate the god of storms.
45. *monodies . . . marriage into art*: an attack on Euripides' innovations and on the alleged immorality in his plays. Monodies are long lyrical solos for main characters.
46. *Telephos*: a beggar hero of one of Euripides' plays.
47. *Phrynichos*: the most important writer of tragedy before Aeschylus.
48. *rooster . . . just for the tragedy*: Aeschylus refers to a rooster in *Agamemnon*.
49. *Cephisophon*: an Athenian who lived in Euripides' house and was rumoured have assisted Euripides with his plays and had an affair with his wife.
50. *line you could take*: Euripides' sympathies in his life appeared to be with the oligarchs, not with the democrats in Athens.
51. *with bells attached*: Cycnus and Memnon were characters in plays by Aeschylus. Warriors had bells attached to their shields or to their horses' harnesses.

52. *Cleitophon*: an Athenian member of the group around Socrates.
53. *Achaean*: this joke is hard to render accurately. The Greek says (literally) “not a Chian [*i.e.*, *from Chios*] but a Kian” or (more freely) “not a Chian with a ch but a Kian with a k,” indicating the man’s slippery character, able to change nationality by altering the spelling of the word. The change to “Achaean” may make the joke somewhat more compressed and workable, especially when the speech is spoken rather than read.
54. *Achilles*: calling Aeschylus “Achilles” is a reminder both of his traditionally noble character and of his mood. Like Achilles he sits there silent and enraged.
55. *finest act*: a reference to the defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC, for most Athenians the high point of their city’s history.
56. *Phaedra and Sthenoboea*: an attack on heroines in plays by Euripides.
57. *by the fish*: a reference to the fact that fish was an expensive food in Athens at the time.
58. *Paralos’ crew*: the *Paralos* was the flag ship of the Athenian navy.
59. *and returns*: Aeschylus’ hair-splitting point is that “come back” and “return” mean different things, because the latter is appropriate for those whose political status is uncertain.
60. *Erastinides*: Athenian general condemned to death after the battle of *Arginusae*.
61. *demonstrate*: in the section which follows Aeschylus repeatedly uses the phrase “lost his little oil jug” to bring out the triviality of Euripides’ verse, especially its rhythms and its imagery.
62. *that too*: Aeschylus is calling attention to the rhythmic feet in Euripides’ verse. Dionysus, of course, misunderstands and starts inspecting Aeschylus’ feet.
63. *Cyrene*: a notorious prostitute.
64. *raise that load*: Egyptians had a reputation for great strength.
65. *Alcibiades*: a brilliant and charismatic, but erratic and controversial Athenian politician and general in the closing years of the Peloponnesian War.
66. *flat sea*: Cinesias was very tall and skinny, and Cleocritus was reported to look like an ostrich.
67. *Palamedes*: a hero in the Trojan war.

68. *wretchedness*: Aeschylus is here apparently defending the early Athenian policy of putting all their faith in the navy to prosecute the war, leaving the land open for enemy occupation.
69. *pillow slip*: Dionysus is here mocking Euripides with echoes of the latter’s own verses.
70. *Adeimantos*: a general in Athens, later accused of treachery.
71. *properties*: Cleophon was a leader of the pro-war party. The point here is that many of those advocating war were not putting their own property in danger, unlike many Athenian farmers and landowners whose lands were occupied by the enemy forces.