



ARISTOPHANES VS PHRYNICHUS IN *FROGS**

ABSTRACT

Aristophanes' Frogs was first performed at the Lenaean festival of 405 in competition with Plato's Cleophon and Phrynichus' Muses. This paper argues that Frogs contains a series of agonistic jokes against Phrynichus, most of which have gone unnoticed because he shares his name with a tragic poet and a politician; Aristophanes plays with the ambiguity of the name Phrynichus to mock his Lenaean rival by comparing him unfavourably with his namesakes. Aristophanes ultimately claims that his comedy is superior to that of Phrynichus because he is more successful than his rival in appropriating and redeploying other comedians' material.

Keywords: Aristophanes; Phrynichus; fragments; *Frogs*; comedy; Aeschylus; Euripides¹

The multiple Phrynichoi problem is an acknowledged conundrum of Greek prosopography: *LGN* lists thirty-eight Phrynichoi, among whom nine were active in Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries.² Debate on the Phrynichus question has focussed primarily on Aristophanes' *Wasps* (= *Vesp.*) where there is uncertainty about the identity of Phrynichus in three passages.³ In most scholarly discussions on *Wasps*

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¹ Frequently cited: Dover = K.J. Dover, *Aristophanes: Frogs* (Oxford, 1993); Sommerstein = A.H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes: Frogs* (Warminster, 1996); Harvey and Wilkins = D. Harvey and J. Wilkins (edd.), *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy* (London, 2000); Harvey = D. Harvey, 'Phrynichos and his Muses', in D. Harvey and J. Wilkins (edd.), *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy* (London, 2000), 91–134; Biles = Z.P. Biles, *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition* (Cambridge, 2011); Stama = F. Stama, *Frinico: Introduzione, traduzione e commento* (Heidelberg, 2014). Citations of Aristophanes use the text of N.G. Wilson (ed.), *Aristophanis fabulae* (Oxford, 2007). Scholia of *Frogs* are cited from M. Chantry (ed.), *Scholia in Thesmophoriazusas; Ranas; Ecclesiazusas et Plutum. Fasc. 1a: Scholia vetera in Aristophanis Ranas* (Groningen, 1999); other scholia are cited from the relevant volumes of W.J.W. Koster and D. Holwerda (edd.), *Scholia in Aristophanem* (Groningen, 1960–2007).

² Cf. *PAA* (which mentions forty-one Phrynichoi, some likely to be the same person, e.g. 965145, 965150); *PA* 15000–15013; and I.C. Storey, 'The symposium at *Wasps* 1299 ff.', *Phoenix* 39 (1985), 317–33, at 328–30.

³ The name 'Phrynichus' appears five times (220, 269, 1302, 1490, 1524). The tragic Phrynichus is referred to at lines 220 and 269. The identification of the Phrynichus in lines 1302, 1490 and 1524 is debated. See e.g. Storey (n. 2), 328–30; A.H. Sommerstein, 'Phrynichos the dancer', *Phoenix* 41 (1987), 189–90; M. Chantry, 'Phrynichos dans les scholies d'Aristophane', *RPh* 75 (2001/2002), 239–47, at 243–5; M. De Simone, 'Aristophanes' Phrynichos and the orientaling musical pattern', in J.G. Westenholz, Y. Mauri and E. Seroussi (edd.), *Music in Antiquity: The Near East and the Mediterranean* (Berlin / Boston / Jerusalem, 2014), 248–72. The various Phrynichoi were confused even in antiquity. See e.g. Phryn. *Com. Test.* 2.5–6 K.–A. (= Stama, *Test.* 2b) with the commentary of Stama, 27–9; Σ *Av.* 749b; *Ael. VH* 3.8; and Σ *Ran.* 689e–f (= *Suda* π 62 Adler), on which see below. Matters are further complicated by *Andoc. De mysteriis* 47.

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there is a persistent assumption that each time ‘Phrynichus’ is named Aristophanes intends one unambiguous referent. Roos has, however, proposed the possibility of a double parody at *Vesp.* 1490 entailing the simultaneous mockery of two different Phrynichoi.⁴ In this paper I analyse the possibilities for double (and even triple) mockery of this kind in *Frogs* (= *Ran.*), where the Phrynichus problem remains largely unexplored. I argue that Aristophanes exploits the ambiguity of the name ‘Phrynichus’ in order to mock his rival at the Lenaea of 405, Phrynichus *comicus*, by comically equating him with the ‘bad’ tragic poet and the oligarchic politician both of whom bear the same name.

Arguments for ‘double mockery’ (the simultaneous mockery of two targets) are not alien to Aristophanic studies, and various forms of it have been proposed:⁵ Platter discusses the ‘double dialogism’ of Aristophanes’ *Telephus* parody in *Thesmophoriazusae*, which, he argues, parodies both Euripides’ *Telephus* and Aristophanes’ own earlier parody of this play in *Acharnians*.⁶ Sidwell argues that Dicaeopolis paracomically caricatures Eupolis and Cratinus simultaneously.⁷ The concept also underlies some of Vickers’s arguments for extensive political allusions to Pericles in Aristophanic comedy.⁸ Double mockery via homonymy, however, remains—so far as I can tell—a relatively unexplored realm.⁹

The name Phrynichus appears four times in *Frogs*.¹⁰ At line 13, Aristophanes calls out his comic rival, mocking him for indulging in a hackneyed, baggage-carrying routine. At line 689, the chorus advises forgiveness for those ‘tripped up by the wrestling tricks of Phrynichus’. Though scholars always understand this passage with reference to those exiled for involvement in the oligarchic coup, I demonstrate that an ancient audience may equally well have understood it as a literary sentiment advising the forgiveness of spectators with bad taste, both those who used to enjoy Phrynichus *tragicus* and the fans of Phrynichus *comicus*. At lines 910 and 1299, Aristophanes names

⁴ E. Roos, *Die tragische Orchestik im Zerrbild der altattischen Komödie* (Lund, 1951), 131 argues that the tragic actor/dancer Phrynichus is the main referent at line 1490. He suggests that, if secure evidence is ever found that Phrynichus’ fr. 17 genuinely belongs to the tragic Phrynichus, then a double parody, simultaneously mocking actor and poet, is possible.

⁵ Outside of Aristophanic studies, see e.g. the discussion of ‘window allusion’ in R.F. Thomas, ‘Virgil’s *Georgics* and the art of reference’, *HSPH* 90 (1986), 171–98, at 188–9.

⁶ C. Platter, *Aristophanes and the Carnival of Genres* (Baltimore, 2007), 144–5, 166.

⁷ K. Sidwell, *Aristophanes the Democrat: The Politics of Satirical Comedy during the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge, 2009), 107–54. Sidwell’s analysis is based on speculative reconstructions of fragmentary comedies.

⁸ M. Vickers, *Pericles on Stage: Political Comedy in Aristophanes’ Early Plays* (Austin, 1997), 86. He suggests that in the choral ode of *Ach.* 836–59 the names of real people are used as speaking names to mock characteristics of Pericles. For example, Ctesias, whose name means ‘property-holder’, mocks Pericles’ dubious stewardship of Athenian finances, while ‘Cratinus’ (‘aristocratic’) alludes to Pericles’ noble background. Vickers’s arguments are unconvincing because the links between primary targets (Ctesias, Cratinus, etc.) and secondary target (Pericles) are so tenuous as to be imperceptible to an audience.

⁹ Though ancient scholars were aware of the concept. For example, Σ *Nub.* 31c argues for double mockery via near homonymy: Aristophanes, the scholiast claims, mentions the name Amynias not to mock Amynias himself but as a means to covertly mock the archon Ameinias. See also Σ *Ach.* 1167a and c and Σ *Av.* 1490a–b on a homonymy joke about a certain Orestes, and Σ *Lys.* 490.

¹⁰ *Ran.* 13 (comic poet, *LGPN* 3; *PA* 15006; *PAA* 965270); 689 (politician, one of the leaders of the oligarchic coup of 411, *LGPN* 16; *PA* 15011; *PAA* 965420); 910 and 1299 (tragic poet, *LGPN* 1; *PA* 15008; *PAA* 965290). There is no debate among modern commentators as to which Phrynichus should be identified where, but there was debate among the ancient scholiasts on the identity of the Phrynichus at *Ran.* 689. On the debate, see e.g. F.V. Fritzsche, *Aristophanis Ranae* (Zurich, 1845), 263–4; Chantry (n. 3), 240–3. Modern scholars ultimately conclude that Phrynichus must be the politician. On the scholiastic debate, see further below.

Phrynichus *tragicus* as an inspiration to and rival of Aeschylus. Both passages are highly metatheatrical and serve to link Aeschylus' rivalry with Phrynichus *tragicus* to Aristophanes' contemporary rivalry with his comic namesake.

Demand is the only scholar to identify the interconnection of the three Phrynichoi. She argues that Aristophanes associates the name 'Phrynichus' with the notion of struggle, forming a minor theme in *Frogs*: Phrynichus *comicus* competed against Aristophanes; Phrynichus the politician opposed the Athenian citizens; and Phrynichus *tragicus* was a rival to Aeschylus.¹¹ I go beyond Demand's observation to argue that each mention of 'Phrynichus' ultimately leads back to Phrynichus *comicus*.¹² To speak of 'Phrynichus' is not merely the articulation of a minor theme but rather a competitive strategy.

Aristophanes announces his agonistic stance against Phrynichus *comicus* in the prologue to *Frogs*. The slave Xanthias asks Dionysus whether he should tell 'one of the usual jokes that the audience always laugh at' (1–2). Dionysus responds by enumerating a list of the crude, overused jokes that Xanthias should avoid. In doing so, he tells all the forbidden jokes, allowing Aristophanes to express disdain for such low-brow humour while still exploiting its popularity.¹³ During this scene Xanthias complains (12–15):

τί δῆτ' ἔδει με ταῦτα τὰ σκεύη φέρειν,
εἴπερ ποιήσω μηδὲν ὄνπερ Φρύνιχος
εἶωθε ποιεῖν; καὶ Λύκις κάμειψίας
σκεύη φέρουσ' ἐκάστοτ' ἐν κωμωδίᾳ.

Why do I have to carry all this baggage
if I can't even do any of the jokes Phrynichus
usually does? Lycis and Ameipsias
do baggage-carrying scenes in all their comedies too!¹⁴

Aristophanes mocks three comic poets for using a popular stock routine in which someone carries a load so heavy it makes them fart.¹⁵ Phrynichus is mentioned first

¹¹ N. Demand, 'The identity of the Frogs', *CPh* 65 (1970), 83–7, at 84.

¹² Though Demand's larger claim—namely, that the chorus of *Frogs* represents Phrynichus *comicus*—would certainly add a further dimension to my argument, it remains unconvincing. Demand (n. 11), 84–5 argues that we can see the figure of Phrynichus *comicus* behind the chorus of frogs, because the φρον-ελεμ in his name means 'toad' in Greek. This argument has come under fire for being too far-fetched, with scholars supposing that, if Aristophanes intended a reference to Phrynichus in the frog chorus, he would have made it more obvious, by, for example, using the word φρόνη earlier in the comedy. See e.g. D.A. Campbell, 'The frogs in the *Frogs*', *JHS* 104 (1984), 163–5, at 164.

¹³ On Dionysus as a representative of the Aristophanic voice in this prologue, see Biles, 214. On the prologue in general, see e.g. T. Baier, 'Zur Funktion der Chorpartien in den *Fröschen*', in A. Ercolani (ed.), *Spoudaiogeloion: Form und Funktion der Verspottung in der aristophanischen Komödie* (Stuttgart, 2002), 190–3; I. Ruffell, 'A total write-off: Aristophanes, Cratinus, and the rhetoric of comic competition', *CQ* 52 (2002), 138–63, at 141; A. Hartwig, 'Comic rivalry and the number of comic poets at the Lenaia of 405 B.C.', *Philologus* 156 (2012), 195–206, at 203; M. Wright, *The Comedian as Critic: Greek Old Comedy and Poetics* (London, 2012), 92–3.

¹⁴ Translations mine.

¹⁵ Such baggage-carrying scenes surely formed part of the action of two comedies whose titles are *Baggage-Carrying Donkeys* (Leucon) and *Basket-Carriers* (Hermippus, probably performed in the early to mid 420s). The fourth-century comic poets Anaxandrides and Eubulus also wrote plays entitled *Basket-Carriers*. A baggage-carrying scene appears in Aristophanes' lost second *Thesmophoriazousae* (fr. 340 K.–A.). There are also numerous vase paintings and terracotta figurines representing comic baggage-carriers, demonstrating the popularity of the routine. See W.R. Biers and J.R. Green, 'Carrying baggage', *AK* 41 (1998), 87–93.

in emphatic position at the end of line 13.¹⁶ Given the prime position of his name and his participation in the contest of 405, the accusation should be read as principally directed against him.¹⁷ Lycis and Ameipsias are cited to bolster this accusation: not only does Phrynichus always do baggage-carrying scenes, but he also copies them from second-rate poets such as Lycis and Ameipsias.¹⁸ A similar accusation of plagiarism was also made by Hermippus in his (presumably) baggage-carrying-themed comedy *Basket-Bearers*, where he mocked Phrynichus ‘for passing off other people’s poetry as his own’ (ὡς ἀλλότρια ὑποβαλλομένου ποιήματα).¹⁹

In the *Frogs* prologue, therefore, Aristophanes accuses Phrynichus not only of staging hackneyed stock routines but even of copying the routine from others. It may be objected that one can hardly plagiarize a stock routine that had long been the common property of comic poets, but the absurdity of the accusation is, I suspect, precisely Aristophanes’ point: he accuses Phrynichus of ‘stealing’ the same scene that everyone else always uses. Some scholars view such accusations as mere ‘standard comic abuse’.²⁰ However, emphasis on the genre-typical, even ritualized nature of comic abuse underplays its agonistic significance.²¹

Whether or not Phrynichus really included such plagiarized routines in his comedy, Aristophanes’ mockery of him as doing so sets up a competitive stance that recurs in *Frogs*. He bills Phrynichus as a bad comedian who steals other poets’ bad routines. He bills himself as a poet above such trivial comic method, but simultaneously and ironically as one who likewise steals the bad comic routines of his rival. He, however, reperforms them in (what he implicitly claims is) a competitively superior manner. In the prologue, Aristophanes, like Phrynichus, ‘steals’ the baggage-carrying routine, but he uses it to critique Phrynichus’ theft of baggage-carrying routines.²² The prominence of Phrynichus as comic rival, thematized in the opening lines of *Frogs*, directs the spectator to look out for further Phrynichian agonistics. In most readings of *Frogs* engagement with Phrynichus *comicus* begins and ends at line 13; in the rest of this paper I dispute this assumption and demonstrate Aristophanes’ competitive attitude towards Phrynichus throughout the play.

We next encounter Phrynichus in the parabolic epirrhema spoken by the chorus of mystic initiates (686–91):²³

¹⁶ There is a textual issue in lines 13–15. Following Sommerstein, 157 and Wilson, I punctuate after εἴωθε ποιεῖν making Phrynichus the sole subject and therefore emphasizing his primacy. Dover punctuates after κάμειψίας retaining undesirable asyndeton in line 15. See Dover, 192; R. Kassel, ‘Zu den Fröschen des Aristophanes’, *RhM* 137 (1994), 33–53, at 34–5; N.G. Wilson, *Aristophanea: Studies on the Text of Aristophanes* (Oxford, 2007), 163–4.

¹⁷ Hartwig (n. 13) argued that Lycis and Ameipsias were also competing at the Lenaea of 405 in order to explain their presence in this line. He argues that five comic poets took part in the competition, but the hypotheses to *Frogs* mention only three (Aristophanes, Phrynichus and Plato *comicus*). Moreover, if such were the case, the absence of Plato *comicus* in this line would be odd.

¹⁸ Σ *Ran.* 13a (= Phryn. com. *Test.* 8 K.–A. = *Testt.* 9b–c Stama).

¹⁹ Hermippus, fr. 64 K.–A. = Σ *Av.* 749b. On this fragment, see N. Comentale, *Ermippo: Introduzione, traduzione e commento* (Heidelberg, 2017), 275–6; S. Halliwell, ‘Authorial collaboration in the Athenian comic theater’, *GRBS* 30 (1989), 515–28, at 517–18, 524; Stama, 43–4.

²⁰ Harvey, 110–13; also Baier (n. 13), 191–2 and, more generally, M. Heath, ‘Aristophanes and his rivals’, *G&R* 37 (1990), 143–58, at 152.

²¹ On the agonistic significance of mocking current rivals, see Biles, e.g. 185.

²² As Wright (n. 13), 92–3 remarks, ‘there is an ostensible element of rivalry: Aristophanes says that Lysis, Ameipsias and others all use these terrible jokes, but the difference between the poets—so he would have us believe—is that Aristophanes tells us that these are terrible old jokes.’ See also Ruffell (n. 13), 141; Hartwig (n. 13), 203.

²³ Pace S. Goldhill, *The Poet’s Voice: Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature* (Cambridge, 1991), 202, the chorus is still in the guise of mystic initiates. Phrynichus, possibly as recently as the Lenaea of

τὸν ἱερὸν χορὸν δίκαιόν ἐστι χρηστὰ τῇ πόλει
 ξυμπαραίνειν καὶ διδάσκειν. πρῶτον οὖν ἡμῖν δοκεῖ
 ἐξιῶσαι τοὺς πολίτας κάφελεῖν τὰ δειμάτα,
 κεῖ τις ἤμαρτε σφαλεῖς τι Φρυνίχου παλαίσμασιν,
 ἐκγενέσθαι φημί χρῆναι τοῖς ὀλισθοῦσιν τότε
 αἰτίαν ἐκθεῖσι λῦσαι τὰς πρότερον ἁμαρτίας.²⁴

It is just for the holy chorus to give useful advice to the city
 And to teach. So first, we think it right to put
 All citizens on an equal footing and take away their fears.
 And if anyone made some mistake, tripped up by the wrestling tricks of
 Phrynichus,
 I say that those who slipped then, if they admit their guilt,
 Must be allowed to make up for their former errors.

Modern commentators consistently identify the Phrynichus of line 689 with the son of Stratonides, ex-general and leader of the oligarchic coup.²⁵ There is no doubt that read with the benefit of hindsight, in full knowledge of the political leanings of the rest of the epirrhema, he is the primary referent. But the first six lines are ambiguous. To understand them we must put ourselves in the shoes of an audience experiencing the play sequentially and for the first time.

The major theme of *Frogs* up until this point has been drama and the search for a tragic poet. Politics has not been entirely absent from the play, but rather programmatically bound to its poetics. The parodos (354–71) outlaws from the audience corrupt politicians and people with bad poetic taste.²⁶ The chorus humorously declines to distinguish the aesthetically from the politically corrupt, but moves seamlessly from excluding ‘those who enjoy buffoonish words on inappropriate occasions’ (βομολόχοις ἔπεσιν χαίρει, μὴ ἔν κειρῶ ποιούντων, 358) to ‘those who do not resolve conflict and are not at peace with the citizens (στάσιν ἐχθρὰν μὴ καταλύει, μηδ’ εὐζολος ἐστί πολίτας, 359). In the final lines of the parodos, the excluded constitute those whose crimes combine the poetic and the political: poets who desecrate religious rites (366) and politicians who curtail poetic freedom (367–8).

Politics and poetics are further entwined in the ode (674–85) directly preceding our epirrhema. The chorus invokes the spectators *qua* theatrical audience, but in political language: ‘Muse, come to my holy dances, to delight in my song and to see the huge crowd of people’ (Μοῦσα, χορῶν ἱερῶν ἐπιβῆθι καὶ ἔλθ’ ἐπὶ τέρψιν ἀοιδᾶς ἐμάς, | τὸν πολλὸν ὀψομένη λαῶν ὄχλον, 674–6). The audience are called λαῶν ὄχλον,

406, premiered a comedy entitled *Mystai*, which must have had a chorus of mystic initiates. If Aristophanes’ chorus of initiates was intended as a parody of Phrynichus’ *Mystai*, it would lend irony to their condemnation of Phrynichoi. On the date of Phrynichus’ play, see I.C. Storey, *Fragments of Old Comedy. Vol. 3: Philonicus to Xenophon, Adespota* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2011), 65; Stama, 221–2.

²⁴ αἰτίαν ἐκθεῖσι is sometimes interpreted to mean ‘having stated their case’ (or ‘having expounded the reason’ [*sc.* for their error]): e.g. W.B. Stanford, *Aristophanes: The Frogs* (London, 1963²), 131; and sometimes ‘having got rid of the charge against them’: e.g. Dover, 279. Cf. B.B. Rogers, *The Frogs of Aristophanes, Acted at Athens at the Lenaean Festival B.C. 405* (London, 1919²), 104 and Sommerstein, 216. I prefer ‘if they admit their guilt (or responsibility)’.

²⁵ Dover, 73 is typical.

²⁶ T.K. Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis* (Ithaca and London, 1991), 204 and I. Lada-Richards, *Initiating Dionysus: Ritual and Theater in Aristophanes’ Frogs* (Oxford, 1999), 224.

words with political and military undertones.²⁷ The spectators are described as intelligent (οὐ σοφία μῦρία κάθηται, 675–6), but their intelligence is qualified politically: it is more worthy of honour than Cleophon, a contemporary politician and the titular target of the third play competing against *Frogs*. The insult attacks Cleophon's oratorical skills, which—to bring us full circle back to the theme of poetics—are compared to a nightingale's song.

Given, therefore, that Aristophanes programmatically entangles political and poetic themes in the lead-up to the epirrhema, that tragedy has been announced as the play's theme, and that the comic Phrynichus has already been highlighted, there is no necessary reason why an audience would, or indeed should, jump immediately to the conclusion that the Phrynichus of line 689 is the politician—at least not until the mention of disenfranchisement (ἄτιμον) in line 692. Until that point, 'Phrynichus' is ambiguous. An audience may expect the chorus' advice to be political or poetic, and they have already been primed by the phrase λαῶν ὄχλον to equate their theatrical and civic roles (πολίτας, 688).²⁸ The appearance of the name 'Phrynichus' at the beginning of the epirrhema unites the poetic and political themes of the play and, like the parodos, introduces a joke equating political and poetic crimes.

The scholia and the *Suda* furnish further evidence that the interpretation of 'Phrynichus' in antiquity was not cut-and-dry. Ancient scholars cannot be assumed to have accurate knowledge of how fifth-century spectators reacted to *Frogs*, but their debate about the identity of Phrynichus at *Ran.* 689 helps destabilize that unanimous modern conviction that the epirrhema's opening is exclusively political.²⁹

The scholia and the *Suda* contain three interpretations of the phrase Φρυνίχου παλαίματα:

1. Phrynichus is the comic poet, wrongly equated with the general (*Suda* π 62 Adler, cf. Σ *Ran.* 689e–f).³⁰
2. Phrynichus is the tragic poet, and the phrase 'the wrestling tricks of Phrynichus' refers to his memorable tragedy (or satyr play) *Antaeus*,³¹ in which Heracles was depicted wrestling the eponymous Libyan giant. (Σ *Ran.* 689c–d).³²
3. Phrynichus is the ex-general famous for his political machinations, here metaphorically referred to as 'wrestling tricks' (*Suda* π 62 Adler, Σ *Ran.* 689e–f).³³

²⁷ For ὄχλος, cf. Pl. *Plt.* 304c–d, *Grg.* 455a; Thuc. 3.109.2, 6.64.1, 7.8.2; Xen. *Cyr.* 2.2.21, 6.1.26. For λαός, compare Ar. *Ach.* 999 and *Eq.* 163, where characters address the assembly.

²⁸ Poetic advice is dispensed e.g. in the parabases of *Knights* and *Clouds*. *Achamians*, *Peace* and *Wasps* combine political and poetic advice.

²⁹ Hubbard (n. 26), 207–10 argues that the parabasis is exclusively political in nature, but that Aristophanes' critique of new politics therein foreshadows his later critique of new tragedy, and thus serves to connect the political and poetic discourses of *Frogs*. For discussion of the political nature of the parabasis, see D. Konstan, 'Poésie, politique et rituel dans les *Grenouilles* d'Aristophane', *Mètis* 1 (1986), 291–308, at 302–4; Goldhill (n. 23), 205; Dover, 73–5; M. Heath, *Political Comedy in Aristophanes* (Göttingen, 1987), 19–21.

³⁰ Chantry, 96 relegates this notice to his footnotes.

³¹ D.F. Sutton, 'A handlist of satyr plays', *HSPH* 78 (1974), 107–43, at 114 suggests that *Antaeus* was actually a satyr play, not a tragedy. M.J. Cropp, *Minor Greek Tragedians, Vol. 1: The Fifth Century* (Liverpool, 2019), 25 n. 3 is suspicious that the scholium reflects real knowledge of Phrynichus' play.

³² See also the commentary of Tzetzes on this line. He says that Aristophanes 'calls bad turns of fortune "wrestling tricks of Phrynichus" because the tragic poet Phrynichus writes in his play *Antaeus* about the wrestling matches of Antaeus the Libyan and Heracles'.

³³ See also *Suda* φ 766 Adler; Σ *Lys.* 313a. A further scholiastic notice (*Ran.* Σ 689b) takes 'those tripped up by the wrestling tricks of Phrynichus' to refer to the generals put on trial after the battle of

Where they discuss the first two interpretations at all, modern scholars are quick to dismiss them. True, the *Suda*'s identification of Phrynichus with the comic poet is erroneous, impossibly equating the comic poet and the politician.³⁴ The scholiast's error should not, however, deter us from seriously considering whether a fifth-century audience may have understood line 689 to be a reference to the comic poet. Halliwell has identified a consistent tendency among ancient scholars' explications of *kōmōidoumenoi* to assimilate the unknown to the known and to translate satire into historical reality in their commentaries.³⁵ The *Suda*'s note demonstrates that the scholar had recognized an ambiguity in the name Phrynichus—the political content of the passage suggested the general, but a different Phrynichus had already been mentioned earlier in *Ran.* 13. His attempt to resolve the ambiguity was to assimilate the two Phrynichoi and claim that the comic poet was the general. Therefore, rather than using the *Suda*'s error as an excuse to uncritically ignore Phrynichus *comicus* as a valid interpretation of *Ran.* 689, we ought to acknowledge the interpretative problem of the ambiguity that he perceived even if his scholarly method for resolution is less than satisfactory to us.³⁶

The notes proposing Phrynichus *tragicus* as referent at line 689 are coherently argued, yet none the less rejected.³⁷ Chantry maintains that *παλαίσματα* cannot refer to *Antaeus* because, if they did, then they should be correctly called 'the wrestling tricks of Heracles'. It suffices to note in response that it was idiomatic in Greek to refer to the actions of a play as belonging to the playwright rather than to his characters.³⁸ Chantry further argues that scholiasts have taken the word *παλαίσματα* too literally and failed to understand the word's metaphorical significance.³⁹ I would argue, however, that Aristophanes chose the word precisely because it has both a literal and a figurative sense that contribute to the multivalent possibilities intrinsic to the name 'Phrynichus'. Finally, Chantry argues that Phrynichus must be a political figure because the parabasis is political. But, as I argued above, the parodos and the odes preceding our passage have entangled politics and poetics enough to render the epirrhema's opening lines ambiguous.

If we accept that initially an ancient audience could have recognized any one or more of our three Phrynichoi in the epirrhema's opening, we must next consider how each might fit in the context of the passage. Broadly, the parabasis calls for all citizens (the audience) to be equal and not to fear. Even if one of them was 'tripped up' by Phrynichus, they must be allowed to atone for the mistake (*λύσαι τὰς πρότερον ἀμαρτίας*). The chorus, therefore, asks those who supported Phrynichus to admit their

Arginousai for abandoning their shipwrecked men, perhaps understanding Φρυνίχου πάλασμα to refer generally to political machinations.

³⁴ Impossible because Phrynichus the politician had been assassinated in 411 and Phrynichus the comic poet was alive and well, competing at the Lenaea of 405. Fritzsche (n. 10), 264 proposes that the scholiast's *τινὲς δὲ τοῦτον κωμικὸν ποιητὴν λέγουσιν* ought to be corrected to *τινὲς δὲ τοῦτον τραγικὸν ποιητὴν λέγουσιν*.

³⁵ S. Halliwell, 'Ancient interpretations of ὄνομαστὶ κωμωδεῖν in Aristophanes', *CQ* 34 (1984), 83–8, at 86–7.

³⁶ On the subjectivity of commentary, see C.S. Kraus, 'Reading commentaries/commentaries as reading', in C.S. Kraus and R.K. Gibson (edd.), *The Classical Commentary: Histories, Practices, Theory* (Leiden / Boston / Cologne, 2002), 1–28.

³⁷ Especially by Chantry (n. 3), 243.

³⁸ See *Ran.* 14–15; *Eq.* 520–4; *Lys.* 158.

³⁹ J. Taillardat, *Les images d'Aristophane: études de langue et de style* (Paris, 1965), 226, 335.

mistake and for the other citizens to forgive them and once again consider them equals (ἐξισῶσαι).

If the *παλαίσματα* were taken to refer to *Antaeus* of Phrynichus *tragicus*, the parabasis would be mocking, and advising us to forgive, those who enjoy the old style of tragedy. In *Antaeus*, the wrestling tricks may have been described in a particularly vivid and enjoyable way, or perhaps even choreographed. During the *agōn* between Aeschylus and Euripides, Euripides accuses his older rival of being a trickster (ἀλαζῶν καὶ φέναξ, 909) who deceives (ἐξηπάτα, 910) his audience with dramatic devices such as staging a silent character and then surprising the spectators with sudden choral lyrics (911–15). The audience fell for such deception, Euripides says, because they were ‘stupid, educated by the plays of Phrynichus’ (μώρους ... παρὰ Φρυνίχῳ τραφέντας, 910). Euripides’ snub is built on a stereotype that audiences of early tragedy were impressed by stage devices rather than by the cerebral content or rhetorical prowess that Euripides claims for his own tragedy. The chorus calls for spectators who enjoyed this old form of tragedy to admit their mistake so that they can once again be counted among the spectators of good taste. This interpretation of the opening lines of the epirrhema is consistent with the overall theme of *Frogs*, which, so far as the audience know at this stage, is the quest for a new-style tragedian (γόνιμος ποιητής, 96–102).

Any spectator with experience in the comic theatre might have expected an attack on a rival comic poet from the parabasis and on this basis alone may have assumed Phrynichus to be Aristophanes’ Lenaeon co-competitor. Further, if the reference to Cleophon in the preceding ode was read as an allusion to the titular character of the comedy of Plato *comicus*—the third entry at the Lenaea of 405—the audience would have been primed to recognize the other competitor of *Frogs* in line 689. In this context *παλαίσματα* would take on the metaphorical sense of rhetorical competitive strategies.⁴⁰ *Frogs* itself furnishes us with an example of the word *πάλαισμα* deployed in this way. When the chorus announces the *agōn* between Euripides and Aeschylus, they characterize them as ‘arguing against each other with wily wrestling moves’ (στρεβλοῖσι παλαίσμασιν ἀντιλογοῦντες, 878). Indeed, the pointed use of the word *πάλαισμα* for the second time also serves to link the fictional *agōn* between poets in *Frogs* to the external *agōn* between Aristophanes and Phrynichus. In the context of the parabasis, *παλαίσματα* would in this case refer to any competitive devices Phrynichus *comicus* had employed (against Aristophanes) in earlier comedies. The chorus would be mocking spectators who were convinced by Phrynichus that his comedy was superior and would be asking them to admit that they were wrong to fall for Phrynichus’ agonistic rhetoric. In the competitive comic context, to admit that it was wrong to like Phrynichus is tantamount to accepting Aristophanes’ superiority and so this advice comically transforms fans of Phrynichus into fans of Aristophanes.

Spectators may also take Phrynichus, as modern scholars do, to be the deceased ex-general and oligarch. The wrestling tricks in this case are a metaphor for the political machinations for which this Phrynichus was famous.⁴¹ The call to forgive those ‘tripped

⁴⁰ Taillardat (n. 39), 335–7.

⁴¹ Thuc. 8.48–51 and *Suda* φ 766 Adler. On the events at Samos, see e.g. E.T. Bloedow, ‘Phrynichus the “intelligent” Athenian’, *AHB* 5 (1991), 89–100. L. Rademacher, *Aristophanes’ Frösche: Einleitung, Text, und Kommentar* (Vienna, 1921), 242 notes that the later saying ‘the wrestling tricks of Phrynichus’ likely derived from the *Frogs* and did not exist prior to the play, lending credence to the ambiguity I argue for.

up' by Phrynichus is the demand for the re-enfranchisement of those exiled for participation in the coup.⁴²

The ambiguity is short-lived: in line 692 and following, it becomes clear that the chorus is indeed making a political point about disenfranchised citizens (ἄτιμον). But for those who perceived the initial ambiguity, the confirmation that Phrynichus is indeed the oligarch serves to reify the competitive joke: the dramatic Phrynichoi, both the *comicus* and the *tragicus*, are comically presented as being as evil as Phrynichus the oligarch.

The Phrynichus jokes of *Frogs* come to a head in the *agōn* between Aeschylus and Euripides. Phrynichus is twice named, invoked on both occasions as inspiration for and rival to Aeschylus. Both passages are metatheatrically inflected. Spectators are thus enabled to see through the dramatic references to Phrynichus *tragicus*, to a joke about the homonymous comic poet present in the theatre. Aristophanes achieves such a metatheatrical atmosphere in the first instance by co-opting the external audience and equating them with the internal underworld crowd watching the Euripides vs Aeschylus debate. In the introduction to the *agōn* (755–817), Aeacus' slave explains the forthcoming contest to Xanthias (755–817): Aeschylus had held the chair of tragedy in the underworld, but when Euripides arrived he claimed the chair for himself and the underworld public demanded a trial. On hearing this, Xanthias asks: 'were there no other allies on Aeschylus' side?' (μετ' Αἰσχύλου δ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἕτεροι ξύμμαχοι, 782), to which the other slave responds: 'good citizens are few and far between down here, just as they are up there' (ὀλίγον τὸ χρηστόν ἐστίν, ὥσπερ ἐνθάδε, 783). The phrase ὥσπερ ἐνθάδε compares and comically equates the fictional underworld audience with the real theatre audience priming the actual spectators to see themselves in any future reference to the underworld audience.

There is such a reference at line 910. Euripides berates Aeschylus (908–10):

τοῦτον δὲ πρῶτ' ἐλέγξω,
ὡς ἦν ἀλαζών καὶ φένας, οἷσις τε τοὺς θεατὰς
ἐξηπάτα, μῶρους λαβὼν παρὰ Φρυνίχῳ τραφέντας.

First I will prove that
He was a pretentious cheat, and show how he deceived
The spectators, since he's inherited a stupid audience educated by the plays of
Phrynichus.

In the *agōn*'s setup, the underworld slave calls the few Aeschylean spectators 'good citizens' (τὸ χρηστόν, 783), while the majority, he says, are Euripides-supporting criminals (772–4). The praise of Aeschylus-fans primes individual spectators to consider themselves among this select few.⁴³ Therefore, when Euripides tells Aeschylus at line

⁴² These men were in fact re-enfranchised by the decree of Patrocleides (*Andoc. De mysteriis* 77–9). This fact, together with a notice in the ancient *Life of Aristophanes* (K.–A. *Test.* 1.35–9) that tells us the playwright received the honour of a crown because of 'what he said about the disenfranchised' (εἰπὼν ἐκεῖνα τὰ ἐν τοῖς βατράχους περὶ τῶν ἀτιμῶν) in the parabasis, has convinced many scholars about the exclusively political nature of the Phrynichus reference. On the decree, see A.H. Sommerstein, 'Kleophon and the re-staging of *Frogs*', in A.H. Sommerstein, *Talking about Laughter and Other Studies in Greek Comedy* (Oxford, 2009), 254–71. For scepticism that Aristophanes was granted a reperformance and honours because of a political message in the parabasis, see R.M. Rosen, 'Reconsidering the reperformance of Aristophanes' *Frogs*', *TiC* 7 (2015), 237–56.

⁴³ Sommerstein, 179 on *Ran.* 273–4 notes that such mockery of the audience is 'effective and safe because each individual spectator assumes that it does not apply to *him*'. See also R.M. Rosen,

910 that his audience are stupid because he inherited them from Phrynichus, the audience, tricked into identifying with Aeschylus' audience, understand themselves to be implicated in the accusation. In the contemporary metatheatrical realm, it is not the tragic but the comic Phrynichus who has most recently 'educated' the audience. As in the parabasis, the implication is that any spectator who allowed himself or herself to be 'educated' by Phrynichus *comicus* is stupid (μώρους). There is an unprovable, but intriguing, further possible layer to this joke: if the *Muses* of Phrynichus *comicus* was performed before *Frogs*, the actor playing Aeschylus will have literally inherited an audience who had just watched a Phrynichus play.

The culmination of Aristophanes' anti-Phrynichus joke is found in the penultimate contest between Aeschylus and Euripides over musical inspiration and the quality of lyric composition.⁴⁴ Euripides accuses Aeschylus of producing monotonously repetitive lyrics. Aeschylus responds (1298–300):

ἀλλ' οὖν ἐγὼ μὲν εἰς τὸ καλὸν ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦ
ἤνεγκον αὐθ', ἵνα μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν Φρυνίχῳ
λειμῶνα Μουσῶν ἱερὸν ὀφθῆιν δρέπων·

But I got [my songs] from a good source and put them to
good use—so that I not be seen reaping the same
holy meadow of the Muses as Phrynichus.

Aeschylus articulates an antagonistic relationship with Phrynichus *tragicus*. He highlights his own originality at his rival's expense, but does so in the context of an anxiety that an audience might suspect him of copying from Phrynichus. The implication of ἵνα μὴ ... ὀφθῆιν is that he does in fact 'reap the same meadow' as Phrynichus, but he attempts to competitively surpass him by adding other songs from good sources.⁴⁵ The claim Aeschylus makes here vis-à-vis Phrynichus *tragicus* is comparable to that made by Aristophanes in the prologue against Phrynichus *comicus*.

An aspect of this passage, however, has been overlooked: Phrynichus *comicus* was competing against *Frogs* with a comedy entitled *Muses*. It is difficult to assume that an audience hearing Aeschylus mention the Muses of Phrynichus *tragicus*, would not think also of the *Muses* of Phrynichus *comicus*, a comedy whose plot was, like that of *Frogs*, literary.⁴⁶ Moreover, in the parody of Euripidean lyric that follows, Aeschylus invites a Muse of Euripides to accompany him in his performance.⁴⁷ I argue that we ought to

'Badness and intentionality in Aristophanes' *Frogs*', in I. Sluiter and R.M. Rosen (edd.), *Kakos: Badness and Anti-Value in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden, 2008), 143–68, at 164.

⁴⁴ On this part of the *agōn* (*Ran.* 1249–364) in general, see e.g. B. Zimmerman, 'Parodia metrica nelle *Rane* di Aristofane', *SIFC* 81 (1988), 35–47; A. Bélis, 'Aristophane, "Grenouilles"', v. 1249–1364: Eschyle et Euripide μελοποιοί', *REG* 104 (1991), 31–51; E.K. Borthwick, 'New interpretations of Aristophanes' *Frogs* 1249–1328', *Phoenix* 48 (1994), 21–41; E. Scharffenberger, '*Deinon eribremetas*: the sound and sense of Aeschylus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*', *CW* 100 (2007), 229–49, at 241–4; and M. De Simone, 'The "Lesbian" Muse in tragedy: Euripides μελοποιός in Aristoph. *Ra.* 1301–28', *CQ* 58 (2008), 479–90.

⁴⁵ Dover, 345: 'Aeschylus does not boast of adherence to immemorial tradition, but of his own originality.'

⁴⁶ Harvey, 103; Stama 191; E. Hall, *The Theatrical Cast of Athens: Interactions between Ancient Greek Drama and Society* (Oxford, 2006), 174–5.

⁴⁷ Usually supposed to be dressed as a prostitute. E.g. Sommerstein, 274, but there is some debate as to whether she would have appeared old and past her prime (Radermacher [n. 41], 320; Dover, 352) or as a youthful seductress (Borthwick [n. 44], 27). See also M. Di Marco, 'La Musa di Euripide: sulla parodia dell'Ipsipile euripidea nelle *Rane* di Aristofane', in M. Di Marco and E. Tagliaferro [edd.],

explore, rather than ignore, the agonistic possibilities inherent in the coincidences of Muses and Phrynichoi in this passage.

In considering whether there could be an intertextual relationship between *Frogs* and *Muses*, it is first necessary to deal with the feasibility of this scenario given that both comedies premiered on the same occasion. It is impossible now to reconstruct rehearsal processes or pre-festival opportunities for viewing a rival's work.⁴⁸ Internal evidence from other comedies does, however, strongly suggest that a poet could plausibly gain enough insight into a rival performance at the same festival to parody or otherwise engage with it.⁴⁹ In 414, Aristophanes' *Birds* competed against Phrynichus' *Hermit* and the plays shared a theme: the fantastical escape from Athens.⁵⁰ Both staged the astronomer Meton and the stock character of Heracles.⁵¹ There is even a verbal parallel in a quip about Nicias.⁵² While no trace remains here of any agonistic attitude between poets, these parallel scenes suggest more than coincidence.⁵³

With only five tantalizing fragments remaining of *Muses*, the plot lies beyond our grasp.⁵⁴ We can be sure, however, that the comedy featured the Muses. The vast majority of plural titles name their comedy's chorus and this is the likeliest scenario for Phrynichus' play too. The chorus could either have been individualized (and therefore featured a distinct Muse of Euripides) or have been represented as a generic group of Muses. Harvey maintains that they could not have been individualized because 'so many idiosyncratic Muses might have presented him with material too rich to cope with'.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, a comparison with the individualized choruses in Aristophanes'

Semeion Philias: Studi di letteratura greca offerti ad Agostino Masaracchia [Rome, 2009], 119–46); and Hall (n. 46), 173–4, who argues that the Muse is a personification of a 'qualitative aesthetic evaluation' focalized from Aeschylus' point of view. Much of the debate on this passage focusses on interpreting the phrase οὐκ λεσβιάζεν (1308), on which see De Simone (n. 44).

⁴⁸ The *proagōn* would no doubt have been an occasion for viewing a rival's work, though we know very little about it: E. Csapo and W.J. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama* (Ann Arbor, 1994), 105, 109–10. Aristophanes may also have been able to view a script or rehearsal of Phrynichus' play and there must have been some interaction between the actors, producers, stage-hands, etc., who worked on different plays.

⁴⁹ Harvey, 102–3.

⁵⁰ P. Ceccarelli, 'Life among the savages and escape from the city', in Harvey and Wilkins, 453–72, at 458–63.

⁵¹ Meton: *Av.* 997–1019, *Hermit* fr. 22 K.–A. Even the context of his entry looks similar: in *Birds* he enters as one in a series of nuisances trying to contribute to the new city; in *Hermit*, Meton also enters as part of a series of characters (τίς δ' ἔστιν ὁ μετὰ ταῦτα), each with something to contribute (φρονιζόν). See I. Ruffell, 'The world turned upside down: utopia and utopianism in the fragments of Old Comedy', in D. Harvey and J. Wilkins (edd.), *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy* (London, 2000), 473–506, at 494. Heracles: *Av.* 1574–692, *Hermit* fr. 24 K.–A. ἐκεῖ suggests a stage-presence, though it is admittedly plausible that another character is being referred to as a Heracles. ὀλιγόσitos ('only eating a little') seems to be an ironic thematization. Heracles' appetite is mocked also in *Birds*.

⁵² *Hermit* fr. 23 K.–A., *Av.* 362–3; Ruffell (n. 51), 494.

⁵³ Consider also the case of Ameipsias' *Comus* competing against Aristophanes' *Clouds* in 423: both dealt with philosophy and intellectualism, and featured Socrates on stage (C. Carey, 'Old Comedy and the sophists', in D. Harvey and J. Wilkins [edd.], *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy* [London, 2000], 419–36, at 420–3).

⁵⁴ Meineke attempted to reconstruct the plot (A. Meineke, *Fragmenta comicorum Graecorum. Vol. 1: Historiam criticam comicorum Graecorum continens* [Berlin, 1839], 157 and A. Meineke, *Fragmenta comicorum Graecorum. Vol. 2: Fragmenta poetarum comoediae antiquae continens. Pars I* [Berlin, 1839], 593). For critiques of his reconstruction, see Harvey, 100–3; Stama, 193–6.

⁵⁵ Harvey, 108.

Birds and Eupolis' *Cities* demonstrates the concept's feasibility.⁵⁶ In *Birds*, four birds are introduced at length with accompanying jokes at their expense and remarks on their costumes (267–93). The rest are simply named as they come on stage.⁵⁷ Throughout the rest of the play, they act as a single undifferentiated chorus. A similar gimmick may have been used in *Muses*: the Muses would have been individually identified in the parodos, and several may have been singled out for more extensive mockery, but for the rest of the play they act in sync as a single group. If Phrynichus' play did feature an identifiable Muse of Euripides, the joke in *Frogs* would be obvious: Aristophanes would have co-opted one of Phrynichus' own chorus-members into being the physical representation of the degraded lyrics of a poet about to lose a dramatic *agōn*. For the Muse, sexualized, probably dressed as a prostitute, clanging some potsherds, is clearly not a flattering anthropomorphization of Euripidean music.⁵⁸ It is also possible, of course, that there was no individualized Muse of Euripides in Phrynichus' play; this would not preclude Aristophanes' audience from detecting a parody of Phrynichus at *Ran.* 1299–324. In this case, Aristophanes would have transformed one of Phrynichus' generic Muses into his own specific Euripidean Muse, thereby one-upping his rival by giving a plain old chorus member a starring role in his own play. In both configurations the joke would naturally work best if there were some additional verbal or sartorial parallel between Aristophanes' prostitute Muse and Phrynichus' chorus.

While the precise dynamics of Aristophanes' parody of Phrynichus are now impossible to reconstruct, the verbal reference to 'Phrynichus' and 'Muses' at line 1299 together with the Lenaeon context is sufficient to validate discussion of a parodic joke here. It is not clear whether Aristophanes' or Phrynichus' play was performed first, but the parody of *Muses* in *Frogs* would work even if *Frogs* preceded its competitor. In that case Aristophanes' parody would function as a form of procatlepsis.⁵⁹ By this point in the comedy, the audience has been sufficiently prepared to see references to Phrynichus *comicus* in any mention of 'Phrynichus'; even if they had not yet seen Phrynichus' *Muses*, they would have known the title and perhaps even a little about the plot. They may still have recognized, therefore, that Aristophanes' scene was a pre-emptive parody of *Muses*. On this argument, when the audience actually saw Phrynichus' play, it would have appeared as a worse version of Aristophanes' scene.

The double reference to the comic and tragic Phrynichoi at line 1299 comically merges the competitive dynamics of real and fictional playwrights. Aeschylus' historical rivalry with Phrynichus *tragicus* merges into Aristophanes' historical rivalry with Phrynichus *comicus*. Aristophanes does indeed, elsewhere in the *agōn*, imbue Aeschylus with something of his own poetic persona, and so it is unsurprising to see their confluence here.⁶⁰ Then there is the fictional rivalry between Aeschylus and

⁵⁶ *Av.* 267–308. Eupolis' *Cities* fr. 245–7 K.–A. (perhaps also fr. 244). See also A.M. Wilson, 'The individualized chorus in Old Comedy', *CQ* 27 (1977), 278–83. The inflation of the traditional nine Muses to the twenty-four needed for a comic chorus does not pose a problem: there are other tragic and comic choruses made up of mythological groups whose number has been increased to fill a chorus, including Euripides' *Supplikes* (seven mothers of the seven against Thebes increased to fifteen), Aristophanes' and Cratinus' *Seasons* (three or four increased to twenty-four) and Hermippus' *Fates* (three increased to twenty-four). See Harvey, 105–7.

⁵⁷ With the first four birds, twenty-eight are named in all. The first four are therefore probably not part of the chorus proper. Wilson (n. 56), 282 suggests that they appear on the roof of the stage building.

⁵⁸ Hall (n. 46), 173–4. See n. 47 above.

⁵⁹ With thanks to *CQ*'s reader for this point.

⁶⁰ Biles, 240–56. Biles argues that throughout the *agōn* Aristophanes uses Aeschylus as his onstage

Euripides. If the rivalries are mapped onto each other, Phrynichus merges with Euripides, Aeschylus' fictional rival—an association made all the stronger by the fact that Euripides' Muse is represented as one of Phrynichus' Muses. By associating Euripides (the loser of the internal *agōn*) with Phrynichus *comicus*, Aristophanes comically projects the defeat of Phrynichus *comicus* in the external contest of that year's Lenaea. Aristophanes' intergeneric rivalry with Euripides is also embedded in the comic conflation of Aeschylus–Aristophanes vs Euripides–Phrynichus *tragicus*–Phrynichus *comicus*.⁶¹

CONCLUSION

In the opening of *Frogs*, Aristophanes mocks his co-competitor at the Lenaea for putting on stage overused baggage-carrying routines like those of Lycis and Ameipsias. The implication of the accusation is that Phrynichus has mindlessly copied a stale sequence from bad poets without playing the comic game by adding something new or critically engaging with it. To an extent, the mockery is ironic since Aristophanes himself criticizes Phrynichus' baggage-carrying while himself staging the same routine. The implicit claim, however, is that Aristophanes stages other poets' comic scenes better than they do. This claim is re-presented in the staging of Phrynichus' Muse at the end of *Frogs*: Aristophanes takes a unique character from the very play competing against him and uses that character in the service of enacting Euripides'—and by association projecting Phrynichus'—failure and defeat. The subtle pair of anti-Phrynichus jokes at lines 689 and 910 also foreshadow Phrynichus' failure at the Lenaea. Phrynichus *comicus* is equated with his namesakes, the tragedian whose audiences were stupid, whose fans had bad taste, who was surpassed by his rival Aeschylus; and a hated politician, who had corrupted the Athenian people. These jokes enact a transformation of the theatre audience from Phrynichus fans to Aristophanes fans. The call to forgive those 'tripped up by the wrestling-tricks of Phrynichus' imagines an audience deceived by the comic Phrynichus into deeming him a talented poet—like those deceived by the tragedian in earlier days, and more recently by the politician. It also imagines them forgiven and brought back into the fold of Aristophanes fans.

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voice, marked above all by the fact that Aeschylus delivers a parabolic speech during the *agōn*, which stands in for the lack of authorial declarations in the parabasis proper of *Frogs*. On the ways in which Aristophanes imbues the character of Aeschylus with his own poetic persona, see especially lines 243–50.

⁶¹ On Aristophanes' rivalry with Euripides, see recently M. Farmer, *Tragedy on the Comic Stage* (Oxford, 2017) and C. Jendza, *Paracomedy: Appropriations of Comedy in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 2020).