

**Aristophanes' *Frogs***  
**(translations by Matthew Dillon)**

***Frogs* 1006-1088**

**Aeschylus**

I am indignant at this encounter, and it gripes my guts,  
if I have to argue against this fellow—but so that he can't say I was helpless,—  
Answer me, why should one admire a poet?

**Euripides**

For cleverness, and giving good advice, since we improve  
the people in the cities.

**Aeschylus**

So if you haven't done this,  
but turned them from fine and decent types into villains,  
what will you say you deserve to suffer?

**Dionysus**

Death: don't ask him.

**Aeschylus**

Consider now what kind of men he first received from me  
if they were generous and six feet tall, no runaway citizens,  
no loafers, rascals, like now, nor miscreants,  
but men who breathed spears and lances, white-crested helmets,  
and headgear, and greaves and sevenfold oxhide tempers.

**Dionysus**

This is really getting bad: he'll crush me with his helmet-making.

**Euripides**

And what did you do to teach men to be so noble?

**Dionysus**

Speak, Aeschylus; don't be a stubborn highfalutin' sorehead.

**Aeschylus**

I composed a drama filled with Mars.

**Dionysus**

Which one?

**Aeschylus**

The Seven against [Thebes](#).  
Everyone who saw it fell in love with being fierce.

**Dionysus**

That was a bad thing you did, since you made the Thebans more courageous in war. For that at least get whacked.

**Aeschylus**

You could have trained for this as well, but you weren't so inclined. Then, producing The Persians after that, I taught them to yearn to beat the enemy; this finest feat did I honor.

**Dionysus**

Well, I rejoiced when you lamented for the death of Darius, and the chorus straightway clapped their hands like this and said, "Ee-ow!"

**Aeschylus**

This is the stuff poets should work on. Just look right from the start how useful the noble race of poets has been.

For Orpheus taught us rites and to refrain from killing,  
And Musaeus taught the cures of illness and oracles, and Hesiod  
the working of the land, harvest seasons, plowing. Divine Homer,  
Where did he get honor and glory if not from teaching useful things,  
battle lines, courageous deeds, men's armory?

**Dionysus**

But I bet he didn't  
teach Pantacles, that clumsy oaf. The other day, when he was parading,  
He fastened his helmet on first and then was going to tie on the crest!

**Aeschylus**

And many other brave men too, of which the hero Lamachos was one;  
from Homer, my brain composed many great feats of valor,  
of Patrocluses, lion-hearted Teucrians, so I could rouse the citizenry  
to strive to equal them, when it hears the call to arms.  
But by God, I never created whores like Phaedra and Sthenoboea  
No one's ever known me to write about any woman in love.

**Euripides**

No sir, you've got nothing to do with Aphrodite.

**Aeschylus**

And may she stay away!  
But she settled down on you and yours in force,  
and destroyed your very self.

**Dionysus**

By God, that she did.  
What you used to do to other mens's wives, you got hit with yourself.

**Euripides**

And how have my Sthenoboeas harmed the state, you wretch?

**Aeschylus**

Since you persuaded noble ladies, wives of noble men  
to drink hemlock out of shame because of people like that Bellerophon of yours.

**Euripides**

So did I make up some non-existent story about Phaedra?

**Aeschylus**

No, it existed. But a poet should conceal wickedness, not bring it forward and teach it. For little boys  
have a teacher who advises them, and grown-ups have poets.  
We have a serious obligation to speak of honorable things.

**Euripides**

So, if you speak to us of Lycabettuses  
and the heights of Parnassuses, this is “teaching honorable things”,  
when a poet ought to speak in human terms?

**Aeschylus**

You fiend! It is the compelling power  
of great thoughts and ideas to engender phrases of equal size.  
And anyway it is proper that demigods speak in grander terms.  
For they also wear much finer clothes.  
What I so nobly exhibited you defiled.

**Euripides**

What did I do?

**Aeschylus**

First you dressed the kingly types in rags, so  
they'd look pitiful to the audience.

**Euripides**

And what harm did I do by that?

**Aeschylus**

Because of that, no wealthy man was willing to fund the navy,  
but wrapped in rags he weeps and claims he's poor.

**Dionysus**

By Demeter, yes, but wearing a tunic of pure wool underneath!  
And if he fooled 'em with that story, he'd pop up in the fish market.

**Aeschylus**

Then again, you taught them to practice drivel and gossip,  
which emptied the gymnasia and ruined the butts  
of our prattling youths, and persuaded the Paralian crews  
to argue with their officers. But when I was alive,  
they knew nothing but to call for grits and sing Yo-ho!

**Dionysus**

Yessir, and fart in the face of their rowing mate,  
dump on their mess partner, go ashore and rob someone.  
But now he argues and doesn't row, and sails to and fro.

**Aeschylus**

Of what crimes is he not guilty?  
Didn't he show pimps,  
women giving birth in temples,  
sleeping with their brothers,  
claiming that life is not life?  
And then our state  
is filled with these bureaucrats  
and oafish democratic apes  
always cheating the people,  
and there's no one able to carry the torch  
any more because of lack of training.