A SHORT HISTORY OF GREEK LITERATURE

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island, where the Greeks want to abandon him a second time. Finally, Oedipus, at the very height of his exaltation, is left alone to face a death only he may witness.

This solitude in fact corresponds to the greatness of the hero; he is condemned to it by his insistence on an absolute. At the same time, he finds in it a sort of obligation to rise above himself with renewed strength.

Even on this point, Sophocles leaves us with an antithesis. On the one hand are the heroes, in all their greatness; on the other, their more human intimates. Naturally the spotlight is on the heroes; the brilliance, the glory are theirs. But are those who try in vain to sway them necessarily wrong? Is Ajax right to kill himself, to abandon Tecmessa, his son, and the sailors of his fleet? Is the pliancy of the more tolerant Odysseus, who can forget injuries, less praiseworthy? And is Philoctetes right to refuse so obstinately to go to Troy? The heroes, in truth, are limiting cases, proof of the nobility that can coexist with the cruelest of trials. They are not models for our emulation, any more than Sophocles' plays are disembodied sermons. They are expressions of his faith in man.

E · The Beauties of Sophocles' World

For a pessimist, Sophocles radiates a rare confidence in everything beautiful. This side of him is often revealed in his choral odes. What I have said thus far about his arrangement of scenes, his lucid dialogue, and his forceful antitheses gives an idea of his dramatic art as expressed in the spoken parts of the plays. But I have given no hint of the beauty of his great odes, which are less directly related to the action than those of Aeschylus, yet for that very reason reveal more of the poet himself. Sophocles' odes are hardly divorced from the action; but in most cases they translate the themes of the preceding episode into more universal terms, reflecting Sophocles' propensity for combining the particular and the general. In *Antigone*, for example, after the announcement that Polyneices has been buried in spite of the royal edict, the chorus sings of the greatness of human accomplishments but recalls that men are bound to obey laws; when Antigone's guilt has been discovered, it sings of the ease with which disaster strikes; after the scene with Haemon, it describes the universal power of love; and when Antigone has gone to her death, it recalls the deaths of figures from mythology. In each case there is the same broadening of focus—the same echo, in a more serene key, of the preceding action.

In this way Sophocles' odes, though far shorter than those of Aeschylus, open up broad perspectives in which we can glimpse the poet's tastes and convictions. An example is the ode in the *Antigone* that begins, "Many are the wonders in this world, but none is greater than man" (332ff.). There is no finer statement in Greek of man's preeminence, no greater praise for his discoveries and creative intelligence. In the spirit of his age, with its faith in progress, Sophocles evokes the whole series of human inventions, closing (in a

vein more characteristic of his own thought) with the warning that if man uses his intelligence for ill, or against the law, it becomes ruinous.

Even expressions of grief and pain testify indirectly to Sophocles' love of life. When he wrote the poignant ode in *Oedipus at Colonus* deploring old age, the poet was in his nineties (the play was produced posthumously); it is a bitter piece, claiming that early death is best, and is often cited as evidence of Sophocles' pessimism. But behind the bitterness we can glimpse a sorrow at the loss of what made life worth living. In describing old age as "loathsome, impotent, unsociable, friendless" (1235–37), the poet may be suggesting nostalgia for the company, friendships, and happy life he had enjoyed as a younger man.

In this last tragedy, Sophocles even finds room for praise of his native Athens or, more precisely, his Attica. Oedipus comes there to die, and Sophocles takes advantage of the opportunity to describe the beauties of the Attic countryside—birds, growing things, and streams—which, together with the beneficent presence of the gods, inspire a great sense of peace. "In this land of good horses, stranger, you have found the best retreat on earth. This is white Colonus, favorite haunt of the sweet nightingale; she loves to sing in our green vales, amid the dark ivy, inviolable bower of the gods, sheltered by its thick growth of leaves from the sun and from every storm wind" (668ff.). If Sophocles is elsewhere the tragedian who most insistently recalls the fragility of human happiness and portrays heroism at its highest pitch, the Colonus ode gives us a glimpse of the happier man suggested by his biography. In the contrast he so consistently draws between man's vulnerability and his greatness, the abiding impression is that vulnerability is not paramount. The mood of Sophocles' plays is not one of despair, and he is no more "pessimistic" about man's worth than he is about the beauty of life.

II · EURIPIDES

The same cannot be said for Euripides. Born less than fifteen years after Sophocles, he nonetheless belonged to a different generation, whose minds were molded in a different moral climate. Intellectually he belongs to the age of the Sophists, and politically to the unsettled age of the Peloponnesian War.

A · Life of Euripides

Euripides was born in Salamis, almost certainly in 485. His contemporaries made fun of his humble origins, but their claims are not to be taken at face value. In any case he seems to have been dogged by misfortune. He was twice married, unhappily each time, and his circle of friends was small. He took no part in politics; and as for his plays, if they attracted much notice, they were also much criticized. The earliest were staged in 455, but not until thirteen years later did he win first prize; after this victory he won only three more in thirty-six years. His style was innovative, and he took liberties that must have shocked many spectators; Aristophanes says as much in *The Frogs*.

Eventually this uneasy truce between poet and city was broken for once and all: in 408, toward the end of the Peloponnesian War, Euripides left Athens to settle in Macedonia, at the court of King Archelaus. There he died in 406, far from his doomed city.

B · Works of Euripides

Euripides is credited with ninety-two plays; of these, eighteen tragedies (including the *Rhesus*, whose authorship has been questioned) and one satyr play have survived. The rest are known to us only through brief fragments, some quoted by ancient authors, some found on papyrus. The satyr play, *The Cyclops*, is undated. (The satyrs are the Cyclops's slaves; the dialogue is lively but joyless.) We have dates for eight of the tragedies: *Alcestis* (438—our only Euripidean play from before the Peloponnesian War), *Medea* (431), *Hippolytus* (428), *The Trojan Women* (415), *Helen* (412), *The Phoenician Women* (410), *Orestes* (408), and two that were staged posthumously: *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *The Bacchae*. The other plays fall somewhere between 431 and 412, so that all we have of Euripides' production is marked by the war; and it not infrequently bears the stamp of contemporary history, either in its details or in its impetus. A brief overview of the earlier plays will give some idea of the range of Euripides' themes.

The *Alcestis* is one of a kind. It was staged in place of the usual satyr play (hence, perhaps, the playwright's willingness to portray Heracles carousing). It is a genuine tragedy, however: Alcestis agrees to die in place of her husband Admetus; and it is only thanks to Heracles, who overcomes Death, that she returns to life and to her husband. The young wife's sacrifice is moving in its nobility, but most of the characters, including Admetus and especially his father Pheres, are quite unheroic. Despite its uniqueness, then, the *Alcestis* displays the two distinguishing features of all Euripides' plays—pathos and realism.

With the *Medea*, a new and capital theme emerges: the power of passion. Medea, abandoned by Jason, takes her revenge by killing her young rival and then cutting her own children's throats. But she does not do so without suffering and hesitation; the treatment of erotic passion brings with it the sudden psychological reversals that were to remain such an important feature of Western drama, including modern drama.

A completely different theme animates the *Heracleidae* ("Children of Heracles"), produced in 430 or sometime between 430 and 427. This is a patriotic piece, written to the greater glory of Athens. Demophon, king of Athens, welcomes the children of Heracles and shelters them from the hatred of Eurystheus. But a secondary theme recalls the *Alcestis*, for Euripides adds an account of voluntary sacrifice to the legend: in order to satisfy a divine decree, the young Macaria offers to die in place of her brothers.

The *Hippolytus* returns to the theme of erotic passion first exploited in the *Medea*. Phaedra, wife of Theseus, falls in love with Theseus's son Hippolytus; when her passion is revealed and repulsed, she accuses him falsely and kills herself. Theseus, believing her, pronounces a curse, which kills the innocent Hippolytus. In an earlier and bolder play, Euripides had made Phaedra confess her love to Hippolytus in person (as Racine was later to do). In the surviving play, the two do not even appear on stage together; but Phaedra's inner struggles, like those of Medea, are described with extraordinary power. The play opens with a speech of Aphrodite and closes with an appearance by Artemis; but the real struggle between these rival goddesses of love and purity takes place in Phaedra's heart.

The variously dated *Andromache* (between 429 and 417) again deals with passion. Andromache, who has become the slave of Neoptolemus, finds herself threatened by the jealous Hermione and her father Menelaus; they plan to kill Andromache together with her son. When they fail, Hermione fears Neoptolemus's vengeance and persuades Orestes to kill him. Threats and violence fill the play; Hermione, yielding to each of her impulses in turn, moves from arrogance to abject fear. At the same time, this is one of the plays in which Euripides uses the myth of the sack of Troy to express his deep pity for the victims of war and for the other evils that accompany war.

The same pity prompted Euripides to write the *Hecuba* (ca. 424) and, somewhat later, *The Trojan Women*. Hecuba, reduced from queen of Troy to slave of the Greeks, sees her daughter Polyxena sacrificed (though Polyxena accepts death, making her sacrifice almost a voluntary one) and avenges the murder of her son Polydorus by putting out the eyes of the traitor responsible for it. Thus the horrors of war are examined side by side with the human appetite for vengeance.

The plot of the *Heracles* (between 424 and 415) includes a shocking double reversal. It opens with one of Euripides' favorite effects—the pathos of weakness: a tyrant is on the point of murdering Heracles' family. In a coup de théâtre, Heracles arrives on the scene to save them; but a second coup de théâtre follows almost immediately: Heracles is stricken with madness and kills his own children. Euripides makes the catastrophe all the more poignant by putting the madness of Heracles at the end of all his labors. Like Sophocles' Ajax, Heracles returns to his senses and is about to kill himself; but Theseus manages to dissuade him, and he discovers a new form of courage in the will to live.

After *The Suppliant Women* (ca. 424–21—a patriotic play like the *Heracleidae* but with a strong pacifist message), come a series of plays that I do not have room to discuss in detail. In most of these the plots are increasingly complex—full of recognitions, tricks, and surprises—and take precedence over other elements. To this group belong the *Ion* (ca. 418–14?), whose young hero, pure as Hippolytus and an acolyte of Apollo, thinks he has found his long-lost father and instead finds his mother, after a sequence of unsuccessful murder attempts; *Iphigenia in Tauris* (ca. 415–12?), whose heroine recognizes her brother just as she is about to sacrifice him to Artemis

the vicissitudes of contemporary history, so freely reflected in his tragedies. Hence the sometimes overingenious attempts of scholars (E. Delebecque and R. Goossens, among others) to ferret out endless topical allusions in his work. The only real constant is his open-mindedness. He is severely critical of any character who treats aliens or slaves with contempt: in politics, as elsewhere, he takes the side of those who suffer.

The same open-mindedness reappears in other areas, where Euripides' criticism is even less restrained. In the literary sphere such criticism can be amusing; for example, he enjoys finding fault with a scene from Aeschylus, or replying to a scene from Sophocles. He can also be critical of the myths, which brings us to the question of his religious beliefs. His characters voice doubts, more or less irreverent in tone, running the gamut from discreet reservations to frank denials. An example is the denial that Aphrodite, "the Cyprian goddess," led Paris to Menelaus's palace: "Shameless folly is always 'the Cyprian' to mortal eyes!" (*The Trojan Women* 989). Euripides is especially critical of myths that put the gods in a bad light. His Heracles observes, "I cannot accept the idea that the gods yield to wrongful loves . . . A god who is true god has no needs; the tales that say otherwise are the wretched inventions of poets" (*Heracles* 1341ff.). Criticism of this kind is a reflection of new ideas, which are still easier to recognize when the gods invoked become those of the philosophers—as in Hecuba's prayer: "O you who uphold the earth and on earth have your throne, whoever you may be, insoluble riddle, Zeus, whether you be unbending law of nature or human intelligence, I worship you" (*The Trojan Women* 884ff.). Some Euripidean characters, like the bolder thinkers of the day, denied the very existence of the gods (as in the lost *Bellerophon*). Yet, at the same time, what tenderness we find in the Artemis of the *Hippolytus*, what elevated moral faith in the Theonoe of the *Helen*, what mystic ecstasy in *The Bacchae*! Euripides' "irreligion" is matched by a purified religious fervor, quite different from ordinary Greek religious feeling. But what does Euripides himself believe? What does he *not* believe? Does he even think the gods determine the course of events? Individual gods—Aphrodite, Hera, Dionysus—intervene in his plays, of course; but the idea of a divine will guiding the world has disappeared, and chance has taken its place. Depending on circumstances, the playwright emphasizes the power of a god or the sheer uncertainty of fortune.

The questioning of this new era in Greek thought extended to the moral sphere as well. Can virtue be taught? Does education count for more than heredity? These are among the questions Euripides formulates. In so doing, he sometimes entertains new and daring propositions; for example, the farmer who is Electra's husband is portrayed as incarnating a virtue many of the highly placed characters lack. As the fifth century approached its end, every aspect of life raised new questions, for everything was changing. Which life is preferable, the active or the contemplative? (The characters in *Antiope* debated this issue.) And what of sports? What of women? The rationalists in

Euripides' plays shower women with abuse; but some of his women characters are admirable. The truth is that Euripides touches on almost every imaginable issue, yet never pleads a cause himself; he has his characters plead them all, as the occasion dictates, which is quite a different matter.

The one feeling that does seem to reflect his own deepest inclinations—and that emerges more and more strongly in the later plays—is the pessimism his work conveys. Growing out of his pity for suffering, his disgust with politics, and his philosophic doubts, this pessimism not only prompted (in all likelihood) his own flight from Athens but also underlies his characters' fondest dreams of escape to a far country, or of retreat into art and poetry. By interweaving this pessimism, as conveyed by choral odes and the laments of victims, with the tensions generated by dramatic action, Euripides achieved a kind of counterpoint that is the most original feature of his art.

E • The Art of Euripides

The vision behind Euripides' work as a whole finds expression in certain technical innovations. Innovations of this order affect the action and its complexity. As the number of actors increased, so did the number of characters. Aside from the chorus, Aeschylus's *Seven against Thebes* required only the king and a series of messengers. *The Phoenician Women*, which deals with the same subject, brings in Oedipus's entire family: first Polyneices and Jocasta, then Antigone, Creon, Creon's son Menoeceus, the prophet Teiresias, and, finally, Oedipus himself. Simplicity is replaced by complexity, continuity by variety.

Nor did Euripides hesitate to reshape mythic materials with a free hand, adding sudden reversals at will and involving his characters in them. By such means he created new and action-filled plots. In his work we may recognize a true dramatic *technique* in the modern sense of the word, and with it a number of typical scenes, or types of scenes, that contribute to this new art. He was responsible for the introduction of long narrative prologues, designed to explain his plot innovations to the audience. As for conclusions, these strained and complicated plots would often be incapable of resolution without the ultimate appearance of a god—the deus ex machina. Between prologue and deus ex machina, both used with great freedom, he could give the action whatever course he chose. There too he relied on typical scenes; the presentation of suppliants grouped about an altar, for example, suited his taste for pathos, as did messenger speeches. Threats of murder and scenes of recognition had similar effects. By contrast, the debate scene, or *agon*, found in almost every play reflects his intellectualizing tendencies.

All this left little room for lyric poetry; indeed, Euripides' choral odes are quite short. What is more, with the exception of *The Bacchae*, his choruses have little to do with his plots. Often their songs are laments or lyrical effusions that would work just as well elsewhere. At the same time, in his concern to portray emotion, Euripides composed songs for his actors with con-

ten the effect is heightened by the presence of children, as in *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Andromache*, and *The Suppliant Women*—not to mention the children of Heracles, whom we see lying dead around him, or Astyanax in *The Trojan Women*, whose body is brought back to his grandmother in a scene in which cries of anguish drive home the horror: "Oh unlucky head, how cruelly the walls Apollo raised for your fathers have shorn the curls your mother loved to arrange on your brow and cover with kisses! The shining blood that seeps from this shattered skull . . . I cannot speak of the horror of it! Oh hands in which I loved to see your father's hands, you lie before me broken and lifeless! (1173-79). Memories of a happy past mingle with the brutal description of death, in a contrast that is profoundly Euripidean.

All the resources of Euripides' craft, then, contribute to the pathos of his work, which corresponds to a deep—and a deeply pessimistic—impulse in the author. Aeschylus had seen war as an ardent struggle in which the just are victorious; Euripides sees it as an evil caused by human folly, which means suffering for all. Sophocles had celebrated human heroism; Euripides often portrays men as cowardly, ambitious, or hypocritical—when they are not the playthings of passion. He sees even the gods as ruled by jealousies that make them unjust (Aphrodite in *Hippolytus*, Hera in *Heracles*) or, at the very least, cruel (Dionysus in *The Bacchae*).

The only relief in this bleak picture of the world is provided by the figures of young people who are still innocent, like Hippolytus or Ion, or who accept death with a kind of serene renunciation—Macaria, Polyxena, Menoeceus, Iphigenia. And this is the exception that proves the rule; the only ray of light in Euripides' plays shines from beyond life. More and more, in his later plays, we get a sense of the desirability of flight—from the city, from mankind, from suffering.

The qualities I have cited would be enough to suggest the originality of Euripides; but there are others, no less modern, which may seem almost contradictory to the first group. For Euripides' theater of suffering is also a theater of ideas.

D · Ideas and Doubts

In his own time, Euripides was essentially a "modern." His studies of passion, his insistence on human weakness, and his realism are all clear indications of that modernity. Because he was receptive to the intellectual currents of his time, and acquainted with some of the Sophists, he also endowed his characters with the Sophistic art of debating any issue; and he let the new ideas, problems, and doubts made fashionable by this school of thought surface in his plays.

There are thus two sides to Euripides' characterization: the most painful of emotions may alternate with the most elaborate discussion of ideas. From Medea, for example, we hear first exclamations—almost shrieks—and then, after her entrance, a long monologue on the condition of women. When Hecuba hears the report of her daughter's noble death, she wonders aloud about the respective importance of nature and education; and she does so immediately, at the height of her grief. Other characters produce closely argued speeches in the heat of passion. It has been said that the rhetorical brilliance of such arguments is out of place, and this is true in some cases. But feeling and rhetoric generally reinforce each other in Euripides' drama. The force of conviction, or of desire, inspires those who are pleading a cause, so that passion and intellectual analysis go hand in hand.

The presence of ideas in Euripides' work does not, however, imply unity of thought. From the very structures of the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles one could arrive at an idea of their views of the world. Euripides, by contrast, touches on everything, debates everything, and yet manages to elude us in the end.

His ideas in the domain of politics are perhaps the least difficult to determine. At the beginning of the war he wrote some fervently patriotic plays, extolling the generosity of Athens (the *Heracleidae* and *The Suppliant Women*). Frequently an Athenian hero comes into his plays as a friend or deliverer (in *Medea* or *Heracles*, for example, or in lost plays like *Alope* or *Erechtheus*). Sparta, on the other hand, is openly attacked in *Andromache*. And yet, side by side with this patriotism, sometimes in the same play, we find a horror of war; for Euripides is an open advocate of peace. His pacifism inspires sudden tirades that cut across the plot and the myth on which the plot is based to address the audience directly. The same pacifism prompted several entire plays. *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, and *The Trojan Women* are devoted, wholly or in large part, to the sufferings caused by war; and the *Helen* suggests that a war has been fought for nothing. In the latter play the chorus sings: "You are mad, you who seek glory in combat, among weapons of war, thinking in your ignorance to find a cure for human misery there" (1151-54). From the patriotic fervor of the early plays to this disillusionment, the fluctuations in Euripides' thought correspond quite closely to developments in the political situation. It is hardly illogical that after so many years of war between the Greek cities, Euripides' last play should end on a Panhellenic note: Iphigenia dies for all the Greeks.

A similar evolution is visible in Euripides' treatment of domestic politics. We find panegyrics to democracy; we find, in *The Suppliant Women*, an analysis of the good and bad effects of democracy compared with those of tyranny. But then we find an ever sharper portrayal of the ill effects of individual ambition, a stumbling block to unity (as in *The Phoenician Women*), and of demagogy, which makes an unruly assembly the arbiter of every question (as in *Orestes*). These reflections of contemporary reality reveal the growing disillusionment that eventually led Euripides to leave Athens, and to write *The Bacchae*, in which the civil order is no longer paramount.

On broad political questions, then, the evolution of Euripides' views can be adequately traced. But when it comes to detail, his position varies with

siderable freedom. Many of his dialogues are half-sung, half-spoken; and song, as against the spoken word, always indicates a heightening of emotion. We also find solos for the actors (monodies), in which Euripides adopted the musical innovations of his contemporaries; the new music was more free-flowing than the old and better adapted to follow the development of an emotion. These various audacities that make for the "modernism" of Euripidean drama account for both its immediate popularity and the resistance it encountered.

A number of his contemporaries and imitators—little more than names to us—took the same liberties. Some, like Carcinus and his sons, were famous for their scenic effects; others, like Critias, for their bold philosophical positions. Agathon, who himself appears as a character in Plato's *Symposium* and in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, resembled Euripides in a number of respects and lived, like him, in Macedonia for a time. Agathon is said to have taken still farther the free invention of plots, the disjunction between chorus and plot, and the taste for metrical innovation.

Amid all these literary games, however, the real power of tragedy began to be lost. For the fourth century we have many names of plays and playwrights (Meletus, Antiphon, Chairemon, Aphares, Dicaeogenes, Astydamas), but most of these men were professional writers, trained as rhetoricians. All their works are lost, with the exception of the *Rhesus*, which was preserved because it was mistaken for Euripides' work. In reality, tragedy died with Euripides and with the greatness of Athens herself. From 386 on, revivals became a standard feature of the Dionysia; a few years later, statues of the three great tragedians were erected in the theater of Dionysus. The history of Greek tragedy extends from beginning to end of the fifth century, but not beyond.

III · Aristophanes

The second half of the fifth century, which saw such a flowering—and such a clear evolution—of the tragic genre, saw a comparable flowering of comedy. Competitions in comedy grew up alongside those in tragedy. I have said nothing of Attic comedy before Aristophanes for several good reasons. The origins of the genre are ill understood; it was not officially recognized[4] at Athens until sometime in the fifth century; and not one play antedating those of Aristophanes has survived.

In Aristotle's account, comedy originated in the songs and jokes accompanying a clownish procession in honor of the god of wine. Called the *kōmos*, this procession was led by a phallic emblem and amounted to a sort of carnival. Later, actors became involved and true scenes were improvised. Comedy properly speaking appears to have developed first in areas settled by the Dorians. The earliest poet known to have written comedies was Epicharmus,

4. I.e., subsidized (by means of a special tax levied by the *polis*).—Trans.

who spent his life in Sicily and whose career can be traced back to the end of the sixth century. Fragments of his plays have been found on papyrus. In these we can find particular types of scenes and characters that later made their way into Attic comedy. Other traits of the genre already visible in Epicharmus are its sprightly and realistic tone and its intellectual vigor. For Attica, the first names we have are those of Chionides (mentioned by Aristotle), Magnes, Cratinus, and Crates (evoked by Aristophanes in *The Knights*). Cratinus was full of energy; Crates was more delicate. Both were writing at the same time as Aristophanes: Cratinus's *Wine Flask*, staged in 423, was a reply to *The Knights*, in which Aristophanes had accused him of drunkenness. Another comic poet, Hermippus, made a spirited attack on Pericles.

By this time, comedy was well established as a genre, with certain elements to be found in every play. Two of these elements are especially worthy of notice—the *agōn* and the *parabasis*. Both obey set forms and are composed in specific meters. At the heart of the action is the *agōn*, a debate between two opposing "camps." After a brief lyrical exhortation, the representatives of each side plead their cause—often twice each—in an *epirrhēma* made up of tetrameters. The metrical symmetry is rigorous, even if the scene includes a real battle. The parabasis, by contrast, is an interruption of the action, toward the middle of the play: the chorus, alone on stage, addresses the audience directly and acts as mouthpiece for the poet. It speaks in anapestic tetrameters; hence, this sequence is often referred to as "the anapests." It has the same sort of lyrical introduction and conclusion, and the same metrical symmetry, that we saw in the *agōn*. The *parabasis* has disappeared from the last of Aristophanes' plays; there is none in either the *Assembly of Women* or the *Plutus*.

But it would be wrong to infer from this use of set forms that there was anything stiff about Old Comedy (as the work of Aristophanes and his contemporaries came to be called). In the first place, the rest of the scenes were much freer (with rare exceptions, their meter was that of tragic dialogue, iambic trimeter). And even the fixed framework made room for the most spirited inventiveness. Old Comedy overflowed with vitality. It allowed itself every indulgence, mingling flights of lyric fancy with the most barefaced obscenities à propos of everything. Its tone was unbridled, allowing open attacks on individuals (though there were several attempts to ban the practice). It featured caricatures of assemblies as well as of politicians and other well-known figures, such as Euripides or Socrates, who were called by their own names. Such license in matters of tone was matched by a freedom of invention that made room for clownish treatment of gods, imaginary creatures (like the giant dung-beetle in the *Peace*, which takes Trygaeus to the home of the gods), or men-beasts (the wasps who, with their stings, represent Athenian jurors; the birds with whom two disgruntled Athenians go to live; even the frogs who croak in the infernal swamp). Wasps, birds, and frogs made up the choruses in these three cases and gave the plays their respective titles. The