

Dionysos' Many Names in Aristophanes' *Frogs*

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“God of many names”, πολυώνυμε, is the first word of Sophocles' famous hymn invoking Dionysos in the *Antigone* (1115). Richard Jebb comments that the epithet is “peculiarly suitable to Dionysus, owing to the manner in which his cult was interwoven with other cults [...]. Dionysus was distinctively *polueidés kai polymorphos* (Plutarch *Mor.* 389c)”. One might leave the matter at that; it seems logical that the god of multiple and shifting identities should also be “many-named”. But, if the epithet is suitable, it is hardly specific to Dionysos, for, as Jebb notes, other gods are entitled to be called *polyonymos*: Apollo, for example, has as many titles without presenting so many contradictory aspects.¹ There is, however, one striking feature of the names for Dionysos to which Sophocles' epithet can be taken to point, and this is a respect in which he was a “different” god. This study will propose that what was distinctive about Dionysos' names was not simply that they were numerous, but that so many of the most powerful ones had lost their meanings in the course of time. To find examples I need go no further than the scholion on this passage, which explains *polyonyme* by saying “for some call him Bakchos, others Iakchos, Lyaïos, or Euios and others Dithyrambos”: of these five names, only *lyaios* is readily intelligible in Greek.²

Henk Versnel's *Triumphus* has given a rich survey of such Dionysian epikleseis from the point of view of the history of religion.³ My concern is literary, to bring out the fact that the god's obscure titles could provoke poets composing songs to him and provide them with special expressive possibilities. Now the fact that Dionysos was feted with archaic cries and calls with no obvious meaning might again seem easily comprehensible: Dionysos is *bromios*, the “noisy” one, and it is reasonable that his names should sometimes stress sound over sense. And for poets, this semantic underdetermination might have been compensated for by the fact that a multiplicity of names facilitates

1 The rich variety of Dionysian epithets can be illustrated by pointing to *Anth. Pal.* 9.524, an alphabetic epigram that fills 24 verses with his titles; but note that 9.525 executes the same trick with Apollo.

2 Diodorus Siculus (4.5.1–2) explains a number of Dionysos' obscurer epithets (*bakcheios*, *lenaïos*, *bromios*, *pyrigenes* and *thriambos*) before breaking off with a *recusatio* because the names are too many (περι ὧν μακρὸν ἄν εἶη λέγειν). Similarly, Cornutus *Graec.* 59.

3 Versnel (1970) 16–38.

composition and provides an opportunity to exhibit *sophia* by choosing an epithet that is either *recherché* or *le mot juste*. But for ambitious poets I suggest such language could pose a challenge: one would be reluctant to leave out of a Dionysiac hymn words that carried a powerful emotional charge from being associated with intense experiences of cult. Such words could also be felt to be intimately bound up with the god, since they had no other meanings and so belonged to the god alone. But when a poet introduced such language into his song, he abandoned for that moment his signifying power, his ability to control meaning and direct thought. To some degree, then, these powerful vocables were in competition with the poet's distinctive voice: a poet who resorted to traditional language like *bakchos*, *euios* or *dithyrambos* was composing words that anyone might have composed, words that even an amateur chorus might sing. A fine lyric hymn ought to be more than a collective cry.

Again, comparing the case of Apollo can make the poetic issue clearer. Among his many epithets, one old and obscure title was commonly used in cult and song – *paian*, already a theonym in Mycenaean. But there is a notable difference between the way *paian* is used in paeans and *dithyrambos* in dithyrambs. The cry *ie Paian* can be found, in one variant or another, in almost every paean.⁴ Its meaning was obscure enough to the Greeks that they could trace it to antithetical etyma: *paiein* to pray for victory and *pauein* to call for rescue. Nonetheless, the role and function of *paian* were quite well defined. For Athenaeus and others, the “paeanic refrain” (697a: τὸ παϊανικὸν ἐπίφθεγμα) was sufficient to define a poem as a paean and direct it to Apollo-Paian. In dithyrambs, by contrast, the word *dithyrambos* is not very common, nor does it serve as a marker of the genre. Instead we find that songs to Dionysos tend to pile his names and epithets to enrich their appeals to the god. Now hymns to any god may begin by giving out several epithets to be sure to catch the divinity's attention. But poets of songs to Dionysos often manifest an effort to search out new and exotic epithets, and to accumulate them insistently.⁵ Philodamus of Skarpheia, for example, began a song summoning Dionysos to the Delphic Theoxenia of 340: “Dithyrambos, Bakchos, Euios, bull, ivy-haired, Bromios” (Διθύραμβε Βάκχ' εὔιε, ταῦρε, κισσοχαῖτα, Βρόμιε (v.1–3 Powell)). Pindar brought the god into his dithyramb for the Athenians by inventing a new epiklesis, “the ivy-knowing god, whom we mortals call Roarer and Shouter” (τὸν κισσοδαῖ θεόν, / τὸν Βρόμιον, τὸν Ἐριβόαν τε βροτοὶ καλέομεν, fr. 75.9–10 Snell-Maehler).⁶ Pindar sets his new

4 See Schröder (1999) 49–61, with the qualifications of Käppel (1992) 68.

5 For this dynamic in dithyrambic poetry, see Ford (forthcoming).

6 Pindar's “ivy-knowing” is such a venturesome expression that it is often, wrongly, emended away: for “knowing” in connection with Dionysos' mystery role, cf. ἀδαήμονα in Hdt. 8.65 quoted below.

and difficult epithet among two old names mortals have for the divinity, but both of these stress the noisiness and shouting accompanying his cult. The New Dithyramb is well known for its tendency to profuse and arcane epithets, but this feature is already found in Pindar's dithyramb: its fifteen legible verses (fr. 75 Snell-Maehler) include nine compound epithets, of which six are hapaxes or not previously attested.⁷

Naturally, no word can remain in use and remain meaningless for long, and explanations were not lacking for Dionysos' old epithets; *dithyrambos*, for example, was so often and so variously connected with the god's birth myth that not only was its original meaning forgotten, but the fact that it had been forgotten was forgotten.⁸ Such games did not disperse the mist of mysterious and potent-sounding titles surrounding the noisy god. The example I focus on is one whose obscurity was *not* forgotten, not redeemed by myth. This is *Iakchos*, the name and epithet with which Sophocles ends his ode to the god (*Ant.* 1153). *Iakchos* was interesting to poets, I will suggest, because its sound testified to its history, to the stages by which it evolved from nonsense syllables to divine name.⁹ The word began as a joyous inarticulate cry, *iakche*, which was perhaps at first used in connection with more than one deity.¹⁰ In Athens, *iakche* became especially associated with the Eleusinian mysteries in which participants shouted it out repeatedly during the procession from Athens to the sanctuary.¹¹ In this context, *iakche* was at some point reinterpreted as a vocative and thus personified as *Iakchos*, the tutelary daimon of the procession. In due course *Iakchos* acquired concrete form: an image of him was carried in the procession by the *Iakchagogos* and his statue was placed beside Demeter and Kore in a temple at Athens – holding a torch to symbolize the nighttime arrival of the procession at Eleusis.¹² Finally, the appellation *iakchos* came to be used by the poets as an epithet of Dionysos, like *bakchos*.¹³ Graf attributes the *Iakchos*-Dionysos connection to the highly excited atmosphere of the

7 Details in Zimmermann (1992) 38 f., van der Weiden (1991) 186.

8 For etymologies of *dithyrambos*, Ieranò (1997) 159–167. Perhaps it was to counter domestications of the sacred title by etymology that Pratinas defamiliarized it again, invoking Dionysos as “*thriambo-dithyrambos*, ivy-haired lord” (θριαμβοδιθύραμβε, κισσόχαϊτ’ ἄναξ, fr. 3.16–17 *TrGF*).

9 On *Iakchos*, see esp. Graf (1974) 51–66, Clinton (1992) 64–71 and, among older studies, Deubner (1932) 73 f., Foucart (1914) 110–113.

10 Graf (1974) 55 n. 20. Chantraine takes it as an onomatopoeic word, perhaps derived from *eche*.

11 Burkert (1983) 30 n. 2, (1985) 74.

12 Pausanias 1.2.4. Clinton (1992) 65 n. 12, (1974) 96 f.

13 Graf (1974) 56. Poets also used *iakchos* by metonymy for the Eleusinian processional song or any song for Dionysos.

procession, which involved ecstatic dancing and a *pannychis* on arrival. The passage from *Antigone* is the earliest literary evidence we have for this usage.¹⁴

When each of these developments occurred is unclear. It used to be thought that the daimon *Iakchos* was not invented until after Salamis, for which the main evidence cited was an anecdote from Herodotus.¹⁵ Herodotus (8.65) records an incident he attributes to Dikaios, an exiled Athenian in the service of Persia. Just before the battle of Salamis, Dikaios was devastating the Thriasian plain with the Spartan Demaratos when they saw an enormous cloud of dust heading their way from Eleusis, as though 30,000 men were on the march. From this cloud emerged an extraordinary sound, which Dikaios, the Athenian, perceived was the mystical *iakchos* cry (τὸν μυστικὸν ἰακχόν). But Demaratos, who is unfamiliar with the Eleusinian mysteries (ἄδραήμωνα), does not understand the utterance (τὸ φθεγγόμενον), and so Dikaios must explain that the “sound you hear is the *iakchos* cry that the Athenians shout in their festival” for the Mother and the Maid (καὶ τὴν φωνὴν τῆς ἀκούεις ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ὀρτῇ ἰακχάζουσι). As Eleusis has been abandoned, Dikaios reasons that this voice is divine (θεῖον τὸ φθεγγόμενον) and that a god would aid the Athenians and their allies.

Here the noun ἰακχόν and the verb ἰακχάζουσι have nothing to do with Dionysos, and indeed do not even imply a personified *Iakchos*. But we cannot infer that *Iakchos* had not yet been added to the Eleusinian pantheon, because Herodotus is writing around the same time as Sophocles, and in *Antigone* the personified cry seems to be presupposed by the equation of *Iakchos* and Dionysos.¹⁶ What I find significant about this passage is that Herodotus emphasizes the incomprehensibility of the *iakchos* cry by focalizing his story through two hearers, one of whom ‘knows’ and another who does not. Therefore, even if the personified *Iakchos* had arisen very early, there remained an awareness that the roots of his name lay in meaningless vociferation.¹⁷ The connection between the appellative *Iakchos* and the mystic cry was kept alive

14 Clinton (1992) 66. Cf. Graf (1974) 52 n. 10 on the controversial restored black-figure lekythos from Sicily (Berlin F 1961 = *ABV* 273) which may show Herakles on Olympus with Dionysos and what some have claimed is a form of *Iakchos* inscribed.

15 E.g. Foucart (1914) 110 (“Au temps des guerres médiques, il n’avait pas encore de personnalité; il désignait les chants et les acclamations poussées par le cortège des mystes.”); cf. Kern *RE* IX (1914) s.v. *Iakchos*. Clinton (1992) 65 n. 71 takes the fact that no temple to *Iakchos* has been found at Eleusis as a sign that he is a latecomer there.

16 So Graf (1974) 58 n. 43; Clinton (1992) 65 n. 71.

17 The incomprehensibility of the paean cry figures in another story in Herodotus 5.1: the Paionians are camped opposite the Perinthians but do not attack because they have been advised by an oracle not to engage unless they are summoned by name (*onomastí*); when the Perinthians sing a battle *paian*, the Paionians, a half-barbarian people, mistakenly take the refrain for their own name and successfully attack, thus unexpectedly proving the oracle true.

by the related words *iakcho*, *iakcheo*, and *iakche*, all of which describe noise, whether the clamor of resounding objects or the inarticulate cries of people in joy or fear.¹⁸ Hence Dodds translated *Iakchos* at *Bacchae* 725 as “Lord of Cries”.¹⁹

In Sophocles as well, the appellative *Iakchos* seems to have special force, for he places it prominently as the last word of the ode, as if it were the final justification of the opening epithet “many-named”. Dramatic reasons for closing on the Eleusinian dimension of Dionysos have been well discussed by Albert Henrichs.²⁰ He explains that Sophocles is recurring to the play’s “death theme” and Antigone’s “progressive self identification with the world of the dead”. Henrichs also notes that, although the chorus begins by invoking the god “of many names”, the epikleseis that follow in the opening three verses are rather perfunctory: “delight of the Kadmean nymph” and “son of Zeus” is what any Theban chorus would be expected to call the god. The song as a whole focuses rather on Dionysos’ cult places – from Magna Graecia to Eleusis and Thebes in the strophe, and then on him as the leader of processing choruses from Delphi to Nysa and Thebes in the antistrophe. This is well observed, and yet in two places the chorus does refer to Dionysian cult cries, and in striking language.²¹ At the end of the first antistrophe (1134 f.), the god reaches Thebes to the accompaniment of “immortal words crying *evoe*” (ἀμβρότων ἐπέων εὐαζόντων). The utterances of Dionysos’ chorus are immortal because they are cries repeated from a time beyond memory. They are personified (as Sophocles had personified oracular language in the parodos of *Oedipus Tyrannus*: ἀμβροτε Φάμα, 158),²² to express the autonomy of Dionysian epikleseis, even if this autonomy reduces to the cry *evoe* getting itself repeated without end. A second reference to the strangeness of Dionysos’ cult language is the synaesthesia near the beginning of the antistrophe (at 1146 f.): as in *Bacchae* (725 f.), Dionysos appears as heavenly choregos, who “watches over the nocturnal vociferations” of his chorus (νυχίων φθεγγμάτων ἐπίσκοπε). In naming the speech that the god paradoxically beholds, Sophocles chooses a word, *phthegma*, that leaves space to include meaningless utterances, as in Herodotus’ *to phthegomenon*; this is speech that is not so much heard as witnessed. In both Sophoclean expressions it seems more important that the god’s epikleseis be ritually performed than that they be understood.

18 Graf (1974) 56 f. notes that ancient etymologies connect *Iakchos* with these sounding words, which are also found in descriptions of Dionysos’ noisy cult.

19 Dodds (1960) 165.

20 Henrichs (1990a) 265–270.

21 See Adami (1900) 237–244 for the epithets.

22 So Lloyd-Jones/Wilson (1990) 145, who reject emendations (e.g. ἐπεράν) that would tame the language. Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.299.

The audience of *Antigone* will soon know that this hymn is shadowed by futility, for the suicides of Antigone and Haimon are about to be announced. The cletic hymn to Dionysos thus brings no epiphany, and the chorus' alienation from their saving god is expressed by their concluding not with a vocative to greet the god, but with a quotation of his name from another chorus: *iakche* in the text is said by the happy Thyiads in Delphi as they greet their (*ton*) lord *Iakchos*. In becoming a substantive rather than a vocative, the potent shout *iakche* is drained of some of its power: no rescue is at hand. If *polyonymia* is in some degree the key-note of the ode and *Iakchos* is its climax, we may understand the *poly-* in *polyonyme* not simply as referring to the abundance of the god's titles (as in the standard hymnic compliment *polyhymnos*, "of many songs", for example) but as hinting at the confusion such profusion can engender, giving the element the sense it has in *polythroos* or *polyglossos* for overabundant, even confusing speech. This is the direction taken, I shall now argue, in the parodos of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, which is the fullest presentation of *Iakchos* on the Attic stage. In tracking the strong reliance on *iakchos* in this text I rely on Fritz Graf's analysis of Eleusinian elements in the parodos²³ while hoping to bring out its poetic functions by seeing it against the opening scenes of the play.

The musical and dramatic cue for the parodos is given at *Frogs* 312, when Xanthias and Dionysos hear the sound of *auloi* and sense mystic torches. Herakles had earlier told them (in 154) they would encounter initiates in the underworld, and so when the chorus appears chanting Ἰακχ', ὦ Ἰακχε, Xanthias infers that "these are they" (*tout' est' ekeino*, 318). Dionysos is persuaded (321) and they retire to watch the chorus perform four hymns, of which the first and last are to *Iakchos*.

The first hymn (324–336) opens by invoking the god with an epithet, Ἰακχε ὦ πολυτίμητε, in which the normal force of *poly-* would be that he receives many high and costly honors. In what follows, however, the literal sense of *poly-* is foremost, since the "many honors" of *Iakchos* consist in his name being pronounced again and again. The chorus repeats the refrain and bids the god to join their holy choral dance (χορείων, 334) decked in a crown of Eleusinian myrtle.²⁴ Their plea that *Iakchos* dance with "insatiable foot" (331) recalls the appeal to Dionysos in *Antigone* to come with "purifying foot" (1114). But *Frogs* is a comedy, and in comedy cletic hymns succeed: *Iakchos* arrives in the antistrophe, probably in the form of lighted torches taken up by

23 Graf (1974) 40–51.

24 The myrtle is only one suggestion of Eleusinian (and other, esp. Dionysian) choruses, Clinton (1992) 64 n. 6. Against attempts to deny that the Eleusinia is Aristophanes' principal focus here, see Bowie (1994) 228–230, Dover (1993) ad loc.

the chorus (340).²⁵ The *praesens deus* is greeted with another repetition of his name (341), and the rejuvenated chorus bids him lead out the procession (351 f.).

Then comes the anapaestic address to the audience (353–371), but the initiatory atmosphere is maintained in its opening demand for *euphemia* and in its close, which calls for songs that are appropriate to “this festival and its all-night revels” (370 f.). Thereupon two hymns follow, one to Soteira (372–382) and “another kind of song” (ἑτέραν ὕμνων ἰδέαν) to Demeter and her “chaste” rites (385–393).²⁶ These are followed by a final song to Iakchos so he may join the procession to “the goddess” (400). This return to *Iakchos* is strongly marked by his name: the last song begins with the same invocation as the first, Ἰακχε ὦ πολυτίμητε (398, cf. 324), and each of its three verses concludes with a new refrain (403, 408, 413), whose epithet “Iakchos, friend-of-choruses” (Ἰακχε φιλοχορευτά) hints at the god’s fundamental connection with the Eleusinian procession.

Is there a reason for the poet’s intense, recurrent interest in the *Iakche* cry? I think the answer is given at the opening of the last song, where *Iakchos* is praised as having “invented the sweetest of festival songs” (μέλος ἑορτῆς / ἠδιστον εὐρών, 398 f.). Invention (*heurein*) is a common theme in Dionysiac as other hymns, but what aetiological story is alluded to here? The readiest answer is that the song of Eleusinian initiates, what Herodotus calls the *mystikon iakchon*, was “invented” by *Iakchos* in the sense that he gave his name to it as its defining refrain. With his typical combination of insight and irreverence, Aristophanes reverses the historical development from shout to name and congratulates the personified shout for having invented the song. His exaggerated praise effectively reduces the panoply of Eleusinian ritual celebration to a god’s name repeated over and over.

In fact, I think that Aristophanes, in this reductive mood, traces the *Iakchos* song further back, all the way back to the animal realm. This appears if we listen to the parodos while remembering the play’s first song, the famous Frog Chorus. When Dionysos mounts Charon’s boat to cross the great marsh leading to the underworld (181), he is told he will hear (ἀκούσει, 205) extraordinarily beautiful songs. These will come from frog-swans (Βατράχων κύκνων, 207) which is oxymoronic, since frogs were no singers: an ancient etymology of “frog” took βάτραχος from “having a harsh call” (παρὰ τὸ βοῆν τραχεῖαν ἔχειν).²⁷

25 Wilson dagers the text at 340 in his *OCT*, but either ἦκεις or ἦκει seems necessary.

26 Fraenkel (1962) 201 f. infers from 385–388 that “für die Prozessionslieder beim Zuge nach Eleusis [...] solche ganz einfachen iambischen Perioden sehr beliebt waren.” On Soteira: Haldane (1964).

27 *Etymologicum genuinum* (Orion). Cf. Ar. *Av.* 769–784, Eur. *IT* 1104.

Which once we sang for the Nisaeon
 son of Zeus, Dionysos
 in the Marshes when at sacred Chytroi time
 the drunken revelers thronged my sanctuary.

The song we hear in Hades is thus what the frogs once used to perform during the Anthesteria in the precinct of Dionysos of the Marshes. *Chytroi* was the last day of the festival when the sanctuary would have been crowded with hung-over celebrants. With his genius for metaphor, Aristophanes envisions the croaking frogs *en Limnaïs* as a chorus singing antiphonally to Dionysos' groaning celebrants as they make their way to "our sanctuary" (κατ' ἐμὸν τέμενος).

The frogs close this first song to *Iakchos* with the refrain (220), and in what follows insist on it twice more (223, 235). They are implicitly identifying their song with its croaked refrain, and so when an exasperated Dionysos finally insults them as "nothing but *koax*" (227), they are happy to accept the characterization:

Εἰκότως γ', ὦ πολλά πράττων
 Ἐμὲ γὰρ ἔστερξαν εὐλυροὶ τε Μοῦσαι
 καὶ κεροβάτας Πάν, ὁ καλαμόφθογγα παίζων· 230
 προσεπιτέρπεται δ' ὁ φορμικτὰς Ἀπόλλων,
 ἔνεκα δόνακος, ὃν ὑπολύριον
 ἔνυδρον ἐν λίμναις τρέφω.

For I am beloved by the fair-lyred Muses
 and by horn-traveling Pan, who plays on the sounding reed. 230
 Apollo the kitharist also delights in me,
 for the sake of the reed, to which lyre's support
 I give watery nurture in the marshes.

The marsh frogs are dear to the gods of music because they nurture the reed, which was, at least in olden times, a basic component of both wind and string instruments.³⁰ The implicit aetiology supports troping frog croaks as a kind of music. Aristophanes' allusion here is not so much, as some have suggested, to a kind of New Music, as to *natural* music, for the connections between the musical arts and the natural, material constituents of music-making was a subject of reflection in the fifth century.³¹ Euripides tersely expresses some of

30 As the scholiast explains, the "ancients" used to make the panpipe from reeds (before they used horn, cf. κεροβάτας 230). For reeds used to make a bridge for the lyre and phorminx, cf. Hsch. who defines βατραχίσκοι as a part of the kithara (μέρος τι τῆς κιθάρας).

31 Rogers (1902) 39 aptly quotes Apuleius calling the reed *musicae suavis nutricula*. Defradas (1969) and Higgins (1977) contend that Aristophanes is parodying new dithyramb here.

its paradoxes in a fragment: “the hymn-maker reed nurtured by the river Melas, the wise nightingale of fair-blowing *auloi*” (fr. 556 *TrGF*: τὸν θ’ ὑμνοποιὸν δόνα[χ’, ὃν ἐκφύει Μέ]λας / ποταμὸς ἀηδόν’ εὐπνῶων αὐλῶν σοφῆν). The glide between nature (*physis*) and art (*techne*) is exemplified by Euripides’ calling a reed in a river a song-maker or “hymn-poet” (*hymnopoios*), and in calling the nightingale, a natural singer, “wise”: like the reed-poet, a wise *aedon* embodies both the naturalness and artificiality of song (*aoide*), for *aedon* was also a name of the mouthpiece of an *aulos* or of the *aulos* as a whole (Eur. fr. 931).

Aristophanes’ frog-chorus thus shows us a Dionysiac cult song returned to a natural, watery landscape, the marshes, where reeds are instruments and animals a chorus. Hence there is a scientific, ethological tenor to Dionysos’ calling the frogs a “song-loving species” (φιλωδὸν γένος, *Ar. Ran.* 240). The playful erasure of the border between natural and artistic music is also at the heart of the word βόαξ, an important verbal inspiration for Aristophanes’ *koax* that commentators seem not to have noticed: Epicharmus (fr. 29) and comic poets, including Aristophanes (fr. 475), attest to *boax* as the name of a grunting fish.³² Aristotle says it is the only fish that makes a noise and explains its name onomatopoeically from its call (*boa*).³³ The *boax* and the frogs with their *koax* are watery animals at the lower border of human speech.

As the frogs go on they remain very much an animal chorus, and frog-behavior is depicted as a watery kind of choreography (247). Their nimble dance (χορείαν αἰόλαν, 247 f.) amidst galingale and reeds forecasts the holy chorale of the initiated (the ἀγνήν, ἱερὰν [...] χορείαν, 334). But the animal chorus stresses its sonority rather than meaningfulness: the last colon of their song is filled with a large onomatopoeic compound, πομοφολυγοπαφλάσμασιν, that straddles the gap between language and noise.

It may be clear by now that I want to suggest that the burden of the frogs’ refrain, *koax koax* – which Dionysos picks out as the essence of their song (“nothing but *koax*”, 227) – forecasts the initiates’ *iakch’ o iakche* in the parodos. Both Dionysian chants – one a natural sound heard at the Anthesteria and the other a meaningless human cry at the Eleusinia – have at their core a short guttural phrase redoubled. This phrase, echoing from the play’s first song to the parodos, suggests that the crude, hung-over music for Dionysos in the Marshes during Anthesterion grew up seven months later and became the sacred epiklesis of the ritually pure initiates on their way to Eleusis. The incessant *koax koax* of the frogs in honor of Dionysos *en Limnais* is the earlier, more natural form of the Eleusinian song for Dionysos as *Iakchos*. The inventive Aristophanes hears in the repeated Dionysian refrain an ennobled

32 Pherecrates’ οὐκ ἔστιν ἰχθύς ἄλλος οὐδεὶς ἢ βόαξ (fr. 178 KA) is suggestive of *Ran.* 227.

33 Aristotle fr. 301. Cf. Athenaeus 287a (ὠνομάσθη δὲ παρὰ τὴν βοήν).

croak, as if aware of the fact that the divine name originated in an excited shout.

It seems worth going further and suggesting that the connection between the two songs would have been made very clear in performance if the two choruses were one and the same. The croaking frogs, which Dionysos only hears but does not see, are revealed when they appear in the parodos to be none other than the initiates chanting mumbo-jumbo whom Herakles had predicted. As the scholia infer from *akousei* in 205, the frogs are not seen by Xanthias and Dionysos, a dramaturgical touch also found in *Clouds*.³⁴ But as the parodos begins and they enter changing their earlier iambs for the ionic characteristic of cult song, Xanthias can infer “these are the ones” (τοῦτ’ ἔστ’ ἐκεῖνο, 318). The phrase has something of the flavor of an initiate’s ‘aha’ experience at the moment of revelation.³⁵ Xanthias’ reaction is also a cue to the audience, for it now realizes that the promised frog-swans, a Bacchic *thiasos* in a land as bright as Athens, are a sublimated version of *rana ridibunda* and its guttural refrain in the marshes. This is perhaps as much a decision about performance as textual interpretation, but I see no reason why the two choruses could not be the same.³⁶

In part, this equation reflects the comic tendency to find humor in reducing the spiritual to the physical. But behind it we may sense a more philosophical view, an enlightened anthropological approach to the origins of religious institutions such as underlies Teiresias’ naturalistic explanation of the cults of Dionysos and Demeter in *Bacchae*.³⁷ This outlook is extended to other cultural institutions, including the art of song, in a passage from Democritus. In a progressivist scenario, Democritus imagines primitive man learning the arts of civilization from various animal species: just as we learned the art of weaving from spiders, so we learned “housebuilding from swallows, and song by imitating the swan and nightingale”.³⁸ In a relevant contrast with Aristophanes, Democritus traces song to the swan and nightingale, both thought beautiful singers, while the swallow, whose call struck the Greeks as

34 Of course, the frogs were likely visible to the audience: Rogers (1902) ad 205, MacDowell (1995) 280, Allison (1985), Zimmermann (1985) 164–166. *Pace* Dover (1993) 56.

35 Cf. the ‘aha’ at Plato *Symp.* 210e.

36 I am encouraged to see that Andreas Willi (2008) has argued for identifying the two choruses, though on very different grounds.

37 *Bacchae* 274–285; cf. Henrichs (1975) 110 n. 64.

38 Democritus fr. B 154 DK (χελιδόνος ἐν οἰκοδομίαι, καὶ τῶν λιγυρῶν, κύκνου καὶ ἀηδόνας, ἐν ᾧ δῆι κατὰ μίμησιν). Cf. fr. B 144 DK and Ford (2002) 145 f. with n. 57.

chattering nonsense, teaches not singing but housebuilding.³⁹ Aristophanes, however, is more fond of nonsense language and so mates swans with frogs (at 207) to generate his natural chorus.

This progressivist view was shared widely at the time. Euripides seems indebted to Prodicus for the discourse on Demeter and Dionysos in *Bacchae*, but Protagoras was of the same school, and so too it seems was Diagoras of Melos. Before concluding I return briefly to the beginning of the parodos and Xanthias' recognition of the chorus' identity. At 320 I should read "They [the frogs] are singing at any rate the very same *Iakchos*-song as Diagoras" (Ἄδουσι γοῦν τὸν Ἰακχὸν ὄνπερ Διαγόρας, 320). Aristarchus I think was right to read the proper name Diagoras here, though Dover's 1993 commentary and Wilson's 2008 *OCT* follow Apollodorus of Tarsus and print the weaker "through the agora" (δι' ἀγορᾶς).⁴⁰ Dover observes that "there is no doubt that utterance of the name 'Diagoras' on the comic stage in 405 would make the audience think not of lyric poetry but of 'atheism' and outrageous blasphemy", but he rejects mention of Diagoras as "a poor joke and theatrically pointless to say".⁴¹ In the context I have proposed, however, this person seems quite relevant for three reasons. First, Diagoras of Melos was known as a composer of songs for Dionysos, including dithyrambs; secondly, he acquired a reputation as an atheist who showed contempt for the Eleusinian mysteries;⁴² finally, Epicurus puts Diagoras in the company of Prodicus and Critias as those who ascribed gods to convention, and explained belief in them by etymology, that is by historicizing their names.⁴³ If Aristophanes presents the *iakchos* hymn as a sublimated natural cry, it is the kind of thing that could be popularly associated with this scientific dithyrambist and enemy of the mysteries. Such a view is not only historically plausible, but fits the nuance of the Greek of 318–320 which marks Xanthias' logic with the particles *pou* and *goun*: Τοῦτ' ἔστ' ἐκεῖν', ὦ δέσποθ'· οἱ μεμνημένοι / ἐνταῦθά που παίζουσιν, οὐς ἔφραζε νῶν. / Ἄδουσι γοῦν τὸν Ἰακχὸν ὄνπερ Διαγόρας. Simply from hearing *iakch'* *o iakche*,

39 Cf. the "mouseion of swallows" for decadent tragic poets at *Frogs* 93. For swallows' "chattering" (*chelidonizein*) representing barbarous speech, cf. *Birds* 1681, *Frogs* 681 f., and Fraenkel on Aesch. *Ag.* 1050 f.

40 For attempts to make cultic sense of "through the agora" cf. Dover (1993) ad loc. and Graf (1974) 49 with notes 40–43.

41 Dover (1993) 127 f. Wilson prints "through the Agora" in his *OCT* at 320, but is unenthusiastic enough about its relevance to record in his apparatus van Leeuwen's suggestion that Xanthias' thought is interrupted here.

42 Schol. *Aves* 1073. He is mocked as impious in [Lysias] 6.17 of the year 399, and Socrates is called "Socrates of Melos" in *Clouds* (830) when he disbelieves in Zeus. He was reportedly outlawed possibly around 415 (*Av.* 1072–1074; Crateros *FGtH* 342 F 16).

43 See Obbink (1996) 352 f. Reading "Diagoras" here is strongly argued for by Janko (2001) 6–11 and (1997) 89 f.; cf. 88 n. 234 on *Frogs*.

he deduces that the singers are the initiates: "at any rate they are singing the Iakchos song, the very one that Diagoras sings."

In closing let us note that the underlying scenario here is the same as that in Herodotus. A pair of witnesses to Iakchos' chorus fails at first to understand what it hears. In Herodotus, one is an insider, one not; in Aristophanes, the insider should be Dionysos, for indeed the chorus is using one of his many names; but the hapless god depends on the outsider slave for understanding. In comedy, the slave's eye is penetrating. He infers that 'this is that', he has a revelation. We too have a revelation if we realize that the annual Iakchos song springs from the same source as the croaking of frogs heard each year in Dionysos' sanctuary.

This study of one of Dionysos' names, focusing on its first and on its fullest attestation in literature, can only close with the suggestion that further attention to the god's epithets in lyrics directed to him may show that they are frequently overabundant, usually insistently sonorous and sometimes explore the limits of articulate speech. One may suspect that the intelligentsia was ready to disregard Dionysos' old names as sanctified nonsense. In tragedy, one may find, as in Sophocles, a sense that they bring us no closer to the many-named wandering deity; it is as if words do what they want to do, not what we want, and recourse to *Iakchos* will not in the end succeed. Lastly, comic and ironic poetry may use Dionysos' names to luxuriate in senselessness, as I have argued Aristophanes does in *Frogs*. Xanthias could see in the *Iakchos* cry the same lesson Aristophanes saw, that beneath all the pomp and pretense of ritual display, the substance of religion was human speech, especially incomprehensible and misunderstood words whose greatest power was in sheer iteration. The exuberant comic poet delighted in the lesson that this name of Dionysos taught, a lesson we may paraphrase from a modern ironic lyricist, Wallace Stevens: like Aristophanes, Stevens saw that, "The imperfect is our paradise", and he could have been speaking of Dionysos' many names when he added, "in this bitterness, delight [...] lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds."⁴⁴

44 Stevens (1955) 193.

