

Drawing on the work of Arnold van Gennep, several scholars have found unity in the dissimilar halves of Aristophanes' *Frogs* by observing that Dionysus moves from Athens to the underworld in an experience recapitulating rituals of initiation (Segal 1961, Moorton 1989, Lada-Richards 1999).

Less remarked is the significance of the slave Xanthias' ability to reach the underworld on foot, without Charon's boat. There are no equivalent versions of the journey to the underworld; whenever Charon is depicted as the ferryman, his services are presumed to be obligatory for anyone making the crossing. We might offer a variety of explanations for the unique situation of Xanthias: that Aristophanes excludes Xanthias from the boat for reasons of staging; that he wishes to capitalize on the joke about Arginusae; or that comedy is not obliged to represent geography (whether mythological or real) in a consistent fashion and that this adjustment reflects Aristophanic playfulness. The more significance we ascribe to the ritual aspects of Dionysus' passage, however, the more seriously we ought to take the ritual-defying journey of Xanthias, especially because he has been a double for Dionysus throughout the beginning of the play and continues to be so after the crossing.

The present argument expands on Radcliffe Edmonds' observation (Edmonds 2004) that Xanthias' ability to run around the Acherousian lake undercuts the ideas of separation and liminality presented elsewhere in the play and emphasized by Dionysus' difficult journey by boat. Edmonds locates the interest of this passage in the fact that Athenian citizenship is being redefined to depend on naval service, service Xanthias has shirked and in which Dionysus now receives a belated training. It is also worth observing, however, that Xanthias more than Dionysus experiences the afterlife as a continuation of the world above: he does not pass through a liminal space, he continues to be a slave, and he finds underworld slavery to be closely equivalent to slavery in Athens, whereas Dionysus eventually assumes his proper function as a god. Xanthias' direct participation in the plot concludes with his going to prepare for the unfolding contest between Aeschylus and Euripides, which is a matter for the same sort of gossip that he enjoyed while in the upper world.

Thus the experience of Dionysus is about rebirth and reclaiming what was lost; that of Xanthias, about continuity and the fact that the loss was never a complete one. This is especially appropriate when we consider that, though Aristophanes calls for a rebirth of Athens and of tragedy through the reimportation of Aeschylean values, his comedy relies on the enduring memory of those who have died. For the audience, as for Xanthias, the legacy of the tragedians remains accessible.