

Cleon's Zombie in the First Parabasis of the *Clouds* (591-4)

It is common knowledge among classicists that the *Clouds* we possess today is not the original version staged by Aristophanes in 423 BCE but a revised edition that circulated some years later. An important piece of evidence for this claim comes from the first parabasis of the play, where the chorus addresses the Athenian audience and criticizes them severely for falling short of the high ideas of the play (510-626). Additionally, the chorus charges the Athenians with the inability to notice and interpret properly the signs given by the clouds themselves as well as the celestial bodies concerning Cleon's generalship: despite the lightning and the thunder caused by the frowning clouds, despite the very bad weather which made it seem like there was a lunar and a solar eclipse, the Athenians elected Cleon to his generalship. All this refers to Cleon's election as one of the ten generals in 424 BCE, in the latter half of which Aristophanes probably wrote the play (Dover 1968). The text continues as follows: "If you convict that vulture Cleon of bribery and theft, then clamp his neck in the pillory, your situation will be as it was before, and everything will turn out better for the city, in spite of your mistake" (591-4; transl. Henderson). The tense used by Aristophanes indicates that this part of the text belongs to the earlier version of the *Clouds*, since Cleon was killed in the battle of Amphipolis in 422 BCE and such an utterance would make no sense in the theater after the summer of 422 BCE (Dover 1968; Henderson 1993). My purpose in this paper is to entertain the possibility that Aristophanes deliberately omitted reworking of this passage in his partial revision of the play. My approach is based on an intertextual reading of the *Knights* and the first parabasis of the *Clouds* as well as *Iliad* 2, 5 and 13.

Besides being present in the first parabasis of the *Clouds* as the politician whom the Athenians ought not to elect as general, Cleon is also referred to with the name Aristophanes

gave him in the *Knights*, that of the Paphlagonian slave (581). The scholia on the *Knights* inform us that this nickname was given to Cleon because he used to splutter during the meetings of the Athenian assembly. Apart from the fact that slaves often had no individual names save for the name of their race, Aristophanes may also have aimed at denigrating Cleon's political authority by representing him on stage as a non-Greek. An ally of the Trojans who is the leader of the Paphlagonians (2.851) appears in the catalogue of *Iliad* 2. Aristophanes must have had this character in mind when choosing to present Cleon as a Paphlagonian. My reason for proposing this connection lies in the name of the Iliadic character, Pylaemenes, which is a compound of πύλη and μένω or μένος. Although Aristophanes never names his slave in the *Knights*, one can see that the Paphlagonian is obsessed with his recent victory at Pylus and, thus, he could be said to be dwelling upon Pylus in a metaphorical way (e.g. *Knights* 355, 702, 742, 846, 1005, 1058). Once this connection is established, the presence of the Paphlagonian in the *Clouds*, especially after Cleon's death, becomes more significant, mostly because of what happens to the Iliadic hero: in *Iliad* 5.576-9 Pylaemenes is killed by Menelaus. In 13.643-5 Pylaemenes' son, Harpalion, attacks Menelaus but is killed by Meriones. The Paphlagonians set him on a chariot to lead him to Ilion and his father appears with them weeping. Ancient scholiasts and philologists attempted to explain away this inconsistency in various ways: by positing that this is not the Pylaemenes who was killed in *Iliad* 13 but another ruler of the same name; by emending his name to Kylaemenes; or even by obelizing the problematic lines (Janko 1994: 126). In my proposed reading of *Clouds* 591-4 Cleon, the Paphlagonian of the *Knights* who has his dwelling in Pylus metaphorically, shares the lot of his Iliadic ancestor by appearing to be alive in a work of literature after his death in real life. It seems that Aristophanes' sharp eye noticed the

inconsistency in Homer and he perhaps decided to leave the passage from the old *Clouds* untouched as a playful and subtle comment on Homeric criticism.

Bibliography

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