NOTES  •  KORT BYDRAES

ARISTOPHANES, FROGS 838: THE HISTORY OF A READING

These lines (Frogs 836–9) constitute Euripides’ comically polysyllabic ridicule of Aeschylus for his sesquipedalianism. At issue is the epithet ἀπύλωτον which in both ancient and modern texts jostles for supremacy with the alternative reading ἀθύρωτον. Investigation of the history of this conflict helps to shed light on ancient transmission of readings and scholarly method.

ἀθύρωτον is read in the Ravenna ms., the so-called Bachmann Lexicon,1 the Lexicon of Photius (A 495), the Suda (A 772 = A 3720), and (e.g.) the editions of Merry, Dunbar (rev. Marzullo, Hildesheim, 1973), and Stanford.

ἀπύλωτον dominates the other mss., and is also the reading in Aulus Gellius (NA 1. 15. 19) where these lines are cited but not themselves discussed, Tzetzes (Schol. in Ar. 4.3 ed. Koster, 925–6), Eustathius (Comm. Il. p. 723, 51–3, ed. Van der Valk 2, 619), the editions of (e.g.) Hall & Geldart (OCT), Coulon (Budé), Rogers (Loeb), and Radermacher (rev. Kraus, Graz-Wien-Köln, 1967), and in Todd’s Index Aristophaneus.

No editor of Aristophanes has drawn all the available threads together, and some do not even hint at the rich diversity. For easy instance, Hall & Geldart’s apparatus reads merely: ἀθύρωτον R Suid.; Merry has no comment at all; Stanford’s lengthy note on Aristophanes’ compounds assumes the correctness of ἀθύρωτον; and so on.

Neither word is common. In addition to the present passage, LSJ adduce only Phrynichus comicus, fr. 82, and a second century BC inscription from Delos for ἀθύρωτον, whilst ἀπύλωτον is exemplified only by Xenophon, Hellenica 5. 4. 20. The comedian Phrynichus owes his place in the story to the Suda’s notice: Ἀθύρωτον στόμας: ὀφθαλμόν, ὀφθαλμόν. Ἄριστοφάνης ἐν βατράχοις, καὶ Φρύνιχος. οἱ δὲ γράφοντες ἀπύλωτον ἀντί τοῦ Ἰνεργημένον καὶ πόλτην μὴ ἔχον, τούτο οἷος χαλιναγογούμενος μηδὲ κρατούμενον. But as divined by Meineke, it is the second century AD grammarian Phrynichus who is meant.2 Hence fr. 82 of the comedian Phrynichus should be expunged from the modern collections of Old Comedy fragments3 and the lexica.

Lampe’s Patristic Greek Lexicon enriches the history of ἀθύρωτον, giving two examples from John Chrysostom and one from Isidore of Pelusium. ἀπύλωτον is
not in Lampe, but the expression ἀπύλωτα στόματα is a pet one in Photius' epistolary style.

Stanford thought that ἀθυρόθητον was intended as a variation on Euripides' "remarkable" ἀθυρόγλασσος at Orestes 903, albeit admitting that Théognis, fr. 421, had very similar language. Euripides in turn is thought by his scholiast to have invented this compound to satirise the demagogue Cleophon. There are two objections to Stanford's view. First, it is Aeschylus who is here under attack, not Euripides. That could be countered by saying that Euripides betrays his own style in criticising a rival, a tenable but perhaps over-subtle proposition. Secondly, is there any humour in replacing Euripides' grand compound by a simple word? For although not well attested, the presence of ἀθυρόθητον in the Delos inscription (an unremarkable inventory) implies a degree of ordinariness. Nor, indeed, was ἀθυρόγλασσος all that remarkable; it lived on, with various cognates (not all recorded by LSJ), as did the very similar ἀθυρόστομος of Sophocles, Philoct. 188, in hellenistic epigram and patristic Greek.

By flagrant contrast, ἀπύλωτον is the eye-catching rarity, being seemingly unused from Xenophon to Photius; apart from the simple ἀπύλος, the lexica report no apul-compounds.

How, then, to account for the co-existence of the two readings, and is there any way of determining what Aristophanes himself wrote? The answer may be relatively easy. Collation of the histories of the rival words in the passage clearly shows that, outside the mss. themselves, ἀθυρόθητον prevails in the lexicographical tradition, ἀπύλωτον in the more literary critical one of Tzetzes and Eustathius. The dogmatic Atticist Phrynichus, a major source of Byzantine lexicographers, is the likely villain. Finding ἀπύλωτον elsewhere only in Xenophon, not the paradigm of Attic purity, Phrynichus altered (or recommended the alteration of) it to ἀθυρόθητον, his prescription persisting thanks to lexicographical epigones. One of these was the scribe of the Ravenna ms., a text whose scholia at least belong to an inferior family. With regard to Photius, the Lexicon is plausibly regarded as a youthful work; in later years, he read or looked up Aristophanes in a copy which had ἀπύλωτον. The Suda's preference for ἀθυρόθητον is explained by the demonstrated fact that its rich harvest of quotations from Aristophanes comes from a source akin to the Ravenna.

NOTES

1. L. Bachmann, Anecdota Graeca 1, Leipzig, 1828, 40, 7; cf. I. Bekker, Anecdota Graeca 1, Berlin, 1814, 352, 11.
3. E.g. those of Kock and Edmonds.
4. Epp. 248, 284, 291, in the new Teubner edition of B. Laourdas & L.G. Westerink, Leipzig, 1983-5. I am very grateful to Professor Westerink for information (per litt.) on Photian usage; I think he will not agree with my inference, hence must not be associated with it.
5. πολλαὶ ἀθυρώπων γλῶσσα ὑπήρεν ὡσκ ἐπίκεινται . . .
Word arrangement in v.11 strikingly supports the storm/calm, light/darkness imagery commented on by Costa.\(^1\) 'Vitam', denoting human life, is the middle word in the line, surrounded by storms (fluctibus) and darkness (tenebris) in the emphatic beginning and end positions. The degree of hopelessness in pre-Epicurean days is emphasized by the repeated adjective tantis flanking vitam on either side. (Perhaps the crossed lines of the chiastic noun-adjective phrases may be seen as stressing the entanglement of life without Epicurus' sapientia of v.10.)\(^2\) But the preposition e suggests hope, and in 12 Epicurus is shown indeed to have plucked life from tempest and dark and to have placed it in calm and light, again emphasized by repetition, this time of the adverb tam.

It is a pity that commentators Costa, Duff and Bailey\(^3\) neglect to point out the device to show beginners that the often puzzling word order in Latin poetry may serve a higher purpose than obedience to the demands of metre.

NOTES

2. I am grateful for this suggestion by Mr D.J. Coetzee.

BARRY BALDWIN

LUZERCIUS DRN V 11 — A NOTE ON WORD ORDER AND IMAGERY

quique per artem
fluctibus e tantis vitam tantisque tenebris
in tam tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit

(DRN V 10–12)
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