

## FROGS AND MICE AND ATHENS\*

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Readers of early Greek epic sometimes become jaded by its basic seriousness. On such occasions they can turn for comic relief to the pseudo-Homeric *Βατραχομυομαχία*<sup>1</sup> or *The Battle of the Frogs and Mice*. This approximately three hundred line parody of the *Iliad*, featuring an epic struggle between frogs and mice after an accidental drowning, is a rare piece. Indeed, while we know the titles of three other "Beast Epics" (*Γερανομαχία*, *Αραχνομαχία* and *Ψαρομαχία*), the *Batrachomyomachia* is the only one actually to survive in Greek literature;<sup>2</sup> further, it contains genuinely funny moments. However, the light-heartedness of the poem is small compensation for the perplexing problems it presents to its scholarly readers. Among those which remain unsolved are the questions of date and authorship.

According to Plutarch (*Ages*. 15.4), Alexander the Great sarcastically

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<sup>1</sup> Various titles are attested for the poem. As *Βατραχομυομαχία* in its transliterated form is the one generally used in the English-speaking world, I have retained it throughout. Other titles include: *Βατραχομαχία*, *Μνοβατραχομαχία* and possibly *Μνομαχία*. *Βατραχομαχία* is the earliest title attested (Mart. 14.183), unless Alexander's remark that Antipater's victory in Arcadia in 331 was a *μνομαχία* is a reference both to the poem and to its title. It is easier to believe the former than the latter, since supporting evidence for the title *μνομαχία* is otherwise provided only in some MSS of Proclus' *Chrestomathia*. On the whole, *Βατραχομαχία* should probably be preferred as the original title. For a full discussion and references cf. A. Rzach, "Homeridai," *RE* 8 (1913) 2170.

<sup>2</sup> For the *Γερανομαχία* and the *Αραχνομαχία* cf. the *Suda*, s.v. "Ὀμηρος 45, 103; for the *Ψαρομαχία* cf. *Vita Herodotea* κδ' and the *Suda*, s.v. "Ὀμηρος 103. We do not know when these pieces were written. If the *Geranomachia* was based on *Iliad* 3.1-6, which mentions pygmies and cranes at war, it might date back to the sixth century when this theme is a favorite with black-figure vase painters. The theme may also have been of interest to the epic poet Choerilus of Samos, cf. A. Barigazzi, *Hermes* 84 (1956) 179; G. L. Huxley, *GRBS* 10 (1969) 15.

referred to Antipater's victory over Agis in Arcadia in 331 as a *μυομαχία*. Thus, if Alexander really made this remark (there is no reason to suppose that he did not), and, if *μυομαχία* is a reference to the *Batrachomyomachia*, the poem is attested for the first time in the latter part of the fourth century B.C. Be that as it may, the poem is certainly attested in the late third (or perhaps early second) century when it is also associated, for the first time, with an author. For, at this time, Archelaus of Priene carved a relief on which was depicted the apotheosis of Homer. On the relief, a frog and a mouse appear at the feet of the great poet.<sup>3</sup> Because of its obvious dependence on the *Iliad*, it is easy to see why the *Batrachomyomachia* would have been attributed to Homer. However, references in the poem to itself as a written text (1-3), to the battle trophy (153), and to elaborate cuisine (24-25) point to a later time. If, as is generally agreed, the phrase *φόρτον ἔρωτος* of line 78 is a borrowing from Anacreon (fr. 460 PMG), a *terminus post quem* is established (i.e., c. 570-500 B.C.). But further progress in dating is made difficult by the fact that scholars have noticed no other clues so obviously helpful as the borrowing from Anacreon. Moreover, close examinations of the language of the poem have proven indecisive because the *Batrachomyomachia* features the vocabulary of various later periods, as well as the usual epic diction. This combination is not surprising since the piece has suffered from interpolation all the way into Byzantine times. For example, some phrases in the poem resemble the language of Attic Tragedy: e.g., *τίς ὁ φύσας* (13) = Soph. OT (1019) *ὁ φύσας*, Tr. (1185) *τοῦ με φύσαντος* and Eur. Med. (1126) *Κρέων θ' ὁ φύσας; λόγος . . . ἐτάραξε φρένας* (145) = Eur. Hipp. (969) *ὅταν ταραῖξῃ Κύπρις ἡβῶσαν φρένα*. On the other hand, vocabulary like *ἔοργαν* (179) and the unusual *ἐλθοίμην* (179) smack of the Hellenistic age or later.<sup>4</sup> Attempts to throw light on the situation by studying the meter of the poem have also been futile.<sup>5</sup> It should cause no surprise, therefore, that in such ill-defined circumstances scholars have felt justified in arguing for dates ranging from the sixth century to the Hellenistic

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. H. Smith, *A Catalogue of Sculpture in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, British Museum (London 1892) III. 2191. Only the mouse is now visible, see T. W. Allen's report in the fifth volume of the OCT of Homer, p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> Lines 1-3 may be Hellenistic interpolations, as they appear to be modeled on Callimachus' *Aetia* (fr. 1.21-22 Pfeiffer).

<sup>5</sup> For an assessment of these examinations, see A. Rzach, *RE* 8 (1913) 2172 ff.

age. Presently there exists some consensus for the early fifth century as the time of composition.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, this position can hardly be considered unshakable.

Since Homeric authorship is excluded, the *Batrachomyomachia* has sometimes been ascribed to a certain Pigres of Halicarnassus who was associated with the poem in late antiquity.<sup>7</sup> But one ought to proceed cautiously with Pigres. Aside from the brief mention of his name as author of the *Batrachomyomachia* in Tzetzes (*Exeges. in Iliad.* 37) and in some of the manuscripts of the poem,<sup>8</sup> only Plutarch and the *Suda* supply information about Pigres, and most of this information is open to question.

The reference by Plutarch occurs in the *De Herodoti Malignitate* (873f). Here, after Herodotus is charged with negatively representing the Greek forces at Artemisium, Thermopylae and Salamis, he is further chastised for portraying them as sitting idle at Plataea; ὥσπερ βατραχομυομαχίας γινομένης—Πίγρης ὁ Ἀρτεμισίας ἐν ἔπεισι παίζων καὶ φλυαρῶν ἔγραψε—. The phrase ὁ Ἀρτεμισίας is vague at best; further, the abrupt way in which the parenthetical—Πίγρης . . . ἔγραψε—intrudes into the narrative has led some to conclude that this statement is a marginal note which found its way into the text.<sup>9</sup> Thus, we cannot be sure that Plutarch thought Pigres wrote the *Batrachomyomachia*; someone else may have inserted this notion into his text at a later date.

<sup>6</sup> Those leaning toward the late sixth or early fifth centuries include: A. Ludwich, *Der Karer Pigres und sein Thiarepos Batrachomachia* (Königsberg 1900), A. Rzach, *RE* 8 (1913) 2172, W. Schmidt, *Gesch. der Griech. Lit.* (Munich 1929) Erster Teil, Erster Band, p. 230, W. Aly, *RE* 20 (1950) 1315, J. D. Denniston, *OCD* (2nd ed.), s.v. "Parody, Greek," and A. Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature* (London 1966) 417; K. Witte argued for a date after 438 B.C., H. v. Herwerden for the fourth century, and J. Wackernagel for sometime after the third century B.C. (cf. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 230, note 4, for references to their works). G. S. Kirk (*YCS* 20 [1966] 161) favors a Hellenistic date. G. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry* (Cambridge, U.S.A. 1969) 188, is non-committal.

<sup>7</sup> Ludwich remains the most enthusiastic supporter of Pigres, *op. cit.*, p. 21, and *Die Homerische Batrachomachia des Karer Pigres, nebst Scholien und Paraphrase* (Leipzig 1896) 14–17. Cf. also Aly, *RE* 20 (1950) 1316.

<sup>8</sup> In both Tzetzes and the MSS, the name is corrupted to Τίγρης. Thus: ἀρχὴ τῆς Μυοβαραχομαχίας· αὐτὴ δὲ ἐστὶ Τίγρητος τοῦ Καρός (U<sup>2</sup>, V<sup>1</sup> [Allen]); Ὀμήρου Βατραχομαχία, ἐν δὲ τισὶ Τίγρητος τοῦ Καρός (S<sup>1</sup>, U<sup>3</sup>, V<sup>12</sup> [Allen]). None of these MSS is earlier than the thirteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. R. Peppmüller, *BPhW* 22 (1901) 676 ff. Many editors would follow Wytténbach in restoring ἦν before Πίγρης, which makes the passage read much more smoothly.

The fullest statement about Pigres is to be found in the tenth century *Suda* s.v. *Πίγρης*. Here it is attested that Pigres was a Carian from Halicarnassus, ἀδελφὸς Ἀρτεμισίας τῆς ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις διαφανοῦς, Μανσώλου γυναικὸς. The phrase τῆς ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις διαφανοῦς suggests the Artemisia who distinguished herself at Salamis and impressed Herodotus, the principal source for her activities. But, although Herodotus (7.99) remarks that Artemisia's husband had died before the battle of Salamis, he does not give his name; nor does anyone else before the *Suda*, over fourteen hundred years later. There is consequently good reason to suspect that the *Suda* has confused the fifth-century Artemisia with her namesake of the fourth century B.C., who was indeed the wife of Mausolus.<sup>10</sup> So, although ἀδελφὸς Ἀρτεμισίας, if accurate, is a definite improvement on the vague ὁ Ἀρτεμισίας in "Plutarch," we cannot be sure to which Artemisia (if either) Pigres was related.<sup>11</sup>

The *Suda* goes on to name Pigres as the author of some sort of work interpolating elegiac verses into the *Iliad* and also the pseudo-Homeric burlesques, the *Margites* and the *Batrachomyomachia*. We can say little about Pigres' supposed interpolation of the *Iliad*, since it is mentioned only here, and the two lines which are quoted from it reveal little about the author's intentions. But the *Suda*'s assertion that Pigres was the author of the *Margites* and the *Batrachomyomachia* is, to my mind, extremely doubtful. A special case can be made for disassociating the *Margites* from Pigres. To put it briefly, the *Suda*'s pronouncement on the *Margites* simply will not wash with the opinions expressed by earlier

<sup>10</sup> See Judeich, *RE* 2 (1896) 1441; Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, etc.* (LCL) (London 1967) xli. V. J. Matthews (*Panyassis of Halikarnassos* [Leiden 1974] 31 note 22) briefly explores the possible relationship of Pigres to the younger Artemisia. This in itself is not impossible. But Matthews apparently also allows for a date c. the second half of the fourth century for the *Margites* and the *Batrachomyomachia* in order to keep these poems with him. The conclusions reached in this paper absolutely preclude a fourth century date for the *Margites* and do not favor such a date for the *Batrachomyomachia*.

<sup>11</sup> It seems unlikely that someone turned the Πίγρης Ὑσσελδώμου mentioned in Herodotus (7.98) as one of Artemisia's commanders into her brother and that this misinformation later found its way into the *Suda*. The different patronymics given by Herodotus for Pigres and Artemisia (Ἀνγδάμιος) should have prevented any such attempt from being taken seriously. Crusius' theory that the forger Ptolemaeus Chennos had done just this (*Phil.* 54 [1895] 734-44) has not been accepted, see Rzach, *RE* 8 (1913) 2176. The name Pigres was common in southwestern Asia Minor, see W. Hoffman, *RE* 20 (1950) 1313.

authors like Cratinus, Aristotle, and Callimachus.<sup>12</sup> But something else in the work of an earlier author applies equally well to both pieces as regards Pigrian authorship. It is a catalogue of *parodists* drawn up by the learned periegete, Polemon of Ilium (220–160 B.C.), in the twelfth book of his *πρὸς Τίμαιον* (= Ath. *Deip.* 15.698b–699d). Because Polemon's principal aim was to discover the inventor of parody (*εὐρέτης τοῦ γένους*),<sup>13</sup> he found it necessary to list all the names he could associate with the genre, especially in its earlier stages. He did this in detail, and, it is agreed, with some care. His sources may only have been the works of the authors he cites; but it may also have been possible for him to find information in the books of earlier historians of literature, some of whom were already at work in the fifth century.<sup>14</sup> Polemon concluded that the *εὐρέτης τοῦ γένους* was Hipponax (*fl.* 540–537 B.C.), in whose poems he found elements of parody. Other authors cited are Epicharmus of Syracuse (first quarter of the fifth century), Cratinus and Hermippus, poets of the Old Comedy, and, of course, the famous Hegemon of Thasos (*fl.* last quarter of the fifth century). In addition to these personalities, Polemon also included two fourth century wits, Boeotus and Euboeus of Paros, both of whom he preferred to earlier parodists. Verses of Hipponax, Hegemon, and Euboeus are also cited. Thus, Polemon's list becomes the most important single document I know for the historical development of Greek parody. What is surprising, of course, is that Pigres is nowhere

<sup>12</sup> Eustratius, a commentator on Aristotle, asserts that Archilochus, Cratinus, Callimachus, and Aristotle attributed the *Margites* to Homer (*In Arist. Eth. Nic.* 6.7). It has been argued that Eustratius is wrong in maintaining that Archilochus pronounced on the *Margites* (cf. L. Radermacher, *RE* 14.2 (1930) 1705 ff.; J. A. Davison, *Eranos* 53 (1955) 125–40). Be that as it may, there is no reason to suppose that Cratinus and Callimachus did not say what Eustratius says they said, and, of course, Aristotle's text survives confirming that he did indeed hold that the *Margites* was Homer's work (*Eth. Nic.* 1141A12; *Poet.* 1448B24). While one could argue that memories had become foggy by Aristotle's day, surely it would not have escaped Cratinus that Pigres wrote the *Margites*, if we choose to assume that he was related to the elder Artemisia. In short, there is no reason for believing the much later *Suda*, which is the sole source for the association of Pigres with the *Margites*. The *Margites* is probably a sixth century work (cf. Radermacher, *RE*, *loc. cit.*; Lesky, *op. cit.*, p. 89), though some allow for a date as early as Homer's time (cf. G. Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 176).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. G. Pasquali, *Hermes* 48 (1913) 180 ff.; K. Deichgräber, *RE* 21 (1952) 1308.

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Glaucus of Rhegium (*περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων ποιητῶν καὶ μουσικῶν*), *FHG* II, pp. 23–24, and Damastes of Sigeium (*περὶ ποιητῶν καὶ σοφιστῶν*), *FGrHist* 5 T1 and F11.

mentioned. But surely, if, as the *Suda* would have it, Pigres of Halicarnassus had been the author of the *Batrachomyomachia* and the *Margites*, or of either poem for that matter, his name would have occurred in Polemon's list.

In sum, the so-called "Pigres-tradition" found in "Plutarch" and the *Suda* emerges late in antiquity and does not inspire confidence because it is confusing or difficult to reconcile with earlier testimony. In all likelihood, it is a late fabrication resulting from circumstances we simply do not know.<sup>15</sup> It does not help us understand to which Artemisia (if either) Pigres was related. Furthermore, it cannot be trusted when it makes Pigres the author of the *Margites* and of the *Batrachomyomachia* with which we are immediately concerned. It would therefore be better to regard the *Batrachomyomachia* as the work of an anonymous author.

Years ago, Wilhelm Schmidt, while discussing the *Batrachomyomachia* in the well-known history of Greek literature which he wrote with Otto Stählin, made a brief but tantalizing suggestion: "Auf Attika als Entstehungsort weisen sehr bestimmte Anzeichen."<sup>16</sup> As far as I know, this statement has evoked no further comment. Since Schmidt was a respected scholar, his undeveloped hypothesis deserves to be examined. This essay is an attempt to do just that.

The "bestimmte Anzeichen" noticed by Schmidt were briefly summarized in a footnote: "Athenes Klagen über die Mäuspilge in ihrem Tempel (v. 177 ff.) und besonders über das ihren Schlaf störende Quaken der Frösche (187 ff.)—man denkt an *Αἶμναι* und die Frösche des Aristophanes—passen gut für Athen." The passages Schmidt refers to occur in an exchange between Zeus and Athena at a council of the gods called after the frogs and mice have declared war and hostilities are about to begin. At this time Zeus asks Athena if she will go to the support of the mice:

καὶ γὰρ σοῦ κατὰ νηὸν αἰεὶ σκιρτῶσιν ἅπαντες<sup>17</sup>  
κνήσῃ τερπόμενοι καὶ ἐδέσμασι παντοδαποῖσιν. (174–75)

<sup>15</sup> The statement in the first part (6) of the *Vita* of Homer attributed to Plutarch—ὥς δέ τινες, οὐκ ἀληθῶς λέγοντες, γυμνασίας καὶ παιδίας ἔνεκα καὶ βατραχομαχίαν προθεῖς ("Ομηρος) καὶ Μαργίτην—may or may not reflect the belief that Pigres wrote these pieces.

<sup>16</sup> *Gesch. der Griech. Lit.* (Munich 1929), Erster Teil, Erster Band, p. 230.

<sup>17</sup> I follow Allen's text in the OCT of Homer (vol. 5).

To Zeus' query, Athena delivers the longest speech (19 lines) assigned to a divinity in the entire poem. Since the *Batrachomyomachia* is a parody of the *Iliad*, it is expected that Zeus, who presides over the action there, should assume the central role here. But, of all the other gods who appear in the *Iliad*, only Athena has an important part to play in the *Batrachomyomachia*.<sup>18</sup> This in itself may be significant. It is true that Athena is one of the most important epic deities, so that, strictly speaking, her presence is not unusual. But the poet might equally well have featured Apollo, Poseidon, Ares, Hera, or Aphrodite (the latter of whom would have provided splendid comic possibilities). Poseidon, for example, as god of the sea would have been a splendid champion for the frogs. And one wonders why Apollo was ignored. Apollo Smintheus had a special relationship with mice, and his cult was especially popular in Asia Minor.<sup>19</sup> A poet from Halicarnassus might be expected to know and exploit this fact, especially with *Iliad* 1.39, where Apollo is invoked as Smintheus, to prompt him. Instead, it is Athena, the protectress of Athens, who is prominently displayed in the poem. The goddess refuses to help the mice, explaining that they have done her many a bad turn:

στέμματα βλάπτοντες καὶ λύχνους εἵνεκ' ἐλαίου.  
τοῦτο δέ μοι λίην ἔδακε φρένας οἶον ἔρεξαν.  
πέπλον μοῦ κατέτρωξαν ὃν ἐξύφηνα καμοῦσα  
ἐκ ῥοδάνης λεπτῆς καὶ στήμονα μακρὸν ἔνησα  
τρώγλας τ' ἐμποίησαν· (180-85)

Nor, Athena continues, will she help the frogs:

εἰσὶ γὰρ οὐδ' αὐτοὶ φρένας ἔμπεδοι, ἀλλὰ με πρῶην  
ἐκ πολέμου ἀνιοῦσαν ἐπεὶ λίην ἐκοπώθην,  
ὕπνου δενομένην οὐκ εἴασαν θορυβοῦντες  
οὐδ' ὀλίγον καταμῦσαι· ἐγὼ ἄϋπνος κατεκείμην,  
τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀλγοῦσαν, ἕως ἐβόησεν ἀλέκτωρ. (188-93)

Athena concludes by exhorting the gods to enjoy the battle from heaven rather than risk injury at the hands of such ferocious antagonists.

<sup>18</sup> Otherwise, only Ares briefly takes part in the action of the poem with a six-line speech at the end (278 ff.) and an appearance at line 123.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ch. Michel in Daremberg-Saglio, "Sminthia," IV 2, p. 1365, and Pfister, "Sminthia," *RE* 3 A 1 (1927) for references.

Zeus' reference to the mice σοῦ κατὰ νηόν and Athena's complaint about them are the first items in these passages which might be considered. A phrase like σοῦ κατὰ νηόν could be taken generally, and not as indicating any specific temple of Athena. But in classical Greece, when one referred, without specifying, to Athena's temple, surely the buildings on the Athenian acropolis came to mind first. Similarly, σοῦ κατὰ νηόν mentioned in connection with e.g., Zeus, Hera, Apollo, and Artemis would have suggested (respectively) their temples at Olympia, Argos or Samos, Delphi or Delos, and Ephesus. So Schmidt's feelings about σοῦ κατὰ νηόν are certainly plausible. In this context, Athena's reference to πέπλον μοῦ has special overtones. The poet seems to have been deliberately imitating *Iliad* 5.734 and 8.385 where πέπλοι woven by Athena are mentioned,<sup>20</sup> and he may also have wished us to recall *Iliad* 6.263–309 where a procession of Trojan women led by Hecuba presents a *peplos* to Athena in her temple.<sup>21</sup> But when πέπλον μοῦ occurs in the context of σοῦ κατὰ νηόν, one cannot help but think, not only of Homer, but also of the famous πέπλος depicted on the Parthenon frieze.<sup>22</sup> This garment was woven and presented to the goddess in her temple (apparently not the Parthenon) every four years at the festival of the Greater Panathenaea. Of interest is the decoration of the πέπλος. It featured the Battle of the Gods and Giants and, in particular, Athena's duel with the giant, Enceladus.<sup>23</sup> While the Gigantomachia was an ancient theme in Greek temple decoration, it was especially popular at Athens. There, in addition to being shown on the πέπλος, the battle was the theme of an archaic pedimental group on the acropolis (Acrop. Mus. No. 631) and appeared on the metopes of the Parthenon, as well as on the inside of the shield held by Pheidias' Athena Parthenos.<sup>24</sup> One is therefore tempted to regard it as more than coincidental that the frogs and mice

<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. Ludwig, *Die homerische Batrachomachia des Karers Pigres* etc., p. 376.

<sup>21</sup> The supplication in *Iliad* 6 may be an Athenian interpolation of the sixth century, cf. H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments* (London 1950) 442–49.

<sup>22</sup> So also Ludwig, *Der Karer Pigres* etc., p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. L. Ziehen, "Panathenaia," *RE* 18 (1949) 460 ff.; L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932) 25, 29–34; M. Robertson, *Greece and Rome*, supp. to vol. 10 (1963), pp. 46–61.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Robertson, *loc. cit.*

are thrice compared to the Giants and once to Enceladus in the course of this short poem (7, 171, 283).<sup>25</sup>

As Schmidt noticed, the linking of frogs with Athena is again evocative of Athens. Schmidt thought especially of the once marshy area of the city called ἐν Λίμναις<sup>26</sup> where the noisy presence of frogs inspired Aristophanes (*Frogs* 209 ff.). But the frogs of Athens were employed for comic purposes long before Aristophanes immortalized their raucous βρεκεκεκεξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ. Aristophanes himself attests in the parabasis of the *Knights* (507 ff.) that his older contemporary Magnes (active 480-450 B.C.) utilized frogs in his comedies. So, at least from the early fifth century, the frogs of Athens played a special role in her comic literature. One wonders if the constant reference to the marsh (λίμνη), in and around which the action of the *Batrachomyomachia* takes place, is not meant as an allusion to the district ἐν Λίμναις (10, 12, 17, 55, 58, 86, 105, 148, 156, 225, 233, 267).<sup>27</sup>

These passages noticed by Schmidt occur midway through the poem. But, in fact, a passage at the beginning of the *Batrachomyomachia* strikes an Athenian note from the very start and can be used to support Schmidt's argument.

Readers of the *Batrachomyomachia* will recall that the war broke out after the mouse Psicharpax (Crumb-snatcher) accidentally drowned when the frog Physignathus (Puff-jaw) attempted to transport him across the λίμνη. Before this incident, the two protagonists met and, in typically heroic fashion, related their distinguished ancestries. That of Physignathus is of special interest:

εἰμὶ δ' ἐγὼ βασιλεὺς Φυσίγναθος, ὃς κατὰ λίμνην  
τιμῶμαι βατράχων ἡγούμενος ἥματα πάντα

<sup>25</sup> At 171, the Giants are paired with Centaurs. The Centauromachy was, of course, also depicted on the Parthenon.

<sup>26</sup> The exact location of the district and the Dionysion encompassed by it is disputed. It has been placed on the west slope of the acropolis and south of the sanctuary and theater of Dionysius Eleuthereus. Cf. W. Kroll, "Limnai," *RE* 13 (1926) 701 ff.; J. Travlos, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens* (New York 1971) 291, 332-33.

<sup>27</sup> A river or seashore would have provided a suitable background. The poet once brings the action away from the λίμνη to a river he visualizes nearby (247, ἐπ' ὅχθησιν ποταμοῦ), possibly the Ἡριδανός of line 20. So he need not have dwelt constantly on λίμνη.

καί με πατήρ Πηλεὺς ἀνεθρέψατο Ὑδρομεδούσῃ  
 μιχθεὶς ἐν φιλότῃτι παρ' ὄχθας Ἑριδανοῖο. (17-20)

It is the phrase παρ' ὄχθας Ἑριδανοῖο that strikes one as curious. An author writing under the influence of Homer, as is certainly the case here, would be expected to have written παρ' ὄχθας Ὠκεανοῖο. A check of the Homeric concordance compiled by Prendergast (*Iliad*) and Dunbar (*Odyssey*) reveals that there is no mention of the Eridanus at all in Homer.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the Oceanus is not only the river most frequently encountered, but the form Ὠκεανοῖο in the final position occurs some sixteen times. It is no surprise then that Ὠκεανοῖο is found in place of Ἑριδανοῖο in a few MSS of the *Batrachomyomachia* (L<sup>1</sup>, L<sup>7</sup>, L<sup>8</sup>, S<sup>2</sup> [Allen]). Clearly, some readers of the poem long ago also considered Ἑριδανοῖο out of the ordinary and introduced the familiar Ὠκεανοῖο of Homer. So speculation on why the poet wrote Ἑριδανοῖο seems justified.

Commentators, both ancient and modern, see in the Eridanus here mentioned only the mythical river which, by the fifth century B.C., came to be identified with rivers far to the west, like the Po. A scholiast, for example, thought the Eridanus had been chosen by the poet because Phaethon had fallen into it in the solar chariot of his father Helios. Consequently, its waters were warmer than those of other rivers, οὐ χρεῖα τῇ τοῦ βατράχου γεννήσει. More sophisticated is the modern view that the Eridanus is well-suited to the poem because it forms a sort of fabulous backdrop for the type of fairy-land episode related in the *Batrachomyomachia*.<sup>29</sup> This is probably true in part. But, if a fabulous backdrop was really all the poet wanted, we might once again ask why he preferred the Eridanus to the Oceanus. Aside from Phaethon, the Argonauts (who briefly sailed on the river), and some local nymphs who gave directions to Heracles in the course of his search for the apples of the Hesperides, there are few other mythical characters connected with the Eridanus.<sup>30</sup> Thus, while it may be a remote river, the Eridanus was hardly the most fabulous of rivers in the

<sup>28</sup> Unless Ἑριδανοῖο and not Ὠκεανοῖο is the correct reading at *Iliad* 16.151, which is unlikely.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ludwich, *Die homerische Batrachomachia des Karers Pigres* etc., p. 328.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Escher, "Eridanos," *RE* 6 (1907) 446 ff.; Roscher, *Lexikon* etc., I.1 (Leipzig 1884-1886) 1308.

sphere of myth. On the other hand, the Oceanus was the most remote river of all—in fact, the source of all other rivers. Moreover, along its waters dwelt all sorts of strange creatures, such as Gorgons, Hekatonchires, Hesperides, Geryoneus, and Eurytion, and also exotic peoples like the Cimmerians, Aethiopians, and Pygmies.<sup>31</sup> Here was a truly fabulous river! Why then did the poet select the Eridanus? I submit that the Eridanus was chosen because it was suggestive of Athens. In other words, the poet was alluding not only to the mythical river, but also to the little Athenian stream which rose on the slopes of Lykabettos, flowed through the city deme of Skambonidai and thence through the Sacred Gate into the Ceramicus.<sup>32</sup> No other local Attic rivers (e.g., the Ilissus or the Kephissus)<sup>33</sup> could evoke both the desired never-never-land atmosphere and, at the same time, an Athenian setting. So the Eridanus was chosen. What laughter the association of the local stream and the mighty mythical river would have occasioned in the Athenian audience! One further point of interest: the Attic Eridanus (or what remains of it) is still filled with frogs to this day.<sup>34</sup> This interpretation of *παρ' ὄχθας Ἑριδανοῖο* is especially attractive when considered in the light of the passages previously discussed. Surely it is not just a coincidence that there are this many passages with Athenian overtones in such a short poem. Taken altogether, these passages lend to the *Batrachomyomachia* a distinctly Athenian flavor. Thus, as Schmidt suggested, the poem could well have “Attika als Entstehungsort.” An alternative is that it was written elsewhere, but for presentation before an Athenian audience.

One final proposal might be made. The references in the *Batrachomyomachia* to Athena's temple, her *πέπλος* and the Gigantomachia are not only suggestive of Athens, but, more specifically, of the Greater Panathenaea. It was during this festival that the *πέπλος* with

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Roscher, *Lexikon* etc., III.1 809–20, esp. 812.

<sup>32</sup> The course of the Attic Eridanus is traced by W. Doerpfeld in *Ath. Mitt.* 13 (1888) 211–20, and Taf. VI.

<sup>33</sup> Ilissus was worshipped as a hero, but no myths concerning him are known (Kolbe, *RE* 9 [1914] 1067). Likewise, the Attic Kephissus plays little role in mythology; the Boeotian-Phocian Kephissus is better attested in myth, but the information is mostly genealogical (cf. Latte, *RE* 11 [1921] 250).

<sup>34</sup> I observed the children of the German excavators of the Ceramicus playing with them while I was studying the Themistoclean wall in 1974.

its Gigantomachia decoration was presented to the goddess in her temple. Among the various elements of the great quadrennial festival were organized contests where rhapsodes and musicians competed for prizes. Because of the poem's Panathenaic orientation, it seems to me that the *Batrachomyomachia* could well have been presented at one of these contests.

Although there is no direct testimony for competitions in parody at the Greater Panathenaea, there should be no doubt that they were held. Such competitions are first explicitly attested for a festival on IG XII 9 189, an Eretrian decree of c. 340 B.C. detailing preparations for the Artemisian Games. Because of the influence exercised by Athens in Euboea in the fourth century, the Artemisian program is considered to reflect that of the Greater Panathenaea.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, we can assume that there were competitions in parody at the Greater Panathenaea by the mid-fourth century. The question is, can one find traces of their existence in Athens at an earlier time?

Once again it is useful to consult Polemon (*apud* Ath. *Deip.* 15.698b–699d) who states that the famous Hegemon of Thasos was victorious on a number of occasions in Athens with his parodies. Polemon quotes some of Hegemon's verses which refer to a prize of fifty drachmas he won there. The same amount for the first prize in parody is inscribed on IG XII 9 189. Moreover, both Polemon and Chamaeleon of Pontus (c. 350–281 B.C.)<sup>36</sup> record the fame Hegemon achieved with one parody in particular, his *Gigantomachia*. Indeed, Chamaeleon declares that the Athenians enjoyed Hegemon's performance even though the disaster in Sicily had been announced on that very day and that they wept in secret but did not leave the theater, *ἵνα μὴ γένωνται διαφανεῖς τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων πόλεων ἀχθόμενοι τῇ συμφορᾷ*. Chamaeleon's linking of Hegemon's performance with the Sicilian disaster has been doubted with good reason.<sup>37</sup> But there is no reason to question the existence of the performance itself before an audience of Athenians and non-Athenians in the later fifth century. Significantly,

<sup>35</sup> Cf. L. Ziehen, "Panathenaia," *RE* 18 (1949) 483; E. Preuner, *Hermes* 57 (1922) 92.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ath. *Deip.* 9.406e.

<sup>37</sup> First by H. Schrader *RhM* 20 (1865) 186–94, who calculated that the news of the Sicilian disaster would have reached Athens in early October—a time when no musical contests are presented. The Greater Panathenaea were celebrated in Hekatombaion, the first month of the Athenian year, cf. Deubner, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

the details provided by Polemon and Chamaeleon point to the Greater Panathenaea.<sup>38</sup> During what other festival in Athens would Hegemon have been more likely to present parodies, win fame and a prize of fifty drachmas, and perform before an international audience? Also, Hegemon's theme, the Gigantomachy is well-suited to the setting of the Greater Panathenaea, as are the various elements in the *Batrachomyomachia* discussed previously.

Polemon adds one more important detail. According to him, Hegemon *πρῶτος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τοὺς ἀγῶνας τοὺς θυμελικούς*. This should mean that he was the first to introduce parodies to the type of artistic competitions featured at festivals like the Greater Panathenaea and the Eretrian Artemisia.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, Aristotle (*Poet.* 1448A12) and Chamaeleon (who, as a peripatetic, probably followed him; *Ath., loc. cit.*) went so far as to claim that Hegemon was actually the first to write parodies (*ὁ τὰς παρωδίας ποιήσας πρῶτος*). This is not likely to be true. Leaving aside those who employed parody in other literary genres (e.g., Cratinus in comedy), the *Margites*, a parody of the epic hero, surely antedates Hegemon, and perhaps also some or all of the "Beast-Epics" cited above. These, although known only by title, were probably parodies of epic in the same vein as the *Batrachomyomachia*.<sup>40</sup> But Hegemon's productions could well have been so outstanding that parody acquired, for the first time, a place in festival programs. Thus Polemon's statement would be true. If so, then parodies cannot have been performed at the Greater Panathenaea much earlier than the last quarter of the fifth century, since all of Hegemon's known activities date to this time.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> So also A. Körte, "Hegemon (3)," *RE* 8 (1912) 2595-96.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. W. Aly, "θυμελικοί ἀγῶνες," *RE* 6A (1936) 704-06 for a thorough discussion of the term.

<sup>40</sup> Or so the *-μαχία* of their titles, plus the fact that they are dubbed *παίγνια* (in the *Suda* s.v. "Ὀμηρος 103 and the *Vita Herodotea* κδ' 330) would suggest (cf. note 2). Other pseudo-Homeric *παίγνια* are: *Κέρκωπες* (sixth century on the basis of the popularity of this theme in temple decoration?), which may have parodied epic (cf. Harp. ["*Κέρκωψ*"]; *Suda* ["*Κέρκωπες*"]); *Ἐπικυλίδες* (date undetermined, which did not involve parody of epic and was evidently erotic in theme (cf. *Ath. Deip.* 14.639a); and *Ἐπταπакτική(ς)?* (cf. *Vita Herodotea, loc. cit.*, *Procl. Chrest.* in vol. V of the OCT of Homer, p. 102) about which we know nothing. Indeed, we are not even sure of its title.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. A. Körte, "Hegemon (3)," *RE* 8 (1912) 2595-96. This means that their introduction cannot be connected with the "Panathenaic Law" of Pericles which is dated to the 440's. Cf. J. A. Davidson, *JHS* 78 (1958) 23-41, esp. p. 41.

Consequently, if the *Batrachomyomachia* is to be associated with the Greater Panathenaea, it cannot be dated earlier than the last quarter of the fifth century. Nor can it have been created much later. In order for the poem to have been accepted as the work of Homer by the third century, it must have circulated for a considerable time before then. There is no reason why the *Batrachomyomachia* cannot have been composed c. 415–400 B.C. The *Suda* certainly cannot be used as evidence for dating the poem to the period of the Persian wars or to c. the mid-fourth century B.C. Whether or not the elder or younger Artemisia had a brother named Pigres, he is not likely to have composed the poem, or his name should have appeared among the parodists on Polemon's list. Further, examinations of the meter of the poem have proven inconclusive. Finally, no barriers are raised by considerations of the language of the piece. As was mentioned, the poem contains epic diction, tragic phraseology, and Hellenistic elements as well. The Hellenistic elements are surely interpolations, since, as I have said, in order for the *Batrachomyomachia* to have passed as the work of Homer by the third century, it must have been written long before. So arguments for a Hellenistic date based on these elements may be dismissed. On the other hand, it cannot so easily be argued that the phrases reminiscent of the language of Attic Tragedy are interpolated. The *Batrachomyomachia* would have had plenty of time to pass as the work of Homer by the third century if it had been composed at the end of the fifth, as I am suggesting. Thus, its tragic phrases can be viewed as part of the original text and not as later interpolations. If this is so, these phrases can be taken as further evidence for "Attika als Entstehungsort." In sum, there is no reason, historical or philological,<sup>42</sup> why the *Batrachomyomachia* cannot have been written in the last quarter of the fifth century and thus have been presented at the competition for parodies which had recently been introduced into the program of the Greater Panathenaea.

To judge by IG XII 9 189, parodies were less popular than other

<sup>42</sup> Nor are there compelling literary grounds. Ludwig's argument for a date c. 500 B.C. because the Greeks would still have been interested in animal fable at that time (the Aesopic fable having been at its high point a century before) does not convince (cf. *Der Karer Pigres* etc., p. 2). Parody is much more kindred in spirit with comedy than with Aesopic fable, and animals played an important role in comedy until the end of the fifth century.

festival competitions; most of the prize money went to the rhapsodes and musicians. This may account for the scant remains of Greek parody and the general paucity of information about its writers in ancient texts. The fact is that, in comparison to other literary genres, parody attracted little attention. Thus, it should cause no surprise that the author of the *Batrachomyomachia* would be forgotten and that, between the fifth and third centuries, the poem would come to be associated with Homer on the basis of its dependence on the *Iliad*.<sup>43</sup>

Any student of Greek parody knows that dealing with the *Batrachomyomachia* is a frustrating business in which certainty may not be ascertainable. It is clear, however, that the traditions which survive about the poem's authorship and date are untrustworthy. Therefore, if these subjects are to be explored at all, there is nowhere to turn but to such clues as are offered by the poem itself. Admittedly, the text of the *Batrachomyomachia* is poorly preserved and has suffered interpolations of vocabulary and phraseology. At the same time, there is no reason to suppose that those episodes of the poem or the phrases in them which have been especially dwelt on in this essay were not part of the original text.<sup>44</sup> It is my opinion that those episodes point, not to Pigres or Halicarnassus, but to Athens and possibly the Greater Panathenaea.

<sup>43</sup> Still, the fact that the only "Beast Epic" to survive has come down to us anonymously is disappointing. Furthermore, since the *Batrachomyomachia* really does have its merits, the temptation to assign it to a prominent parodist is strong. Is it in any way possible that this poem, in which mice and frogs are comically compared to giants on three occasions (7, 171, 283), once bore the title *Gigantomachia*, and is, in fact, the famous parody Hegemon presented before the Athenians?

<sup>44</sup> The heavy-handedness of P. Brandt (*Corpusculum Poesis Epicae Graecae Ludibundae* I [Leipzig 1888]) in bracketing 181-87 and 187-92 has not been followed by subsequent editors: viz. Ludwich and Allen. Brandt (p. 3) conceded that he objected to these and other lines on purely subjective grounds ("Atque prioribus illis locis ubi eicienda tantummodo esse insiticia mihi aliisve visa sunt, ea his [ ] cancellis circumscripti."); cf. also Ludwich's review in *BPhW* 13 (1888) 1429 ff. ("Auch dürften sich nur wenige finden, welche selbst bei diesem Gedichte die Anwendung des kritischen Mittels der Athetese in solchem Umfange billigen wie Brandt gethan hat.").