

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

EURIPIDES EROTODIDASKALOS? A NOTE ON ARISTOPHANES *FROGS* 957

EY. ἔπειτα τουτουσὶ λαλεῖν ἐδίδαξα . . .
νοεῖν, ὀρᾶν, ξυνιέναι, στρέφειν, ἐρᾶν, τεχνάζειν,
κάχ' ὑποτοπεῖσθαι, περινοεῖν ἅπαντα
Ar. *Ran.* 954, 957–58

I never cease to be surprised how editors at *Ranae* 957 express doubts about the unanimous MSS reading ἐρᾶν, “to love,” which has resulted in a crop of emendations of varying degrees of feebleness or improbability: περᾶν (Meineke, van Leeuwen), δέρειν (Kock), τε καὶ (!) or πλέκειν (Blaydes), φωρᾶν, στρέφειν (Lobeck, *metri causa*), ἐρᾶν, but = “pour out,” “vomit” (Richardson),¹ ἔριν τεχνάζειν (Tucker).² The intrusion of an object in the last proposal for one verb only in the brisk series of infinitives in the line also spoils Fritzsche’s στροφῶν ἐρᾶν as well as Ussher’s ingenious στρέφειν ἔδραν (based on the wrestling term in Theophr. *Char.* 27.12, Theoc. 24.111),³ and it is difficult to see how the line could be delivered in the way suggested by Coulon, Radermacher, or Stanford; that is, that either the previous στρέφειν, or both it and the following τεχνάζειν could be understood to depend on ἐρᾶν, and not on ἐδίδαξα. Most recently, K. J. Dover agrees that ἐρᾶν “is keeping odd company,” and concludes “an obelisk seems appropriate.” Of editors this century only Rogers seems entirely happy with ἐρᾶν, though he rather coyly translates “to woo.”⁴ (The Penguin translator, by the way, omits any word at all in his translation at this point.)

At least Dover refers to “the heterogeneity of Aristophanes’ lists,” but by citing only *Aves* 1539–41 he does not show just how common and characteristic of his humor this is.⁵ Far better in *Aves* alone is 837–42, where “fall off the ladder” and “fall asleep” are absurdly included in a peremptory series of commands by Peisetairos to his work force. Sometimes it is the last word or phrase in a sequence that carries the joke, as in *Ranae* 151, where “copying out a speech of Morsimos” concludes the list of offences for which wrongdoers may be punished in Hades, but often the incongruous item is embedded among others, as in “to the crows” in Charon’s list of destinations for his passengers in *Ranae* 185–87. In frag. 428 K/A αἶραι (darnel, *infelix*

1. *Hermathena* 72 (1948): 80.

2. I am surprised Tucker did not take ἔριν rather with στρέφειν, and compare Pind. *Nem.* 4.93 ἔριδα στρέφειν.

3. *Hermathena* 85 (1955): 59.

4. As the Oxford text editors have no punctuation in the line, one cannot be certain how they intended it to be understood. Coulon’s apparatus draws attention to punctuation points in the Ravenna MS before and after ἐρᾶν. Willems in his French translation and notes also accepts ἐρᾶν (“convoiter”).

5. For heterogeneity in such lists, see E. S. Spyropoulos, *L’Accumulation verbale chez Aristophane* (Thessaloníki, 1974).

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lolium) is an “innocent” inclusion in the cargo of grain for sale of a merchant ship: “a comic intermixture of weeds,” to quote Edmonds. In quite a number of examples, like ἐρᾶν above, a sly sexual intrusion is made or suggested, as in *Acharnenses* 545–54, where in the list of busy warlike preparations in the Athenian docks “aulos girls, black eyes” are added;⁶ or “brothels and landladies” in the instructions for landmarks and stopping-places en route to Hades in *Ranae* 113–14; or “prostitutes, dancing girls, Harmodius’ darlings” on the menu for the banquet in *Acharnenses* 1089–93; or ὄλισβοι in frag. 332.13, thrown in towards the end of a spectacular list of feminine adornments and cosmetics—τὰ περὶ κόσμων Pollux—but not exactly what the well-dressed young lady would be wearing in public. Mnesilochus adds *sotto voce* καὶ λαϊκάζει at *Thesmophoriazusae* 57, rounding off the servant’s enthusiastic catalogue of his master’s compositional procedures. At *Ecclesiazusae* 221–28, Praxagora’s list of women’s activities, which show the benefits that might accrue to the state if they were given power, soon slips into unguarded admissions of their love of drink, sex, and deceiving their husbands.

So much for this characteristic of Aristophanes’ humor. What of the allegation—of course with comic exaggeration—that Euripides had taught (ἐδίδαξα, 955) the young of Athens “to love”? The poet as teacher is a basic theme of the contest of the poets in *Ranae*, and Aeschylus’ position, that the poet’s business is to teach τὰ χρηστά, appears at 1026–27, 1035, 1053–56, while he claims that Euripides has transformed the χρηστοί into μοχθηρότατοι (1011). The comment of Tzetzes on ἐρᾶν in our passage is ἐρωτικά γεγραφέναι. τεχνάζειν: πανουργεῖν, ἥ τὰ πρὸς ἔρωτας τεχνικῶς λέγειν, ὡς ἐν Φαίδρα.⁷ Of all the charges brought by Aristophanes against Euripides, his preoccupation with “sleazy” subjects is most prominent (849–50, 1043–44, 1079–81, 1301), and this is true also of the satirical treatment of the poet in *Thesmophoriazusae*, although the passage at 383–428, where one of the women is appalled how he has revealed their guilty secrets to their menfolk, is slightly different in character; that is, he has not so much taught men how to indulge in love affairs and seduction as exposed the ways in which their wives deceive them in sexual matters. That Euripides is a “teacher” in this sexual area too, however, is shown by the use of ἐδίδαξεν in 399, as in *Ranae* 954.⁸ (Incidentally the only other usage in Aristophanes of the verb ὑποτοπεῖσθαι of 958,⁹ describing how Euripides has taught Athenian men to be on the lookout for trouble [κακά], is at *Thesmophoriazusae* 496, where Mnesilochus in female disguise outlines a sexual escapade that the poet had not succeeded in communicating to the husband, who thinks his wife μηδὲν κακὸν δρᾶν.) In the final scene of *Thesmophoriazusae* Euripides himself appears disguised as a bawdy old woman, demonstrating his expertise in sexual instruction by schooling a pretty dancing girl in how to seduce and distract the libidinous Scythian warder; and not surprisingly, when at *Ranae* 1306 Euripides’ own castanet-

6. There is a similar amusing catalogue in Eubulus frag. 94 of toasts to be drunk, and their subsequent effects on the drinkers.

7. Perhaps in associating τεχνάζειν with ἐρᾶν he was thinking of the τέχνη or μηχαναί of the nurse in *Hipp.* 481, 670, 680, 1305, referring to the play as *Phaetra*, like the Laurentian MS of the extant play. (See Koster on Tzetzes’ commentary at 957 and 1043.)

8. The verb recurs of Euripides at 427.

9. It is interesting that the verb occurs also in Thucydides’ account of Diodotus’ speech at 3.43, where he goes on to criticize contemporary Athenian περίνοια (“excessive cleverness”); cf. Aristophanes’ περινοεῖν of Euripides’ “teaching,” a theme he develops in absurdly exaggerated fashion at 971–91.

TABLE 1. EROTIC WORDS OCCURRING IN MAJOR TRAGEDIANS

| | Aeschylus | Sophocles | Euripides |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| ἔρως (-ος) | 16 | 18 | 87 |
| ἐράω, ἔραμαι | 5 | 14 | 57 |
| Κύπρις | 6 | 6 | 87 |
| Ἀφροδίτη | 6 | 2 | 26 |

playing “Muse” appears, she too is clearly—and in the eyes of Aristophanes appropriately—represented as a seductive Cyrene-like courtesan.¹⁰

The particular plays with sexual themes that Aristophanes had in mind are, of course, the two *Hippolytus* and *Cretan* plays, *Stheneboea*, *Peleus*, *Aeolus* (the theme of which disgusted old Strepsiades too in *Nub.* 1371), and *Melanippe the Wise*;¹¹ but it is striking that, in the background of a number of other plays, seductions and rapes, human or divine (e.g., *Auge*, alluded to at *Ran.* 1080), are important to the plot, and Webster refers to a series of five less familiar plays that featured what he quaintly terms “women with irregular babies.”¹² The more innocently romantic *Andromeda*, which aroused such πόθος in Dionysus (*Ran.* 53–67) and which, in Lucian’s amusing account (*Hist. Conscr.* 1) induced a romantic mania in the citizens of Abdera, must also have had notable erotic overtones; for example, frag. 136 where, incidentally, “Ἐρως ‘the tyrant over gods and men’ is invoked as teacher. Small wonder that Plutarch (*Mor.* 762b) actually called Euripides ἐρωτικός¹³ in quoting one of the best known lines from *Stheneboea* (frag. 663), ποιητὴν δ’ ἄρα / Ἐρως διδάσκει, κἄν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρὶν, where again notice the verb “teach.”

Over and over again in Euripides, the power, pressures, and perils imposed on mortals by Aphrodite and Ἐρως are stressed, and whole odes, or parts of odes, are devoted to the charms, but also the dangers and dominion of love (*Med.* 627–42, *Hipp.* 525–64 and 1267–82, *Tro.* 840–59, *IA* 543–57, *Bacch.* 403–8). Many of the fragments quoted from lost plays also represent this, of which I cite only a selection:

- (136) σὺ δ’ ὃ θεῶν τύραννε κἀνθρώπων Ἐρως,
 ἦ μὴ δίδασκε τὰ καλὰ φαίνεσθαι καλά,
 ἦ τοῖς ἐρῶσιν εὐτυχῶς συνεκπόνει
 μοχθοῦσι μόχθους ὧν σὺ δημιουργὸς εἶ. (*Andromeda*)
- (162) ἀνδρὸς δ’ ὀρῶντος εἰς Κύπριν νεανίου
 ἀφύλακτος ἡ τήρησις, ὥς κἄν φαῦλος ἦ
 τᾶλλ’, εἰς ἔρωτα πᾶς ἀνὴρ σοφώτατος
 ἦν δ’ ἂν προσῆται Κύπρις, ἥδιστον λαβεῖν. (*Antigone*)

10. See E. K. Borthwick, *Phoenix* 48 (1994): 26–37.

11. See the allusions at 849, 863, 1043, 1079–81, and the amusing parodies of 1471, 1475. *Melanippe* is associated with Phaedra in contrast to Penelope in *Thesm.* 547. Doubtless Plato had these plays in mind when deploring tragedies with a woman κάμνουσαν ἢ ἐρώσαν ἢ ὠδίνουσαν (*Resp.* 395E).

12. *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London, 1967), 86.

13. Plutarch, who clearly had a wide-ranging familiarity with Euripides’ plays, again characterizes him as ἐρωτικός ἀνὴρ in his essay *On Love* (frag. 136.41 Sandbach) when quoting from his *Antigone* (frag. 161) on love as madness.

- (269) Ἔρωτα δ' ὅστις μὴ θεὸν κρίνει μέγαν
καὶ τῶν ἀπάντων δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατον,
ἦ σκαίος ἐστὶν ἢ καλῶν ἄπειρος ὦν
οὐκ οἶδε τὸν μέγιστον ἀνθρώποις θεόν. (*Auge*)
- (340) Κύπρις γὰρ οὐδὲν νοθετουμένη χαλᾷ,
ἦν δ' ἂν βιάζῃ μᾶλλον ἐντείνειν φιλεῖ (κτλ.) (*Dictys*)
- (428) οἱ γὰρ Κύπριν φεύγοντες ἀνθρώπων ἄγαν
νοσοῦσ' ὁμοίως τοῖς ἄγαν θηρωμένοις. (*Hippolytus* 1)
- (431) Ἔρως γὰρ ἄνδρας οὐ μόνους ἐπέρχεται
οὐδ' αὖ γυναικας, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεῶν ἄνω
ψυχὰς χαράσσει κατὰ πόντον ἔρχεται. (*Hippolytus* 1)
- (665) νοθετούμενος δ' ἔρως
μᾶλλον πιέζει. (*Stheneboea*)
- (898) τὴν Ἀφροδίτην οὐχ ὀρᾷς ὅση θεός;
ἦν οὐδ' ἂν εἴποις οὐδὲ μετρήσειας ἂν
ὅση πέφυκε κάθ' ὅσον διέρχεται.
αὕτη τρέφει σε κάμει καὶ πάντας βρότους (κτλ.) (*Frag. Incert.*)

By comparison, in the plays of neither Aeschylus nor Sophocles does love so persistently obtrude. In the latter, the fragments of his *Phaedra* are not enough to reveal how his version of the play developed,¹⁴ and one thinks readily of only the famous chorus of *Antigone* 781–99, where S. Trenkner's comment is apt: "Apart from the ode in honour of the power of Eros by the chorus of old men, there is not a word of love in it."¹⁵ Contrast with this Webster on what can be inferred about Euripides' (lost) *Antigone*: "He saw their love as central to the story, not as a secondary motive which merely created a foil to display Kreon's isolation."¹⁶ As for Aeschylus, in *Ranæ* 1044, in the debate with Euripides he is made to declare that he never put on stage a woman in love as he had, and it is true that a reader of *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroi* gets no strong impression of mutual affection between Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, whose adultery was long in the past. Perhaps if more of his *Danaides* survived apart from the speech about love by Aphrodite (frag. 44 Radt) quoted from σμενότατος Aeschylus by Athenaeus 600b, we might find the love of Hypermestra for Lynceus more sensitively portrayed.

Even a basic word count in the plays and fragments of Euripides demonstrates the greater prominence of themes of love in his works. I take the statistics in Table 1 (p. 365) from the standard modern concordances to the three tragedians, and even allowing for the fact that not all the usages, especially of the verb, are specifically sexual, and of course that the number of extant plays and fragments of Euripides is greater, the contrast with the other two could hardly be more striking.

Naturally Euripides' two *Hippolytus* plays in particular show how humans are unable to resist the onset of sexual passion. ἐρᾷς· τί τοῦτο θαῦμα; σὺν πολλοῖς βροτῶν

14. Frag. 431 of Euripides quoted above may in fact come from this play (frag. 684 Radt).

15. *The Greek Novella in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1958), 56. She also observes of *Trachiniae*, a play in which love is a major theme, that nevertheless "it is notable for the way in which love is glossed over."

16. *Tragedies*, 184. Cf. G. Xanthakis-Karamanos, *Studies in Fourth-Century Tragedy* (Athens, 1980), 48, who describes Euripides as "the founder of love-drama . . . the first to make the theme of love the ruling motive for the action."

(441) . . . τόλμα δ' ἐρῶσα (476), says the nurse to Phaedra in the extant play, as her resistance gradually crumbles (392, 504, 727, 764), since Κύπρις οὐ φορητὸς ἦν πολλῇ ῥύῃ (443). In the earlier play, said to have scandalized society, Phaedra was herself more brazen and direct, and claimed the god of love to be her teacher (frag. 430): ἔχω δὲ τόλμης καὶ θράσους διδάσκαλον / ἐν τοῖς ἀμηχάνοισιν εὐπορώτατον, / Ἔρωτα, πάντων δυσμαχώτατον θεόν. But there is one other passage above all that supports Euripides' assertion in *Ranae* 957 that he taught men, among other things, to love. Perhaps Aristophanes recalled lines of frag. 897, where the speaker proclaims to young men that they should make good use of every sexual opportunity that presents itself: τὸ δ' ἐρᾶν προλέγω τοῖσι νέοισιν / μὴ ποτε φεύγειν, / χρῆσθαι δ' ὀρθῶς, ὅταν ἔλθῃ. If the youngsters in the audience at this unidentifiable play took these lines to heart, they might well have pre-echoed Ovid's famous conclusion *Euripides magister erat!*

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VERTUMNUS IN LOVE

Masquerading as his daughter, goddess of chastity, Jupiter effects the rape of Callisto (Ov. *Met.* 2.424–38); disguised as his victim's mother, Sol initiates the rape of Leucothoë (4.218–320); impersonating an old woman, Apollo ravishes Chione (11.310); and, also in the guise of an old lady, Vertumnus attempts the seduction of Pomona (14.654–766). In an influential reading of these rape scenes that conflates them ("Ovid was to repeat the idea of transvestite rape several times in the *Metamorphoses*"), Richlin sums up the final effect of this "idea" thusly: "gender revelation equals penetration."¹ Whatever this conflation may accomplish for feminist theory, what it does to the passages in question is to rob them of their defining specificities, their special ugliness, or, in the case of the Vertumnus tale, its special charm. In the Callisto scene, Jupiter rapes his victim still disguised as Diana, so there is a lesbian fillip to his lust that adds unusual mordancy to the outrage she struggles so hard against. In the Leucothoë scene, as soon as he has administered some maternal (and lesbian and incestuous) kisses to his victim (4.222), once her maids have filed out of the chamber (223–25) and he has spoken to her (in his own voice? *ille ego sum*), Sol returns to his true form (*in veram rediit speciem solitumque nitorem*, 231), and the girl, though terrified *inopino visu*, is overwhelmed by the god's splendor and endures being raped "without complaint" (or so this narrator says: *victa nitore dei posita vim passa querella est*, 233). Apollo doesn't bother to resume his godly shape when he rapes Chione in a single line (*Phoebus anum simulat praereptaue gaudia sumit*, 11.310), and in her arms, apparently, he is, temporarily, just an old lady with a phallus doing her/his thing.

The Pomona scene echoes and mirrors the previous scenes in certain ways, but the differences are as important as the similarities. Like Jupiter, Sol, and Apollo, Vertumnus does employ the transvestite strategy. Like Sol, he does get out of drag before preparing "to exert force" (to use a suitably offensive euphemism). Like Leucothoë, Pomona, though she is not terrified by the transformation, is impressed by the physical appearance of her "admirer" (another archaic euphemism): *sed non vi*

1. Richlin 1992, 161.