

THE ‘LESBIAN’ MUSE IN TRAGEDY: EURIPIDES *ΜΕΛΟΠΟΙΟΣ* IN ARISTOPH. *RA*. 1301–28*

It is well known that the comic *ψόγος* of fifth-century conservative poets also involves musical practices. The favourite targets of their polemics are the excesses of the so-called ‘New Music’, introduced in lyric performances from the first half of the fifth century.¹ The devices of criticism are extremely various: metaphors and verbal allusions (level of *λέξις*) are usually reinforced by musical parodies (level of *μελοποιΐα*) and/or visual signs (level of *ὄψις*).² Through the latter (costumes, masks, accessories, etc.) polemical ideas could appear concretely before the mind’s eye, becoming more discernible for the Athenian audience. But how did the audience see the characters on the stage? What were the symbolic codes of visual signs? What were the polemical messages of musical performances?

Unfortunately, the *μελοποιΐα* and the *ὄψις* are no longer within the reach of the modern reader; hardly anything is known about the orchestric movements of the chorus and actors. Therefore, in order to answer these questions satisfactorily, we should try to reconstruct both visual representations and the features of musical performances – or at least their symbolic codes – by the reactions of characters on the stage (that is by the level of *λέξις*). I will attempt to use this approach in the analysis of the second section (1298–1328) of a scene from the *Frogs*, the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides about the choral songs (1249–1328).³

In the first part of the scene, quoting a series of lyric verses from various plays, Euripides satirizes Aeschylus’ fondness for the old-fashioned and monotonous musical patterns. After Dionysus has highlighted the popular sources of Aeschylus’

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¹ On the ‘New Music’ see generally L. Richter, *Die Neue Musik der griechischen Antike*, ‘AMW’ 25 (1968), 1–18 and 134–47; A. Barker, *Greek Musical Writings*, I. *The Musician and his Art* (Cambridge, 1984), 93–8; M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford, 1992), 356–72; B. Gentili, *Poesia e pubblico nella Grecia antica. Da Omero al V secolo* (Roma–Bari, 1984), 34–41; G. Mosconi, ‘La democrazia ateniese e la ‘nuova’ musica: l’Odeion di Pericle’, in A.C. Cassio, D. Musti, L. E. Rossi (edd.), *Synaulia. Cultura musicale in Grecia e contatti mediterranei* (Naples, 2000), 217–316; D. Musti, ‘Musica greca tra aristocrazia e democrazia’, in Cassio, Musti, Rossi, loc. cit. at 7–55; E. Csapo, ‘The Politics of the New Music’, in P. Murray, P. Wilson (edd.), *Music and the Muses. The Culture of Mousike in the Classical Athenian City* (Oxford, 2004), 207–48; on Old Comedy’s criticism against the ‘new wave’ composers see particularly B. Zimmermann, ‘Critica ed imitazione. La nuova musica nelle commedie di Aristofane’, in B. Gentili, R. Pretagostini (edd.), *La musica in Grecia* (Roma–Bari, 1988), 199–204 and B. Zimmermann, ‘Comedy’s criticism of music’, in N.W. Slater, B. Zimmermann (edd.), *Intertextualität in der griechisch-römischen Komödie* (‘Drama’ 2), (Stuttgart, 1993), 39–54.

² For an early use of the terms *λέξις*, *ὄψις* and *μελοποιΐα* as referring to the different *μέρη* of a tragic drama see Arist. *Pol.* 1450a 9–11.

³ On the passage as a whole see esp. M. van der Valk, ‘Aristophanes, *Ranae* 1249–1363’, *Antichthon* 16 (1982), 54–76; A. Bélis, ‘Aristophane, *Grenouilles*, v. 1249–1364: Eschyle et Euripide *μελοποιοί*’, *REG* 104 (1991), 31–51; E.K. Borthwick, ‘New interpretations of Aristophanes *Frogs* 1249–1328’, *Phoenix* 48 (1994), 21–41.

inspiration (1296–7), Aeschylus himself, by contrast, emphasizes the noble character of his own μέλη (εἰς τὸ καλὸν ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦ, 1298), not gathered from the songs of Phrynichus (μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν Φρυνίχῳ / λειμῶνα Μουσῶν ἱερὸν ὀφθείην, 1299–1300); then, he cleverly makes a counter-charge against Euripides' tragic songs:

Οὔτος δ' ἀπὸ πάντων μὲν φέρει, πορνωδιῶν,
 σκολίων Μελήτου, Καρικῶν ἀλλήματων,
 θρήνων, χορειῶν. Τάχα δὲ δηλωθήσεται.
 Ἐνεγκάτω τις τὸ λύριον. Καίτοι τί δεῖ
 λύρας ἐπὶ τοῦτον; Ποῦ' στίχῳ ἢ τοῖς ὀστράκοις
 αὕτη κροτοῦσα; Δεῦρο, μοῦς' Εὐριπίδου,
 πρὸς ἥνπερ ἐπιτήδεια τάδ' ἔστ' ἄδων μέλη. 1305

The contrast between the *selective* character of Aeschylus' songs, transposed εἰς τὸ καλὸν ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦ, and the *unselective* variety of Euripides' music, derived from all kind of material (songs of prostitutes, Meletus' drinking songs,⁴ Carian pipe-tunes, dirges and dance lyrics), is a very effective one. From the items of the Euripidean source-list it appears that the main criticism raised by Aeschylus concerns the trivial flavour of Euripides' lyric style, which is said to be lascivious (πορνῶδια,⁵ χορεία), pathetic (θρήνοι) and convivial (σκόλια Μελέτου). Carian songs, as revealed by literary evidence, are both pathetic and convivial.⁶ Yet, I believe, the words Καρικὰ ἀλλήματα convey a further allusion to the *exotic* character of Euripides' choral lyrics (but I shall return to this point later).

After first asking for a *lyrion* to accompany the forthcoming performance (which is a specimen of Euripidean trivial music), Aeschylus immediately turns round and invites the 'Muse of Euripides' to come on the stage (1305–7). She is identified as a potsherd-player,⁷ the perfect accompanist for the parody of Euripides' vulgar songs.⁸ She appears as a mute character, and 'apparently remains in view, perhaps dancing

⁴ In Epicr. fr. 4 K.–A. Meletus is branded as a composer of ἐρωτικά (see J.H. Hordern, 'Gnesippus and the rivals of Aristophanes', *CQ* 53 [2003], 608–13, at 611, and below); about his identification with the late fifth-century tragic poet Meletus (Aristoph. fr. 117 + 156 + 453 K.–A.), and/or the most famous accuser of Socrates (Pl. *Apol.* 23e), scholars have different opinions (see e.g. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Griechische Verskunst*² [Bad Homburg, 1958], 226, n. 1; van der Valk [n. 3], 60–1; A.H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes. Frogs* [Warminster 1996], 273).

⁵ The MSS' πορνιδίων is metrically wrong (in *Nub.* 997 the -νί- of πορνιδίων is short); hence Meineke's πορνωδιῶν ('performances of song by harlots'), a *hapax* which is more suitable in a list of categories of songs: see esp. K.J. Dover, *Aristophanes. Frogs. Edited with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford, 1993), 350.

⁶ Carian pipe-music is associated with symposia at Pl. *Com.* fr. 71, 12 K.–A., while the connection with funerals is especially attested by the scholiast, who qualifies Καρικὰ ἀλλήματα as lamentations (cf. also Pl. *Leg.* 800e; Pollux 4.75–6; Athen. 4.174f). The genre was probably languid, emotional and immoderate, features which are usually associated in Athenian sources with barbarians and vulgar people (see esp. E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian. Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, [Oxford, 1989], 79–84). Discussion and earlier bibliography in van der Valk (n. 3), 61–2 and n. 32.

⁷ In classical Athens percussion instruments like ὄστρακα and κρόταλα were closely associated with orgiastic celebration (see e.g. *Lys.* 387–98; Athen. 14.636ce), but also with performances of low quality (in Phryn. *Epit.* 79 the expression 'singing to the ὄστρακα' is proverbial for bad music): see Barker (n. 1), 115, n. 65; for ceramic evidence see T.J. Mathiesen, *Apollo's Lyre. Greek Music and Music Theory in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Lincoln and London, 1999), 164–5. According to the ancient commentators (cf. schol. *Ran.* 1305) the mention of potsherds involves an effective 'sending up' of a scene from Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, where the queen amuses the infant Opheltes by playing castanets (the use of which was an innovation inviting parody).

continuously, throughout Aeschylus' parody of Euripidean choral lyric and monody'⁹ (1304–64).

The practice of inscribing poets' musical criticism onto the female body seems to be a *topos* of Attic Comedy. Significant examples are the Lady Music of Pherecrates' *Cheiron* (fr. 155 K.–A.), whose limbs are symbolically violated by the 'new wave' composers,¹⁰ and the Lady Nightingale of Aristophanes' *Birds*, who, as Barker has convincingly argued, stands on the stage as an emblem of musical avant-garde, representing 'everything that is musically debased'.¹¹ To the same comic *topos* would also belong the potsherds-player of the *Frogs*; a fifth-century character identified as 'Muse of Euripides' is in fact to be regarded as a woman impersonating Euripides' music. Her figure, as it has already been suggested, stands for a symbolic expression of musical meanings.¹² Yet in one respect this female personification is an exception: she is 'focalized from Aeschylus' perspective',¹³ that is from the qualitative, subjective perspective of one of the characters acting on the stage. Her costume and mask (level of *ῥίψις*), probably consonant with the parody of Euripidean trivial songs (level of *μελοποιΐα*), could have given visible form to Aeschylus' picture of Euripides' *μέλη* (level of *λέξις*). And Aeschylus' picture, as far as it can be coincident with Aristophanes' picture, is not to be regarded as universal agreement: it remains a personal, aesthetic (and ethic) evaluation. Therefore, if the character of the Muse is conceived from Aeschylus' particular point of view, her appearance and symbolic meaning can certainly not be reconstructed independently of all Aeschylus says about Euripides' musical style.

At first sight, little can be inferred from the text about the appearance and the demeanour of the Muse, except whatever is to be understood by Dionysus' shocked exclamation *αὔτη ποθ' ἡ Μοῦσ' οὐκ ἐλεσβιάζειν, οὐ* (1308). But the precise point of this assertion is controversial, especially for the problematic exegesis of the verb *λεσβιάζω*. Therefore, it will be worth re-examining in detail the question, whose comprehension is crucial to the interpretation of the whole scene.

In Classical Greek *λεσβιάζω/λεσβιάζω* is the *vox propria* for *fellatio*, as securely attested by a good number of comic passages quoted by Jocelyn.¹⁴ Given this erotic meaning, we can translate the whole verse as follows: 'in days gone by (*ποτε*) that Muse didn't perform the *fellatio*, oh no!'. Yet according to many scholars Aristophanes would play on the ambiguity of the expression *οὐκ ἐλεσβιάζειν*: on the one hand, it would refer to the *unskilfulness* of Euripides' Muse in *Lesbian* sexual activity, on the other, it could allude to the *distance* of Euripides' music from *Lesbian* lyric

⁸ 'Her social status (*scil.* of the Muse) ... is clearly not high, ... consonant with the *Frogs*' overall picture of this tragedian as a purveyor of unheroic individuals, domestic plots, colloquial speech and a "democratized" type of tragedy in which women and servants speak as much as the male householder': E. Hall, 'Female figures and metapoetry in Old Comedy', in D. Harvey, J. Wilkins (edd.), *The Rivals of Aristophanes. Studies in Athenian Old Comedy* (London, 2000), 407–18, at 409.

⁹ Hall (n. 8), 409.

¹⁰ For references to editions and earlier studies see M. De Simone, 'Nota a Pherecr. fr. 155, 25 K.–A.', in S.M. Medaglia (ed.), *Miscellanea in ricordo di Angelo Raffaele Sodano* (Naples, 2004), 119–37, at 120–1, n. 7.

¹¹ A. Barker, 'Transforming the nightingale: aspects of Athenian musical discourse in the late fifth century', in Murray, Wilson (edd.), (n. 1), 185–204, at 204.

¹² See esp. Bélis (n. 3), 46; Hall (n. 8), 409–10.

¹³ Hall (n. 8), 409.

¹⁴ H.D. Jocelyn, 'A Greek indecency and its students: *λαϊκάζειν*', *PCPhS* 206 (1980), 12–66, at 31–4 (later occurrences of the term are quoted at 48, n. 66).

poetry (namely from the traditional poetry of Terpander, Sappho, Alcaeus etc.).¹⁵ Thus the line would mean either 'that Muse didn't perform the sexual acts of Lesbian women' or 'that music is not of the dignified type created by Lesbian composers like Terpander'. This interpretation evidently goes beyond the mere denotative sense of *λεσβιάζω*, to which it appears reasonable to ascribe some allusion to musical features, especially in the light of the semantic intersection between musical practices and erotic activity.¹⁶ An analogous *double entendre*, which plays again on the overlap between music and sex, can be found in the use of the verbs *χιάζω* and *σιφνιάζω* in Aristoph. fr. 930 K.–A. In this case, as revealed by lexicographical evidence,¹⁷ the reference to the elaborate musical style of the Chian Democritus and the Siphnian Philoxenides (or Theoxenides) conveys an ironic allusion to the erotic practice of *pedicatio*.

Therefore, for the majority of editors and scholars the precise purpose of Dionysus' remark is to deny the sexual talent of Euripides' Muse, as well as her relationship with the great poets from the past who hailed from Lesbos. Yet after the Aeschylean allusion to the songs of prostitutes, the dance lyrics and the trivial drinking songs, and given the following association of Euripides' *μέλη* with the erotic tricks enacted by the harlot Kyrene (1327–8), the reference to a Muse not familiar with sexual practices appears at least striking. In other words, a Muse incapable of erotic activity would contrast with Aeschylus' evaluation of Euripides' *τέχνη*, whose *lascivious* and *erotic* character has just been stressed by the Eleusinian poet. The female body, instead of being the concrete incarnation of Aeschylus' musical opinion, would become the visual contradiction of what Aristophanes makes Aeschylus assert about Euripides' choral songs.

With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that the scholars who want this view to be plausible have appealed to an additional hypothesis, involving the lost level of *ῥψις*: the lack of sexual appeal, ironically stressed by a sickened Dionysus, depends neither on the noble dignity of the Muse, nor on the innocence of her soul, but springs from her old, decrepit appearance, so ugly that no man would fancy her.¹⁸ Such an image is strongly effective, and well able to explain the shocked reaction of Dionysus. The god, disgusted at the sight of an ugly creature, would have exclaimed 'she couldn't be a seductive harlot, nor could she have been when she was young!'

¹⁵ So e.g. W.W. Merry, *Aristophanes. The Frogs* (Oxford, 1884); T.G. Tucker, *The Frogs of Aristophanes* (London, 1906); Van Daele in V. Coulon, *Aristophane. Les thesmophories – Les grenouilles*, Texte établi par V. Coulon et traduit par H. Van Daele, IV (Paris, 1928); W.B. Stanford, *Aristophanes. The Frogs* (London, 1963²); D. Del Corno, *Aristofane. Le Rane* (Milan, 1985); K.J. Dover (n. 5); Sommerstein (n. 4); Totaro in G. Mastromarco, P. Totaro, *Commedie di Aristofane*, II (Turin, 2006).

¹⁶ On this aspect see now L. Prauscello, 'A note on Tabula defixionis 22 (A).5–7 Ziebarth: when a musical performance enacts love', *CQ* 54 (2004), 333–9.

¹⁷ Suid. s.v. *χιάζειν*; Poll. 4.65; Suid. s.v. *σιφνιάζειν*.

¹⁸ So esp. Dover (n. 5), 352 ('given the occurrence of *ποτε* in epitaphs and dedications ... it seems likely that the Muse of Euripides is represented as an ugly old woman, as good as dead') and Sommerstein (n. 4), 274, who takes the allusion to Euripides' *Hypsipyle* (cf. above n. 7) as implicit evidence for the old aspect of the Muse (in the Euripidean play the queen Hypsipyle should have been an elderly woman, for she already had adult sons). Yet Sommerstein's argument is not so strong: the possible allusion to the lullaby scene of Euripides' *Hypsipyle* clearly reminds the audience of musical innovation (the introduction of low-quality instruments), but does not imply that there was a physical resemblance between the character of the queen and that of the Muse (cf. Borthwick's similar caution against representing Euripides' Muse as an old and matronly nurse: Borthwick [n. 3], 27).

But indeed the hypothesis of an old and repellent Muse does not allow us to overcome the dichotomy between Dionysus' exclamation and the previous charges against the musical manner of Euripides. If Dionysus' irony could have been a reaction to the physical aspect of the Muse, his claim is specifically about her sexual habits. In other words, whatever her appearance (ugly or beautiful, young or old, attractive or repellent), she is qualified by the god as a woman who does not perform *fellatio*. She is neither a vulgar prostitute, nor the sort of woman who provides sexual diversions for the guests at a symposium. She is by no means consistent with the trivial and erotic music depicted by Aeschylus as being typical of Euripides' songs. She is not, in short, a suitable incarnation of the trendy New Music (and this makes the 'decrepit Muse solution' at least problematic).

Before proposing an alternative exegesis, there is one more interpretation that I would like to consider briefly. Some scholars (Radermacher,¹⁹ Del Corno²⁰) have tried to re-establish the once prevailing view of taking *λεσβίζω/λεσβιάζω* as pointing to female homosexuality, that is they have considered the expression *οὐκ ἐλεσβιάζειν* an allusion to the women's heterosexual behaviour. Nevertheless, in spite of the coherent contextualization it could allow (a heterosexual Muse is well able to incarnate the erotic style of Euripides' songs), this view of the matter is anachronistic, for in Classical Greek *λεσβίζω/λεσβιάζω* has nothing to do with tribadism.²¹ The first secure instance of *Λεσβία* meaning *τριβάς* can be found in a scholion on Clem. Alex., *Paedag.* 3.3, written by Arethas and dated A.D. 914,²² whereas in the classical period the meaning of *λεσβίζω/λεσβιάζω* is *fello*, the only sense well attested by literary evidence. With regard to this, Ar. *Vesp.* 1346 is a very instructive example, and leaves no doubt about the meaning of *λεσβίζω* in the passage from the *Frogs*.²³

At this point, if the previous observations are correct, we could infer that the more or less persuasive readings of modern commentators make it problematic to contextualize the comment of Dionysus within the whole scene. Therefore, it will be useful to reconsider the most ancient proposal about the line's meaning, more coherent (or so I believe) with all that emerges from the words of Aristophanes' Aeschylus about the musical style of Euripides.

The ancient scholiasts of the *Frogs* interpreted the verse as a question: *αὐτῇ ποθ' ἡ Μοῦσα] ἐν ἐρωτήσῃ λέγει*. A sign of interrogation also occurs in a part of the manuscript tradition: V (the *Venetus Marcianus* of the eleventh century) has a question mark at the end of the line, while in A M² the semicolon is found after *ἐλεσβιάζειν*, and it is followed by a change of speaker²⁴ (in A the last *οὐ* is assigned to

¹⁹ L. Radermacher, *Aristophanes' Frösche. Einleitung, Text und Kommentar* (Vienna, 1954), 320.

²⁰ Del Corno (n. 15), 235.

²¹ This point has often been stressed by scholars; cf. e.g. B. Gentili, 'La ragazza di Lesbos', *QUCC* 15 (1973), 124–8; Jocelyn (n. 14), 48, n. 66, and, most recently, Mastromarco, Totaro (n. 15), 682, n. 208.

²² The scholion was first quoted by A.C. Cassio, 'Post-Classical *Λέσβιαι*', *CQ* 33 (1983), 296–7, and allows us to rectify Jocelyn's assertion that 'the error (i.e. that of taking *λεσβίζω/λεσβιάζω* as referring to female homosexuality) is as old as the fifteenth century' (Jocelyn [n. 14], 48, n. 66).

²³ Cf. also (in Aristophanes) *Eccl.* 920 (*δοκεῖς δέ μοι καὶ λάβδα κατὰ τοὺς Λεσβίους*), with schol. ad loc. (*λάβδα] λαικάζουσιν οἱ Λέσβιοι ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου στοιχείου*). Other comic examples are found in Jocelyn (n. 14), 31–2.

²⁴ On the philological value of changes of speaker in Aristophanes' manuscript tradition see esp. J.C.B. Lowe, 'The manuscript evidence for changes of speaker in Aristophanes', *BICS* 9 (1962), 27–42.

Euripides, whereas in M² it is attributed to Aeschylus).²⁵ The quick ἀντιλαβή is likely to have been inserted for the singular structure of the sentence, which presents an uncommon double οὐ. But this is a matter to which I shall return below. In the meantime, I want to draw attention to another point: printed with the question mark, the verse would mean the opposite of what it would express as a negative statement. At the sight of a vulgar potsherd-player, probably in the guise of a degraded slave-girl, Dionysus would have exclaimed: 'I have recognized this woman: in days gone by she was a sexual entertainer; isn't that true?' Such an ironic question would be a comment on the evil reputation that the Muse, now a resident of Hades, had when she was alive.

There are at least two good reasons for accepting such an interpretation. First, the image of a Muse-ἑταίρα basically agrees not only with the previous allusion to Euripides' erotic, drinking music (1301–3), but also with the following association between the Euripidean μελοποιία and the twelve perverted postures of the harlot Kyrene (1327–8; the number twelve probably implies some reference to the twelve-stringed *lyre* mentioned by Pherecrates in the *Cheiron* fragment²⁶). In other words, a Muse dressed as a sexual entertainer would constitute the perfect visual comment on Aeschylus' evaluation of Euripides' choral songs. The level of ὄψις (the symbolic meaning of the Muse's body) would be coherent with the level of λέξις (the ironic Aeschylean allusions to Euripides' musical style). Secondly, the figure of a Muse-ἑταίρα has close affinities with other female characters associated with a degraded musical style: at *Wasps* 1346 the woman who is said to perform *fellatio* is a debauched flute-girl, well trained in sexual practices as well as in musical entertainment. A vulgar working girl blowing αὐλοί at a symposium is also the nightingale of the *Birds*, whose figure is likely to have impersonated the new debased musical taste.²⁷ And indeed three modern scholars (Taillardat,²⁸ Jocelyn²⁹ and

²⁵ The question of the punctuation in Greek minuscule manuscripts is one of the most debated: see e.g. E.G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (Oxford, 1971), who wonders if 'variants in punctuation ... are due simply to the caprice of copyists ... or may reflect settled divergencies of tradition' (12); given the difficulty of coming to a general conclusion, it is necessary to check individual cases carefully. The present argument does not aim at determining the philological value of the interrogation mark, but attempts simply to find the best solution in the specific context of the musical agôn. A thorough review of relevant opinions on punctuation marks is P. Rafti, 'L'interpretazione del libro manoscritto: mezzo secolo di studi', *SC* 12 (1988), 239–98; an attempt to find a definite rule for the sign of interrogation, especially in some of Aristophanes' manuscripts, is C.B. Randolph, 'The sign of interrogation in Greek minuscule manuscripts', *CPh* 5 (1910), 309–19.

²⁶ Pherecr. fr. 155, 5 + 16 + 25 K.–A., with D. Restani, 'Il Chirone di Ferecrate e la "nuova" musica greca', *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 18 (1983), 139–92, at 143–4; cf. Stanford (n. 15), 184 on 1325–8. According to the scholia, ἀνὰ τὸ δωδεκαμήχανον (1327) is a quotation from the Euripidean ἀνὰ τὸ δωδεκαμήχανον ἄστρον (*Hypsipyle*, fr. 755 R.). In the *Cheiron* fragment the number δώδεκα is used instead of 'many' (I. Düring, 'Studies in musical terminology in the 5th century literature', *Erano*s 43 [1945], 176–97, at 181–2), and conveys a musical allusion to the great mass of notes of the 'new wave' composers, obtained by breaking up larger intervals into smaller ones. For many scholars, the *Frogs*' δωδεκαμήχανον would designate an analogous musical feature. But the line's interpretation is debated: some commentators (see e.g. B.B. Rogers, *The Frogs of Aristophanes* [London, 1919²], 199) argue in favour of a metrical allusion to lines whose pattern is δωδεκάσημος (i.e. of twelve χρόνοι; an example would be line 1322, if read with περιβαλ'); Borthwick (n. 3), 36–7 suggests a reference to 'the licentious posturings indulged in by the "Muse" during her dance preceding the embrace', while for Sommerstein (n. 4), 276 Euripides is more simply charged with 'degrading tragedy to a level fit for prostitutes'.

²⁷ Barker (n. 11), 204.

²⁸ J. Taillardat, *Les images d'Aristophane. Etudes de langue et de style* (Paris, 1965²), 428.

²⁹ Jocelyn (n. 14), 32–3.

Marzullo³⁰), taking account of the scholiasts' explanation, have accepted the interrogative solution. Nevertheless, two unresolved problems generally cause the scholiasts' straightforward reading to be thought implausible.

The first is a grammatical problem: double οὐ, which sporadically occurs in Greek sources, could not possibly be found within an interrogative sentence. Conversely, a second οὐ which strengthens a negative is securely attested by literary evidence.³¹ This sort of argument has become especially prominent from the early nineteenth century onwards. Kenneth Dover, for instance, maintains that 'repeated οὐ ... is not attested in questions',³² and that the line is to be treated as a statement. But together with Jocelyn ('for myself I cannot see why, if intonation could make a string of words containing a single οὐ suggest a positive, the same should not be possible with a double οὐ'³³), I wonder if we should lay so much stress on that argument. The sentence could have been pronounced in a *sarcastic* way, so that it pointed to the opposite of its apparent meaning.³⁴ Thus, retaining a non-interrogative form, we could translate as some eighteenth-century commentators did (see e.g. Thiersch 'profecto haec Musa olim fuit foedissima meretrix'³⁵), the positive meaning being conveyed by an ironic tone. And indeed intonation of the voice was one of the most expressive devices in dramatic performances, by which the actor could provide the text with meaningful stylistic movements that are not amenable to formal syntactical analysis.

Alternatively, one could return to the scholiasts' interrogative solution by focussing on the other examples of repeated negation in Greek questions, which are similar in structure and/or sense:

(a) Condensed forms of co-ordinated questions introduced by οὐ (hoping for the answer 'yes') are well established in Greek. A first category is represented by co-ordinated questions with *imperative* sense expressed by οὐ and the future indicative, especially attested in comic texts (see e.g. *Lys.* 459–60 οὐχ ἔλξετ', οὐ παίησεν, οὐκ ἀράξετε, οὐ λοιδορήσεν, οὐκ ἀναισχυντήσετε; 'go on, drag them down, hit them, thump them, revile them, be shameless!'³⁶). An unusual passage is Eur. *Cyc.* 49 (ψύττ' οὐ τᾷδ', οὐ; οὐ τᾷδε νεμῇ κλειτὸν δροσεράν; 'Psst ... come munch over here, on the crunchy moist grass'³⁷), but I am inclined to think that there is no real obstacle to putting it in this category; its only difference is the presence of a second *supplementary* οὐ within the first interrogative sentence (the same negative supplement of *Frogs* 1308),³⁸ a difference which Duchemin reduces by adding another interrogation-mark before the last οὐ (οὐ τᾷδ'; οὐ;).³⁹

³⁰ B. Marzullo, *Aristofane. Le Comedie: traduzione scenica, testo greco integralmente rinnovato, appendice critica* (Rome, 2003), 894–5.

³¹ See the examples quoted by Jocelyn (n. 14), 59–60, n. 246; cf. also R. Kühner, B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*, II 2 (Hannover and Leipzig, 1904³), 205; A.C. Moorhouse, *Studies in the Greek Negatives* (Cardiff, 1959), 133 (under head [b] = supplementary negatives); id., *The Syntax of Sophocles* (Leiden, 1982), 336; G.L. Cooper (after K.W. Krüger), *Attic Greek Prose Syntax*, II (Ann Arbor, 1998), 1122.

³² Dover (n. 5), 351.

³³ Jocelyn (n. 14), 33.

³⁴ Cf. also R. Cantarella, *Le Rane di Aristofane* (Como, 1943), 199.

³⁵ B. Thiersch, *Aristophanis Comoediae* (Leipzig and London, 1830), 252.

³⁶ Translation: A.H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes Lysistrata* (Warminster, 1990), 63; for other instances cf. e.g. Cooper (n. 31), 652.

³⁷ Translation: D.R. Slavitt, P. Bovie, *Euripides, 2. Hippolytus, Suppliant Women, Helen, Electra, Cyclops* (Philadelphia, 1998), 305.

³⁸ The interrogative sentence is perfectly inserted within a sequence of multiple questions, and the doubt that has been cast on the ancient scholiast's punctuation of the verse from the *Frogs* has

(b) A second category is represented by co-ordinated questions with a *rhetorical* sense (see e.g. Eur. *Andr.* 450–2 τί δ' οὐκ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔστιν; οὐ πλείστοι φόνοι; οὐκ αἰσχροκερδεῖς, οὐ λέγοντες ἄλλα μὲν γλώσση, φρονούντες δ' ἄλλ' ἐφευρίσκεισθ' αἰεῖ; 'What abomination does not dwell with you? Are there not countless murders? Aren't you always shown up as men corrupted by malice, saying one thing with your tongue but thinking another?'⁴⁰). To the same category (rhetorical questions⁴¹) could also belong the verse of the *Frogs*, which in terms of formal structure can be paralleled by *Cyc.* 49 (iteration of οὐ in an interrogative sentence). And as for the *Cyclops*' question we could add a second interrogation mark before the last οὐ, thus proposing again the solution prevailing in the late seventeenth century,⁴² and obtaining an elliptical form of condensed, co-ordinated questions of which the passage from *Andromache* would be a more complex example.

In view of the previous observations, and the instances quoted above, three alternative hypotheses could be advanced for the line in the *Frogs*, which differ from one another only in grammatical structure, the meaning being very similar: (1) we could treat the line as an interrogative sentence with iteration of οὐ, where the effect is to strengthen the affirmative view by an additional negative (αὖτη ποθ' ἡ Μοῦσ' οὐκ ἐλεσβιάζειν, οὐ; (2) we could mark off the second οὐ by another question mark before it, giving it a more independent status (αὖτη ποθ' ἡ Μοῦσ' οὐκ ἐλεσβιάζειν; οὐ;);⁴³ (3) we could infer that the sentence was spoken in a sarcastic fashion which invites approbation.

This last suggestion would be less questionable from a grammatical point of view, with the positive meaning conveyed by a sarcastic intonation. But I am inclined to think that the first one is not improbable: with the rhetorical effect being strengthened by the addition of a supplementary negative (οὐκ ἐλεσβιάζειν, οὐ;); the Classical Greek preference for repeated negatives which reinforce one another would be confirmed. In fact, the positive meaning of the question would not result from cancel-

not been raised in the case of the line from *Cyclops*, generally printed with the question mark. See e.g. G. Murray, *Euripidis Fabulae*, I (Oxford, 1902); L. Méridier, *Euripides. Le Cyclope, Alceste, Medee, Les Heraclides*, I (Paris, 1925); J. Duchemin, *Euripide. Le Cyclope* (Paris, 1945), with commentary at 60–1; W. Biehl, *Euripides. Cyclops* (Leipzig, 1983), with id., *Euripides Cyclops* (Heidelberg, 1986), 83; J. Diggle, *Euripidis Fabulae*, I (Oxford, 1984); R. Seaford, *Euripides. Cyclops* (Oxford, 1988), with commentary at 110; M. Napolitano, *Euripide. Ciclope*, introduzione di L.E. Rossi (Venice, 2003), with commentary at 102–3.

³⁹ Duchemin (n. 38).

⁴⁰ Translation: J. Morwood, *Euripides: Hecuba, The Trojan Women, Andromache*, with introduction by E. Hall (Oxford, 2000), 89.

⁴¹ The expression 'rhetorical questions' is used in the modern English sense, i.e. as referring to interrogative sentences used to assert (or deny) a point strongly by asking it as a question. Generally, the rhetorical question includes an emotional dimension, expressing wonder, indignation, sarcasm, etc., and it is not used with the expectation of an answer, its purpose being not to obtain an information but to make a point.

⁴² See e.g. R.F. P. Brunck, *Aristophanis Comoediae*, I (London, 1783); F. Invernizzi, *Aristophanis Comoediae*, I (Leipzig, 1794); J.G.C. Höpfner, *Aristophanis Ranae* (Halis Saxonum, 1797); F.H. Bothe, *Aristophanis Ranae* (Leipzig, 1828); I. Bekker, *Aristophanis Comoediae*, V (London, 1829).

⁴³ From the viewpoint of performance, proposals 1 and 2 are not dissimilar: the second negative is added in a supplement, and in speaking it has to be marked off by a pause before it. Such a pause, which gives the supplement independent status, could be indicated either by a comma or a first sign of interrogation.

lation (two negatives which annul each other⁴⁴): an interrogative sentence introduced by *οὐ* is affirmative in itself (as it implies an affirmative answer), and the addition of a redundant extra negative would only reinforce the previous one.⁴⁵ Be that as it may, if we agree that the appearance of the Muse should be consistent with verbal references to Euripides' erotic style, of which she is conceived as a physical incarnation, it is very likely for the line to mean the opposite of its apparent significance, and 'remind less quick-witted spectators of the reputation which the castanet dancer ... had when she carried on her profession in Athens'.⁴⁶

The second problem has more general implications, as it forces us to a closer inspection of the different devices of Aristophanes' musical criticism. According to scholars, the second musical meaning assigned to the verse ('the music of Euripides had no Lesbian charm, oh no!') would require a negative. In fact, with the line being made positive by a sarcastic/interrogative tone, a metaphorical reading of the expression *οὐκ ἐλεσβιάζειν*, *οὐ* would imply that Euripides' musical style has something in common with the Lesbian lyric. And this would be a *nonsensical* message: that Dionysus wants any connection between Euripides' Muse and the great Lesbian poets to be rejected has appeared a rather obvious point.⁴⁷ But is it really so? Is there any possible association between Euripides' musical style and *Lesbian* lyric poetry? In my opinion, such an association is not simply a valuable hypothesis, but a meaningful exegetic clue in the context of the *Frogs*' agôn. And I will try to show that this is exactly so.

Of the three levels employed in the *Frogs*' scene (*λέξις*, *ὄψις* and *μελοποιία*), I have deliberately left out the level of *μελοποιία*, for its analysis will be especially useful at this point of the discussion. The parodic song performed by Aeschylus is largely made of quotations from different plays of Euripides (1309–22), followed by a dialogue section in the same rhythm (1323–8). According to the standard interpretation, Aeschylus is especially mocking two features of Euripidean lyrics: (a) the unheroic character of the subjects, taken from everyday life but described in the most solemn language;⁴⁸ (b) the frequent deviations from the regular metrical patterns, which are typical of the new musical style⁴⁹ (genuine features of the New Music are also the lack

⁴⁴ It is indeed possible in Greek to take repeated negatives as constituting 'double negatives' in the modern English sense (i.e. negatives which produce a virtual positive by cancelling one another out), but they generally occur 'only when a compound negative of substantive meaning is followed by a simple (uncompounded) negative': Cooper (n. 31), 1121, with examples at 1121–2.

⁴⁵ This is the same case with *Cyclops* 49, where the second *οὐ* gives additional strength to the imperative question. Such an expression (supplementary *οὐ*) probably belongs to popular speech, as it occurs most often in passages of dialogue (cf. Cooper [n. 31], 652). And this is perhaps why the examples of repeated *οὐ* in questions are not so numerous, although further interrogative instances may be obscured by the state of our evidence.

⁴⁶ Jocelyn (n. 14), 33.

⁴⁷ There is uncertainty, however, about the specific identity of the Lesbian poets: Van Daele in Coulon (n. 15), 146–7, Del Corno (n. 15), 235 and Sommerstein (n. 4), 274, on the basis of Terpanther's Lesbian origin, have supposed a direct association between the Lesbian style and the Terpantherian school of poetry; on the other hand Radermacher (n. 19), 320, who supports the view of taking *λεσβιάζειν* as referring to female homosexuality, identifies the Lesbian lyric with the one of Sappho; for Totaro in Mastromarco, Totaro (n. 15), 682, at last, the verb *λεσβιάζειν* would refer at the same time to Terpanther, Sappho and Alcaeus.

⁴⁸ On this aspect see esp. van der Valk (n. 3), 64.

⁴⁹ Devices of the metrical parody: R. Pretagostini, 'Forma e funzione della monodia in Aristofane', in L. De Finis (ed.), *Scena e spettacolo nell'antichità. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studio Trento, 28–30 marzo 1988* (Florence, 1989), 111–28, at 116–18; Borthwick (n. 3), 29–36; L.P.E. Parker, *The Songs of Aristophanes* (Oxford, 1997), 506–9; B. Zimmermann, 'Parodia metrica nelle Rane di Aristofane', *SIFC* 81 (1988), 33–47, at 37–40.

of strophic respension and the singing of different notes – or else repetitions of the same note – on a single long syllable, marked with the iteration of *εἰ-* at 1314⁵⁰). Nevertheless, one of the main points of Aeschylus' metrical criticism seems to have been overlooked. Every scholar takes the view that the rhythm of the lyric medley is Aeolic or Lesbian,⁵¹ but this feature has not been considered as parodic in itself, nor, so far as I know, has anyone contemplated the possibility of a connection between the *Lesbian* rhythm of the song and the verb *λεσβιάζειν*. It is my conviction that immediately after a verbal allusion to the Lesbian charm of Euripides' Muse, the parodic use of Euripides' Lesbian lines cannot be coincidental.

If this line of thinking is correct, a sarcastic and/or interrogative interpretation of line 1308 becomes not only a valuable alternative, but an intriguing exegetical solution, which can allow a coherent contextualization of Dionysus' verbal reaction. The *double entendre* of the verse (*αὕτη ποθ' ἡ Μοῦσ' οὐκ ἐλεσβιάζειν; οὐ;* would mean either 'in days gone by that Muse was a sexual entertainer, isn't that true?' or 'that music had some Lesbian charm, isn't that true?') would be consistent with all Aeschylus says about Euripides' musical inspiration (as noted above, Euripides' lyric sources are said to be lascivious – *πορνώδια* –, convivial – *σκόλια Μελήτων* – and orientalizing – *Καρικὰ ἀλλήματα*). Moreover, the reference to a Lesbian Muse would find an intriguing rhythmical parallel in the following parody of Euripidean Aeolic lines.

In the light of this interpretation, we could picture the following scenario: after his polemical allusion to the *erotic* and *exotic* character of Euripides' choral songs, Aeschylus announces that he is going to prove such a specific charge (1303). At this point, enter Euripides' Muse: she is in the guise of a slave-girl hired out to play the pots/herds and to double as a prostitute. She is the perfect incarnation of what Aristophanes makes Aeschylus assert about Euripidean lyric manner. On seeing her, Dionysus would ironically stress her notorious sexual talent. Yet the verb *λεσβιάζειν* would also highlight a connection between Euripides' music and the Lesbian lyric tradition, in perfect agreement with the following parodic use of Euripidean Aeolic verses.

It is my contention that this reconstruction, though hypothetical, is more plausible because it places in a coherent context various polemical clues, each of them suggesting the same musical charge: the mention of *πορνώδια* and *Καρικὰ ἀλλήματα* at 1303 (confirmed by the allusion to the musical/sexual tricks of the harlot Kyrene, 1327–8), the reference to a Lesbian Muse (1308) and the parodic use of Lesbian lines (1309–28) are all indicative of the *erotic* and *orientalizing* character of Euripides' musical inspiration.

There is, however, a problem in such a coherent reading: the association between Euripides' musical style and Lesbian poetry presupposes a negative opinion of the Aeolic lyric manner. And yet a negative evaluation of a tradition which goes back to the archaic period seems surprising, especially in the light of conservatives' strong

⁵⁰ See esp. Dover (n. 5), 353–4; Stanford (n. 15), 183.

⁵¹ Notwithstanding the different interpretation of some ambiguous cola: J.W. White, *The Verse of Greek Comedy* (London, 1912), 270; C. Prato, *I canti di Aristofane: analisi, commento, scoli metrici* (Rome, 1962), 321–3; Radermacher (n. 19), 320–1; Zimmermann (n. 49), 37–8; Parker (n. 49), 504–7. The presence of the impure 'lecythion' with the *ἄλογος* in fourth position (1310 and 1315), which in other contexts can be interpreted as a trochaic colon or syncopated iambic (see R. Pretagostini, 'Lecizio e sequenze giambiche o trocaiche', *RFIC* 100 [1972], 257–73), does not affect the prevalent Aeolic flavour of the lyric parody.

admiration for the music of the good old days, consciously placed in ideological opposition to the new musical degeneracy.⁵² What is more, the excellence of the Lesbian music is implied by the proverb 'second to the Lesbian singer'.⁵³ However, if a disciple of Arion and Terpander is recognized as supreme in his art, the Lesbian songs of Alcaeus are associated by Aristophanes with the lascivious overtones of Agathon's New Music.⁵⁴ And in Epicrates (fr. 4 K.-A.) the songs of the Lesbian Sappho are compared with the erotic verses of Cleomenes, Lamynthius and Meletus. Cleomenes is mentioned by schol. *Nub.* 333a as an exponent of the new dithyramb, while Lamynthius is said to have written a lyric *Lyde* inspired by a Lydian *hetaira*;⁵⁵ but the most significant name is that of Meletus, whose *σκόλια*, as noted above, are quoted among the sources of Euripidean trivial songs (1303). The association between his poetry and the erotic songs of Sappho suggests that the Aeolic *μέλη* were considered particularly indecent and characterized by indecorous frivolity. A similar perspective is also offered by Clearchus, who claims that the lyric compositions of Sappho and Anacreon are not so different from popular erotic songs and trivial Locrian songs.⁵⁶ By combining these comments with the evidence of Aristophanes, one may conclude that in the élite critics' literature the popular erotic songs, the new musical compositions and the lyrics of the Lesbian tradition were all tarred with the same brush for their similar lascivious overtones. With this in mind, it should not be surprising if the Aeschylean parody of Euripides' songs is made up of Aeolic lines, nor if a sarcastic Dionysus evokes the Lesbian character of Euripides' music.⁵⁷

If this is correct, the comic strategy of Aristophanes' musical criticism should have been very effective. The poet would have poked fun at the Euripidean erotic-and-exotic inspiration by making use of all the levels of performance: the Aeschylean selection of Euripides' Aeolic lines (level of *μελοποιία*) confirms the previous allusion to a Lesbian *Μοῦσ'* *Εὐριπίδου* (level of *λέξις*), who appears as a mute character acting on the stage (level of *ὄψις*). Wearing a mask with the features of a party entertainer, she would constitute a continuing visual comment on Euripides' musical inspiration. The intention was to imply that the choral songs of Euripides were suitable for an orientalizing symposium, where female instrumentalists (pipe-players or even potsherds-players) notoriously provided disreputable diversions for the male guests.

To conclude, then, there is one more issue that I would like to consider briefly. The charge which Euripides brings against Aeschylus (1249–97) is that he usually introduced into his tragic *μέλη* the metres of the kitharoedic *nomoi* (1282) as well as the rhythmical patterns of Dorian choral songs (according to Danielewicz the

⁵² Cf. e.g. *Nub.* 966–72 and 1355–72; ps.-Arist. *Probl.* 19.15; ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 6.1133b; Athen. 14.631e. I agree with Csapo (n. 1), 230 that 'the critics invented a timeless musical tradition opposed to New Music in every way: manly, very Greek, and noble'.

⁵³ Sapph. fr. 106 V.; Cratin. fr. 263 K.-A., with commentary ad loc. ('Aelio Dionysio teste [λ 7] Lesbium illum in proverbio *ῥῆδον* Aristoteles in Lacedaemonium republica [fr. 545 R.] Terpandrum intellexit ...').

⁵⁴ *Thesm.* 160–3. For the extensive literature on the Agathon scene see G.L. Compton-Engle, 'Control of costume in three plays of Aristophanes', *AJPh* 124 (2003), 507–35, at 520, n. 40.

⁵⁵ Clearch. fr. 34 W. Significantly, in Phot. s.v., Lamynthius is a composer of erotic music.

⁵⁶ Clearch. fr. 33 W., with commentary of R. Giannattasio, 'Gli interessi letterari di Clearco' (forthcoming), 1–36, at 4–5.

⁵⁷ Consider too some comic fragments (quoted by H.R. Parker, 'Sappho Schoolmistress', *TAPhA* 123 (1993), 309–51, at 309–10, n. 1) in which the *Lesbian* Sappho figures prominently as a character; that there is any direct reference to that tradition here is an intriguing hypothesis, which shows once more how the passage opposes any univocal interpretation.

Aeschylean cola, selected by Euripides for his parodic specimen, would combine the metrical sequences in a manner reminiscent of Terpander, Alcman and Stesichorus⁵⁸. The charge which Aeschylus makes against Euripides is that he drew inspiration from Aeolic songs, whose overtones evoke both the exotic elaboration and the lascivious character of the trivial *ἑρωτικά*. This stark opposition (*Doric* versus *Aeolic* music) is basic to the schematic binarism between Greek and Asiatic modes: in the élite critics' perspective the Dorian is 'the only true Greek mode' (Plato, *Lach.* 188d), whereas the orgiastic overtones of the eastern modes are alien to the established tradition.⁵⁹ 'The two ethnic labels – *scil.* the Phrygian (= Asiatic) and Dorian modes – ... give critics a convincing symbolic template for shaping broad ethical distinctions between New Music and *tradition*';⁶⁰ at the same time they reveal an ambivalent view of what music was like in the past. It is not to the whole of ancient poetry that the conservatives assigned pristine virtue and manly character: the archaic sobriety of a Dorian choral lyric has nothing to do with the barbarian emotionalism of an orientalizing love-song. And indeed, for Aristophanes, the conscious fondness for orientalizing patterns bears some responsibility for the moral corruption of modern music.

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⁵⁸ J. Danielewicz, 'Il *nomos* nella parodia di Aristofane (*Ran.* 1264 sgg.)', in *Lirica greca e latina. Atti del convegno di studi polacco-italiano (Poznan 2–5 maggio 1990)*, *AION* 12 (1990), 131–42, at 135–7.

⁵⁹ Cf. also Pratinas' opposition between the New Music and the 'Dorian dance-song' (*TrGF* 4 fr. 3.17), and Telestes' reference to a Phrygian king (probably Olympus: Barker [n. 1], 273, n. 60) who 'first composed the Lydian *nomos*, rival to the Dorian Muse' (*PMG* 806). For detailed discussion see Csapo (n. 1), 232–5.

⁶⁰ Csapo (n. 1), 233.