

Seducing a Misanthrope: Timon the Philogynist in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*

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IN ARISTOPHANES' *Lysistrata*, the female half-chorus cast Timon, the most famous of all ancient misanthropes, as their unlikely ideological ally in their bid to take over the Acropolis and impose peace on war-ridden Athens. While the male half-chorus' song of "Melanion the misogynist" is undermined by traditional erotic associations with Atalanta, the women's song of "Timon the philogynist," on the other hand, gains power from the crafty redirection of his misanthropy against the men by means of a verbal game. This short choral interaction highlights two important patterns which pervade the entire play. First, female characters in the play consistently employ to their advantage more sophisticated discursive strategies than their male opponents. Second, even at moments of the strictest and most antagonistic gender separation, the aggressive rhetoric of both male and female characters contains the seeds of an eventual resolution.¹

Melanion the misogynist and Timon the philogynist

The choral sparring takes place mid-way through the play, when the women have already settled upon the sex strike, but

¹Important contributions to the study of women in comedy have been made by D. M. Bain, "Female Speech in Menander," *Antichthon* 18 (1984) 24–42; R. Finnegan, "Women in Aristophanic Comedy," *Platon* 42 (1990) 100–106; J. Henderson, "Older Women in Attic Comedy," *TAPA* 117 (1987) 105–129; L. Taaffe, *Aristophanes and Women* (London 1993); and L. McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman* (Princeton 1999) 205–259. For *Lysistrata* in particular, see also H. Foley, "The 'Female Intruder' Reconsidered: Women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*," *CP* 77 (1982) 1–22, and M. Rosellini "Lysistrata: Une Mise en scène de la féminité," *Les Cahiers de Fontenay* 17 (1979) 11–32.

the men do not yet know this. The confrontation between the two half-choruses, therefore, is staged as a bid for control of the Acropolis. The men begin by singing of Melanion, a youth who flees society in order to avoid marriage and never goes homeward (οἶκαδε) again on account of his hatred of women (781ff).² The women reply with a song about Timon (805ff), who spitefully curses men but, surprisingly, likes women.

If we look at Melanion's character in detail, we see that Aristophanes distorts Melanion's mythical biography by ignoring his well-known amorous associations with Atalanta in order to make the male chorus vulnerable to the women's counterattack:³

μῦθον βούλομαι λέξαι τιν' ὑμῖν, ὃν ποτ' ἤκουσ'
 αὐτὸς ἔτι παῖς ὢν.
 οὕτως ἦν νεανίσκος Μελανίων τις, ὅς φεύ-
 γων γάμον ἀφίκετ' ἐς ἐρημίαν,
 κἂν τοῖς ὄρεσιν ὄκει·
 κῆτ' ἐλαγοθήρει
 πλεξάμενος ἄρκυς
 καὶ κύνα τιν' εἶχεν
 κούκετι κατῆλθε πάλιν οἶκαδ' ὑπὸ μίσους.

²For the idea of the οἶκος in Athenian drama as the center of the female, domestic world, see S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1986) 69ff.

³It may be suggested that the misogynistic Melanion described in these lines is a different figure from the lover of Atalanta (especially given the complexities of the Atalanta myths, cf. n.7 *infra*), but I am not able to find any support for this thesis. In his note on line 785, the scholiast writes: μήποτε παρὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν εἴρηκεν. οὐ γὰρ Μελανίων ἐφευγε μᾶλλον, ἀλλ' ἡ Ἀταλάντη. ἐπίτηδες δὲ τοῦτο ὁ τῶν ἀνδρῶν χορὸς ἱστορεῖ. Van Leeuwen, *Aristophanis Lysistrata* (Leiden 1903) 112 *ad* 785, suggested that Melanion only hated mortal women: "Quod autem Atalantem in matrimonium accepit cursu victam et Parthenopaeum ex ea genuit, ea fabula huc non pertinet: qui feminas terrestres cultumque mortalium spreverat, hunc dea—nam vera dea primitus fuit Atalanta—dignata cubili est." Wilamowitz, *Aristophanes Lysistrata* (Berlin 1927) 169 *ad* 781, is less dismissive of Aristophanes' deliberate manipulation of Melanion's character: "Es ist natürlich Erfindung der Greise, daß Melanion aus Weiberhaß in die Einsamkeit floh." Wilamowitz, however, attributes this flexibility in Melanion's dossier to the mythical style ("es war einmal"), rather than to specific poetic workings of *Lysistrata*. J. Henderson, *Aristophanes Lysistrata* (Oxford 1987) 170, claims that the men simply "ignore his connection with Atalante."

οὕτω τὰς γυναῖκας ἐβδελύχθη ῥκεῖνος, ἡμεῖς δ'
οὐδὲν ἥττον τοῦ Μελανίωνος, οἱ σῶφρονες.

I want to tell you a story which I heard when I was still a boy. There once was a lad named Melanion, who fled marriage and went off into the wilds and lived in the hills. And with his woven nets, he hunted rabbits with his dog, and he never went homeward again out of spite. Melanion was revolted by women, and we are no less chaste than he (781–796).⁴

Misogynistic figures like Melanion have been seen before on the tragic stage, such as Hippolytus and Pentheus (though Euripides' *Bacchae* was produced several years after Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* of 411), and they always meet with a frightful end.⁵ Despite Melanion's modern reputation for being "a renowned... misogynist,"⁶ he is regularly portrayed as the lover of Atalanta; among classical Greek sources, only these lines in *Lysistrata* attest to his misogyny. The two are associated both in the famous race, in which the victor won the hand of the beautiful maid and the loser was summarily executed, and in the Calydonian boar hunt (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.9.2). In these stories, the young man is variously identified as Hippomenes or Meleager,

⁴For the paired use of μῦθος in lines 781 and 805 as a verbal weapons, see G. Zanetto, "Iambic Patterns in Aristophanic Comedy," in E. Carvarzere *et al.*, edd., *Iambic Ideas* (Lanham 2001) 68, which compares the semantic effect of μῦθοι to αἶνοι. R. Rosen, *Old Comedy and the Iambographic Tradition* (Atlanta 1988) 31, has shown that the αἶνος functioned as a "vehicle for abuse" in *iambos*. On the general theme of lyric abuse in Aristophanes, see Carroll Moulton, *Aristophanic Poetry* (Göttingen 1982) 18–47.

⁵Hesiod *Th.* 603–604 warns of the dangers of avoiding marriage: ὅς κε γάμον φεύγων καὶ μέρμερα ἔργα γυναικῶν / μὴ γῆμαι ἐθέλη, ὅλοόν δ' ἐπὶ γῆρας ἵκοιτο. If the description of Melanion as γάμον φεύγων recalled this Hesiodic line for the audience, then the men's misogyny is already partially undermined.

⁶John Boardman, "Meilanion," *LIMC* VI (1992) 404, who offers no support for this comment. This passage from *Lysistrata* is cited as proof of Melanion's misogyny (rather than a unique Aristophanic innovation) by both M. Detienne, "The Perfumed Panther," in *Dionysos Slain*, transl. M. and L. Muellner (Baltimore 1979) 41, and P. Vidal-Naquet, "The Black Hunter and the Origin of the Athenian *Ephebia*," in *The Black Hunter*, transl. A. Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore 1986) 119–120.

but also as Melanion. Details surrounding the girl and the three heroes are somewhat obscure, and Timothy Gantz suggests that there are actually two distinct individuals named Atalanta: one is a chaste Boiotian who races against her suitors; the other is an Arcadian who takes part in the Calydonian boar hunt.⁷ Hippomenes is the standard racer in the early literary sources, and Meleager is almost always named as the main boar hunter, but by the fifth century Melanion seems to have a role of his own as a hunter and the devoted lover of Arcadian Atalanta—a far cry from his misogynistic depiction in *Lysistrata*.⁸

The earliest literary evidence all supports this portrayal of Melanion as Atalanta's lover. Hellanicus, the first author to mention Melanion, lists him and Atalanta as the parents of Parthenopaïos (*FGrHist* 4 F 99). Xenophon and Palaephatus, rough contemporaries of Aristophanes, though almost certainly writing some years after the performance of *Lysistrata*, both mention that Melanion had to work to win the affections of Atalanta.⁹ Neither author makes any suggestion that the young hero had misogynistic tendencies.

In art the situation is the same. On the François Krater, a black-figure vase dating from about 570 B.C., named figures of Melanion and Atalanta are pictured together at the hunt.¹⁰ A black figure dinos from about the same time pairs Atalanta with

⁷T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Johns Hopkins 1993) 337. This argument was known in antiquity as well: schol. *Theocr.* 3.40d, schol. Eur. *Phoen.* 150.

⁸In the earliest mention of the race, Hesiod identifies the male runner as Hippomenes: fr.72–76 M./W.

⁹Xen. (*Cyn.* 1.7.1) says that Melanion succeeded through φιλοπονία. (He also mentions Melanion at 1.2.3 in a list of some of the great hunters of myth.) Palaephatus 13.4 says that Melanion convinced (ἀναπειθεῖ) Atalanta to marry him. Compare with these Propertius 1.1.9–10 and Ovid *Ars Am.* 2.185–192 where Melanion appears as the devoted and ardent lover. For more on Melanion in Latin literature, see P. Fedeli, *Sesto Propertio: Il primo libro delle Elegie* (Florence 1980) 71–72 ad 1.1.9.

¹⁰J. D. Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters* (Oxford 1956) 76.1, 682 = Florence 4209.

a figure who is almost certainly Melanion.¹¹ Sometimes he appears without Atalanta while taking part in standard male heroic activities, but these images never suggest an antipathy toward women.¹² Pausanias, in his description of the Chest of Cypselus on which he claims to have seen Atalanta and Melanion portrayed together (5.19.2), attests that these traditional associations between the two figures persisted.

It is highly unlikely that this theme of Melanion's love for Atalanta, which appears in both literature and art, would not have been known at the time of the production of *Lysistrata* in 411.¹³ Furthermore, there is no early evidence (aside from these lines of Aristophanes) to suggest that Melanion was known as a misogynist in other tales. The much more likely explanation is that Aristophanes is distorting Melanion's mythical biography for comic effect. By invoking a figure with traditional erotic connections with a mythical huntress, rather than citing a true misogynist, such as Hippolytus, the chorus of old men lay themselves open to humorous attack.

The female chorus' use of Timon would, at first, seem to be similarly inappropriate, since Timon is never described as being a friend to women, and a similar interpretive problem arises in

¹¹Beazley (*supra* n.10) 23 = Athens Agora P334. Boardman (*supra* n.6) argues that the figure standing next to Atalanta (of whose name only the letters ME are legible) is most probably Melanion given his other associations with Atalanta in the sixth century.

¹²E.g. the Archikles/Glaukytes cup (Beazley [*supra* n.10] 163.2, 160.2 = Munich 2243) and a Tyrrhenian amphora (96.18 = Tübingen S/12 2452).

¹³The only way in which such evidence could be discounted would be through the meager remains of recent dramatic productions involving these characters which could have altered their public images. Unfortunately, so little is known about, for example, Aeschylus' *Atalanta* (*TrGF* III τ 78.3) that such a line of argument would be very difficult to support. Furthermore, given the confusion surrounding male attendants of Atalanta, it is quite possible that Aeschylus' play focused on her relationship with Meleager as plays by Sophocles (*TrGF* IV fr.400–406) and Euripides (fr.515–539 N.²), each titled *Melaeagros*, apparently did.

trying to explain their attempt to appropriate the famous misanthrope:¹⁴

κάγὼ βούλομαι μῦθόν τιν' ὑμῖν ἀντιλέξαι
τῷ Μελανίωνι.

Τίμων ἦν αἰδρυτός τις, ἀβάτοισιν ἐν σκώ-
λοισι τὰ πρόσωπα περιειργμένος,

Ἐρινύων ἀπορρώξ.

οὗτος οὖν ὁ Τίμων

ᾔχεθ' ὑπὸ μίσους

<-- -->

πολλὰ καταρασάμενος ἀνδράσι πονηροῖς.

οὕτω κείνος ἡμῖν ἀντεμίσει τοὺς πονηροὺς

ἄνδρας αἰεὶ, ταῖσι δὲ γυναιξὶν ἦν φίλτατος.

And I want to tell you a story in reply to your Melanion. There was a skulker named Timon, walled off his face in unapproachable prickles, a shard of the Furies. This Timon, then, out of hatred went <-- --> having vehemently cursed wretched men. So he, just like us, always hated wretched men, but he was very dear to the ladies (805–820).

Unfortunately, one line is missing from this description, leaving a lacuna regarding Timon's movements. It would appear, however, that while Melanion's hatred of women drives him away from the inhabited world, Timon's friendly relations with them would likely have kept him closer to society.¹⁵

¹⁴N. Loraux, "L'Acropole Comique," *AncSoc* 11/12 (1980–81) 129, suggests that the female chorus were expected to sing of Atalanta as a response to the male song of Melanion. Given the misogynistic portrayal of Melanion, however, a song about Atalanta's erotic connections with Melanion would hardly be applicable to this aggressive context. Wilamowitz (*supra* n.3) 171 justifies the portrayal of Timon by analogy: "Daß er den Haß auf die Frauen nicht übertrug, natürlich Erfindung für diese Antithese."

¹⁵Henderson (*supra* n.3) 173 mentions Coulon's suggestion that the missing line said something like "into the mountains." This is very convenient, but it is also pure conjecture. The male chorus' Melanion does live in the mountains and the two songs closely parallel one another, but this does not make Coulon's proposal conclusive. Henderson tries to support it by claiming that in Lucian "Timon wandered in the mountains." This would be slim support even if true, but Lucian's Timon is a sedentary farmer who lives by himself on a farm in the

No evidence before or after *Lysistrata* shows Timon as an enemy of men while befriending women.¹⁶ In fact, at the Dionysia of 414, the comic poet Phrynichus produced his *Monotropos*, which explicitly casts Timon as a typical misanthrope who rejects all social interaction including marriage.¹⁷ As the title character introduces himself, he announces:

ὄνομα δὲ μουστὶ Μονότροπος ...
 ζῶ δὲ Τίμωνος βίον
 ἄγαμον, ἄδουλον, ὀξύθυμον, ἀπρόσοδον,
 ἀγέλαστον, ἀδιάλεκτον, ἰδιογνώμονα.

My name is Monotropos ... I live the life of Timon—unmarried, slaveless, sharp-tempered, unapproachable, unlaughing, un-conversing, and keeping my own council (fr.19 K.-A.).

This character sounds much like Menander's grumpy Cnemon of *Dyscolus*, and his claim to being unmarried, just like Timon, works against the idea that Timon was a friend to women.¹⁸ The two descriptions, however, do agree on Timon's unapproachable personality.

Timon could also be portrayed as a figure who defies strict categorical oppositions. This aspect of his character can be

hills. Aristophanes' Timon is not so isolated as to avoid contact with women or frequent tirades against men. If Melanion, thus, avoids women by refusing to go homeward, and Timon has relations with women, then Timon must not run off to the hills like Melanion.

¹⁶ Lucian seems to make reference to Timon becoming engaged (*Tim.* 47). The issue hinges on the word προίκα. In post-Homeric usage, προίκα typically means "bride-gift" or "dowry," but in the accusative it can also be used adverbially to mean "freely given." This distinction, however, matters very little since the story of Lucian's Timon is that, in the words of Alciphron, ἐκ φιλανθρώπου μισάνθρωπος ἐγένετο (Alciph. 2.32). Whether a true engagement or not, it is irrelevant to the present discussion since the sentence refers to Timon's life prior to his transformation into a misanthrope.

¹⁷ The first hypothesis of Aristophanes' *Birds* gives the reference about Phrynichus' play, including the fact that it was awarded third prize. See N. Dunbar, *Aristophanes Birds* (Oxford 1995) 55.

¹⁸ There are several other known appearances of inveterate grouches on the comic stage in addition to Timon, Cnemon, and Monotropos: the chorus of grumpy old men in Pherecrates' *Agrioi* (described at Pl. *Prt.* 327D), Antiphanes' *Timon*, and Anaxilas' *Monotropos*.

clearly seen in Aristophanes' *Birds*, produced in the same year as Phrynichus' *Monotropos*. Aristophanes makes a brief mention of Timon which likens him to Prometheus:

Πρ.: ἀεὶ ποτ' ἀνθρώποις γὰρ εὖνους εἴμ' ἐγώ.
 Πι.: μόνον θεῶν γὰρ διὰ σ' ἀπανθρακίζομεν.
 Πρ.: μισῶ δ' ἅπαντας τοὺς θεούς, ὥς οἶσθα σύ.
 Πι.: νῆ τὸν Δί' ἀεὶ δῆτα θεομισῆς ἔφυς,
 Τίμων καθαρός.

Prometheus: I have always been a friend to men.

Pisthetaerus: I know. It is because of you, alone of the all gods, that we have our cook-outs.

Prometheus: And I hate every one of the gods, as you well know.

Pisthetaerus: By Zeus, I do. You've always been a god-forsaken sort. A regular Timon! (*Av.* 1545–1549)¹⁹

Prometheus has just risked Zeus' wrath by descending to earth in order to advise mortals on how to bargain with the gods, and he makes sure that Pisthetaerus understands his motivation by referring to his well-known fondness for mankind (*cf.* Hes. *Th.* 562–569, Aesch. *PV* 11, 28). This example is more interesting than the fragment of Phrynichus, because it likens Timon to Prometheus, who is clearly cast as a character who hates his own kind but favors a group to which he does not belong. Of course, Prometheus is a Titan and a second- (rather than third-) generation god, but the text emphasizes his defection from the unified camp of heaven rather than any factionalism among the gods. In *Birds*, Timon thus becomes an example of one who blurs the lines between categories that might otherwise be assumed to be in strict, exclusive opposition to one another.²⁰ This role is equally important in *Lysistrata*.

Several later sources follow Aristophanes' description of

¹⁹I here follow Dunbar's (*supra* n.17) line assignment, though the question of who speaks the first half of line 1549 does not affect my argument.

²⁰In his comments on these lines from *Birds*, Dunbar (*supra* n.17: 707–709) is obviously aware that the point of connection between Prometheus and Timon is their opposition to their own group, though he gives equal emphasis to the incongruity of comparing a Titan to an Athenian mortal.

Timon not just as a misanthrope, but as a hater of his own kind who could enjoy the company of others. Plutarch claims that Timon was very fond of Alcibiades because he happily anticipated the havoc which Alcibiades would one day wreak on Athens (*Ant.* 69–70, *Alc.* 16). This connection between Timon and Alcibiades may be much earlier than Plutarch, however. The scholiast to Plato's *Symposium* comments that Alcibiades makes a quip to Agathon about learning through suffering which was particularly apt for Timon, who reviled his former friends only after they had spent all his wealth (222B). The pairing of Alcibiades and Timon in Plutarch and the scholiast may be part of a traditional conception of Timon's social behavior, rather than a mere coincidence. Olympiodorus, writing in the sixth century, relates that Plato was the only man in Athens with whom Timon would consort (*in Alc.* 2.147).²¹ While these sources are too late to be understood as reflecting classical Athenian views of Timon, they do show that later writers conceived of him as making exceptions to his generally misanthropic views for certain types of people. Whether this pattern derives from Aristophanes' portrayal of Timon in *Birds* and *Lysistrata* or whether it pre-dates Aristophanes is unimportant for the present argument.²²

All this evidence suggests that, while Timon was always known to be at odds with society at large, he could also form alliances with those who opposed his enemies. Although none of the passages hint at a fondness for women (and the fragment of Phrynichus expressly mentions that Timon was unmarried), *Lysistrata* may have provided a suitable ally for Timon in the

²¹P.5 Westerink. Olympiodorus' point may be connected to the fact that a tower in the vicinity of Plato's Academy was commonly known as Timon's Tower (Paus. 1.30.4).

²²In "Timon of Athens—A Legendary Figure?" *G&R* 34 (1987) 7–11, A. M. Armstrong surveys the evidence and concludes that Timon was a historical person. Armstrong relies particularly on the first-ever mentions of Timon in the comedies of Aristophanes and Phrynichus in 414 B.C. and the *Suda's* (s.v. ἐσχηματισμένος) record of an oration by Lysias titled *Against Timon*.

form of the chorus of women. Like Timon, the women rebel against the established order in Athens and, in behaving like an army of Amazons trying to conquer the Acropolis (albeit in order to put an end to the war), the chorus of women may be thought of as earning Timon's affection for the same reasons that Alcibiades did.²³

Seducing a misanthrope and other tricks of female rhetoric

Edward Cohen has recently argued that the participation of women in Athenian life was much less restricted than modern scholarship has recognized, which calls into question the historical reality of a uniquely feminine rhetoric.²⁴ Even if Cohen's thesis is correct, however, a particularly feminine mode of verbal communication, characterized by crafty and persuasive speech, exists on the dramatic stage.²⁵ In *Lysistrata*, female characters are consistently shown as capable of understanding and manipulating not only this particularly feminine discursive strategy but also the more direct mode of speech typical of male characters. Female characters use this rhetorical flexibility to their advantage and their male counterparts' disadvantage in

²³The idea of the parallel between the women in *Lysistrata* and the Amazons is heightened by the presence of images of Theseus' amazonomachy on the Parthenon (Paus. 1.15–17). The role of Amazons in Athenian imagery is discussed by W. B. Tyrrell, *Amazons* (Baltimore 1984) 40–63; Vidal-Naquet (*supra* n.6) 205–223, "Slavery and the Rule of Women in Tradition, Myth and Utopia"; and P. DuBois, *Centaurs and Amazons* (Ann Arbor 1982) 34–42.

²⁴E. Cohen, *The Athenian Nation* (Princeton 2000) 38. Cohen argues (9) that the study of Athens has been biased by an "obsession with the male 'citizen.'" An example of the position against which Cohen argues may be found in P. Cartledge, "Deep Plays: Theatre as Process in Greek Civic Life," in P. E. Easterling, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1997) 27–28.

²⁵McClure (*supra* n.1) 24ff. McClure suggests that this portrayal of women in Athenian drama stems from the fact that only a woman *truly* knows who the father of her children is. This knowledge gives women power over truth and falsehood. According to R. Martin, "Fire on the Mountain: *Lysistrata* and the Lemnian Women," *CA* 6 (1987) 77–105, the male chorus attest to the fact that "the potential threat from powerful females was a psychic reality to Athenian males" (84).

the confrontation of the two half-choruses centered on the songs about Melanion and Timon.

The female chorus appropriate the figure of Timon by means of a clever word play which gives the women the edge in the battle of the songs. They invoke the vocabulary of words that mean “man” to their advantage: ἄνθρωπος and ἄνθρω. Each word can be used specifically, to refer to males, or generally, to refer to all people.²⁶ For the male characters, this distinction is trivial, since they are included in both the specific and the general meanings of the two words; for the women, however, these words are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive. The slippage between the general and specific meanings of ἄνθρωπος and ἄνθρω allows a word such as “misanthrope” to be interpreted to mean either “male-hater” or “people-hater.” The women exploit this potential in order to outdo the men whose song lacked any such flourish.

As the women describe Timon’s irascible personality, the listener is led to believe that this unpleasant character is on bad terms with society at large.²⁷ So when it becomes clear that his curses are directed at wretched, that is to say, *all* men (ἀνδράσι πονηροῖς), the obvious assumption is that he hates everyone. This matches with Phrynichus’ description of Timon and perfectly sets up the two-line *peripeteia* in which it becomes clear that Timon actually hates only men, but likes women. The use of ἄνθρω, which had appeared to be general, turns out to be specific in retrospect. This sleight of tongue is what gives the women the advantage in their choral dialogue with the men.

²⁶ ἄνθρωπος tends toward the more general definition, ἄνθρω toward the more gender-specific. LSJ s.v. ἄνθρωπος I.4–5 (specific) and I.1–3, II (general); s.v. ἄνθρω I (specific), “man, opp. woman (ἄνθρωπος being *man* as opp. to *beast*),” and II (general).

²⁷ In this description, Timon is quite similar to the figure of Oedipus in the opening scene of *OC*. Neither character is well suited to the social life of the *polis*, but they both become tools in the contest for power within the social world. The women in *Lysistrata* use Timon to legitimate their position; in Sophocles, Oedipus’ body becomes a talisman for political power in the rivalry between Athens and Thebes.

While the men's appeal to Melanion is humorously undercut by that character's traditional associations with Atalanta, the women's song about Timon is amplified by their clever way of recasting Timon's misanthropy as a weapon against the men.

This example from the agonistic choral songs about Melanion and Timon is illustrative of a pattern of similarly sophisticated female communication (always in opposition to more straightforward male speech) which runs throughout the play. Laura McClure refers to this dimension of dramatized female speech as "bilingualism":

women can be considered "bilingual" in that they understand both their own discursive strategies and those of the dominant group, engaging in "code-switching" in order to function in societies where they are subordinated.²⁸

This "bilingual" aspect of female speech in *Lysistrata* fits well with the women's appropriation of Timon who, unlike the male chorus' Melanion, remains ensconced in a world populated by the objects of his derision.

The very first joke of the play introduces the theme of female "bilingual" speech. Lysistrata is worried that her tardy comrades will confirm the reputation for being lazy and mischievous which men impute to them, and Kalonike gleefully claims that they already have (12).²⁹ The male castigation is registered, understood, re-evaluated and changed into a positive rather than a negative trait. This small example of female manipulation of verbal communication is mirrored in the overarching story line in

²⁸ McClure (*supra* n.1) 27. Similar analyses of marginal or minority discourses may be found in: Ann Bergren, "Language and the Female in Early Greek Thought," *Arethusa* 16 (1983) 69–95; John Winkler, "Double Consciousness in Sappho's Lyrics," in *The Constraints of Desire* (New York 1990) 162–187; Richard Martin, "Hesiod's Metanastic Poetics," *Ramus* 21 (1993) 11–33, and "The Scythian Accent: Anacharsis and the Cynics," in R. B. Branham and M. Goulet-Cazé, edd., *The Cynics* (Berkeley 1996).

²⁹ For a discussion of Kalonike's speech patterns and those of old female characters in general, see McClure (*supra* n.1) 210–211; Henderson (*supra* n.1) 96–97, 120, and *The Maculate Muse*² (Oxford 1991) 87.

which the women are able (and the men are unable) to see themselves simultaneously as the aggressive interlopers who seize the political, religious, and financial center of Athens on the Acropolis and also as the midwives of peace and salvation. The men who see and hear the women's plan unfolding can only think of Cleomenes (273ff), Hippias (618–619), and tyranny (630–631). The women fight to protect their private space by forcing their way onto the public stage.

Lysistrata demonstrates another form of female “bi-lingualism” in her argument with the Proboulos when she re-writes Homeric epic in a female register by describing a typical conjugal interaction prior to the women's plan to end the war (507ff).³⁰ When her husband returns home from a day at the assembly, a good wife stops her weaving to ask what progress has been made in the peace process. The tired husband snaps at his wife to shut up and go back to her work since πόλεμος δ' ἄνδρεσσι μελήσει, “war is a man's business” (520).³¹ This Homeric line comes from the touching private moment when Hector bids farewell to Andromache (*Il.* 6.492). In both Aristophanes and Homer, the words are used to re-assert the standard acceptable boundaries of gender roles. Andromache acquiesces to her husband's rebuff, but the Athenian women do not. While the chorus of women dress the Proboulos in women's clothing and assign him an allotment of weaving, Lysistrata says that the wives did not shut up; instead they re-work Homer to say πόλεμος δὲ γυναιξὶ μελήσει, “war is a woman's business” (538). The metrically equivalent phrase produces a female battle cry which comes from the greatest authority on the male world of heroic combat. Lysistrata's re-working of this line closely parallels Sappho's approach to Homer, as described by

³⁰ As mentioned, though as part of a different argument, by Taaffe (*supra* n.1) 64.

³¹ Note that the husband would have no doubt about the specific semantic reference of the word ἄνδρεσσι. War is the business of *men*, not of mankind.

John Winkler, which re-asserts a valid and important role for women in the world of epic:

Sappho appropriates an alien text, the very one which states the exclusion of the “weak” women from men’s territory; she implicitly reveals the inadequacy of that denigration; and she restores the fullness of Homer’s text by isolating and alienating its deliberate exclusion of the feminine ...³²

The women of *Lysistrata* appropriate Homer, just as the female chorus recasts the figure of Timon, in order to explain and justify their bold public behavior.

This theme of female appropriation and reworking of male speech is presented from the male character’s point of view when the Proboulos laments the lustful bent of women and admits that men have had a hand in fostering their passion.

ὅταν γὰρ αὐτοὶ ξυμπονηρενώμεθα
ταῖσιν γυναιξὶ καὶ διδάσκωμεν τρυφᾶν,
τοιαῦτ’ ἀπ’ αὐτῶν βλαστάνει βουλεύματα.
οἱ λέγομεν ἐν τῶν δημιουργῶν τοιαδί·

For whenever we ourselves aid and abet these women and teach them luxurious ways, such schemes blossom forth from them. We say these sorts of things among the craftsmen: (404–406)

He then launches into a series of bawdy double entendres. In each case, a man naively requests some work to be done for his wife in terms which are rife with sexual innuendoes. The audience surely get the jokes immediately, and the Proboulos clearly intends both meanings to be heard; but the implication is that at the time when the requests were made, the woman understood both meanings but the man did not. The only message the man hears in his own words refers to the business at hand; the woman, however, understands both the intended mercantile message and the unintended erotic subtext. In all these cases,

³²Winkler (*supra* n.28) 175.

the disinterested and uninvolved party experiences events very differently from the interested and involved party.³³

The words of the Proboulos are even more striking because of his assertion that these men, who do not understand the full implications of their own words, actually teach loose behavior to their wives. In a case of the blind claiming to lead the clear-sighted, the Proboulos assumes the role of authority even when any responsibility for the female understanding of the situation obviously lies with the women themselves. This comes very close to what Winkler describes when he finds that women “set up a feminine perspective on male activity which shows more clearly the inner structure and motivation of the exclusion of the feminine from male arenas.”³⁴

A final example of the women’s knack for manipulating language and ideas comes in their advice to approach the city’s problems as a woman approaches her weaving (574ff).³⁵ The advice offers political solutions in the women’s language of wool-working and it comes from a character who knows the jargon and the craft intimately. This is a language in which most men would not be fluent since it does not normally enter into the male world. It is true, as Henderson mentions, that weaving is linked to the complex of images associated with the women: Athena is the patron deity of weaving and the Acropolis, and she is a warrior virgin; the women have taken possession of the Acropolis and defend both the gates and their temporary

³³It is striking that so little ancient evidence depicts men being forced to function in a female world. Aristophanes does offer a few comic examples in other plays (e.g. *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Ecclesiazusae*) and Euripides’ *Bacchae* (produced several years after *Lysistrata*) provides an exception from the tragic stage, but when compared with the number of women who move in the male world, the imbalance is striking. There are few male complements to Penelope among the suitors, Sappho’s reading of Homer, Clytemnestra making a bid for power, Artemisia commanding a Persian fleet, etc.

³⁴Winkler (*supra* n.28) 175–176.

³⁵For a discussion of the weaving metaphors, see Moulton (*supra* n.4) 49–57. For the tradition of weaving as a political metaphor, see J. Scheid and J. Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus* (Harvard 1996) 32ff, in which the pacifying and cohesive power of weaving is discussed as a countermeasure to political strife.

chastity with arms.³⁶ The weaving image fits perfectly into this set of ideas, but that does not mean that the use of weaving as a political metaphor is any less distinctly feminine and οἶκος-based. In fact, it only works to heighten the fundamental contradictions that are bound up in the nature of these women. They defend the city through military occupation, they are chaste wives, they are in political control, and they are objects of desire.³⁷ The women use the language with which they always address their tasks, that is, domestic language. The suggestion of weaving as a solution to political problems sounds ridiculous to the men, but that is only because they have not been trained to communicate with the “bilingual” discursive strategies which are familiar to the women. McClure discusses a similar communication break-down in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, in which Clytemnestra’s “bilingualism ... creates a category crisis that ultimately destabilizes gender roles.”³⁸ In *Lysistrata*, a similar crisis arises, though it leads to a re-stabilization of gender interaction.

Complementary opposites

Thus far, the focus of this paper has been the strict and antagonistic opposition between the male and female elements in *Lysistrata*. Such a clear-cut reading of the play, however, tends to underemphasize the extent to which opposition implies complementarity. *Lysistrata* ends with the happy reunification of the sexes, and signs of this re-harmonization are to be found even in the choral songs about Melanion and Timon, despite the stark antithesis of male versus female at that moment.

Melanion’s misogyny may be undercut by his relationship with Atalanta, but this also highlights the impossibility of

³⁶Henderson (*supra* n.3) 141.

³⁷Taaffe (*supra* n.1) 20 is the most recent scholar to point out that in order for the women’s political plan to succeed they must adopt a quintessentially feminine role of being “objects of desire within the field of the male gaze.”

³⁸McClure (*supra* n.1) 71ff.

thinking in terms of absolute, exclusive sexual opposition. If the men use Melanion as the champion of their hatred for women, then they, like him, both love and hate women. Similarly, despite the clever wordplay of the female chorus, Timon's hatred of men does not fit well with the women's motivation for their sex strike. The more forcibly that the women maintain a strict sexual segregation (in the name of achieving re-harmonization), the more quickly the two camps gravitate toward one another. (Recall Lysistrata's frustration with the women who are driven to sneak away from the Acropolis to return to the integrated social world [717ff].) These strict oppositions are further weakened by the fact that it is the women, rather than the men, who follow Melanion's example of withdrawal from mixed society.

The best example of this aggressive opposition collapsing into complementarity can be found in connections between Timon and invective *iambos*.³⁹ Timon's habit of verbal abuse against those within his social group (815) and his irascible nature form a basic link with iambic abuse.⁴⁰ Later stories which grew up

³⁹ A similar strategy is adopted by R. Rosen in his explanation of the presence of an Ionian in the prologue of the *Peace*, "The Ionian at Aristophanes *Peace* 46," *GRBS* 25 (1984) 389–396. For fuller discussion of the iambic elements in Old Comedy, see Rosen (*supra* n.4); E. Degani, "Giambo e commedia," in E. Corsini, ed., *La polis e il suo teatro II* (Padua 1988) 157–179, and "Aristofane e la tradizione dell'invettiva personale in Graecia," in J. Bremer and E. Handley, edd., *Aristophane* (Geneva 1993) 1–49; Zanetto (*supra* n.4).

⁴⁰ The influence of *iambos* can be clearly seen in two other interactions in the play. First, the male and the female half-chorus leaders offer to hit one another in the jaw (360–361, 634–635), referring directly to Hipponax fr.120 West: λάβετέ μεν ταιμάτια, κόψω Βουπάλου τὸν ὀφθαλμόν. Henderson (*supra* n.3) 113 suggests that the jaw is substituted for the original target of the eye because the women are babbling. Following Rosen's sexual interpretation of the name Bupalus, however, the Aristophanic version of this fragment could refer to fellatio (see R. Rosen, "Hipponax, Boupalos, and the Conventions of the *psogos*," *TAPA* 118 [1988] 29–41). I suggest that the female chorus leader's aggressive retort in 363 about the male chorus leader's testicles further supports this interpretation. Conversely, the aesthetic interpretation of *iambos* set out by Benjamin Hughes, "Callimachus, Hipponax and the Persona of the Iambographer," *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 37 (1996) 205–216, would imply that the Aristophanic version is more about critique of offensive or improper speech rather than a response to incoherent babbling. For further discussion of these lines and *Ranae* 659–660, the only other Aristo-

around Timon, Archilochus, and Hipponax about their dangerous or remote graves strengthen this association with iambography, though they all postdate *Lysistrata*.⁴¹ While this iambic element in the female chorus' song adds rhetorical force to their riposte to the men's song about Melanion, it also provides an opportunity for *iambos* to exert its community-building force.⁴² As the women draw upon the tradition of abusive *iambos* to excoriate the men, they simultaneously set in motion a return to integrated normalcy.

phanic passage to overtly refer to the Hipponactean corpus, see Rosen (*supra* n.4) 14–16, 69–70. Second, the two instances in which something “bites the eye” (τῶφθαλμῶ/τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν δάκνει) of the male chorus leader recall the stinging, biting nature of *iambos* (298 and 1029). For biting in *iambos*, see Hipponax fr.28.5 and 84.11 W. For the more important later connections between *iambos* and biting, see Pindar *Pyth.* 2.53, who speaks of fleeing the Archilochian bite of slander (δάκος κακαγοριᾶν); Timon is also referred to as a biter in an epigram of Callimachus, *Anth.Pal.* 7.319. This epigram may have been the inspiration for a similar epigram written by Julian, prefect of Egypt and uncle of the emperor, in which he warns Cerberus, the three-headed biter of Hades, about the piercing (δριμύς) iambics and sharp-tempered (πικρόχολος) anger of the dead Archilochus, *Anth.Pal.* 7.69. Other instances of the biting quality of *iambos* can be seen in Christodorus' (V/VI A.D.) phrase θυμοδακεῖς ἰαμβοῦς (*Anth.Pal.* 2.1.359) and in Philodemus' (I B.C.) reworking of the traditional phrase of knowing how to befriend a friend and hate an enemy mentioned by Archilochus (fr.23.14–15 W.): γινώσκω τὸν με δακόντα δακεῖν (*Anth.Pal.* 5.107). For more on the connection between biting and the poetics of invective see G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore 1979) 225f.

⁴¹Especially interesting are the connections involving wasps and the prickly-pear tree (ἀχράς), both of which represent the stinging nature of *iambos*. For Archilochus' grave, cf. *Anth.Pal.* 7.71 = Page, *FGE* 197–202 (Gaetulicus). Callimachus also mentions the sharp sting of the wasp (κέντρον σφηκός) as part of Archilochus' nature (fr.380 Pf.). For Hipponax's grave, which could spout abuse at passers-by, cf. Theocr. *Epigr.* 19 Gow = *Anth.Pal.* 13.3; Philip of Thessalonica *Anth.Pal.* 7.405; Leonidas of Tarentum *Anth.Pal.* 7.408 = Gow/Page, *HE* 2325–30; Alcaeus of Messene *Anth.Pal.* 7.536. For Timon's grave see Neanthes *FGrHist* 84 F 35 which, like Aristophanes' portrayal of the living character, depicts his grave as being in a position from which he can oversee events without being accessible. Plutarch lists two epitaphs for Timon (*Ant.* 70); the second is especially interesting because it describes Timon as ἀπορρήξας, strikingly similar to Ἐρινύων ἀπορρώξ at *Lys.* 812. Both words seem to characterize Timon as a broken fragment detached from mainstream society. It is also at this point that Plutarch relates the story of how Timon stood up in the assembly to invite all Athenians to come hang themselves from a tree on his property, furthering connections between Timon and iambic motifs.

⁴²Cf. Nagy (*supra* n.40) 251: *iambos* “is an affirmation of *philotês* in the community”; C. Brown, “Iambos,” in D. Gerber, ed., *A Companion to the Greek Lyric Poets* (Leiden 1997) 11–88, esp. 41–42.

The harmonizing force of *iambos* appears more clearly at the reconciliation of the two half-choruses. As the women help remove the bug which “bites the eye” of the male chorus leader (τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν δάκνει, 1029), they tell the men that they have been looking laughable, καταγέλαστος (1020, 1024). Such gentle mockery is just as much a part of the tradition of *iambos* as the scathing abuse which famously drove its victims to suicide.⁴³

Even the female “bilingualism,” which originally served to separate the sexes, fosters the possibility for a return to integration when practiced (albeit rather inelegantly) by a man. The closest example of male “bilingual” speech is when Kinesias successfully coaxes his wife, Myrrhine, down from the chaste confines of the Acropolis. His first attempts to compel her, using the imperative, κατάβηθι δεῦρο, “come down here!” (873), and the negative future question, οὐ καταβήσῃ, “won’t you come down?” (874), have no effect; but when Kinesias has their infant child cry out to Myrrhine (878–880), she relents. Although he must resort to a voice other than his own, Kinesias does manage to affect a sort of “bilingualism” which brings male and female together. The scene ends with Kinesias left in erotic torment, but it nevertheless shows that the strict separation and opposition of the sexes is constantly on the verge of collapsing back into complementarity.

The intermingling of the sexes (at least in ritual contexts) was not at all unusual on the Acropolis, the dramatic setting of *Lysistrata*, highlighting the unusualness of the strict separation of male and female into aggressively opposed camps in the play. The women in the play affect a particularly female solution to the crisis of war while thinking not in the highjacked world of male exclusivity, but in the mixed world of men and women. The clever and effective rhetorical strategies which the women employ to co-opt Timon and press their advantage against their

⁴³ Cf. Nagy (*supra* n.40) 244.

male adversaries strengthen this segregation, but they also anticipate the final return to harmonious integration.⁴⁴

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