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GENDER, ROLE AND PERFORMER IN ATHENIAN THEATRE ICONOGRAPHY: A MASKED TRAGIC CHORUS WITH KALOS AND KALE CAPTIONS FROM OLBIA

In memoriam V.V. Krapivina

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Abstract: A vase fragment from Olbia has been recognized in recent years as a key piece of evidence for the tragic chorus in fifth-century Athenian drama, especially because it shows the use of masks by dancers in such a chorus. This article provides the first clear illustration of the fragment, revealing much detail about the dress of the dancers, with a range of further information about the object (its size, discovery etc.). The illustration shows for the first time that the scene on the fragment includes inscriptions which declare the central *aulete* and percussionist to be KALOS and each of the two dancers to be KALE. A survey of KALE tags and similar inscriptions shows that there is no direct parallel for these KALE inscriptions. Moreover, these KALE tags are all the more remarkable in that they are attached to dancers who are appearing in female dress and female roles, but who are also male in biological sex. That usage raises the larger issue of gender in the theatre, which is set beside other indications that actors might be treated as in some sense female.

Keywords: chorus, theatre, gender

In recent years, students of Greek theatre have observed the likely importance of a fragment (itself reconstituted from smaller fragments) of Attic red-figure found in the excavations of the city of Olbia, located on the west bank of the estuary of the river Bug (ancient Hypanis) in the northwest Black Sea region. In particular, the fragment has been seen to provide rare insight into the use of masks by the tragic chorus in later fifth-century Athens, since its detail, in making clear the profile mask representing female faces in a scene showing performance, is 'totally unparalleled' in Attic red-figure.[1] However, research has been hampered by the lack of adequate photographs and supporting information, for example on the size of the fragment. The purpose of this short article is to make good images available to scholars at large and, at the same time, to offer some comments on key features of the vase, including the inscriptions which the photographs now reveal and which raise questions about the gendering of actors in Athenian society. As we shall see, the composition on this fragment, both figures and inscriptions taken as a whole, is without parallel.

We wish to express our gratitude to the director of excavations at Olbia, Professor V.V. Krapivina, who died prematurely in 2013. Despite her illness, she kindly had her team supply the original images from which our illustrations are derived. We have not been able to study the actual fragment at any length ourselves.[2]

The significance of the fragment has only begun to be grasped quite recently, since it was discussed in 2002 by Heide Froning in an important German volume on the ancient Greek theatre,[3] but the fragment itself is by no means a new discovery. It was found in 1962 in the excavations of

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[1] O. Taplin, *Pots and Plays* (Los Angeles 2007) 29.

[2] We are grateful also to E.A. Mackay, Rosie Wyles, Felix Budelmann, Robin Osborne and George Gerleigner for advice and discussion. We would also like to thank the editor of *JHS* for his patience and meticulousness, the anonymous readers of *JHS*, one of whom was particularly generous with supplementary evidence, and Cathy Morgan (n.45). All responsibility remains jointly with the authors.

[3] H. Froning, 'Masken und Kostüme', in S. Moraw and E. Nölle (eds), *Die Geburt des Theaters in der griechischen Antike* (Mainz 2002) 70–95, 72 with fig. 88.

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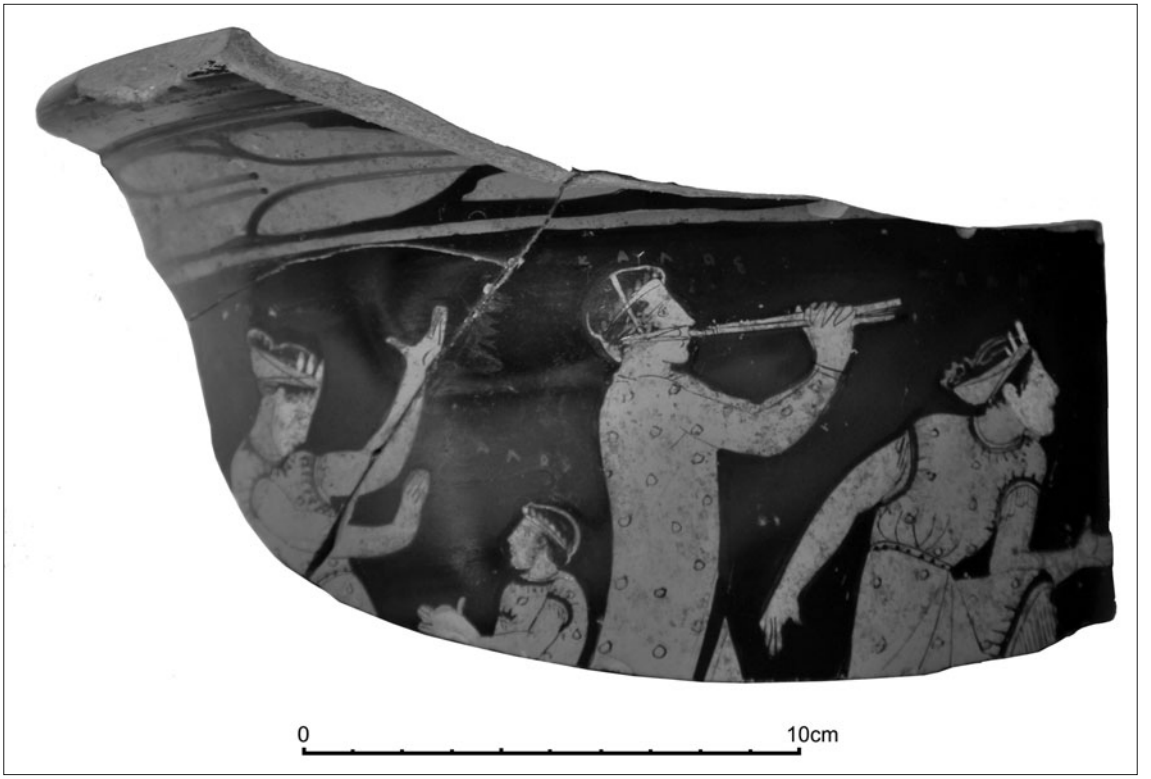

Fig. 1: Attic red-figure vase fragment from Olbia.

a dwelling conducted under the direction of L.M. Slavin (field reference 0-62/1344) in Sector E of the city. It is kept in the Archaeological Museum of the Institute of Archaeology, which belongs to the National Academy of Sciences in Kiev (item no. AM 1097/5219). The fragment was part of a krater, whose painter has not (as yet) been identified. It has been suggested that its date of production in Athens fell in the 420s, which is a reasonable guess; the inscriptions certainly encourage a date around or before 430–420.[4] We have part of the lower rim and of the upper wall of the vessel, measuring approximately 22cm by 14cm maximum, as restored (though see below). The bulk of the vessel from which our fragment comes was, however, not found. The greenish discoloration of the glaze may well indicate misfiring in production, perhaps because of the over-proximity of another vessel, the impact of whose rim is visible on the fragment. However, it is the theatrical scene that makes the fragment interesting.

Although we cannot know the composition of the scene (and the other scenes) on the whole vessel, the fragment is large enough to give a strong sense of the theatrical image. Four figures are shown in profile. In the foreground and at the centre of the fragment is depicted an *aulos*-player. He wears a substantial head-harness (*phorbeia*) to assist him in his playing by taking the weight of the two pipes, each depicted as about a metre in length and held high. Presumably such

[4] The fullest discussion of the fragment is M.V. Skrzhinskaya, *Drevnegrecheskiye prazdniki v Elladye i Severnom Prichernomor'ye* (St Petersburg 2010) esp. 200–01. These kinds of inscriptions fell out of fashion in the period *ca*. 450–425: D. Yatromanolakis, 'Contrapuntal inscriptions', *ZPE* 152 (2005) 16–30, esp. 20; although F. Lissarrague ('Publicity and performance: *kalos* inscriptions in Attic vase-painting', in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge 1999) 359–73) notes that some may date as late as 420. See also Froning (n.3) 72; Taplin, (n.1) 29.

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support was all the more desirable for prolonged performance.[5] He wears a tight-fitting garment with pronounced cuffs at the end of its long sleeves. It is decorated with a pattern of occasional and imperfect circles, a design which the painter has repeated on the clothing of the other figures shown. It is very similar to the type of theatre piper's costume to be found in earlier and contemporary Attic vase painting, for example on the fragmentary Attic red-figure hydria of between 480 and 460 BC by the Leningrad painter,[6] showing a satyr chorus in oriental clothing, or the Attic kalpis with a satyr chorus and piper, probably also by the Leningrad painter and of similar date, in Boston (MFA 03.788). This costume, with its tight sleeves, pattern of occasional circles (often with a dot marked at the centre of each circle), a long black stripe down the side and pointed shoes, became a distinct iconographic type for the formal costume of theatrical pipers. The circles may represent large sequin-like gold or precious metal ornaments sewn onto the clothing, a type of bracteate called *pasmatia*, such as actually survive in more elaborate shapes.[7] We are not, unfortunately, in the position to see the shoes of the piper on the Olbia fragment, but in other respects he wears this standard costume, except that the circles are not dotted.

The pattern of undotted, occasional and imperfect circles is repeated on the clothing of the other figures shown, including the figure immediately to the left of the piper, behind his back. That figure appears on the fragment as if considerably smaller than the *aulos*-player, though the absence of the rest of the scene makes it difficult to assess size and perspective. He may well be a boy. He wears a garlanded band around his head, close above the line of his hair, which is short like that of the *aulos*-player. There has been considerable controversy about what he is doing with his hands. Some scholars have argued that he is clapping, with thumbs held at a right-angle to his fingers, which might even suggest that we are viewing a rehearsal scene; others have suggested that he is playing castanets.[8] The detail which the new photography has revealed indicates that there is some damage in the crucial area to the right of the fingers. But overall it now seems to us (sadly) less probable that Eric Csapo was correct in suggesting that the image supplies us with rare and precious representations of a piper's equipment, pipe case and reed case, being held in readiness here by his younger attendant.[9] The perpendicular object protruding from the area of the hands does indeed seem to be a thumb (fig. 2); although it is perhaps unrealistically long, and forms a surprisingly wide angle in relation to the forefinger, comparison with the thumbs of the two dancers implies that this is the painter's idiosyncratic method.

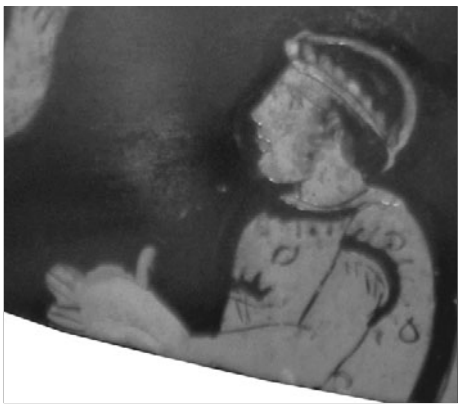

Fig. 2: Close-up of hand of young attendant

[5] See P. Wilson, 'The musicians among the actors', in P. Easterling and E. Hall (eds), *Greek and Roman Actors* (Cambridge 2002) 39–68, 45.

[6] J.D. Beazley, 'Hydria-fragments in Corinth', *Hesperia* 24 (1955) 311–12.

[7] M. Miller, *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC: A Study in Cultural Receptivity* (New York and Cambridge 1997) 156–67, esp. 162, 167.

[8] Froning (n.3) 72; M. Revermann, *Comic Business* (Oxford 2006) 87–88, n.64.

[9] E. Csapo, *Actors and Icons of the Ancient Theater* (Chichester 2010) 8.

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One of these two dancers is the figure at the edge of the fragment, on the left, towards whom the youth's hands reach up and at whom he is gazing. This dancer holds his hands raised and held in gestures to express the dance, with upper body leaning back. The dancer wears a mask, painted strikingly white and with a long artificial chin. The mask seems to be attached to, and suspended from, a substantial headband or diadem which is fastened around the dancer's head and hair; the diadem has also been attached to artificial hair dressed to give the effect of long locks wound into a bun. The mask closely resembles the mask worn by the final figure on our fragment, the second dancer who appears at the right of the *aulos*-player. The expressions of the two masks seem slightly different: the dancer to the left has a mask with a face which creates a pensive or sad effect, while to the right the expression on the mask is possibly more akin to surprise or excitement. The right-hand dancer's pose is also different. Here the dancer's body bends forward with left(?) knee raised and arms bent at the sides, in a pose which, in different circumstances, might have been mistaken for running.

The painter is clearly interested in the non-uniformity of the dance movements performed by these chorusmen. The painter may be depicting together two distinct features of the performance. Alternatively, however, it is not hard to imagine a choral performance entailing two or more forms of dancing as part of a complex spectacle. Perhaps his image here represents phased dance, with the same movements being performed serially by individual chorusmen, rather than simultaneously. But the picture could equally suggest something much more chaotic, as on the fragmentary vase in Corinth showing satyrs in oriental dress (above). In Attic iconography, choruses of citizen men are depicted dancing in formation and taking uniform steps, whereas barbarian and satyr choruses are often depicted moving out of synch with one another. This vase now provides us with an example of a chorus performing non-uniform steps and movements as they impersonate women. The iconographic conventions may or may not reflect the reality of the choreographical conventions in live performance. But in tragedy, actors playing female and barbarian characters are certainly given far more lyrics to sing than men, who far less often relinquish the spoken medium of the iambic trimeter. Measured metres characterize masculinity and self-discipline, while wild lyrics can signify disorderliness, femininity and abandon.[10] Towards the later fifth century, female and barbarian choruses seem to have become more popular, perhaps in response to audience appetite for wilder lyrical sequences, fostered by the popularity of the New Music associated with Timotheus.

The new photographs confirm the description in Rosie Wyles' recent book on Greek tragic costume, that the dresses are patterned, and although 'not "fitted" in the sense of being tailored close to the body, there is a defined neckline, the side seams must be sewn, and the finished *chiton* is drawn in at the waist by a patterned "girdle"/belt'.[11] Beneath the *chiton* the dancers wear a finely pleated garment, visible in the case of the dancer to the right. Both dancers have notably short-sleeved costumes, in contrast with the *aulos*-player, and the pictures confirm that they are definitely *not* wearing wrist-length body-tights beneath their *chitones*.[12] This is an important finding, since all the unambiguous evidence previously assembled suggests that both tragic and comic chorusmen did wear body-tights, like the main actors.[13]

[10] E. Hall, 'Actor's song in tragedy', in Goldhill and Osborne (n.4) 96–122; E. Hall, 'The politics of metrical variety in classical Athenian drama', in D. Yatromanolakis (ed.), *Music and Politics in Ancient Greek Societies* (London and New York 2012) 1–28.

[11] R. Wyles, *Costume in Greek Tragedy* (London 2011) 15.

[12] Wyles (n.11) 15 considers the possibility that the costumes included long fitted sleeves; Csapo (n.9) 8 thinks they are wearing 'body-tights'.

[13] The lines on the ankles of the chorusmen on the famous Basel krater BS 415 (conveniently reproduced and discussed in J.R. Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* (London and New York 1994) 18, fig. 2.1) may hint at body-tights. See, however, R. Krumeich, 'Schöne und geschmückte Choreuten in attischen Theaterbildern der spätarchaischen und frühklassischen Zeit', in L. Beaumont, C. Barker and E. Bollen (eds), *Festschrift in Honour of J. Richard Green, MedArch* 17 (2004 [2006]) 157–63, 17, who suggests that the lines indicate bangles.

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In addition to all this, we now see that the painter has painted 'tags' (or captions) over his figures. These appear only faintly. Above the central figure of the *aulos*-player we read KALOS. There is a pronounced mark on the fragment, resembling an upsilon. In her pioneering remarks on the fragment, Skrzhinskaya therefore reads KAULOS (see n.4). She takes the initial kappa to be an abbreviation and so reads K(ALOS) AULOS. However, even if we accept the reality of the stark abbreviation, we might have expected not AULOS but AULETES (or an abbreviation of the word), referring to the man rather than his instrument. Conceivably, one might imagine that the painter was indulging in word-play by introducing the upsilon into the more normal KALOS to elide the sense of approbation and the centrality of the *aulos* to the scene. However, the more basic observation must be that the 'upsilon' is qualitatively different on the fragment from the other lettering. Moreover, it disrupts the fairly regular spacing of the other letters K-A-L-O-S. We seem to have not a letter but damage to the surface of the vase (fig. 3). We may speculate that the location of this upsilon-shape saved it from the remedial attention of its conservators. On their work we are also sceptical about the lowest portion of the restored fragment, which, together with another unremarkable piece, probably belongs elsewhere on the body of the vase.

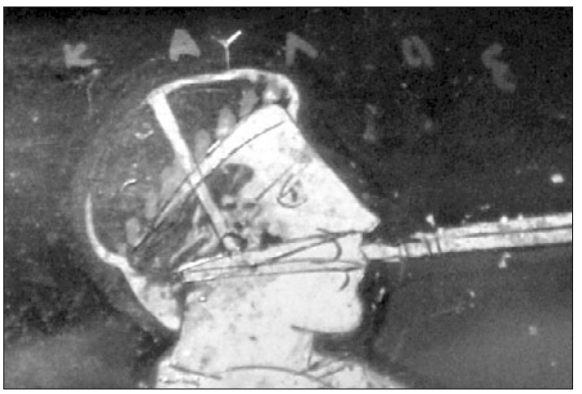

Fig. 3: Close-up of inscription (enhanced)

However, KALOS is clearly legible above the small figure behind the *aulos*-player. And above both dancers, the feminine form is also legible, KALE, although the lettering above the right-hand dancer is rather fainter. In each case we should note the painter's concern with the gender of 'her' appearance and role in performance rather than the performer's biological sex or indeed gender in life outside the theatre. For the dancer was of course male, and female only in performance.

Such tags as these have been the subject of considerable scholarly discussion and controversy, not least because some scholars seek a universal explanation of such tags which may be applied to the various usages on various vases. One may reasonably suppose a broadly common practice among painters, especially since the phenomenon is almost exclusively Athenian. Yet within this category of Athenian pottery, although 'acclamatory inscriptions are integrated into the representation', the extent to which they interact with other elements within the representation differs widely.[14] The tendencies of representational art, linguistic usage and probably also the caprice of (at least) painter and purchaser pull away from universal explanation towards flexibility and a variety of practice. However, in the case of our fragment, there can hardly be much doubt that the painter has used these tags to express approval, most likely his own, but possibly also a client's, patron's or master's.

[14] Lissarrague (n.4) 361.

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In Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, the diplomat Theorus returns to Athens from the court of the Thracian king Sitalces. He boasts that his diplomatic drinking sessions with the barbarian monarch have been so effective that Sitalces has become a lover of the Athenians and has been writing 'ATHENAIOI KALOI' on his walls (141–45):

τοῦτον μετὰ Σιτάλκους ἔπινον τὸν χρόνον:
καὶ δῆτα φιλαθήναιος ἦν ὑπερφυῶς,
ὑμῶν τ᾽ ἐραστὴς ἦν ἀληθὴς ὥστε καὶ
ἐν τοῖσι τοίχοις ἔγραφ᾽, Ἀθηναῖοι καλοί.

Theorus' representation of Sitalces' general disposition towards the Athenians is clear: *kalos* when inscribed designates enthusiasm, appropriate for expression in a sympotic context. Its repetition on our fragment (and perhaps elsewhere on the vase besides) intensifies the sense of celebration in the image. In the comic claims of *Acharnians*, Sitalces names the Athenians, but there are no names on our fragment. The lack of a personal name to identify the musicians, for example, further indicates that the painter has sought to portray good performance and to evoke the pleasure of enjoying such a performance, not to record and comment on the attributes and abilities of identifiable individuals. The painter's subject is a tragic chorus, but his theme (as appropriate to a krater) is optimistic and evocative of the fine shows that he and others had seen. The *KALOS* and *KALE* tags are repeated to build a mood of pleasure set in music and dance.

To our knowledge there is no direct precedent or parallel for the use of a grammatically feminine ending to an adjective in an inscription adjacent to a female figure in what is explicitly represented as a dramatic performance, whether in a leading role or a role represented by a chorusman. Indeed, very few surviving theatre-related vase-paintings, the vast majority of which were made in southern Italy in the fourth century BC, contain written inscriptions at all. But where we *can* compare the practice of other vase-painters in writing on an image which relates to a theatrical performance, the gender implied by the grammatical ending relates to the biological sex of the performer rather than to the gender of the role he is performing. The nearest equivalent is constituted by the scene on a famous red-figure pelike in Berlin, dated to around 470 BC. The vase depicts an elaborately dressed stage piper and two maenads, one on each side of the vase. Over one of them is written KALOS, even though the visual impression made by both maenad figures (the other is actually bare-breasted) is wholly feminine. The vase-painter approves of the young man playing the maenad, rather than the maenad.[15]

Another important example is the Attic hydria portraying Thamyras and an agitated woman, probably Thamyras' mother Argiope, dated to about 430 BC and now in the Vatican.[16] This image is likely to be related to Sophocles' own tragedy *Thamyras*, in which this mythical bard performed hexameters and played the lyre (*Life* 5; *TrGF* F 242). It has the words 'Euaion <is> beautiful' (KALOS – with the masculine ending) inscribed over the female figure, who is dancing under the influence of Thamyras' music.[17] This Euaion may be Aeschylus' son by that name, who we know performed as a tragic actor.[18] On another Athenian vase of similar date, found in Kerch, the inscription EUAION <is> KALOS is written at an exact equidistance between the two figures of a near-naked, sleeping maenad and a satyr about to accost her. If the viewer was thinking about an actual

[15] Berlin-Charlottenburg inv. 3223; J.R. Green (n.13) with fig. 2.6.

[16] Museo Etrusco Gregoriano 16549; A.D. Trendall and T.B.L.Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama* (London 1971), 69, no. III.2.9.

[17] This seems to be the closest theatrical parallel: see E. Hall, 'The singing actors of antiquity', in Easterling and Hall (n.5) 3–38, at 9–10, where the image is reproduced as fig. I; also R.T. Neer, 'Imitation, inscription, antilogic', *Métis* 13 (1998) 17–38.

[18] J.R. Green, 'Towards a reconstruction of performance style', in Easterling and Hall (n.5) 95–96; A. Shapiro, 'Kalos-inscriptions with patronymic', *ZPE* 68 (1987) 108–18.

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performer called Euaion in this case, it is not clear whether he sees him beneath the elaborately and unambiguously female body of the maenad or the appetitive satyr.[19]

On the Olbia fragment, the vase-painter does not have in mind a particular actor or dancer such as the famous Euaion; if a masculine proper name such as Euaion had been inscribed here, the adjective would presumably have been given a masculine ending. But in fact the vase-painter does not seem to have in mind the actual performer at all: by labelling the figure KALE, the viewer is being invited to think about the *effect* of the dance being performed and the identity being *projected*, rather than the identity of the performer or his biological body beneath the feminine costume and mask. This is all the more remarkable since no attempt has been made to erase the fact of the performer's own underlying 'real' masculinity, as can be seen from the short hair on the nape of the neck and the contrast between the darker skin of the dancer and the paler face painted on the mask he is wearing.

It is probably significant here that the performer labelled KALE is a member of the chorus rather than a famous individual actor. Painting a famous actor in a role for which he had been particularly acclaimed may have heightened a vase's appeal and market value: another theatre-related vase image on which the inscription tells us that Euaion is KALOS is expressing approbation of Euaion as performer of the role of Perseus. He is addressing Andromeda, tied to stakes, in the presence of her father Cepheus. This image is painted on an Attic white-ground calyx-krater from Agrigentum, dated a little earlier, to 450–440 BC. No such great interest seems normally to have attached to the individual identity and names of the chorusmen, although an outstanding exception here, of course, is the Pronomos Vase, on which the masculine names of nine members of the masculine satyr chorus are clearly inscribed.[20]

J.D. Beazley collected and so facilitated discussion of KALE inscriptions,[21] but there has been little focus on the topic since his work. While we await the findings of George Gerleigner, who is currently completing a PhD thesis under the supervision of Robin Osborne at Cambridge on vase inscriptions, the only publication of which we are aware which directly addresses feminine KALE inscriptions is an article by Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux.[22] One black-figure vase exists in which the inscription KALE KOLOURA indicates the individual – most unusually, explicitly a woman – honoured by the vase, which actually depicts aristocratic men equipped as warriors and horsemen.[23] On some Athenian vases of the sixth and fifth centuries BC, good-looking female figures including Nikai, Amazons or women at their toilet can be praised with the inscription KALE,[24] just as (in many more instances) good-looking male figures, usually in homoerotic contexts, are praised with the inscription KALOS. Masculine endings, as we have seen, can also sometimes appear on vases depicting females in maenadic contexts, and also in sympotic ones, where the homoerotic aesthetics of the vase image celebrate an individual named man with exciting images of attractive females.[25] That is, there are such inscriptions in some cases where the iconography is also homoerotic, and then others where it is sympotic, but praise of a named individual in that context (and the social context in which the vase is used) creates homoerotic overtones, with the attractive females offering an alternative but complementary model of attractiveness and/or sexuality.

[19] 30688, Moscow, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, M1360. See S. Schmidt, *Rhetorische Bilder auf attischen Vasen, Visuelle Kommunikation im 5. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Berlin 2005) 189, fig. 96.

[20] On the names, see the seminal article by K. Junker, 'Namen auf dem Pronomoskrater', *Athenische Mitteilungen* 118 (2003) 317–35; with the complementary discussion by R. Osborne, 'Who's who on the Pronomos Vase?' in O. Taplin and R. Wyles (eds), *The Pronomos Vase and its Context* (Oxford 2010) 149–58.

[21] *ABV* 676–78; *ARV*[2] 1614–16.

[22] 'Kalé: le féminin facultatif', *Métis* 13 (1998) 173–85.

[23] Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 68.105.

[24] Discussed by Frontisi-Ducroux (n.22) 175–78, figs 1–3.

[25] Frontisi-Ducroux (n.22) 176.

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Yet the opposite does not hold good. By and large, the adjective with a feminine ending does *not* normally appear inscribed in the proximity of figures who are 'actually' male. Just two vases identified by Frontisi-Ducroux (plus a third illustrated in a catalogue of an exhibition devoted to Syracuse in Atlanta) offer anything like parallel instances of the feminine inscription KALE in equivalently ambiguous contexts. The first vase is a kyathos of the second decade of the fifth century depicting a scene of educational instruction.[26] One inscription proclaims the beauty of PANAITIOS, with the epithet KALOS next to one of the two male pupils. There is a box inscribed KALE and on the box there is a papyrus roll inscribed XIPONEIA, the *Cheironeia*, apparently the title of the work which will be discussed during the lesson. Frontisi-Ducroux may well be correct in arguing that the epithet on the box is qualifying, through 'une chaine metonymique', the poem which the box usually contains and which is about to be recited.[27]

The second example decorates an early fifth-century alabastron, on which two individuals face one another but are separated by a rich ensemble of palmettes which create a sense of elegance and luxury.[28] On the left-hand side a handsome young man holds a chest from which he is pulling a necklace to offer to the woman on the other side of the palmettes. Inscribed vertically parallel and adjacent to the man from the level of his hips to his ankles is ALEXOMENOS KALOS. Inscribed vertically behind the woman's back is HE PAIS ('the girl') and vertically in front of her face is KALE ('beautiful'). But the word KALE is *also* inscribed on the man's side of the picture, horizontally, above his hand and the necklace he his holding. The most likely explanation of this is not that the man is in any sense being gendered female, but that the vase-painter is indicating that the effect of the necklace will be to make the woman look beautiful: the necklace is destined for the woman, and in wearing it her beauty will be further emphasized.[29]

These two KALE inscriptions, one praising the poem contained within the roll of papyrus marked *Cheironeia* and one praising the beauty that an item of *kosmos* will confer on a female form, do not provide precise parallels to the inscription KALE denoting a figure in a drama equipped and ornamented as a woman yet performed by a man. Potentially a little more helpful is the portrait of Paris on a striking red-figure vase from Sicily of much the same date as our fragment from Olbia (Syracuse inv. 2406). It is an Attic skyphos attributed to the Danae painter, found in the necropolis. One side of the vase is almost completely destroyed; a cloaked figure with a sceptre might be Priam. On the right of the main scene, a muscular but feminine-featured Paris, with long curls flowing from beneath his Phrygian cap, dressed in the elegant clothes of a Phrygian shepherd, reclines at ease on a rocky outcrop of Mount Ida. On the left, Hermes, *caduceus* held to touch the ground, is delivering a message to him. The word KALOS in the masculine, orthograde, is written between them, close to Hermes' head; in a corresponding position relative to Paris, the word KALE in the feminine is inscribed retrograde. A persuasive interpretation argues that even though the goddesses are not physically included in the scene the inscriptions 'appear almost as greetings: *kalos* (beautiful) in the masculine for Paris, *kale* in the feminine for his response to the goddesses'.[30] Indeed, the use of the feminine ending nudges the viewer of the vase into imagining the Judgement scene in which Hermes has just invited Paris to participate. In the late fifth century, Judgement of Paris scenes acquired a new significance in the light of the Peloponnesian War;[31] it is interesting that this vase was placed in a tomb near Syracuse. Another explanation is that the inscription implies, perhaps humorously, that the exquisite Paris himself is effeminate in his beauty, but the way the word is inscribed, retrograde from near his face, does make it look as though it is

[26] Berlin 2322; *ARV*[2] 329/34.
[27] Frontisi-Ducroux (n.22) 178.
[28] London E 719; *ARV*[2] 1560.
[29] Frontisi-Ducroux (n.22) 179, fig. 4.
[30] M.-T. Lanza and B.D. Wescoat, commentary on exhibition catalogue no. 10, in B.D. Wescoat (ed.), *Syracuse, the Fairest Greek City. Ancient Art from the Museo Archeologico Regionale 'Paolo Orsi'* (Rome 1990) 82–83.
[31] L. Burn, *The Meidias Painter* (Oxford 1987) 65–68.

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a view *he* is somehow expressing. This fascinating image, in any case, presents no parallel to the feminine inscriptions on the Olbia pot, because the scene is not explicitly theatrical and Paris is not playing a female role.

These three vases constitute a motley group which is small and, in each case, the use of KALE is quite unlike its extraordinary use (and together with KALOS) in our theatrical scene. In their different ways, however, they do help illuminate the fascinating meaning which KALE can take on in the context of a depiction of a theatrical performance. If the piper was not described as KALOS, it might even be tempting to consider Frontisi-Ducroux's speculation that the femininity of the poetry roll on the first example, the Berlin kyathos, might have something to do with the femininity of poetry – Poesis – and of the Muses in the Greek imagination. Tragic theatre, when visualized, personified or allegorized as *Tragōidia* by the fifth-century Athenians, and indeed throughout Greek and Roman antiquity, was always imagined as not only feminine but seductive and usually beautiful – whether as a maenad, as an actor dressed in female costume, a Muse named Melpomene or as an imposing, glamorous matron.[32]

Regardless of whether the vase-painter wanted to suggest approval of the performance in female guise of the (male) tragic dancer he has so carefully painted, or more generally of the effect of *tragōidia* in performance, the inscriptions on this fragment merit the close attention of theatre historians. Csapo's important comments on the picture stress that it 'is precisely the lack of anything that could be linked to narrative, either mythical or dramatic, that is astonishing'; the Olbia fragment, he writes, is our earliest surviving visual depiction which is unapologetically and unambiguously showing us 'a performance, pure and simple, without even a hint at the story behind the performance, let alone the myth behind the story'.[33] The image is a realistic depiction of musicians and dancers in tragedy, rather than an impression of the effect of a tragedy based on a particular myth in performance.

Yet the KALE tags certainly move the viewer one step away from the 'realistic' interpretation of the image as portraying an all-male group of performers using different types of equipment. It asks the viewer to appreciate the *effect* that the feminine masks, the white skin, the carefully arranged long hair, the elegant dresses and the waving arms had in performance to the music of the *aulos*. Even as it stands, the fragment asks the viewer to reflect on the psychological effect of the mimesis created by the tragic performers, which must have been disorientating in a gender-related way. The KALE inscriptions are, in effect, stating that the youths' mask and dancing make them 'beautiful women'.

Substantial questions remain, however, about the composition itself: the new photographs lend no more support than the older images to David Wiles' arbitrary insistence that the dancers are obviously representing maenads.[34] As we have it, the figures seem to form two pairs, in each of which we have a musician and a dancer, male and 'female', respectively. The two musicians stand back-to-back, looking to the dancers separated to either side of the scene. We have observed that two quite different dance-movements are shown.

It is not out of the question that the remainder of the picture did originally include further details that allowed viewers to identity an actual and specific tragic chorus in performance, or at least a chorus in a specific tragedy, or a chorus of a particular identity. One possibility is that the chorus is meant to appear somewhat oriental. The costumes of the chorusmen and the piper are similarly decorated. The pattern consists of undotted circles.[35] The picture is clouded because this type of

[32] E. Hall, 'Tragedy personified', in C. Kraus, S. Goldhill, H.P. Foley and J. Elsner (eds), *Visualizing the Tragic. Drama, Myth, and Ritual in Greek Art and Literature. Essays in Honour of Froma Zeitlin* (Oxford 2007) 221–56.

[33] Csapo (n.9) 8–9.

[34] D. Wiles, *Mask and Performance in Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 2007) 28.

[35] See M. Miller (n.7) 167; M. Miller, 'In strange company: Persians in early Attic theatre imagery', *MedArch* 17 (2004) 165–72, 168.

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decoration became very fashionable amongst elite Athenian males. Yet similar *pasmatia* decorations appear on the fragments of the hydria of the Leningrad painter showing an elaborately oriental chorus.[36] Since female choruses are not usually elite citizens (unlike elderly male choruses), that these chorusmen share the piper's dress decorations *may* be an indication that the identities they are assuming are meant to look oriental. The similar circles patterning the clothing of the Persian on the notorious 'Eurymedon eimi' red-figure oinochoe in Hamburg (1981.173) are, interestingly, also undotted (see above n.7).

But we must also remember that this is an artistic representation which attempts to capture performance in a stylized fashion appropriate to an image painted on the side of a vase. Given the concerns of Dionysos, tragic performance was suitable enough as decoration for a krater, used for the mixing of wine, while the cheerful optimism of the tags, the appreciation of the beautiful femininity represented in tragic theatre and the focus on music and dance all suit the symposiastic consumption of wine.[37]

We may well wonder how this vessel, with its presentation (as it seems) of a much-approved tragic choral performance, found its way to Olbia in the northwest of the Black Sea. Certainly, Olbia was much closer to Athens, and indeed to the Athenian stage, than has often been imagined;[38] the city is notable for its celebrations of Dionysos, both in the theatre and in civic rituals at large.[39] Skrzhinskaya suggests, rather ambitiously, that the vase may have been commissioned by an Olbian visitor to Athens, impressed by a play he saw there, so that he had the scene painted to commemorate the event;[40] similar suggestions have often been made about some of the more spectacular Athenian vases painted with scenes related to theatre that have been found in the graves of Magna Graecia and Sicily.[41] However, a great deal of Attic pottery came into the Black Sea in the fifth century and earlier, and some of it reached places far more remote than the cardinal city of Olbia.[42] Moreover, while the image may well have been inspired through experience in the theatre, the lack of any personal name on the fragment (our *aulos*-player is no Pronomos) makes the scene functionally generic and evocative of good (tragic) choral performance, music and dance in general. And one might well take the view that the vase was all the more attractive (not least in a symposium) precisely because of the broad evocations of its design, rather than through some attempt to record a specific performance.

We hope that the fragment will now become even more a focus of attention among students of Greek theatre and its representations, as well as among those who are interested in recreational culture in the ancient Black Sea or in the vexed issues surrounding inscriptions on vases. The KALE inscriptions on our fragment, and the issues of gendering which they raise, may point the way to a fuller understanding of social attitudes about actors in Athens and their roles off-stage in Athenian society. It is possible that the camp operatic performance of the effeminate Agathon in

[36] Beazley (n.6).

[37] Skrzhinskaya (n.4) 201 observes that tragic scenes were uncommon in Attic vase painting before the fourth century (though note especially the tragic chorus on a vase of *ca*. 480 in Basel: Taplin [n.1]) and so takes our fragment to show a satyr-play. She compares the so-called Pronomos Vase, where the presence of satyrs is very clear. Our fragment shows none.

[38] See D. Braund, 'Pericles, Cleon and the Pontus: the Black Sea in Athens, c.440–421 BC', in D. Braund (ed.), *Scythians and Greeks* (Exeter 2005) 80–99.

[39] On Dionysus at Olbia, see D. Braund, 'Scythian laughter: conversations in the northern Black Sea in the fifth century BC', in P. Guldager Bilde and J. Hjarl Petersen (eds), *Meetings of Cultures – Between Conflicts and Coexistence* (Black Sea Studies 8) (Aarhus 2008) 347–68 with bibliography; further, D. Braund and E. Hall, 'Greek theatre in the fourth-century Black Sea', in E. Csapo, H.R. Goette, J.R. Green and P. Wilson (eds), *Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century BC* (Berlin 2014) 371–90.

[40] Skrzhinskaya (n.4) 201.

[41] On the presence of the Athenian Pronomos Vase in a grave in Ruvo di Puglia, see L. Burn, 'The contexts of the production and distribution of Athenian painted pottery around 400 B.C.', in Taplin and Wyles (n.20) 15–31, 26; on another important theatre-related Athenian vase found in Italy of similar date, see E. Hall, *Adventures with* Iphigenia in Tauris*: A Cultural History of Euripides' Black Sea Tragedy* (New York 2012) 79–80.

[42] D. Braund and S.D. Kryzhitskiy (eds), *Classical Olbia and the Scythian World* (Oxford 2007) passim.

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Thesmophoriazusae tells us something about the contemporary perception of the *real* public personae of singing actors (*tragōidoi*) specializing in the impersonation of beautiful women with extensive sung lyrics, roles like that of Helen in Euripides' *Helen*. An important Hibeh papyrus contains a fragmentary treatise on musical modes responding in the early fourth century to the famous music theorist Damon of Oa; the treatise impugns the masculinity of tragic actors and their singing. It denies that the enharmonic mode can bestow bravery on tragic actors, for they are not 'a manly lot'.[43]

Another suggestion that actors were sometimes regarded as effeminate has been made by an archaeological discovery in the Kerameikos, where an actor may have been buried with grave-goods more usual in the burials of women. A burial there contained pyxides, a bronze mirror, make-up (notably, cinnabar: *cf*. Plin. *NH* 33.112) and even what seems to be equipment for wool-working.[44] Such grave goods would usually be taken to indicate that this was a female burial. However, skeletal examination showed that the person interred (in a fine sarcophagus) with these goods was biologically male, indeed a young man.[45] The possibility that this was the burial of an actor was encouraged by the discovery nearby of the epitaph of a certain Makareus. His verse epitaph proclaims him a 'charioteer of tragic art for Greeks': he was an actor, who evidently died prematurely (*IG* II^2 6626). While it must be acknowledged that there is some element of doubt in the connection of Makareus' epitaph with the feminine male burial (such problems are common enough in the archaeology of the Kerameikos),[46] we should observe not only their proximity and the explanatory force of their connection, but also the fact that Makareus died young, as did the deceased of the burial. Moreover, such dates as are available for the sarcophagus and the various grave goods are consonant with the date when Makareus' epitaph was inscribed, probably early in the third quarter of the fourth century. Doubt abides, but the case is strong for the connection. Of course, Makareus performed about a century later than our fragment. However, the unusual details of this burial combine with the use of feminine KALE for the dancers on our fragment (as distinct from the KALOS of the male musicians) to raise serious questions about the extent to which actors may have been gendered as somehow female in classical Athenian society, in life and in death.

[43] B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt (eds), *The Hibeh Papyri* (London 1906) part 1 no. 13, pp. 45–58, col. ii. For further discussion, see E. Hall, *The Theatrical Cast of Athens* (Oxford 2006) chapter 11.

[44] W.K. Kovacsovics, *Die Eckterrasse* (Kerameikos 14) (Berlin 1990) 36–38, no. 24.

[45] *Cf*., in a larger context of burials in the Kerameikos, S.H. Houby-Nielsen, '"Burial language" in archaic and classical Kerameikos', *Proceedings of the Danish Institute at Athens* 1 (1995) 129–92, esp. 140 (a reference we owe to Cathy Morgan).

[46] On such difficulties, see D. Braund, 'Scythians in the Kerameikos', in C.J. Tuplin (ed.), *Pontus and the Outside World: Studies in Black Sea History, Historiography, and Archaeology* (Leiden 2004) 17–24 and the literature there cited.

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