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Some thoughts on humor and music in Aristophanes’ plays*

Loredana Di VIRGILIO

Introduction

Whoever deals with ancient Greek dramatic texts should never neglect that what we face today as “text” was actually a “360° performance” for the “collective experience” of the theatre, in which several means of expressions were used to captivate the audience’s emotional involvement.

In particular, it is possible to approach ancient Greek comedy focusing on some elements that are illustrative of the important role performed by music, intended as both a comic work instrument and an expressive modality. It should be worth bearing in mind that music and laughter, as natural forms of expression belonging to all human beings, go beyond time and space, and some of their modes of operation could be considered “universal” indeed.

Greek comedy provides a large variety of techniques conceived for making people laugh: the so-called onomasti komōidein (“mocking someone directly, by name”), parody, obscenities, puns, funny accidents, masks, gestures, and so on, many of which can be used in different ways,¹ not least from a musical point of view. In fact, just as the text, gesture, costumes – and alongside them – also music could be variously used by the poet (or better, “composer”) in order to express humor. Even if nowadays we lack the melodies, the study of the metrical structures of the songs can provide us a good amount of information about the comic scene. Furthermore, by observing the different uses of musical instruments into comedy, some particular figures of speech, special characters, and so on, it is possible to become aware of the important role played by music in ancient Greek comedy. Aristophanes’ comedies represent an excellent opportunity for an investigation of this kind; in this sense, this paper contains, as food for thought, a brief

* This paper represents a revised and extended edition of the one entitled Laughing with Ancient Greeks. Examples of Comic Use of Metres and Sounds in Aristophanes, presented at the Workshop The Mediterranean as a Plaza – co-organized by the Mediterranean Studies Group (Tokyo) and the University of Urbino “Carlo Bo” and that took place Urbino, 22-23 March 2018 – and published in Hiroshi Kato, Liana Lomiento (eds.), The Mediterranean as a Plaza. Japanese and Italian Insights on the Great Sea, EPHESO, vol. 6, Cisalpino Istituto Editoriale Universitario, 2018, pp. 27-47.

¹ Cfr. for example SOMMERSTEIN 1996b; SOMMERSTEIN 2009; ZIMMERMANN 2014, pp. 149-156.
selection of passages from Aristophanes’ *Birds*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, and *Frogs*, in which it is possible to identify different models of “musical strategies” used by the playwright for making his audience laugh.

It seems useful to keep in mind that the comic text can be approached with special regard to music thanks to some “universal” techniques – all analyzable – that are common to literature and music. A remarkable and easily understandable support can be found in the very interesting lesson entitled *Humor in Music*, held by the famous chief-orchestra Leonard Bernstein in 1959 within the series of *Young People’s Concerts.* In that lesson, Bernstein made clear that music can be funny – it is something we all know – but it has to be so for some specific reasons. He explained, then, several techniques of humoristic music, just as we could analyze a literary text and say why it is funny by identifying, for example, its specific figures of speech.

The aim of these following pages is to analyze the text and the scene of Aristophanes, remembering also the teachings of Bernstein, in the attempt to present the musical techniques of comedy in a simple but – I hope – captivating way, trying to image how ancient Greeks had fun from music in theatre.

Before starting the review of the Aristophanic passages to be analyzed, it is worth warning the reader that the Greek texts of the solo songs (Av. 227-262; Th. 776-784 and 1015-1055; Ra. 1284-1295 and 1264-1277;) are going to be presented in the colometry edited by me after an in-depth study on Aristophanes’ manuscript tradition; also critical apparatus and colometric apparatus are edited by me. Greek text of the other passages, instead, reproduce Wilson’s edition. For Ra. 1284-1295, 1264-1277 and Th. 1015-1055 an apparatus of the sources is also provided.

2 The transcript of the lesson can be found at https://leonardbernstein.com/lectures/television-scripts/young-peoples-concerts/humor-in-music. Other bibliography on this subject can be easily found, for example GILBERT 1926.

3 Bernstein made use of masterpieces by great composers from different times, such as Gershwin, Haydn, Prokofiev, Mahler, Strauss, Mozart, Dukas, and many more. It seems meaningful that almost all of the types of humoristic music selected and presented by Bernstein to his young audience exist also in other kinds of art, including literature: surprise, incongruity, imitation, satire, pun, parody, caricature, burlesque, etc.

4 Manuscripts consulted are listed below. II *P.Oxy.* LXXIII 4935 (Th. 1043-1051), saec. II; R *Ravennas* 429, saec. X med.; V *Venetus Marcianus* gr. 474, saec. XI vel XII; M4 *Ambrosianus* C 222 inf., saec. XII ex.; A *Parisinus Regius* gr. 2712, c. 1300; Γ *Laurentianus Plut.* XXXI 15, saec. XIV; M *Ambrosianus* L 39 sup., saec. XIV in.; P20 *Parisinus* suppl. gr. 463, saec. XIV in.; Vs1 *Vaticanus Reg.* gr. 147, saec. XIV in.; P8 *Parisinus* gr. 2821, saec. XIV; U *Vaticanus Urbinus* gr. 141, saec. XIV; Vv17 *Vaticanus* gr. 2181, saec. XIV ex.; E *Estensis* gr. 127 (a.U.5.10), saec. XIV ex. vel XV; L *Holkhamensis* gr. 88 saec. XV in.; M9 *Ambrosianus* L 41 sup., saec. XV; Mu2 *Monacensis* 492, saec. XV; Vp2 *Vaticanus Palatinus* gr. 67, saec. XV; H *Hauniensis* 1980, saec. XV; B *Parisinus Regius* gr. 2715, saec. XV; C *Parisinus Regius* gr. 2717, saec. XVI; Ald editio princeps Aldina, 1498; Suid. Suida, saec. X. Also note: codd. = consensus codicum; p = consensus codicum Vp2HC; r = consensus codicum Vv17LB; q = consensus codicum Vp2HCLVv17B. For further metrical analyses (yet not based on ancient colometries) and discussions, see ZIMMERMANN 1985 and PARKER 1997.

5 More technical analyses and extensive comments on the songs are contained in my doctoral thesis *Le monodie di Aristofane. Metro musica drammaturgia*, discussed in March 2019 at the University of Urbino “Carlo Bo”.
in order to let the reader easily individuate the tragic quotations (from different Aeschylus’ dramas for *Frogs*; from Euripides’ Andromeda for *Thesmophoriazusae*) contained in the songs. All English translations are taken from Alan Sommerstein’s single editions of the plays.

### I. Incongruity

In his *Humor in Music*, Bernstein highlighted that one of the most important features of humor is to be found in the “incongruity”, the lack of sense of two or more things taken together. Incongruity produces laughter and, for this reason, has to be considered a comedy technique, even from a musical point of view. Aristophanes’ plays provide a very large amount of examples in which a “contrast” is realized through the discrepancy between the singing characters and the metre used, or between the metre and the scene in general.

It is very interesting to look at this elementary – but indeed functioning technique – as used in *Thesmophoriazusae*, a comedy based on the parody of Euripidean tragedies. In particular, the successful use of this strategy appears clear in the first of the In-law’s monodies of the play (*Th.* 776-784).

![Greek text with annotations](image-url)

[R] 777 χρῆν Bentley : χρή R, Suid. π 2064 783 καθ’ ὁδὸς Biset : καθόδους R 784 καίνα Mu2 ταύτα

Grynaeus (hac Divus) : ταύτα R

![Greek text with annotations](image-url)
Oh my hands,
you should be setting to work at a task that demands
resourcefulness.
Come now, you smooth tablet-sheets,
receive the chisel-cut tracks
that will proclaim my troubles (dammit,
this letter rho is giving trouble!)
[To the knife] Go on, go on. What a furrow!
[As he throws the tables as far as he can in all directions]
Hie you, hasten by every road,
this way, that way; you must be quick!

Euripides’ In-law has been captured by the women because he had just entered, disguised as a
woman, the exclusive female assembly during the Thesmophoria in order to defend the tragedian
from the charge of misogyny. The poor prisoner thinks out a way to escape, recalling an episode
from Euripidean Palamedes, where Oeax wrote a message to his father on his oar-blades, and
then he entrusted them to the waves of the sea. The similarity between the two scenes – the
tragic original and the comic one – is explained by the In-law himself in the lines that precede
the monody (Th. 765-775).

INLAW [to himself]: Come now, what device will be able to save me? what experiment,
what idea? Because the man who’s responsible for this, the man who pitched me into
all this trouble, hasn’t put in an appearance – [looking hopefully off to the side to see if
Euripides is approaching] no, he still hasn’t. Now then, what messenger could I send to
fetch him? Ah yes, I know a trick from his Palamedes. I’ll do what that man did, write
on those oar-blades and throw them in the sea. Only the oar-blades aren’t here. Now
where could I get oar-blades from? where, oh where? Hey, what if I was to write on
these votive tablets instead of the oar-blades, and throw them around in all directions?
That’s much better. After all, these are wood, and the other were wood too. [He takes
some votive tablets from under the altar, and begins to carve messages on them with the
sacrificial knife.]

The whole scene is established on paratragedy and based on many contrasts: everything here –
the metre too – is “perfectly incongruous”, and for this reason “perfectly comic”.

As highlighted by the Italian scholar Enrico Medda, in this monologue is already possible
to recognize an “Aristophanic reinterpretation of tragic monologue”, 6 in particular of the type
that regards a decision to be hold. While this kind of monologue in tragedy takes generally
place ad spectatores, here Aristophanes makes the In-law plan his escape while many women
do surround him. 7 Furthermore, the comic character is dressed as a woman and now is prisoner
in the sanctuary Thesmophoreion, trying to act as a tragic hero but actually speaking to wooden
tablets, and having some problems in writing the letters of his savior’s name “Euripides”, as we
learn from l. 781.

From a musical point of view, the “contrast” is to be found in the rhythm used for the In-
law’s song. In line with the tragic scene the character is re-interpreting, the monody is composed
in the so-called “lamentation anapaests”, whose many examples are in tragedy. 8 In this scene, a
simple man dressed as a woman and in the act of trying to catch Euripides’ attention, throwing
on the ground wooden tablets stolen from the sanctuary, uses a rhythm of tragic lamentation:
in other words, the rhythm is the basic tragic element, while the context is comic. Anapaests
with long syllables in tragedy are generally associated with grief and sorrow, but here the slow
rhythm emphasizes instead the carving, and expresses the difficulty of the operation. Particular
effort is comically expressed when the In-law has to carve the round line of the Greek letter rho
(P) of the name ΕΥΡΙΠΙΔΕΣ – the metre underlines Mnesilochus’ strain, since ρ makes long
the previous syllable. All this composition is “incongruous”, and if we analyze the text paying
specific attention to metrics, it is possible to understand how music was in contrast with text,
scene and character, perhaps imagining people laughing while hearing this song.

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6 Medda 2006, p. 100 («rilettura aristofanea del monologo tragico»).
II. Imitation

“Imitation” can be considered the opposite technique of contrast. As Bernstein declares in his lesson, «the first and simplest way that music can be amusing is by simply imitating nature. It’s one of the oldest ways of making you laugh – by imitating things or people». As just in the previous example of Thesmophoriazusae part of comedy was created by the fact that the In-law was imitating Oeax – and we must not forget that another actor is playing the part of Euripides and then, on a second level, of Euripides acting as several tragedian heroes – also music can imitate something in a comic way. We are dealing with a sort of “universal law”: if we come back again to Bernstein’s words, the similarity between modern and ancient times, together with modern and ancient basic principles of music, appears really striking: «it’s like comedians who do impersonations of famous stars: like impersonating Greta Garbo… or impersonating Katherine Hepburn… But the way music does this is by imitating sounds, sounds we all know, like mosquitos, or trains, or ox-carts, or little chickens, or a big sneeze».

2.1. Vocal imitation of sounds. From a literary point of view, imitation of sounds is known under the name of “onomatopoeia”, a very common figure of speech so strictly related with music – technically, and not by chance, it is a figure of sound. As regards sounds of nature, the renowned Hoopoe’s second song in Aristophanes’ Birds (Av. 227-262) – a comedy where the concept of mimēsis is used by the dramatist in every sense and single possibility – represents the most enlightening example we can consider.

227 ἐπο ποι ποι πο πο ποι πο ποι.
228 ἵο ἵο ἵο ἵο ἵο ἵο ἵο.
229 ἰω τις ὧδε τῶν ἐμῶν ὁμοπτέρων·
230 ὅσιο τ’ εὐσπόρους ἀγροίκων γύας
231 νέμεσθε, φῦλα μυρία κριθοτράγων
232 σπερμολόγων τε γένη,
233 ταχύ πετόμενα,
233 μαλθακὴν ἱέντα γῆρυν.
234 τίο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο.
235 τιττυβίζεθ’ ὧδε λεπτὸν
236 τά τε κατ’ ὄρεα τά τε κοτινοτράγα τά τε κομαροφάγα,
ἀνύσατε πετόμενα
πρὸς ἐμὰν αὐδάν·
τριοτό· τριοτό· τοτοβρίξ.
οἵ θ’ ἑλείας παρ’ αὐλώνας ὀξυστόμους
ἐμπίδας κάπτεθ’, ὅσα τ’ εὐδρόσους
γῆς τόπους ἤχετε λει-
μόνα τ’ ἐρώσεται Μαραθῶνος,
ὅρνις πτεροποίκιλος
ἀτταγᾶς ἀτταγᾶς.
ὡν τ’ ἐπὶ πόντιον ὀξύ μαθάσης
φῦλα μετ’ ἀλκυόνεσσίς ποτάται,
δεύρ’ ἴτε πευσόμενοι τὰ νεώτερα,
πάντα γὰρ ἐνθάδε φῦλ’ ἀθροΐζομεν
οἰωνὸν ταναοδεῖρων.
ἡκε γὰρ τις δριμός πρέσβυς
καινὸς γνώμην
καινὸν ἐργὸν τ’ ἐγχειρητής.
ὅρνις πτεροποίκιλος
ἀτταγᾶς ἀτταγᾶς.
ὦν τ’ ἐπὶ πόντιον ὀξὺ μαθάσης
φῦλα μετ’ ἀλκυόνεσσίς ποτάται,
δεύρ’ ἴτε πευσόμενοι τὰ νεώτερα,
πάντα γὰρ ἐνθάδε φῦλ’ ἀθροΐζομεν
οἰωνὸν ταναοδεῖρων.
ἡκε γὰρ τις δριμός πρέσβυς
καινὸς γνώμην
καινὸν ἐργὸν τ’ ἐγχειρητής.

[SOME THOUGHTS ON HUMOR AND MUSIC IN ARISTOPHANES' PLAYS 37]
227 ἐποὶ ποί· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποὶ· ποἰ
Epopoi, popopopopoi, popoi!
Io, io, ito, ito, hither, hither,
hither let all my feathered fellows come!

All who dwell in the country plough-lands
rich in seed, the myriad tribes of barleycorn-eaters
and the races of seed-gatherers
that fly swiftly and utter soft notes,
and all who in the furrows often
gently twitter over the turned soil
with joyful voices, like this,
tio tio tio tio tio tio tio tio!
And all of you who find their food
in gardens on the ivy branches,
and you of the hills, the oleaster-eaters and the arbutus-eaters, 
hurry, come flying to my call: 
trioto trioto totobrix!
And you who in the marshy valleys swallow
the sharp-biting gnats, and all you who inhabit
the well-watered regions of the land and the lovely meads of Marathon,
and the bird of patterned plumage, francolin, francolin!
And you whose tribes fly with the halcyons
over the swell of the open sea,
come hither to learn the news;
for we are assembling here all the tribes
of long-necked fowls.
For a sharp-witted old man has come here,
new in his ideas
and an attempter of novel deeds.
Come to the meeting, all of you,
hither, hither, hither, hither!
Torotorotorotorotix!
Kikkabau, kikkabau!
Torotorotorolililix!

This song arises from the mouth of the Hoopoe, king of the birds, to call and gather every kind of bird, as the Hoopoe is going to explain a new political project. At the beginning of the comedy, in fact, Peisetaerus and Euelpides, two Athenians disappointed by their city, have reached the Hoopoe, asking for advice on some new towns in which eventually live free from any annoyance (Av. 39-48).

οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὖν τέττιγες ἑνα μὴν ἢ δύο
ἐπὶ τῶν κραδῶν ἄδουσ’, Ἀθηναῖοι δ’ ἀεὶ
ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν ἄδουσι πάντα τὸν βίον.
διὰ ταῦτα τὸν βάδον βαδίζομεν,
κανοῦν δ’ ἔχοντε καὶ χύτραν καὶ μυρρίνας
πλανώμεθα ζητοῦντε τόπον ἀπράγμονα,
ὅποι καθιδρυθέντε διαγενοῦμεθ’ ἄν.
ὁ δὲ στόλος νῦν ἐστὶ παρὰ τὸν Τηρέα,
τὸν ἐποπα, παρ’ ἐκείνου πυθέσθαι δεομένω,
ei pou toisootin eide polin H peptato.
That’s the thing: the cicadas chirp on the branches for a month or two, the Athenians chirp away at lawsuits continually all their lives long. That’s why we’re trekking this trek; with a basket, a pot and some myrtle-wreaths, we’re wandering in search of a trouble-free place where we can settle and pass our lives. Our journey now is to see Tereus the hoopoe, wanting to find out from him if he’s seen a city of that kind anywhere he’s flown over.

After evaluating the possibilities shown by the Hoopoe, Peisetaerus gets to an eccentric idea: he wants the Hoopoe himself to establish a new city, the city of birds, located in the air, where they could finally live in peace. The Hoopoe is excited: he is ready to found the new city, but first he has to summon the community of the birds in order to have a complete approval. Thus, he calls his companions by singing this long monody, which is really a masterpiece of music.

We shall later come back on the extraordinary metrical-rhythmical mimesis, but for the moment, it will be sufficient to list the onomatopoeias created by Aristophanes to reproduce birds’ different voices:

l. 227 ἐπο ποι πο πο πο πο πο πο πο;
l. 228 ἰώ ἰώ ἰτώ ἰτώ ἰτώ ἰτώ;
l. 237 τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο;
l. 243 τριοτό· τριοτό· τοτοβρίξ;
l. 249 ἀτταγᾶς ἀτταγᾶς (francolin’s Greek name is onomatopoeic);
l. 259 δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο (the adverb “here” is used as a sort of onomatopoeia, with a repetition leading to the real onomatopoeias of ll. 260-262);
l. 260 τοροτοροτοροτοροτίξ;
l. 261 κικκαβαῦ κικκαβαῦ (as for the francolin, owl’s Greek name is onomatopoeic too);
l. 262 τοροτοροτοροτοροτολιλιλιλιξ.

Apart from sounds of nature, voice can also imitate sounds produced by objects, with comic effects.

In Frogs, for example, Euripides blames Aeschylus for the monotony of his compositions. After having sung a first monody, composed of Aeschylean tragedy quotations whose every second line presents the same rhythm (Ra. 1264-1277, see forward), Euripides’ aim is to demonstrate that Aeschylus’ songs, as long as one tries to vary the way of composing, yet are sounding always the same. It is for this reason that Euripides introduces a second monody, this time composed “in the manner of kitharodic nomoi” (ll. 1278-1282):
DIONYSUS: Lord Zeus, what an orgy of striking! [Making as if to depart] As far as I’m concerned, I want to go to the bath-house; all these strokes have given me swellings in the … kidneys.
EURIPIDES: Not before you’ve heard another series of songs, made out of lyre tunes.

Arranged as a little nomos, the following monody is a combination of several Aeschylean lyric quotations, again with a recurrent anapaestic line (on metrical-rhythmnical comedy see forward), but also with a recurrent onomatopoeic line created to imitate the sound of a kithara. In fact, in order to reproduce a typical Aeschylus’ song, Euripides would really need a kithara, but he does not have it. Therefore, after every two lines, he reproduces by himself, by using his own voice, the sound of the kithara, by singing tophlattothratophlattothrat.⁹

9 In his edition, Sommerstein accepts Fritzsche’s emendation of the text. For other vocal imitations of strings consider, for example, Ar. Pl. 290 θρεττανελο θρεττανελο, or Archil. fr. 324 West, whose onomatopoeia τήνελλα has been interpreted, since the antiquity, as imitation of the sound of kithara (cfr. Schol. vet. Pl. O. 9. 1c, vol. I p. 266 Drachmann: Ἀρχίλοχος τῷ Ἡρακλεῖ ὤμον ... ἀπορήσας κιθαρῳδοῦ διά τινος λέξεως τὸ μέλος ἐμιμήσατο). Cfr. Rocconi 2003, pp. 81, 91.
SOME THOUGHTS ON HUMOR AND MUSIC IN ARISTOPHANES' PLAYS  43

1285 τοφλατοθραττοφλατοθρατ

1284-1285 A. Ag. 108-109  1287-1287b TrGF A. Sphinx F 236  1289-1289b A. Ag. 111-112
1291-1292 TrGF A. inc.fab. F 282  12924 TrGF A. Thressai F 84

[RVM4AUEP20P8Vs1LAld]
1284-1285 coniung. UP20P8  1287-1287b coniung. AUVs1  1289-1289b VM4ELAld
coniung. RAUP20P8Vs1  1289b VM4ELVs1Ald  1291-1292 coniung. AUVs1
1292 inc.fab. F 282  1294 om. U

1285 ἡβαν LAl  1286, 1288, 1290, 1293, 1285 τὸ φλαττο- vel sim. codd., φλαττο- Fritzsche, cfr. v. 1296 1287a δυσαμεριὰν Dindorf : -ίαν codd. 1291 κουρεῖν V  1292 ἀεροφοίταις AP8
1294 τ’ om. LAl  hunc v. in quibusdam exemplaribus defuisse testatur Timachidas ap. Σ

1284  
1285  
1286  
1287a  
1287b  
1288  
1289a  
1289b  
1290  
1291  
1292  
1293  
1294  
1295  
1284/5 How two Achaean kings united in power, of Hellas’ young manhood (phlattothrattophlattothrat)
Sphinx, the bitch that presided o’er days of ill-fortune, were sped with (phlattothrattophlattothrat)
spear and avenging hand by a bird of martial omen
which handed them over to be the brutal air-roaming hounds’ prey
and those who gathered around Ajax

It seems not an improbable suggestion that Euripides, every time in the act of singing the onomatopoeia, pretends to play the imaginary musical instrument, comically moving his arms on an invisible kithara.

2.2. Rhythm imitating content. As it has been said at the beginning of paragraph 2, imitation may act in many different ways, even from the musical point of view. Looking again Hoopoe’s second monody in Birds, we are provided of one of the most striking examples of the mimetic use of metres-rhythms. As already highlighted by the Italian scholar Roberto Pretagostini, both the first and the second songs of Hoopoe in this comedy are established on the concept of metrical mimesis. At ll. 209-222, in fact, the Hoopoe sings a high-refined song to his wife the Nightingale: this monody is composed in “lamentation anapaests”, as the Nightingale’s human past (i.e. when she was Prokne) is marked by the murder of her own son Itys and by dramatic events involving his husband Tereus (then become the Hoopoe). At the same time, the second Hoopoe’s monody, the call of the community of the birds category by category, is characterized by the evocation of each kind of birds by a constantly new specific metrical choice. It is possible to summarize the seven big “sections” created by the strong relationship between the text and the metrical structure, while we shall focus in detail only on two particularly interesting passages, two prime examples of metrical mimesis.

I) ll. 227-229 (c. 1-3): calling all the birds – iamb;
II) ll. 230-237 (c. 4-12): birds dwelling in the country plough-lands – iamb, trochees, dactyls;
III) ll. 238-243 (c. 13-19): birds from gardens – ionics a minore; birds from the hills – anapaests;
IV) ll. 244-249 (c. 20-25): birds dwelling in places full of humidity – cretics; the single francolin is distinguished by a telesillean, but the section is recomposed in cretics with the last line/colon, which contains the name of the francolin;
V) ll. 250-254 (c. 26-30): birds from the sea – dactyls;
VI) ll. 255-257 (c. 31-33): Peisetaerus – anapaests;
VII) ll. 258-262 (c. 34-38): conclusion – trochees, cretics and extra metrum.

Here I would like to take into special consideration ll. 240-243, referring to the small birds picking olives with their beaks, invited to hurry up and come to the Hoopoe. Except for the
extra metrum of l. 243, this section is composed entirely of anapaests. The exclusive use of short syllables is to imitate the smallness and the speedy of those birds, in what could be imagined as a musical *accelerando* or *vivace*. This sense of vivacity is realized by the combination of this particular metrical form and the high number of alliterations: so, imitation of birds is realized by metre and voice, and the exaggeration of the speedy is cause of comedy too – the global effect is similar to that of a tong-twister. Using again Bernstein’s words, «speed has been one of the main things about wit always; “fast and funny” – that’s the rule for jokes».

240a  15 τά τε κατ’ ὄρεα τά τε
240b  κοτινοτράγα τά τε κομαροφάγα,
241  ἀνύσατε πετόμενα
242  18 πρός ἐμἀν αὐδάν·
243  τριοτό· τριοτό· τοτοβρίξ.

The contrary happens, with an effective comic result, al ll. 255-257, when the Hoopoe has to explain the meaning of the call: an old man has come with a new political project, which involves the birds. Anapaests again characterize this section, but now with a very different form if compared with those of the previous example. Here the anapaests present only long syllables, because the intent now is to evocate the slow dragging-on typical of old people like Peisetaerus. The musical effect is that of a *rallentando*, in comic contrast with the general lively variety of the rest of the monody dedicated to birds.

255  ήκει γάρ τις δριμὺς πρέσβυς
256  καινός γνώμην
257  33 καινῶν ἔργων τ’ ἐγχειρητῆς.

The power of rhythms to produce a special effect on the audience and to induce some particular perception on people is testified also by Aristides Quintilianus, *de Mus.* II 15, 15-17
“Winnington-Ingram”:

Τῶν δ’ ἐν ἴσῳ λόγῳ οἱ μὲν διὰ βραχειῶν γινόμενοι μόνων τάχιστοι καὶ θερμότεροι, 
<οἱ δὲ διὰ μακρῶν μόνων βραδύτεροι> καὶ κατεσταλμένοι ... 

Of the rhythms in equal ratio, those composed only of short syllables are most swift 
and more passionate [thermoteroi, lit. “hotter”], those composed only of long syllables 
are slower and calm. (transl. Barker).

III. Parody of music, musicians and musical instruments

For making people laugh, music can also be used – and so it was by ancient comedy 
playwrights – as a parody of itself, and even thanks to the comic and parodic use of a musician. 
Well-known are, for example, the personification of the Music in Pherecrates’ Chiron, or the use 
of (more or less) technical musical terms with reference to sexuality, like χιάζειν and σιφνιάζειν 
in Aristophanes’ fr. 930 Kassel-Austin, and even the sexual mockery directed to poets and 
musicians.11 Here I shall focus on the figure of the auletēs in Birds, a play in which, actually, 
there are even two pipers, with different dramaturgical roles.

At the beginning of the comedy, the Hoopoe goes behind the skēnē and sings a sweet serenade 
whose text, full of musical references, is an invitation for his wife the Nightingale to wake up 
and raise her wonderful song with her voice (Av. 209-222). Only at the end of this actor’s solo, 
the audience hears the voice of the Nightingale, reproduced by the sound of the aulos, as it is 
testified in medieval manuscripts by the parepigraphē αὐλεῖ (or αὐλεῖ τις) collocated after l. 
222, and also by the ancient scholium 222c Holwerda.12 Everything happens behind the skēnē, 
which reproduces the wood, as several stage directions identifiable from the text itself inform 
us.13 The Nightingale herself will not appear before l. 667, when she is finally invited to enter 
the stage in order to reach her companions from the Chorus. In fact, she is revealed to be not 
only a bird – the Nightingale indeed – but the real auletēs, as she is provided of a strange beak 
similar to a pair of skewers and of a sort of belt on her head (ll. 672 ῥυγχος ὀβελίσκοιν ἔχει; 674 
ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὸ λέμμα). As we were already informed that the voice of the Nightingale was 
the voice of the aulos, now in these two objects we can identify the two canes of the aulos and

11 Apart from the classical study of Taillardat 1965, with specific reference to pp. 458-459, 
an accurate summary is provided in Recchia 2017, p. 64 n. 2, in a study of Aristophanes’ fr. 930 Kassel-Austin.
12 αὐλεῖ RV: τούτο παρεπιγέγραπται δηλοῦν, ὅτι μιμεῖται τις τὴν ἀηδόνα ΡVΓ2Μ ως ἐπὶ ἐνδὸν οὔσαν ἐν τῇ λόχμῃ VM9Γ2Μ.
13 Cfr. ll. 202-203 (Hoopoe) δευρὶ γὰρ ἐμβὰς αὐτίκα μᾶλ’ εἰς τὴν λόχμην, ἐπετ’ ἀνεγείρας τὴν ἀηδόνα; 207-208 (Peisetaerus) ἄγ’ ὡς τάχιστ’ εἰς τὴν λόχμην / ἐπειδὴ καίνεγεφε τὴν ἀηδόνα; 223-224 (Euphides) ὃς Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ, τοῦ φθέγματος τοῦρνιθίου· ἐν οἷον κατεμελίσατο τὴν λόχμην ὅλην. 265-266 (Peisetaerus) ἄλλως ἄρ’ οὖσον, ὡς ἐοικ’, εἰς τὴν λόχμην / ἐμβας ἐποίει χαραδρῶν μιμούμενος
the *phorbeia*, respectively.\(^{14}\) As a result, we can conclude that the *auletēs* of the play is used as a *real character* of the play, surprising the audience. We can also add that, as Euelpides is seized with sexual passion towards the Nightingale, Aristophanes’ spectators would have laughed at this amazing whole scene. The Nightingale-*auletēs* reaches then the Chorus for the *parabasis* (ll. 676-800), as it is confirmed by the text of the *kommation* (ll. 676-684):

```
ὦ φίλη, ὦ ξουθή,
ὦ φίλτατον ὀρνέων,
πάντων ᾧννομε τῶν ἔμων
ὕμνων, ᾧντροφ’ ἄηδοι,
680 ἤλθες, ἤλθες, ἤφθης,
ἡδὺν φθόγγον ἐμοὶ φέρουσ᾿·
ἀλλ’, ὦ καλλιβόαν κρέκουσ’
αὐλὸν φθέγμασιν ἠρινοῖς,
ἄρχου τῶν ἀναπαίστων.
```

O beloved one, O vibrant-throated one,
O dearest of birds,
partner of all my songs,
Nightingale my companion,
680 you have come, you have come, you have appeared,
bringing your sweet voice to me!
Now, you who play the notes of springtime
on the fair-sounding pipe,
introduce our anapaests.

But just few lines after the *parabasis*, around l. 848 a religious procession enters the stage, in order to sustain the Priest in the foundation of the new city. The Chorus, as we said, has its own *auletēs*, the Nightingale, but for this special circumstance invites Chaeris, a real *auletēs*, to accompany its song for the religious moment. It seems that Chaeris, in fact, was a musician being used to take part in city rites playing his *aulos*, and more than once he is mocked by Aristophanes or by other comedians for his bad playing or for his habit to take advantage of circumstances. In *Ar. Ach*. 16, in fact, Dikaiopolis narrates how he once got upset when Charis appeared in theatre for playing the *Orthios*; at l. 866 of the same comedy, then, some annoying pipe-players are depicted as “offspring of Chaeris” (Χαιριδῆς βομβαύλιοι). In *Ar. Pax* 951, while Trygaios and his Servant are preparing the sacrifice, the Chorus exhorts to be quicker, because if Chaeris sees them, “he’ll come up uninvited to play the pipes” and then “he’ll puff

and labour” for getting something.\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Schol. (vet.Tr.)} Av. 858a Holwerda reports that Charis became \textit{auletes} after having been a “cold” \textit{kitharōidos} (ὁ Χαῖρις οὔτος κυθαρωιδὸς ψυχρὸς καὶ γέγονεν αὐλητής) and, in this sense, in Pher. fr. 6 Kassel-Austin, from \textit{Agrioi}, Chaeris is expected to be mentioned in a list of the worst \textit{kitharōidoi}.

From the text of Av. 848-861 it is possible to understand that Charis appears on the scene, he plays something on his \textit{aulos}, and then he is sent away badly. His playing, in fact, is immediately stopped by Peisetaerus, who reproaches him as “raven” (l. 861), notoriously the most unmusical of the birds.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{PEISETAERUS:}

[...] As for myself, I’ll summon the priest to organize the procession, so that I can sacrifice to the new gods. [...]  
\textbf{CHORUS:}

I agree, I concur,  
I hereby join in recommending  
that great and solemn processional hymns should rise  
to the gods, and at the same time as well, to win  
their favour, we should sacrifice a sheep or so.  
Let it rise, rise, rise, the Pythian cry,  
and let Chaeris pipe an accompaniment to our song.  

[\textit{The piper plays on, solo, but untunefully. [...]}]  
\textbf{PEISETAERUS [calling angrily to the piper]:}

You, stop your blowing! [\textit{Coming closer to him}] Heracles,  
what’s this? By Zeus, I’ve seen plenty of strange things, but  
this I’ve never seen, a raven in a piper’s muzzle!  

People, then, does not laugh just because an actor-character is moved away from the scene, but because they hear something terrible, possibly out-of-tune. It is a pure comic moment, inserted by Aristophanes just when concentration and solemnity are expected: an accident in the fluidity of the plot, realized by using music and musicians, and even playing with their identities at the same time. Parody and surprising are working together for comic intention.

Strictly related with the comic use and abuse of music and musicians is also the parody of musical instruments, as it happens in \textit{Frogs}. During the scene of the poetic agon between Aeschylus and Euripides, the older poet introduces the first Aeschylus’ parodic song (ll. 1309-
Aeschylus: Bring me my lyre, someone — but on second thoughts, who needs a lyre for this job? Where’s that girl who plays percussion with broken bits of pot? [Calling within] Come here, Muse of Euripides; you’re the proper accompaniment for these songs to be sung to.

[The “Muse of Euripides” comes out; she is an old and ugly woman, heavily made up, and dressed like a prostitute. She holds a pair of potsherds, which she will clash together to provide an accompaniment to the ensuing songs].

Dionysus: This Muse used to be — well, she certainly wasn’t part of the Lesbian tradition!

A sequence of rapid coupes-de théâtre characterizes this scene. In order to start singing, at l. 1304 Aeschylus requires a lyre, but immediately he corrects himself: they lyre is a too noble instrument to perform Euripides’ poetry… some clappers will be sufficient! A comic joke is realized by the substitution of the musical instrument, but we are also dealing with a parody of a second level. In fact, these same clappers are not invoked with their proper name, κρόταλα, but with ὄστρακα, earthenware. Furthermore, a freakish Muse is invited on the scene: she is not a proper Muse, but a prostitute dancing in a lascivious way while playing the earthenware. This example is indicative of the wide scope of parody, involving also music in it. The whole Aristophanic scene, in fact, contains continuous parodic references to the Euripidean Hypsipyle, thanks to a continuous interaction of literal quotations or echoes within the monody,17 allusion to some scenes,18 the call of the Muse that in tragedy pushed the queen Hypsipyle, by now slave to Nemea, to play the rattles to accompany Opheltes’ sleep,19 etc.

IV. Parody of a style

Parody of a poetical style, with reference to some precise verses, can be often connected

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17 Cfr. l. 1312 δροσιζόμεναι and fr. 7, 4 Cockle = TrGF E. Hypsipyle F 753c, 4; l. 1329 and fr. 57+81, pp. 110-111 Cockle = TrGF F 765; l. 1322 and p. 137 Cockle, TrGF F 765.  
18 Line 1322 could refer to Hypsipyle embracing one of his sons; cfr. Sommerstein 1996a, p. 276.  
19 Cfr. fr. 1, II, 7-14 Cockle = TrGF E. Hypsipyle F 742f, 7-14.
with musical parody. Aristophanes in Ra. 1264-1277 provides a very enlightening example: Euripides’ first monody is meant to imitate Aeschylus poetry, in order to make clear to Dionysus that Aeschylus is always repeating himself, producing boring lyric. At ll. 1249-1250, and then 1261-1262, Euripides introduces his parodic song with these words:

Ευ. καὶ μὴν ἔχω γ’ οἷς αὐτὸν ἀποδείξω κακὸν 
μελοποιῶν ὄντα καὶ ποιοῦντα ταῦτ’ ἀεὶ.

... 
πάνυ γε μέλη θαυμαστά· δείξει δὴ τάχα.
εἰς ἓν γὰρ αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ μέλη ξυντεμῶ.

EURIPIDES: All right then, I’ve got material with which I shall prove that he’s a bad lyric writer and that what he composed was always the same thing.

... 
[sarcastically] Oh, very marvelous indeed! We shall see presently. I’m going to cut down all his lyrics to a single measure.

The monody Euripides is going to perform is made of fragments from different Aeschylus’ tragedies, and it is characterized by the repetition of a refrain consisting in the line ἰὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ’ ἀρωγάν, extrapolated from Aeschylus’ Myrmidons (fr. 132 Radt). Actually, if we consider the ancient colometry of the song, the sense of repetition is even rhythmic, thanks to the recurrence of a 2an (or paroemiac), always with the same aspect, in given positions of the whole piece. In fact, being the monody a cento of Aeschylus’ verses, for each quotation every first line is always metrically different, while the second one is always a 2an. Euripides’ intent is to show, from a musical point of view, that as long as Aeschylus tries to change metres and rhythms – and even trying to pass from one play to another – he always falls back into the same one. The comic “hypnotic” effect of this musical choice is such “hammering” and “effective” that even Dionysus, performing his duties as judge of the poetic competition, is dragged along by this repetitive anapaestic rhythm and, when he interrupts Euripides by commenting on the song, he unconsciously uses the same anapaests.

1264a  Φθιῶτ’ Ἀχιλλεῦ,
1264b  τί ποτ’ ἀνδροδαίκτον ἄκουὼν
1265  ἰὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ’ ἀρωγάν;
1266a  Ἐρμᾶν µὲν πρόγονον

20 Cfr. also Dionysus’ ll. 1278-1280 (“Lord Zeus, what an orgy of striking!” etc.)
τίομεν γένος οἱ περὶ λίμναν.

ιῇ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾿ ἀρωγάν;

δύο σοι κόπω, Αἴσχυλε, τούτω.

κύδιστ’ Ἀχαιῶν Ἀτρέως
polykoipane μάνθανέ μου παῖ.

ιῇ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾿ ἀρωγάν;

τρίτος, φισχύλε, σοι κόπος οὕτως.

eὐφαμεῖτε· μελισσονόμι

dόμον Ἀρτέμιδος πέλας οἴγειν.

ιῇ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾿ ἀρωγάν;

κύριός εἰμι θροεῖν

ὅδιον κράτος αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν.

κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾿ ἀρωγάν;

οὐ σιν θαλαικὸς ἔστη αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν.

κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾿ ἀρωγάν;

κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾿ ἀρωγάν;

κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾿ ἀρωγάν.

κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾿ ἀρωγάν πάνθετο.

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κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾿ ἀρωγάν πάνθετο.

κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ≺ 
EURIPIDES [to pipe accompaniment]:
Phthian Achilles, O why, when thou hearest the sound of men dying –
1265
Aï, aï – stricken, advancest thou not to their succour?
We, the folk of the lake-shore, do honour to Hermes our forebear –
Aï, aï – stricken, advancest thou not to their succour?

DIONYSUS [setting two pebbles aside]: That’s two strikes against you, Aeschylus.

EURIPIDES:
1270
O most glorious of the Achaeans, great ruler and son of Atreus, mark what I tell thee –
Aï, aï – stricken, advancest thou not to their succour?

DIONYSUS [setting aside a third pebble]: Aeschylus, that’s your third strike.

EURIPIDES:
Keep ye silence: the Bee-wards approach, to open Artemis’ temple –
1275
Aï, aï – stricken, advancest thou not to their succour?
Strong am I yet to declare that sign that sped men on their journey –
Aï, aï – stricken, advancest thou not to their succour?

V. Aprosdoketon

Finally, we are going to consider a particular form of surprise, the so-called *aprosdoketon*, which could be defined as the «disappointment of the spectators’ expectation».

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may regard many aspects of the text and the stagecraft, for example puns, paragrammasti
matai, jokes or the appearance of an unforeseen character or a character acting or dressing in an
unexpected way. Musical aprosdoketa are nowadays traceable from metrics, so that we are able
to have an idea of what surprising effects could happen from a rhythmic point of view, always
connected with the semantic aspects of the text itself.

The conclusion of this paper follows a sort of Ringkomposition, because among
Aristophanes’ songs, a very appropriate example can be found in the second monody of the
In-law, in Th. 1015-1055. The context of this song is the same of the first one analyzed in these
pages, as the In-law is still prisoner of the women, since every attempt to escape reveals itself
to be unsuccessful. The man is still complaining to himself because he is enchain. If at ll.
777-784 he compared himself to Oeax, this time he considers his fate to be very similar to
that of Andromeda, Euripidean character from the namesake tragedy represented just the year
before. He decides, then, to sing a complaint made of quotations of Andromeda’s original tragic
complaint. The parody is complete, and involves opsis, lēxis and mousikē.

Within the monody are condensed many lexical aprosdoketa, like the continuous switching
from the use of the feminine (In-law acting as Andromeda) to the masculine (In-law speaking as
himself), as at ll. 1020-1021 and 1022-1023; the paragrammatimos κημόν for κῶμον at l. 1031,
with reference to the unwholesome passion of Athenians for voting; at l. 1033 the substitution
of the marine monster supposed to devour Andromeda with Glaucetes, a well-known glutton
in Athens, often mocked by comedy playwrights.22 Lexical aprosdoketa are realized with – or
better, strengthened by – metrical aprosdoketa. Since the song is composed of tragic quotations,
it shows text and metrics belonging to the relative tragedy. But the In-law is not able to carry on
with his fiction from the very beginning until the end, and each time, after few lines of quotation,
he speaks as himself, as a man, interrupting the (para)tragic performance and obtaining a
hilarious effect. Every time the register of the In-law swifts from tragic to comic, from high to
low, also the metre changes, generally – and significantly – with a rhythmic upturning (note the
use of the epiplokē for stressing the passages from tragic to comic register, for example at ll.
1055-1051 with the upturning of the dactyls into anapaests; also the passage from a quotation
to a proper comic line or section is often marked by the change of metre). It is possible to
acknowledge to metre (and music) a guiding function for the understanding of the scene and the
song: with these rhythmic surprising “seesaws” fitting the text, comic passages are amplified,
and the audience has more fun.

Both dramaturgical and musical parody count on the fame of the model: Andromeda’s
tragic complain must have been very popular for the audience that had listened to it just the year

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22 Cfr. schol. ad Th. 1033 Regituit ἐπὶ ὠροφάγος καὶ γαστρίμαργος ὁ Γλαυκέτης, ὡς ἐν Εἰρήνη
δηλοῦται; Ar. Pax 1008 Μορύχῳ Τελέῳ Γλαυκέτη κτλ.; Pl.Com. fr. 114 K.-A. ὁ θεῖς Μόρυχος: πῶς γὰρ οὗ
δαίμον ἡ δέμα; καὶ Γλαυκέτης ἡ ψῆττα, καὶ Λεωγόρας, ὁ ζήτη τερπνῶς ὑπὲρ ἄνθισθαι, ἐνθουσιομένην. Parody is
enhanced by the sounding wordplay between κήτε and Γλαυκέτη.
before.\textsuperscript{23} Aristophanes uses that lyric complaint two times in \textit{Thesmophoriazusae}: in the monody, we are telling about and in the one just following in the play, at ll. 1065-1072. Unfortunately, we are not able to recover the melody of the songs, but it seems probable that the \textit{solo} of ll. 1015-1055 had recalled the music of the Euripidean model. Translating Fraenkel’s words, we have to admit that “the Athenian audience must have had more fun than us, because often it was able to distinguish parodies from original already from the melodies”\textsuperscript{24}.

Here is the text of \textit{Th}. 1015-1055, provided with its English translation and metrical analysis: indicated in bold type, it is possible to identify the specific passages in which metrical \textit{aprosdoketa} accompany verbal \textit{aprosdoketa}.

1015 φίλαι παρθένοι φίλαι,
1016 πῶς ἄν ἀπέλθοιμι καὶ
1017 τὸν Σκύθην λάθοιμι;
1018 κλύεις, ὦ
1019 προσάδουσ’ ἀὕταῖς ἐν ἄντροις;
1020 κατάνευσον, ἔασον ὡς
1021 τὴν γυναῖκα μ’ ἐλθεῖν.
1022 ἀνοικτος δέ μ’ ἔδησε τὸν
1023 πολυπονώτατον βροτῶν.
1024 μόλις δὲ γραῖαν ἀποφυγὼν
1025 σαπρὰν ἀπωλόμην ὅμως.
1026 ὅδε γὰρ ὁ Σκύθης φιλαξ
1027 πάλαι ἐφέστηκ’ ὀλοὸν ἄφιλον
1028 ἐκρέμασέ <με> κόραξι δεῖπνο.
1029 ὅρας; οὐ χοροῖσιν οὐδ’
1030 ὑφ’ ἡλίκων νεανίδων
1031 ἐστηκ’ ἐχουσ’
1032 ἀλλ’ ἐν πυκνοῖς δεσμοῖσιν ἐμπεπλεγμένη
1033 κήτει βορὰ Γλαυκέτῃ πρόκειμαι.
1034 γαμηλίῳ μὲν ξὺν
1035 παιῶνι, δεσμίῳ δέ,
1036 γοᾶσθε μ’, ὦ γυναῖκες, ὡς
1037 μέλεα μὲν πέπονθαι μέλεος,
1038 ὃ τάλας ἐγὼ τάλας,
1039 ἀπὸ δὲ συγγόνον ἄλλ’

\textsuperscript{23} Arist. \textit{Pr.} XIX 40 contains an interesting consideration about the “natural” phenomenon of “going after” a well-known melody, as it produces in the “captured” listener a feeling of pleasure.

\textsuperscript{24} Cfr. Fraenkel 1962, p. 178.
1040 ἄνομα πάθεα, φῶτα λιτομένα 
1041 πολυδάκρυτον Αἴδα γώνον φλέγουσα, 
1042 αἰαὶ αἰαὶ ἐ, ἐ, 
1043 δὲ ἤμι’ ἀπεξύρησε πρῶτον, 
1044 δὲ ἐμὲ κροκόεντ’ ἀμφέδυσεν, 
1045 ἐπὶ δὲ τούσδε τόδ’ ἀνέπεμψεν 
1046 ἵφαν ἐνθα γυναικεῖς. 
1047 ὅς ἐμ’ ἀπεξύρησε πρῶτον, ὃς ἐμὲ κροκόεντ’ ἀμφέδυσεν, 
1048 ἐπὶ δὲ τούσδε τόδ’ ἀνέπεμψεν 
1049 ἱερόν ἔνθα γυναῖκες. 
1050 ἵφαν ἐνθα γυναικεῖς. 
1051 ὃς ἐμ’ ἀπεξύρησε πρῶτον, ὃς ἐμὲ κροκόεντ’ ἀμφέδυσεν, 
1052 ἐπὶ δὲ τούσδε τόδ’ ἀνέπεμψεν 
1053 ἱερόν ἔνθα γυναῖκες. 
1054 ὅς ἐμ’ ἀπεξύρησε πρῶτον, ὃς ἐμὲ κροκόεντ’ ἀμφέδυσεν, 
1055 ἐπὶ δὲ τούσδε τόδ’ ἀνέπεμψεν.
Maidens, beloved maidens, 
how can I get away and
escape unseen by that Scythian?\(^{25}\)
Dost thou hear, O thou in the caves
that singest in response to my cries?

1020 Grant my prayer and let me
**go home to my wife**?\(^{26}\)
Pitiless he who bound me,
me the most afflicted of men:\(^{27}\)
having just escaped from that decayed
old woman, I’m done for just the same.
For this Scythian, long since
posted to guard me, has hung me up,
doomed, friendless, to make a meal for the ravens.
Seest thou this? Not now in choral dances, nor
among the young woman of my own age
**do I stand, holding a voting-urn by the funnel**?\(^{28}\)
but enmeshed in numerous bonds
I am cast forth **to be food for the monster... Glauces**.\(^{29}\)
Not with a hymn for a bride

1035 but with one for a captive
lament me, you women,
for I am wretched and have suffered wretchedly –
O unhappy, unhappy man that I am! –
and treatment, moreover, at kindred hands, against all right,
though I besought the man,

1040 kindling a tearful
lament of death –
ah me, ah me! [**sobbing**] –
he who began by shaving me,
he who garbed me in a saffron robe,

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\(^{25}\) The In-law swifts from the tragic role of Andromeda to himself, referring to the Scythian guard placed next to him.

\(^{26}\) The In-law surprises the audience by praying for the possibility for him to come back to his wife, thus abandoning the role of Andromeda.

\(^{27}\) Even if, within the tragic quotation, the use of the masculine in place of the feminine is cause of comedy, the passage from 2ia to 2tr, is already witnessed in Andromeda’s respective fragment of *P.Oxy.* 2628.

\(^{28}\) The *scholium* to this passage simply notes that these words are taken again from *Andromeda* (πάλιν ἐξ Ἀνδρομέδας), but does not specify the “boundaries” of the quotation. *Van Leeuwen* 1904, p. 30, supposes that, for Aristophanes’ l. 1031, the respective Euripidean text could be κῶμον ἐστηκ’ ἀγουσ’, modified by Aristophanes in κημὸν ἐστηκ’ ἔχουσ’ in order to mock In-law’s *philodikia*.

\(^{29}\) See p. 23 and e note 22.
and moreover sent me up
   to this sanctuary, where the women are.
   Alack for my fate
   **which a god engendered!**
   Accursed that I am!
   Who will not behold
   my unenviable sufferings, in which such sorrows are present?

Would that the fiery meteor of the sky –
   might utterly destroy that barbarian!
   For no longer does it please me to look
   on the immortal flame of day, since I have been hung up here
   in a god-sent torment to make one slit one’s throat,

on a darkling journey to the land of the dead.

Many more examples of musical comedy strategies can be traced in Aristophanes’ plays. What has been provided here is just a selection presented as food for thought and intended to show, in a hopefully sufficient and simple way, how ancient Greek comedy used all kinds of resources for making the audience laugh.

It is worth to specify that, when we speak of “Aristophanes”, we actually deal with the paradosis of his text. Nevertheless, by making a deep investigation into the colometry of the songs, as transmitted by ancient manuscripts and papyri – as for the examples proposed in this paper – it is possible to notice a very strong relationship between colometry and dramaturgy, as between the text, its metrics and its meaning, and even with other poetic texts (as we have seen). Coherence and meaning are so strong, from both a musical and dramaturgical point of view, that appears impossible to consider the ancient colometries only a mechanical work of some late grammarian. On the contrary, in every case – as it is demonstrable through concrete examples – into the paradosis we seem able to recognize the poet’s touch and will.

As regards the main issue of these pages, we may conclude that, on one hand, investigating in depth metrical structures, by putting them in relationship with the text and the scene, allows the modern reader of Aristophanes to enter the poet’s laboratory and understand his way of composing. On the other hand, we are able to recognize that the mechanisms of humor in music are not so far from our mentality and way of composing/understanding music and its messages.

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30 This passage could be considered a comic aprosdokeiton if we think that the daimōn, for the In-law, is actually Euripides, the cause of all of his troubles.
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