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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

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* 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.

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2 The transcript of the lesson can be found at [https://leonardbernstein.com/lectures/television-scripts/young-peoples-concerts/humor-in-music](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. *P* *Oxy.* LXXIII 4935 (*Th.* 1043-1051), saec. II; *R* *Ravennas* 429, saec. X med.; *V* *Venetus Marcianus* gr. 474, saec. XI vel XII; *M* *Ambrosianus* C 222 inf., saec. XII ex.; *A* *Parisinus Regius* gr. 2712, c. 1300; *L* *Laurentianus Plut.* XXXI 15, saec. XIV; *M* *Ambrosianus* L.39 sup., saec. XIV in.; *P* *Parisinus suppl.* gr. 463, saec. XIV in.; *V* *Vaticanus Reg.* gr. 147, saec. XIV in.; *P* *Parisinus* gr. 2821, saec. XIV; *U* *Vaticanus Urbinas* gr. 141, saec. XIV; *V* *V* *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.; *M* *Ambrosianus* L.41 sup., saec. XV; *M* *Novacensis* 492, saec. XV; *V* *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: cod. = 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 entitled *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).

776 ὦ χεῖρες ἐμαί,
777 ἐγχειρεῖν χρῆν ἐρνῷ πορίμῳ.
778 3 ἀγε δή, πινάκον ξεστῶν δέλτοι,
779 δέξασθε σμύλης ὅλκοὺς,
780 κήρυκας ἐμών μόχθων. οἴμοι,
781 6 τουτὶ τὸ ρῶ μοχθηρόν.
782 χώρει, χώρει. ποίαν αὔλακα·
783 βασκέτ’, ἐπείγετε πάσας καθ’ ὁδοὺς ὅδους,
784 9 κεῖνα, ταῦτα· ταχέως χρῆ.

[R]

777 χρῆν Bentley: χρῆ R, Suid. π 2064 783 καθ’ ὁδοὺς Biset: καθόδους R 784 κεῖνα Mu2 ταῦτα

Grynaeus *(hac Divus)*: ταῦτα R

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an
2an
2an
2an
2an
2an
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).

765 ἄγε δή, τίς ἔσται μηχανή σωτηρίας;
tίς πείρα, τίς ἐπίνοι'; ὃ μὲν γὰρ αἴτιος
καί' εἰσκυλλάς εἰς τοιοῦτο πράγματα
οὐ φαινέτ', οὐπώ. φέρε, τίν' οὖν <ἄν> ἄγγελον
πέμψαιμ' ἐπ' αὐτόν; οἶδ' ἐγὼ καὶ δὴ πόρον
770 ἐκ τοῦ Παλαμήδους· ὡς ἐκείνος, τάς πλάτας
ῥίψω γράφων. ἄλλ' οὖν πάρειςιν αἱ πλάται·
pόθεν οὖν γένοιτ' ἄν μοι πλάται; πόθεν <πλάτας;>
tί δ' ἄν, εἰ ταῦτα τάγματ' ἄντι τῶν πλατῶν
γράφον διαφύσειμι; βέλτιον πολύ.
775 ξύλον γέ τοι καὶ ταῦτα, κάκειν' ἦν ξύλον.

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”, 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. 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. 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 ῥ 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 ποί πο πο ποι ποι ποι.
228 ἵω ἵω ἦτω ἦτω ἦτω ἦτω
229 ἵτω τις ὧδε τῶν ἐμῶν ὁμοπτέρων·
230 ὅσοι τ’ εὐσπόρους ἀγροίκων γύας
231 νέμεσθε, φῦλα μυρία κριθοτράγων
232 οὐκερμολόγων τε γένη,
233 ταξὶ πετόμενα,
233 σπερμολόγων τε γένη,
236 ἡδομένα φωνῇ.
237 τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο.
238 οὐφαθίζεθ’ οὐδε λεπτὸν
239 ἀμφιτίττυβίσθ’ ὧδε λεπτὸν
240 τά τε κατ’ ὄρεα τά τε
240 κοτινοτράγα τά τε κομαροφάγα,
```
ἀνύσατε πετόμενα
πρὸς ἐμάν αὐδάν·
τριοτῷ τριοτῷ τοτοβρίζ.
οἱ θ’ ἐλείας παρ’ αὐλώνας ὀξυστόμους
ἐμπίδας κάπτεθ’, ὡσα τ’ εὐδρόσους
γῆς τόπους ἐχετε λει-
μῶνα τ’ ἐρόσεντα Μαραθῶνος,

ὄρνις πτεροποικίλος

ἀτταγᾶς ἀτταγᾶς.

ὁ θ’ ἐλείαις παρ’ αὐλώνας θαλάσσης

ἑλείας παρ’ αὐλῶνας ὀξυστόμους
ἐμπίδας κάπτεθ’, ὡσα τ’ εὐδρόσους
γῆς τόπους ἐχετε λει-
μῶνα τ’ ἐρόσεντα Μαραθῶνος,
227 ἐποὶ ποὶ πο οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ: ἐπὸς ποίς πο̂ν ο̂ποὶ πο̂ν ο̂ποὶ πο̂ν ο̂ποὶ πο̂ν ο̂ποὶ πο̂ν: οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ: οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ οἱ ποὶ. 

228 ἔργων M, Suid. κ 1175 

234 9 

261 ἔργων M, Suid. κ 1175 

237 12 extra metrum 

246 vel ionmi ia hypercat (2ionmi hypercat)
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, 
novel 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 ἔνα μὴν ἤ δύο
ἐπὶ τῶν κραδῶν ἄδουσ’ Ἀθηναῖοι δ’ ἀεὶ
ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν ἄδουσι πάντα τὸν βίον.
διὰ ταύτα τὸν βάδον βαδίζομεν,
κανοῦν δ’ ἔχοντε καὶ χύτραν καὶ μυρρίνας
πλανώμεθα ζητοῦντε τόπον ἀπράγμονα, 
ὅποι καθιδρυθέντε διαγενοίμεθ’ ἄν.
ὁ δὲ στόλος νῦν ἔστι παρὰ τὸν Τηρέα,
tὸν ἔποπα, παρ’ ἔκεινον πυθόμεθα δειμένω,
eἰ που τοιαύτην εἶδε πόλιν ἦ ’πέπτατο.
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 ποι πο πο ποι πο ποι;
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 κικαβαῦ κικαβαῦ (as for the francolin, owl’s Greek name is onomatopoeic too);
l. 262 τοροτοροτοροτορολιλιλιξ.

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):
Δι. ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ, τὸ χρῆμα τῶν κόπων ὅσον.
                ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν εἰς τὸ βαλανεῖον βούλομαι·
1280 ύπὸ τῶν κόπων γάρ τὸ νεφρὸν βουβωνιώ.
Ευ. μὴ πρίν γ’ ἀκούσῃς χἀτέραν στάσιν μελῶν
                ἐκ τῶν κιθαρῳδικῶν νόμων εἰργασμένην.

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-rhythrical 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

1284 ὅπως Ἀχαιῶν
1285 δίθρον κράτος Ἑλλάδος ἥβας
1286 τοφλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ

1287a Σφίγγα δυσαμεριᾶν
1287b πρύτανι κύνα πέμπει
1288 τοφλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ
1289a σύν δορὶ καὶ χερὶ πράκ-
1289b τορι θούριος ὄρνις
1290 τοφλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ

1291 κυρεῖν παρασχὼν
1292 ἰταμαῖς κυσὶν ἀεροφοίτοις
1293 τοφλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ
1294 τὸ συγκλινές τ’ ἐπ’ Αἴαντι

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 interpretated, since the antiquity, as imitation of the sound of kithara (cfr.
Schol. vet. Pl. O. 9. 1c, vol. I p. 266 Drachmann: Ἀρχίλοχος τῷ Ἑρακλεὶ ὤμον ... ἀπορήσας κιθαρῳδοῦ
1295 τοφλαττοθρατοφλαττοθρατ

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

[RVM4AUEP20P8Vs1LAlp]
1284-1285 coniung. UP20P8 1287\(^a\)-1287\(^b\) coniung. AUVs1 1289\(^a\)-1289\(^b\) πράκτορι | VM4ELAlp
coniung. RAUP20P8Vs1 1289\(^b\) θούριος δράμας | VM4ELVs1LAlp 1291-1292 coniung. AUVs1
1292 ἰταμαῖς κοσίν | ἀεροφοίτας | P8 1293 om. U

1285 ἤβαν LAlp 1286, 1288, 1290, 1293, 1285 τὸ φλαττο- vel sim. codd., φλαττο- Fritzsche, cfr. v. 1296 1287\(^a\) δυσαμερίαν Dindorf : -ίαν codd. 1291 κομπὲιν V 1292 ἀεροφοίτας ΑΡ8
-φύτοις Β 1294 τ’ om. LAlp hunc v. in quibusdam exemplaribus defuisse testatur Timachidas ap. Σ

1284  
1285  ἴα  
1286  ἴα

1287\(^a\)  
1287\(^b\)  
1288  ἴα

1289\(^a\)  
1289\(^b\)  
1290  ἴα

1291  ἴα

1292  ἴα

1293  ἴα

1294  ἴα

1295  ἴα

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».

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 evoke 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.

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 aὐλεῖ (or αὐλεὶ 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

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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: τούτῳ παρεπιγέγραται δηλοῦν, ὃτι μιμεῖται τις τὴν ἀηδόνα RVΓ2M ως ἐπὶ ένδον οὐσαν ἐν τῇ λόχῃ VM9Γ2M.
13 Cfr. ll. 202-203 (Hoopoe) δειψι γὰρ ἐμβὰς αὐτικά μάλ’ εἰς τὴν λόχην, / ἔκαμ’ ἀνεγείρας τὴν ἀηδόνα; 207-208 (Peisetaerus) άυ’ ὡς τάχιστ’ εἰς τὴν λόχην / εἴσβαινε κανέγειρε τὴν ἀηδόνα; 223-224 (Euelpides) ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ, τοῦ φθέγματος τοῦρνιθίου· / οἶνον κατεμελίσταρ τὴν λόχην ὄλην. 265-266 (Peisetaerus) ἄλλως ἢρ’ οὕσψ, ὡς ἐνικ’, εἰς τὴν λόχην / ἐμβὰς ἐποίξε χαραδρῶν μιμούμενος
the *phorbeia*, respectively. 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 ξύννομε τῶν ἐμῶν ὕμνον, ξύντροφ' ἀηδοῖ, ἦλθες, ἦλθες, ὤφθης, ηδὺν φθόγγον ἐμοὶ φέρουσ᾿· ἀλλ’, ὦ καλλιβόαν κρέκους’ αὐλὸν φθέγμασιν ἠρινοῖς, ἀρχοῦ 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 anapaesths.

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 of 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

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and labour” for getting something.\textsuperscript{15} Schol. (vet.Tr.) Av. 858a Holwerda reports that Charis became \textit{auletes} after having been a “cold” \textit{kitharōidos} (ὁ Χαῖρις οὔτος κυθαρῳδός ψυχρός καὶ γέγονεν αὐλητής) and, in this sense, in Pheresr. fr. 6 Kassel-Austin, from Agrioi, Charis is expected to be mentioned in a list of the worst \textit{kitharōidoi}.\textsuperscript{16}

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.

\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-
1328) against Euripides with these words (ll. 1304-1308):

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, allusion to some scenes, 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, etc.

IV. Parody of a style

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

Εὐ. καὶ μὴν ἔχω γ’ οἷς αὐτὸν ἀποδείξω κακὸν μελοποιὸν ὄντα καὶ ποιοῦντα ταῦτ’ ἄει.

...πάνυ γε μέλη θαυμαστά· δείξει δὴ τάχα. εἰς ὥν γὰρ αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ μέλη ξυνεμώ.

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’ Ἀχιλλεῶι,
1264b τί ποτ’ ἀνδροδαήκτον ἀκούοιν
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.

ιὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾽ ἀρωγάν;

δύο σοι κόπω, Αἰσχύλε, τούτω.

κύδιστ᾽ Ἀχιλλείον Ἀτρέως

πολυκοίρανε μάνθανέ μου παῖ.

ιὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾽ ἀρωγάν;

τρίτος, ψυχύλε, σοι κόπος οὔτος.

eὐφαμεῖτε· μελισσονόμοι

δόμον Ἀρτέμιδος πέλας οἴγειν.

ιὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾽ ἀρωγάν;

κύριός εἰμι θροεῖν

ὅδιον κράτος αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν.

ιὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ᾽ ἀρωγάν;

1264-1266 TrGF A. Myrmidones F 132 1265, 1267, 1271, 1275, 1277 TrGF A. Myrmidones F 132
1266-1266b TrGF A. Psychagogoi F 273 1269-1270 TrGF A. Telephus F *238 1273-1274 TrGF

A. Hiereai F 87 1276a-1276b A. Ag. 104

[RVM4UEP20P8Vs1LAl]
1264-1264b coniung. VAM4UEP20P8Vs1LAl spatio inter Ἀχιλλεῖον et τί relicto coniung. R
1266a-1266b coniung. AUP8Vs1 1266a-1267 om. E 1269 Ἀτρέως τε | L 1269-1270 coniung.
U 1276a-1276b coniung. AUVs1 κράτος | L 1276b αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν | L

post 1263 parepigrapham διωάλων (vel -ειον) προσαυλεῖ τις praebent plerique codd., Suid. δ 804, δωάλων

προσαυλεῖ Ald, om. A Ἀχιλλεῖον RVAUEVs1, ΣΜΙ : Ἀχιλλεῖον M4P20P8LAl, ΣΥ 1265 ιὴ κόπον Heath
(cfr. Σ) : ιήκοπον codd. 1266a-1267 om. E 1268 δόο UP8Vs1 1269 Ἀτρέως τε L 1270

µου om. A 1272 ὁ Αἰσχύλε Λ Αἰσχύλε Ald 1273 εὐφημεῖτε VE 1276b δόον P20L, cfr. A.

Ag. 104: ὃς δῖον R ὃσιον VM4AUEP8Vs1LAl

1264a ——— inpenth
1264b —— 2an
1265 — 3 — extra metrum 2an
1266a ——— 3da
1266b ——— 2an
EURIPIDES [to pipe accompaniment]:
Phthian Achilles, O why, when thou hearest the sound of men dying –

1265 Ai, ai – stricken, advancest thou not to their succour?
We, the folk of the lake-shore, do honour to Hermes our forebear –
Ai, ai – 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 –
Ai, ai – 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 Ai, ai – stricken, advancest thou not to their succour?
Strong am I yet to declare that sign that sped men on their journey –
Ai, ai – stricken, advancest thou not to their succour?

V. Aprosdoke ton

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

may regard many aspects of the text and the stagecraft, for example puns, *paragrammastismon*, 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 enchained. 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 *paragrammatimós* *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. 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 swifits 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 *Reguit* ἐπὶ ὁφράγος καὶ γαστρίμαργος ὁ Γλαυκέτης, ὡς ἐν Εἰρήνῃ δηλώτατα; *Ar. Pax* 1008 Μορύχῳ Τελέῳ Γλαυκέτη κτλ.; *Pl.Com. fr.* 114 Κ.-Α. ο Ἱες Μήτριος πῶς γὰρ οὐ δαίμον ἢν; / καὶ Γλαυκέτης ἡ ψῆττα, καὶ Λεογόρας, / οἱ ζήτε τερπνῶς οὐδὲν ἐνθουμούμενοι. Parody is enhanced by the sounding wordplay between κῆτα and Γλαυκέτη.
Aristophanes uses that lyric complaint two times in *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 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”.24

Here is the text of *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 *aprosdoketa* accompany verbal *aprosdoketa*.

23 Arist. *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.

1040 ἄνομα πάθεα, φῶτα λιτομένα
1041 27 πολυδάκρυτον Αἰδά γώον φλέγουσα,
1042 αιαὶ αιαὶ ἐ ἐ,
1043 ὃς ἐμ' ἀπεξύρησε πρῶτον,
1044 30 πολυδάκρυτον Ἀἰδά γόον φλέγουσα,
1045 ἐπὶ δὲ τοις δό τὸ ἀνέπεμπεν
1046 ἵππον ἔνθα γυναίκες.
1047 33 ὃς ἔμ' ἀπεξύρησε πρῶτον,
1048 30 ὃς ἐμ' κροκόεντ' ἀμφέδυσεν,
1049 ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖσδ' ἀνέπεμπεν
1050 ἱερόν ἔνθα γυναῖκες.
1051 33 ὃς ἔμ' ἀπεξύρησε πρῶτον,
1052 ὃς ἐμ' κροκόεντ' ἀμφέδυσεν,
1053 39 ὃς ἔμ' κροκόεντ' ἀμφέδυσεν,
1054 ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖσδ' ἀνέπεμπεν
1055 νέκυσιν ἐπὶ πορείαν.

1015-1016 TrGF E. Andromeda F 117 1018-1020 TrGF E. Andromeda F 118 1022-1023 TrGF E. Andromeda F 119 1029-1032 TrGF E. Andromeda F 122 1034-1041 TrGF E. Andromeda F 122

[RΠ]
1027 ὀλοὸν | R 1027-1028 ἀφιλον – κόραξ | R 1028-1029 δεῖπνον – χοροῦσιν | R 1029-
1030 οὐδ’ | νεανίδον | R

1017 λάθοιμι Ellebodius : λάβοιμι RMu2 1019 προσόδοους’ ἀωταῖς Sommerstein : προσφόδοσσαι
1021 με suppl. Mehler 1031 ψήφον del. Hermann 1032 ἐμπεπλεγμένη Mu2 : ἐπεπλεγμένη R 1034-1035 ζὸν παιόνι Zanetti (cum carmine Divus) : ξυμπαιόνι
1039: ἀλλ’ Scaliger : ἀλλ’ RMu2, ἀνωμ’ Blaydes 1040 λιτομένα Enger (cf. Σ2 δειμένη)

1015 ba ia
1016 cho cr
1017 3 Tr ga
1018 ba
1019 3ba
1020 glyc
Maidens, beloved maidens, how can I get away and
escape unseen by that Scythian?  
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?  
Pitiless he who bound me, 
me the most afflicted of men:  
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,  
but enmeshed in numerous bonds  
I am cast forth to be food for the monster… Glauces. 
Not with a hymn for a bride 
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, 

1035 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 ἔστηκ’ ἔχουσ’, modified by Aristophanes in κημὸν ἔστηκ’ ἔχουσ’ in order to mock In-law’s philodikia.
29 See p. 23 and e note 22.
1045 and moreover sent me up
to this sanctuary, where the women are.

Alack for my fate

**which a god engendered!**³⁰

Accursed that I am!

Who will not behold

my unenviable sufferings, in which such sorrows are present?

1050 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,

1055 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 *aprosdoketon* if we think that the daimôn, for the In-law, is actually Euripides, the cause of all of his troubles.
References


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