

The Play of Language in Ancient Greek Comedy

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Volume 154

The Play of Language in Ancient Greek Comedy



Comic Discourse and Linguistic Artifices of Humour,
from Aristophanes to Menander

Edited by

Kostas E. Apostolakis and Ioannis M. Konstantakos

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Preface

A French theoretician once remarked that anthropologists can be recognised from the food stains on their clothes, given that they are inveterate frequenters of restaurants, taverns, or lunch pubs. This is probably true of all scholars of the humanities. The origins of this volume go back exactly to such an encounter of scholars over the loaded table – one evening in December 2018, when the two of us were having dinner in a neighbourhood bistrot, at the north of Athens, and discussing the organisation of an international conference at the University of Crete. As we both maintain a lively interest in Greek comedy, we came up with the idea of comic language and the linguistic techniques of humour as a conference topic. This promised to be an opulent and not overploughed field that would lend itself to fruitful scholarly exploitation. Soon we were exchanging emails and drawing up lists of the speakers we would like to have in the conference. The colleagues we approached responded readily and eagerly, and we felt a little like the mythical Jason or the legendary Germanic king Hengist putting together their brave crews for a fabulous enterprise.

The practical procedures for the preparation of the conference were also set in motion, mostly thanks to the initiatives of Kostas E. Apostolakis and the supportive milieu of the University of Crete. The Department of Philology willingly undertook to host the conference in its hospitable premises at the university campus at Rethymno, which replicate the beautiful labyrinthine style of Evans' Knossos. The Special Account for Research Funds of the University of Crete offered a generous grant to cover the organising expenses and the accommodation of the speakers. Almost everything was ready, and the conference was scheduled to take place in May 2020. Then, in the early March of that fateful year, the COVID pandemic reached Greece, and the lockdowns became our everyday reality.

At the beginning, we tried to be optimistic, in spite of the growing fear, not unlike the heroes of Camus' *The Plague*. We kept postponing the conference again and again, for a few months each time, in the hope that conditions were eventually bound to ameliorate, and that human contact would become permissible before long. We could have opted, of course, for an event online, the kind of experience that developed into a standard part of university life from a given point onwards. However, as both of us were facing on a daily basis the very unsatisfactory practice of online teaching, we were reluctant to extend this kind of virtual semi-existence to the endeavour which we had originally planned as a live exchange of knowledge and scholarly companionship. In the end, exasperated after a protracted period of continuous cancellations and deferments, we

decided to abandon the plan of the conference and to collect the written chapters from the participants, so as to prepare a collective volume.

We are most grateful to the authors who have contributed to the book. They have laboured for our common project with unfailing endurance and patience in difficult times, and have stayed with us throughout the long interval of its gestation and its metamorphoses. We feel deeply honoured that they have entrusted us with the fruits of their work. We are sorry that we have not been able to welcome them to Crete, but we hope for another opportunity in the future, when — as is usual in the wonderful world of Aristophanic comedy — language will be transformed into real things and acts.

Professor Antonios Rengakos is our *agathos daimon*. Already while we were planning the conference, he took an active interest, encouraged us, and invited us to think of the renowned *Trends in Classics Supplementary Volumes* series as a possible venue of publication of the proceedings. When we approached him later with a proposal of the volume, he warmly embraced the project and offered us his invaluable support. By now, no less than four generations of Modern Greek scholars have found a good home and a well-respected forum in the rich and prestigious *Trends* series, which is his spiritual child. We are all proud to be soldiers in his great scholarly legion — the equivalent of the magical “Dumbledore’s army” in the Greek philological world.

A big “thank you” is due to our colleague Melina Tamiolaki, of the University of Crete, who offered us valuable advice and guided us through the tricky process of applying to the university administration for funding. We owe a great debt to two charismatic young doctoral students of the Department of Philology at Crete, members of Kostas E. Apostolakis’ dynamic research team: Georgia Choustoulaki (who meanwhile has been awarded her doctorate) and Georgios Triantafyllou, who has also contributed a chapter to the collection. They provided vital assistance in editing the volume, formatting the texts and bibliographies, checking references, and taking care of innumerable practical details. Last but not least, our wives, Vaso and Konstantina, tolerated the project with their undaunted good humour and surrounded us with their inexhaustible love and solicitude. Let our profound gratitude to them serve as an envoi for this book.

Kostas E. Apostolakis
Ioannis M. Konstantakos

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Simone Beta

The Shop of Aristophanes the Carpenter: How Comic Poets Assembled (and Disassembled) Words

Abstract: In the *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian says that the composition of new words through the device of *iungere* (“to join”) was a privilege of the Greek writers that their Latin colleagues did not have. This statement is particularly true if we think of the creative language of Greek comedy, as the many brilliant puns invented by Aristophanes and the other poets of Old Comedy witness. This chapter presents, analyses, and discusses a wide choice of comic compounds organised by their grammatical features (compounds with prepositions, prefixes, and suffixes; compounds with proper names), in order to give a comprehensive picture of the imaginative ability shown by Greek comic poets in the creation of new, smart, and funny words.

1 Introduction

In the tenth book of his *Institutio oratoria*, a work that might be translated as “a textbook on the art of speaking in public”, at the beginning of the cursory but interesting survey of the main authors and subjects of Greek and Latin literature (10.1.46), Quintilian states that “as Aratus says ‘let us begin with Zeus’, so the proper place for us to begin is Homer”. Likewise, in this chapter on the use of compounds in ancient comic poetry, we can begin with Quintilian. In the eighth book of the *Institutio*, the most famous Latin rhetorician states that “coining words ... is more a privilege of the Greeks, who have not hesitated to fit words even to certain sounds and emotions with the same freedom with which primitive men gave things their names. The few ventures that our countrymen have made in compounds or derived words have scarcely met with acceptance”.¹ From this quotation, it is clear that Quintilian knew very well that

¹ Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.30–31: *Fingere ... Graecis magis concessum est, qui sonis etiam quibusdam et adfectibus non dubitaverunt nomina aptare, non alia libertate quam qua illi primi homines rebus appellationes dederunt. Nostri aut in iungendo aut in derivando paulum aliquid ausi vix in hoc satis recipiuntur* (for the translation, see Russell 2001).

the composition of new words through the device of “joining” (this is the proper meaning of the verb *iungere*) was a prerogative of the Greek writers that their Latin colleagues did not share.

This is true — and it is particularly true if we think of certain poetic genres, such as the dithyramb, in which the Greek poets were able to create compound words by joining together up to three different lexical items: in a papyrus fragment attributed to Theophrastus (probably a passage from his lost treatise *On Style*, as the first editor Bruno Snell suggested) we find the terms βοτρυοκαρποτόκος (“generating the fruits of the grapes”) and ἀστερομαρμαροφειγής (“as bright as a shining star”).² Aristotle was also conscious of this peculiar feature of the Greek language: in one of the last chapters of his *Poetics*, the philosopher notes that “in regard to words, compounds are especially suitable for dithyrambs”; in the third book of the *Rhetoric*, he states that “*lexis* using double words is most useful to dithyrambic poets”.³

The same observations are valid also for other genres, apart from dithyramb. One of these genres is comedy, of course, as many scholars have noticed. One example is Americo Da Costa Ramalho, a Portuguese academic who taught Greek at the University of Coimbra and who published, in 1952, his doctoral dissertation *Dipla Onomata no estilo de Aristófanés*, a list of Aristophanic compound words classified by individual comedies, with a concise *index nominum* at the end.⁴ A recent monograph on a particular aspect of this topic is *Aristophanes’ Comedy of Names* by Nikoletta Kanavou (2011), who catalogues the speaking names present in the eleven comedies (and the extant fragments) of the Greek comic poet, including the proper names that are the result of a compound.⁵

In this chapter, I plan to discuss the inventiveness shown by Aristophanes and his colleagues (the poets of the so-called Old Comedy) in the creation of new comic compounds for the sake of provoking laughter in the audience. A wide selection of examples will be analysed and categorised according to their

² See Appendix 8 Fortenbaugh (*P. Hamb.* 128, col. li, ll. 23–25).

³ Arist. *Poet.* 1459a 4 ff., τῶν δ’ ὀνομάτων τὰ μὲν διπλᾶ μάλιστα ἀρμόττει τοῖς διθυράμβοις (for the translation, see Golden 1968); *Rh.* 1406b 1 ff., χρησιμωτάτη ἡ διπλῆ λέξις τοῖς διθυραμβοποιῶσι (for the translation, see Kennedy 1991).

⁴ The first scholarly work on this subject was Meyer 1923, another dissertation submitted at the University of Basel. This work is divided in two sections, dedicated respectively to prose and poetry; in the latter part, a large portion is dedicated to satiric poetry (comedy included).

⁵ See however the introduction to this volume, section 2.5 and n. 52, on the limitations of this work.

grammatical features (and not, as happened in earlier studies of the topic, by individual plays).⁶

2 Compounds with prepositions, prefixes, and suffixes

2.1 Prepositions

One of Aristophanes' most brilliant puns, based on the clever conjunction of a preposition and a proper name, is found in a passage of *Acharnians* and involves the preposition κατά (“against”). At 599–606, the protagonist Dicaeopolis complains that, while elderly Athenians have to serve in the army to fight against the Spartans, there are some young Athenians who desert and find refuge abroad, travelling to the most remote and secluded places. Among the cities to which they flee, Dicaeopolis mentions ἐν Καμαρίνῃ κἀν Γέλα κἀν Καταγέλα (606). While the first two locations are real (Camarina and Gela, two Sicilian cities), the third is a fictional one, a geographical wordplay which, through its reference to the verb καταγελάω (“make fun”), condenses the preposition κατά and the place-name Γέλα into a felicitous and playful composite word.⁷

The preposition ἀντί (“against” and “instead of”) is cleverly handled by Aristophanes in two plays. The first example is a passage of *Knights*. At 1042–1043, the Paphlagonian (the arch-slave who, in the symbolic plot invented by the comic poet, is the body double of Cleon, the leader of the radical demagogic party) interprets to his own benefit a Delphic oracle by identifying the lion (λέων) mentioned in the text of the prophecy with himself: Paphlagon/Cleon will save Athens because he is as strong as the king of the animals; his strength will be the salvation of the town (1043, ἐγὼ γὰρ ἀντὶ τοῦ λέοντός εἰμί σοι). This boast makes Demos of Pnyx (the personification of the Athenian people) think of the similarity between the Paphlagonian's ambiguous behaviour and the hostility of a tyrant of Chalcis whose name was Antileon (Ἀντιλέων). The answer of Demos (1044, καὶ

⁶ My initial approach to this topic dates back to 2006, when I took part in a conference organised in Venice by my friend and colleague Alberto Camerotto. The proceedings were published the following year (see Beta 2007); this chapter is in fact an expanded and updated reworking of that contribution. I have also discussed some of these examples in my contribution on puns to the *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Humour* (Beta, forthcoming).

⁷ Mueller (mentioned by Olson 2002, 230) has detected, in the fictive name of Καταγέλα, a hint at the name of another Sicilian town, Κατάνη/Catania (but see Olson's critique).

πῶς μ' ἐλελήθεις Ἄντιλέων γεγεννημένος;) is a wordplay on a real name (the historical Antileon is mentioned by Aristotle in *Politics*) taken in its etymological meaning (“someone who is against the lion/Leon”, that is, the opponent of lion/Leon).⁸

The second example is a passage of *Women at the Thesmophoria*. The kinsman of Euripides (who is disguised as Helen of Troy), interrogated by Euripides (disguised as Menelaus), introduces an Athenian woman by claiming that her name is Theonoe, the daughter of Proteus (αὕτη Θεονόη Πρωτέως); the woman replies that her name is in fact Critylla, daughter of Antitheus, from the deme of Gargettus (Κρίτυλλά γ' Ἀντιθέου Γαργηττόθεν). Here the joke lies in the contrast between the former name, which is a real and famous one (Θεονόη, a mythical prophetess, whose name means “the mind of a god”), and the second name (Ἀντίθεος), a very rare one, whose meaning might be equivalent to “the contrary of god”.⁹ Although the names used by Aristophanes in these cases are not new in themselves, new is the meaning these quite uncommon names receive in the comic context.¹⁰

Brand new, on the other hand, and never attested elsewhere, as far as we know, is the compound word found in another Aristophanic passage. In the prologue of *Birds*, Peisetaerus, the comic hero, is telling Hoopoe where he and his companion Euelpides come from. When the bird hears that they come from Athens, the city of the “beautiful galleys”, he asks if they are jurors of the Heliaea (109, μῶν ἡλιαστά;). But the Athenian denies it: “No way! We belong to the other kind: we are no-jurors!” (109–110, μᾶλλὰ θᾶτερου τρόπου / ἀπηλιαστά). In her commentary, Nan Dunbar notes that the word ἀπηλιαστά “is coined as an opposite, presumably by Ar. for this passage”;¹¹ in fact, there is no reason for not seeing this word as a compound that plays on the meaning of the preposition ἀπό.¹²

Similar examples of a wordplay on the same preposition are quoted by Pollux in the *Onomasticon*: they do not come from a comic poet, but from a historian,

⁸ Arist. *Pol.* 1316a 29–32. On this joke, see also Kanavou 2011, 54–55.

⁹ Ar. *Thesm.* 897–898; see Austin/Olson 2004, 287–288. As for Antitheus, Kanavou 2011, 149 n. 673, comments that “a pun between the two names is not impossible, but the frequency of the -θεο- element in onomastics risks making it unnoticeable”.

¹⁰ In some later plays (of Middle and New Comedy), there are further witty compounds with ἀντί, which produce a neologism attested nowhere else: see for instance the titles Ἀντιπορνοβοσκός (“The rival of a pimp”, by Dioxippus) and Ἀντιλαΐς (“The rival of Lais”, by Cephisodorus and Epicrates).

¹¹ Dunbar 1995, 168–169.

¹² For another play on ἡλιαστής (a juryman at the Athenian court of the ἡλιαία), see below, section 2.2, on φιληλιαστής.

namely Theopompus of Chios, who coined the negative compounds Ἀπαθηναῖοι (“degenerate Athenians”), ἀποπολίτης (“degenerate citizen”), and ἀφέταιρος (“degenerate friend”).¹³

2.2 Prefixes

The most productive prefix in the language of the comic poets is by far φιλο-, used for underlining the strong passion of a comic character for something or someone. Aristophanes was well aware of this, because he himself jokes about it in the prologue of *Wasps*. The comic slave, who speaks the prologue, speculates about the strange disease of the old hero of the play (called Φιλοκλέων, because of his love for Cleon). He mentions and rejects a series of possibilities: that the old man is mad about dice (75, φιλόκυβος), or fond of drinking (79, φιλοπότης), of offering sacrifices to the gods (82, φιλοθύτης), of hosting strangers (82–84, φιλόξενος); and he finally reveals the old man’s true passion, namely, to sit in a tribunal as a judge (88, φιληλιαστής). In between this sequence of compound words, the slave acknowledges that “the beginning of the name of the disease” is the prefix φιλο- (77, ἀλλὰ «φιλο» μὲν ἔστιν ἀρχὴ τοῦ κακοῦ).¹⁴

Most of these compounds are quite probably original coinages of Aristophanes;¹⁵ as for the case of φιλόξενος, which was a common word (as old as Homer), there is a further play with a historical name, a certain Philoxenus (one of the

13 Pollux 3.58; Theopompus, *FGrHist* 115 F 338. For ἀποπολίτης, cf. also ἀπόπολις, a tragic neologism (“far from the city”, i.e. “banished”) created by Aesch. *Ag.* 1410; the word (see Medda 2017, 338) is a conjecture by Casaubon (the mss. have ἄπολις), followed by Seidler. The more common form is ἀπόπολις (Soph. *OT* 1000 and *Trach.* 647).

14 I have quoted the translation of MacDowell 1971. He postulates a lacuna between 76 and 77, where there might have been another similar compound, such as φιλογύννης (“lover of women”) or φιλόπαις (“lover of boys”); *contra*, Biles/Olson 2015, 110.

15 A doubt might arise for φιλοπότης, attested in Herodotus (2.174, about Amasis, who was also φιλοσκώμμων, i.e. “fond of jesting”) and Eupolis (fr. 221.1, about Cimon), who used it in a comedy (*The Cities*) produced, according to Geissler, in 422 — that is, in the same year of *Wasps* (see Olson 2016, 241–245, in particular 244). The same could be said about φιλοθύτης; Metagenes, a contemporary of Aristophanes, wrote a Φιλοθύτης (Ericharmus), Φιλάργυρος (Crates II and Philippiades), Φιλαυλος (Philetæus and Philippiades), Φιλαθήναιος (Alexis and Philippiades), Φιλοδικαστής (Timocles), Φιλευριπίδης (Axionicus and Philippiades), and Φιλοτραγωδός (Alexis). The opposite of the *harpax* φιληλιαστής is the already quoted ἀπηλιαστής (above, section 2.1).

many passive homosexuals that populate the stage of Old Comedy).¹⁶ Two other Aristophanic compounds bear testimony to the poet's enviable creativity: in *Acharnians* 336, the Chorus of the coalmen of the deme of Acharnae calls a charcoal-basket φιλανθρακέα (“coal lover”);¹⁷ in *Peace* 308, the goddess that gives her name to the play is called φιλαμπελωτάτη (“a strong lover of vines”).¹⁸

Even when Aristophanes uses a very common compound such as φιλόπολις, his choice is never innocent, because the epithet is charged with a strong political sense, according to the context, as becomes clear in a passage of *Wealth*: when a sycophant complains of being treated badly although he is an honest citizen who loves his own home city (899–900, Οἴμ' ὡς ἄχθομαι / ὅτι χρηστός ὢν καὶ φιλόπολις πάσχω κακῶς), Carion, Chremylus' slave, rebukes him with sarcasm: “You, an honest citizen who loves his own city?” (901, Σὺ φιλόπολις καὶ χρηστός);¹⁹ A political nuance is also detected in a compound first attested in the most famous of Aristophanes' predecessors: in a fragment of an unspecified comedy, Cratinus coined the word φιλοπραγματίας, “meddlesome” and “busybody”, almost a synonym of the term πολυπράγμων, which was a recurring term in the political language of the fifth century BCE.²⁰

Since it would be too long to quote all the comic compounds with φιλο-, I prefer to end this section with two amusing *hapax legomena*. The first consists of a pair of epithets, the positive φίλορχος (“someone who loves to dance”) and the comparative φιλορχικώτερος (“someone who loves to dance even more”), attributed by Pherecrates, in his comedy *The Savages*, to the sons of the tragic poet Carcinus: in the scholion to Aristophanes' *Wasps* which has preserved the fragment, the manuscript readings are φίλαρχος (“someone who loves power”) and the comparative φίλαρχικώτερος, but since the young boys were famous for their ability in dancing (and this is the reason why they are mentioned in the exodos

16 For φιλόξενος, see for instance Hom. *Od.* 6.121; in a fragment of Cratinus (fr. 1.2), there is the superlative φιλοξενώτατος (but see also Aesch. fr. 196.2 Radt). On the κωμωδοῦμενος Philoxenus, see Henderson 1991, 215.

17 Olson (2002, 165) says that “φιλανθρακέα appears *para prosdokian* for φιλάνθρωπον (‘humane’)”.

18 See Olson 1998, 133. This adjective reappears at the very end of antiquity: see Nonn. *Dion.* 12.41.

19 The compound, first attested in Aeschylus (*Sept.* 176: the gods of Thebes) and in Pindar (*Ol.* 4.18: Ἥσυχια, that is Tranquillity and Peace), is used by Aristophanes in *Lysistrata* (547–548, φιλόπολις ἀρετὴ φρόνιμος, said of the sagacious virtue of the Athenian women) and in another passage of *Wealth* (726, referring to the god Asclepius).

20 Cratinus fr. 382; see Olson/Seaberg 2018, 205–206. On πολυπράγμων and πολυπραγμοσύνη, see Ehrenberg 1947; Dover 1974; Leigh 2013.

of the Aristophanic comedy), Meineke's conjecture is accepted by all the editors.²¹ The second *hapax*, the juicy compound φίλετνος (“fond of pulse-soup”), is an adespoton — and we are not sure whether it actually comes from a comic play. Nevertheless, the strong presence of food in Greek comedy makes this attribution quite possible.²²

The opposite of the suffix φιλο- was properly μισο-, but the imagination of the comic poets allowed for other possibilities, as is shown by the young protagonist of *Wasps*, Philocleon's son, who utterly despised the politician so loved by his father and thus has been given by Aristophanes the name Βδελυκλέων, with a prefix that recalls the verb βδελύττομαι (“to despise”, “to loathe”). The prefix μισο- appears three times in this comedy, always with reference to the conflicting relationship between father and son. The compound word μισόπολις (“hater of the town”) occurs in a political context: it is an accusation tossed by the Chorus of Athenian judges to the “man who despises Cleon” in the section (the προαγών) that precedes the debate proper (the ἀγών).²³ Utterly political is, again, the nuance of the compound μισόδημος (“hater of democracy”), hurled as an abuse by the same Chorus to Bdelycleon a little while later, in the same part of the play.²⁴ Aristophanes employs this very compound (possibly his own coinage) also in the lost comedy *Farmers* (Γεωργοί): in a fragment quoted by Athenaeus in regard to Spartan figs, an unknown character charges this variety of fruit with being hostile, tyrannical, and a hater of the *demos*.²⁵ This bitter feeling, which the Athenians nursed against the Spartans during the Peloponnesian War, is echoed also in another passage of *Wasps*, in which Philocleon refuses to wear a Laconian shoe because his foot is μισολάκων (“hater of the Spartans”).²⁶

But Cleon was not the only Athenian politician who aroused different and opposed feelings in the people of Athens. In the context of a long and arduous war, it is no wonder that the warmongering captains were hated by their fellow citizens: thus, the long-awaited day of the inauguration of Nicias' peace, which marked the end of the first part of the Peloponnesian War, is celebrated by the Chorus of farmers of the Aristophanic *Peace* (produced in 421) as μισολάμαχος

²¹ Pherecrates fr. 15, quoted by Schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 1502c.

²² Fr. 686 (from Phryn. *Praep. Soph.* 122.11).

²³ Ar. *Vesp.* 412; see Biles/Olson 2015, 219.

²⁴ Ar. *Vesp.* 474; see Biles/Olson 2015, 235–236.

²⁵ Ar. fr. 110.2–3: τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ σῦκον ἐχθρόν ἐστι καὶ τυραννικόν. / Οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἄν μικρόν, εἰ μὴ μισόδημον ἦν σφόδρα.

²⁶ Ar. *Vesp.* 1165; see Biles/Olson 2015, 425.

(304).²⁷ Aristophanes' target is here the *strategos* Lamachus, considered as the symbol of the political party favourable to the continuation of the war. He had already been mocked in the *Acharnians*, the comedy performed at the Lenaea of 425, in which he was one of the main characters (actually, the basic antagonist of the comic hero Dicaeopolis). The accidental presence, inside his very name, of the word μάχη ("battle") had given Aristophanes the chance to include the same witty pun in two different passages of that play: at 269–270, Dicaeopolis thanks the god Phales for having relieved him "from troubles, battles, and Lamachuses" (πραγμάτων τε καὶ μαχῶν καὶ Λαμάχων ἀπαλλαγείς); at 1071, a herald knocks at the door of Lamachus' house crying "O toils, and battles, and Lamachuses!" (ὦ πόνοι τε καὶ μάχαι καὶ Λάμαχοι).²⁸ To return to the category of compound words, we cannot overlook the adjective πολεμολαμαχαϊκός, attributed to στρατεύμα ("army") at *Acharnians* 1080, in which the name of the general is facetiously joined to the word πόλεμος ("war").

A final example of a compound with μισο- is offered again by a passage of *Peace*, in which the god Hermes, after having contributed to the rescue of the goddess Peace, addresses her with the vocative "you, the woman who feels the strongest hatred for the shield-handles" (662, ὦ γυναικῶν μισοπορπακιστάτη), a compound built upon the technical word πόρπαξ ("shield-handle").²⁹

Other fairly productive prefixes are ψευδο-, μονο-, αὐτο-, and ὅμο-. Since it would take too long to comment on all the compounds with these prefixes, only the most imaginative ones will be discussed here. In the section of the *Knights* that follows the parabasis, the Sausage-Seller informs the audience of the strong reaction of the council at the speech of the Pahlagonian. As he states, the assembly was full of ψευδατράφαξ (630): the name of this nonexistent plant joins the prefix ψευδο- to the botanical name of the orach (ἀτράφαξ) and succeeds in

²⁷ According to Olson (1998, 132), the compound has an active sense: "hostile to Lamachos", and not something "that Lamachos abhors".

²⁸ For another compound including the name of general Lamachus in this comedy see 1207, Λαμαχίππιον, a play of the suffix -ιππος (typical of the names of people belonging to a high social class), plus the diminutive -ιον; Olson (2002, 360) translates the name "My dear noble Lamachos". On similar compounds with -ιππος, see also Beta, forthcoming (Ar. *Ran.* 429, Ἰππόκινος or Ἰππόβινος). A quite different case is the name of Strepsiades' son in *Clouds*, Φειδιππίδης, on which see below, section 2.5.

²⁹ On the precise meaning of πόρπαξ ("a removable bronze strip that ran across the back of the hoplite shield"), see Olson 1998, 206.

creating a name that recalls that of a real herb — ψευδαμάμαξυς, a bastard vine that twines itself around a tree but does not produce any grapes.³⁰

The “lonely eater”, the man who likes to eat on his own in order not to share his food with anybody, is a standard character in Greek comedy, as Ameipsias’ μονοφάγος demonstrates;³¹ the coining of this adjective might date back to Aristophanes, who uses the superlative μονοφαγίστατος to describe the selfish appetite of the dog Labes, accused of having eaten a whole truckle of cheese.³²

In a fragment of Epicharmus, the father of the Syracusan comedy, we find αὐτότερος, the comparative of the pronoun αὐτός; the superlative αὐτότατος is attested in *Wealth*, Aristophanes’ last play.³³ These two *hapax legomena* are not compound words, but both play on αὐτός, as Aristophanes does in a famous passage of the prologue of *Knights*, a difficult challenge for every translator.³⁴ A compound including this pronoun is surely αὐτόκακος (“self tormentor” — or, using a

30 This plant is mentioned by Aristophanes (*Vesp.* 326) in order to underline the falsehood of a certain “son of Sellus” (MacDowell 1971 translates this as “the son of Swank”), a notorious liar; for a more detailed explanation of the joke, see Biles/Olson 2015, 193. The frequent occurrence of this suffix in Greek comedy (see for instance other compounds such as ψευδολόγος, *Ar. Ran.* 1521; ψευδομαρτύριον, Cratinus fr. 192 and fr. 268; ψευδορκεῖν, *Ar. Eccl.* 603) is caused by the high rate of deceitful characters present in these plays. On this topical feature of Greek comic theatre, see Beta 2004, 175–180.

31 Fr. 23; see Orth 2013, 309–311.

32 *Ar. Vesp.* 923. For the same idea, see also Antiphanes (fr. 291, μονοφαγεῖν); other similar compounds are Μονότροπος (“The loner”, the title of a comedy of Phrynichus), the verb μονοκοιτεῖν (“to sleep alone”, *Ar. Lys.* 592), and the noun μονογέρων (“solitary old man”, *Adesp. com.* fr. 628).

33 Epicharmus fr. 5; *Ar. Plut.* 83. There is a similar joke in Plaut. *Trin.* 988 (*ipsissimus*).

34 *Ar. Eq.* 20–27: ΔΗΜΟΣΘΕΝΗΣ ἄλλ’ εὐρέ τιν’ ἀπόκινον ἀπὸ τοῦ δεσπότη. ΝΙΚΙΑΣ λέγε δὴ “μο-λω-μεν” ξυνεχῆς ὡδι ξυλλαβῶν. Δ. καὶ δὴ λέγω “μο-λω-μεν”. Ν. ἐξόπισθε νῦν “αὐ-το” φάθι τοῦ “μο-λω-μεν”. Δ. “αὐ-το”. Ν. πάνυ καλῶς ὥσπερ δεφόμενος νῦν ἀτρέμα πρῶτον λέγε τὸ “μο-λω-μεν”, εἶτα δ’ “αὐ-το”, κἄτ’ ἐπάγων πυκνόν. Δ. μο-λω-μεν αὐ-το μο-λω-μεν αὐτομολῶμεν. Ν. ἦν, οὐχ ἡδύ; On this wordplay between αὐτός, μόλωμεν, and αὐτομολῶμεν, see the different renderings of Sommerstein 1997 (Demosthenes: “Find some sort of wiggle to get away from master”. Nicias: “Well, say ‘cape-let’, joining it together in one like this”. Demosthenes: “All right, I’m saying it: ‘capelet’”. Nicias: “Now, after that ‘capelet’, say ‘cess’”. Demosthenes: “Cess”. Nicias: “Splendid. Now act as if you were having a wank: say first of all slowly ‘capelet’, then ‘cess’, and then start speeding it up hard”. Demosthenes: “Capelet cess cape — let’s escape!” Nicias: “There, isn’t it delightful?”) and Henderson 2022 (First slave: “Just think of some kind of shimmy away from the master!”. Second slave: “Very well, say ‘wall lets’, and put it together like this”. First slave: “All right, ‘wallets’”. Second slave: “Now next, after ‘wallets’, say ‘go way’”. First slave: “Go way”. Second slave: “Very good! Now, as if you were masturbating, slowly say ‘wallets’ first, then ‘go way’, and then start speeding it up”. First slave: “Wallets, go way, wallets go way, let’s go AWOL”; Second slave: “There, wasn’t that nice?”).

more up-to-date terminology, “masochist”), present in a fragment of Theopompus from an unknown comedy.³⁵

The only case of a compound with ὄμο-, which points at the idea of similarity, is a clever coinage placed in the mouth of Xanthias, the slave who accompanies Dionysus during the trip to the Underworld staged by Aristophanes in the *Frogs*. The neologism ὀμομαστιγίας (LSJ translates the word as “fellow-knave”, adducing the noun μαστιγίας “rogue”, a derivative from μάστιξ “whip”) is the epithet Xanthias gives to Zeus, hinting (if we have to trust the ancient scholiast) at the cult appellation of Ζεὺς δούλιος (“Zeus protector of the slaves”).³⁶

2.3 Suffixes

The suffixes mainly used by the comic poets in order to coin new compound words are two: -μανία and -δουλος.³⁷ *Birds* presents two occurrences. The first one, the verb ὀρνιθομανεῖν, is present twice in the same scene (the long messenger’s speech after the expulsion of Iris from Cloudcuckooland), and is repeated shortly afterwards. The messenger tells Peisetaerus that clear evidence of the success of his brilliant idea (the foundation of the city of the birds between heaven and earth) is the sudden attack of bird-mania which has affected the Athenians (1284, ὀρνιθομανοῦσι); the latter have started to show this unbelievable passion (1290, ὀρνιθομάνουσι) by giving people the nicknames of birds. Then the father-beater (or, as Nan Dunbar prefers to call him, the rebellious son) claims that his love for the species of birds (1344, ὀρνιθομανῶ) is so strong that he has just begun to fly.

The emotion conveyed by this suffix represents, in a certain sense, a stronger version of the feeling expressed by the φιλο- compounds. The equivalence becomes evident from another Aristophanic coinage, φιλορνηθία, a noun that occurs in the same context (the messenger’s speech, at *Birds* 1300).³⁸ Equally stronger than the mild φιλολάκων which, according to Plutarch, was the epithet given to Cimon because of his penchant for Sparta, is the Aristophanic coinage

³⁵ Theopompus fr. 21; Farmer (2022, 80) cites in his commentary Menander’s Ἐαυτὸν τιμωρούμενος, the model of Terence’s *Heautontimorumenos*. See also adesp. com. fr. 559.

³⁶ Ar. *Ran.* 756 (preceded, at 750, by another epithet of Zeus, ὀμόγνιος, used by the same Xanthias in the exclamation ὀμόγνιε Ζεῦ in order to highlight the closeness between himself and the lord of Olympus). On both passages, see Dover 1993, 285–286.

³⁷ For a different case (-πωλης), see below, section 4 and n. 76.

³⁸ For all these passages, see Dunbar 1995, 638. In Aeschylus we find the adjective φιλορνηθίς (*Eum.* 23), referring to the Corycian cave.

λακωνομανεῖν (“to be crazy for the Spartans”), mentioned in the same comedy as one of the many passions of young Athenians of the upper class.³⁹

A fragment from an unknown comedy of Aristophanes is the only attestation of the compound ἐνθεσίδουλος (“slave to his own stomach”), a graphic description of a glutton.⁴⁰ In the land of Cockaigne described in Greek comedy, where almost every play ended up with a lavish banquet, similar coinages were very frequent: Photius, who has transmitted the Aristophanic fragment, states that ἐνθεσίδουλος was a synonym of ἐνθεσίψωμος and ψωμόδουλος, two other unique compounds built on ψωμός (“morsel of food”). This latter word recurs as part of another comic neologism, ψωμοκόλαξ, “a parasite ready to flatter in order to get some good morsels”, in another fragment of Aristophanes from the lost play *Gerytades*.⁴¹

2.4 Prefixes and suffixes

There is at least one term that, in the language of comedy, works both as prefix and suffix: ἀρχο. Its use as suffix, very common in the Greek language, gives two brilliant results in a passage of *Birds*, in which Peisetaerus shows Iris that the organisation of Cloudcuckooland resembles that of a typical Greek polis: among the public positions, we find the more specific κολοίαρχος (1212, the “leader of the jackdaws”) and the less specific ὀρνίθαρχος (1215, the “leader of the birds”). With regard to its use as a prefix, unfortunately we do not know the name of the comic poet who coined the compounds ἀρχολίπαρος and ἀρχογλυπτάδης, quoted by Suetonius in *The Greek Terms for Abuse* (Περὶ βλασφημιῶν) with the meaning “someone who yearns for obtaining a position of power”.⁴²

³⁹ Ar. Av. 1281; Plut. *Per.* 9 and *Cim.* 16. Dunbar 1995, 636: “The compound occurs only here, but imitative Lakonizing in disregard for cleanliness and in anti-democratic attitudes had long been practised by some Athenian aristocrats, and during the war clearly aroused suspicions of treachery”.

⁴⁰ Ar. fr. 816, see Bagordo 2017, 259–260. The word ἐνθεσις is a typical comic term for “mouthful” (Ar. *Eg.* 404; Pherecrates fr. 113.6; Telecleides fr. 1.10; Hermippus fr. 42.1).

⁴¹ Ar. fr. 172, borrowed by Sannyrion fr. 11 and Philemon fr. 7; see also ψωμοκολακεύειν (Philippides fr. 8) and ψωμοκόλαφος (Diphilus fr. 48, “someone who endures to be slapped just for getting a piece of bread”). On the land of Cockaigne, see Pellegrino 2000; Farioli 2001; and the chapter by Ioannis Konstantakos in the present volume.

⁴² Adesp. com. fr. 930. In their commentary, Kassel/Austin point out the compound σπουδαρχίδης, probably coined by Aristophanes (*Ach.* 595–597, “the son of a man who is eager for gaining an office of state”) and echoed by Eupolis in the lost *Cities* (fr. 248); “probably a colloquial term of abuse” according to Olson 2016, 301.

2.5 Patronymics

One of the most characteristic Greek suffixes, sometimes used by the comic poets for comic purposes, is the patronymic. The most famous example is the name of one of the main characters of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, the son of the protagonist, the young Φειδιππίδης. The origin of this proper name (a common one, because it was also the name of the celebrated Athenian who is reputed to have died after having given his fellow citizens the news of the victory at Marathon) is explained by the young man's father in a passage of the prologue, where Strepsiades gives the audience the following, bizarre etymology:

Well, soon enough we had a son, and then my troubles really began. The wife and I could not agree on a name for the boy. She wanted something upper-class and horsy, a name with hippos in it, like "Xanthippus", "Charippus", or "Callippides". But I wanted to name him Pheidonides after his grandfather, a good old-fashioned thrifty name.⁴³

In the end, the boy does get the upper-class suffix so craved by his mother and, in addition, a patronymic ending too — but the linguistic root (φειδ-) betrays (at least in Strepsiades' interpretation) the lower-class origin of his father's lineage, because the verb φείδομαι means "to spare", "to be frugal". This proper name is not an Aristophanic coinage, but other examples of compound names are new words indeed. Such is, for instance, the Ἀποδρασιππίδης mentioned in the prologue of *Wasps*: here (at 185) the ending -ιππίδης that belonged to Pheidonides' grandson is glued to the root of ἀποδιδράσκω, a verb that means "to run away". The character who claims this name is old Philocleon: caught during one of his many attempts at escaping from the house where his son Bdelycleon has locked him up, he admits his desire for running away by declaring that he is the "son of Fitzrunawayhorse".⁴⁴

⁴³ Ar. *Nub.* 60–65: Μετὰ ταῦθ', ὅπως νῶν ἐγένεθ' υἱὸς οὐτοσί, / ἐμοί τε δὴ καὶ τῇ γυναικὶ τάγαθῆ, / περὶ τοῦνόματος δὴ ἔντεῦθεν ἐλοιδορούμεθα. / ἢ μὲν γὰρ ἵππον προσετίθει πρὸς τοῦνομα, / Ἐάνθιππον ἢ Χάριππον ἢ Καλλιππίδην, / ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦ πάππου ἑτιθέμην Φειδωνίδην (for the translation, see Meineck 1998). For the first Marathon runner, see Hdt. 6.105.1; on the question of his name (elsewhere quoted as Φιλίππίδης), see Nenci 1998, 266–267.

⁴⁴ This is the translation of MacDowell 1971; see also Kanavou 2011, 86–87. Similar wordplays can be found in other authors and other genres: see, for instance, the compound Ἴπποκρατιπιάδης coined by Nicarchus, *Anth. Pal.* 11.17.

3 Compounds with proper names

3.1 Compounds with two proper names

A passage of Aristophanes' *Acharnians* is a good starting point for a discussion of this type of compound made of the union (and, in a few cases, of the fusion) of two proper names. The long list of deserters enumerated by Dicaeopolis in front of the general Lamachus includes a string of such compounds: Τεισαμενοφάνιπποι at 603 and Γερητοθεόδωροι at 605. The identity of these people may be learned from the scholia (if it is admitted that the scholiast transmits reliable knowledge, which is often doubtful). These are certainly comic creations, made of the union of personal names.⁴⁵

In other cases, the personal names belong to famous people. One of the most ancient examples is the verb coined by Cratinus by joining together the names of his main comic rival and of the most controversial tragic poet of his times: a precious note written by Arethas of Caesarea in the margin of a Platonic manuscript has preserved for us the verb εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζειν, a brilliant way (for Cratinus) to indicate that Aristophanes made fun of Euripides but, at the same time, imitated him.⁴⁶ Cratinus has repeated the same procedure for two other poets, the tragic Choerilus (Χοιρίλος) and the comic Ecphantides (Ἐκφαντίδης), thus creating the compound Χοιριλεκφαντίδης.⁴⁷

This comic procedure is mostly exploited for the creation of amusing and imaginative titles: one of the first examples is Cratinus' *Διονυσαλέξανδρος*, a play whose plot is known to us through a papyrus preserving a conspicuous section of

45 Kanavou (2011, 38–39) comments upon all the explanations put forward by ancient and modern commentators. To the first compound Aristophanes also adds Πανουργιππαρχίδα (a compound that belongs to the category of patronymics discussed above, in section 2.5); the second one is followed by the compound Διομειαλαζόνες (“Humbug from Diomeia”, as translated by Henderson 2022), which, according to Kanavou, “may refer to the reputation of the people from the deme Diomeia, perhaps for favouring the war or for arrogance, which came to give the demotic a pejorative sense”.

46 Cratinus fr. 342: τίς δὲ σύ; κομψός τις ἔροιτο θεατῆς. / ὑπολεπτολόγος, γνωμοδιώκτης, εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων (“A sophisticated spectator might ask you who you are. And the answer would be that you are a subtle speaker, a relentless phrasemaker, a mixture of Euripides and Aristophanes”). On these three compounds, see also Conti Bizzarro 1999, 91–104; Beta 2004, 136 n. 62, 143 n. 88; Olson 2007, 110–111; Olson/Seaberg 2018, 118–122.

47 Cratinus fr. 502. On this fragment (but also on the preceding one), see Bakola 2010, 23–29; Ornaghi 2006; Olson/Seaberg 2018, 342–343. For another similar example, see adesp. com. fr. 338, Ἐξηκεστιδαλκίδα (the cithara-players Excestides and Alcides).

its ὑπόθεσις (the introduction written by the Alexandrian scholars). There are many more examples, including an Aristophanic title (*Αἰολοσίκων*, Aristophanes' last comedy, produced by his son Araros).⁴⁸ Apart from the title, the same phenomenon occurs also in the main text of the play, if the poet wants to underline the double nature of a specific character: thus, in the *Frogs*, when the slave Xanthias accepts to wear Heracles' attire (the lion's skin and the club), he becomes a real "Heracleian Xanthias" (499, Ἡρακλειοξανθίας).

Sometimes this creative process is not limited to the conjunction of two proper names: in the course of the process, the names may also be modified, so that it would be more appropriate to speak of a fusion or, if we want to borrow a word used by Sigmund Freud, a condensation. The compound Ἄνδροκολωνοκλῆς, coined by Cratinus in the lost comedy *The Seasons*, is a clear example of this peculiar comic process: the poet merges the proper name of a politician of the radical party, Androcles (Ἄνδροκλῆς), with the name of one of the Athenian demes, Colonus (Κολωνός); since this deme was the place in which poor people gathered every morning in search of a daily job, it becomes clear that Androcles is mocked either for being always and readily at the disposal of the leading politicians or (since the scholion adds the information that Cratinus satirises him for being a pervert) for his sexual availability.⁴⁹

This same Androcles apparently recurs in the fragment of another lost comedy of Cratinus, *The Men of Seriphos*. It is not easy to determine what the compound Ἄνδροκλέων means: it might be tempting to see it as a kind of condensation of Ἄνδροκλῆς and Κλέων (especially because the leader of the radical party is hinted at in a fragment of the same comedy), but since the term is preceded and followed by five plural genitives (δούλων, ἀνδρῶν, νεοπλουτοπληθῶν, αἰσχροῶν, and the probably corrupted Διονυσοκουρώνων), it is much more likely that here Cratinus is simply adding Androcles to this list in a grammatical case that makes the audience recall the name of Cleon.⁵⁰ Still, if Ἄνδροκλέων is not a

48 On Cratinus' title, see Bianchi 2016, 198–203; on Aristophanes', see Orth 2017, 9–14. Among many other compound titles, note especially Ἀνθρωφρακλῆς and Ψευδηρακλῆς (both by Pherecrates), Ἀνθρωπορέστης and Δημονομέδα (both by Strattis), Μανέκτωρ (Menecrates), Τιτανόπανες (Myrtilus), Δημοτυνδάρεως (Polyzelus), and Σφιγγοκαρίων (Eubulus). In the latter title it is easy to identify a common slave name (Καρίων), joined to the name of the Sphinx; for a similar compound, see Eupolis fr. 435, who coins Βαρυγέτας, a name that indicated a very earnest (βαρύς) slave (Γέτας), as Photius β 60 explains (σεμνὸς μὲν καὶ βάρος ἔχων, δοῦλος δὲ καὶ Γέτας). Cf. also the chapter by Kostas E. Apostolakis in the present volume.

49 Cratinus fr. 281 (see Fiorentini 2022, 226–230).

50 Cratinus fr. 223: εἶτα Σάβας ἀφικνῆ καὶ Σιδονίους καὶ Ἐρεμβούς, / ἔς τε πόλιν δούλων, ἀνδρῶν νεοπλουτοπληθῶν, / αἰσχροῶν, Ἄνδροκλέων, † Διονυσοκουρώνων ("Then you come to the Sabae

“condensation”, Ἄνδροκολωνοκλήης certainly is — and therefore it is liable to the definition Freud used in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, the essay published in 1905. In that study on the origins of laughter, the founder of psychoanalysis spoke of *Verdichtung mit Ersatzbildung* (“condensation with substitution”), and made the meaning clear to his readers through the coined compound “famillionnaire” (a condensation of the words “familiar” and “millionaire”).

Returning to Cleon, one of the most beloved targets of Aristophanes’ first comedies, his name appears in other compounds in addition to the already quoted pair of protagonists of *Wasps* (Φιλοκλέων and Βδελυκλέων). In fact, the name of Pericles’ successor appears in this same comedy under another coinage: in the preliminary scene to the *agon*, the Chorus, who stands by Philocleon in his passion for the radical demagogue, insults Bdelycleon by calling him Δημολογοκλέων, a comic compound in which the name of Cleon is preceded by the adjective δημολόγος, “a contemptuous word for a public speaker”.⁵¹

3.2 Compounds with one proper name joined with an adjective or noun

The final case of the preceding section is a suitable introduction to the present one, which regards another group of comic compounds, made of the union of a proper name (such as that of Cleon)⁵² not with another personal name but with

and the Sidonians and the Eremboi, / and to the city of slaves, men who are newly rich and wicked, / shameful, Androcles, Dionysio-barber-Pyrans”; for this translation, see Rusten 2011). On this fragment, see also Bona 1992; Fiorentini 2018; Fiorentini 2022, 30–37. The word Διονυσοκουρώνων is another interesting compound, but the passage is so corrupted that it is very difficult to guess what the poet precisely meant (see Luppe 2005).

51 Ar. *Vesp.* 343; the quotation comes from MacDowell 1971, who translates the compound with “Soapbox-Cleon”; see also Kanavou 2011, 89. The presence of a negative word in connection with Cleon uttered by a character who has always a positive attitude toward him has induced many scholars to emend the compound: for some of these proposals, see, besides MacDowell 1971, Vetta 1996.

52 The popularity of Cleon in the first five Aristophanic comedies (he died in 422, but he is often mentioned in *Peace* as well, performed in 421, right after his death) is witnessed by other comic compounds: in order to let the audience understand who is the real politician hidden behind the mask of the Paphlagonian, in the prologue of *Knights* the slave Demosthenes calls him βυρσοπαλαγών (*Eq.* 47, “leather-Paphlagonian”), with a straightforward allusion to Cleon’s profession (he owned a tannery); further below, in the same comedy, see also 901, Πύρρανδρος (the “red man”, probably an allusion to Cleon’s red hair). According to Hesychius (*adesp. com. fr.* 297), the compound βυρσόκαππος (a synonym of βυρσοκάπηλος, “leather-seller”) was a sobriquet of Cleon.

an adjective or a verb. The names of this group very often belong to celebrated contemporary Athenians: apart from the politicians, there were also the poet's colleagues (comic or tragic poets), or other intellectuals, or even athletes; sometimes, the proper name is a geographical one.

The verb *μελλονικιάω*, used by the Hoopoe in *Birds*, is a coinage made up by Aristophanes to mock the notorious tendency of Nicias to hesitate and procrastinate (*μέλλειν*), pointed out by Thucydides as well.⁵³ Amynias, ridiculed in *Wasps* through the compound *Κομηταμυνίας*, was a notable politician: elsewhere Aristophanes mocks him for being a flatterer and an effeminate, but in this case he makes fun of Amynias (who, by the way, held the strategy in that very year) because of his long hair — a probable sign of his penchant for the Spartans.⁵⁴ The neologism *Κολακώνυμος* is not, in the strictest sense, a compound. But behind this name, which also occurs in *Wasps*, there hides another politician: Cleonymus, standardly accused in comedy for being a coward.⁵⁵ In this passage, he is also blamed for flattery, as the first part of the word (*κολακ-*) shows.⁵⁶

In the preceding section, the Cratinean verb *εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζειν* was mentioned; another compound with the name of the tragic poet is offered by Aristophanes. In the prologue of *Knights*, the adverb *κομψευριπικῶς* is found, translated by the LSJ (which considers the word as a shortening of *κομψευριπιδικῶς*) as “with Euripides-quibbles”; the significance of the adjective has been thoroughly discussed by O’Sullivan in his excellent essay on the beginning of Greek stylistic theory.⁵⁷ Another tragic poet who is frequently cited by Aristophanes (but, contrary to Euripides, in a positive way) is Phrynichus, one of the oldest tragic playwrights, famous for the beauty of his choral songs.⁵⁸ The extremely long word *ἀρχαιομελυσιδωνοφρυνιχῆρατα* (“ancient-honey-Sidon-Phrynikhos-lovely”, in MacDowell’s

53 Ar. Av. 639; Thuc. 6.8.4. According to Dunbar (1995, 414), the verb means “to suffer from the Nicias-dithers”.

54 Ar. Vesp. 466; see Biles/Olson 2015, 109, 234.

55 Ar. Vesp. 592 — but see also his (disguised) presence in Xanthias’ dream at the beginning of the play (15–27). For other occurrences, see Storey 1989.

56 For a similar joke, see *Κολακοφοροκλείδης* (or *-φωροκλείδης*), a word attested both in Herippus (fr. 39) and Phrynichus (fr. 18) for a person accused of being a flatterer. On the identity of this mysterious character (Hierocleides? Hierocles? Pherecleides?), see Stama 2014, 128–131; Comentale 2017, 154–156.

57 O’Sullivan 1992, 138 ff.; see also Beta 2004, 142–144.

58 See Ar. Av. 749–750.

verbum de verbo rendering) blends the name of the poet with his age (ἀρχαῖος) and the sweetness (μέλι) of his lovable (ἐρατός) songs.⁵⁹

Among the intellectuals, a prominent place is occupied by Socrates: in a fragment of Telecleides, Euripides is blamed for the (presumed) help he received from Socrates in the composition of his tragedies by means of the compound σωκρατογόμος (“patched up by Socrates”), where the name of the Athenian thinker is joined with γόμος (“bolt”).⁶⁰ Even Socrates’ music teacher receives the (dubious) honour of being part of a comic compound: in the word κοννόφρονες, mentioned by Hesychius, the proper name Connus is easily identified.⁶¹ But “having the same mind as Connus” is not a compliment at all, because, according to Hesychius, the word was a synonym of ἄφρονες (“mindless”, “foolish”) – and so the compound may be translated as “people as stupid as Connus”. In another case, an athlete’s name is brilliantly modified through the addition of a part of the body which was central in his athletic feats: he was Δαμασίστρατος, a Chian boxer, whom Eupolis calls Δαμασικόνδυλος because he used his fists (κόνδυλοι) for defeating his rivals.⁶²

A good selection of compounds with geographical names comes, as usual, from Aristophanes. In the long list of the sophists (σοφισταί) that are fed by the Clouds, Socrates mentions, together with the just quoted μετεωροφένακες (see note 60), the Θουριομάντιες: with the term “soothsayers of Thourioi”, Aristophanes alludes to the people who took part in the foundation of the town of Thourioi,

⁵⁹ Ar. *Vesp.* 220 (a perfect iambic trimeter). More problematic is the mention of the Phoenician town Sidon (Σιδών): according to a scholion, this is due to the fact that, in a song of Phrynichus’ *Phoenician Women*, Sidon was cited twice (see MacDowell 1971, 160–161; Biles/Olson 2015, 156–157).

⁶⁰ Telecleides fr. 42 (quoted by Diogenes Laertius 2.18); for a recent discussion of the fragment, see Conti Bizzarro 1999, 178–186; Bagordo 2013, 205–207. It is not known whether Telecleides portrayed Socrates as a sophist, as Aristophanes did in *Clouds*. Certainly, many Aristophanic compounds make fun of the sophists: see *Nub.* 101, μερμυνοσοφισταί (“minute philosophers”, according to the LSJ); 333, μετεωροφένακες (“astronomical quacks”, LSJ); 360, μετεωροσοφισταί (“astronomical sophists”, LSJ, i.e. “sophists with the head in the clouds”); see also fr. 401, μετεωρολέσχει (“star-gazers” and “visionaries”, according to the LSJ, but I would prefer to translate it “chatterers with the head in the clouds”, see Beta 2004, 151 n. 11, with bibliography, because the fragment is quoted by the scholiast of *Peace* 92 in connection with another similar compound, μετεωροκοπεῖν, correctly translated by the LSJ with “to prattle about high things”). On this fragment (possibly a remnant of the first version of *Clouds*), see Torchio 2021, 54–55.

⁶¹ Adesp. com. fr. 371 (Hesychius κ 3536). Κόννος was the title of a play by Ameipsias, performed in 423 BCE, in the same festival as Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, when the prize was won by Cratinus’ *Flask* (Πυτίνη).

⁶² Fr. 444; see Olson 2014, 211–212.

in Southern Italy (and, in particular, to the *mantis* Lampon, a friend of Pericles).⁶³ In a long fragment from the *Gerytades*, Aristophanes creates the noun Θρακοφοίτης (“Thrace-haunter”), a possible allusion to Alcibiades, who, in the years preceding the performance of the play, had fled in Thrace after the defeat of Notion.⁶⁴ The town of Abydos, located in the Asian coast of the Hellespont, appears in another Aristophanic fragment, in which the compound Ἀβυδοκόμης designates a sycophant who declares to be proud of his job. According to the many sources that have handed down to us this *hapax legomenon*, the people of Abydos were notorious for their inclination towards denouncing foreigners.⁶⁵

This kind of compound might involve the names of populations as well: in order to indicate a group of Peloponnesians who had been forced to leave their country due to a famine, Eupolis created, in the *Helots*, the noun Λιμοδωριεῖς.⁶⁶ Since the plays were staged and took place in Athens, it is no wonder that the creative imagination of the Athenian comic poets acted on the geographical names of the area in which they lived and worked. Thus, the compound Δρυαχαρνεύς underlines the endurance of the people who lived in the deme of Acharnae, portrayed by an unknown poet as strong as oaks (δρῦς).⁶⁷ The name of Attica, the broader region of the city of Athens, is present in a passage of Aristophanes’ *Peace*, in the coinage Ἀττικωνικοί (215); although the name is clearly modelled on Λακωνικοί (“Spartans”), mentioned at *Peace* 212, it probably contains within itself the word *νίκη* as well, as an allusion to a possible future victory of the Athenians in the war.

A final category of this kind of compounds involves proper names taken from mythology. In most of these comic coinages the name of Cronus, Zeus’ father, is evoked as a symbol of a very old age: such is the case of Κρόνιπος (“old nag”), a

63 Aristophanes mentions Lampon in *Birds* 521; on the presence of deceitful soothsayers in Greek comedy, see Smith 1989; Beta 2004, 212–215. The compounds included in the list are five (in just two lines, 332–333): ἰατροτέχνηαι (“experts in medicine”), σφραγιδονυχαραγοκομήται (a comic name for a coxcomb, translated by the LSJ as “lazy long-haired fop with his rings and natty nails”), and κυκλίων χορῶν ἄσματοκάμπται (“twisters of arias performed by dithyrambic choruses”).

64 Fr. 156.7; on the validity of this hypothesis, put forward by Kaibel, see also Rusten 2011, 298. This coinage appears to be influenced by the word ἄδσοφοίται (“Hades-haunters”, because very thin and, therefore, very close to death), cited in ll. 4 and 6. For a similar compound, see *adesp. com. fr.* 840, Λυδοφοίτης (“Lydia-haunter”, in the sense of someone who sells oils and unguents).

65 Fr. 755. On this fragment, see Kanavou 2011, 195; Bagordo 2017, 179–181.

66 Fr. 154. On this fragment, see Storey 2003, 178; Olson 2016, 24–25.

67 *Adesp. com. fr.* 498. On this fragment, see Olson 2002, 127–128. The strength of the Acharnians had been emphasised by Aristophanes in *Ach.* 179–181, where they had been described as πρίνινοι (“made of olm oak”) and σφενδάμνινοι (“made of maple tree”).

mocking insult hurled by the Wrong Speech to the Right Speech (who is envisaged as old and antiquated, like the educational system he represents) in the *agon* of *Clouds*;⁶⁸ κρονοδαίμων (“as old as the god Cronus”), a compound addressed to someone who was old and silly;⁶⁹ κρονόληρος (“old chatterbox”), from the verb ληρεῖν (“to speak foolishly”).⁷⁰ Old people were often mocked in comedy, and this gave the comic poets the opportunity for many witty coinages, such as πρότηθς, a neologism invented by Cratinus for designating an extremely old woman, who was born “before Tethys”, one of the oldest goddesses in classical mythology, the daughter (according to Hesiod) of Gaia and Uranus, older sister of the aforementioned Cronus, and wife of Ocean.⁷¹

The list of the compound names invented by the comic poets for making fun of some of the more evident (and ridiculous) features of old people is too long for quoting and discussing every single sample. The same can be said of women, another category which was a beloved target of the Greek comic gibes.⁷² As far as proper names are concerned, it is easy to think of Lysistrata, “she who disbands the armies”, the heroine who gives her own name to one of the wittiest plays of Aristophanes, or of Praxagora, the “woman who turns her words into real facts”, the protagonist of the *Women in the Assembly*.⁷³ In this case too, compounds related to mythological figures are found. The classic example is the neologism μεθυσσοχάρυβδις, a derogatory term addressed to a drunken woman, who is compared to a mythological monster: the terrifying Charybdis, the whirlpool that, together with Scylla, made extremely difficult the crossing of the Strait of Messina, between Calabria and Sicily.⁷⁴ The difficult relationship between women and wine is one of the most frequent *topoi* in Greek comedy — but the same can be said of the penchant (of both men and women) for sex, the origin of another

68 *Ar. Nub.* 1070. See Dover 1968, 152, 226.

69 *Adesp. com. fr.* 610; see also *adesp. fr.* 660, σοροδαίμων (a nickname of “one on the brink of the grave”, LSJ), from σορός “coffin”.

70 *Adesp. com. fr.* 751. On the verb ληρεῖν, see Beta 2004, 167–170; Kidd 2014.

71 Cratinus *fr.* 483; see Olson/Seaberg 2018, 318–319. On Tethys (not to be confounded with Thetis, Achilles’ mother), see Hes. *Theog.* 126–138, 337–368.

72 For a more detailed discussion, see Beta 2007, 21–23.

73 Most of the names of Aristophanic protagonists are in fact compounds: Dicaeopolis (*Acharnians*), Agoracritus (*Knights*), Philocleon and Bdelycleon (*Wasps*), Peisetaerus and Euelpides (*Birds*). For these and other examples, see Kanavou 2011.

74 *Adesp. com. fr.* 629, quoted by the lexicographer Phrynichus, with the clarification that the term was addressed to a drunken woman, not to a man (*Praep. Soph.* 88.14, ἐπὶ γυναικὸς μεθύσου, οὐκ ἐπ’ ἄρρενος). On the terrible reputation of the strait of Messina, the *locus classicus* is the famous passage from Homer’s *Odyssey* (12.234–259).

long list of comic compounds that clearly show the way comic poets were able to assemble (and disassemble) words.⁷⁵

4 Conclusions

Some comic terms are made up of more than two or three simple words — hence, they are even longer than the sought-after compounds created by the dithyrambographers. Speaking of women, it would be difficult not to mention the two long compounds Lysistrata creates when she urges all the Athenian female storekeepers to defend her friends from the attacks of the Scythian archers led by the Probulus: σπερμαγοραιολεκιθολαχανοπώλιδες and σκοροδοπανδοκευτριαρτοπώλιδες are two “multi-compound words” (πολυσύνθετοι λέξεις is the definition given by Eustathius of Thessalonica), in which, before the suffix -πώλιδες (from πωλεῖν, “to sell”), a great variety of goods may be identified, such as σπέρματα (“seeds”), λέκιθοι (“legumes”), λάχανα (“vegetables”), σκόροδον (“garlic”), and ἄρτος (“bread”), all of them sold in the “market-place” (ἀγορά), next to the pubs run by the “innkeepers” (πανδοκεῦτριάι).⁷⁶

And it is, once more, a female character who utters the longest word in ancient Greek literature. The Chorus-leader of the *Women in the Assembly* (herself a woman, since the Chorus of that play was formed by Athenian women) invites her friends to a party where the cook will serve the following, astonishing dish:

Plattero-fillete-mulleto-turboto-
 cranio-morselo-pickleo-acido-
 silphio-honeyo-pouredonthe-topothe-
 ouzelo-throstle-o-cushato-culvero-
 cutleto-roastingo-marrowso-dipper-
 leveret-syrupo-gibleto-wings.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ See Beta 2007, 30–35.

⁷⁶ Ar. *Lys.* 457–458; for Eustathius, see *ad Il.* 1277.47, vol. IV p. 645.15 van der Valk. Aristophanes plays on the suffix -πώλης in a passage of *Knights* (129–144), in which he lists all the predecessors of the character of the “Sausage-Seller” (ἄλλαντοπώλης): “oakum-seller” (στυππειοπώλης), “sheep-seller” (προβατοπώλης), and “leather-seller” (βυρσοπώλης) — an allusion to the Paphlagonian, i.e. Cleon.

⁷⁷ I have borrowed the glittering translation of Rogers 1924. But the translation of Henderson 1996 is much clearer: “For soon there’ll be served / limpets and saltfish and sharksteak and dogfish / and mullets and oddfish with savory pickle-sauce / and thrushes with blackbirds and various pigeons / and roosters and pan roasted wagtails and larks / and nice chunks of hare

This is the translation of a word that occupies seven lines (1169–1175), positioned by Aristophanes as the seal of a comedy that, like most of the examples we know, ended up with a banquet:⁷⁸

λοπαδοτεμαχοσελαχογαλεο-
 κρانيολειψανοδριμυποτριμματο-
 σιλφιοτυρομελιτοκατακεχυμενο-
 κιχλεπικοσσυφοφαττοπεριστερα-
 λεκτρονοποκεφαλιοκιγκλοπε-
 λειολαγωσσαιοβαφητραγα-
 νοπτερυγών

Such a rich word, crafted by the exquisite art of a poet who is as expert a craftsman as a skilled carpenter, seems the aptest conclusion to a chapter in which I have tried to give a picture of the ability shown by comic poets in the composition of new, smart, and funny words.

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marinated in mulled wine / and all of it drizzled with honey and silphium / and vinegar, oil and spices galore!”

78 Here are the words that Ussher (1973, 235–237) identifies in the “much compounded” (συχνοσύνθετον: again, a definition given by Eustathius, see above, n. 76) term: “saucepan” (λοπαδο), “slices of salt-fish” (τεμαχο), “shark” (σελαχο), “dog-fish” (γαλεο), “head” (κρανιο), “pieces” (λειψανο), “bitter” (δριμ), “pickling” (υποτριμματο), “laserwort” (σιλφιο), “cheese” (τυρο), “honey” (μελιτο), “poured all over” (κατακεχυμενο), “thrush” (κιχλ), “blackbird on top” (επικοσσυφο), “doves and pigeons” (φαττο, περιστερα, πελειο), “hen” (αλεκτρονον), “roast-mullet” (σποκεφαλιο), “wag-tail” (κιγκλο), “hare” (λαγωο), “dipped in new wine boiled down” (σαιοβαφη), “gristly wings” (τραγανο πτερυγων). See also the chapter by Ioannis Konstantakos in this volume.

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