

**THE LANGUAGE OF
PARODY: A STUDY
IN THE DICTION
OF ARISTOPHANES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649335862

The Language of Parody: A Study in the Diction of Aristophanes by Edward William Hope

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*εἰκὸς τοὺς ἡμῶν τοῖς
ῥήμοσι μείζονα χρῆσθαι.*—Ranne 1060.

THE LANGUAGE OF PARODY

A STUDY IN THE DICTION OF ARISTOPHANES.

BY

EDWARD WILLIAM HOPE

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY
IN CONFORMITY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1905

BALTIMORE
J. H. FURST COMPANY

1906

TO
AUGUSTUS TABER MURRAY.

INTRODUCTION.

Although the subject of "parody in the Greek Comic poets" has claimed the attention of many scholars from time to time, forming a theme for dissertations and more pretentious works, there has been no systematic treatment of the language of parody aiming to give a full collection of those words by which the writers of the old comedy secured their parodic effects. It is this work which I have tried to do for Aristophanes. The following pages contain what professes to be, however insufficient it may be found, a complete list¹ of those words by the use of which Aristophanes departs from the usage of the ordinary Athenian life of his day, and rises to the loftier tone of tragedy or other kinds of poetry. There will be found, moreover, many words not belonging to this higher sphere which are yet used in parody. Such are those dialectical words with which Aristophanes knows so well how to depict the manners of his provincial fellow-countrymen from Boiotia, Megara and Lakcdaimon. In this part I have not thought it worth while to collect mere dialectical variants of words which were current in Attic, but have included only such as are not at home in any shape on Attic soil.

The places where the higher tone is consciously sought coincide, in large measure, with those which have been shown by Scholiasts and modern scholars to be parody or paratragedy; but not unfrequently poetic words spring up from surroundings which seem quite sober and matter-of-fact, and a closer study is often necessary to enable one to see why they are used. Thus the formal limits of known parody are too narrow, and many words in the subsequent pages, though not found in parodic lines, have, nevertheless, a poetic tinge.

On the other hand all travesty does not contain words dis-

¹ With the limitation stated on page 6 regarding words occurring only in lyric verse.

tinctively poetic, since it is born often, not of words, but from various relations which are connected with the thought rather than with its form of expression. One common example of this is where the poet joins to weighty or lofty themes, things that are trivial—often vulgar. Here the words themselves may be quite colorless. W. Ribbeck points out that parody often consists in holding up to view the ordinary affairs of daily occurrence, and, naturally, in this case, no further embellishment of language is necessary. Another method is employed where words of the common crafts are used to describe work of a higher nature. An example of this may be seen at *Thes.* 52 ff. (See also under *τέκτων*). In the former case Aristophanes is not ridiculing the words of the writer quoted, but uses them simply because the thoughts fit what he is himself thinking to say. The situations are parallel, but on different levels. (See *Eq.* 1250). Still another kind consists in the substitution of a vulgar or commonplace word for the tragic expression resembling it in form or sound. Ex. *Ach.* 119, where *πρακτόν* is put in the place of the original *σπλάγγχρον*. Other examples can be found from the cross-references.

Certain characters can always be expected to speak in an exalted way. Euripides, as we might suppose, nearly always uses the language of the tragic-stage, and he is followed in this by his relative. Aischylos, also, uses a lofty style of speech, but his diction, unlike that of Euripides, is thickly sown with epic words. For Aristophanes, Aischylos is the poet of the good and glorious past. His type of mind belonged to the heroic times—his plays concerned themselves with epic subjects, and to emphasize these facts Aischylos not only uses epic words, but is sometimes represented as writing in hexameters, at least his critic, Euripides, uses hexameter verse when “taking off” the manner of his adversary. (See *Ran.* 1273, 1276, 1533). Lamachos, in whom Hartung saw a parody of Achilles, uses many epic and tragic words. His son, who appears in the *Pax*, uses epic words chiefly, since during his whole stay on the stage he is reciting battle scenes from Homer. Polemos and Kydoimos also use heroic language. The stately quack, Sokrates, and his

other self, the *ἄδικος λόγος*, in the *Clouds*, remind us constantly of Euripides. And so when others come into contact with the foregoing characters, they are straightway kindled into flame and would speak with "all the charm of all the Muses," either in mockery as when Dikaiopolis meets Euripides on his own level in the *Acharnians*, or out of vanity, as is the case with Strepsiadēs, who is comically dazzled by Sokrates' bombast. On the same principle servants are apt to speak in the fashion of their masters. (See *Ach.* 1174 ff., *Thea.* 39 ff.).

A close comparison of the kinds of words used by different speakers throughout the plays is very illuminating at times. Attention may here be called to a fact that, so far as I know, has never been specially emphasized in this connection. It is repeatedly the case that after a poetical word has been used by one character in the drama, another, within the next line or two, will refer to the same object, but in doing so will use the prosaic equivalent for the poetic word, or the Attic equivalent, if an Ionic or otherwise un-Attic word has preceded. A few examples will suffice to make this clear: *Ran.* 1378, cf. 1381, 1365 (*σταθμός* — *πλάστιγγη*). *Pax* 933, cf. 937, 949 (*δῖς* — *πρόβατον*). *Lys.* 94, cf. 96, 97 (*μιθίζω* — *λέγω*). There are numerous instances of this close connection of picturesque and prosaic words, and it frequently amounts to a clear proof that Aristophanes used the unusual word designedly, since the plain word following would make the other more conspicuous. The nearer or more closely connected in thought the two words are, the easier it is to believe in this. Less striking as a proof, but perhaps equally valid, is the use of prosaic synonyms in places further removed from the word in question, but where the situation described or the character of the thought is similar. Often observation of these things brings with it the most trustworthy evidence for the character of any word. The quality, or, so to speak, the color of the poet's feeling that appears in his choice of this or that word must be discerned. It happens very frequently that this internal criticism is the only means we have of judging, owing to the rarity or non-appearance of the word elsewhere in extant literature. How very different might our judgments be if we had a

really large mass of good prose literature of Aristophanes' period ! The use of this method for determining the nature of a word may prove deceptive if the latter occurs but once, for the parody may be expressed by another word, or not in words at all, but in the situation, as said above. It is more certain when the same word occurs in parody several times. Consequently, the status of a word of one occurrence ought to be judged more rigidly by its use in other authors. This external evidence is more valuable for positive than for negative conclusions. It cannot, for example, be said with assurance that the non-use of a word by prose writers proves it to be poetic, for :—1) the authors consulted may have had no occasion to use the word, or 2) it may have occurred in prose that has been lost. The case is different, though, where all prose writers agree in consistently refusing to use a word which at the same time occurs in poetry, while they do use a synonym. On the other hand if a word can be shown to be in use in prose writers of, or just before Aristophanes' time, there could be no excuse for his not using it excepting that he did not wish to do so, but preferred to use the word of our text for a special reason (generally a humorous one).

As before said, if a word is found several times and always in parody, we may feel assured it does not belong to the speech of every day life, but serves as a vehicle for the poet's humor. Unfortunately, this is only rarely the case—most of the following words occurring both in and outside of parody. This makes classification hard and uncertain in many instances. The sort of evidence to be used in classifying words may be indicated at this point. It consists in finding the answers to such questions as these : In what kind of metre is the word prevailingly found ? What prose writers use it ? What poets ? How often ? In what way ? Does it prevail in poetry or in prose ? What characters in our plays use it ? or in addressing whom ? or in speaking of whom ? *Was there any other word that could have been used ?* Is it a favorite with any particular author ? If a word is common in Euripides, we may feel sure that Aristophanes uses it for the purpose of parodying Euripides' diction, and so with Aischylos.

Quite commonly a word which seems to belong to the higher