

MAKING WATER MUSIC: A *DOUBLE-ENTENDRE*
IN ARISTOPHANES *PAX* 1265–9

In a litany of disparaging remarks on tragic poetasters and dilettantes, Aristophanes' Dionysus refers to their brief and piddling attempts at tragedy: ἄπαξ προσουρήσαντα τῇ τραγουδίᾳ (*Ra.* 95). This clear association of urination with inferior poetic compositions is one of several factors that support the possibility of a cognate conceit in the following verses of *Pax*.¹

Νῆ τὸν Δί', ὡς τὰ παιδί' ἤδη ξέρχεται
οὐρησόμενα τὰ τῶν ἐπικλήτων δεῦρ', ἵνα
ἄττ' ἔσεται προαναβάληταί, μοι δοκεῖ.
Ἀλλ', ὦ παιδίον, ὅ τι περ ἔδειν ἐπινοεῖς
αὐτοῦ παρ' ἐμέ στὰν πρότερον ἀναβαλοῦ ἵθαδί. (1265–9)

In an earlier phase of its editorial history critics variously emended or athetized parts of this passage because they suspected textual corruption underlying the apparently contradictory motivations expressed by the future participle οὐρησόμενα and the purpose clause ἵνα ... προαναβάληταί.² Such concerns now seem to have dissipated and recent commentators accommodate the received text by explaining that the boys chose to urinate *outside* because that would give them an opportunity to rehearse a song before singing it at the banquet.³ I believe, though, that Cantarella's translation—... vengono fuori la pipi, come preludio, direi, alle canzoni che canteranno ...—had already realized more of the comic potential by identifying the urination itself as the prelude to the song.⁴ Dramatic, historical, and lexical circumstances suggest, moreover, that there might be still more to the linking of the boys' singing and urination.

The first consideration is that the speaker is Trygaeos who presents the boys' micturition and/or their intention to sing as his own opinion; the boys themselves express no motive or intention, much less any linking of the two. In the event, the boys do sing at the urging of Trygaeos, who then severely criticizes their efforts (1270–1310). This is the same Trygaeos who earlier in the play (830–1) told of his encounter with the souls of dithyrambic poets during his beetleback ride through the heavens. Those poets were collecting ἀναβολαί which Trygaeos describes with the mockingly bombastic ἐνδιαεριαυροννηχέτους. Having once derided the dithyrambic compositions known as ἀναβολαί and their authors, he now uses the associated terminology προαναβάληται and ἀναβαλοῦ as he announces the entrance of earthly targets of his poetic criticism.

What Trygaeos announces as the boys' performance is a preliminary ἀναβολή, a rehearsal of what they intend to sing (ἄττ' ἔσεται). Such at least is the sense encouraged by other contexts⁵ and by a scholion on this very passage of *Pax* which glosses προαναβάληται with προμελετήσει. It is also the sense accepted by modern interpreters

¹ I am grateful to an anonymous *CQ* referee for urging me to cite *Ra.* 95 as a parallel.

² See the apparatus criticus of S. D. Olson (ed.), *Aristophanes Peace* (Oxford, 1998), ad loc.; also J. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Aristophanis Pax* (Leiden, 1906), ad loc.; M. Platnauer (ed.), *Aristophanes Peace* (Oxford, 1964), ad loc.

³ See A.H. Sommerstein (ed. and trans.), *The Comedies of Aristophanes. Vol. 5. Peace* (Warminster and Chicago, 1984), 193; Olson (n. 1), 306–7.

⁴ R. Cantarella (ed. and trans.), *Aristophanis Comoediae quae exstant, Vol. 3* (Milan, 1949), 537.

⁵ See Isoc. *Panegyricus* 39.2, and several later passages: Theodorus Hexapterygus, *Epitaphium in Stephanum Choregetopulum* 227.10; Nicetas Choniates, *Or.* 8.83.24; *Hist.* 1.4.126; Michael Psellus, *Or.* 25.125. Cf. LSJ s.v. προαναβάλλομαι.

of the verb *προαναβάλλομαι*.⁶ The *ἀναβολή* itself was a feature, whose precise nature is not now known, of the dithyramb. One thing that *is* known about the *ἀναβολή* is that it had become, by the later fifth century, the subject of considerable controversy and adverse criticism owing to some of the musico-poetic innovations that certain dithyrambists applied to it.⁷ Whatever general topicality that would give it for the Athenian audience of *Pax* will no doubt have been heightened by the circumstances of the celebration of the City Dionysia at which dithyrambic competitions were also held. A second comedic barb directed at a rival Dionysiac genre would accommodate the figurative identification of *ἀναβολή*-rehearsal with bladder-voiding. The semantic range of *ἀναβολή* and its cognates also favour that identification.

The proximity of *οὐρησόμενα* to *προαναβάλλεται* and *ἀναβαλοῦ* will have alerted the audience to non-musical semantic possibilities. While one meaning of *ἀναβάλλομαι* and *ἀναβολή* has to do with starting, or resuming, a musical performance, another has to do with liquid welling up and issuing forth as from a fountain or pipe.⁸ A fragment of Callimachus (546 Pf.), for instance, reads *κρήνη λευκὸν ὕδωρ ἀνέβαλλεν*. Eustathius, who preserves that fragment in an extended comment on *ἀνεβάλλετο* at Hom. *Od.* 1.155, indicates that the verb can be synonymous with several others relating to the discharge of water:

*ἀναβάλλεται δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ, διὰ σολήνων ἢ κίονος ἢ οὐτῶ πῶς
ἀνάβαινον, ἢ καὶ ἄλλως ἀναπηδῶν ὕδωρ ὡς δημοῖ παρὰ Καλλιμάχου
κρήνη λευκὸν ὕδωρ ἀνέβαλλεν. ἀναπιδύον δηλαδὴ καὶ ἀναβλύζον.* (140.3 5)

In his comments on the same verse Eustathius actually seems to preserve a vestige of a pun on musical and aqueous associations of *ἀναβάλλομαι*, for he appears to say that *ἀνεβάλλετο* simultaneously means “he poured water” and something like he “he commenced [to sing]”.

Ὅτι τὸ, ἧτοι ὁ φορμιζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν αἰδεῖν, ἐλλιπῶς ἔχει ὡς καὶ τὸ, χέρνιβα ἐπέχευε νύφασθαι. λείπει γὰρ τὸ ὥστε ἢ τοιοῦτόν τι. ἵνα λέγῃ ὅτι ὕδωρ ἐπέχεεν ὥστε νύφασθαι, καὶ ἀνεβάλλετο ὥστε καλὸν αἰδεῖν. Τὸ δὲ ἧτοι, ἰσοδυναμεῖ φασὶ τῷ μὲν. διὸ καὶ ἐκ παραλλήλου κεῖνται ποτέ. (139.40 2)

While it is difficult to reconcile this with the particular Homeric passage, it does indicate that at some time in the history of the language, punning or confusion involving the two meanings of *ἀναβάλλομαι* was a reality that eventually found its way into Eustathius’ lexical archives. The lexical conditions for such punning are documented much earlier than the *Pax*: [ὑδωρ] . . . ζέει ἀμβολάδην (Hdt. 4.181).

The clues to the pun are actually redundant. The explicit *οὐρησόμενα* is twice glossed: by *προαναβάλλεται* and *πρότερον ἀναβάλου*. If the *δεῦρο* (“in this direction”) modifies *οὐρησόμενα*, it is balanced, and corrected in Trygaios’ self-interest, by the *ἐνθαδί* (“in that direction”) that modifies *ἀναβάλου*. It seems impossible to capture the Aristophanic paronomasia in an economical translation. The following attempt, consequently, involves some double-rendering of the Greek.

By god, the guests’ boys are coming out now in this direction to piss, so as, I reckon, to pour out a rehearsal of what they are going to sing as their dithyrambic outpouring. Hey, kid! You stand

⁶ See M.L. West, ‘The singing of Homer and the modes of early Greek music’, *JHS* 101 (1981), 122.

⁷ In general see G. Comotti, ‘L’anabole e il ditirambo’, *QUCC* n.s. 31 (1989), 107–17; B. Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos: Geschichte einer Gattung* (Göttingen, 1992), 117–27. Cf. M. L. West (n. 5) 122; *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford, 1994), 205, 359; E. Robbins, ‘Anabole’, in *NP I* (1996), 638–9.

⁸ See also LSJ s.vv. *ἀμβολάδην I*; *ἀναβάλλω I.A.4*; *ἀναβολή III.2*.

beside me and gush forth in that direction with the preliminary rendition of whatever it is you are intending to sing in your flowing performance.

A *CQ* referee enhances the interpretation of the conceit here by relating *προαναβάλλεται* to “the pleasure boys sometimes take in sending their urine in a long, high parabolic trajectory”. Such imagery accords well with the earlier reference to the *ἀναβολαί* encountered in the dung-beetle’s flight-path.

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A MISSED JOKE IN ARISTOPHANES’ *WASPS* 1265–1274

The ode of the second parabasis of *Wasps* (1265–74) satirizes a certain Amynias, a prominent Athenian at the time.¹ I shall argue here that none of the interpretations offered so far has fully grasped the point of the ode and I shall demonstrate how Aristophanes builds his joke about Amynias to a climax.

πολλάκις δὴ ῥοξ’ ἑμαυτῷ	1265a
δεξιὸς πεφυκέναι καὶ	1265b
σκαίος οὐδεπώποτε,	
ἀλλ’ Ἀμυνίας ὁ Σέλλου	1267a
μᾶλλον, οὐκ τῶν Κρωβύλου,	1267b
οὗτος ὅν γ’ ἐγὼ ποτ’ εἶδον	1268a
ἀντὶ μήλου καὶ ῥοῆς δειπ-	1268b
νοῦντα μετὰ Λεωγόρου· πει-	
νῇ γὰρ ἤπερ Ἀντιφῶν.	1270
ἀλλὰ πρεσβεύων γὰρ ἐς Φάρσαλον ᾤχετ’.	
εἴτ’ ἐκεῖ μόνος μόνοισι	
τοῖς Πενέσταισι ξυνῆν τοῖς	
Θετταλῶν, αὐτὸς πενέστης	1274a
ὦν ἐλάττων οὐδενός.	1274b

The discrepancy between the different interpretations begins with vv. 1265–7b and subsequently influences the interpretation of the whole ode. MacDowell (1971), like the earlier commentators Rogers and Starkie, supplied *σκαίος πεφυκέναι* *ἔδοξεν* after *μᾶλλον* of 1267b, so that Amynias is described as stupid.² His reason is that

¹ J. Kirchner, *PA* 737. It has been suggested that he was a general in 423–422 B.C. Cf. G. Kaibel, *Hermes* 30 (1895), 441–5; D. M. MacDowell, ‘Nikostratos’, *CQ* 15 (1965), 50–1. It certainly seems from vv. 74 and 326 (suggesting that Amynias was sitting at the front of the audience) that he was holding an important public office.

² D. M. MacDowell, *Aristophanes’ Wasps* (Oxford, 1971), 295. Cf. B. B. Rogers, *The Wasps of Aristophanes* (London, 1875) and W. J. M. Starkie, *Aristophanes: The Wasps* (Amsterdam, 1968, reprint of London, 1897), ad loc.; also J. Van Leeuwen, *Aristophanis Vespae*