

Fausto Montana

## Aristotle, Eratosthenes and the beginnings of Alexandrian scholarship on the *Archaia*

**Abstract:** In his work *On the Ancient Comedy*, fr. 25 Strecker, Eratosthenes of Cyrene gives a positive appraisal of a metaphorical play on words by the comic poet Cratinus (fr. 54 Kassel / Austin), describing it as εἰς τὸ εἶδος οὐκ ἀρύθμως παίζειν. In this paper, it is argued that this expression, which is in conformity with Aristotelian theorization on metaphor, could also imply an enunciative reminiscence of the judgement given by Aristotle, who held that the irony of the poets of the Archaia was based on αἰσχρολογία, whereas contemporary poets preferred ἐμμελῶς παίζειν (NE 4.14, 1128a 9). Some ancient explications transmitted in the scholia to Aristophanes' comedies seem to testify to the influence or reception of Eratosthenes' attitude in this regard.

**Keywords:** Aristotle, Eratosthenes, Alexandrian scholarship, ancient Greek comedy, Scholia

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**Fausto Montana:** University of Pavia, E-Mail: fausto.montana@unipv.it

The first generation of Greek intellectuals recruited by Ptolemy Philadelphus when he embarked on his ambitious cultural project included, as is known, a pool of learned scholars, originating from the four cardinal points of the Greek world, whom the Lagid entrusted with putting into order (διορθοῦν) – probably not in a bibliographic-classificatory, but in a textual perspective – the increasingly vast collection of books in the Alexandrian Library<sup>1</sup>. Under the leadership of Zenodotus of Ephesus, appointed as the first librarian, the scholars Alexander Aetolus and Lycophron of Chalkis were given the task of dealing with drama –

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English translation by Rachel Barritt Costa.

<sup>1</sup> Johannes Tzetzes, *Prolegomena*, *Prooemium* I (XIa I, 22, 1–23, 7 Koster) and II (XIa II, 31, 1–32, 4 and 33, 22–25 Koster); cf. *Anonymus Crameri* II (XIc, 43, 1–4 and 17–19 Koster). Here, it seems advisable to reject the rendering of Tzetzes' διορθοῦν as «putting in the right order» given by the *scholium Plautinum* (ms. Vat. Lat. 11469, f. 181r: *poeticos libros in unum collegerunt et in ordinem redegerunt*): Pfeiffer 1968, 106–107; cf. Montanari 2009, 412.

tragedy and comedy<sup>2</sup>, respectively – apparently assisted by the younger Eratosthenes of Cyrene, himself a future librarian. Lycophron and Eratosthenes can, in fact, be regarded as the originators in Alexandria of specialist studies on the text of comic poets<sup>3</sup>. Lycophron distinguished himself by collecting his glossographic research on the plays of the Archaia<sup>4</sup> and, as it seems, of that which today we call the Mese<sup>5</sup>, in no fewer than nine books *Περὶ κωμωδίας*<sup>6</sup>. Eratosthenes followed in Lycophron's footsteps no less significantly by composing a work *Περὶ τῆς ἀρχαίας κωμωδίας* in at least twelve books<sup>7</sup>; the names of Pherecrates, Cratinus, Aristophanes, Eupolis and perhaps Plato<sup>8</sup> can be recognized in the fragments that have come down to us. These purely external data would appear to suggest that Eratosthenes, unlike Lycophron, felt he should devote particularly incisive critical attention only to the most ancient phase of Attic comedy (perhaps taking ἀρχαία κωμωδία to stand roughly for what we specifically mean by Archaia)<sup>9</sup>, but one may also hazard a guess – comparing the number of books that make up each of the two works – that he perhaps dilated and aggrandized the proportions of the investigation focusing on this phase of comic production. This inverse relation between a narrowing of the field of inquiry and an expansion of the subject matter could indicate that, within the space of a single generation, research had acquired greater depth and had become more complex, no longer bypassing but, on the contrary, incorporating the interrelated questions of the distinction among different types of comedy and the periodization of the genre<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Testimonies and fragments in *TrGFI*, 100 and 101 Snell. On Alexander at the service of Ptolemy Philadelphus, see Magnelli 1999, 10–11.

<sup>3</sup> The chronology of the grammarian Euphronius, Aristophanes' commentator, is intermeshed with the problem of his identification with the poet of the Pleiad, hesitantly asserted by, among others, Pfeiffer 1968, 160–161, but far from definitively accepted. Cf. Novembri 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Lycophr. fr. 85 Strecker = 63 fr. 3 Bagordo (cf. Pherecrates, fr. 101 Kassel / Austin).

<sup>5</sup> Lycophr. fr. 13 Strecker = 63 fr. 1 Bagordo: Antiphanes, test. 8 Kassel / Austin.

<sup>6</sup> Editions: Strecker 1884 (all the known fragments, including many that are uncertain); Rutherford 1905, 417 (fragments from the scholia to Aristophanes, mss. RV); Bagordo 1998, 150 (No. 63; only three fragments of certain attribution).

<sup>7</sup> Editions: Strecker 1884; Rutherford 1905, 418–420 (fragments from the scholia to Aristophanes, mss. RV); Bagordo 1998, 127–136 (No. 43).

<sup>8</sup> Plat. test. 7 Kassel / Austin in *P.Oxy.* XXXV 2737, *hypomnema* to an unidentified Aristophanean comedy (= Aristoph. fr. 590 Kassel / Austin; Aristophanes 27 CLGP; Eratosth. 43 fr. 18 Bagordo), fr. 1, col. II, ll. 10–17: Montana 2012<sup>2</sup>, 174–177; cf. Pirrotta 2009, 270–271; Perrone 2010, 91. A second citation of Eratosthenes has been hypothesized by W. Luppe in l. 31 of the same column of the papyrus: see Montana 2012<sup>2</sup>, 179.

<sup>9</sup> Pfeiffer 1968, 161; Nesselrath 1990, 176–180 and 181 n. 93; Bagordo 1998, 38.

<sup>10</sup> Although we have no idea in what manner, and with what kind of stance, it is likely that Eratosthenes took an active part in this debate, if it is true that the threefold division Archaia,

The extant fragments of Eratosthenes' work point to a specific interest in the language of comedy writers and the characteristics of the Attic dialect. This attention to linguistic form may bear some connection to problems of authorship of the plays, and it is also suggestive of a focus on chronology and staging. These subjects were contemplated in the Callimachean *Pinakes* (including the *Pinax* of the dramatic poets), which, having been compiled only a short time before, must have become a tool greatly in vogue in the Ptolemaic Library. In fr. 93 Strecker (= 43 fr. 5 Bagordo), for instance, Eratosthenes casts doubt on the authenticity of the *Μεταλλεῖς* attributed to Pherecrates by resorting to a dialectological line of reasoning that seems to prefigure the methods of later Atticism<sup>11</sup>. In fr. 48 Strecker (= *FGrHist* 241 fr. 19; 43 fr. 12 Bagordo), he adduces chronological arguments against the tradition that holds that Eupolis was murdered by Alcibiades during the crossing to Sicily in 415 BC<sup>12</sup>. Such an event – of dubious historical reliability – had risen to the status of a fundamental node, not only in the debate on comic *parrhesia* and on its presumed limitations in the evolution of comedy between the end of the fifth and the beginning of the fourth centuries, but also in reconstruction of the transformations and periodization of the genre<sup>13</sup>. To give a final example, in fr. 97 Strecker (= 43 fr. 14 Bagordo), Eratosthenes expressly corrects Callimachus (fr. 454 Pfeiffer, assigned to the *Pinax* of the dramatic poets), who believed he had identified a mistake in the Aristotelian *Didascaliae* concerning the relative chronology of Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Eupolis' *Maricas*<sup>14</sup>.

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Mese and Nea is traceable back to Callimachus and Aristophanes of Byzantium: Nesselrath 1990, 28–187, especially 186–187; cf. Sidwell 2000, 255–256; *pace* Janko 1984, 247–250, who argues in favor of assigning to Aristotle the partition given by the concluding paragraph of the *Tractatus Coislinianus de comoedia* (18: παλαιά, ἢ πλεονάζουσα τῷ γελοίῳ· νέα, ἢ τοῦτο μὲν προῖεμένη, πρὸς δὲ τὸ σεμνὸν ῥέπουσα· μέση, ἢ ἀπ' ἀμφοῖν μεμιγμένη), interpreting παλαιά+μέση as denominations of two distinct phases of the Archaia and νέα as equivalent to the Mese: see *contra* Nesselrath 1990, 147–149; cf. Halliwell 1987, 87 n. 2; Halliwell 1998<sup>2</sup>, 273–274; Pfeßler 1999, 161–162 n. 618.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. fr. 46 Strecker and fr. 149 Strecker (= 43 fr. 17 Bagordo). On Eratosthenes' tendency toward Attic purism in the field of studies on Attic comedy, see Tosi 1994, 168–171.

<sup>12</sup> Duris, *FGrHist* 76 fr. 73. The sources of the presumed killing of Eupolis by Alcibiades are discussed in Storey 2003, 56–60 and 379–381.

<sup>13</sup> Nesselrath 1990, 178–179; Nesselrath 2000, 237–240: the debate set up a contrast between the 'literary' approach to comedy, typically Alexandrian (Eratosthenes), and the political approach of Peripatetic origin. The latter is represented above all by Platonius, *Περὶ διαφορᾶς κωμωδιῶν* 21–23 Perusino, who identified the reprisal against Eupolis as constituting a negative change of direction in comic satire, and thus as the watershed between Archaia and Mese: cf. Perusino 1989 *ad l.*, 14–15 and 48–49.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Storey 2003, 61.

Thus if Lycophron is to be credited with founding the field of Alexandrian studies that dealt with comedy, Eratosthenes should be recognized as having promptly risen to the challenge with his characteristic verve, engaging in a lively and polemical exchange of ideas on a vast swathe of issues with a wide range of scholars, sparing neither the Peripatos and Callimachus, nor Lycophron himself. Among the instances that illustrate the latter aspect, the one most frequently cited is fr. 25 Strecker of the work of Eratosthenes (= 43 fr. 2 Bagordo; *apud* Athen. 11.104, 501d), in which Lycophron is irreverently reproached for ignorance *tout court* in his interpretation of a comic neologism coined by Cratinus:

Κρατίνου δ' εἰπόντος ἐν Δραπέτισιν (fr. 54 Kassel / Austin):

δέχεσθε φιάλας τάσδε βαλανειομφάλους,  
Ἐρατοσθένης ἐν τῷ ἑνδεκάτῳ *Περὶ κωμωδίας* τὴν λέξιν ἄγνοεῖν φησι Λυκόφρονα· τῶν γὰρ  
φιαλῶν οἱ ὀμφαλοὶ καὶ τῶν βαλανείων οἱ θόλοι παρόμοιοι· εἰς δὲ τὸ εἶδος οὐκ ἀρύθμως<sup>15</sup>  
παίζονται.

When Cratinus in the play entitled *Fugitive Women* says:

take these *balanos*-omphalossed bowls,

Eratosthenes in *Περὶ κωμωδίας* eleventh book asserts that Lycophron does not know the meaning of this word (*scil.* βαλανειόμφαλος). The fact is that the navel-like protuberances inside the *phialai* and the domes of the bathing rooms are very similar; thus they are taken as subject-matter of a pun in a way not unsuitable with reference to the species<sup>16</sup>.

We learn from Didymus (fr. 24, p. 42 Schmidt), cited by Athenaeus (501e), that Lycophron (fr. 25 Strecker again) explained the origin of the compound βαλανειόμφαλος «from the hollows (ὀμφαλοὶ) that are inside the women's bath-tubs, from whence they draw by mean of washbowls»<sup>17</sup>.

The Eratosthenic fragment supplies two distinct pieces of information. On the one hand, the scholar pointed the finger against Lycophron, charging him with a lack of awareness (ἄγνοεῖν) of the exact meaning of the compound adject-

<sup>15</sup> On the spelling ἀρύθμως (as in Athenaeus' mss. according to Kaibel's edition and as maintained by S. Douglas Olson in his own edition of the *Lerned banqueters*), instead of the expected ἀρρύθμως, cf. Soph. fr. 25a Radt ἀρρύθμων (by Hesych. α 7554 Latte), with Radt's reference to Kühner / Blass 1890–1892, I 275 n. 4 and Schwyzler 1939–1950, I 311.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Henderson, in Rusten 2011, 184, translates the final sentence «they allude not inappropriately to their shape». The exaggeratedly magniloquent compound βαλανειόμφαλος fits well with the paratragic (mostly Aeschylean) character of Cratinus' *Δραπέτιδες*, convincingly underscored by Bakola 2010, 141–158, although she oddly omits to take into consideration the fr. 54 Kassel / Austin.

<sup>17</sup> On the interpretations of Lycophron's explanation, see the detailed account in Pagani 2007, 220–221.

tive βαλανειόμφαλος. On the other hand, Eratosthenes (if it can be presumed that his *ipsissima verba* are quoted by Athenaeus), following Aristotle's theorization and terminology on ὀνόματος εἶδη and μεταφορά in the *Poetics* (21.1 and 21.3 ff., 1457a 31 ff.)<sup>18</sup>, saw in the relation of similarity (παρόμοιοι) between the *omphalos* of the *phialai*<sup>19</sup> and the *tholos* room of the public baths<sup>20</sup> precisely the proper rationale (*omphalos* : *phiale* = *tholos* : *balaneion*, or, in Aristotelian terms, a μεταφορά κατ' ἀνάλογον), which would assure categorial consistency and proportional suitability (εἰς τὸ εἶδος οὐκ ἀρύθμως) of the image underlying the play on words (παίζονται)<sup>21</sup>. That is to say, perception of the proportional analogy

**18** The text of the *Poetics* is quoted according to Tarán-Gutas 2012.

**19** This kind of *phiale* is a round shallow bowl without foot or handles, on the bottom of which there is a centrally placed round and hollow protuberance (*omphalos*, a sort of thimble) that allows the bowl to be held on a fingertip: Pottier 1907, 434; Sparkes / Talcott 1970, 105–106, 271–272 (Nos. 518–526), Fig. 6, Pl. 23 and 52; Scheibler 2000.

**20** In the opinion of Pagani 2007, 222, the parallel set up by Eratosthenes should be seen as an ingenious witticism to capture the similarity “between the concavity of the *phiale* and that of the dome of the bathing rooms, both of which were characterized by a centrally placed round element”, respectively the *omphalos* and an opening at the top that could be closed with a circular device. Unless one supposes, as Pagani does, that the passage of Athenaeus is brachylogical and compendious, the literal reading of the text (and indeed the actual lexical composition of βαλανειόμφαλος) seems to suggest that the analogical comparison with the *tholos* room involves not so much the overall *phiale*, properly speaking, but only its *omphalos*. Thus it can be argued that in the Eratosthenic interpretation the adjective conveys the image of this type of *phiale* as being «equipped with a *tholos*-bath-shaped *omphalos*». As can be inferred from the subsequent passage of Athenaeus' statement (501ef), the explanation given by Eratosthenes was adopted by Asclepiades of Myrlea, very likely in his work *On Nestor's bowl* (fr. 9 Pagani), then by Didymus Chalcenterus (fr. 24, p. 42 Schmidt) and, apparently in the abovementioned ingenious way now endorsed by Pagani, by Timarchus (probably to be corrected to Timachidas [of Rhodes]) in his work *On Eratosthenes' 'Hermes'* (Timach. fr. 17 Blinkenberg; cf. Powell 1925, 59).

**21** On μεταφορά κατ' ἀνάλογον, see Aristot. *Poet.* 21.3, 1457b 16–25, where the exemplification includes, firstly, the analogic proportion *Dionysos* : *phiale* (!) = *Ares* : *aspis*: τὸ δὲ ἀνάλογον λέγω, ὅταν ὁμοίως ἔχη τὸ δεύτερον πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον καὶ τὸ τέταρτον πρὸς τὸ τρίτον· ἐρεῖ γὰρ ἀντὶ τοῦ δευτέρου τὸ τέταρτον ἢ ἀντὶ τοῦ τετάρτου τὸ δεύτερον. καὶ ἐνίοτε προστιθέασιν ἀνθ' οὗ λέγει πρὸς ὃ ἐστὶ. λέγω δὲ οἷον ὁμοίως ἔχει φιάλη πρὸς Διόνυσον καὶ ἀσπίς πρὸς Ἄρη· ἐρεῖ τοίνυν τὴν φιάλην ἀσπίδα Διονύσου καὶ τὴν ἀσπίδα “φιάλην Ἄρεως” (Timoth., *Pers.* fr. 18 [794] P.; the same example in *Rh.* 3.4, 1407a 14; 3.11, 1412b 34). ἢ ὁ γῆρας πρὸς βίον, καὶ ἑσπέρα πρὸς ἡμέραν· ἐρεῖ τοίνυν τὴν ἑσπέραν γῆρας ἡμέρας ἢ ὥσπερ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς καὶ τὸ γῆρας ἑσπέραν βίου ἢ δυσμάς βίου (cf. Plat. *Leg.* 770a). The same concepts occur in *Rh.* 3.2, 1405a 3 ff. and 3.10–11, 1410b–1413b, with reference to the use of metaphor in oratorical discourse; cf. further *NE* 5.5, 1131a 31 ἢ ἀναλογία ἰσότης ἐστὶ λόγων καὶ ἐν τέτταρσιν ἐλαχίστοις, «analogy is an equality of ratios containing at least four terms» (transl. Stanford 1936, 11). With regard to Aristotle's theorization on metaphor, selectively: Stanford 1936, 6–14; Levin 1982 (especially his conclusion, 44, that «[b]y showing how the genus/species relationship figures in type 4 [i.e. μεταφορά κατ' ἀνάλογον] as well as

between the *omphalos* of the *phiale* and the *tholos* of the *balaneion* suffices to understand and appreciate the metaphoric strength of Cratinus' neologism – τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν, Aristotle concludes, indeed, τὸ τὸ ὁμοιον θεωρεῖν ἔστιν (*Poet.* 22.6, 1459a 7–8; cf. Eratosthenes' παρόμοιοι).

The most striking feature of the passage undoubtedly lies in the caustic manner in which Eratosthenes makes short shrift of Lycophron, and it is hardly surprising that critical attention has focused on this aspect above all. However, I would suggest that the concluding part of the fragment, which offers a concise assessment of the analogical adequacy of the comic compound, deserves at least equal, if not even greater, attention. Not only is it in consonance with Aristotle's theoresis on metaphor, but one also notes that the expression used by Eratosthenes to convey his positive appreciation of Cratinus' metaphorical pun seems to echo on the formal level another Aristotelian statement, namely the judgment on comic irony passed by the philosopher in *NE* 4.14 (1128a 9). The words οὐκ ἀρύθμως combined with παίζειν in the Eratosthenic fragment seem to recall the expression ἐμμελῶς παίζειν, «being humorous in an attuned manner», i.e., in a seemingly manner or appropriately, which Aristotle uses in the passage in question to characterize the ironic register proper both to χαρίεντες (genteel, refined, elegant) temperaments – the specific object of discussion at this point of the treatise – and also to the comic poets of his time, in strong contrast with those of the previous era.

It is helpful, here, to summarize the passages from Aristotle that concern us (*NE* 4.14, 1127b 34–1128b 9)<sup>22</sup>. After defining παιδιά (amusement, humor) as ἀνάπαυσις (relaxation) from commitments and ordinary activities<sup>23</sup>, he examines the issue of excessive and faulty behavior in this sphere, concluding that οἱ δὲ ἐμμελῶς παίζοντες εὐτράπελοι προσαγορεύονται, οἷον εὐτροποι· τοῦ γὰρ ἥθους αἱ τοιαῦται δοκοῦσι κινήσεις εἶναι, ὥσπερ δὲ τὰ σώματα ἐκ τῶν κινήσεων κρίνεται, οὕτω καὶ τὰ ἥθη, «those who make amusing jokes in a seemingly manner are called witty, i.e., having agile wit: because their manner of behavior resembles motion of the character, and, just as bodies are judged on the basis of motions, the same holds true for characters». Nevertheless, even though buffoons are appreciated for their wittiness as if they were refined persons (καὶ οἱ

in the first three types, we have shown that Aristotle's theory is consistent as to its constitutive categories»); Halliwell 1987, 157–164; Müller-Richter / Larcari 1996, 51–75; Kirby 1997, 531–547; Gastaldi 2002; Rapp 2002, 883–930; Guastini 2010, 311–332; Schmitt 2011<sup>2</sup>, 623–640.

<sup>22</sup> For philosophical and conceptual background, the reader is referred to Fortenbaugh 1968 and 2002, 87–92 and 120–126; Dirlmeier 1999<sup>10</sup>, 391–394.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Pol.* 8.3, 1337b 38–39; 8.5, 1339b 15–17.

βωμολόχοι εὐτράπελοι προσαγορεύονται ὡς χαρίεντες), this cannot be taken to mean that any manner of being humorous is equivalent to any other such manner: rather, such a phenomenon is the outcome of an excessive desire for amusement that has gradually become generalized. In the case of a free and cultivated man – the philosopher continues – we note that just as a man of this nature knows how to speak and listen in a fitting manner to whomever he is addressing and in whatever situations he finds himself, so he also does when engaging in humorous talk, thereby distinguishing himself from a slave or an uncultured person. The same difference separates the humor of παλαιαὶ comedies from that of the καιναί: the former was inclined to degenerate to the point of obscenity, whereas the pivotal element of the latter rests on allusion and implicit meaning. This is a by-no-means irrelevant difference as far as the issue of decorum is concerned (ἴδοι δ' ἄν τις καὶ ἐκ τῶν κωμῳδιῶν τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ τῶν καινῶν· τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἦν γελοῖον ἢ αἰσχρολογία, τοῖς δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ ὑπόνοια· διαφέρει δ' οὐ μικρὸν ταῦτα πρὸς εὐσχημοσύνην)<sup>24</sup>. Thus how should we specifically define the witty individual? In Aristotle's perspective, good irony has no need to be described or regulated, because a refined and free person (ὁ δὲ χαρίεις καὶ ἐλευθέριος) will instinctively know how to behave, as such a person is, in a sense, «a law unto himself»<sup>25</sup>.

**24** NE 4.14, 1128a 22–25. This Aristotelian distinction between παλαιαὶ and καιναὶ comedies is patently chronological (cf. also ἦν). In the opinion of Sidwell 2000, 251–254, here Aristotle had in mind the typological «twofold division of comedy into caricature-based and plot-based which stems from the fifth/fourth centuries» (254), as reflected in *Poet.* 5.1, 1449a 32–b 7, by the demise of the type of comedy hinging on personal abuse and invective (κατὰ πᾶσαν κακίαν) and by the symmetric preference for the type oriented toward innocuous laughter (ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φθαρτικόν and ἄνευ ὀδύνης). For the purposes of the present argument, it is helpful to underscore three factual elements: the Aristotelian terminology in this passage of NE has an indisputably temporal acceptance, plainly in a sense of relative chronology; additionally, as mentioned above, the attribute ἀρχαία in the title of Eratosthenes' *syngamma* has to be taken in the temporal sense, roughly indicating our Archaia; and, finally, no doubt Cratinus must have fallen within the boundaries both of (the authors of) the Aristotelian παλαιαὶ and of the Eratosthenic ἀρχαία κωμῳδία.

**25** The entire passage of NE is comparable to *Rh.* 2.4, 1381a 33–35: those whose friendship is desirable include οἱ ἐπιδέξιοι καὶ τῷ παῖσαι καὶ τῷ ὑπομεῖναι· ἐπὶ ταῦτο γὰρ ἀμφοτέροι σπεύδουσι τῷ πλησίον, δυνάμενοι τε σκώπτεσθαι καὶ ἐμμελῶς σκώπτοντες. The Aristotelian typology is echoed in the *schol.* Plat. *Rp.* 563a Greene (on εὐτραπείας): εὐτραπεία ἐστὶν ἕξις τις ἐν μεσότητι θεωρουμένη βωμολοχίας καὶ ἀγροικίας· ἔστι δὲ περὶ σκώμματα ἢ τὸν ἔχοντα παρέχεται δύνασθαι τε σκῶψαι ἐμμελῶς ἢ ὑπομένειν σκωπτόμενον· βωμολοχία δὲ ἢ πάντα καὶ πάντας οἰομένη δεῖν σκώπτειν· ἀγροικία δὲ ἢ μήτε σκώπτειν μήτε σκωφθῆναι βουλομένη, ὀργιζομένη δὲ ἐπ' ἀμφοῖν.



Therefore, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle passed a blanket judgement on the humor of the παλαιαί and proceeded, without further ado, to identify it as αἰσχρολογία *tout court*<sup>26</sup>, contrary to comic decency as embodied by the ἐμμελῶς παίζειν rather (μᾶλλον) typical of later comedy, as well as highly recommendable to persons of a refined cultural background<sup>27</sup>. Eratosthenes, for his part, working in the circumscribed space of the interpretation of an individual play on words – i.e., on a quite different plane compared to the focus of Aristotle's attention – assessed the ironic quality of a Cratinean metaphorical quip as εἰς τὸ εἶδος οὐκ ὀρύθμως παίζειν. The clear-cut difference between the two contexts and, therefore, between the conceptual planes and the respective arguments, should be emphasized. Aristotle is distilling the fundamental character of the two types of comedy in absolutely general terms (αἰσχρολογία vs ὑπόνοια and ἐμμελῶς παίζειν), whereas Eratosthenes is commenting on a specific and isolated comic expression of a *non*-obscene type. Thus the object of Eratosthenes' interpretation is to define the poetic quality not of the αἰσχρολογία of the Archaia but of the metaphor inherent in the neologism βαλανειόμφαλος; in so doing, he makes use of a yardstick and a terminology that Aristotle himself would quite likely have adopted in similar circumstances, probably reaching the same judgment (positive)<sup>28</sup>. Thus we would be forcing the situation if the words of the Alexandrian scholar were interpreted as a reversal of Aristotle's negative judgment on ancient Attic comedy. Yet the verbal assonance does call for deeper reflection to establish accurately whether Eratosthenes' statement simultaneously entailed in some way the general view on ancient comedy expressed in the *Nicomachean ethics*.

In my opinion, we dispose of two clues supporting the view that Eratosthenes' wording bears the hallmark of the Aristotelian passage. Firstly, in Eratosthenes' choice of the semantic and conceptual sphere of ῥυθμός / εὐρυθμία one may perceive a reflection of, and a variation on, the Aristotelian metaphor involving sound and music (ἐμμελῶς), which the philologist replaces with an image drawn from the 'bodily' or 'plastic' sphere. Uttered by an Alexandrian intellectual, οὐκ

<sup>26</sup> About ritual and comic αἰσχρολογία: Henderson 1991<sup>2</sup>; Rösler 1993; Preßler 1999, 166–169.

<sup>27</sup> In the view of Preßler 1999, 160–166, in this passage of *NE* Aristotle is by no means excluding the presence of αἰσχρολογία in the comedies of his days, and his statement on παλαιαί is devoid of any moral intention with reference to (ancient) comedy in itself, on account of the constitutive difference between the *comparandum* and the *comparatum* in the context, namely human behavior and comic poetry. The opposite opinion, here maintained, has been put forward by Fuhrmann 1992<sup>2</sup>, 63; cf. Halliwell 1998<sup>3</sup>, 273–274 n. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Unless Cratinus' metaphor falls in the case in point in *Poet.* 22.4, 1458b 13–15: καὶ γὰρ μεταφοραῖς καὶ γλώτταις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις εἶδεσι χρώμενος ἀπρεπῶς καὶ ἐπίτηδες ἐπὶ τὰ γελοῖα τὸ αὐτὸ (*scil.* τὸ γελοῖον) ἂν ἀπεργάσαιτο.



ἀρύθμως could well, in connotative terms, include a reference to the conceptual area of eurythmics, that is to say, good proportion or formal harmony, elegance appropriate to the purpose (of a work or action) from the point of view of the recipient, according to the dictates of late-classical and Hellenistic aesthetics<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, Eratosthenes' shift toward the idea and image of 'rhythm' may have sprung from the Aristotelian passage itself: as was pointed out earlier, in the same context of *NE* the philosopher metaphorically depicts the (good) motions of the character as akin to the (good) movements of the body (οἱ δὲ ἐμμελῶς παίζοντες are called εὐτράπελοι or, in a sense, εὐτροποὶ τοῦ γὰρ ἥθους αἱ τοιαῦται δοκοῦσι κινήσεις εἶναι) and merges the assessment criteria pertaining to the respective spheres (ὥσπερ δὲ τὰ σώματα ἐκ τῶν κινήσεων κρίνεται, οὕτω καὶ τὰ ἥθη)<sup>30</sup>. In short, in Eratosthenes' οὐκ ἀρύθμως παίζειν, as well as in the idea of the logical proportion set up by the metaphorical device, a further connotation may perhaps be perceived: namely, a harkback to the metaphor of good bodily movement adduced by Aristotle himself to illustrate the concept of ἐμμελῶς παίζειν.

<sup>29</sup> On εὐρυθμία as an aesthetic concept, linked from the fourth century BC onward with the idea of subjective perception in the visual arts and with the technique of perspective, see Pollitt 1974, 28–31 and also 218–228 (s.v. ῥυθμός, «shape», «form») and 169–181 (s.v. εὐρυθμία, «the quality of being well shaped, well formed»). An illuminating passage is Xen. *Mem.* 3.10.10–12, where the weapon-maker explains to Socrates that he is capable of building an εὐρυθμος armor, even for an ἄρρυθμον σώμα, inasmuch as ὁ ἀρμόττω (scil. θώραξ) γάρ ἐστιν εὐρυθμος: «a breastplate which was εὐρυθμος was neither one that contained an ideal set of proportions, nor one that exhibited the repetition or flow of modules or a complicated numerical *symmetria*: a εὐρυθμος breastplate was one which was simply well shaped with respect to its wearer» (Pollitt 1974, 178). In the same vein, Aristotle in *Rhetoric* states that δεῖ δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐπίθετα καὶ τὰς μεταφοὰς ἀρμοττοῦσας λέγειν. τοῦτο δ' ἔσται ἐκ τοῦ ἀνάλογον· εἰ δὲ μή, ἀπρεπὲς φανέεται διὰ τὸ παρ' ἄλληλα τὰ ἐναντία μάλιστα φαίνεσθαι (3.2, 1405a 10–11; cf. *Poet.* 22.4, 1458b 13–17, partly quoted above, in the previous note). In this sense the Alexandrian Callistratus, the pupil of Aristophanes of Byzantium, seems to exploit the expression μὲν εὐρύθμως ἀμπέχεσθαι (Schmidt 1848, 313 with n. 15) to stigmatize Aristarchus' dishevelled and untidy clothing, not befitting the intellectual value and social role of the Ptolemaic philologist (and therefore prejudicial to the πρέπον): cf. Montana 2008, 81–83.

<sup>30</sup> «Aristotle uses that basic meaning to draw a parallel between the versatile play of ready wit and agility of bodily movement» (Taylor 2006, 234). On the acceptations, both positive and negative, of εὐτράπελος in the form of Greek current in Aristotle's day: Dirlmeier 1999<sup>10</sup>, 392–393. On the terminological association of ῥυθμός with movement of the body, see Plat. *Leg.* 665a τῇ δὲ τῆς κινήσεως τάξει ῥυθμός ὄνομα εἶη. According to Labarrière 1994, above all 251–252, the Aristotelian rhetorical reflections on ῥυθμός (*Rh.* 3.8–9) and on metaphor that evokes visual illusion (τὸ πρὸ ὁμμάτων ποιεῖν: *Rh.* 3.11; cf. *Poet.* 17.1, 1455a 22–26; this is precisely the case of the Cratinean βαλανειόμοφος, as underscored by Eratosthenes' explanation) are linked to the theoretical sphere of εὐρυθμία.

The second clue of a possible implicit allusion to Aristotle's statement in Eratosthenes' words is the litotic formulation οὐκ ἀρύθμως, an intrinsic effect of which could be to recall *e contrario* the lack of appropriacy and decency imputed by the philosopher to the poets of the Archaia *tout court*.

Even though Aristotle and Eratosthenes differed with regard to the basic questions they raised, and set themselves different aims, the reader's impression that the wording adopted by the philologist presupposes the philosopher's terminology and general judgment on the comic quality of the Archaia is heightened by the abundance of appreciative references to expedients of non-indecent comic irony, such as metaphors and neologisms, that are found in ancient exegesis of the comedies of Aristophanes, the most representative exponent of the Archaia itself. These features of comic poetry are often described as genteel or refined, sometimes apparently echoing Eratosthenes' (supposed) formal variation on the Aristotelian ἐμμελῶς παίζειν. In a sense, it is as if the later exegetes were still mindful of the philosopher's negative opinion, yet at the same time disregarded it in favor of an in-depth investigation that would highlight the positive poetic qualities of the comic plays as such, precisely in accordance with the approach and the weaponry of an Aristotelian mode of formal analysis.

An eloquent parallel is given by the ancient scholium to *Ach.* 1125 (ms. R) = 1123a (mss. EF). In the explanation of the word τυρόνωτον, which designates a type of round cheese-coated bun, used by Aristophanes as a comic verbal substitution to indicate a shield, the anonymous exegete praises the clever word-play, pointing out that the poet ἔπαιξε δὲ χαριέντως ὅτι καὶ οὗτοι περιφερεῖς ὡς ἄσπίδες, thus replicating not only terms and concepts that also occur in the cited passage of Aristotle's *Ethics* (χαριέντες, παίζειν), but also the rhetorical argument adduced by Eratosthenes with regard to the Cratinean βαλανειόμφαλος (the analogical relation between two objects). On the use of χαριέντως in the scholium, it cannot in principle be ruled out that post-Aristotelian rhetorical reflection on χάρις (attraction, elegance) in the framework of treatment of the γλαφυρός style may have exerted some influence; however, the connection of the adverb with παίζειν once more focuses attention on the issue of the παιδιὰ of the χαριέντες addressed in the *Nicomachean ethics*<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> On χαριέντως in ancient rhetoric see, e.g., Dion.Hal. *Comp.* 22; Demetr. *Eloc.* 128–186, particularly 185, χαριέντως ἤρμοσεν, χαριέντως μεμίμηται; cf. Marini 2007, 225–226, comment on 128, where the rhetor distinguishes the χάριτες μείζονες καὶ σεμνότεραι from the εὐτελεῖς μάλλον καὶ κωμικώτεραι, σκώμμασιν ἑοικυῖαι; cf. *schol.* Plat. *Rp.* 563a Greene: χαριεντισμός ἐστι σκῶμμα μετὰ τέρψεως καὶ χάριτός τινος.

Ancient exegesis on Aristophanes reserves further similar examples. The (para)tragic self-mockery of Trigeo's quip in ll. 367–368 of *Peace*, when the character responds to the notification that he will be subjected to capital punishment with the objection that he is not ready to die because «I haven't yet provided myself with a store either of flour or of cheese for my departure», was favorably received by a commentator, who stated that (*schol. Pa.* 368, mss. RV) χαριέντως δὲ καὶ παρ' ὑπόνοιαν εἶπεν: the pair composed of «refinedness» and «allusiveness» is an endiadic rendering of the Aristotelian concept of the good irony peculiar to cultivated persons as well as to the authors of *καίνοι* comedies. Additionally, the *Argumentum* II of *Wasps* (transmitted by mss. RV and taken up again by Demetrius Triclinius and in the Aldina), after the extensive overview of the comedy and before the final section containing the stage notes on the first performance, proposes an interpretation of the meaning of the play (p. 5, ll. 32–36 Koster: the plot is completely invented, and its aim is to criticize the Athenians' excessive passion for law-courts and to turn them away from the judges, who are thus portrayed as wasps equipped with a sting) that concludes with an overall aesthetic assessment of the work, or verdict of κρίσις ποιημάτων (l. 36): πεποιήται δὲ αὐτῷ (*scil.* Ἀριστοφάνει) χαριέντως<sup>32</sup>. To give a final example, the adverb χαριέντως is found together with παίζειν in the ancient scholium to *Pl.* 21d (RV Ald(U), cf. Tzetzes *ad l.*, p. 14a, 16–17 Massa Positano), which reports an embarrassing judgement, or perhaps merges two opposing judgements, concerning the comic impertinence of the servant Carion, who, confident of the impunity bestowed on him by the Delphic crown, addresses his master Chremylus rather irreverently: ἔπαιξε ἅμα χαριέντως καὶ δυσωπητικῶς<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> It should be underlined, as an emblematic circumstance, that the terminology employed in this *hypothesis* to define the relation between theatrical fiction and reality either as a poetic reproduction of existing facts (ὑποκεῖσθαι) or as total invention (πεπλάσθαι) is exactly the same as that utilized by Eratosthenes in his celebrated discussion of the wanderings of Odysseus as a paradigm of Homeric geography: fr. 1 A 12 Berger *apud* Strab. 1.2.12, especially τοὺς δὲ μὴ πεπλάσθαι λέγοντας ἀλλ' ὑποκεῖσθαι, «those who say they (*scil.* myths) are not invented but substantiated» (as translated by Roller 2010, 43). Cf. Meijering 1987, 86 n. 98.

<sup>33</sup> In the ancient exegesis to Aristophanes, χαριέντως occurs, once again in union with verbs that express comic irony, in the scholia to *Ach.* 140a (vet) (σκώπτειν), 140b (Tr) (παραβάλλειν), *Pa.* 697d (vet Tr) (διασύρειν); with verbs of 'saying', in the scholia to *Ach.* 146c (Tr), 321 (vet Tr), *Eq.* 539aII (vet), 539c (Tr), *Nub.* 545b (vet), 545b (Tr), 1119 (vet), *Av.* 445b (vet Tr), 635 (vet), *Ran.* 421b (vet) (the Triclinian scholium 421c repeats the ancient scholium in its redaction α, but concludes εἶπε παρ' ὑπόνοιαν κτλ.), *Pl.* 251 (vet) (cf. Tzetzes *ad l.*, p. 70a, 17–18 Massa Positano) and also Tzetzes *ad Nub.* 483a, p. 498, 17 Massa Positano and *ad Nub.* 778a, p. 562, 9 Massa Positano; in union with μνημονεύειν, in the scholium to *Nub.* 21 (vet); with an understood verb of 'saying', in the scholia to *Ach.* 146a (vet), *Eq.* 919aI (vet Tr), *Nub.* 733ay (vet), *Av.* 1484b (vet), *Lys.* 17a (vet), *Pl.*

It may therefore seem, in conclusion, that associating all these pieces of evidence serves no useful purpose other than to confirm the self-evident fact from which we started and that hardly needed demonstrating, namely the solid and respectful exegetic interest in the Archaia shown by the Alexandrian scholars from the earliest generations of philologists onward, despite the cursory disparaging assessment apparently made by Aristotle. But in actual fact, this available evidence does provide additional information. The Aristotelian assertion – which could have weighed adversely on the plans forming part of the Ptolemaic project in this sphere and, more generally, on the attitude of the exegetes of comedy – was by no means ignored. Rather, it was taken into consideration and counter-balanced by pointing out instances of poetic and comic quality within the plays through the very conceptual and rhetorical weapons of the philosopher himself, in the manner that Eratosthenes was perhaps the first to indicate<sup>34</sup>. That is to say, attention was devoted to documenting in ancient Attic comedy, and describing in a formal manner, features of suitable παιδιὰ, namely conceived, for example, οὐκ ἀρύθμως εἰς τὸ εἶδος (in a metaphoric context) or, no less Aristotelianly, ἐμμελῶς, χαριέντως, παρ' ὑπόνοιαν – in short, the very type of private irony the philosopher commended in *Nicomachean ethics*, recognizing it as especially peculiar to the comedy of his era<sup>35</sup>.

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700b (vet) (cf. Tzetzes *ad l.*, p. 162a, 2 and p. 162b, 3–5 Massa Positano); the scholium to *Pl.* 23d (vet) comments on the insult addressed by Carion to Chremylus (λῆρος, «foolish things», taken in the sense of «you're saying foolish things») annotating χαριέντως καὶ τὸν σκοπὸν ἤνυσεν, καὶ ὑβρίζειν οὐκ ἔδοξεν (cf. Tzetzes *ad l.*, pp. 14a, 28–15a, 1 Massa Positano), whereas in the *schol. Pl.* 23c (rec), λῆρος is defined as χαριεντισμός; finally, Tzetzes *ad Nub.* 1055a, p. 626, 18–20 Massa Positano, explains: ἀστείως καὶ χαριέντως παρὰ τὴν ὁμωνυμίαν τῆς ἀγορᾶς κατασοφίζεσθαι καὶ παραλογίζεσθαι βούλεται. See also Rutherford 1905, 452 n. 64.

**34** The lacunae in our knowledge of the Aristotelian conception of the comic does not hinder the perception that the strategy deployed by the ancient grammarians and exegetes with the aim of studying and acquiring an understanding of the Archaia availed itself of tools and categories of rhetorical and stylistic analysis that can be recognized first and foremost in none other than in Aristotelian writings themselves, as in *Rh.* 3.10–11 (1410b 6–1413b 2: the analysis of the ἀστεῖα), or which can at least be traced in part to the Peripatetic sphere, such as the *Tractatus Coislinianus* (5–6: the typology of the factors of the comic γέλως).

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