

## SOUND MIMICRY: AN OLD TRAIT OF THE NEW MUSIC?\*

### Introduction

Onomatopoeic imitation of non-musical sounds, such as the noises of a storm, animal voices, squeaks of wheels and so on, has often been identified<sup>1</sup> as a characteristic of the so-called New Music (an avant-garde trend in Greek art in the second half of the fifth and the early fourth century BC severely attacked by critics<sup>2</sup>).

Meanwhile there is evidence that sound mimicry existed in archaic Greek music from at least the start of the sixth century BC.

At the Pythian Games auletes competed in performances of the Pythian nome from 584 BC and citharists from 558 BC (Paus. 10. 7. 4, 7; Strab. 9. 3. 10, p. 421). Descriptions of this piece note the marked mimetic elements in its structure: when depicting the struggle of Apollo with Python instrumentalists would imitate the signals of a salpinx (τὰ σαλπιστικά κρούματα)<sup>3</sup> and the teeth-gnashing (ὀδοντισμός)<sup>4</sup> or hissing (σύριγγες, ὑποσυριγμός, σύριγμα)<sup>5</sup> of the expiring serpent.

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\* This work was supported by the *Russian Science Foundation* (project no. 18-18-00060).

<sup>1</sup> Pickard-Cambridge 1927, 68; Schönewolf 1938, 13; 59; Richter 1968, 7–8; Defradas 1969, 27; 31; Restani 1983, 188; 189; Zimmermann 1984, 78; 79; 157; Zimmermann 1988, 44; Zimmermann 1989, 28; Kugelmeier 1996, 257; 261; Hordern 2002, 38–39.

<sup>2</sup> Among the most informative overviews of the New Music are: Schönewolf 1938, 17–36; West 1992, 356–372; Csapo 2004; see also Barker 1984, 93–98.

<sup>3</sup> Poll. 4. 84.

<sup>4</sup> Poll. *ibid.*: τὸν ὀδοντισμὸν ὡς τοῦ δράκοντος ἐν τῷ τετοξεῦσθαι συμπίοντος τοὺς ὀδόντας.

<sup>5</sup> Strab. 9. 3. 10, p. 422: σύριγγας δὲ τὴν ἔκλειψιν τοῦ θηρίου, μιμουμένων ὡς ἂν καταστρέφοντος ἐσχάτους τινὰς συριγμούς. Dem. Lac. *De carminibus*, *PHerc.* 1014, col. XLVIII, l. 12–15: [ὕ]ποσυ[ρ]ιγμόν, ἔχον το[ῦ] δράκοντος ἐν τῷ [καταστρέφειν] τάδ' ἐσ[χα]τα συρίγματ[ι]α. *Sch. Pind. Pyth.* hypothes. a, vol. II p. 2 l. 15 Dr.: σύριγμα δὲ διὰ τὸν τοῦ ὄφεως συριγμόν.

The invention of the Many-headed nome is attributed to the legendary aulete Olympus or his pupil Crates (Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1133 D–E). Its performance in the early fifth century (most probably at the Pythian Games of 490 BC, see *Sch. Pind. Pyth.* 12, II p. 263, 23–25 Dr.) is testified by Pindar. It is evident from the twelfth Pythian ode that a characteristic feature of this auletic nome, possibly even the reason for its name, was the mimicking of the woeful and threatening cries of the gorgons and the hissing of snakes on their heads after Medusa's death.<sup>6</sup>

Ancient critics of the New Music are quite benevolent to Olympus: in their eyes, the decline of music resulted from the departure from his standards. Aristoxenus' report of how this legendary musician invented the enharmonic γένος comes to the following conclusion (Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1135 B–C = Aistoxen. fr. 83 Wehrli):

φαίνεται δ' Ὀλυμπος αὐξήσας μουσικὴν τῷ ἀγένητόν τι καὶ ἀγνοούμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν εἰσαγαγεῖν, καὶ ἀρχηγὸς γενέσθαι τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς καὶ καλῆς μουσικῆς.

It is apparent that Olympus extended the resources of music by introducing something which previously did not exist and was unknown to his predecessors, and that he was the founder of the noble style of music that is specifically Greek.<sup>7</sup>

In Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1137 A–B Olympus, Terpander and their followers who have consciously chosen severe simplicity (στενοχωρία καὶ ὀλιγοχορδία) are contrasted with the vulgar innovators with their πολυχορδία τε καὶ ποικιλία, traits typical of the New Music.

Even Plato refers positively to the music of Olympus (which he identifies with that of Marsyas, his teacher). As a matter of fact, the reference is by Alcibiades, but it forms part of the famous eulogy to Socrates in which the author most probably shares his character's point of view. It takes the form of a complimentary comparison: Socrates' words

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<sup>6</sup> τέχνη, τάν ποτε / Παλλὰς ἔφευρε θρασειᾶν <Γοργόνων> / οὐλίον θρήνον διαπλέξαις' Ἀθάναν / τὸν παρθενίοις ὑπὸ τ' ἀπλάτοις ὀφίων κεφαλαῖς / ἄιε λειβόμενον δυσπενθέι σὺν καμάτῳ (lines 6–10); αὐλῶν τεύχε πάμφωνον μέλος, / ὄφρα τὸν Εὐρυάλας ἐκ καρπαλιμᾶν γενύων / χριμφθέντα σὺν ἔντεσι μιμήσαιοι' ἐρικλάγκταν γόον. / εἶδρεν θεός· ἀλλὰ νιν εὐροῖς' ἀνδράσι θνατοῖς ἔχειν, / ὠνόμασεν κεφαλᾶν πολλᾶν νόμον... (lines 19–23).

<sup>7</sup> Translation: Barker 1984, 217–218. The same point is repeated below (*De mus.* 1141 B): τὸν Ὀλυμπον ἐκεῖνον, ᾧ δὴ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς τε καὶ νομικῆς μούσης ἀποδιδόασιν.

and the music of Marsyas, as mastered by Olympos, both inspire divine possession in the listeners (Plat. *Symp.* 215 c; cf. Ps.-Plat. *Minos* 318 b).

Thus sound mimicry featured in time-honoured traditional music dedicated to the gods, such as the nomes of Olympos. Is it possible, then, that the same convention was both accepted as part of a revered tradition and yet also dismissed as a trait of the avant-garde trend of 450–400 BC?

Remarkably, the same modern scholars who consider sound mimicry a particular feature of the New Music are usually aware that it had previously been utilized by Sacades at the first Pythian auletic contest, but their comments are far from exhaustive. The change that would have annoyed ancient conservative critics has been identified as its more widespread occurrence;<sup>8</sup> its accentuation and osmosis into other music genres;<sup>9</sup> its less “trivial” forms;<sup>10</sup> or the transfer of a traditional device of instrumental music into monodic and choral lyrics.<sup>11</sup>

In order to clarify this point, this paper aims to review all existing evidence on musical mimicry in the Classical period and consider possible connections to the New Music. Here it is important to distinguish between vocal and instrumental sound imitation. It should also be noted that mimetic terminology, notorious for its ambiguity,<sup>12</sup> can be applied to at least three musical phenomena in our sources. First, theoretical thought since Damon has ascribed the capacity to imitate a certain ethos to the melody and rhythm of a musical composition (this was considered the most complex matter for analysis, since we can perceive music as having a certain “character”, but it is hard to explain what the “similarity” consists in and what the “imitation” is based on). Second, one can speak in mimetic terms of the penetration of “theatrical” dramatization into

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<sup>8</sup> Schönewolf 1938, 13: “Das [sc. die ‘musikalische’ Mimesis] ist aber das Grundprinzip der ganzen Kunst des neuen Dithyrambos. Es ist an sich keine Erfindung der neuen Dichter, es ist ein ursprünglich musikalisches Prinzip, und dem νόμος Πυθικός des Sakadas wird man μίμησις ἡθῶν sicher zuzuschreiben haben. Aber es scheint, dass die bewusste Ausdehnung des Grundsatzes auf das gesamte Kunstwerk die bezeichnendste Tat der jungattischen Dithyrambiker war”.

<sup>9</sup> Mureddu 1982, 82 with n. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Csapo 2004, 214 n. 28: “The nome had already developed some trivial forms of performative mimesis” (there follows a reference to the Pythian nome of Sacades).

<sup>11</sup> Hordern 2002, 38: “One of the strongest trends often associated with late classical lyric, both choral or monodic, is an increasing interest in musical imitation <...>. This should clearly be associated with the New Music, and thus with Timotheus <...>. For instrumental music this mimetic element appears to have been traditional <...>”.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Halliwell 2002.

the genres of dithyramb and nome, for example elements of pantomime on behalf of the musician. Third, mimetic vocabulary is applied to the onomatopoeia itself, that is, the mimicry of non-musical sounds by musical means.<sup>13</sup> Thus each time we find a reference to “mimesis” we have to separate onomatopoeic effects from its other manifestations, which do not concern us here.

### I. Sound mimicry in the New Music

Passages directly related to famous representatives of the New Music are short and therefore difficult to interpret.

(1) Onomatopoeia is traditionally observed in *Semele's Birth-Pangs* by Timotheus of Miletus.<sup>14</sup> Athenaeus (8. 45, p. 352 a) quotes a joke by Stratonicus the citharist<sup>15</sup> (hardly a conservative himself<sup>16</sup>) which makes clear that Timotheus imitated the cries of a woman in childbirth:

ἐπακούσας δὲ τῆς Ὠδίνος τῆς Τιμοθέου “εἰ δ’ ἐργολάβον, ἔφη, ἔτικτεν καὶ μὴ θεόν, ποίας ἂν ἠφίει φωνάς”.

Having heard *The Birth-Pangs* by Timotheus, he said: “And if she were giving birth to a contractor and not to a god, what cries would she utter?”

However a passing simile by Dio Chrysostomus (78. 32) points to dramatic rather than sound mimesis. He compares Alcmaeon, who, burdened as he is with gold, can hardly drag his feet as he leaves the treasury of Croesus, with an aulete performing *Semele's Birth-Pangs* (μόλις ἔξω βαδίζειν, ὥσπερ αὐλοῦντα τὴν τῆς Σεμέλης ὠδίναν). Unfortunately it is not clear whether Dio is referring to a contemporary performance or a literary source, and indeed if he means *Semele's Birth-Pangs* by Timotheus or a later piece of the same name.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the three spheres affected by mimesis in Plat. *Resp.* 3. 395 b–d: ἡ οὐκ ἦσθησαι ὅτι αἱ μιμήσεις, ἔαν ἐκ νέων πόρρω διατελέσωσιν, εἰς ἔθνη τε καὶ φύσιν καθίστανται καὶ κατὰ σῶμα καὶ φωνάς καὶ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν;

<sup>14</sup> Fr. 792 Page = Campbell = Hordern. The complete title (“τὰρ Σεμέλαρ ὀδίναν”) is mentioned in a forged decree of Spartan ephoroi cited by Boetius, *Inst. mus.* 1. 1, p. 182 Friedlein.

<sup>15</sup> Ca. 410–360; see Stephanis 1988 [I. E. Στεφανής, *Διονυσιακοὶ τεχνίται· συμβολές στην προσωπογραφία του θεάτρου και της μουσικῆς των αρχαίων Ελλήνων*], no. 2310; West 1992, 367–368.

<sup>16</sup> Stratonicus was credited with introducing πολυχорδία into solo cithara-playing (Athen. 8. 46, p. 348 d) and commented respectfully on the nomes of Timotheus (Athen. 8. 45, p. 352 b).

Both Dio and Alcaeus of Messene (*AP* 16. 7. 2–3) indicate that an aulete took part in the performance of *Semele's Birth-pangs*. If they are referring to the work by Timotheus or at least to a piece in the same genre, it follows that *The Birth-Pangs* by Timotheus was a dithyramb and not a citharodic nome. The same is further attested by Boethius: in the forged Laconian decree cited by him the verb διδάσκει, which is commonly used to describe the training of a chorus, is applied to this piece.<sup>17</sup> Did the onomatopoeia belong to the part of the aulete or the voice (of the chorus or the coryphaeus)? Dio's passage implies that the pregnant woman was impersonated by the aulete who (ab)used actors' devices. Such attempts at pantomimic impersonation had been used by aulos-players since at least the time of Aristotle (who condemned them as displaying bad taste).<sup>18</sup> If so, it is difficult to imagine that a singer pronouncing the text on behalf of Semele took part in the performance alongside the aulos-player. In this case we are dealing with instrumental mimesis. On its own, it could hardly be considered an innovation – if indeed something frustrated conservative critics about it, it might have been a startling object of mimicry or the expanded role of the aulos in dithyramb in general.

(2) Next, we have evidence of the imitation of a sea storm in *Nauplius* by Timotheus.<sup>19</sup> Once again it is a witticism, this time by the conservative aulete Dorion<sup>20</sup> (Athen. 8. 19, p. 338 a):

ὁ αὐτὸς Δωρίων καταγελῶν τοῦ ἐν τῷ Τιμοθέου Ναυπλίου χειμῶνος  
ἐφασκεν ἐν κακκάβῃ ζεοῦσα μείζονα ἐωρακέναι χειμῶνα.

Ναυπλίῳ Casaubon : Ναυτίλῳ codd.

The same Dorion, ridiculing the storm in Timotheus' *Nauplius*, said that he had seen a bigger storm in a boiling stew-pot.

<sup>17</sup> Hordern 2002, 10–11.

<sup>18</sup> Aristot. *Poet.* 26, 1461 b 30–32: οἷον οἱ φαῦλοι ἀνελταὶ κυλιόμενοι ἂν δίσκον δέη μιμεῖσθαι, καὶ ἔλκοντες τὸν κορυφαῖον ἂν σκύλλαν ἀνελῶσιν. Gomperz 1887, 87–88, comparing the passages of Aristotle and Dio, boldly concludes that an aulete in the New Dithyramb had the dramatic task of impersonating one of the main characters, whereas the chorus-leader played the other. Csapo 2004, 214 seems to agree: “Late fifth- and early fourth-century comedy shows a clear trend towards ‘metatheatrical’ inclusion of the piper in the performance”.

<sup>19</sup> Fr. 785 Page = Campbell = Hordern.

<sup>20</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. (contemporary of Philippus and Alexander of Macedon), see Stephanis 1988, no. 805; West 1992, 369. On his opposition to the fashionable trend: Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1138 A–B.

According to Suetonius (*Nero* 39. 3), a piece called *Nauplius* was performed by Nero. If it was the one by Timotheus or at least from the same genre, it follows that *Nauplius* was a monody, i.e., probably a citharodic nome. Two epigrams, *AP* 9. 429 and 11. 185, also mention a solo citharodic piece. The same may be inferred from the *Suda*, where it is mentioned separately from the dithyrambs of Timotheus, but next to the *Persians*, which is clearly a nome.<sup>21</sup> Still no conclusions can be drawn about the role of the cithara and the human voice in imitating the sound of a storm.

(3) The scholia to Aristophanes' *Plutus* 290 report that the amoebean song in 290–301 parodied the famous dithyramb *Cyclops* by the innovator Philoxenus. The slave Cario starts a buffoonish dance of joy and announces that he will imitate the Cyclops – twang! (θρεττανελο, *Plut.* 290) – while the chorus-members should play the part of his herd, βληχώμενοι τε προβατίων αἰγῶν τε κιναβρώντων μέλη – “bleating the songs of stinking sheep and goats”. The chorus does not leave this unanswered: dealing with the Cyclops – twang! (θρεττανελο, *Plut.* 296) – they will better play the companions of Odysseus and blind him.

As for θρεττανελο (the onomatopoeic imitation of a stringed instrument), the scholia say that Philoxenus made Polyphemus play a lyre (κιθαρίζοντα) to express his love for Galatea (*Sch. Aristoph. Plut.* 290 c α 12–15 [see n. 25]; β 4–5; γ 5–7 Chantry). Still it is not clear whether the word θρεττανελο first appeared in the dithyramb<sup>22</sup> or in Aristophanes' parody.<sup>23</sup> The assumption that the Cyclops' lyre-playing was only referred to in the narrative part of the dithyramb may be discounted,<sup>24</sup> since this explains neither the indelible impression reflected in the records nor the onomatopoeia: for Philoxenus it would have been unnecessary and for Aristophanes' audience, unintelligible, if not for an allusion to a key feature of Philoxenus' production. One version of the scholia explicitly claims that θρεττανελο was introduced by Philoxenus;<sup>25</sup> the other

<sup>21</sup> Suid. τ 620. See Hordern 2002, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Berglein 1843, 49–50; Holland 1884, 192; Pianko 1954, 34; Defradas 1969, 30–31; Zimmermann 1992, 127; Zimmermann 1993a, 31; Zimmermann 1993b, 47; Dobrov – Urios-Aparisi 1995, 170; Kugelmeier 1996, 257; Hordern 1999, 451; 453; Sommerstein 2001, 156; Csapo 2004, 215; Power 2013, 238; 254.

<sup>23</sup> Bergk 1882, 612–613; Holzinger 1940, 111; Mewald 1946, 281; Henderson 1957, 396; Richter 1968, 14; Wölffle 1981, 115; Zimmermann 1984, 59–60.

<sup>24</sup> Pace Webster in Pickard-Cambridge 1962, 46.

<sup>25</sup> *Sch. Aristoph. Plut.* 290 c α Chantry: Φιλόξενον τὸν διθυραμβοποιὸν – ἢ τραγωδοδιδασκαλὸν – διασύρει, ὃς ἔγραψε τὸν ἔρωτα τοῦ Κύκλωπος τὸν ἐπὶ τῇ Γαλατείᾳ· εἶτα κιθάρας ἦχον μιμούμενος ἐν τῷ συγγράμματι, τοῦτό φησι τὸ ῥῆμα θρεττανελό. ἐκεῖ γὰρ εἰσάγει τὸν Κύκλωπα κιθαρίζοντα καὶ ἐρεθίζοντα τὴν Γαλατείαν (the subject of φησι must be the same as that of ἔγραψε and εἰσάγει, that is, Philoxenus, as noted by Holland 1884, 192 n. 1). Cf. *ibid.* γ.

appears to disagree.<sup>26</sup> Those who ascribe it to Philoxenus argue that the uncouth ogre who did not know how to play the lyre could only mimic its sound now and then between poetic lines.<sup>27</sup> Yet I find it problematic to imagine such a performance. Polyphemus' love song hardly lacked accompaniment, and a standard accompaniment – that by an aulos – would prevent any possibility of a recognizable imitation of the lyre<sup>28</sup> (given the fact that dithyrambic singers did not perform in costume, even increasing dramatization could not go so far as to supply a character with a lyre prop). It seems more plausible that a real chordophone was used by Philoxenus, be it a chelys-lyre suiting an amateur performer of a Cyclops' level of training<sup>29</sup> or a sonorous cithara appropriate for a public performance. We lack direct evidence of such an extravagant practice,<sup>30</sup> but many scholars<sup>31</sup> feel it corresponds to what we know of the New Dithyramb. Cithara-playing occurred in tragedy when the plot dictated it,<sup>32</sup> and the same may also apply to the dithyramb once solo songs were introduced into it:<sup>33</sup> the

<sup>26</sup> *Sch. Aristoph. Plut.* 290 p. 341 l. 11–13 Dübner (= 290 e β, 292 a α Chantry) τὸ δὲ θρεττανελὸ ποιὸν μέλος καὶ κρονμάτιόν ἐστι· τὸ δὲ “ἀλλ’ εἶα τέκεα θαμίν’ ἐπαναβοῶντες” ἐκ τοῦ Κύκλωπος Φιλοξένου ἐστὶ. The second particle δέ implies that θρεττανελο, unlike the following phrase, does not come from the *Cyclops*, as noted by Bergk 1882, 613.

<sup>27</sup> Berglein 1843, 49–50.

<sup>28</sup> *Pace Power* 2013, 254. Aulos- and cithara-players may have emulated and adopted each other's technical achievements, but even a masterly performance can hardly conceal the timbre of a wind instrument to an extent that would make the audience members believe that they were listening to a stringed instrument (by the way, *Power ibid.*, 243–244 and 254 speaks of the “aulization” of the cithara, not vice versa, and Plato *Resp.* 397 a names only wind instruments among objects of imitation).

<sup>29</sup> It is possible that the sound θρεττανελο was meant to reflect the primitive nature of the performance by Polyphemus who could only strum on the strings with his thumb: Holzinger 1940, 111; Mewald 1946, 281. Cf. *Sch. Aristoph. Plut.* 290 f Chantry: τινὲς τοῦτο ἀγροικικὴν φωνὴν εἶναι λέγουσιν.

<sup>30</sup> I doubt that the enigmatic expression of Plato (*Leg.* 700 d) καὶ ἀλφιδίας δὴ ταῖς κιθαρῳδίαις μιμούμενοι referred to the introduction of citharodic solos into dithyramb, for the term ἀλφιδία only ever seems to have concerned solo nomic singers: see Almazova 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Pickard-Cambridge 1927, 61; Mewald 1946, 281; Richter 1968, 14; Zimmermann 1984, 60; Sutton 1983, 42; De Simone 2006, 71–72; see below n. 35.

<sup>32</sup> For evidence on the occasional use of stringed instruments in drama, see Pickard-Cambridge 1968, 165–166; Wilson 2005, 185–186.

<sup>33</sup> It is generally accepted (Smyth 1900, 461; Pickard-Cambridge 1927, 61; Schönewolf 1938, 22; McEvelley 1970, 270; Sutton 1983, 40; 42), albeit not on quite firm grounds, that Philoxenus introduced solo songs into dithyramb. The main reason is the passage *Ps.-Plut. De mus.* 1142 A = *Aristoph. fr.* 293, although it is corrupted at the most important point.



central episode of the famous “Marsyas” by Melanippides (Philoxenus’ predecessor) must have been the contest between the satyr playing his aulos and Apollo playing his cithara,<sup>34</sup> and I do not see how it could be produced without using both instruments. I therefore believe that Philoxenus introduced a real lyre into his dithyramb, a novelty which illustrates the blurring of genre boundaries.<sup>35</sup> Onomatopoeic *θηρτανελο* must be the work of Aristophanes: his characters allude to this impressive feature of the *Cyclops*, and since they do not have a lyre at hand they “play” on their lips.

However elsewhere in the same passage there is another hint of sound mimicry, this time employed by Philoxenus. Aristophanes quotes Polyphemus as he addresses his herd: “ἀλλ’ εἶα τέκεα θαμὶν’ ἐπαναβοῶντες” (292), and next to the direct quotation<sup>36</sup> there is an appeal to *bleat*<sup>37</sup> the songs of sheep and goats (293–294). The word *βληχώμενοι* is repeated in the replica of the chorus-members (297) – even though bleating is not appropriate to the role of Odysseus’ companions, which they are going to play at that moment, – and is thus singled out.<sup>38</sup> This is most likely a reference to another experimental device used by Philoxenus: that is, he must have made the dithyrambic chorus mimic the voices of Polyphemus’ animals.<sup>39</sup> If this hypothesis is correct, we have a case of vocal sound mimicry.

Evidence directly connecting onomatopoeia with the New Music is limited to the three passages analyzed above. By analogy it has been assumed that the authors following this trend used sound mimicry in other cases as well, but it is important to remember that this is mere guesswork.

<sup>34</sup> See Boardman 1956, 19–20.

<sup>35</sup> Henderson 1957, 396; West 1992, 365–366; De Simone 2006, 71–72; 76.

<sup>36</sup> *Sch. Aristoph. Plut.* 292 a α: ὁ δὲ “ἀλλ’ εἶα τέκεα θαμὶν’ ἐπαναβοῶντες” ἐκ τοῦ Κύκλωπος Φιλοξένου ἐστί.

<sup>37</sup> *Sch. Aristoph. Plut.* 293 b α: “βληχᾶσθαι” τὸ τὰ προβάτια ποιᾶ φωνῇ κε-χρηῆσθαι. – Bergk 1882, 612 *ad loc.* proposed an emendation of *βληχώμενοι* to *βληχόμενων* in *Plut.* 293, which does not change the sense. See Sommerstein 2001, 157.

<sup>38</sup> Holzinger 1940, 113.

<sup>39</sup> Klingender 1845, 46 (erroneously supposing that the bleating was imitated by numerous musical instruments); Hartung 1846, 415–416; Holzinger 1940, 113; Mureddu 1982, 80: “la qualità della mimesi messa in atto da Filosseno costituisce qui l’oggetto della sua parodia”; 82 n. 24; Zimmermann 1995, 125; Sommerstein 2001, 157; De Simone 2006, 67–68. A fragment of Hermesianax may also imply that sheep and goats somehow expressed their feelings in the *Cyclops*: in order to revive memories of Philoxenus’ work he mentions μέγαν πόθον, ὃν Γαλατεῖη / αὐτοῖς μηλείοις θήκαθ’ ὑπὸ προγόνοις (fr. 7 Powell = fr. 3 Lightfoot, 73–74).



For instance, “sound painting” might have seemed appropriate<sup>40</sup> in the scene of the naval battle in Timotheus’ *Persians*, the only citharodic nome where the text has partly survived. Th. J. Mathiesen even indicates a suitable expressive means: accumulation of sibilants in the section that describes the sea and the shore (Tim. *Pers.* fr. 19. 104–113 Edmonds = fr. 791. coll. II–IV. 95–104 Hordern), and thus relates the onomatopoeia with the vocal part.<sup>41</sup>

It has been assumed that instrumental sound mimicry was used in the *Scylla* which Aristotle refers to twice in the *Poetics* as an example of bad taste (most likely he means the dithyramb of Timotheus).<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that the Stagirite is evidently referring to dramatic rather than sound mimesis: inferior auletes assume the role of the monster and try to grab at the chorus-leader. However, it is reasonable to believe that if an aulete fancied being a Scylla, he was led to it by his musical part and only passed from imitating κατὰ φωνάς to imitating κατὰ σῶμα. Still one should not forget that such an assumption is not as grounded as it is sometimes believed to be.<sup>43</sup>

Besides, our sources mention certain instrumental effects or techniques whose very names imply that they would suit onomatopoeic purposes perfectly, although we cannot claim that their application lay only in sound mimicry or that it was their primary purpose. Some of these effects have been associated with the New Music authors.

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<sup>40</sup> Henderson 1957, 396: “The bombastic libretto of Timotheus’ *Persae* was written for programme-music of the sort which attempted (Plato says) to make the noises of thunder, wind, hail, cats, dogs, cattle, bird-songs, and all kinds of instruments, with frequent and startling modulations”. Hordern 2002, 38–39: “The narrative of the Persian fleet’s destruction in Timotheus’ *Persae* would also be ideal for a display of the sort of musical mimesis described by Plato”. Cf. Zimmermann 1989, 30: “die teilweise lautmalerische Schilderung der Seeschlacht”.

<sup>41</sup> Mathiesen 1999, 69.

<sup>42</sup> *Poet.* 26, 1461 b 30–32 – see above n. 18. Collation of *Poet.* 15, 1454 a 30–31 with a papyrus fragment *Pap. Graec. Vind.* 26008 + 29329 (fr. 1, col. 2, l. 26 – 32, see the edition of Oellacher 1938, 135–181), in which the author of *Scylla* is named, proves that Aristotle is referring to the work of Timotheus when discussing the lament of Odysseus, and therefore probably also below when speaking of the auletes’ acting. See Tim. fr. 793 Page = Campbell = Hordern.

<sup>43</sup> West 1992, 363: “It was probably in Timotheus’ *Scylla* that auletes would make a show of grabbing at the chorus-leader, in imitation of the monster grabbing at Odysseus’ sailors. Homer describes Scylla as yelping like a young puppy, and Timotheus **no doubt** tried to achieve this effect in the aulos part”. Csapo 2004, 213: “Timotheus’ piper <...> made a mime of dragging off the *koryphaioi* in *Scylla*, **doubtless** while reproducing the monster’s wild hisses and roars through his instrument” (my emphasis. – N. A.).

A comedy fragment by Diphilus cited by Athenaeus claims that Timotheus' auletes perform with a 'goose style' (Athen. 14. 74, p. 657 e = Diphil. fr. 78 K.-A.):

χηνίζειν δὲ εἶρηται ἐπὶ τῶν αὐλούντων. Δίφιλος Συνωρίδι·  
ἐχηνίασας· ποιούσι τοῦτο πάντες οἱ  
παρὰ Τιμοθέω.

The word 'to goosise' is applied to aulos-players. Diphilos in the *Synoris*:  
"You have goosised! All the followers of Timotheus do that".

According to the interpretation of S. Hagel, the musicians are mocked for adopting a characteristic feature of the cackling of geese – "interspersed squeaks, where the voice suddenly, and only for a fraction of a second, breaks into a much higher pitch range, producing a sound that is much more clearly pitched, only to return immediately to its normal mode". Hagel notes that the enrichment of the musical range with sounds that were unusually high and startling rather than pleasant would have been typical of the New Music.<sup>44</sup>

Philoxenus is credited with introducing certain νίγλαροι into his music (Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 1142 A). This term occurs rarely and is hard to interpret. Lexicographers explain it with the help of τερετισμός or τερετίσματα, derivatives of τερετίζω (Hesych. *Lex.* v 559 s.v. νιγλαρεύων, 560 s.v. νίγλαροι; Phot. *Lex.* v 215 Theodoridis s.v. νιγλαρεύων, 216 s.v. νιγλάρους, 217 s.v. νίγλαροι; Suid. v 366 s.v. νίγλαροι), which literally means the chirping of a cicada or the twitter of a swallow (Hesych. 517, 518 s.vv. τερετίζοντα, τερετίσματα; Phot. *Lex.* 171 Theodoridis s.v. τερετίσματα; Suid. τ 338 s.v. τερετίσματα). Semantic analysis of these terms<sup>45</sup> shows that they were applied to singing and aulos-playing with elaborate melismata (lyre-playing is not explicitly referenced until the fifth to sixth centuries AD). In the case of singing this made the words unintelligible. The exact kind of embellishment implied is impossible to say; the significance of τερετισμός as a technical term is defined only in musical treatises of late antiquity and Byzantine times (Anon. *Bell.* 2; 10; 92; Bryenn. p. 481. 8 sqq., cf. 310. 24 sq. and 312. 11 sq. Jonker) in which it means a staccato repetition of the same note. In fact this effect is similar to the mimetic reproduction of a natural cicada's sound. A fragment from a comedy by Phrynichus<sup>46</sup> with

<sup>44</sup> Hagel 2010–2011, 496–497; 510–511.

<sup>45</sup> Restani 1983, 186–190; Rocconi 2003, 81–98.

<sup>46</sup> Athen. 2. 21, p. 44 d = Phrynich. fr. 74 K.-A.: <καὶ νιγ>λάρους θρηνεῖν, ἐν οἷσι Λάμπρος ἐναπέθνησεν, / ἄνθρωπος <ὦν> ὕδατοπότης, μινυρὸς ὑπερσοφιστής, / Μουσῶν σκελετός, ἀηδόνων ἠπίαιλος, ὕμνος "Αἰδου.

<νιγ>λάρους plausibly restored by Th. Bergk<sup>47</sup> suggests the same interpretation: the expression ἀηδόνων ἡπίαλος can create associations with the juggling of a nightingale, and the epithet μινυρός, with the high timbre of νίγλαροι.<sup>48</sup> The belief that νίγλαροι served for mimetic purposes<sup>49</sup> is shared by the *Suda*, where the term is thought to be onomatopoeic, though further explanation is not provided (ν 366: ἔοικεν ὠνοματοπεποιῆσθαι).

It is natural to describe such effects on the basis of their similarity to animal noises. Yet we cannot know whether they were invented and used purposefully to imitate such sounds. Known titles of Philoxenus' and Timotheus' works make one doubt that they systematically demanded mimicking of cicadas or geese (even more so since in the case of χηνίζειν we are dealing with teasing rather than a technical term). We therefore lack information about what these techniques were actually used for.

On the whole, there is hardly any doubt that the composers of the New Music used onomatopoeic effects, both vocal and instrumental, yet nowhere is it claimed that this characteristic was specifically innovative. What is more, two jokes out of three could not have arisen purely from the fact that sound mimicry was used: the conservative Dorion seems to say that its use in *Nauplius* was insufficient and thus unconvincing, whereas the avant-garde Stratonikus, on the contrary, ridicules the exaggerated violent realism in *Semele's Birth-Pangs*, which he likely believed was not appropriate for the divine subject.<sup>50</sup> As for Aristophanes, his allusion to Philoxenus' *Cyclops* may well be a kind of *Komplimentzitate*, rather than an explicit criticism.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Bergk 1838, 375–376.

<sup>48</sup> Hagel 2010–2011, 496 n. 16: “This passage ... contributes associations of feebleness and whining (μινυρός), while the expression ἀηδόνων ἡπίαλος adds substance to the idea of a staccato element, which is a plausible result of nightingales shivering from ague”.

<sup>49</sup> Restani 1983, 189: “Originariamente, si può pensare che νίγλαροι indicasse un suono imitativo di qualche stridulo o tintinnante verso di animale, coerente con la prassi mimetica musicale dei rappresentanti di tale indirizzo” (sc. the New Music).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Privitera 1979, 320 n. 160: “Dorione derideva la tempesta del *Nauplio* per difetto...; Stratonico biasimava le gride di Semele, nel *Parto di Semele*, per eccesso”. Power 2013, 249–250: Dorion is not ridiculing sensational musical mimesis in general, but rather publicizing its lacklustre effect.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Nesselrath 1990, 251–252: “die Parodie auf den Κύκλωψ des Philoxenos ... ist ... kaum ein Angriff auf Philoxenos (dessen Name gar nicht fällt), sondern in Gegenteil fast eine Hommage an den großen Erfolg seines Κύκλωψ”.

## II. Evidence of sound mimicry in Plato

Arguments that onomatopoeia was a characteristic of the New Music are usually backed with references to Plato. Indeed, it is in his works that we find the most extensive testimonies to sound mimicry in music.

First it is important to look again at the famous discussion on what must and must not be imitated in the poetry of an ideal polis (*Resp.* 3).

The second section of this discussion (392 c – 398 b) is dedicated to poetic expression (λέξις), that is, the two ways in which a poet presents his material: ‘imitation’ (μίμησις) and ‘narration’ (διήγησις). In 394 c Socrates names some of the literary genres he has in mind,<sup>52</sup> and it is evident that they were not chosen on the base of whether they were connected to music or not: tragedy and comedy contain sung and spoken parts, dithyramb is entirely musical, while epos lacks singing.<sup>53</sup> Participants in the dialogue do not begin discussing specifically musical means until 398 c<sup>54</sup> (though harmony and rhythm are already mentioned in 397 c as additional expressive means used by poets). In 395 d – 396 b a list is compiled of what the guardians (and accordingly the poets composing for them)<sup>55</sup> must not imitate: women, slaves, debased people, madmen, handicraft workers. Then, quite unexpectedly, the following undesirable objects of imitation are added (396 b):

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<sup>52</sup> ...τῆς ποιήσεώς τε καὶ μυθολογίας ἡ μὲν διὰ μιμήσεως ὅλη ἐστὶν ὥσπερ σὺ λέγεις **τραγωδία** τε καὶ **κωμῳδία** ἡ δὲ δι’ ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ – εὐροῖς δ’ ἂν αὐτὴν μάλιστά που ἐν **διθυράμβοις** – ἡ δ’ αὖ δι’ ἀμφοτέρων ἐν τε τῇ **τῶν ἐπῶν ποιήσει**, πολλαχοῦ δὲ καὶ **ἄλλοθι**...

<sup>53</sup> The hypothesis on singing epic poetry (see West 1971, 308; West 1986, 45–46) does not seem applicable to the fourth century BC. For Aristotle ἐποποιία evidently belongs to ψιλομετρία (*Poet.* 1148 a 11), ἔξω μελοποιίας (1459 b 10), cf. 1462 a 14–16: πάντ’ ἔχει [sc. ἡ τραγωδία] ὅσαπερ ἡ ἐποποιία ... καὶ ἔτι οὐ μικρὸν μέρος τὴν μουσικὴν. According to the source of Ps.-Plut. (most probably Heraclides), the ancient citharodic practice of singing ἔπη (ὅτι δ’ οἱ κιθαρωδικοὶ νόμοι οἱ **πάλαι** ἐξ ἐπῶν συνίσταντο, which he takes pains to prove, see *De mus.* 1132 D–E; 1133 C) only lasted until the innovations of Phrynis and Timotheus (1132 D–E; 1133 B–C; cf. Procl. ap. Phot. *Bibl.* 320 b 5–11 Bekker).

<sup>54</sup> *Resp.* 3. 398 b 6 – c 2: Νῦν δὲ <...> κινδυνεύει ἡμῖν τῆς μουσικῆς τὸ περὶ λόγους τε καὶ μύθους παντελῶς διαπεπεράνθαι· ἅ τε γὰρ λεκτέον καὶ ὡς λεκτέον εἴρηται. <...> Οὐκοῦν μετὰ τοῦτο <...> τὸ περὶ ᾧδης τρόπου καὶ μελῶν λοιπόν;

<sup>55</sup> In the *Republic* Plato causes problems for interpreters by indiscriminately describing the acts of composing, performing, and perceiving of poetic work as μίμησις. For an attempt at explanation see Havelock 1963, chapters III and IX.

Τί δέ; ἵππους χρεμετίζοντας καὶ ταύρους μυκωμένους καὶ ποταμοὺς  
 ψοφοῦντας καὶ θάλατταν κτυποῦσαν καὶ βροντὰς καὶ πάντα αὖ τὰ  
 τοιαῦτα ἢ μιμήσονται;  
 Ἄλλ' ἀπείρηται αὐτοῖς, ἔφη, μήτε μαίνεσθαι μήτε μαινομένοις  
 ἀφομοιοῦσθαι.

Well then, will they imitate horses neighing, bulls bellowing, rivers  
 gurgling, the sea roaring, the thunder and everything of that kind?  
 But they have been forbidden, he said, to be mad or to act like madmen.

The homogeneous series of examples is interrupted: instead of dealing with the imitation of persons, it deals with the imitation of the sounds of nature. No wonder the readers of the passage may feel confused. H. Koller even claimed that Plato had suddenly changed the meaning of *μίμησις* as well as the argument and started quoting a treatise of Damon on entirely musical matters, thus anticipating the following section.<sup>56</sup> Yet it is hardly plausible that Socrates simply lost his train of thought: a little later he knows exactly what stage of the argument they have reached (see n. 54). Thus the phrase should not be analyzed beyond its broader context (that is, discussing *λέξις*).

It is clear from Socrates' explanations (392 e – 394 a) that *διήγησις* means narrative in the third person, and *μίμησις* means the dramatic impersonation in direct speech: when Homer speaks on behalf of Chryses in *Il.* 1, he imitates, whereas to say: "Chryses came and started to plead..." would be a narration. Therefore in our passage Plato considers the possibility that a poet (or a performer) might not say, "And the hungry sea was roaring, and a storm was on its deep",<sup>57</sup> but would rather utter the sounds of wild nature himself. The ironic response by Adeimantus makes this even more evident: one can liken a person who bellows or howls to a madman, but not someone who simply narrates the story of a bull or a tempest.

The same possibility occurs again in 397 a: a worthy performer will only imitate irreproachable people, while a debased and unscrupulous one will not be so restrained.

Οὐκοῦν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὁ μὴ τοιοῦτος αὖ, ὅσῳ ἂν φαυλότερος ᾖ, πάντα τε  
 μᾶλλον διηγήσεται καὶ οὐδὲν ἑαυτοῦ ἀνάξιον οἰήσεται εἶναι, ὥστε  
 πάντα ἐπιχειρήσει μιμεῖσθαι σπουδῇ τε καὶ ἐναντίον πολλῶν, καὶ ἂ  
 νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, βροντὰς τε καὶ ψόφους ἀνέμων τε καὶ χαλαζῶν καὶ  
 ἁζόνων τε καὶ τροχιλιῶν, καὶ σαλπίγγων καὶ αὐλῶν καὶ συρίγγων  
 καὶ πάντων ὀργάνων φωνάς, καὶ ἔτι κυνῶν καὶ προβάτων καὶ ὀρνέων

<sup>56</sup> Koller 1954, 18–21.

<sup>57</sup> J. T. Field, "The Tempest".

φθόγγους· καὶ ἔσται δὴ ἡ τούτου λέξις ἅπανσα διὰ μιμήσεως φωναῖς τε καὶ σχήμασιν, ἢ μικρόν τι διηγήσεως ἔχουσα; Ἀνάγκη, ἔφη, καὶ τοῦτο.

“Well then”, I said, “the man who is not like this will go right through everything, and the more so the more despicable he is. He will think nothing unworthy of him, so that he will make great efforts, before large audiences, to imitate everything, as we were saying just now – thunder, and the noises of winds and hail and axes and pulleys, and the voices of salpings and auloi and syringes and instruments of every kind, and even the sounds of dogs and sheep and birds: and his diction will consist entirely of imitations by voice and gesture, or will include just a smattering of narration”.

“That is inevitable as well”, he said.<sup>58</sup>

As we remember, at this point Plato is examining poetic expression (λέξις); he has not yet dealt with specifically musical means, and, more generally, he does not regard instrumental music without words as suitable education. It follows that he ascribes sound mimicry to the human voice. In the previous passage (396 b) one might still have thought that Plato implied using all expressive means at a poet's disposal, including instrumental interludes between sung phrases. However, in the present case (397 a) musical instruments are themselves listed among the objects it would be unwise to imitate. The context does not even encourage one to consider using one instrument to imitate the sounds of another (such as *σαλπιστικά κρούματα* played on an aulos in the Pythian nome), because the aulos, normally the only instrument used in drama or dithyramb (the genres mentioned above, 394 c), is itself included in the list of forbidden objects.<sup>59</sup> Besides, the means of imitation – *φωναῖς τε καὶ σχήμασιν* – are indicated; a combination of *φωναί* with movements or postures also makes one think of the physical possibilities of the human body. One further argument is presented by W. B. Stanford:<sup>60</sup> he draws attention to 395 d, where it is specifically stated that imitation affects a person in relation to body, voice and mind (*καὶ κατὰ σῶμα καὶ φωνὰς καὶ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν*). The examples that follow involve first the condition of mind (women, slaves, cowards, madmen) and then bodily gestures (manual workers), so it is natural to expect that the third group will deal with the human voice.

<sup>58</sup> Translation: Barker 1984, 128.

<sup>59</sup> However it is hard to raise an objection to Power 2013, 244 n. 30, who considers a possibility of a citharistic imitation of the aulos.

<sup>60</sup> Stanford 1973, 186.

Thus we see that the *Republic* depicts a surprisingly widespread use of sound mimicry in poetry, as known to Plato.

The question arises of what genres are implied. By now we can exclude the effects of instrumental music or stage machinery<sup>61</sup> and are still left with a broad choice (in fact Plato must have had in mind every kind of poetry that contains mimetic effects). For the most part, scholars think that the musical (or partly musical) genres mentioned in 394 c (see n. 52) – dramatic performances (or just comedy)<sup>62</sup> and contemporary dithyramb<sup>63</sup> – are implied. In addition, there is enigmatic evidence of skilled sound imitators that may be relevant, though we are not told of the circumstances in which they practiced their art: Pseudo-Aristotle (*De audib.* 800 a 25–29) mentions people who are able to imitate the voices of horses, frogs, nightingales, cranes and “almost all other animals”; Plutarch (*De aud. poet.* 18 c) says that Parmenon was particularly good at imitating a pig’s squealing, and Theodorus, the noise of a pulley.<sup>64</sup> F. Ademollo suggests that these are performances of mimes.<sup>65</sup>

Stanford<sup>66</sup> proposed a revisal of this traditional interpretation, claiming that Plato’s primary target is Homeric epos with the “sound painting” observed by ancient critics. Although he rightly argues that both Platonic passages deal with poetic texts and not instrumental music, his conclusion that no musical genre was intended at all is an obvious overstatement: he does not take into account that the syncretism of music and poetry was natural for Plato. Nevertheless, the evidence that he collected on Homeric poems is worth examining.

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<sup>61</sup> Proposed by Adam 1969, 151.

<sup>62</sup> Atkins 1952, 37 (comedy); Adam 1969, 151; Zimmermann 1984, 79 with n. 52; Ferrari 1989, 116; Burnyeat 1999, 270; Prauschello 2014, 218–219; for literary evidence, see below part III.

<sup>63</sup> Adam 1969, 151; Murray 1996, 180; for literary evidence, see above part I.

<sup>64</sup> Parmenon was probably a comic actor (Stephanis 1988, no. 2012), and Theodorus a tragic actor (*ibid.*, no. 1157) in the mid-fourth century BC. However “imitation of the disagreeable noise made by a windlass or block and tackle mechanism seems remote from tragic acting” (Hunter–Russell 2011, 101). Nor does a performance that made Παρμένωντος ὄς proverbial resemble a comedy: we infer from a more detailed account of Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 5. 1. 2, 674 c) that Parmenon had rivals who tried in vain to outdo him publicly.

<sup>65</sup> Ademollo 2011, 273. Cf. imitation διὰ τῆς φωνῆς mentioned in Aristot. *Poet.* 1447 a 20, which is probably different from musical genres such as tragedy, comedy, dithyramb, aulos- and cithara-playing.

<sup>66</sup> Stanford 1973, followed by Murray 1996, 177–178. Confronting in 397 c examples of sounds which are not mentioned in Homer, both admit that Plato extends the scope of his discussion to include some contemporary literature.



To my mind, one part of this evidence can be set aside at once, and that is the use of words etymologically based on sound imitation (onomatopoeia in the linguistic sense). Some learned readers of Homer believed that he was aware of the rules followed by the first inventors of names and applied them to his own word-making which reflected Nature itself (Dion. Hal. *De comp.* 16; Dio Chrys. 12, 68: *καναχάς τε καὶ βόμβους καὶ κτύπον καὶ δοῦπον καὶ ἄραβον* *πρῶτος ἐξευρὼν καὶ ὀνομάσας*; Ps.-Plut. *De Hom. vita et poesi* 16). Lists of sounds that are named with such words (including that of the sea, rivers, winds, animals, birds and musical instruments) overlap – for natural reasons – with lists of the objects of sound mimicry in *Resp.* 396 b – 397 c. This leads Stanford to conclude that Plato’s discussion was the starting point for later authors who believed that he was referring to the onomatopoeic language of Homer.<sup>67</sup> However, if the writers of Roman times did indeed believe that they were developing Platonic argument, they were wrong. A lack of precision in various respects can be demonstrated in their direct references to Plato: despite Dio’s aberration of memory<sup>68</sup> or Dionysius’ superficial reading,<sup>69</sup> nowhere in the *Republic* is there a single reference to etymology or Homer the sound imitator, and in *Cratylus* *ὀνοματοποιοί* are by no means related to Homer and have nothing to do with sound mimicry. In response to Stanford one may object that using etymologically onomatopoeic words does not involve impersonation, and from the point of view displayed in *Resp.* 3 it would be *διήγησις* and not *μίμησις*. Socrates himself cannot do without them (*χρεμετίζοντας, μυκωμένους, ψοφούντας, κτυποῦσαν, βροντάς*), so it is hardly likely that he would consider such generally accepted “sound imitation” as a sign of madness or bad taste.

Having rejected this kind of evidence, we must turn to a much more subtle matter indicated by Stanford, that is, “sound painting” or, as R. Nünlist puts it, the “iconic relation between form and content”:<sup>70</sup> by accumulating certain vowels or consonants, arranging long or short

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<sup>67</sup> Stanford 1973, 187; 188: “From the similarity between these passages in Dionysios and Dion, and the two in *Republic* 396 b – 7 c it would seem that the two later writers had the earlier discussion in mind and were answering Socrates’ objections from the point of view of the poet, while defending Homer’s use of onomatopoeia as a poetic device”.

<sup>68</sup> Dio Chrys. 53. 5: *ὁ δὲ Πλάτων ἅμα αἰτιώμενος αὐτόν (sc. Ὅμηρον), ὡς εἶπον, καὶ τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ θαυμαστήν τινα ἀποφαίνει τῆς ποιήσεως, ὡς εἰκόνα ὄντα παντὸς χρήματος καὶ πάσας ἀτεχνῶς ἀφιέντα φωνάς, ποταμῶν τε καὶ ἀνέμων καὶ κυμάτων* (there follows a reference to *Resp.* 398 a).

<sup>69</sup> Dion. Hal. *De comp.* 14–16 (with a reference to the *Cratylus* and “many other places” in 16); for a discussion of his erroneous understanding of Plato, see Belardi 1985, 24–53, esp. 44; 46–48; 52–53.

<sup>70</sup> Nünlist 2009, 215.

syllables, accentuating or concealing word-endings, using particular forms of words etc. a poet can depict through sound the content of the passage or the action described within.<sup>71</sup> Stanford offers a collection of examples from Greek literature,<sup>72</sup> that for the most part lack the acknowledgment of ancient readers. Yet this technique was not unknown in antiquity, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus teaches it, drawing examples from Homer (*De comp.* 15–16; 20). He argues that certain passages depict movements (*Il.* 21. 240–242; *Od.* 9. 415–416; 11. 593–598), appearance (*Od.* 17. 36–37; 6. 162–163; 11. 281–282), and emotions (*Il.* 22. 476; 18. 225). There are also images of two conjoining rivers (*Il.* 4. 452–453: ὥς δ' ὅτε χεῖμαρροι ποταμοὶ κατ' ὄρεσφι ῥέοντες / ἐς μισγάγκειαν συμβάλλετον ὄβριμον ὕδωρ) and of the sea beating against the shore (*Il.* 17. 267: ἡϊόνες βοόωσιν ἐρευγομένης ἀλὸς ἔξω) – the same objects of sound imitation as mentioned in the *Republic*. The latter verse was famous in antiquity for its clear visualization of the content through the use of βοόωσιν (e.g. Aristot. *Poet.* 1458 b 31; Ps.-Plut. *De Hom. vita et poesi* 16); it was even claimed that Plato (or Solon) burned his own poetry after reading this unsurpassed line.<sup>73</sup> So are we to agree with Stanford that Plato had in mind this complex “sound painting” in unsung poetry rather than simple sound-for-sound imitation that was likely set to the music?

My impression is that in the *Republic* Plato refers to well-known examples that would have been easily recognizable (it must not be more difficult to notice an imitation of a horse whinnying than to notice speaking, say, on behalf of a woman in love). Revealing Homer’s “sound painting” is a much more complicated matter that requires special philological interest and skill. As Stanford himself admits, such subtle mimetic effects are not easy to detect (a case postulated by one listener may seem imaginary to another); there is no agreed scientific basis to appreciate

<sup>71</sup> Etymologically onomatopoeic words often occur in such passages, but the device under consideration is not tantamount to simply using them (Stanford 1973 does not mark the difference).

<sup>72</sup> Stanford 1967, 99–116.

<sup>73</sup> *Sch. Hom. Il.* 17. 263–265: οὐ μόνον ῥεύματι ποταμοῦ οὐδὲ κύματι θαλάσσης εἶκασε τὸν ἦχον, ἀλλ' ἄμφω συνέπλεξε. καὶ ἔστιν ἰδεῖν κῶμα μέγα θαλάσσης ἐπιφερόμενον ποταμοῦ ῥεύματι καὶ τῷ ἀνακόπτεσθαι βρυχώμενον, καὶ τὰς ἐκατέρωθεν τοῦ ποταμοῦ θαλασσίας ἡϊόνας ἠχούσας, ὃ ἐμιμήσατο διὰ τῆς ἐπεκτάσεως τοῦ βοόωσιν. αὕτη ἡ εἰκὼν Πλάτωνος ἔκαυσε τὰ ποιήματα· οὕτως ἐναργέστερον τοῦ ὁρωμένου τὸ ἀκουόμενον παρέστησεν. *Ibid.* 265: Σόλωνά φασι τὸν νομοθέτην, μιμησάμενον τὴν Ὀμήρου ποίησιν ἐν ἅπασιν, ἐνθάδε γενόμενον καὶ προσ<σ>χόντα τῷ στίχῳ σφόδρα κατ' εὐταξίαν ἐπιτετευγμένῳ διαπορήσαι καὶ θαυμάσαντα κατακαῦσαι τὰ ἴδια σκέμματα· τῆς γὰρ ἐπαλλήλου τῶν ὑδάτων ἐκβολῆς ἢ τοῦ βοόωσιν ἀναδίπλωσις ὁμοίαν ἀπετέλεσε συνφθόριον.

adequacy in verbal sound-imitation, and for the most part it is unclear whether the poet's use was deliberate.<sup>74</sup> Though our earliest examples derive from the Homeric scholia,<sup>75</sup> it cannot be ruled out that some of Plato's contemporaries and even the sophistic tradition before him might already have revealed interest in the topic.<sup>76</sup> Yet in this case I believe that the philosopher would have felt it necessary to provide a theoretical introduction analyzing the imitative possibilities of the στοιχεῖα of human speech. Dionysius did so for his phonosymbolical studies (*De comp.* 14–15), as did Plato himself in *Cratylus* during an experiment to see whether letters and syllables can express the essence of things (starting with 424 b: ὁρθότατόν ἐστι διελέσθαι τὰ στοιχεῖα πρῶτον).

At this point it seems sensible to address one more Platonic passage, this time from *Cratylus*. The participants in the dialogue must define the ὀνομαστική τέχνη, identifying it by what it is *not* (423 c–d):

EPM. ...ἀλλὰ τίς ἄν, ὦ Σώκρατες, μίμησις εἴη τὸ ὄνομα;

ΣΩ. Πρῶτον μὲν, ὥς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, οὐκ ἔάν καθάπερ τῇ μουσικῇ μιμούμεθα τὰ πράγματα οὕτω μιμώμεθα, καίτοι φωνῇ γε καὶ τότε μιμούμεθα· ἔπειτα οὐκ ἔάν ἅπερ ἡ μουσικὴ μιμεῖται καὶ ἡμεῖς μιμώμεθα, οὐ μοι δοκοῦμεν ὀνομάσκειν. λέγω δέ τοι τοῦτο· ἔστι τοῖς πράγμασι φωνὴ καὶ σχῆμα ἐκάστω, καὶ χρώμα γε πολλοῖς;

EPM. Πάνυ γε.

ΣΩ. Ἔοικε τοίνυν οὐκ ἔάν τις ταῦτα μιμηται, οὐδὲ περὶ ταύτας τὰς μιμήσεις ἡ τέχνη ἡ ὀνομαστικὴ εἶναι. αὗται μὲν γάρ εἰσιν ἡ μὲν μουσική, ἡ δὲ γραφική.

HERM. But, Socrates, what sort of imitation should the name be?

SOCR. It seems to me that we shall not be naming, first, if we imitate the objects as we imitate them in music – although there too we imitate them with the voice – and secondly, if we imitate the very items which music imitates. What do I mean thereby? Do the objects have each a sound and a shape, and many of them a colour as well?

HERM. Of course.

SOCR. It seems, then, that the onomastic art is not involved if one imitates these features, and does not concern these imitations. For the arts involved therein are respectively music and painting.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Stanford 1967, 99–100. Most examples adduced by Dionysius would be hard to understand without his explanations. He also takes pains to prove that the sound effects noted by him are not incidental: καὶ ὅτι ταῦτα οὐ φύσεώς ἐστιν αὐτοματιζούσης ἔργα ἀλλὰ τέχνης μιμήσασθαι πειρωμένης τὰ γινόμενα, τὰ τούτοις ἐξῆς λεγόμενα δηλοῖ (*De comp.* 20).

<sup>75</sup> See Richardson 1980, 283–287; Nünlist 2009, 215–217.

<sup>76</sup> See Ademollo 2011, 282.

<sup>77</sup> Translation: Ademollo 2011, 273–274

A reader cannot help noticing that the definition of music suggested here is unsatisfactory:<sup>78</sup> surely the art of music cannot be reduced to imitating, through sounds,<sup>79</sup> only those sounds produced by objects or associated with them. Attempting to do justice to Plato, one might suppose that he did not mean to define all existing music as such and was rather saying that imitation of the sounds of objects falls within the realm of music. In any case, two important conclusions arise from this passage. First, sound mimicry was common enough in music to afford such a reference. Second, if the imitation of sounds is the province of music for Plato in *Cratylus*, this must also be the case for the *Republic*: when speaking of mimicking bulls, horses, rivers, the sea, thunder, etc., he implies poetic genres set to music rather than Homeric epos.

We are not aware how exactly the poets performed this sound imitation. Modern experience strongly suggests that musical means played an important part, but we are in no position to confirm this. Since sound mimicry involved the voice, one might expect to find its traces in extant texts. However, this is not the case in known archaic and classical lyrics,<sup>80</sup> except in comedy (see part III below). One possible explanation might be that onomatopoeic sounds were inarticulate, performed *extra metrum* and therefore not written down;<sup>81</sup> another is, that there is not a significant archive of early lyric poetry, so the lack of sound mimesis in extant pieces is accidental.<sup>82</sup> Otherwise it can be assumed – in accordance with Hordern and those commentators who relate Plat. *Resp.* 396 b and 397 a to the later dithyramb<sup>83</sup> – that *vocal* sound mimicry in high poetry first and only

<sup>78</sup> Ademollo 2011, 275.

<sup>79</sup> Ademollo 2011, 275 n. 30 interprets φωνή in this passage first as ‘voice’ (καίτοι φωνῇ γε καὶ τότε μιμούμεθα implies “like in naming”) and then more generally as ‘any sound whatsoever’ (ἔστι τοῖς πράγμασι φωνή). I prefer to admit the generic meaning for both cases, which includes both singing and musical instruments.

<sup>80</sup> The famous case of the Deliads in *Hymn. Hom.* 3. 162–164 (πάντων δ’ ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ κρεμβαλιαστὸν / μιμεῖσθ’ ἴσασιν· φαίη δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕκαστος / φθέγγεσθ’· οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρηρεν αἰοιδή), I believe, deals with observing the folk traditions of various Greek peoples in song and dance, and not with sound mimicry. Cf. Pozdnev 2010 [M. M. Позднев, *Психология искусства. Учение Аристотеля*], 89–91.

<sup>81</sup> For instance, one could imagine a mimetic illustration accompanying Alcman’s words οἶδα δ’ ὀρνίχων νόμῳ παντῶν (fr. 40 Page) or γεγλωσσαμένην κακκαβίδων ὅπα συνθέμενος (fr. 39 Page).

<sup>82</sup> One exception is Archilochus’ τήνελλα (fr. 324 IEG) imitating the sound of a cithara, see *Sch. Pind. Ol.* 9. 1, I p. 267, 1–13 Dr. However, this might already have been a traditional acclamation of a victor by Archilochus’ time. West 1992, 67 n. 86, compares τήνελλα before καλλίνικε with the cue *hip-hip* before *hooray*.

<sup>83</sup> See above n. 11; 63.

became widespread under the influence of the New Music. The genres most affected by this trend were dithyramb and citharody; tragedy was also influenced, though the tragedians are never referred to as pioneers.<sup>84</sup> It is well known that little has remained of its authors' verse, let alone the music. Yet even scarce fragments lead one to conclude that sound-play gained unprecedented importance among them and was sometimes used to mimic sense:<sup>85</sup> e.g., Timotheus seems to have accumulated sigmas to imitate the sea and dental mutes to depict the wailing of the naked frozen Persians (fr. 19. 104–119 Edmonds = fr. 791. coll. II–VI. 95–109 Hordern);<sup>86</sup> Euripides portrays barbaric speech by means of anadiplosis, anaphora and alliteration (*Phoen.* 678–681).<sup>87</sup> The mimetic effect of such sound figures was probably enhanced by music.

Finally, let us turn to a discussion of musical art in the *Laws* (*Leg.* 2. 668 a – 670 d). Clearly, Plato is referring to contemporary practice when he indicates two widespread errors made by composers, which the Muses never would have committed. The first (669 c–d) consists of a wrong combination of mimetic elements:

(I) οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐκεῖναί γε <sc. Μοῦσαι> ἐξαμάρτοιέν ποτε τοσοῦτον ὥστε ῥήματα ἀνδρῶν ποιήσασαι τὸ χρῶμα γυναικῶν καὶ μέλος ἀποδοῦναι, καὶ μέλος ἐλευθέρων αὐτῶν καὶ σχήματα συνθεῖσαι ῥυθμοὺς δούλων καὶ ἀνελευθέρων προσαρμόττειν, οὐδ' αὐτῶν ῥυθμοὺς καὶ σχήματα ἐλευθέρων ὑποθεῖσαι μέλος ἢ λόγον ἐναντίον ἀποδοῦναι τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς, (II) ἔτι δὲ θηρίων φωνὰς καὶ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ὀργάνων καὶ πάντας ψόφους εἰς ταῦτόν οὐκ ἂν ποτε συνθεῖεν, ὥς ἔν τι μιμούμεναι· ποιηταὶ δὲ ἀνθρώπινοι σφόδρα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐμπλέκοντες καὶ συγκυκλῶντες ἀλόγως, γέλωτ' ἂν παρασκευάζοιεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὅσους φησὶν Ὀρφεὺς λαχεῖν ὥραν τῆς τέρψιος. ταῦτά γε γὰρ ὁρῶσι πάντα κυκλώμενα.

For the Muses would never make so gross an error as to compose words suitable for men, and then give the melody a colouring proper to women, to put together melody and postures of free men and then fit to them rhythms proper to slaves and servile persons, or to start with rhythms and postures expressive of freedom, and to give them a melody or words of opposite character to the rhythms; nor would they ever put together in the same piece the sounds of wild beasts and men and instruments, and

<sup>84</sup> West 1992, 357.

<sup>85</sup> Csapo 2004, 222–223.

<sup>86</sup> Mathiesen 1999, 69.

<sup>87</sup> Csapo 2004, 222–223.

noises of all sorts, as though in imitation of a single object. But human composers, weaving and jumbling all such things nonsensically together, would be laughed at by everyone who, as Orpheus puts it, ‘has attained the full bloom of joyfulness’. For they can see all these things jumbled together.<sup>88</sup>

The description of this mistake includes two points: with ἔτι δέ the phrase is clearly divided into two parts (marked as I and II here), each depending upon a verb in optative mood + ἄν with the negation οὐ ... ποτε. Both points specify the same error: the combining of different objects of imitation. Neither part inquires which object is good and which is bad (it is only by adducing passages from the *Republic* for comparison that we can guess that the Muses, in Plato’s opinion, would not imitate a base character or an animal voice).

Still, there is also a difference. The first part (I) deals with the means of imitating an ethos – words, “colouring”,<sup>89</sup> melody, rhythm, and postures (ῥήματα, χρώμα, μέλος, ῥυθμός, σχήματα): female devices are not to be mixed with male, nor noble with servile. It is clear that none of these components are ruled out as unnecessary in a composition (Plato approves of syncretic art, see 669 d–e) – one merely has to ensure they are all suitable and compatible in regard to the object of imitation, that is, the ethos. If one puts together a “male” melody with a “female” rhythm, the result will be not two different artistic images, but rather no one imitated properly. The lack of poetic mastery is evident here in the inability to define correctly the ethos of a certain expressive means.

As for sound mimicry (II), surely it would not be difficult for an author or his audience to understand what sounds must be imitated. Oddly, Plato argues that one should not introduce the imitation of different sounds (such as human and animal voices) into the same composition, since this would destroy the unity of the whole. His aim is apparently to prevent an excessive variety of expressive means and modulations (*Resp.* 397 b–c).<sup>90</sup> However, taken alone, this passage does not mean that onomatopoeia is in itself unacceptable.

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<sup>88</sup> Translation: Barker 1984, 154.

<sup>89</sup> Barker 1984, 154 n. 80: “*Chroma*, possibly here in the sense related to tuning” (cf. 143 n. 62: “Metaphorical references to ‘colouring’ in music seem to refer to expressive effects involving either ‘tone-colour’ or nuances of tuning”).

<sup>90</sup> West 1992, 369: “All this can only be done by using a whole range of different scales, rhythms, and changes of one to another. Once it is excluded, there will be no need of polychordy and omnimodality in the music, or of instruments such as harps or auloi that yield excessive numbers of notes and scales, or of complex rhythms”.

The reference to the imitation of human voices is curious. Perhaps it relates to the performance of any vocal part in the first person. Yet in the same list containing the imitation of animals and instruments, Plato may be implying any conscious changing of the voice, such as performing a woman's part in a high register<sup>91</sup> or imitating barbaric speech. Nor can mimicking the human voice with a musical instrument be ruled out, especially inarticulate groans and cries (such as those of a woman in childbirth by Timotheus).

It is unclear from this passage whether Plato meant vocal or instrumental sound mimicry, or both.

The composers' second mistake consists in violating the syncretism of poetry, music and dance (669 d – 670 a):

καὶ ἔτι διασπῶσιν οἱ ποιηταὶ ῥυθμὸν μὲν καὶ σχήματα μέλους χωρὶς, λόγους ψιλοῦς εἰς μέτρα τιθέντες, μέλος δ' αὖ καὶ ῥυθμὸν ἄνευ ῥημάτων, ψιλῇ κιθαρίσει τε καὶ αὐλήσει προσχρώμενοι, ἐν οἷς δὴ παγγάλεπον ἄνευ λόγου γινόμενον ῥυθμὸν τε καὶ ἁρμονίαν γιγνώσκειν ὅτι τε βούλεται καὶ ὅτῳ ἔοικε τῶν ἀξιολόγων μιμημάτων· ἀλλὰ ὑπολαβεῖν ἀναγκαῖον ὅτι τὸ τοιοῦτόν γε πολλῆς ἀγροικίας μεστὸν πᾶν, ὅποσον τάχους τε καὶ ἀπταισίας καὶ φωνῆς θηριώδους σφόδρα φίλον ὥστ' αὐλήσει γε χρῆσθαι καὶ κιθαρίσει πλὴν ὅσον ὑπὸ ὄρχησίν τε καὶ ᾠδῇν, ψιλῷ δ' ἐκατέρῳ πᾶσά τις ἀμουσία καὶ θαυματουργία γίγνεται ἂν τῆς χρήσεως.

And further, the composers tear rhythm and posture away from melody, putting bare words into metres, setting melody and rhythm without words, and using the cithara and the aulos without the voice, a practice in which it is extremely difficult – since rhythm and *harmonia* occur with no words – to understand what is intended, and what worthwhile representation it is like. It is essential that we accept the principle that all such practices are utterly inartistic, if they are so enamoured of speed and precision and animal noises that they use the music of the aulos and the cithara for purposes other than the accompaniment of dance and song: the use of either by itself is characteristic of uncultured and vulgar showmanship.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Such as the part of Electra in Euripides: see *Sch. Eur. Or.* 176, p. 116, 14–16 Schwartz.

<sup>92</sup> Translation: Barker 1984, 154.



This is the famous Platonic passage in which music that is purely instrumental is condemned, with reasons adduced. The participants in the dialogue have to confess that in spite of their working hypothesis about the mimetic character of any kind of music (668 a–c) it is difficult to recognize the mimesis when the text is missing (though they believe that true connoisseurs would be able to do so). Annoyed, the Athenian remarks: <anyway this task is not even worth our efforts, since> there is nothing good in music which aims only at displaying masterly technique (τάχος καὶ ἀπταισσία) and sound-mimetic tricks (φωνὴ θηριώδης).

This phrase clearly shows that onomatopoeia is the acknowledged forte of instrumental music:<sup>93</sup> virtuoso musicians were even willing to sacrifice poetic text and dance in order to perform it perfectly.

Thus Plato provides the following information: musical mimicry was common in his time; it was particularly typical of instrumental music, but also occurred in vocal forms. The philosopher dismisses imitating the inarticulate sounds of nature as senseless trickery.

Is it reasonable to connect Plato's evidence to the New Music? The culmination of this phenomenon dates to the second half of the fifth century BC, whereas the *Republic* was composed ca. 380–370, and the *Laws* ca. 360–347. Yet, firstly, it is plausible that the innovations introduced proved to be irreversible and influenced the further development of Greek music;<sup>94</sup> secondly, Plato's aesthetic predilections perhaps took shape in his young years and scarcely changed later on; in addition, reproducing a situation in the age of Socrates would suit the Socratic dialogues.<sup>95</sup> It cannot be denied that an overview of everything that Plato found unacceptable in this art closely matches known features of the New Music.<sup>96</sup> However, it should be noted that the passages considered above contain no references to any recent degradation (such as in *Leg.* 659 b–c or 700 a – 701 b). If Plato dislikes some aspects of music, one can hardly make the New Music responsible for everything he

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<sup>93</sup> There is nothing new in claiming that a programmatic character and sound-mimetic elements were typical features of Greek instrumental music (see e.g. Guhrauer 1904; West 1992, 368 n. 49; Hagel 2010–2011, 497; Rocconi 2014). Cf. Aristot. *Poet.* 1447 a 14–16: καὶ τῆς αὐλητικῆς ἢ πλείστη καὶ κιθαριστικῆς πᾶσαι τυγχάνουσιν οὔσαι μιμήσεις τὸ σύνολον.

<sup>94</sup> See Henderson 1957, 397–398; West 1992, 371–372.

<sup>95</sup> I owe this observation to Prof. A. Verlinsky.

<sup>96</sup> Csapo 2004, 236: “Plato makes no secret of his tastes in music. If there is one thing that characterizes them all, it is violent antipathy to every feature of New Musical style” (a series of examples follows).

disapproves of. For example, he does not accept melody without words (*Leg.* 669 d – 670 a), but no one would conclude that instrumental music was first separated from the text in his time or a little before, since it was already the subject of musical contests in the sixth century. He may not welcome the aulos (*Resp.* 399 d, cf. *Gorg.* 501 e), but this is no reason to doubt the long history of Greek wind instruments before they played an important part in the musical “revolution” of the fifth century.<sup>97</sup> Plato is not claiming that the use of sound mimicry in music was innovative. However, its relatively recent penetration into sung poetry may be conjectured with caution.

### III. Onomatopoeia in comedy

There are reasons to suspect that artists of the New Music were not the first to apply vocal sound mimicry, just as they were not the first to use it in instrumental pieces: one cannot help but notice its repeated use by Aristophanes. The imitation of a stringed instrument occurs not only in *Plutus* (θερεττανελο 290, 296), but also in the *Frogs* (τοφλαττοθρατ τοφλαττοθρατ as a refrain in 1286–1295), in a parody of Aeschylus’ chorus songs, which seem to be taken “from the citharodic nomes” (1282). At the beginning of the *Knights* the flogged slaves imitate an auletic duet, howling a nome of Olympus to express their suffering (μυμῦ μυμῦ μυμῦ μυμῦ μυμῦ μυμῦ 10). In the *Birds*, the peculiarity of the Hoopoe’s song as well as that of the chorus’ lyrics in the parabasis is the imitation of various bird-calls,<sup>98</sup> and in the *Frogs*, the zest of the frog chorus is the croaking (βρεκεκεκεξ κοαξ κοαξ as a refrain in 209–268). Of note, sound mimicry occurs mainly in the sung rather than the spoken parts (*Eq.* 10 is transmitted as an iambic trimeter, but I believe that the characters actually sang the original music of Olympus with its own rhythm). This supports the hypothesis that music was considered a necessary aid to such effects.

<sup>97</sup> On the role of the auloi see Csapo 2004, 211–212.

<sup>98</sup> Hoopoe’s call-song: ἐποποποί, ποποποποί ποποί, ιὼ ιὼ ιτὼ ιτὼ ιτὼ ιτὼ 227–228; τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο τιο 237; τριοτό τριοτό τοτοβρίξ 243, τορο τορο τορο τοροτίξ, κικκαβαῦ κικκαβαῦ, τορο τορο τορο τορο λιλιλίξ 260–262; τοροτίγξ τοροτίγξ 267 (attributing some of these lines to the Hoopoe or to the birds that respond to his call is debatable, see e.g. Fraenkel 1950, 82–84; Sifakis 1971, 113–114 n. 3). The chorus: ποποποποποποποπο ποῦ 310; τιτιτιτιτιτιτι τίνα 313; τιο τιο τιο τιο 738=770, 743=775, τιο τιο τιο τίγξ 741=773, 751/2=784, τοτοτο τοτοτο τοτοτο τίγξ 746/7=779. There are also replicas of the birds-messengers: ποῦ ποῦ ’στι, ποῦ ποῦ ποῦ ’στι, ποῦ 1122; ιὼ ιὼ, ιὼ ιὼ, ιὼ ιὼ 1170. (The text is cited from the edition of Dunbar 1995.)

The only exception is the sound of *crepitus ventris* in the *Clouds*, in anapestic lines (παππάξ παππάξ, παπαπαππάξ 390, 391).

Attempts have been made to interpret some of these passages as pastiches or parodies of the New Music.

(1) The significance of the frogs' scene (*Ran.* 209–268) within Aristophanes' comedy is debated; some scholars assume that it foreshadows the main theme of the play – the debate over what constitutes good and bad poetry.<sup>99</sup> Indeed these frogs are no strangers to the poetic realm: Charon introduces them as βάτραχοι κύκνοι and their songs as κάλλιστα and θαυμαστά (205–207), and they boast about their musical art (εὐγῆρυν ἐμὴν ᾠοδᾶν 213–214) and the favour of divine patrons of music – the Muses, Pan and Apollo (229–232). J. Defradas<sup>100</sup> presented the argument that the frogs represented poets of the New Dithyramb. His reasons were as follows: (a) the expression βάτραχοι κύκνοι is in line with later dithyramb images; (b) the use of extravagant compound neologisms, such as κραιπαλόκωμος (218), πολυκολύμβοισι (246) and πομφολυγοπαφλάσμασιν (249), is typical of avant-garde compositions; (c) the chorus song contains allusions to the Dionysian feast of the Anthesteria, which leads Defradas to conclude that it is a dithyramb; (d) the epithets πολυκολύμβοισι μέλεσιν (245) and χορείαν αἰόλαν (247–248), as well as the opposition of Dionysus' trochees to the chorus' iambs, are interpreted as alluding to ποικιλία and καμπαί of the New Music. G. Wills<sup>101</sup> defended the same idea arguing that Dionysus defeated the frogs in a competition over poetic "beauty" (judged from the frogs' point of view) by producing sounds even more disgusting than their croaking – that is, farting. E. Rocconi<sup>102</sup> tried to expand on this argument, claiming that the frog chorus shows signs of a work-song, and since Euripides is accused of borrowing his lyrics from low genres (1301–1303), this might well be an accusation leveled against the New Music in general and implied by Aristophanes in this scene.

<sup>99</sup> For an overview see Campbell 1984 (with convincing criticism); Rocconi 2007, 137–138 n. 5. For the most part the frogs are thought to impersonate inferior poets of various kinds; only Whitman 1964, 248–249, places them among Aristophanes' champions (*pace* Campbell): their music is somewhat monotonous, but at least it does not suffer from decadent multiformity, and they make Dionysus learn the rowing rhythm of the Athenian fleet, whereas Euripides teaches the sailors only to talk back to their commanders (*Ran.* 1071–1072).

<sup>100</sup> Defradas 1969, followed with more restraint by Zimmermann 1984, 157; 159; 161.

<sup>101</sup> Wills 1969.

<sup>102</sup> Rocconi 2007.

This hypothesis is interesting; however, none of its arguments are truly compelling, and some are far-fetched.<sup>103</sup> Stylistic analysis of the passage reveals peculiarities that suggest objects of parody other than the New Music.<sup>104</sup> In particular, compounds are an effective means of comic language itself<sup>105</sup> and at the same time a characteristic feature of choral lyrics and tragedy (Aristophanes regularly uses them for paratragic effect, and in the agon of the *Frogs* it is Aeschylus and not Euripides who is responsible for heavy, powerful compounds<sup>106</sup>). Refrains are used in cult invocations, magical spells and popular songs,<sup>107</sup> and they are also typical of Aeschylus (see *Ran.* 1264–1277). Alternation and contest between the soloist and the chorus is reminiscent of a folk tradition, particularly the amoebaeon singing agon.<sup>108</sup> The characteristics of an elevated style such as the Doric long alpha, the choice of poetic words, archaisms, circumlocutions, and dactylo-epitrite verse<sup>109</sup> are traditional features of choral lyrics, including the kind used by Pindar or Aeschylus,<sup>110</sup> and they are often intended to provide the sort of comic effect beloved by Aristophanes: a combination of high and low styles.<sup>111</sup> The frogs' scene is perfectly entertaining even without being

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<sup>103</sup> For objections to Wills, see MacDowell 1972, 4; Kugelmeier 1996, 132–134; to Defradas, Dover 1993, 56 n. 2; Kugelmeier 1996, 134–135; concerning (c) it may be added that dithyrambic contests cannot be proved for the Anthesteria (Pickard-Cambridge 1968, 16–17; Robertson 1993, 244 n. 133), and associations with Dionysus have practically disappeared in the New Dithyramb. – The idea of Rocconi is not convincing. Beyond the fact that the frogs sing during the rowing, traits of a rowing song are in short supply: it is Charon and not the frogs who commands the rhythm (208); the soloist rows instead of commanding; no part responds with only a rhythmic cry to the song of another; the rhythm is irregular (note also that, since Dionysus rows alone, he does not need to keep up the same rhythm); the frogs do not mention Dionysus' activity and on the whole do not communicate with him before he addresses them. Facing this evident lack of similarity to a work-song, Rocconi sophisticatedly refers to it as 'deformazione comica' (p. 141). Besides it has yet to be demonstrated that it was a well-known trait of the New Music to borrow from low genres, rather than a peculiarity of Euripides' tragedy first observed by Aristophanes, and that such an allusion could be made clear enough by imprecisely imitating just one such piece outside an elevated context.

<sup>104</sup> Zimmermann 1984, 157; Rocconi 2007, 139–140.

<sup>105</sup> Campbell 1984, 165; Kugelmeier 1996, 134; admitted also by Defradas 1969, 31.

<sup>106</sup> E.g. *Ran.* 929, 937, 1056; McEvilly 1970, 274.

<sup>107</sup> Dover 1993, 219; Kugelmeier 1996, 138.

<sup>108</sup> Zimmermann 1984, 163; Kugelmeier 1996, 257.

<sup>109</sup> Radermacher 1954, 171; 172; Zimmermann 1984, 157–160; Dover 1993, 219; Kugelmeier 1996, 138–140.

<sup>110</sup> Campbell 1984, 164–165; Zimmermann 1984, 157–158; Dover 1993, 219.

<sup>111</sup> Zimmermann 1984, 81; 158; 161; Rau 1967, 13.

a musical pastiche or parody: an elevated poetic style and high self-esteem is funny when coming from frogs, as is its juxtaposition with the croaking and the tone-lowering remarks of Dionysus.<sup>112</sup>

In addition, we have enough examples of the care Aristophanes took to show his parodistic intentions:<sup>113</sup> he names his targets<sup>114</sup> and uses quotations from their works, either direct or comically distorted, but still recognizable.<sup>115</sup> Thus the lack of an explicit reference might be considered an argument against parody. Nevertheless, the possibility of parody cannot be excluded, as it might have been evident to the audience through the music, which has since been lost.<sup>116</sup>

However, even if the frogs' chorus did satirize the New Music, it is impossible to prove and hard to imagine that the croaking in Aristophanes' comedy reflected the sound mimicry in the parodied dithyrambs. Defradas himself argues that the onomatopoeia is a *metaphorical* representation of avant-garde music designed to show the contrast between the result of the frogs' creativity – hoarse cacophonous sounds – and their own artistic claims placed back-to-back with their βρεκεκεκεξ κοαξ κοαξ.

(2) The sung parts of the parabasis in the *Birds* embellished with birds' twittering (737–752, 769–784)<sup>117</sup> show a striking resemblance to the frogs' song. Both choruses praise themselves and refer to the gods (partly the same) whom they please with their songs, and G. M. Sifakis believes these themes are characteristic of performances of animal choruses from the early stages of their development on.<sup>118</sup> Animal sounds could be used for parody, but we do not need a parody to explain and enjoy their use.<sup>119</sup> After all, it is more than natural to chirrup for a chorus of birds and croak for a chorus of frogs.

Extant evidence is very limited, but there is little reason to doubt that sound mimicry was mastered by authors of comedy for their own buffoonish aims, rather than absorbed from some other genre. One might

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<sup>112</sup> Stanford 1958, 94 ad 210 ff.; Campbell 1984, 164; Kugelmeier 1996, 137; cf. 141: “parodistische Lyrik (auch ohne besonderes Objekt der Parodie)”.

<sup>113</sup> See Schlesinger 1937; id. 1936.

<sup>114</sup> Classes 1–3 in Schlesinger. The principle of personal invective is observed at least until the transitional period from Old to Middle comedy (Nesselrath 1990, 250). If Aristophanes mocks the representatives of the avant-garde style as a whole, the group is also clearly indicated: *Nub.* 333 κυκλίων χορῶν ὁσματοκάμπτας; *Pax* 829 διθυραμβοδιδασκάλων.

<sup>115</sup> Classes 4–6 in Schlesinger.

<sup>116</sup> MacDowell 1972, 5; Campbell 1984, 164.

<sup>117</sup> Parody character was assumed for this chorus by A. Barker, see below n. 136.

<sup>118</sup> Sifakis 1971, 95–97; 101–102.

<sup>119</sup> Kugelmeier 1996, 143; 313.

suppose that its use seemed appropriate whenever the chorus consisted of animals, although our sources for theriomorphic choruses in Attic tradition outside of Aristophanes are limited to vase-paintings and titles of non-extant comedies,<sup>120</sup> which obviously provide no information on onomatopoeic effects. Yet there is one piece of evidence proving that the mimicking of sounds in comedy existed before the New Music. In Aristoph. *Eq.* 522–523 Magnes, the comic poet active ca. 475–450 BC, is praised for being able to utter “all kinds of sounds”:

πάσας δ' ὑμῖν φωνὰς ἰεῖς καὶ ψάλλων καὶ πτερυγίζων  
καὶ λυδίζων καὶ ψηνίζων καὶ βαπτόμενος βατραχειοῖς

...though he produced every kind of sound for you, twanging the lyre, flapping wings, speaking Lydian, buzzing like a gall-fly and dying himself frog-green...<sup>121</sup>

(3) Similar issues with the frogs' scene can be found within the call-song of the Hoopoe in the *Birds* (227–262). Features that may be associated with the New Music have been observed there too: first, it is a monody of the late Euripides' type, which probably required virtuoso singing,<sup>122</sup> unusually long for a drama and with no observance of strophic correspondence;<sup>123</sup> second, it presents an unusual variety of rhythms that change in every movement of the song.<sup>124</sup> However, the prevailing opinion is that this piece was not intended as parody.<sup>125</sup> The Hoopoe is surely not a dithyrambic poet, but a paratragic hero, Tereus the king,<sup>126</sup> and his monody is composed as a κλητικὸς ὕμνος<sup>127</sup> in conventional high

<sup>120</sup> See Sifakis 1971, 73–75 and 76–77 respectively.

<sup>121</sup> Translation: Sommerstein 1981, 61.

<sup>122</sup> Russo 1984, 245; Zimmermann 1984, 70 n. 3.

<sup>123</sup> Mazon 1904, 99; Henderson 1957, 393.

<sup>124</sup> Händel 1963, 172 n. 2; Zimmermann 1984, 77–78. Pretagostini 1988 completes his analysis with a conclusion that appears contrary to his own observations: according to him, in the call-song Aristophanes rejected all fashionable contemporary innovations. Meanwhile, of the innovations listed on p. 194, two (“la preminenza riservata al ruolo dell’auleta” who provides a solo piece and “il *mélange* di metri e ritmi”) are certainly present, and three others (“l’uso sempre più ampio delle modulazioni vocalizzate della melodia”, “il ricorso ai superallungamenti per cui il lungo poteva valere anche più di due tempi” and “il progressive prevalere del dato musicale su quello linguistico”) are impossible to judge without the music.

<sup>125</sup> Mazon 1904, 99; White 1912, 593–594; Zimmermann 1984, 72; 81; 82; Zimmermann 1989, 28; Zimmermann 1993b, 48; Kugelmeier 1996, 143.

<sup>126</sup> Zimmermann 1984, 72; cf. Dunbar 1995, 161 ad v. 92.

<sup>127</sup> Zimmermann 1984, 77.

lyric style, including compound epithets<sup>128</sup> and archaizing words.<sup>129</sup> Here again we see a combination of low and high style particularly typical of Aristophanes' autonomous "comic-fantastic" lyrics:<sup>130</sup> elevated poetry is sung by a hoopoe, addressed to the birds rather than the gods and mixed with the birds' sounds and realities. There appears to be little reason to interpret the bird-calls of the Hoopoe as allusions to typical features of a parodied musical trend rather than as devices used for their own sake.

Stylistic similarities between some Aristophanic passages and those of Euripides were observed long ago (Cratinus invented a verb εὐριπιδαριστοφάνειν for this purpose, fr. 342 K.-A.). It is well known that Aristophanes, who was sometimes the harshest critic of the New Music, was also inclined to adopt many of its characteristics in his own writings.<sup>131</sup> Two explanations of this paradox have been proposed. According to Th. McEvilley, it was only the sense-bearing aspect of the avant-garde trend that annoyed Aristophanes – namely, its bombastic and nonsensical poetry; however, he readily embraced most of the technical musical innovations.<sup>132</sup> B. Zimmermann<sup>133</sup> argues that the poet was well aware of the boundaries of his own genre in relation to others: in his opinion, devices apt for comedy were out of place in a dithyramb, nome or tragedy.

(4) A. Barker<sup>134</sup> sees parody of the New Music in the wordless part of the Nightingale in the *Birds*. Attempts to find hints at such parody in the Hoopoe's wake-song addressed to his spouse (Av. 209–222) are not very convincing.<sup>135</sup> Still, an appealing assumption is that Procne is

<sup>128</sup> Zimmermann 1984, 79 refers them to characteristic features of the New Music.

<sup>129</sup> Zimmermann 1984, 79–80.

<sup>130</sup> Pucci 1961, 393; Rau 1967, 13; Silk 1980, 129–130; 151 ("realistic-fantastic lyric"); Zimmermann 1984, 72; 81; 158 ("komisch-fantastische Lyrik").

<sup>131</sup> Mazon 1904, 99; McEvilley 1970, 270–276; Zimmermann 1993b, 40; 48.

<sup>132</sup> McEvilley 1970, 273; 275.

<sup>133</sup> Zimmermann 1988, 44–45; Zimmermann 1995, 125; 128–129.

<sup>134</sup> Barker 2004.

<sup>135</sup> The supposed hint at confusing genres (Barker 2004, 192–193) may be called into question. The terms ὕμνος and νόμος are synonymous for 'song', and θρήνος and ἔλεγχος, for 'sorrowful song'. Apollo's lyre sounds in respond to the nightingale, but mourning is impossible on behalf of the blessed gods, so the music that sounds on the Olympus is probably different (σύμφωνος can mean that the chorus of gods and Apollo are in tune with each other and not with Procne). A certain discrepancy between the lament of the nightingale and the gods' ὀλολυγή as a reaction to it cannot be denied, but in fact "it may seem plausible to read this as an essentially unproblematic piece of poetic rhetoric, harmlessly expanding its praises of the nightingale beyond what could literally be true" (Barker 2004, 192). Barker's second point (*ibid.*, 194–195: ἀντιψάλλων is associated with exotic musical instruments



represented as a cheap auletris and shares the symbolism with the Muse of Euripides in the *Frogs* (*Ran.* 1305–1308) – that is, the vulgarity of the fashionable style of music.<sup>136</sup> I would even suggest going one step further. If her appearance (demonstrated to the characters and the public with a meaningful retardation, only after v. 666) is a sort of commentary on the aulos interlude performed by her after v. 222, it might well be that, rather than a stylization composed by Aristophanes, Procne played a potpourri of famous pieces of the New Music or even one such piece: as there is no clear indication of parody in the text, I believe that this would be the only way to make the joke understandable to the public. Since Procne is a nightingale, sound imitation of this bird's voice in the aulos *intermezzo* seems unavoidable (cf. *Sch. Aristoph. Av.* 222: μιμεῖται τις τὴν ἀηδονά). Perhaps a popular composition existed in which an aulete masterly mimicked the warbling of a nightingale – or else the νύγλαροι and τερετίσματα of Philoxenus' kind regularly created such associations? This would then be another example of the use of onomatopoeic effects in the New Music. Unfortunately, this is pure guesswork.<sup>137</sup>

On the whole, barring *Plutus* (290–301) a relation between the New Music and sound mimicry in comedy cannot be proved. Interpreting Aristophanes' passages with this kind of mimesis as pastiches or parodies, some of which are aimed at the New Music, is still possible to a certain extent. However, it should be emphasized that those who propose such interpretations consider onomatopoeic effects not as *objects* of mockery, but as a *means* of ridiculing the parodied works. The only probable case in which onomatopoeia must be traced to Aristophanes' target rather than

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discussed in Athen. 14. 34–38, p. 634 b – 636 c, and thus with oriental flavour and with the New Music) seems quite unconvincing. The author evaluates the credibility of his own arguments with customary sobriety: “I cannot yet claim to have proved that the nightingale stands here as an emblem of the excesses of the ‘new wave’ composers” (p. 195).

<sup>136</sup> Since Barker assumes that the aulete in the *Birds* continued to play the part of Procne until the end of the comedy (which I strongly doubt), he must conclude that all the songs accompanied by him – at least from v. 676 – had an extravagantly populist and decadent character: “She would be the perfect accompanist for such figures as the Poet and Cinesias in the later episodes, and would effectively undercut any temptation to take seriously the various musical offerings of the chorus” (Barker 2004, 203; 204 with n. 35). Thus the birds' chorus becomes a portrait of the musical avant-garde.

<sup>137</sup> If we accept the conclusion of Th. McEvilley (see above n. 132) that all Aristophanes refuted in the New Music was the obscuring of the poetic text, then his criticism of purely instrumental music becomes improbable if not impossible.

himself is the *Cyclops* of Philoxenus alluded to in *Plutus* – and this is the exception that proves the rule: in a case when the bleating of the chorus sounded in the original, Aristophanes only refers to it and does not repeat it himself.

This unique case is the only positive evidence available to support the hypothesis that vocal sound mimicry in high lyrics was a novelty that first appeared in the New Music. Following Zimmermann,<sup>138</sup> we may suppose that Aristophanes felt this device appropriate only for comedy. In this case, his parody was used to show that onomatopoeia, particularly from a human voice, has a potentially comic effect and its use in elevated genres such as dithyramb can yield unintentional ludicrous results. However, this is not an inevitable conclusion: first, I believe that in the *Cyclops* Philoxenus was deliberately using comic methods to produce a comic effect;<sup>139</sup> and second, Aristophanes' allusion does not sound like criticism, but rather like a tribute to the work's fame.<sup>140</sup>

Still, this hypothesis is plausible and may well be correct, even with no support other than *argumentum ex silentio* (vocal mimicry is widespread in the time of Plato and may be postulated for the authors of the New Music, but there is no evidence of it in earlier high lyric poetry). It does not presuppose that “serious” genres borrowed vocal sound mimicry from comedy – it could very well have been adopted under the influence of instrumentalists.

To sum up: sound mimicry was not in itself a novelty – it was long ago mastered by instruments in solo aulos- and cithara-playing, and by voice in comedy. However, its use in the New Music may perhaps illustrate other notorious features of this style: the confusion of genres, the increasing importance of instrumental parts in dithyramb, tragedy and sung nome, and πολυχорδία – the use of a larger number of notes and scales.

Nina Almazova  
Saint Petersburg State University;  
Bibliotheca Classica Petropolitana  
n.almazova@spbu.ru

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<sup>138</sup> See above n. 133.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Hartung 1846, 417: “Die Weise, in welcher Aristoteles Poet. 2, 4 [1448 a 15–18] diesen Kyklops des Philoxenos als Beispiel eines komischen Dithyrambos erwählt, beweist uns, dass keineswegs alle Dithyramben dieser Periode von solcher Art gewesen sind”.

<sup>140</sup> See above n. 51.

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The use of musical means to imitate non-musical sounds is often identified as a characteristic of the New Music (an avant-garde trend reported to have developed in Ancient Greece beginning around 450 BC), although it can be traceable to an earlier period (at least to 584 BC). This paper reviews existing evidence on sound mimicry in the Classical period and considers its possible connections with the New Music. Particular attention is paid to distinguishing between vocal and instrumental sound imitation, and separating onomatopoeic effects from other types of mimesis somehow connected with music in texts. (I) The limited evidence that focuses directly on famous artists of the New Music (Timotheus and Philoxenus) leaves no doubt that they used sound mimicry, probably both by means of voice and instruments. However, there is no clear indication that the use of such effects was criticized for its innovation. (II) According to Plato, in his time sound mimicry through the human voice was unexpectedly widespread in poetry; he also speaks of it as a recognized feature of purely instrumental virtuoso music. Plato disapproved of such senseless trickery, but his condemnations are not related to his complaints about the recent degradation in music, and on the whole the New Music cannot be blamed for everything Plato disliked in this art (such as wind instruments or melodies without words). Still, in view of the fact that earlier lyrics, as far as we know, showed little evidence of sound mimicry, it may be cautiously conjectured that it was propagated in “high-style” sung poetry during the second half of the fifth century BC. (III) Vocal onomatopoeic effects were mastered by Old Comedy, it may be postulated, even prior to Aristophanes. Even if some passages that contain sound imitation may be interpreted as Aristophanes’ pastiches or parodies of the New Music, it is impossible to prove that this device was an object, rather than a means, of mockery. If indeed it began to spread in monodic and choral lyrics in the second half of the fifth century, we need not think that it was borrowed from comedy rather than instrumental music. Perhaps some critics felt that sound mimicry, with its comic potential, especially on human lips, was as much out of place in serious poetic genres as it was at home in comedy, but we have no evidence that specifically claims this. Onomatopoeia was not in itself a novelty, but its use may illustrate features of the New Music such as the confusion of genres, the increasing importance of instrumental parts and the growing numbers of sounds and scales.

Отображение немusических звуков музыкальными средствами часто включается в перечень отличительных признаков т.н. Новой музыки (авангардистского направления, развивавшегося в Древней Греции с середины V в. до н.э.), хотя известно, что этот прием применялся значительно раньше (по меньшей мере с 584 г. до н.э.). В статье рассматриваются все существующие свидетельства звукоподражания в классическую эпоху и возможность связать их с Новой музыкой. Особое внимание при этом уделяется, во-первых, разграничению между звукоподражанием вокальными и инструментальными средствами, а во-вторых – отделению свидетельств об имитации звуков природы от прочих упоминаний о “мимесисе” в музыкальной сфере. (I) Немногочисленные сообщения, прямо связывающие звукоподражание с представителями



Новой музыки (Тимофеем и Филоксеном), не оставляют сомнений, что они использовали этот прием, но никто не критикует его как нововведение. (II) Платон свидетельствует, что в его время неожиданно широкое распространение получило звукоподражание посредством человеческого голоса; кроме того, оно было характерной чертой виртуозной инструментальной музыки. Философ не одобряет его как бессмысленные фокусы, однако нигде не связывает с деградацией недавнего времени, и в целом не все, что осуждает Платон в этом искусстве (например, духовые инструменты или мелодии без слов), можно связывать с воздействием Новой музыки. Тем не менее, поскольку в более ранней лирике звукоподражание практически не засвидетельствовано, можно с осторожностью предположить, что оно проникло в “высокую” музыкальную поэзию на протяжении 2-й пол. V в. (III) В Древней комедии вокальное звукоподражание, по-видимому, практиковалось еще до Аристофана. Хотя некоторые содержащие его аристофановские строки можно интерпретировать как пародию на Новую музыку или стилизацию под нее, не удастся доказать, что этот прием когда-либо был объектом, а не средством осмеяния. Если он и в самом деле стал распространяться в монодической и хоровой лирике ок. 450 г., заимствовать его поэты могли скорее из инструментальной музыки, чем из комедии. Возможно, кто-то из античных критиков чувствовал, что звукоподражанию, особенно в исполнении человеческого голоса, присущ потенциальный комический эффект, а потому оно уместно в комедии, но никак не в серьезных жанрах, однако прямо такое мнение никто не высказывает. Итак, подражание звукам природы само по себе не являлось нововведением, но его применение в Новой музыке может иллюстрировать такие особенности этого стиля, как смешение жанров, возрастание роли инструментальной музыки и числа используемых звуков и звукорядов.

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