
Periekkokasa-Aristophanes, Knights, 697

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but the end of his happiness on earth. He joins Teiresias in endless night; and like the seer, he has begun to see.¹⁵

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Περιεκόκκασα—ARISTOPHANES, *KNIGHTS*, 697.

About the middle of the *Knights* of Aristophanes, in a quick exchange of abuse between Cleon and the Sausage-Seller, the latter jeers (696-7):

ἦσθην ἀπειλαῖς, ἐγέλασα ψολοκομπῖαις
ἀπεπυδάρισα μύθωνα, περιεκόκκασα.

The last word here represents Dindorf's emendation—substantiated by Photius (*s. v.*) and universally adopted by editors—for the περιεκόκκασα or περιεκόκκωσα of the manuscripts.

The verb περιεκόκκασα is a *hapax legomenon*. It is not glossed in Hesychius, Suidas, or the *Etymologicum Magnum*—nor, indeed, is its hypothetical original, *κοκκάζω. The compilers of modern lexicons, in common with practically all editors, while keeping the reading περιεκόκκασα, translate as if the root word were κοκκύζω, “utter the sound ‘cuckoo,’” or “crow,” as a cock. The new Liddell-Scott-Jones dictionary, for instance, renders περικοκκάζω as “cry cuckoo all around.” Samples of the translations of the passage by various editors are as follows:

¹⁵ Many new facets of Sophocles' subtle mind are revealed by each fresh perusal of the play from the point of view outlined here, such as the significance in the parodos of the apostrophe, ἄμβροτε Φάμα (158). Cf. Bultmann, *Philol.*, XCVII, p. 12: “Der Gegensatz von Licht und Finsternis ist . . . im Griechentum kein ethischer Dualismus . . . Der Gegensatz von Licht und Dunkel ist . . . vielmehr der von Heil und Unheil.”

One of the most interesting of the phenomena brought to light (as against Wilamowitz, *Hermes*, XXXIV [1899], pp. 61 ff.) is the relevance of the character of Creon, the neutral figure standing apart from the plot, neither seeing nor blind, neither active nor passive, not good nor yet evil. Creon alone is given no development within the play, and Creon alone has not been blinded by knowledge when the play is over. But the Sophocles who had already written the *Antigone* had a worse fate in store for him.

"I like your threats; I'm wonderfully tickled To hear you fume; I skip and cuckoo around you" (Rogers, Loeb); "Oh! How he diverts me with his threats! His bluster makes me laugh! And I dance the *mothon* for joy, and sing at the top of my voice, cuckoo" (Black and Gold; also Oates and O'Neill); "Your threats and bounce I laugh at, dance on you The double-shuffle—cock-a-doodle-doo!" (Way); "Je danse un mothon! Je crie tout à l'entour 'cocorico!'" (Van Daele); "It makes me laugh, it amuses one to see him Bluster and storm! I whistle and snap my fingers" (Frere); "I dance a horn-pipe, and cry cock-a-doodle-do over him" (Merry); "Suave mihi est audire tuas minas; rideo fumos tuae jactantiae, saltito mothonem, alta voce canto" (Dindorf); "Mich vergnügt dein Drohn, dein Holtergepolter macht mir Spass, Wie ein Böcklein muss ich springen, kräh'n wie ein Hahn dazu!" (Droysen); "I like your threats, laugh at your empty bluster, dance a fling, and cry cuckoo all round" (Hickie); "Dolce m'è il suon di tue minaccie, e rido De tuoi gran vanti al fumo, or salta, ch'io Quasi cuculo canto" (di Bagnolo); "The threats I like; the smoky brags I laugh at; The scamp I kick away, and cuckoo at him!" (Walsh); "Recht hübsch geflucht, dein Drohen macht mir Spass, Ich tanz' und spring' und schnalze vor Vergnügen!" (Seeger); "J'aime tes menaces, je ris de ta jactance, je te fais la nique, et je me moque de toi" (Artaud), with note: "Littéralement, 'Je danse le mothon (danse obscène), et j'imité le chant du coq'"; "I admire These threats, and ridicule thy vapping; I leap, and sing aloud with cuckoo's note" (Wheelwright); "Mir behagt die Drohung, lachend hör' ich den Prahlerwind, Ab tramp! ich den Plumptanz, and umher kukuk ich eins!" (Voss).¹

¹ The editions cited in this paragraph are: *Aristophanes, with the English Translation of Benjamin Bickley Rogers*, Loeb ed. (London, Heinemann; New York, Putnam, 1927), I, p. 191; Anon., *Aristophanes, The Eleven Comedies*, Black and Gold ed. (New York, Liveright, 1930), I, p. 42; Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., *The Complete Greek Drama* (New York, Random House, 1938), II, p. 505; Arthur S. Way, *Aristophanes in English Verse* (London, Macmillan, 1927), I, p. 84; *Aristophane—Les Acharniens, Les Cavaliers, Les Nuées*, traduit par Hilaire Van Daele (Paris, Belles Lettres, 1923), p. 110; *The Acharnians and Three Other Plays of Aristophanes*, translated by J. Hookham Frere (London, Dent; New York, Dutton, 1911), p. 104; W. W. Merry, *Aris-*

In the interpretation of the word in question, it seems to me that too little attention has been given to the testimony of the early commentators on the passage—Photius and the scholiast. The former's gloss on *περικόκκασα* is: "*περιεγέλασα. καὶ κατορχησάμην* <*sic*>· *Ἀριστοφάνης*." The latter's comment is: "*περικόκκασα* <*sic*>· *περικορδάκισα. ἔστι δὲ εἶδος ὀρχήσεως*." The rest of his statement is to the effect that the word here implies derision.

If these comments, deriving in all probability from ancient sources, are to be trusted (and I see no reason for doubting their credibility, especially in view of the fact that Dindorf based his emendation on the authority of Photius), then *περικόκκασα* would seem to mean here, as Rogers and Voss perceived, "I have cuckooed around you"—i. e., "I have derided you by dancing the cuckoo around you." "Dancing the cuckoo," although metaphorical in this passage, would refer to an imitation of both the movements and the cry of the bird. Whether a distinction in meaning between **κοκκάζω* and *κοκκύζω* is to be inferred, the latter referring to the cry alone, we do not know; but the text of the scholion would argue against this supposition.

The remainder of the line contains mention of another dance—the *mothon*. This was a lewd dance, performed often by sailors or by intoxicated persons.² It was characterized by writhing or wriggling, and apparently also by a striking of the buttocks with the soles of the feet or with the flat hand (Schol. Aristoph. *Knights*, 697 and 796). It seems thus to have been similar to

tophanes, *The Knights*² (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1902), Part II, p. 45; Wm. Dindorf, *Aristophanis Comoediae* (Paris, Didot, 1899), p. 53; J. G. Droysen, *Des Aristophanes Werke*² (Leipzig, Von Veit, 1869), I, p. 129; Wm. J. Hickie, *The Comedies of Aristophanes* (London, Bohn, 1853), I, p. 83; Coriolano di Bagnolo, *Comédie di Aristofane* (Torino, Marzorati, 1850), I, p. 146 and notes, p. 199; Benjamin D. Walsh, *Aristophanes—The Acharnians, Knights, and Clouds* (London, Bohn, 1848), p. 198; Ludwig Seeger, *Aristophanes* (Frankfurt a. M., Rütten, 1845), I, p. 305; M. Artaud, *Comédies d'Aristophane*² (Paris, Lefèvre, 1841), p. 77; C. A. Wheelwright, *The Comedies of Aristophanes* (Oxford and London, Talboys, 1837), I, pp. 323-4; J. H. Voss, *Aristofanes* (Braunschweig, Vieweg, 1821), I, p. 142.

² Photius, *s. v. mothon*; Suidas, *s. v. mothon*; Hesychius, *s. v. mothon*; Pollux, IV, 101; Schol. Aristoph. *Plut.*, 279; Townley Schol. on *Iliad*, XXII, 391; *Et. Mag.*, 589, 57; cf. Lillian B. Lawler, "The Dance of the Ancient Mariners," *T. A. P. A.*, LXXV (1944), pp. 31-33.

the figure called *ῥαθαπυγίζειν*.³ Such striking of the buttocks was a motif common in the *kordax*, the distinctive dance of Old Comedy.⁴ The verb *ἀποπυδαρίζειν*, used with *mothon* in our line, is interpreted by the lexicographers (*Et. Mag.*, 696, 3; Schol. Aristoph. *Knights*, 697) as denoting "leap, spring"; and its later form, *πυγαρίζειν*, is taken as indicating an association with *πυγή* (*Et. Mag.*, 696, 3). Antyllus (*ap. Oribas.*, VI, 31, 1) says that the kicking of the buttocks was done sometimes with both feet together, sometimes with the feet alternating. Photius (*s. v. mothon*) definitely says the *mothon* is *κορδακώδης*—characteristic of the *kordax*.

In the line in question, both the *mothon* and the suggested cuckoo dance are referred to metaphorically. Nevertheless, since the *mothon* is authenticated as a real dance of classical antiquity, associated with the *kordax*, and since the scholiast on the line glosses *περικόκκασα* as *περικορδάκισα*, it would certainly be logical to infer that a cuckoo dance or figure existed, and that it was to be found in connection with the *kordax*. It is well established that bird figures and motifs were common in the Greek dance, and were of high antiquity;⁵ and the very existence of such comedies as the *Birds* of Magnes and of Aristophanes is *a priori* evidence that such figures and motifs were actually used in the choral evolutions of Old Comedy.⁶ In Aristophanes' play, the cuckoo is mentioned only casually (504-7), as "king of Egypt and of all Phoenicia." However, it is entirely possible that one member of the chorus in the play was actually costumed as a cuckoo.

The nature of a mimetic cuckoo dance would not be hard to determine. The European cuckoo, *Cuculus canorus*, is a fairly large bird, with distinctive habits, and the Greeks had observed it with interest since their primitive days. To them, as to the inhabitants of mediaeval England, it was the herald of spring.

³ Hesychius, *s. v.*; Schol. Aristoph. *Knights*, 796; cf. also Hesychius, *s. v. ἀλέσθαι πρὸς πυγὴν*.

⁴ Heinz Schnabel, *Kordax* (Munich, Beck, 1910), pp. 16-19; Kurt Latte, "De Saltationibus Graecorum Capita Quinque," *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*, XIII, 3 (1913), p. 21.

⁵ Lillian B. Lawler, "The Dance of the Holy Birds," *C. J.*, XXXVII (1942), pp. 351-61.

⁶ Lillian B. Lawler, "Four Dancers in the *Birds* of Aristophanes," *T. A. P. A.*, LXXIII (1942), pp. 58-63.

In early times it was evidently held in high regard. Zeus, we recall, was believed to have wooed Hera in the guise of a cuckoo, on or near Mount Kokkygion, in Argolis (Pausanias, II, 17, 4; II, 36, 1-2; Schol. Theocr., XV, 64); and a cuckoo was perched upon Hera's scepter in the famous chryselephantine statue of the goddess made by Polyclitus for the Argive Heraeum. Cook discusses the implications of the legend.⁷ He sees in it evidence for a prehistoric concept of Zeus as a cuckoo; and he expresses the opinion (III, pp. 63-4) that there is in the story a "relic of the old Minoan belief that gods appeared in the shape of birds." He regards the name of the birds' city in Aristophanes' play, "Cloud-cuckooborough," as ritualistically significant. He also points out (III, pp. 64-5) that the bird has always held the attention of the peoples of Europe. He notes that all over Europe to this day there is a very old tradition that the cuckoo is a bird of good or evil omen, and that it is a sort of daemon which can give or withhold a "long and prosperous life." Pollard,⁸ on the other hand, has, successfully, I believe, upheld the thesis that the idea of a Zeus-cuckoo is a late one, and that the myth is aetiological; but that the connection of the cuckoo with Hera is unquestionably authenticated, and may be a legacy from Minoan-Mycenaean times, when the great mother goddess was habitually associated with birds of many different kinds.

The use of animal mummery and dances in religious rituals was widespread around the Mediterranean, in both prehistoric and historic times.⁹ In it, sacred animals were imitated by costumed worshippers. Such mummery naturally included bird dances of many kinds.¹⁰ Where protected by the secrecy of mystery cults, these dances remained solemn and serious; otherwise, they often degenerated into buffoonery and "horseplay." In Athens, of course, the animal *komos* played a large part in the

⁷ A. B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge, University Press, 1914-40), I, pp. 134-5; 518; 532; II, p. 893 and note 2; p. 1144, note 2; III, pp. 63-8.

⁸ J. R. T. Pollard, "The *Birds* of Aristophanes—A Source Book for Old Beliefs," *A. J. P.*, LXIX (1948), pp. 353-76.

⁹ Lillian B. Lawler, "Pindar and Some Animal Dances," *C. P.*, XLI (1946), pp. 155-9; "Two Notes on the Greek Dance—I, The Fox," *A. J. P.*, LXIX (1948), pp. 87-90; "A Lion among Ladies," *T. A. P. A.*, LXXVIII (1947), pp. 88-98.

¹⁰ Lawler, "Holy Birds" (see note 5).

development of Old Comedy.¹¹ Typical of the kind of deterioration in dignity which must inevitably have accompanied portrayal in the rough-and-tumble animal *komos* is the fact that soon "cuckoo" became a synonym for a cowardly, stupid, coarse, or half-crazy person (Aristophanes, *Acharn.*, 598 and schol. *ad loc.*; *Et. Mag.*, 524, 50)—as, indeed, it is to this day, in many languages.

In a dance or figure imitative of the cuckoo we should expect to find movements characteristic of the bird. *Cuculus canorus*, with its slim body, long wings, and long, rounded tail, has a swift, graceful, swooping flight.¹² It is very active, and is in motion from early morning until far into the night.¹³ It seems, however, to make every effort to avoid observation; for it is subject to pursuit and attack even by birds much smaller than itself, because of its resemblance to the hawk (cf. Aristotle, *Hist. An.*, VI, 563 b; XI, 618 a), and because of its parasitism in laying its eggs in other birds' nests.¹⁴ Light and graceful as it is in the air, it is singularly clumsy on the ground. There its one form of locomotion is an awkward, flopping hop,¹⁵ because of the fact that the arrangement of its four toes (two pointing forward and two pointing backward) precludes easy walking or running. The shrill mating-call of the male bird is familiar in all parts of Europe. As it perches on a bough, screeching "Cuckoo!" at the top of its voice, it sometimes turns in a circle about its own axis.¹⁶ Rival males fight bitterly, striking one another with beak and wings.¹⁷ All of these characteristic actions would lend themselves well to imitation in a mimetic dance.¹⁸

¹¹ Roy C. Flickinger, *The Greek Theatre and Its Drama*⁴ (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1936), p. 38.

¹² Alfred E. Brehm, *Die Vögel*³ (Leipzig and Vienna, Bibliographisches Institut, 1900), II, p. 79; Walther Kahle, *Der Kleine Brehm* (Berlin, Voegel, 1924), p. 362. I am indebted to Dr. Emory E. Cochran, of New York City, who first called my attention to Brehm's work.

¹³ Brehm, *op. cit.*, II, p. 82.

¹⁴ Alfred Newton and Hans Gadow, *A Dictionary of Birds* (London, Black, 1893-6), p. 119.

¹⁵ Brehm, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 82-3; Kahle, *op. cit.*, pp. 364-5.

¹⁶ Brehm, *op. cit.*, II, p. 83.

¹⁷ Brehm, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-5.

¹⁸ For further information on the European cuckoo, and references to the bird in Greek literature, see D'Arcy W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds*² (London, Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 151-3; Otto Keller, *Die Antike Tierwelt* (Leipzig, Engelmann, 1913), II, pp. 63-7.

In many countries of Europe today there are old folk dances named for the cuckoo. Typical of these are the cuckoo dances of Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, and Russia.

The "Kuckuckstanz" of Pomerania, in Northern Germany,¹⁹ is characterized by turnings in place as the dancers cry "Cuckoo!" The "Kukačka" of Bohemia²⁰ features quick running steps (perhaps suggestive of flight), turns about the dancer's own axis, and stamping steps as the dancers cry "Ku, ku, ku!" The "Kukachka" of Moravia²¹ makes use of hops, smooth running steps, and turns in place. The Russian "Kukushka"²² is much more active, mimetic, and brilliant. In it, the dancers jump on both feet, in the manner of "a bird hopping from place to place," and at the same time flap their arms as if they were wings; they also turn in place, with little jumps, and cry "Cuckoo!"

In a moving picture "short subject" issued recently, featuring winter sports in Aspen, Colorado, a cuckoo dance on skis was introduced as a *tour de force*. The performer, dressed in Tyrolean garb, hopped, flapped his arms, and turned about his own axis, clockwise. The dance was evidently inspired by the cuckoo folk dance of Germany and Austria.

These dances may, of course, bear little or no relation to one another, and may have arisen spontaneously. However, when old folk dances of both Eastern and Western Europe, especially those of great popular appeal, agree so closely in pattern and detail, there is always the possibility that they may have a common origin in a Greek or Graeco-Roman prototype.

In this connection, the words chosen by two translators of Aristophanes are interesting. We have referred above to Voss' rendition of the line we have been discussing: "Ab traml' ich den Plumptanz, und umher kukuk ich eins." Although "Plumptanz" is evidently meant to refer here to the *mothon*, yet it could actually be an accurate descriptive term for some of the cuckoo

¹⁹ Oswald Fladeres, *Deutsche Volkstänze* (Kassel, Bärenreiterverlag, 1927), I, pp. 10-11.

²⁰ Anna Spacek and Neva L. Boyd, *Folk Dances of Bohemia and Moravia* (Chicago, Saul Bros., 1917), p. 16.

²¹ Marjorie C. Geary, *Folk Dances of Czechoslovakia* (New York, Barnes, 1922), pp. 22-3.

²² Louis H. Chalif, *Folk Dances of Different Nations* (published by the author, 163-5 W. 57th St., New York, N. Y., 1926), III, pp. 59-62.

dances of modern Europe. Perhaps Voss had seen such dances, and was unconsciously influenced by them in translating the line. In an entirely different play, the *Lysistrata*, Droysen²³ translated the vexed διποδιάξω of line 1243, in dialect, "Mer wollen den Kukuk hopsa." I have argued elsewhere²⁴ that the διποδία here referred to was a dignified, graceful Spartan "dance to the dimeter" of Laconian choral songs; but that several writers, both ancient and modern (obviously including Droysen), have confused it with the ποδισμός or the διαποδισμός, which was a hop, with both feet held closely together as if tied, and with the body bent far forward. A figure of this sort, with lewd movements of the hips and thighs, was a characteristic feature of the *kordax*.²⁵ It would combine well with the *mothon*. Scaliger²⁶ says that the figure is one in which "iunctis pedibus, labore plurimo et conatu, picos imitabantur." I have no idea from what source Scaliger drew this bit of information; but it offers a hint, at least, that the ultimate origin of this particular feature of the *kordax* was a dance or figure imitative of an awkwardly hopping bird.

In summary, then, I should like to offer the suggestion that line 697 of the *Knights* of Aristophanes is a passing reference, in the form of a metaphor, to a real dance or figure imitative of a cuckoo; that this dance or figure was a part of the old animal *komos* which, with its roots perhaps in Minoan-Mycenaean religious practices, was later a factor in the development of Greek comedy; that it became a *schema* of the *kordax*; and that characteristic features of it were awkward hops on both feet, a flapping of the arms, turns about the dancer's own axis, quick running steps to suggest flight, some hostile or derisive lunges with "beak" and "wings," and an obligato of cries of "Cuckoo!" or the Greek equivalent thereof.

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²³ *Op. cit.* (note 1), II, p. 183.

²⁴ "Diple, Dipodia, Dipodismos in the Greek Dance," *T. A. P. A.*, LXXVI, pp. 59-73.

²⁵ Schol. Aristoph. *Clouds*, 540; Schnabel, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 5-6; Louis Sèchan, *La danse grecque antique* (Paris, de Boccard, 1930), p. 196.

²⁶ Julius Caesar Scaliger, "De Comoedia et Tragoedia," in Vol. VIII of Jacobus Gronovius' *Thesaurus Graecarum Antiquitatum* (Venice, 1732-7), cols. 1533 F-1534 A.