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NEW LINGUISTIC USES ON THE COMIC STAGE: NON-STANDARD DEVICES

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As long as Aristophanes was writing polis-comedies (...) his dialect may have been consciously conservative, favouring traditional over innovative Attic wherever actual usage was divided. If this is true, it entails that the Attic heard on stage was not necessarily the same as the Attic spoken by a majority of his audience. (Willi 2014, 178)

0.Summary.

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- 2) Aphaeresis.
- 3) Unconditioned metathesis.
- 4) Metathesis in contact with liquids.
- 5) Vocalic change in contact with liquids.
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- 7) Confusion of liquids.
- 8) Lenition of voiced obstruents.
- 9) Devoicing of voiced obstruents.
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1. Introductory

The comic fragmentary texts of the 5th and 4th centuries BC offer a huge and varied testimony of linguistic innovations, that is to say, phenomena of different origin which were neither inherited nor generally attested in the literary tradition. It must be kept in mind, however, that most of these innovations, actually spoken by the comic characters in daily situations exempt of any particular social relevance, belong to the low registers of the language and follow the patterns of the non-standard varieties.

In choosing texts from both Athens and Sicily, even if they are not strictly contemporary in time, our conclusions initially focused on the Attic dialect, much more represented in our extant corpus of fragmentary comedy, will find a support in a second dialect which

is distant in geography, although close in literary tradition.¹ Our fragments imply severe difficulties in many aspects, as many of these quotations were made because of their high interest for lexicographers and grammarians in general.

Our survey includes an extensive corpus consisting of the first three volumes of the Kassel & Austin edition.² The objectives of our research are, first of all, the linguistic innovations registered in the comic genre of the Classical Age; second, the position of these phenomena within the history of the Greek language as full innovations even in further ages. Otherwise said, we are interested in those linguistic phenomena which in literature appear at first in the comic genre.

Morphology especially offers a plenty of examples of regularization, but not all of them are interesting for our purposes. For example, the ancient class of the athematic verbs undergoes thematization, witness Antiphanes in *Antiph.* 154: *Antiatt.* δ 8 Valente: διδοῦσιν· οὐ διδόασιν. Ἀντιφάνης Μητροφῶντι (“*didôusin*, not *didôasin*. Antiphanes in *Metrophon*”). The thematic conjugation of the old athematic verbs occurs quite often in non-literary Koine, cf. *P.Mich.* 176.20 ὀμνύω, dated on 91 AD, but this feature is so widely registered in the Classical literature that it has small relevance for our search. The same can be said of many other cases, implying or not regularization and levelling: for example, the sigmatic imperative λέξον -a substitutive form of the old εἰπέ-, attested by Epicharmus, *Epich. fr.* 113, v. 252; the syntactic construction ὦ οὔτος, cf. *Sophr. fr.* 57; and the periphrastic perfect, cf. *Alex. fr.* 267, 8 δεδωκῶς ἦν. Although these features fit with the substandard register, none of them can be ranged under the qualification of unique novelties. Other innovations come from high registers of the language, but they soon spread to almost all the literary genres. So, for example the *-μα terms, as in *Alc. fr.* 12 νοσημάτων instead of νόσων, *Sophr. fr.* 23.2 λίχνευμα. In the field of lexicon, Epicharmus, Alexis and Aristophanes, as well as Timocles, use the term δηλαδή, i.e. originally δῆλα δῆ, cf. *Epich. fr.* 149, *Alex. fr.* 177.6, *Ar. Ve.* 441, *Timocl. fr.* 3. Yet this term, so frequent in later stages of the Greek language, is attested from Herodotus onwards and in different genres,³ so that it will not deserve our comment here.

In short, we will pay attention to those instances featured by a sense of singularity which makes unusual to find them in other genres than comedy. As an example we will give that of the change of the gender of the masculine term ὁ σκότος, which became τὸ σκότος in Epicharmus.⁴ In outlining the history of this term, Fränkel pointed out that

¹ It is not really relevant for our purposes that Sophron was a mime writer. Also, from the point of view of methodology Alexis will be dealt with as an Attic author, although he was Thurian by birth and developed there his skills and his talent as comedigrapher. Furthermore, Epicharmus, born in the Aegean island of Cos, will be alluded to as a Syracusan poet.

² Only occasionally we will offer quotations from comedigraphers included in other volumes (Eubulus, Plato, Timocles), just for the sake of comparison or completeness.

³ See, for example, *Hdt.* 4.135, *S.* *OT* 1501, *E.* *IA* 1386, *Pl.* *Prt.* 309a, etc.

⁴ BELLOCCHI 2008, 280.

already in the Classical Age the neuter form was developed, although it could achieve a normal use only in the New Comedy. According with Fränkel, Aristophanes always keeps the old masculine noun,⁵ but in fact this statement is quite weak, as there is an only valid example in *Frogs*.⁶ His contemporary Ameipsias, however, admitted the neutral declension, cf. Amips. 38: Phot. 525, 4 σκότος καὶ σκότον· ἐκατέρως. οὕτως Ἀμειψίας (“*skotos* and *skoton*: in both forms. So Ameipsias”). In New Testament Greek, Blass does not mention any particular feature of this neutral declension, but Radermacher quotes this form as *vereinzelt*.⁷ Actually, in the Ptolemaic papyri variation cases such as τὸ ἔτος / ὁ ἔτος are quite frequent.⁸ Therefore, the role of comedy in this linguistic change goes far beyond other literary genres, and this is the kind of situation that we would like to underline in this paper.

2.Evidence for innovation I. Phonology.

Many of the attested innovations belong to the phonological level. Look, for example, 1) at this *Diphthong-Öffnung* attributed to Epicharmus, Epich. fr. 174: *Et. Gen.* A¹¹B εὐληρα οὐδετέρως, τὰ ἡνία, τοὺς ἰμάντας· ἔστι δὲ τῶν ἄπαξ εἰρημένων· παρὰ δὲ Ἐπιχάρμω **αὐληρα** εἴρηται, παρὰ τὸ αὐλόν (“*eulera*, in neuter form, the reins, the straps; it is one of the terms said only once; in Epicharmus it is said *aulera*, in comparison with *aulón*). In our opinion, however, beyond the suggested etymology, the spelling αὐληρα instead of εὐληρα shows a non-standard pronunciation of the diphthong which will be attested later in the Imperial Age, as in *P.Oxy.* I 67, 18 ἐραυνα (1st. cent. AD); II 294, 9 and 10 ἐραυνάω (3rd. cent. AD). This Epicharmian example deserves full attention, for such a pronunciation was not very common indeed. We also read ἐραυνάω instead of ἐρευνάω in the *Gospel* of John and in the *Apocalypse*, and in the Pauline epistles as well.⁹ Take into account that the phenomenon points to the idiolects of these two individuals. On the other hand, this feature was qualified by Schmid as a specific Helleno-Hebrew innovation,¹⁰ and later on by Buresch, Thumb and Reinhold as an Alexandrine trait.¹¹ We can

⁵ FRÄNKEL 1911, 195-196.

⁶ *Ar. Ra.* 273, *Ec.* 288 κατὰ σκότον is ambiguous.

⁷ BLASS/DEBRUNNER 1961, 35; RADERMACHER 1925, 62.

⁸ MAYSER 1923, 276-277 and 285-289; GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. II, 92-103.

⁹ Jo. 5.39 and 7.52, *Apoc.* 2.23, *Ro.* 8.27, *I Cor.* 2.10. See also MAYSER 1923, 113: «Die im N.T. (...) auch bei Philo und Josephus (...) belegte Form ἐραυνάω erscheint in dem Papp. erst nach Christus: so ἡραύνηται *Oxy.* II 294, 9. 10 (22p); ἐραυνᾶν ebd. 280, 30 (180^p)».

¹⁰ SCHMID 1895, 40, where the feature is assigned to the category of Ἰουδαϊκὰ ὀνόματα.

¹¹ BURESCH 1891, 214; REINHOLD 1901, 40; MAYSER 1923, 113-114. *Contra*, THUMB 1901, 176-178, cf. p. 177: «mit ἐραυνάω fällt geradezu der letzte Rest und die stärkste Stütze eines judengriechisches Dialektes».

now reconsider the question from a different perspective and depict the feature as a general Koinism, not to be identified with a restricted group of speakers.

2) Prodelision or aphaeresis, also known as inverse elision, is not very common in Classical Greek literature, but in Koine Greek it is slightly more usual, especially in the Roman -and later in the Byzantine- papyri, while in Modern Greek its frequency becomes very high.¹² In our corpus, it occurs in Epicharmus and Amphipolis, that is to say, both in Sicily and Athens, cf. Epich. fr. 76, 2 ᾠ τᾶν, Amph. fr. 30, 12-13 (...) ἀλλὰ συλλαβὴν ἀφελῶν ᾿ τᾶρων / ᾿ βολῶν γένοιτ ᾿ ἄν ᾿ ἡ δὲ κέστρα; ᾿ κτῶ ᾿ βολῶν (‘‘but when taking out a syllable ‘it should cost four pennies’; ‘and the fish?’; ‘eight pennies’’’), this second passage being quoted by Athenaeus.¹³ In non-literary Koine we will find much more examples, such as *P.Grenf.* II 26, 19 ὁ ᾿ πελθῶν, 28, 12 νότου ᾿ μπελῶν, *P.Oxy.* 75, 32 καὶ ᾿ νοίκησιν.

3) Our third feature will be unconditioned vowel metathesis, another uncommon phonetical phenomenon. Our comic fragments show examples so striking as βιπτᾶζω instead of βαπτίζω, cf. Epich. fr. 171, Sophr. fr. 110 βιπτᾶζω. Not surprisingly, Cassio declares that this case of metathesis is unparalleled.¹⁴ Mayser defines this phenomenon as originated in written texts,¹⁵ and a similar explanation is also tried by Threatte.¹⁶ With all probability it was after the passages of Epicharmus and Sophron that Hesychius collected this phonetical feature, cf. Hesych. 304: βιπτᾶζειν ᾿ ἐπιβάπτειν. Since there is no basis for a phonetical change, in our opinion the explanation for the appearance of the by-form βιπτᾶζω must be phono-morphological. Although there are of course many *-τίζω formations as ποτίζω, σχηματίζω, χαιρετίζω etc., some of them experiencing an increased use in Koine Greek, it seems that by means of a transitory form **βαπτᾶζω, following the model of ἐξετάζω, κοιτάζω, and the like, a dissimilatory form βιπτᾶζω was created.

4) Other examples of vowel change occur in contexts of liquid phonemes, especially the rhotic /r/, as shown by Epicharmus and Sophron, cf. Epich. fr. 177 κοκρούδες instead of κρόκυδες, Sophr. 10 δρίφον instead of δίφρον. In this case the Syracusan authors are much more close to the spoken language than their Attic partners. Aristophanes, for ins-

¹² See on the matter MAYSER 1923, 143-144; GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. I, 319-321; HOLTON/HORROCKS/JANNSEN/LENDARI/MANOLESSOU/TOUFEKIS 2019, 61-63.

¹³ Athen. 224d.

¹⁴ CASSIO 2002, 66.

¹⁵ MAYSER 1923, I 152: «Wenn solche Metathesen bei unähnlichen Vokalen vorkommen, sind sie wohl rein graphischer Natur». However, Mayser is wrong in describing as a vowel metathesis the writing of αὐθαίρω instead of αὐθαίρετος. The writing mistake is correctly defined, but there is no metathesis because αι and ε sounded exactly the same.

¹⁶ THREATTE 1980, vol. I, 163.

tance, keeps always the inherited form, cf. Ar. fr. 676 κροκύδα, fr. 689 κροκύδας. Nonetheless, the language of the Greek papyri is fond of similar examples of vowel change.¹⁷ Threatte takes as doubtful an Attic evidence for metathesis and quotes just an example from the Imperial period, τρομήση instead of τολμήση (3rd-4th cent. AD).¹⁸ Also Gignac is quite reluctant to the recognition of metathesis as a rather common feature of standard language.¹⁹ On the other hand, spellings like Φρεσοφόνην, Φρεσσοφώνη are quite abundant in the Attic *defixiones* from a much older period.²⁰ Compare also the lexicographical quotation afforded by Hesychius, Hesych. 1270: πρᾶνῶ ἀκρίδος εἶδος (“*pranó*: kind of locust”), that is to say, a πᾶρνοψ, which is to be related to Hesych. 1200: πᾶρνοπες ἀκρίδες (“*parnopes*: locusts”) – a gloss inspired by an Aristophanic passage, *Av.* 588.

5) Another rather anomalous case of vowel substitution can be found in Epicharmus, namely Epich. fr. 191 βλίταχεα instead of βατράχεα. No matter how much unsound we can find this vowel variation, the case deserves further study. The Epicharmean form merges two variations, since not only liquids /l/ and /r/ are confused, but also the vowels /a/ and /i/, so that βλίταχεα would have been occurred after an intermediate form *βιτράχεα, with a vocalic dissimilation.²¹ Other examples given by the lexicographer Hesychius should have different explanations: for instance, a quite opening of the vowel because of the liquid is attested in Hesych. 1468 τράφαλλος ὁ χλωρὸς τυρὸς, οἱ δὲ τροφαλλίδα (“*traphallos*: fresh cheese, others say trophallida”). The case of Hesych. 1323: ῥιπή ὀρμή, ῥοπή should be due to the semantic similarity of the corresponding verbs of movement ῥίπτω and ῥέπω.²²

6) Not far from the above examples, a liquid vibrant is lost after two non-vocalic phonemes as in the spelling ἀλαβαστον, registered in Attic non-literary texts dated about 414 and 350 a.C.,²³ but also in the comedialographer Alexis, cf. Alex. fr. 63 ἀλαβάστου and 147, 3 ἀλαβάστους. Parallel examples can be found in the Ptolemaic papyri.²⁴

7) The confusion between liquid phonemes is attested in Ameipsias, Sophron and Sopat, cf. Amip. 5 κλιβανίτις, Sophr. 27 κλιβανίταις, Sopat. 5 κλίβανον. In dealing

¹⁷ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 189; GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. I, 314-315.

¹⁸ THREATTE 1980, vol. I, 476.

¹⁹ GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. I, 314: «Metathesis is limited to a very few words, indicating the existence of by-forms rather than that metathesis was a phonological feature of the living language».

²⁰ RABEHL 1906, 9 and 24.

²¹ It is after the form βλίταχος that one should probably explain another Hesychian testimony, Hesych. 306: βλαχάν ὁ βάτραχος.

²² It is not to be discarded that ῥίπτω was created after ῥέπω.

²³ THREATTE 1980, vol. I, 482.

²⁴ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 187.

with this same word, Mayser suggests that the Koine form follows a widely attested tendency, given that κλίβανος is used by Herodotus, besides the Doric instances.²⁵

8) The lenition of the voiced obstruents is also attested, in such a way that they can be even eliminated. A fragment from the Attic comedigrapher Plato was already noticed by Dover,²⁶ namely Plat. Com. fr. 183 ὀλίος. Yet other instances can be read in the Syracusan authors Rhinton and Sophron, cf. Rhint. fr. 2 ὀλίοισιν ἡμῶν ἐμπέφυκ' εὐψυχία ("in a few of us good spirit has grown"), fr. 4 χρήζω γὰρ ὀλίον μισθὸν αὐτὸς λαμβάνειν ("I need to take a small salary"),²⁷ Sophr. fr. 149 παμφάλυα instead of πομφολύγα. The feature is very common in the language of the Greek papyri,²⁸ so that Thumb suggested, insofar as the examples in Asia Minor were not so frequent, that its presence in Egypt was a direct consequence of the influence of the Coptic phonetics, not at all an inherited feature since according with his opinion the Classical instances were very few.²⁹ We now have in front of our eyes a much more widespread testimony of the feature.

9) Devoicing of the voiced obstruents is attested in Alexis and Sophron, cf. Alex. fr. 177, 3-4, ποταπὸς οὔτοσι / ἄνθρωπος; Sophr. fr. 144: Phot. 158 βλέννα· ἡ μύξα. Σώφρων δὲ διὰ τοῦ π φησὶ πλέννα ("blenna: snot. But Sophron says plenna with p"). Again the language of the Greek papyri shows interesting parallels, such as P. Par. 51, 3 βατίζειν, Ost. 1089, 5 προστέχομαι, etc.³⁰

10) The voiceless aspirated obstruents φ θ χ experienced deaspiration, as in Epicharmus and Sophron, cf. Epich. fr. 139 ῥαπίδα· τὴν βελόνην. Ἐπίχαρμος ("rhapida: the needle"), instead of ῥαφίδα; Sophr. fr. 34 τατωμένα τοῦ κιτῶνος, ὁ τόκος νιν ἀλιφθερώκει ("in need of a mantle, the interest had ruined her"), instead of χιτῶνος; and fr. 67 and 68 ἠπιάλῃς instead of ἠφιάλτης. This last term was quoted by Hesychius after a fragment of the Lesbian poet Alcaeus, Alc. fr. 129 ἐπιάλτης, cf. Hesych. 582: ἐπιάλτης· ὁ ἐφιάλτης. Of course in the Imperial Age it was quite common to assign this feature to the eastern Greek dialects. Therefore, Mayser explained all these instances of deaspiration, cf. P. Par. 52, 6 κιθῶνας, P. Tebt. 112, 42 κύθρα, as Ionicisms.³¹ Yet long before the strongest period of influence of the Ionic spoken dialect in Athens, spellings like κιτῶν, καλκοῦς, πρέατος (on a vase of the 4th cent. BC), ἄτλα (on a vase of the

²⁵ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 7 and 188, cf. Hdt. 2.92.5. The *Septuagint* uses also κλίβανος, cf. Gn. 15.17.

²⁶ DOVER 1993, 244-245.

²⁷ See also EM 621.51 ὀλίος κατὰ διάλεκτον. Ταραντῖνοι γὰρ τὸ ὀλίγος ὀλίος λέγουσιν ἄνευ τοῦ γ; QUEROL DONAT 2018, especially 11-12.

²⁸ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 163-164. See also pp. 163-164 for the opposite feature, the *Hiatusstilgung*.

²⁹ THUMB 1901, 134-135.

³⁰ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 175; for a double example, both of devoicing and voicing spelling, see P. Weil III 1 πάμποδος instead of πάμβοτος, cf. MAYSER 1923, 185.

³¹ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 184: «Man darf in allen diesen Formen, die nicht nur auf Ägypten beschränkt bleiben, Ionismen erkennen».

painter Sophilos, 6th cent. Athens), etc., were attested in non-literary Attic,³² as well as a different case in which there is no real deaspiration, but methathesis, as in κύθρα for χύτρα.³³ The inverse phenomenon is also attested in two Aristophanic fragments, Ar. fr. 391 φανός instead of πανός, cf. Phot. 377, 25 πανός· δέσμη κληματίδων. Οί δὲ νεώτεροι Ἀττικοί φανός (“*panós*: tie of the vine-branches. But the youngest Attic-speakers say *phanós*”), and fr. 701 πολφούς instead of βολβούς, this last text showing also the voiceless pronunciation of the voiced labial β.

11) The simplification of obstruent clusters is a feature present in many popular and generally non-literary registers. This feature is already attested in Aristophanes, cf. Ar. fr. 955 ἄρτον, where the first voiceless phoneme of the inherited term ἄρκτον is suppressed. This reduced by-form is common in our imperial texts, although with a different solution, cf. *I Sal.* 17.35 ἄρκος. Take also into account Hesych. 1017 ματία· ἀμαρτία.³⁴

12) Another phonetical confusion originates the change of the labial nasal /m/ into the labial voiced /b/. The case is attested in Antiphanes, cf. Antiph. fr. 46, 4 βύστακας. This same word appears in Eubulus and Aristoteles under the form μύσταξ, cf. Eub. fr. 112 μύστακα, Arist. fr. 539 μάστακα. Hesychius gives the follow explanation of the term, Hesych. 1068: μύσταξ· οί ἐν τῷ ἄνω χεῖλει τρίχες (“*mystax*: hair on the upper lip”). But the gloss devoted to this variation by Photius is much more interesting, cf. Phot. 318: βύσταξ· ὁ ὕφ’ ἡμῶν μύσταξ (“*bystax*: the word that for you is *mystax*”). Of course the oscillation of these phonemes is known from a long time before. The epic and poetic verb μάρναμαι is recorded in two epigrammes epigraphically transmitted under the spellings βαρνάμενος βάρναμαι, maybe because of a dissimilation.³⁵ Moreover, our papyrological sources include the spelling attested in *P. Tebt.* I 16, 41 μάραθρον, while similar instances can be found in the lexicographer Hesychius, cf. Hesych. 293 βάσκα· μάκελλα (“*baska*: hoe”), cf. 1014 μάσκη· δίκελλα (“*maske*: a double hoe”); 305: βλακεία· μαλακία (“*blakeia*: illness”), cf. 1008: μαλακία· νόσος. βλακία (“*feebleness*: illness. *blakia*”).

13) In a different phonetic context, Sophron offers an exemple of the posterior development of a secondary vowel from /r/ followed by the development of an epenthetic glide, again the labial voiced /b/, cf. Sophr. 114 ἐμβραμένα (<*ἐμοραμένα). This phenomenon is also registered in the language of the Ptolemaic papyri, cf. *Wilcken Par.* 5, 20, 8

³² THREATTE 1980, vol. I, 452-453.

³³ RABEHL 1906, 24: χύτρα est forma solita, sed iuxta omnibus temporibus κυθρ- in usu erat.

³⁴ A midway solution is attested in Cretan μαῖτυς ἀδευπιός for μάρτυς ἀδελφεός, cf. *Gort.* I 40 ἀντὶ μαιτύρων δυῶν, II 20 μαῖτυς, V 18 ἀδευπιοί. It must be pointed out that μαῖτυς is a standardized form, while ἀδευπιός remains occasional.

³⁵ *IG I²* 943, 9 and LAZARIDIS 1976.

κρομβυσοπώλης,³⁶ and in our lexicographers as well, cf. Hesych. 1054: Μομβρώ· ἢ Μορμώ (“*Mombro*: Mormo”), in this last case after a metathetical form *Μομρώ.

3. Evidence for Innovation II. Morphology.

14) We will first of all notice the metaplasm in the old name ἄλς ἄλός, regularized by Antiphanes in the neuter nominative ἄλας, cf. Antiph. fr. 71, 2 ἄλας. This same regularization occurs in our papyri, cf. *P. RyI.* 4, 692.7 and 12, 696.6, dated in the last decades of the 3rd cent. AD.³⁷ The innovation also occurs in Neotestamentarian texts, cf. Mc. 9.50, Mt. 5.13 (*bis*), as well as in Galen 14, 3217.1 K. καὶ ἄλας βωλικὸν μετὰ γλήχονος (“and a lump of salt with pennyroyal”).

15) Interesting beyond any doubt is the change of grammatical gender in the neutral form of the former masculine σκότος, transmitted by Ameipsias according with our sources (fr. 38). As it has been discussed above, we will just mention it.

16) Nominal suffixation shows the continuity between these comic texts and post-Classical Greek. Aristophanes, for instance, uses twice the suffix *-ίας to allude to some wine of bad quality, cf. Ar. fr. 219 ταχύ νυν πέτου καὶ μὴ τροπίαν οἶνον φέρε. A second example appears in the extant comedies, where wine scented with floral aromas is called ἀνθοσμίας, a term also attested in the fragments of Aristophanes himself and his contemporary Pherecrates.³⁸ Both terms are quoted and explained by Hesychius: Hesych. 161 ἀνθοσμίας· οἶνος ἄνθος ἔχων (“*anthosmias*: wine aromatized with flower scent”); Hesych. 1475 τροπίας οἶνος· μεταβεβληκῶς καὶ ἔκλυτος (“*tropias* wine: transformed and untied”). It is interesting that there are other examples that refer to the same reality, different kinds of wine, cf. Pherecr. fr.130, 6, Anaxandr. fr. 41, 71 and Pl. Com. fr. 244 καπνίας, as in the Aristophanic *Acharnians* we find ὀμφακίας.³⁹ Similarly, this suffix *-ίας provided many names for the semantic family of winds, cf. κερκίας, ὄρνιθίας, καικίας, etc.⁴⁰ The formation is of course present in the Ptolemaic papyri with examples such as ἐρυθρίας, ἰσχυρίας.⁴¹

17) The preference for diminutive substantives links also these comic fragments with the Greek Koine. Alexis, Antiphanes, Apollodorus and Aristophanes prove that the di-

³⁶ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 169.

³⁷ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 286.

³⁸ Ar. *Ra.* 1150, *Pl.* 807; fr. 351; Pherecr. fr. 108, 30.

³⁹ Ar. *Ach.* 352.

⁴⁰ CHANTRAINE 1933, 94.

⁴¹ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 434, *P. Petr.* 2 13 (a) 26 ἐρυθρίας, *P. Petr.* II 10 (1) 10 ἰσχυρίας.

minutive has lost its meaning to become a simple alternative to the corresponding substantive.⁴² It has no sense that Alexis adds the adjective ‘small’ in Alex. fr. 115, ll. 5-6 **ἰχθυδίων** μικρῶν. On the Aristophanic fragment 13 δυοῖν **λυχνιδίον** the lexicographer Pollux had to make a very valuable comment, cf. Poll. 10.118 (...) δῆλον ὅτι λύχνια εἶρηκεν ἀλλ’ οὐ λύχνους μικρούς (“it is clear that he was speaking about oil lamps, not about small oil lamps”). In a similar way, look at Mt. 26.51 ὠτίον and Mc. 14.47 and Jo. 18.10 ὠτάριον, as nothing in our texts imply that the poor servant had a diminutive ear.

18) Two fragments of Epicharmus, Epich. fr. 43 and 86, show a case of haplologization, **πέρκας** instead of **πέρδικας**. This feature can also be recognized in the language of satyr drama, cf. A. fr. 234 θώψεις instead of θωπεύσεις,⁴³ S. fr. 173 θωχθείς instead of θωρηχθείς.⁴⁴ The language of the Greek papyri gives us again striking parallels, such as *P. Grenf.* I 39 v. II 2 στεφαλίβανος,⁴⁵ *P. Petr.*I 14, 20 Βενίκην,⁴⁶ instead of στεφανολίβανος, Βερενίκην. Moreover, the Hesychian lexicographical compilation adds new valuable information, cf. Hesych. 1008: μάλαι· μασχάλαι (“*malai*: armpits”). The phenomenon of haplology was actually common in low registers.

19) Pronominal morphology makes also some contribution to our outline of the linguistic innovations in the literary language of the comic genre. Epicharmus and Sophron use Sicilian pronominal forms that had no continuity in the Greek Koine, for they were limited to that dialectal area. Our first instance comes from Epicharmus, cf. Epich. fr. 5 **αὐτότερος** αὐτῶν. This innovation has a very noticeable parallel in Ar. *Pl.* 83 αὐτότατος, showing also the extension of the adjectival gradation to the class of the personal pronouns.⁴⁷ The following examples are taken from Sophron: the reflexive pronoun αὐταυτός is attested also once, cf. Sophr. 18 αἰ δὲ μὴ ἐγῶν ἔμασσον ταῖς **αὐταυτᾶς** χερσὶν (“if I had not knead it with my hands”),⁴⁸ but it is quite frequent in epigraphical texts of the Hellenistic Age from different places in most of Sicily; as a formation many scholars use to analyze it as a refection by means of the addition of an

⁴² Alex. 159 ὀψάρια, τριχίδια and σηπίδια, 177, Anaxil. 28 (bis), Antiph. 132 ὀψάρια, Apoll. Car. 30 οινάρια. Actually this item can be ranged among the morphological as well as among the syntactic innovations.

⁴³ REDONDO 2015a, 149.

⁴⁴ REDONDO 2003, 426. For an alternative explanation, as the passive aorist participle of θήγω, see LÓPEZ EIRE 2003, 391.

⁴⁵ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 6 and n. 4, suggests that the form can be recognised as a case of haplology, but states that the question remains unsolved because of the unclear meaning of the word.

⁴⁶ MAYSER 1923, vol. I, 245-248.

⁴⁷ A different case is that of the possessive pronouns ἡμέτερος, ὑμέτερος and σφέτερος, as well as the alterity pronoun ἔτερος, where the suffix keeps its old intensive meaning, cf. WITTWER 1970; see also LEJEUNE 1962; NEUMANN 1983.

⁴⁸ ESTEVE 2009, 206.

undeclined element *-τα.⁴⁹ In our opinion, for different reasons it seems better to follow the explanation of García Teijeiro and Molinos Tejada, as an haplogogized form of the reflexive tautological conflation αὐτὸς αὐτόν, since it offers a comparative approach to similar cases, it is more economical according with the refection procedures, and avoids the introduction in pronominal morphology of such a singular element as the indeclinable suffix *-τα, only known till now as a temporal adverbial element.⁵⁰ Finally, the third Sophronian innovation is also a reflexive pronoun, cf. Sophr. fr. 89 Συρακούσιοι ψίν, and fr. 90 πῶς ψε καὶ γινώσκομες; (“how do we know ourselves?”), and it was explained by Hesychius with the following gloss, cf. Hesych. 1574 ψίν· αὐτοῖς. αὐτόν (“*psin*: themselves; himself”). The form ψε is found in Theocritus, Theocr. IV 3, as well as in the Cretan dialect; it is usually explained as a metathetical by-form of σφε.⁵¹ However, as indicated above, none of these innovations had some continuity in later stages of the Greek language, the Theocritean instance being due to the sole factor of literary imitation.

A last remark on pronominal morphology is related to the form οὐθέν used by Antiphanes, cf. Antiph. fr. 193, 11-12 (... ἀλλ’ οὐθέν μέλει / τῶν σκωμμάτων μοι (“but I do not care at all about these jests”).⁵² Gignac is not right when he states that it was a Sandhi-sequence that originated the new form,⁵³ since never in Classical and Hellenistic standard Greek a voiced stop became aspirated. Only in the imperial period will be found some examples, although quite rare.⁵⁴ Actually οὐθείς was very sparingly used by the Attic writers. Hypereides, for instance, says (...) οὐδὲν δεινὸν ἔπασχον (...) ὡς οὐθενὸς ἄξια ὄντα (“they did not suffer at all (...) since they were not worthy anything”) etc.,⁵⁵ as a kind of doublet.

Verbal morphology confirms the link between this language of comedy and the Greek Koine. 20) In post-Classical Greek the sigmatic future uses to restrict and even to eliminate the ancient contract future. This preference for sigmatic future is already attested in

⁴⁹ ESTEVE 2009, 217: «En primer lugar hay que destacar el uso del sufijo -τα añadido al pronombre αὐτός para formar el pronombre reflexivo en las antiguas ciudades no griegas del oeste y centro de la isla. Así, encontramos: αὐτοῦστα, αὐτῶντα ambas en Centuripe en el s. II; αὐτοῖστα, αὐτῶντα en Entella en los ss. III/II; αὐτῶντα en Termas de Hímera en el s. II o en Segesta αὐτοῦτα entre los siglos III/II». Esteve himself (2009, 227) takes for highly probable that the innovation was extended to all the Sicilian dialects: «No tenemos ninguna razón para pensar que el reflexivo del tipo αὐτοῦτα no llegará a toda la isla, incluidas las zonas del sur, de colonización ródia, y Siracusa. Los primeros ejemplos de estos pronombres surgen en el siglo III y se generalizan en el siglo II. Es probable que, en general, los reflexivos en -τα conviviesen con reflexivos áticos que poco a poco irían desplazándolos». On αὐτῶντα see also MIMBRERA 2012, 232-233.

⁵⁰ GARCÍA TEIJEIRO/MOLINOS TEJADA 1988, 177-178.

⁵¹ FISKE 1830, 227.

⁵² In this regard, see also fr. 281 K.-A. in DOUGLAS OLSON 2021, 250; THREATTE 1980, 472-476.

⁵³ GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. I, 97. He is followed by AITKEN 2008, 265-266.

⁵⁴ GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. I, 96-97.

⁵⁵ Hyp. Ath. 7. See LÓPEZ EIRE 2002, 86-87.

the following Alcaeus' fragment: Alc. 8: *Antiatt.* κ 38 Valente: κρεμάσω οὐ μόνον κρεμῶ. Ἀλκαῖος Γανιμήδει ("kremaso: not only kremō. Alcaeus in *Ganimesdes*"). Aristophanes certainly used the expected contracted future κρεμῶ,⁵⁶ but it was in a lyric section. His adoption of the new sigmatic formations is not limited to the particular Greek spoken by the Scythian archer with his τρέξει, i.e. θρέξει,⁵⁷ since the innovation is also used by such different characters as the Just Discourse, War and the slave Charon.⁵⁸ This innovative sigmatic future -and aorist- will ratify its expansion in the *Septuagint*, cf. LXX *Gn.* 40.19: ἔτι τριῶν ἡμερῶν ἀφελεῖ Φαραὼ τὴν κεφαλὴν σου ἀπὸ σοῦ, καὶ κρεμάσει σε ἐπὶ ξύλου, καὶ φάγεται τὰ ὄρνεα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὰς σάρκας σου ἀπὸ σοῦ ("Yet in no more than three days the Pharaoh will rip your head off, and he will hang you on a tree, and heaven birds will eat your flesh").⁵⁹ New Testament Greek, as the language of the Greek papyri, generalized the sigmatic future in the paradigmata provided with dental suffix.⁶⁰ Yet the opposite phenomenon is also attested, as it can be read in Ameipsias, cf. Amip. fr. 29 ἀναβιβῶμαι· ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀναβιβάσομαι ("anabibomai: instead of *anabibaso-mai*").

21) In accordance with an extended and deep regularization of the verbal morphology, the old root aorist is now replaced by sigmatic forms, as in a fragment of Antiphanes, cf. Antiph. fr. 33 λείψας instead of λιπῶν. Similar examples can be found in non-literary Roman and Byzantine papyri.⁶¹

22) The perfect form τέθεικα is attested in the Attic comedialographers Alexis and Batos, cf. Alex. fr. 15, 13 διὰ τοῦτο <τὸ> τὰριχος τέθεικας διπλασίου ("for this reason did you raise twice the price of your salted fish?"); Bat. fr. 2, 7-8 τί τὰργύριον, ἀνθρῶπε, τιμιώτερον / σαυτοῦ τέθεικας ἢ πέφυκε τῇ φύσει; ("why, man, did you release money that is worth more than what is naturally due you?"). This by-form can be read in LXX *Is.* 49, 6 ἰδοὺ τέθεικά σε εἰς διαθήκην γένους ("have it in mind, I made you as a pact of our people"),⁶² and in the Ptolemaic papyri and in New Testament Greek as well it is

⁵⁶ Ar. *Pl.* 312.

⁵⁷ Ar. *Th.* 1222 and 1225.

⁵⁸ Ar. *N.* 1005 ἀποθρέξει (Just Discourse), *Pa.* 261 μεταθρέξει (War), *Ra.* 193 περιθρέξει (Charon). On other Aristophanic innovations in verbal morphology – βαλλήσομεν, ἀνίστασο, ἐθρέφθην – see REDONDO 2015b, 193. See also LAUTENSACH 1911, 173-174.

⁵⁹ *Gn.* 40, 19.

⁶⁰ BLASS/DEBRUNNER 1961, 50; RADERMACHER 1925, 92-93. The only exception were some forms taken from quotations of the *Septuagint*, for example Mt. 12.21 ἐλπιούσιν, Lc. 19.44 ἐδαφιοῦσιν. For the Roman and Byzantine papyri see GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. II, 284-286.

⁶¹ GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. II, 291-292, cf. *BGU* 1141.17 κατέλειψα, dated ca. 13 BC, *BGU* 467.6 καταλείψας, dated 177 AD.

⁶² Most, not to say all, of the extant translations of this passage do not give any account of this sentence, which instead is rendered with a version where δέδωκα replaces the uncomfortable τέθεικα.

also the regular record.⁶³ We must take into account that the first Attic epigraphic example is dated in 69-62 BC.⁶⁴

23) Other noticeable verbal forms do appear in the fragments of the Athenian comedigraphers Antiphanes and Alexis. Antiphanes uses a second person singular of the middle pluperfect with an ending *-εσο which gives in a contract verb in *-α the result *-ᾶσο, cf. Antiph. fr. 93 ἡκροᾶσο· ἀντί τοῦ ἡκροῶ. Ἀντιφάνης Ἐπιδαύρω (“*ekroâso*: instead of *ekroô*. Antiphanes in *Epidauros*”). The innovation consists in adding the thematic vowel, since this verbal formation was all around the Greek territories athematic, as far as we know.

24) Morphological innovations are also attested in the imperative. The comedigrapher Alexis made his own contribution to it, cf. Alex. fr. 14: *Antiatt.* μ 25 Valente: **μετάβα**· ὥσπερ καὶ ἀνάβα καὶ κατάβα. Ἄλεξις Ἀμφώτιδι (“*metaba*: like *anaba* and *kataba*. Alexis in *Amphotis*”). This formation appears in Aristophanes, cf. Ar. *Ve.* 979-980 and *Ra.* 35 κατάβα. Yet in this author the most common form is the old one as in *Ve.* 963 ἀνάβηθι, *Ach.* 884 ἐκβαθι, *Eq.* 169 ἐπανάβηθι, *Ra.* 674 ἐπίβηθι, *Nu.* 237 and *Lys.* 873 and 883 κατὰβηθι. In non-literary Koine, however, the old ending *-θι is only used in the verbs εἰμί and οἶδα.⁶⁵

25) In 1948 Schmid and Stählin pointed out the present formation with nasal infix and suffix as one of the features by means of which the language of Thucydides was related to the Greek Koine.⁶⁶ The fourth-century BC comic poet Antiphanes is actually placed between Thucydides and the Koine, and this verbal formation is attested in one of his fragments, cf. Antiph. fr. 37 πρὸς τῷ Πέ<ρω>νι μυροπώλη γευόμενον **κατελίμπανον** / αὐτὸν περὶ μύρων κτλ. (“I left him close to Peron, the perfumeseller, tasting fragrances”). In a similar way, Deinolochus prefers a new formation, cf. Deinol. fr. 5 **σωννύω** instead of σῶζω, originated by analogy with ζωννύω according with Cassio.⁶⁷ This form was already remarked by Ahrens,⁶⁸ and its continuation in the Cretan modern conjugations ἐσώννυσα, θα σωννύσω *et sim.* was confirmed by Hatzidakis.⁶⁹ Similar formations are Attic καταδηγύω, *IG III App.* 75 (12ies) and 94, 2, and Cretan στανύω, cf. GDI 5040, 66, as deverbatives from δέω and ἴστημι, respectively.

⁶³ MAYSER 1923, 370; RADERMACHER 1925, 96. For the Roman and Byzantine papyri see GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. II, 398-399.

⁶⁴ MEISTERHANS/SCHWYZER 1900, 189.

⁶⁵ Mt. 5.25, Mc. 5.34 ἴσθι (εἰμί), Lc. 19.17 ἴσθι (οἶδα), Jer. 31.34 γνῶθι. The Lucan example is a hapax, and even most of commentators and translators did not understand that it is an οἶδα-form, cf. A. Ag. 1760.

⁶⁶ SCHMID/STÄHLIN 1948, vol. I, 5, 190.

⁶⁷ CASSIO 2012, 262.

⁶⁸ AHRENS 1843, 352.

⁶⁹ HATZIDAKIS 1892, 157.

4. Evidence for Innovation III. Syntax.

The innovations are not restricted to the fields of phonetics and morphology. To begin with, 26) there are examples of the decay of the dative case, as shown by Alexis and Aristophanes, cf. Alex. 250: *Antiatt.* π 1 Valente: **παρ' ἡμᾶς** οἰκεῖ ἀντὶ τοῦ παρ' ἡμῖν. Ἄλεξις Φιλαθηναίῳ (“he lives close to us: instead of near us. Alexis in *Philathenaios*”), Ar. fr. 466, 4-5: γυναῖκα δὴ ζητοῦντες ἐνθάδ' ἤκομεν / ἦν φασιν εἶναι **παρὰ σέ** (“We arrived here indeed in the search of a woman who is said to live by your side”). In both sentences the required pronouns had to be ἡμῖν and σοί.

27) The substitution of the partitive regime with the accusative appears in a quotation from Antiphanes, *Antiph.* fr. 68: *Antiatt.* δ 38 Valente: **δράμ'** ἀκοῦσαι ἀντὶ τοῦ δράματος ἀκοῦσαι (“to listen a play: instead of listen to a play”). The *Septuagint* shows close examples as *Gn.* 3, 8 καὶ ἤκουσαν **τὴν φωνήν** Κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ περιπατοῦντος ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τὸ δειλινόν (“and they heard the voice of Lord, the God, while he was walking down the paradise in the evening”),⁷⁰ and if we now pay attention to the Ptolemaic papyri we will find the same construction, as in *UPZ* 77 col. I 25 ἀκούσασα **τὴν φωνήν** (“as she heard the voice”).⁷¹

28) The preference for accusative constructions expands to the prepositional syntagm. So Amphis prefers to use the prepositional syntagm with accusative κατ' ἀγρόν instead of the old construction with dative ἐν ἀγρῷ, cf. *Amph.* fr. 12: **κατ' ἀγρόν** ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐν ἀγρῷ. Ἄμφις Δακτυλίῳ (“in the countryside: instead of by the countryside. Amphis in *The ring*”). The same construction, now with a temporal meaning, comes back in this *Septuagint* passage, *Deut.* X 15: πλὴν τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν προείλατο Κύριος ἀγαπᾶν αὐτούς, καὶ ἐξελέξατο τὸ σπέρμα αὐτῶν μετ' αὐτούς ὑμᾶς πάρα πάντα τὰ ἔθνη **κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν ταύτην** (“except that the Lord chose to love your ancestors and appointed their descendance after them, that is to say, you, over all the nations up to this day”).

29) Regarding pronominal syntax, Alexis replaces the simple possessive ἐμῆς by the reflexive ἐμαυτῆς, cf. Alex. fr. 291: οὐκ ἔστ' ἀναισχυντότερον οὐδὲν θηρίον γυναικός· ἀπ' **ἐμαυτῆς** ἐγὼ τεκμαίρομαι. (“There is no beast more shameless than woman: I have experience from mine”). A similar use can be detected in the Lucan *Acts of the Apostles*, cf. *Act.* 21, 11 καὶ ἐλθὼν πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ ἄρας τὴν ζώνην τοῦ Παύλου δήσας **ἑαυτοῦ** τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰς χεῖρας εἶπεν etc. (“And as soon as he went to us, took out Paul's belt and tied his feet and hands, he said”).⁷²

⁷⁰ BLASS/DEBRUNNER 1961, 114.

⁷¹ MAYSER 1923, vol. II, 2 207.

⁷² BLASS/DEBRUNNER 1961, 178.

30) Variation in verbal voice is also widely attested. Of course the middle voice experienced the strong concurrence of the passive voice, as in several fragments of Epicharmus, Sophron and Antiphanes. Our first example, Epich. fr. 210: Phryn. *Ecl.* 79 **γενηθῆναι** ἀντὶ τοῦ γενέσθαι, is described by Willi as a Koinism in Epicharmus,⁷³ which is not exactly the case: it is attested in Metrodorus of Chios, a philosopher of the 4th cent. BC, cf. Metrod. *Aët.* I 5, 4, in the Neotestamentarian text of *Heb.* V 5, and in an epigraphical record of northern Thracia, *IG X E205*, 16, ca. 2nd-1st cent. BC. Just to quote an example taken from the Greek Koine, cf. Mc. 12.29 Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ (“and Jesus answered him”).⁷⁴ The Sophronian instance is the following, Sophr. fr. 101 **ἐκρατηρίχθημες**, so explained by Hesychius, Hesych. 497: ἐκρατηρίχθημεν ἐμεθύσθημεν. In our third example, Antiphanes does not correctly use the old middle form **γαμοῦμαι**, which was assigned to the female speakers –just as the passive **μοιχεύομαι** was also applied to women–, cf. Antiph. 48: *Antiatt.* γ 2 Valente: γαμῶ ἢ γυνὴ λέγει, οὐ γαμοῦμαι. Αντιφάνης Ἀσώτοις. **ἐγῆμάμην** ὁ ἀνὴρ λέγει ἀντὶ τοῦ ἔγῆμα (“*gamô* says the woman, not *gamoûmai*. Antiphanes in *The people deprived of salvation*. The husband says *egemamen* instead of *egema*”). The comment by Ammonius is absolutely clear: γῆμαι τοῦ γημᾶσθαι διαφέρει, ὅτι γαμεῖ μὲν ὁ ἀνὴρ, γαμεῖται δὲ ἡ γυνὴ (“*gêmai* is different from *gemâsthai*, for the husband marries, and the wife is married”).

31) A different example, where the middle voice is replaced with an active form, comes out among the fragments of the comedialographer Alcaeus, cf. Alc. fr. 31: *Antiatt.* β 40 Valente: βιάσαι ἀντὶ τοῦ βιάσασθαι. Ἀλκαῖος: **ἐβίασέ** μου τὴν γυναῖκα. The quotation seems somewhat corrupted, as the article has a non-Doric form. Yet the verbal active form has no textual problems and is also guaranteed by the grammatical quotation. Its correspondence can be found in *P.Petr.* II 45, col. 1, 2 **καταβιάσας**,⁷⁵ *P.Oxy.* 1257.17 **δεήσει** (4th cent. BC), *P.Giss.* 105.20 **λήμψης** (5th cent. AD).⁷⁶ Consequently, there is no doubt about how often the middle voice shows its decreasing use.

32) As in former cases, where the innovation draws the opposite reaction –not especially because of a conservative tendency, but after a counterbalanced sense of symmetry–, also some middle forms were thought to express the passive meaning. So in Alexis and Epicharmus, cf. *Antiatt.* λ 11 Valente: Alex. 23 **λαβόμενος** ἀντὶ τοῦ λαβών. Ἀλεξὶς Ἀρχιλόχοις (“*labomenos*: instead of *labon*. Alexis in *The Archilochi*”); Epich. 118: *Antiatt.* δ 40 Valente: **δεοῦμεθα** ἀντὶ τοῦ δεηθῆσόμεθα. Ἐπίχαρμος Δευκαλίωνι (“*deoumetha*, instead of *deethesometha*. Epicharmus in *Deucalion*”). The first example shows the middle form instead of the active, the second instead of the passive.

⁷³ WILLI 2008, 147-149. A more detailed account in FAVI 2021.

⁷⁴ See BLASS/DEBRUNNER 1961, 196; RADERMACHER 1925, 147-148; GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. II, 322-324.

⁷⁵ MAYSER 1923, 385.

⁷⁶ GIGNAC 1975-1981, vol. II, 326.

33) Another important syntactic change, the loss of the aspectual value of the perfect stem, very often used from now on just for expressing past time, can be perfectly understood after this passage from Antiphanes, cf. Antiph. fr. 202:

Ἰόστις ἄνθρωπος δὲ φύς
 ἀσφαλές τι κτήμ' ὑπάρχειν τῷ βίῳ λογίζεται,
 τὸ πλείστον **ἡμάρτηκεν**· ἢ γὰρ εἰσφορὰ τις **ἤρπακεν**,
 τᾶνδοθεν πάντ', ἢ δίκη τις περιπεσῶν ἀπώλετο,
 ἢ στρατηγίας προσῶφλεν, <ἢ> χορηγὸς αἰρεθεὶς
 ἰμάτια χρυσᾶ παρασχῶν τῷ χορῷ ῥάκος φορεῖ
 ἢ τριηραρχῶν ἀπήγξατ', ἢ πλέων **ἤλωκέ** ποι,
 ἢ βαδίζων ἢ καθεύδων **κατακέκοφθ'** ὑπ' οἰκετῶν.

whoever having been born as a human being bears in mind that for his living every sure possession is fruitful, is most of times wrong; either some tax takes out all his belongings, or was completely ruined for he yielded to a verdict, or he was fined after holding a strategy, or because he was elected as choregus is now dressed in rags because he provided his chorus with golden robes, or while being trierarch he became choked, or when sailing was taken prisoner somewhere, or while walking or in sleeping was dismembered by his servants.

The loss of the aspectual value in New Testament Greek is underlined by Radermacher and Blass.⁷⁷ A second example, this time taken from Amphis, will support the evidence of this innovation in the perfect tense –and the same should be said regarding its past tense, the pluperfect: Amph. 27, 4.5: **ἀκήκοας** σύ, δέσποτ', ἤδη πώποτε / τὸ θυμίαμα τοῦτο; (“did you ever hear, lord, this fragrance?”)

34) An interesting colloquialism occurs at one of the pseudo-Epicharmean fragments. The text goes like this: [Epich.] 295, 3-4 τεσσάρων δὴ δεῖ λαβεῖν ὥρᾶν τριμήνων λ[όγον υ — / ὁ νοσέων νοσεῖ τις **ἢ ὅτι** (“so, he must take an amount of three months for the four seasons [... / whoever is patient suffers not otherwise”). This syntactic construction is based on the principle of brachylogy, so that the causal marker ὅτι is here equivalent to a whole sentence. The cluster is however not very common, and its parallels must be found in the Ptolemaic papyri, cf. *P. Teb.* 35.8 **ἢ ὅτι** ὁ παρὰ ταῦτα ποιῶν ἑαυτὸν αἰτιάσεται –here after high point- (“not otherwise, because whoever acts against these rules will incriminate himself”), 15 τοὺς παρὰ τῶν κατὰ κώμην ἐπιστατῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ζμύρναν μὴ πλέον διαγράφειν τῆμ μνᾶς ἀργυρίου μ **ἢ ὅτι** <ὁ> παρὰ ταῦτα ποιῶν ἑαυτὸν αἰτιάσεται (“those who take myrrh from the governors of each village

⁷⁷ RADERMACHER 1925, 153-154; BLASS/DEBRUNNER 1961, 211: «die spätere Sprache hat das Perfekt fallen gelassen (...), nachdem es vorher noch als erzählendes Tempus vergeblich mit dem Aorist konkurriert hatte».

and from the other people do not inscribe an amount for more than forty minae not otherwise, since whoever acts against these rules will incriminate himself>>).⁷⁸

5. Conclusions.

From the above data some conclusions can be drawn: first, our comic fragments show the same linguistic innovative solutions that we find in private texts written by individuals with no special literary and rhetorical skills, as well as in a few literary genres: judicial oratory and historiography.

Second, some of these innovations will achieve a standard status only after a long period. Such are, for instance, the elimination of the dative case and of some middle verbs. This means how much time the social and cultural pressure kept the innovation restricted to informal speaking situations.

Third, it is interesting to remark that a half of the commented features belong to the phonological level, that is to say, the comic poets were especially attentive and close to the innovations produced in talk situations. This fact is wholly consequent with our former remark.

Fourth, at a very first sight it could be inferred from the above data that the Syracusan authors are much more close than the Athenians to the spoken language and, what is more, to its most innovative trends. Yet this is a rather slippery slope, since a high number of the quotations taken from our Sicilian comedigraphers come from two lexicographers: that called the Antiatticist, working in the 2nd cent. AD, and Hesychius, working in the 6th cent. AD. Had we a higher amount of fragments from the Syracusan authors, maybe there should be room for a right comparison. The particular case of Epicharmus deserves further comment, since this author was especially attracted by linguistics and rhetoric, as shown by Novokhatko and Lebedev.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ MAYSER 1923, vol. II, 3, 47.

⁷⁹ NOVOKHATKO 2015 and LEBEDEV 2017 explain how Epicharmus played with the pareymological joke between the theonym Ζεός and the verb ζῆν, by means of a parechesis that sounds only if we have as our starting point the Doric accusative of the former, Ζᾶνα, which could be also Ionicised in the form Ζῆνα. It seems now unacceptable the old view of GRYSAR 1828, 209-226, on the literary language of Epicharmus. His view was supported mostly by misunderstanding and prejudgment, cf. 222-223: *Sermo autem, quem ad fabulas suas omnino adhibuit Epicharmus, id est, quo tum temporibus homines Siculi utebantur. Duplex enim sermonis Dorici genus fuisse statuunt grammatici, unum antiquius, quod asperum et rusticitate plenum, alterum recentius, quod facilius et ad Ionicum sermonem emollitum fuerit. Illo igitur Epicharmum et Sophronem, hoc Theocritum usos esse tradunt.*

Fifth, a difference can be made between comedy and mime, insofar as this last genre reflects the dialectal diction at a greater extent. Maybe the fact that some mimes were written in prose helped to approach better to the real colloquial situations.⁸⁰

Sixth, exclusive dialectalisms have small chance, if any, to arrive into the Greek Koine. This is perfectly exemplified by the pronominal innovations registered in our Syracusan authors, none of which reached a normalized extended use in Koine Greek.

Some conclusions have a different perspective of interest: they point out how the language of our comic characters fits with the substandard registers. In other words, our comic fragments display rather the daily life, interests and motifs of joy and fear of the common people. Most of our characters have to be found among individuals who had no chance to follow regularly the lessons of rhetoricians and even schoolmasters. In the same way our fragments attest a freedom of speech, from the point of view of grammar at least, that situates the genre of comedy at the highest level of closeness to the whole of its society.

From the perspective of the history of the Greek language, it is interesting to point out that many of the features that led to the Koine were parallelly developed in Sicily and Athens, no matter if there was, as it seems, a literary Sicilian influence on the evolution of the Attic theatre.⁸¹ This fact, obviously concluded after the extant data -prodelision; lenition of voiced obstruents; deaspiration of voiceless aspirated obstruents; changes in the diathetical system- means that former theories on the opposition of spoken Doric and spoken Koine were wrong.⁸² Actually in the Hellenistic age the so-called Koinisms have been recognised at a higher extent in low registers, inasmuch as people of lower education were more flexible in using non-standard linguistic solutions.⁸³

As suggested by Willi -see the quotation which opens this paper-, of course the real Greek language used by the speakers was quite different from that elaborated in their plays by the literary authors, since even a genre so close to realism as comedy had to embellish its lexis with a huge arsenal of poetic and rhetorical devices. Notwithstanding, the comic poets were extremely attentive to the new trends of spoken Greek.

⁸⁰ Cf. WILLI 2014, 183.

⁸¹ This influence was simply non-existent according to ZIELINSKI 1885, but extremely important according to VON SALIS 1905, who relies at most on Arist. *Po.* 1449b 5-7. See also CASSIO 1985; BELLOCCHI 2008, 260, and especially the complete reappraisals by BREITHOLTZ 1960, 25-82, and KERKHOF 2001, 51-177. We must also take into account the Ionicisms and Doricisms represented with a realistic bias on the Attic stage, as reminded by CASSIO 2002, 57.

⁸² SICCA 1924, 156-160.

⁸³ MIMBRERA 2012, 244: «(...) Features of the spoken Koine were more prominent in this group [that is to say, in *defixiones* and dedications] of inscriptions than in the contracts».

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Abstract: The comic festivals became a useful platform for transferring those linguistic innovations already common in daily speech to a literary frame. This was a regular behaviour among the comedigraphers, while the tragic poets did it in a much more restricted way. This paper will focus on the comic attestations of the linguistic change occurred in two different dialectal areas, Attica and Sicily. The comic testimonies show a greater closeness to the common people and reflect the linguistic change better than other literary genres. Many of the analyzed features reappear either in the non-literary Koine of our papyrological records or in the usually simply elaborated Biblical Greek.