

## This is the Very Model of a Modern Major *Lopado*-: The Patter-Songs of Aristophanes

Perhaps best associated in the Anglophone world with the *oeuvre* of W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, patter songs feature “consonants and vowels tumbl[ing] over each other in sheer sonic joy, careening at the absolute edge of intelligibility” (Fiss 2009). While scant evidence of the musicality of Greek comedies has survived, how might understanding certain passages as patter songs provide clues for their performance today? How have modern translators rendered these passages, and to what degree do they present the “careening intelligibility” in their translations?

This paper examines the final choral song of Aristophanes’ *Ekklesiazousai* and its notorious, uproarious *Lopado*- word (ln 1169-1175) for the characteristics of a patter song, specifically one of the “list” type. First, I examine its consonant-vowel ratio, meter, and apparent intelligibility (or lack thereof) as preserved in the papyrus and manuscript traditions. Fiss contends that patter songs in English (“words with many consonants set to a rapid, steady pulse”) have a higher ratio of consonants to vowels and a general lack of *melisma*, the carrying over of a single syllable over multiple musical notes. I test Fiss’ criteria against Aristophanes’ *Lopado*-word and note the general differences between a highly-inflected language like ancient Greek to a less-inflected language like English. Additionally, the variant readings of specific elements within the *Lopado*- word that reinforce its slippery intelligibility; corruption, in this case, actually seems to preserve an important aspect of the word’s function within this song, its borderline intelligibility.

Lastly, I survey several notable English language translations of the *Ekklesiazousai* and their handling of the *Lopado*- word. While I cannot determine any chronological trend, I do

comment upon the translations that appear more like patter songs (e.g., Halliwell's "slices" and Sommerstein's "dishy") and those that are less (e.g., Lindsay's "dish," Roche's "prodigious dish," and Theodoridis' "morsels") in terms of both the rendering of the *Lopado*- word and any supplemented stage directions. This analysis will be of great benefit to future translators and directors/actors of Aristophanes and Old Comedy who wish to present not just the *Ekklesiazusai* but other works, like the *Akharnians* and the *Lysistrata*, that feature such patter songs.

### Select Bibliography

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