

and *Peace*, both of 1998, cover between them the ground trodden by M. However, in this garden, even more than in others, we should be glad to allow a thousand flowers to bloom. Students without Greek are potentially helped, rather than hindered, by being able to consult different versions of the same text. The particular virtue of M. lies in the fact that he is a theatre director who has worked with these texts in an attempt to realize them for modern audiences, without replacing their contemporary references. His aim of producing translations ‘that are understandable, performable, accessible, and entertaining’ has clearly been fulfilled. And (despite some quibbles) his reasonably full notes are generally very helpful.

I cannot help wondering, though, whether such editions would not better serve the university students who are now surely their main audience if they contained fuller commentaries. In all, the notes in this edition amount to sixty-one pages. In Halliwell’s there are only thirty-four pages (for four plays). But add together the notes in Sommerstein’s editions of these three plays (which are keyed to his translations) and you have 279 pages. And he is not a verbose commentator. Since Plutarch, it has been recognized that the understanding of Aristophanes requires a great weight of learning. Nothing has changed.

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P. TOTARO: *Le seconde parabasi di Aristofane*. (Drama 9.) Pp. xxv + 219. Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler. Paper, DM 50. ISBN: 3-476-45229-8.

This volume has at its core the second parabases of *Knights*, *Clouds*, *Wasps*, *Peace*, and *Birds*, each treated separately with an introductory essay (context, themes), metrical note, text with translation, and a detailed commentary. Texts printed are the most recent Oxford editions or, in the case of *Knights*, Henderson’s Loeb. T.’s particular strengths are in detailing parallel literary motifs, both Greek and Latin (e.g. the *laus vitae rusticae* in *Peace*), treating sympotic themes, and finding sexual innuendo (contrast, for example, the more restrained comments of Dunbar and Olson). Even compared with recent heavyweight commentators, T. is long on detail. However, despite T.’s distinctive voice, the commentaries (*Knights* excepted) do run the risk of redundancy. More serious problems include the absence of an apparatus (which could have reduced or clarified much of the longhand textual criticism in the notes), and a rather leisurely and repetitive style of presentation. T. is a scrupulous and judicious guide to scholarly controversies (with ample citation of predecessors), but at times this even-handedness comes close to fence-sitting. He is reluctant to push himself forward: one tentative and minor emendation (*Birds* 1094, floated elsewhere); the occasional dissension from scholarly consensus. We see most of T. himself in his two appendices on the interpretation of the antepirrheme of *Wasps*, and on *Knights* and the relationship between Aristophanes and Eupolis. These are significant mini-essays (although the latter conspicuously needs a reference to the work of Keith Sidwell).

Despite their valuable remarks, the commentaries are really extended footnotes to the introductory essay on the definition, form, and content of the second parabasis. Here T. is at his best—admirably well-informed, but clear-headed about what can seem an arcane topic. T. brushes aside both the wilder proliferation of formal elements and the over-precise mapping of form to content. For T., the character of the ‘second parabasis’ resides in a combination of metre with one or more of three motifs—*onomasti komoidein*, choral self-praise, and/or appeal to the judges. Particularly valuable is his section on the fragments. Here his flexible criteria and caution over the habit(at)s of comic dicola mean that he is (justifiably) hesitant in assigning fragments to formal contexts. His emphasis on flexibility and distrust of dogma is suggestive, but not pushed to a conclusion. Ultimately, in deciding his corpus, he follows the scholia’s identification of five segments as a *παράβασις*, *τελευταία παράβασις*, or *δευτέρα παράβασις*, and carefully excludes borderline cases such as *Acharnians* 971–99. Despite ‘una patina parabatica’ and close metrical similarities to *Wasps*, T. prefers to accept the scholiastic description of this passage as a *συζυγία κατὰ περικοπήν ἀνομοιοκέρης* (a fudge if ever there was one). T. thus ducks some pressing issues. What is at stake (for him/us/the scholia) in choosing one label over the other, in assigning a specific identity and status to a dramatic segment? How, if at all, did the second parabasis represent a different part of the theatrical experience? T.’s cautious treatment could have provided grounds for either the deconstruction or recuperation of the formal agenda. That would have required more focus and a more consistent argument—more of T. himself and less of the

scholarly apparatus. There might not have been an entire book in it, but perhaps rather wider appeal.

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X. RIU: *Dionysism and Comedy*. Pp. X + 293. Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. Paper, £19.95. ISBN: 0-847-69442-9.

This book argues that Old Comedy enacts a Dionysiac mythic/ritual pattern whereby the comic hero(ine)—who is partly identified with Dionysos and with the poet—subverts one or more of the central norms of *polis* society, often negating civilization itself and regressing to a primitive stage of human existence. In comedy this ‘disfounding of the city’ normally leads to bliss; in reality it could not. Comedy thus presents an inverted world which confirms and valorizes by contrast the norms of the actual world. Accordingly, values and causes supported by the comic hero would in real life, in all probability, be condemned by him and his audience; while policies and persons whom the hero and his/her allies oppose (e.g. war, Kleon, the Proboulos in *Lysistrata*) are likely to have the approval of the poet.

These surprising propositions are not logically untenable. As R. rightly argues (pp. 237–42), there are in many societies some contexts, not necessarily ritual, in which words, gestures, etc. that *prima facie* are highly insulting are not regarded as ‘real’ insults but as part of a game with well-understood rules or even as evidence of a friendly attitude; and such contexts certainly existed in ancient Greek society too. To show, however, that comedy was one of them, one needs to establish (i) that the Dionysiac story-pattern R. posits was a cultural reality; (ii) that Old Comedy reflects it in a way that ‘serious’ poetic genres do not; and (iii) that Athenians of Aristophanes’ time, far from regarding comic satire as damaging, positively welcomed it as evidence of popular favour. R. gets nowhere near doing this. Given the space available, I shall focus on (iii).

R.’s approach to the evidence regarding the contemporary reception of comic satire is simple: he disregards it, every bit. All evidence of Hellenistic and later date, notably that of scholia, is rejected on the ground that it includes some demonstrable falsehoods and that we can never know when it is true (pp. 24, 34); no reason is given why we cannot follow the normal rules of historical inquiry and examine the sources and credentials of each statement separately. Statements or allusions in comic texts themselves are excluded as evidence because we have even less reason to be confident of their veracity (as against this simplistic approach, see now the masterly discussion of comedy as a historical source by C. B. R. Pelling, *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian* [London, 2000]). The evidence of the ‘Old Oligarch’ (2.18) and of Plato (*Apol.* 18b–19d?—no references are given) is reserved for later treatment (p. 4), with no hint offered of how R. would reconcile it with his thesis. Other evidence (e.g. Aischines 1.157) is simply not noticed. And thus R. can presume that we know nothing whatever of how contemporaries viewed comic satire, and can spin elegant inferences undisturbed by obstinate fact.

I cannot here catalogue all the liberties R. takes with evidence and logic, so I will concentrate on one. Maintaining that *Lysistrata* affirms ‘that war is the proper state of things, in accordance with the will of god’ (p. 184), R. adds that this is ‘in complete agreement with Hesiod (*Op.* 229) when he says that it is Zeus who decrees war to {the} humans’. What Hesiod actually says is that Zeus never brings war on a city that respects justice, that famine and disaster are unknown to such a city, and that it prospers in every way (225–37). If this is evidence that Hesiod believed war to be ‘the proper state of things’, it is also evidence that he thought that famine and misery were the proper state of things. Or does R. suppose that that was what Hesiod, and fifth-century Athenians, believed?

And yet this book is not without its usefulness. Far better scholars than R. have argued that the causes espoused by comic heroes are to a considerable extent invalidated by these heroes’ opposition to *polis* norms, which often extends to serious crime (treason, impiety, hubris, etc.). R., by taking this position seriously and following out its implications as no one else has done, has tested it literally to destruction; or at least he has set its proponents the challenge of showing why it does not follow from their arguments that Aristophanes believed, and expected his audiences to believe, (for example) that *ceteris paribus* it was better to be at war than at peace, better for the virtuous to be poor and the wicked rich than vice versa, and better to seek enjoyment in condemning the innocent than in alcoholic conviviality.

R. is under no illusions about the quality of his English (p. viii, 239), but his editor and