

BOOK REVIEW

Κωμικός Στέφανος: Νέες τάσεις στην έρευνα αρχαίας ελληνικής κωμωδίας (in modern Greek; *Comic Wreath: New Trends in the Study of the Ancient Greek Comedy*). Edited by MELINA TAMIOLAKI. Editions of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Crete, Rethymnon, 2014. Pp. xviii + 179. €12.00. ISBN 978-960-9430-10-4.

The book under review is divided into three sections: the first includes chapters on Old Comedy (Emmanouela Bakola, Nikoletta Kanavou and Michales Paschalis); the second on Middle and New Comedy (Ioannis Konstantakos, Kostas Apostolakis and Antonis Petrides); and the last on the reception of Comedy in the Roman and Byzantine eras (Richard Hunter and Nikos Litinas). Melina Tamiolaki's introduction provides a useful survey of the articles and their approaches (9–13).

Bakola discusses Cratinus' reception of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in his *Ploutoi*, perhaps the earliest such case. Both, she argues, are concerned with the unjust acquisition of wealth and exploitation of the earth. For Bakola, the chthonic nature of the chorus of *Ploutoi* recalls the chorus of Erinyes in the *Oresteia*: both punish unjust extravagance and restore a natural balance (18, 19, cf. 23–24, 25–26). She notes the delayed arrival of the chorus in both, and suggests that the trial of the 5th century politician Hagnon in *Ploutoi*, who is accused of illegal enrichment while serving in office, recalls that of Orestes for killing his mother, herself a symbol of nature since she begets and reproduces (20, 38). Bakola also offers a new interpretation of the carpet scene as an instance of *hybris* against the earth (32–34). Both plays, on her reading, are early examples of environmental awareness.

Kanavou's chapter (drawn from her article in *GRBS* 51 [2011] 382-400) offers a novel interpretation of the use of "political myth" in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* and *Birds* (45–46). These myths contribute to the "self-definition of cities and social groups or are used to interpret political developments", and also promote the action of the plays (46). An example is Amphitheos in the *Acharnians*, who introduces himself in the Assembly as the offspring of Demeter and Trip-temos as he raises the idea of a truce between Athens and Sparta: his mythic

identity aims at gaining prestige so that his arguments in favour of peace will be taken seriously (49–51).

Paschalis also examines Aristophanes' use of myth. Focusing on verse 1052 (65) in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, in which Euripides replies to Aeschylus' complaint that he dramatized the myths of Phaedra and Stheneboia with the words "But wasn't this a true story that I wrote about Phaedra?" Paschalis argues that Euripides altered the traditional version of Phaedra's story in the revised production of *Hippolytus*, where it is the nurse who informs Hippolytus of Phaedra's *erôs* for him and not Phaedra herself, so as to conform to his audience's taste and values. Paschalis invokes Aristotle's comments in *Poetics* (1453b22-1454a9) on how a dramatist should treat traditional myths and to what degree he might be inventive (67–70).

The mythological background of comedy is again at the centre Konstantakos' article on the so-called Middle Comedy. Konstantakos examines three strategies for reworking, rationalizing and secularizing mythical motifs in the plays: adaptation of the supernatural to an urban and domestic environment (86); taking myth to its logical extreme for comic purposes (91), as in Anaxilas' *Kalypso* and *Circe*, where Odysseus' comrades, after being transformed into swine, suffer because they cannot scratch their itchy noses (94–95); and the combination of mythical wonder with popular folktale patterns (96). Konstantakos offers a rich variety of comic fragments to support his case.

Apostolakis discusses political satire in Middle Comedy, concentrating on Timocles, "the most Aristophanic poet" of the period, who satirized the famous "anti-Macedonian" orators Demosthenes and Hyperides as corrupt demagogues (105, 108). Apostolakis argues that the technique of *Onomasti kômôdein* made a sporadic comeback in Timocles (109, 121). Moreover, Apostolakis compares personal satire in Old and Middle comedy with the vituperative techniques of the fourth century orators (cf. 121–122).

Petrides suggests that "what is new" in New Comedy is (among other things) the importance the genre places on performance and the use of the mask. Performance features in various spheres of life (Assembly, theatre, law-courts, etc.) in the 4th century, and New Comedy (especially Menander) is in dialogue with both theatrical (tragedy) and extra-theatrical discourses, as manifested in its plots, linguistic registers, the construction of character, and masks (125–126). For example, New Comic masks were influenced by the physiognomic theories of the Hellenistic era (extra-theatrical discourse) (128), and served also as signs of *êthos*, which in turn reflects Aristotle's theory of character in his *Rhetoric* and

ethical treatises (cf. 129–130). Petrides thus assigns equal importance to *logos* and *opsis*.

Hunter's paper is a Greek translation of his "Attic Comedy in the Rhetorical and Moralizing Traditions" (in M. Revermann, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Greek Comedy*, 2014). Hunter pays special attention to the reception of Aristophanes and Menander in a variety of Hellenistic and Roman sources, as well as to comparisons between the two comic playwrights and between Menander and Euripides. Hunter argues that the "educated elite" admired Menander's plays for his depiction of character and the relation between theatrical fiction and the real world (139, 140). The plays also helped shape humanitarian values (cf. 148) and a refined taste, and were preferred for reading and entertainment in symposia (146). Aristophanes' plays, on the other hand, inspired satirists such as Lucian but were also recommended for learning good Attic Greek (149).

Litinas focuses on Aristophanes' reception in papyri of the Roman and Byzantine eras. Litinas pays attention to the educational status of the audiences who possessed and read (or possessed without reading) these papyri. He underlines the importance of the archaeological context, where papyri were discovered (157, 162–163). For example, a papyrus preserving verses 1127–1141 of *Knights* was discovered in the agricultural town of Karanis in Egypt, close to a temple, suggesting that the readers of this play were more likely to be the priests than farmers who had little time for reading (165).

In all, Tamiolaki's volume is a significant contribution in the study of ancient Greek comedy, especially noteworthy for being published in Greece, and is valuable for scholars, students and anyone interested in ancient comedy.

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