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REVIEW ARTICLE: COMEDY

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Abstract: This paper reviews and discusses two major publications on Greek comedy (J. Rusten, *The Birth of Comedy* and I. Storey, *Fragments of Old Comedy*) in the light of recent advances and trends in scholarship. It focuses in particular on periodization of the genre, including an evaluation of the contribution of ancient scholarship; the evidence for variety in Old Comedy; the different perspectives on competition within the genre; and the presentation and implications of the comic body. An assessment is offered of the impact on scholarship of large-scale research projects such as Kassel and Austin's *Poetae Comici Graeci* and Koster et al.'s *Scholia in Aristophanem*, as well as the growing material evidence for Greek comedy, its context and reception. Some significant ongoing problems are identified which require further study.

Keywords: comedy, Greek, fragments, periodization, competition

Rusten, J. (ed.) (2011) *The Birth of Comedy: Texts, Documents and Art from Athenian Comic Competitions, 486–286* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press)

Storey, I.C. (ed.) (2011) *Fragments of Old Comedy* (Loeb Classical Library, 3 vols) (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press)

In the last 50 years, research into Greek comedy has been transformed by a number of large-scale research projects. Most notable among these is the re-edition of the comic fragments by Rudolf Kassel and Colin Austin in the *Poetae Comici Graeci* series (1983–). The even longer project initiated by W.J.W. Koster and his collaborators to edit the Aristophanic scholia (1960–2007) has in the same period come to a conclusion.[1] And the material evidence for comedy has become far better understood, through the labours of T.B.L. Webster, A.D. Trendall, J.R. Green and others.[2] With the recent publication of two substantial works that draw on this body of material, it is a timely moment to assess the state of play in studies of Greek comedy.

The work of Kassel and Austin is at the core of both Jeffrey Rusten's *The Birth of Comedy* and Ian Storey's three-volume *Fragments of Old Comedy* for the Loeb Classical Library. With the publication in 1995 of a volume of *adespota* (comic fragments not clearly assigned to a named author) and of Dorian and Sicilian comedy in 2001, *Poetae Comici Graeci* (*PCG*) reached an important milestone. It is now possible to study all the Greek comic poets in reliable up-to-date and complete editions. The most conspicuous 'missing' volumes of *PCG* are of the extant plays of Aristophanes and the papyrus texts of Menander, which are now available in a number of modern editions and commentaries. In addition to the Oxford Classical Text of N.G. Wilson (2007) and the near-complete Clarendon Press series, Aristophanes is available in the editions by A.H. Sommerstein (1980–2002) and J. Henderson (1998–2008). Although Sandbach's Oxford Classical Text of Menander (1990 second edition) does not incorporate all recent discoveries – Menander being still a somewhat moving, or at least shuffling, target – the Loeb of Arnott (1979–2000) is more up-to-date. The gaps in *PCG* are not acutely felt, then, and with the major fragmentary poets available since the early 1990s, there has been time already for scholars to capitalize on the new presentation of the evidence.

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[1] For an appreciation, see Tordoff (2008).

[2] Trendall (1967); Webster and Green (1978); Webster et al. (1995).

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Among the many features of *PCG* as a tool for research, aside from the precision and critical acumen on display,[3] is that it brought together what had become disparate material: Kock's edition, Kaibel's Dorian comedy, Demianczuk's supplement and the papyri, which Austin had himself earlier gathered.[4] The state of affairs that existed before *PCG* can be well observed by anyone using the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, which only offers these disparate earlier editions. Add the convenience, the generous and clear layout, and helpful notes, and *PCG* offers a real boost to research. It is not that scholars earlier than *PCG* had failed to use the fragmentary evidence, far from it – whether in dedicated studies such as that of Pieters on Cratinus (in Dutch),[5] or as supplementary material to the study of Aristophanes (consider, for example, Dover)[6] – but the barrier to entry has been considerably lowered. Since 1990 there have been a number of collections dedicated solely or significantly to fragmentary poets, monographs on Eupolis and Kratinos, and commentaries on a number of authors.[7] Publications since 2000 have had much more of an eye on the fragments. In particular, 'Old Comedy' has become much less obviously synonymous with Aristophanes and Greek Comedy less obviously synonymous with 'Aristophanes and Menander'.[8] A number of studies, indeed, have focused on the relationships between poets.[9] As a case-study of how fundamental editorial and text-critical work can stimulate research, *PCG* is exemplary. Both Rusten and Storey draw on this first flush of responses to *PCG* in their respective works.

Rusten's enormous volume allows greater scope for this, in many ways. The project started as a straight translation of (the best bits of) *PCG* and retains that work at its core, with the collaboration of a strong team of US-based comedians – Jeffrey Henderson (Aristophanes; major fragments of Kratinos), Ralph Rosen (Hermippos; major fragments of Eupolis; Platon (Plato Comicus); Timokles; Nikostratos), David Konstan (Philemon; Diphilos; minor poets of New Comedy) and Niall Slater (Ephippos; Alexis; minor poets of Middle Comedy). In its final form, however, Rusten has undertaken an even more grandiose scheme, which seeks to combine a straight translation with a sourcebook for comedy and the comic festivals, including epigraphic and material evidence, and a global history of the genre. Rather than being organized alphabetically, the book is arranged chronologically by period (with Epikharmos perhaps anomalously up first in chapter two) and by author within each period; it also contains substantial narrative chapters or sections offering an overview history of Greek Comedy, and evidence for its origins (where Rusten favours a pluralist account)[10] and of its immediate reception in Rome, introductory essays on each phase of Greek Comedy and accounts of its physical appearance, performance and festival context. A separate chapter is devoted to the evidence of South Italian and Sicilian vases. All these elements are contributed by Rusten, who also translates around half the fragments, as well as providing overall editorial direction – so it is very much his book.

[3] Justly praised by Rusten (2011) 2.

[4] Kock (1880–1888); Kaibel (1899); Demianczuk (1912); Austin (1973).

[5] Pieters (1946).

[6] Dover (1972) 210–24.

[7] For collections, see especially Dobrov (1995); Wilkins and Harvey (2000); see also Dobrov (1997). For author studies, see Storey (2003); Bakola (2009). For commentaries, note in particular that on Alexis by Arnott (1996), that on Eupolis' *Demoi* by Telò (2007) and the emerging *Studia Comica* series helmed by Bernhard Zimmermann, with thus far Pirrotta's *Plato Comicus* (2009) and Orth's *Strattis* (2009); for Strattis, see also Miles (2009); for others, see the bibliographies of Rusten (2011) and Storey (2011). Lowe (2008) offers a stimulating and wide-ranging survey of work in recent decades.

[8] See, for example, Wilkins (2000); Revermann (2006a); Pütz (2007).

[9] Biles (2002); (2011); Ruffell (2002); Kyriakidi (2007); Bakola (2008); Sidwell (2009), drawing on a number of earlier studies.

[10] Drawing on the material evidence for animal choruses (*cf.* Sifakis (1971); Rothwell (2007)) along with the disparate literary sources and explanations. His attempt to find plausible material in the tradition associating origins with Sousarion is not particularly convincing.

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Given the scope of the project, Rusten has had to be quite ruthless in his selection of fragments. The biases are in favour of Old Comedy, and within that more in favour of the big names, who have relatively large numbers of surviving fragments, especially Kratinos and Eupolis. In most cases, the selection is understandable, but even in Kratinos, for example, there are entire plays left out of account whose inclusion might be felt desirable: thus no *Deliades*, *Dionysoi* (especially *fr*. 52) or *Trophonios*; likewise Platon's *Sophistai* is a conspicuous absentee; others can be added. In terms of individual fragments, those that deal with wine, food and the symposium (i.e. Athenaios' contribution) are treated particularly severely. It is, however, also noticeable that fragments that are of metrical or musical interest (whether in formal or cultural terms) surprisingly often fail to make the cut (for example, Kratinos *Trophonios fr*. 237). Individual users will no doubt miss some of their own favourite fragments,[11] but it may be more important that, because of the selection policy, Rusten almost never presents the entire evidence for a single play. If a reader is interested in the output of individual authors or wants as much information as possible for plot reconstruction of a specific play, this is unhelpful. A good example of such selectivity is the limited presentation of Pherekrates' influential play *Agrioi* (*Savages*). In terms of individual poets, Krates is notably anaemic: given the place often assigned to him in the history of Old Comedy (not least by Aristophanes and Aristotle; see below), the material underplays both his obscenity and his political content. An irritant is that some of the smaller fragments (primarily lexicographic) that deal with details of dramatic production are only mentioned in the contextual chapters and not under the author in question (there are no cross-references), which saves space but gives (at least in terms of metatheatricality) an incomplete representation of the respective author.

As a source book, *The Birth of Comedy* represents, in some sense, an attempt to transcend works such as *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens* or Csapo and Slater's *The Context of Ancient Drama*.[12] The justification is that Csapo and Slater's book, in particular, does not have quite the same coverage of comedy. There are, however, some disadvantages in the approach offered by Rusten, which focuses, for the most part, on comedy alone. The example of *deme* performance is one such area: Rusten is able to give a fuller set of inscriptions that indicate *deme* performances (certainly than Pickard-Cambridge (1988)); the downside is that he *just* gives evidence of comic performances.[13] The full set of attestations of *deme* performance would, however, certainly be relevant, both to allow for the chance survivals of such evidence and for the important question of the experience of other genres that a comic audience might have:[14] i.e. comic performances may have happened where there is evidence for local performance of tragedy, while the performance of tragedy itself is relevant for comedy. This is not to ask (rather churlishly) for *more* data in a book that already rolls in at over 750 pages, but to suggest that a one-stop shop might have been overambitious. Similar problems arise in the case of the material evidence, where far more exhaustive accounts are available and Rusten is deliberately selective. As with any source book, there are, then, limitations to its usefulness and it will not displace more thorough treatments. That said, it will certainly be appearing on my reading lists in future, and if my students engage with the evidence collected here, I shall be a happy teacher indeed.

[11] A small selection of mine would include Kratinos *frr*. 350, 354, 363, 392; Telekleides *frr*. 33, 42; Pherekrates *fr*. 182.

[12] Pickard-Cambridge (1988); Csapo and Slater (1995).

[13] The only exception, where evidence of non-comic performance is considered, is in relation to Ikaria (126–27), where he is working to defend the tradition which links a Sousarion with the origins of Greek comedy as a dramatic genre, but where the epigraphic evidence supporting *deme* performance of comedy does not currently exist.

[14] For one account of the 'competence' of the comic audience, see Revermann (2006b).

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As in Csapo and Slater's *Context of Ancient Drama* (1995), Rusten opts to put most of the comment and analysis in the introductory chapters or sections, rather than to annotate the individual sources, although (as with *PCG*) he makes a point of including the context in which fragments are cited. Annotations of the comic fragments themselves are largely restricted to an observation of the metre in which they are written (or reconstructed). The metrical pedant in me worries that labelling catalectic anapaestic tetrameters simply as 'anapaests' might be misleading (not all anapaestic fragments are in tetrameters), whereas (conversely) there could be more clarity that anapaestic tetrameters occur outside of the parabasis.[15] Some of the testimonia are given brief comments, but inconsistently. Thus, for example, it is pointed out that Plato's claim in the *Symposium* that 30,000 people attended a theatrical performance is obviously wrong; the equally obvious mistake by the scholia on *Acharnians* 1150, claiming a 'decree of Antimachus' restricting *onomasti komoidein*, passes without comment.[16]

The three volumes of Storey's version of Old Comedy are in many respects less ambitious. As one might expect in a Loeb volume, the focus is on text and translation. The Loeb Classical Library's ongoing commitment to the dramatic fragments (recent conspicuous examples in Sommerstein's Aeschylus (2008) and Henderson's Aristophanes (1998–2008)) is very much to be welcomed. Storey's text is based on *PCG* with only minor changes, which are noted ad loc., and like Rusten he retains the numeration of *PCG* for the fragments, although the testimonia are in his own ordering, with some additions against *PCG*. Storey does not attempt to cover all of Greek comedy, but within his definition of Old Comedy he is rather more comprehensive in terms of the fragments he includes. Where a fragment's play is known, he tends to omit only the text of those one-word fragments which are not obviously helpful to any understanding of the play in question (although he translates them in a final note). He is slightly more ruthless with similar fragments from unknown plays. He includes in volume three a number of *adespota* which are plausibly from Old Comedy. For the serious student, teacher or user of Old Comedy, Storey's more inclusive approach to the fragments is likely to be more useful than Rusten's selectivity (although of course neither is a substitute for *PCG*).

In terms of the reconstruction of plays, Storey tends to offer more detail and more speculation than the contributors to *The Birth of Comedy*, whose introductions tend to keep within the bounds of what can be said with reasonable certainty. Speculation is not necessarily a bad thing: any reconstruction of a comedy is hazardous (not least given the flexibility and creativity of Old Comedy in particular) and some kind of effort in that direction is needed if we are to derive any interpretative profit from comic fragments (as opposed to, say, linguistic interest). There are points, however, where Storey could be clearer about the basis for his claims or the degree of uncertainty involved. The gambits of the rhetorical question and 'it would be interesting if …' constructions might be felt to be over-employed in a Loeb edition. Some of the space taken in a necessarily-brief introduction is devoted to some poorly-founded ideas: the suggested presence of Aristophanes and Eupolis in *Autolykos* or Pieters' suggestion of Aristophanes represented on stage in *Pytine* (xxxviii–xxxix).

In addition to a few more testimonia, the main addition to a straight rendering of fragments in Storey is a section 'About Old Comedy' which presents some of the evidence of ancient scholarship on Old Comedy. Most of this material is from the collection passed down with manuscripts of Aristophanes and presented in the first volume of Koster's edition of the scholia

[15] See, for example, 45, n.1. It is also misleading to say that when ancient poets talk of 'the anapaests' they mean the 'whole parabasis', as is said in the glossary (744). The basic anapaestic unit is the metron (⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ –), not the foot (⏑ ⏑ –) as given there. The glossary is rather bizarrely entitled *komoidoumenoi*.

[16] Rusten (2011) 404 (Plato), 90 (scholia on *Acharnians* 1150). There are implications, however, that Rusten views the 'alleged bans' (89) with some suspicion; *cf*. also 22. See generally, Halliwell (1991).

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as *Prolegomena de comoedia* (1975). The selection offered by Storey seems to be chosen with a view to the periodization of Old Comedy and as a pendant to the introductory essay on the genre, but there are some very odd gaps here, not least the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, which has been the focus of quite some attention. Whatever one might think about its merits or demerits as a guide to comic interpretation or analysis, it certainly seems in part to be claiming to talk about Old Comedy (since the parabasis is involved).[17]

Nonetheless, it is excellent that these fascinating (if compressed, opaque, at times wildly improbable or blatantly mistaken) treatises are being made more accessible to a wider public. The *Prolegomena* naturally feature quite extensively also in Rusten, but I much prefer their presentation in Storey, where it is possible to see them in all their gory and implausible detail; Rusten's approach of filleting them for details and distributing the snippets throughout his volume seems less helpful to me and the division of material between chapters (especially on the history of Old Comedy) is not always easy to navigate. The dismembering of these treatises also tends to give them a credibility which they do not deserve and which is certainly not being claimed. Paradoxically, Rusten expresses far more scepticism about the treatises than does Storey. For Rusten, only Platonios (*Prolegomena* I, II), the anonymous *Prolegomena* III and the *Tractatus Coislinianus* (*Prolegomena* XV) are really worth the candle.

A further difficulty in both books is that the only plausible contemporary witnesses to Old Comedy are missing or hard to find. In Storey, Ps.-Xenophon's *Constitution of the Athenians* 2.18 is absent, however wrong it is in some details (and it is only partially exploited in Rusten (88)), as is Plato's *Apology*, however partial it is. Rusten includes some of the *Apology* among Aristophanic testimonia, elements from Plato's *Laws* among philosophical strictures against comedy and the *Philebos* under the rubric of ancient theory of comedy. Plato's most substantial engagement with Old Comedy, in his *Symposium*, is missing from both, as is his engagement with (Old or Middle) Comedy in the *Republic*. Other, more contested, pieces of evidence which have been adduced (rightly or wrongly) by scholars, for example on comic character, are not to be found, although their importance to critical debates about comedy is probably greater than some of the more dubious claims in the prolegomena.[18]

I. Periodization and variety

It is in the introductory material that it becomes particularly obvious how these works stand in relation to recent work on the genre and where the burst of scholarship inspired by *PCG* has made progress, and where it has not. Most fundamentally, both Rusten and Storey are engaged in exercises in the periodization of Greek Comedy – Rusten organizing his material chronologically and by sub-genres/periods, Storey roping off Old Comedy from what follows and seeking to encapsulate the genre in his own introduction – and in this exercise there is a tension between the evidence of ancient scholarship, on the one hand, and the variety, on the other, which seems to be indicated between and within authors (particularly of Old Comedy), and which has become increasingly clear after *PCG*.

In addition to the broader character of the treatises, noted above, there are two main specific problems in relation to the periodization of comedy in ancient scholarship. First, more than one periodization can be found there. Both Storey (who acknowledges the point but ploughs on regardless) and Rusten (who disregards most of the dissenting treatises) plump for the version more-or-less given by Platonios. In this now-familiar Old-Middle-New scheme, the particular sticking point is over the definition of Middle Comedy, rather than Old; but given that Middle

[17] For the *Tractatus*, see Janko (2002); for scepticism about its Aristotelianism, see Halliwell (1986) 266–76; Nesselrath (1990) 102–49.

[18] Although Rusten refers at one point to Süss' study (1908).

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Comedy is the lower bound of Old, the two are intimately connected. A reference to and engagement with Nesselrath's investigation of Middle Comedy by Storey would have been helpful.[19] Rusten, by contrast, does refer to Nesselrath, but still to my mind underplays some of the problems.[20]

The periodization, which must originate in post-Classical (Hellenistic) scholarship, reflects the narrow preoccupations of those scholars and is overwhelmingly couched in terms of political and personal invective (*onomasti komoidein*). Storey traces this back further to Aristotle's distinction between 'old' and 'modern' (i.e. later 'Middle', in our terms) comedy in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1128a23–5, although the distinction between *aiskhrologia* and *hyponoia* ('suggestion') goes much further than that (as he is aware), encompassing at least general verbal abuse (rather than representation) and obscenity.[21] Aristotle's remarks on plot (contrasted with invective) might also have given encouragement to the association of earlier comedy with *onomasti komoidein*, but his association of plots, as an innovation, with Kratinos' contemporary Krates supports a more gradual and parallel or mixed development (from *ca*. 450) than that envisaged by Platonios.[22]

Platonios' explanation of the change of mode in comedy is in strictly historicist terms, although it is horribly garbled: democracy explains Old Comedy (freedom; cash support); oligarchy explains Middle Comedy (fear; abolition of choregoi). Rusten categorically rejects historical determinism and explanations – although this does not stop him periodizing Old Comedy in terms of the pre-eminence of Perikles, for example. Storey is much more amenable both to finding historical explanations (as, for example, for the supposed decree of Morychides) and, like the ancient scholarship, takes *onomasti komoidein* as the overriding characteristic of the genre. While other aspects are noted, the issue of satire (and personal and political satire in particular) dominates his introduction.

Here the missing or only partially used treatises really would have helped to round out the picture of ancient scholarship. Even Platonios, whose history of Old, Middle and New in *On the Difference in Comedy* is largely predicated on *onomasti komoidein*, does seem to suggest (in *On the Difference in Styles*, which Storey does include)[23] a literary criticism that might also involve the study of plot. Kratinos, according to Platonios, starts off well (by presumably Aristotelian criteria) but 'as he goes on he tears apart his plots and fills up his plays in no order' (προίων καὶ διασπῶν τὰς ὑποθέσεις οὐκ ἀκολούθως πληροῖ τὰ δράματα); Eupolis is 'exceedingly imaginative

[19] Nesselrath (1990).

[20] Platonios' reference to Kratinos' *Odysses* (*Odysseus and Company*) as an example of plays in Middle Comedy lacking a chorus does not inspire confidence in either his dating or his accuracy, although changes to the chorus were a genuine phenomenon from at least the early fourth century. Rusten's attempt to excuse Platonios on *Odysses* (84, n.5) is unconvincing (although it is entirely possible to see how the mistake came about). A side note here is that Rusten (mostly) sticks to retaining these enigmatic plural titles (although not exclusively: see Telekleides' *Hesiodoi* at 125), although his contributors evidently understand it in the usual sense (i.e. *x* (usually the central character) and company); this literalism rests uneasily next to play-titles that are accessible, certainly, but firmly anachronistic, such as *Nuts to you* (Lysippos' *Katakhēnai*) or *A PhD in Profligacy* (Alexis' *Asotodidaskalos*).

[21] Rusten misleadingly cites this testimonium twice under a subheading 'Old Comedy compared with New' (82, 579), although in the latter instance he acknowledges that this is actually not the sense and suggests instead that 'old and new' (τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ τῶν καινῶν) is akin to notices of reperformed comedies (although his parallels only use the first of these terms). Equally, Aristotle's famous remarks about the ugliness of comic characters (*Poetics* 1449a32–7) undoubtedly refer as much to mid fourth-century comedy as to fifth and do not offer help in distinguishing periods of comedy.

[22] How far back political abuse goes is another matter. Storey tends to be more inclined to associate Magnes with crude animal humour (xviii); Rusten is more careful about assigning Magnes a style on the basis of the few fragments and testimonia we have (19).

[23] The difference in topic between the two treatises is that the second looks at styles *within* periods. Rusten translates the two titles identically, which is understandable, but unhelpful. He also in at least one place attributes the third (anonymous) treatise on comedy to Platonios.

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…in his plots' (εὐφάνταστος εἰς ὑπερβολήν … κατὰ τὰς ὑποθέσεις: *Prolegomena de comoedia* II). Storey's interest in this treatise is in the establishment of the canonical triad. While, however, it is quite hard to see Aristophanes as the mid-point of Cratinus and Eupolis, even in the terms used by Platonios (power and charm),[24] what this treatise also indicates is that there was a critical discourse in which concepts like *phantasia* were applied to the plots of Old Comedy (to which we can add the typologies of humour of the *Tractatus Coislinianus*). The limited basis of the ancients' periodization should not distract us from the range of their interests.

The emphasis on *onomasti komoidein* or its implications in periodization jars with the variety that both Rusten and Storey acknowledge in Old Comedy in particular, perhaps the most significant aspect of both these studies. The strands of Old Comedy identified, and their association with particular poets, are familiar from work over the last decade and a half. Storey picks out (in particular) the utopian strand, Pherekrates' *hetaira* comedy, and the demagogue comedy, which (if we believe Aristophanes) begins with *Knights* and develops through various hands to Platon's series of plays on individuals; conversely, a domestic strand is rather conventionally associated with Krates, drawing on well-known remarks by Aristotle on plot and some limited evidence which links Krates and Pherekrates.[25] Given the relative paucity of evidence for Krates in particular, I am rather less sanguine than Rusten that we can make such a tidy account of the genre.

It is certainly possible to overstate the extent to which individual strands are associated with particular authors. In terms of authorial preferences, we may be talking more about *emphases* rather than *absolutes*, while strands often combine in different authors. 'Domestic' strands are clearly being used by Kratinos in *Pytine* and Aristophanes in *Knights* and *Wasps*, while a preference for social comedy allied to mockery of the rich and famous is characteristic of Eupolis. Storey notes the presence of domestic elements in such plays, but even this, I think, overplays the distinction between the social comedy of Aristophanes and Eupolis, on the one hand, and Krates and Pherekrates, on the other. Similarly, Rusten prefers to emphasize the distinctions between Pherekrates and others in the production of plays dealing with realms of spontaneous abundance, but the continuities in form, language and content between, say, Telekleides' *Amphiktyones* (*Amphiktyon and Company*) and Pherekrates' *Metalles* (*Diggers*) and *Persai* (*Persians*) are as striking as the set-ups are different: above all (and most significantly) the differences have to be understood in relation to earlier comedy and not as distinct strands.[26]

Nowhere is variety within an individual poet's output more obvious than in the case of Platon, whose output seems to be characterized (but not encompassed) by both demagogue comedies and mythological burlesques. The latter are supposedly characteristic of Middle Comedy, but it would be a brave person who located all such Platonic titles in the fourth century (or even after 410): Rusten does not quite go that far, but does see Platon as a key figure in establishing the trend towards Middle Comedy (26, 30).

Conversely, both Rusten and Storey are keen to emphasize the continuity between the mythological burlesque of Kratinos[27] or Hermippos and that of Platon, which they associate with

[24] More so than Storey allows. On the other hand, Storey attributes (xxxiii–xxxiv) Aristophanes' presence in this triad to the effect of Plato's interest in Aristophanes in *Apology* and *Symposium* (although the same does not apply to Agathon and the tragic triad) or to the Alexandrians wanting to find authors that would fit Aristotle's emphasis on *aiskhrologia*. Storey's main argument for Aristophanes' relative unimportance is that no ancient source gives Aristophanes' number of victories, which he implies is a cover-up. This seems to me to be underestimating the hazards of chance; the fact is that we would know these details if a few centimetres of the victory lists were not lost. On a somewhat related note, Rusten accidentally confuses (26) the dearth of *actual* victories after 420 with the dearth of *known* victories (contrast 273).

[25] *Poetics* 1449b5–9; *Prolegomena* III.

[26] Here I disagree with Rusten (20, n.28). The language of 'schools' goes back at least to Norwood (1931).

[27] Storey in particular, arguing that it is less political than may have been supposed (xxv–xxvi).

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emergent Middle Comedy.[28] Both seem to me to understate the extent to which the move back to mythological themes at the end of the fifth century is a product of parody, a process in which Strattis may be particularly important.[29]

Certainly, what emerges from this is a much more varied form of comedy in the fifth century. If there is a move towards comedy of the social type, for which there is most evidence, in the fourth century, with or without a mythological veneer (as implied by many play titles), then this may be a winnowing out of the strands of Old Comedy, rather than a development as such. This is not a particularly new point. Rusten claims, rather improbably, that his is the first attempt to write a complete history of the genre since Meineke in his edition ((1839–1857) 1.3–500). This I find hard to swallow. The chapter on comedy by Eric Handley in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, for one, seems to me to be admirably rounded and not in much shorter compass. Indeed, Handley's account of the flexibility of Old Comedy, written before Kassel and Austin had built up a head of steam, still stands in good stead. Going back further, one could look to Norwood's account, however dated it now seems.[30]

II. The competitive environment

This does raise the question of whether the existence of *PCG* has really added *that* much to existing thematic treatments. The facts that (for example) Pherekrates wrote an extravaganza of self-conscious musical innuendo in *Kheiron*, that Athenaeus preserved a series of plays which introduced worlds of spontaneous abundance, that Eupolis' *Taxiarkhoi* prefigured Aristophanes' *Frogs* in various ways, that Eupolis' *Demoi* handles an annoying *sykophantes* in a manner familiar from Aristophanes, that Kratinos' *Wealth Gods* engaged with the Aeschylean *Prometheus Unbound*, that Perikles was widely satirized as Zeus or that Kleon's eyebrows probably featured in a portrait mask were all known (or at least *noticed*) before *PCG* came on the scene.[31] The degree to which *Dionysalexandros* was 'allegorical' or not was certainly discussed.[32]

Although it is quite difficult to think back to the earlier context and compare scholarly environments (particularly for someone like me whose entire postgraduate and research career is post-*PCG*), there have been a number of changes. There is much more optimism about what we *do* know. Writing in 1972, Dover could claim that we only really knew one non-Aristophanic plot, namely Kratinos' *Dionysalexandros*. Some 40 years on, I would be optimistic that we know a good deal of the plot of *Pytine*, substantial elements of *Ploutoi* and of Eupolis' *Demoi*,[33] the set-up of others (for example Kratinos' *Nemesis*, Pherekrates' *Petale*) and at least a major theme of a number of others (for example Eupolis' *Autolykos* and *Kolakes*).[34] Second, when Aristophanes is studied, he is presented much more clearly and consistently in a generic context. A good example of this can be observed in comparing Dover's commentaries on *Clouds* (1968*a*) and *Frogs* (1993).[35] Third, there is a greater tendency to tie in individual phenomena (for example superabundance) to broader generic questions.

[28] Storey (2011) xxii–xxiii; Rusten (2011) 26, 30. Whether Hermippos' *Athenas Gonai* is necessarily early is questionable, though.

[29] For Strattis' use of tragedy, see especially Miles (2009) 220–59.

[30] Handley (1985); Norwood (1931).

[31] See, for example, on Pherekrates' *Kheiron*, Dover (1972) 214–15; on superabundance, Baldry (1953); Gomme et al. (1945–1981) 1.104–05; on *Taxiarkhoi*, Wilson (1974); on *Demoi,* Dover (1968b) 138; on *Ploutoi*, West (1979); on Kleon, Welsh (1979).

[32] See, for example, Dover (1972) 217–18); Handley (1982a); (1982b).

[33] Curiously ignored by Dover (1972), although he is more open to our knowing plot structures (including *Demoi*) in his earlier survey article (1968b), as in n.31.

[34] This is far from exhaustive.

[35] Or consider how little Sommerstein's *Knights* (1980–2002) has to say about Kratinos: something addressed somewhat in the post-*PCG addenda*, as, for example, on *Knights* 526–38. Compare also Henderson's introduction to his *Lysistrata* (1987) with his account of women in the comic fragments (2000).

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Conversely, what Dover's account of Aristophanes' contemporaries did pick out in 1972 was the evidence for mythological comedy[36] and, in particular, elements of formal technique shared among different comic poets. While he was sceptical about using this material to project back onto the origins of Greek comedy (a reluctance shared by both Rusten and Storey), Dover was concerned to establish the formal continuities (and, where possible, differences) among the poets of the second half of the fifth century.[37] By contrast, Rusten has only a couple of sentences on the formal issues of Old Comedy (beyond the presence or absence of the chorus), while Storey has nothing at all.[38]

What has changed above all, I think, is the intellectual context in which these observations have been inserted, which perhaps owes less to the phenomenon of *PCG* and more to the general critical environment of the 1990s and 2000s. Three different critical moves typify recent engagement with comic fragments, which we can see reflected in both Storey and Rusten. First, as Angus Bowie remarked in the last review article on Aristophanes in *JHS*,[39] in the late 1980s and early 1990s critics had come to appreciate the extent to which authors' personae were fictional creations (or constructs), that we could and should talk of 'Aristophanes' rather than Aristophanes. This important move was especially useful in seeking to understand the relationship between Aristophanes and Kratinos, in particular, not least in *Pytine*.[40] I am not, myself, as confident as some that we can read back as much of the details of the Kratinean *persona* from *Pytine* into his earlier work (although an engagement with Arkhilokhos does look very probable in Kratinean poetics) and I would emphasize more the creativity both in Aristophanes' allegations and self-constructions in *Akharnians* and (especially) *Knights* and in Kratinos' response, but these are points of detail, not of method.

Second, there have been a number of attempts to characterize the more general environment in which the comic poets are operating. Most recent scholars have tended to emphasize the competitive nature of the exchanges, rather than seeing points of contact as reflecting a common and relatively static store of motifs.[41] Paradoxically, a boost to this enterprise was Stephen Halliwell's suggestion that, *inter alia*, the allegations about poets using others' material or needing others' help or donating material reflected a more *collaborative* ethos in the fifth century.[42] Of course, an *actually* collaborative milieu may require all the more stridently competitive language. It must be admitted, however, that, although Rusten draws on this material, his history of the genre does rather too often to lapse back into diagnosing the psychological states of individual poets.[43]

Third, there is a greater willingness to see the comic poets as intertextually creative in general, and not just in their poetic personae (or allegations about others). Relations between comedies are thus being perceived with some of the creativity that has been identified in comedy's interaction with tragedy.[44] Sidwell's proposal (in response to Halliwell) of a particularly complex form of comic impersonation has won few converts, but the essential idea of competitive intertextuality has been taken up.[45]

[36] Dover (1972) 218; see also above.

[37] Dover (1972) 215–17.

[38] Rusten (2011) 20, 28. Form is a particular interest of Lowe (2008) 27–29, 54–59). A different kind of formalism is pursued by the sophisticated and stimulating work of Silk (2000a), focusing mainly on Aristophanes.

[39] Bowie (1993).

[40] Rosen (2000); Biles (2002); Ruffell (2002); Bakola (2008); (2009) 59–64).

[41] For the latter, see especially Heath (1990), although his emphasis on game-playing is a helpful starting point.

[42] Halliwell (1989).

[43] So also on Anaxandrides (461; testimonium 2 suggests abuse of the audience, not chronic self-doubt). Similarly, despite the prospectus of de-emphasizing Aristophanes, his language about some of the poets is at times unhelpful: describing playwrights of the calibre of Ameipsias as 'also-rans' (25) seems to smack of the rhetoric of the *Frogs* prologue rather than the evidence for victories or places. (On 26, for Lycus read Lycis.)

[44] See especially Foley (1988).

[45] Sidwell (2009), with earlier papers.

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Old habits die hard, even in this more creative approach to comic identities and output. Notwithstanding the idea that the comic stance is a construct, the approach taken to it can in some versions be quite rigid, even where it does not revert to straight biography and psychology. Thus the Aristophanic 'obsession' (Storey (2011) xx) with Euripides perhaps gives rather too much weight to Kratinos' compound *euripidaristophanizōn* (*fr*. 342).[46] This observation (if we grant Kratinos' death shortly after *Pytine*) can hardly be taken as a general statement about Aristophanes' career so much as a response specifically to early Aristophanes (especially *Akharnians*). That Aristophanes preferred to use Euripides is undoubtedly true, but he is far from exclusive either in terms of tragic intertext or generic intertext (just consider the plot of *Gerytades* or the second half of *Peace*). It has, however, been argued that the choice of a consistent tragic 'opponent' was central to the construct of a comic identity, in particular using Kratinos' engagement with Aeschylus. Kratinos did demonstrably engage with Aeschylus – although most convincingly with pastiche Aeschylus, whoever wrote *Prometheus Unbound*, parodied in *Ploutoi* – but Kratinos' use of the poetic inheritance is, if anything, more creative than Aristophanes'.[47] Eupolis, as Storey notes (xx), was far less interested in using the tragic tradition.

A similar tendency to rigidity can still be seen in the discussions of the personal and political targets of the comic poets' satire and invective. The idea that comic poets had a specific major target has a long history, often couched in terms of the personal or ideological enmity that was traditionally associated with Aristophanes' interactions with Kleon. Storey essays (xxvii) a rather over-stated version of Rosen's argument that the feud is a necessary element of the iambic *persona*, presenting it in terms of one man, one target. This is far too exclusive and, in any case, I am not sure Storey's heart is really in it.[48]

III. The comic body

Another aspect in which Rusten, in particular, can be said to reflect recent emphases in the understanding of Greek Comedy is in his engagement with the visual and material evidence. Notwithstanding the (necessary) selectivity, the vast majority of this material is not particularly new, having featured in Bieber, Trendall or Pickard-Cambridge,[49] although Rusten does make good use of more recently discovered mosaics depicting scenes from Menander. And despite a last-ditch effort by Beare (against Webster) to deny the element of the grotesque to Old Comedy,[50] the overwhelming consensus since (at least) the 1960s has been that Old (and Middle) Comedy is indeed the home of grotesque costume, padding, mask and phallos. For Old Comedy, Laura Stone's *Costume in Aristophanic Comedy* (1984) remains fundamental, while the devel-

[46] I was pleased to see Storey refer to Kratinos' use of a similar Khoirilekphantides (*fr*. 502; Storey (2011) xxxix); he might have pointed out explicitly that this tactic of tarring a comic poet with a tragic poet (here perhaps suggesting 'old-fashioned') must have belonged to the earlier part of Kratinos' career: the 420s were not as inventive as they seem. Kratinos' first victory seems much more probably located in the 450s than the 440s (despite Rusten at 20–21): in the lists of victors (*IG* II^2 2325) he appears two poets after Euphronios and three before Kallias, victors in 459/458 and 447/448 respectively (*IG* II^2 2318 ii, iv); Kratinos is placed in the second half of the 450s by later chronicles (454/453, test. 4a K-A; 453/453, test. 4b K-A) and Krates (the poet before Kallias) at the very end of the decade or beginning of the next (451/450, test. 7a K-A; 449/448, test. 7b K-A).

[47] Miles (2009) 260–303) compares approaches to tragedy by Strattis and Aristophanes, not least in relation to Euripides. Silk ((2000a) especially 49–52; (2000b)) argues for Aristophanic exceptionalism. Bakola ((2008) 17–20) argues for Aeschylus being central to Kratinos' comic persona in a manner broadly analogous to Euripides' importance for Aristophanes.

[48] See especially Rosen (1988), although Rosen is certainly not suggesting exclusivity of target for the feuding *persona*.

[49] Bieber (1961; first German edition 1920, first English edition 1939); Trendall (1967); Pickard-Cambridge (1988; first edition 1927; second edition 1968).

[50] Beare (1954); (1957); (1959); Webster (1955); (1957).

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opment of costume in Greek Comedy, from Old through Middle and New, has become much better established through the work of Webster and his collaborators, and in particular through J.R. Green, who has added important interpretative studies to his work on the compendious *Monuments Illustrating ...* series. There has been something of a gradual up-dating of some of the most important pieces of evidence (not least the New York terracottas), but the picture has not fundamentally altered over the last 20 years or so.[51]

What has changed most in that period has been (a) the place of the South Italian evidence and (b) attempts to draw inferences from the grotesque nature of the comic body. The association of South Italian vases with Old Comedy is not in fact new – it goes back at least to 1948[52] – but its central role in discussion was given a massive boost by Oliver Taplin's revisiting of the evidence (with some new pieces, not least the 'Choregoi Vase'), to the extent that the association of the one-time 'phlyax vases' with Attic Comedy has become the norm.[53] Although he devotes an entire chapter to this evidence, Rusten is cautious and allows for only three vases that demonstrably refer to known Athenian comedies (and of these the birth of Helen from the egg seems less certainly to derive from Kratinos' *Nemesis*, given our state of knowledge of the play, than the Würzburg Telephus does from *Thesmophoriazousai* or Asteas' representation of Pyronides and Phrynis does from Eupolis' *Demes*). Rusten's caution here seems sensible to me: on the one hand, the Attic dialect of labels on some vases shows a self-conscious association with Attic origins, but the lag in dates is an issue for representations of Old (rather than Middle) Comedy, and it would be far too premature to rule out local forms of comedy, whether connected with later 'phlyax' drama, with the earlier drama of Epikharmos, with both or with neither.[54] Rusten himself prefers an intermediate Attic art-form, but could have developed the local drama angle more. An early chapter on Epikharmos certainly expands the range of the volume beyond Attic comedy; but the post-Epikharman period outside Athens is not given much emphasis (except for the activities of the 'Craftsmen of Dionysos').

Two main attempts to interpret the materiality of Old Comedy have been offered. One sporadic strand since around 1990 has been to connect this aspect of the genre with Bakhtin's analysis of medieval carnival and the exploitation of that carnival culture by Rabelais.[55] It is the visual material in particular, with its rather obvious exploitation of what Bakhtin called the 'material bodily lower stratum',[56] that guards against some of the more abstracted attempts to claim Bakhtin as a precursor of postmodernism or to emphasize Bakhtinian dialogue over Bakhtinian carnival[57] or to adopt carnival as a means for isolating comedy from its culture, far indeed from Bakhtin's (admittedly often wildly over-optimistic) point.[58] It is this neutered and circumscribed carnival which has prompted objections to using the prism of carnival at all.[59]

An alternative perspective on the comic grotesque has been offered by Helene Foley, who has argued that the obviously fake nature of the comic body emphasizes that the characters are 'citizens in disguise'.[60] It is far from clear, for me, that the former (self-conscious fakery) implies the latter (self-conscious citizenship), but it is important that the attempt to interpret the grotesque has been made.

[51] Webster and Green (1978); Webster et al. (1995); Green (1994); (2002).

[52] Webster (1948).

[53] Taplin (1993). A strong example of this trend is Revermann (2006a).

[54] A reference to Hughes (2003) would have been useful, although other papers by Hughes are noted; see now Hughes (2011).

[55] Bakhtin (1984). See especially Edwards (1993); von Möllendorff (1995); *cf.* Rösler (1986).

[56] Bakhtin (1984) 368–436.

[57] Platter (1993); (2007).

[58] See especially Halliwell (1984); (2008) 204–06, 243–63).

[59] Henderson (1990) 274; Pelling (2000) 125–26). For carnival spilling out over the confines of festivity, see the discussion of Goldhill (1991), citing, in particular, studies by Le Roy Ladurie (1980) and Davis (1987).

[60] Foley (2000). (Rusten's bibliography has a slight typo.)

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Interpretation of the grotesque is, however, one of the missing elements in both volumes under consideration here. Indeed, Storey sniffily refers to attempts to connect Aristophanes with Rabelais, on the one hand, and Swift, on the other, claiming instead that Old Comedy died intestate and that the next people to pick up the baton were the Monty Python team (xxxiv–xxxv). While there are indeed many connections between Python and Old Comedy (although Storey's favoured political invective is largely absent from Python and their respective narrative techniques – *Life of Brian* aside – do differ somewhat), this is far too narrow a view. Even in 20th-century terms, it is to dismiss the entire popular tradition of comedy from music hall and vaudeville onwards, including Marx Brothers films and radio comedy (The Goons obviously, but one could find points of connection from *The Navy Lark* to *Round the Horne* and beyond). To underplay the tradition of popular satirical and comic writing and performance, which can clearly be traced still earlier in time, seems more than a touch reckless.[61] Allied to this is a certain teleological aspect to Storey's presentation of Old Comedy, as if the progression towards New Comedy was smooth and steady.[62]

IV. Where do we go from here?

Both these works, then, will be valuable for any student or scholar of Old Comedy. At the very least, they make much more readily available a host of material that is not always accessible, especially to the Greekless reader. The interpretative essays and discussions of individual plays make a further set of contributions, of which any future inquiries into fragmentary comedy will need to take account. As reflections of the state of play of debates within the study of Greek comedy, they present Old Comedy, in particular, as a more varied phenomenon than it has appeared in the past, but there is still a certain conservatism in both these works. To some extent this is a function of the respective types of book, but the analysis of the genre is still tied quite noticeably to the claims and priorities of a somewhat limited view of ancient scholarship. The shift from personality to persona and from facts to constructs has in certain respects been recuperated to more traditional accounts of the genre and of authorial development. The variety of Old Comedy, in particular, is well presented, and to that extent they illustrate and draw upon significant advances that can be traced to the publication of *PCG*. At the same time, however, the account of comic form is strictly limited. Comic plot, at a less macroscopic level, and the full gamut of comic humour are still somewhat the poor relation to politics and *onomasti komoidein*. Comparative angles are downplayed. These studies, then, represent a good snapshot both of how far we have come in recent years and of some thorny, ongoing problems in relation to the mechanics of individual plays, relations between poets and the development of the genre.

[61] For some comparisons between ancient and modern traditions, see Ruffell (2011); for Aristophanes in the context of the language of humour in general (not least speech-act theory), see also Kloss (2001); Robson (2006); and Lowe (2008) 2–17) on definitions of comedy.

[62] Rusten is much less prone to this formulation: he explicitly presents Middle Comedy as a period of transition rather than a mid-point and gives due weight to poets, particularly the satirical Timokles, who upset tidy notions of later comedy.

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