how they function as a set. One begins to wish that S. had winnowed out the metatheatrical points from the narration of the plot (which can be irksome if one knows the plays, however useful to the uninitiated), and then discussed them in a manner which led more clearly to the conclusions. The political points that S. is making would also have been clearer. For instance, there is a good deal of disguise and revelation of disguise in *Acharnians*, but each case is discussed separately (and some get very little treatment): the result is that it is hard to see how the points relate together. There is generally a problem of focus.

Focus is a problem in other ways. At times, the plays do not seem to be as fruitful in metatheatre as S. hoped, and the discussion can stray onto matters that are tangential to metatheatre; this is especially so with *Knights*. Even in the chapter on *Acharnians* we have a lengthy and highly speculative discussion of what happened to costumes after a play. In *Wasps* one sometimes feels that S. is straining to find material, e.g. the attempt to relate 492 *kulindetai* to the theatre's *ekkyklema* (p. 90); his remarks on the ending are interesting, however. By contrast, one might have expected more concentrated discussion of the metatheatrical *synkrisis* of tragedy and comedy in *Frogs* and *Thesmophoriazusae* (in these chapters one misses discussion of Silk's critique in *Comparative Criticism* 10 [1988], 3–37 of the idea of tragedy's primacy, which Slater seems to accept).

The book is generally very scholarly (there are some eighty pages of notes), but scholarly problems can be dealt with somewhat abruptly: ideas and solutions are suggested but not developed or justified. When Lamachus is stripped of his weapons, 'Dicaeopolis has revealed Lamachus as just one more poor bugger' (p. 58). The joke works in English, but what does it mean for the play? When the Chorus doff their cloaks for the parabasis, the garments 'are cast aside along with their pro-war views' (p. 59): this is chronologically true, but only for half of the Chorus, and no justification is given for equating cloak and militarism. Conclusions are often drawn from points that are far from fully established. S. argues strongly for a more optimistic reading of the ending of *Birds* than many recent writers, but does not really manage to explain away those points which the pessimists have relied on. The sustained criticism of the 'ironic' reading of *Ecclesiazusae* is, however, more compelling.

The book tantalizes. It is full of insights and revisions of standard views; its claims that metatheatre is a crucial weapon in Aristophanes' political armoury are challenging and novel. However, the insights are produced piecemeal, and the conclusions can seem drawn, rabbit-like, from a hat. The linear treatment of metatheatrical aspects works against a more cogent and coherent discussion of how exactly these features work together to justify S.'s conclusions. The result is that one is tempted both by S.'s suggestions and yet at the same time not certain that he has established that metatheatre is as important as he claims.

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GORGIAS

S. Consigny: *Gorgias, Sophist and Artist*. Pp. 242. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001. Cased, $39.95. ISBN: 1-57003-424-9.

Athens first met the orator Gorgias of Leontini in 427 B.C.E. when he spoke to the assembly on behalf of his city which was seeking an alliance with Athens against

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neighboring Syracuse, and astounded his literate audience by the novelty of his style (A 4). He stayed on, or returned, to teach rhetoric at high prices, but the Athenians were never quite sure how to regard him. That uncertainty has been passed down to us and in this lucid and forcefully argued study of Gorgias' thought and art, Consigny taking sides against Isocrates, Plato, and Aristotle by presenting Gorgias as a serious thinker and careful stylist.

C. is very clear in the introduction about his own strategies for interpreting Gorgias' perplexing texts. Rejecting what he calls an 'objectivist' approach based on historical 'facts' and 'contexts', he opts for a 'communitarian' model, in which one engages with the shared practices of an 'interpretive community' of readers at work on the same hermeneutic enterprise. In this case it is the community of scholars who have written about Gorgias, and C. proceeds by considering various earlier readings before setting out his own, which he hopes will be the most persuasive. This seems, on the face of it, to be the usual strategy of most scholars in the humanities and to be scarcely in need of special defense, but C. stresses its controversial underlying assumptions, that scholarship is a kind of game and that there is no 'true' argument that cannot be replaced by a more persuasive one.

C. defines two traditional approaches to Gorgias in modern scholarship. The first he calls the 'subjectivist', founded by Hegel, which argues that Gorgias saw an unbridgeable gulf between human perception and external reality. Thus, in *On Not-being*, Gorgias claims that nothing can be known. In ethics, subjectivists argue that Gorgias is a romantic or irrationalist who wants to liberate us from the tyranny of reason, and in stylistics, they claim that his dramatic poetic devises are designed to allude to truth that cannot be conveyed through literal discourse.

The second traditional approach is the empiricist, stemming from Grote, which reads *On Not-being* as a rejection of Parmenides' transcendent Being and an affirmation of the existence of a material world accessible through the senses. In politics, empiricists view Gorgias as a liberal and a democrat; in stylistics, they argue that his unusual poetic devises, especially antithesis, are intended to increase the clarity of his oral presentations.

These two basic approaches and their various proponents constitute the community in which C. wishes to situate his own view of Gorgias, and he argues their cases with vigor, citing the texts that support his opponents' positions and sometimes even convincing the reader of their good sense. He also shows how neither of them accounts for all of the texts and testimonia, and finds weaknesses in their interpretations. In this way he clears ground for his own perspective, which he calls 'anti-foundationalist'. In this view Gorgias rejects the possibility of both objective and subjective truth, but sees it instead as an endorsement by a community that finds it persuasive. In politics, the anti-foundationalist Gorgias sees a community as a contingent association of people held together by shared activities, and in stylistics, he uses extreme effects to foreground the rhetoricity of all texts, including his own.

There seems, then, to be a remarkably close fit between C.'s own world-view and that of Gorgias, and if this seems too neat, it must be said that the anti-foundationalist Gorgias is an interesting and sophisticated figure whose definition of inquiry as rhetorical debate anticipates Wittgenstein, Rorty, and Kuhn. While the broad strokes are impressive, however, the details of C.'s account are occasionally off the mark. For example, C. claims that Gorgias' penchant for compounding words from two or more familiar ones is a strategy for showing that 'there is no independent, antecedent object that a word simply names', challenging the assumption that 'words and things are independent items, the former representing or mirroring the latter' (p. 179). His

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example is *ptocho-mouso-kolakas*, 'begging-poet-flatterer' (p. 179), a hit, perhaps, at the Orphics. But no special or philosophical explanation is necessary for the coining of compounds in insulting remarks. Homer established this pattern in the *Iliad*, where Achilles ridicules Agamemnon with an avalanche of similar formations (*Il.* 1.122; 149; 159; 225; 231). It was taken up with relish by Aristophanes in the fifth century, and the fragments of Timon of Phlius (*SH* 792, 808, 831) show that it was still a popular tactic in the third century. Gorgias' compounding, then, more likely depends on his knowledge of the Greek literary heritage than on any linguistic theory.

C. also makes the 'festival venue' in which Gorgias performed carry more interpretive weight than it should: 'Gorgias' use of the festival venue complements his notion that every assertion is inherently agonistic, situated *vis-à-vis* competing viewpoints, never complete in itself, and always responding to and being responded to by people with alternative perspectives' (p. 196). But Gorgias had no choice about where to deliver his speeches. As a metic in Athens he could not speak in the law courts or the assembly, except the one time when he was appearing as an ambassador, and the competitions for rhetors at the great pan-Hellenic festivals offered the only opportunities for him to perform before large audiences. Like his competitors in these events who had no theoretical justification for their performances, he was there to further himself professionally.

C., like his Gorgias, hopes that his account will be judged 'true' because it is more persuasive than previous ones. Some will find it so, but in any event, it should certainly take its place in the history of the discussion.

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HERODOTUS VI

E. I. McQUEEN (ed.): *Herodotus Book VI*. Pp. xvi + 232. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2000. Paper, £11.99. ISBN: 1-85399-586-X.

Book VI is one of the most appealing in Herodotus, yet the wait for a modern commentary for 'A'-level and undergraduate students has been a long one—Shuckburgh's Pitt Press volume [Sh.] first appeared in 1889 (though reprinted by Bristol Classical Press as recently as 1984). McQueen highlights (p. v) the need to take account of developments in scholarship on Greek history (approaching a century's worth even since How & Wells), and to provide the fuller guidance on Greek grammar and syntax required by today's students. Sh.'s text is retained, though the reproduction, corrected by hand, is sometimes messy and occasionally incorrect (read ἀπικόμενος at 39.2; broken nu at 68.3 and iota at 86γ2 [not 86χ as printed], a tailless rho at the foot of p.62); the addition of section numbers to which the commentary is keyed is a helpful feature, though markers there are sometimes misplaced or absent (e.g. 30.2, 43.3, 61.4, 63.3, 75.3, 76.2, 79.2, 83.2, 100.3, 109.3). McQ. is mostly content to explicate the text printed: the few textual notes (e.g. on 32, 40.1, 57.2 [but ἀνὰ *is* the reading in several MSS], 95.2, 128.1) seem generally sufficient, although one is surely needed at 128.1, and McQ. does not make clear why he retains the bracketing at 98.3.

As a historical commentary, the volume generally works very well: McQ.'s discussions are judicious, balanced, up-to-date, and supported by sensible selections of bibliography. If anything, his treatment of certain topics displays learning beyond the needs of his target audience (e.g. 69.5 on 'eight month child'). There are inevitably points on which one regrets the absence of comment: for example, though McQ. is

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