Tiedke's ἐσαθρήσειας eliminates ἄν, alien to Nonnus' usage and probably introduced by contamination from the Gospel text (p. 186); and at 137 νισομένοιο normalizes to Nonnus' preferred form.

The comprehensive commentary covers fundamental topics: Nonnus' text of the Gospel, links with Cyril's commentary and other exegesis, including Neoplatonic writers, insertion of explanatory material from the synoptic Gospels, Nonnus' profound debt to earlier poetry, especially that of Gregory of Nazianzus (often preserved in the same manuscripts), links with the *Dionysiaca*, and so on. It also brings new insights; for example, Nonnus' consistent vocabulary to achieve certain effects: Homeric ζόφος, associated with Hades, replaces the biblical σκότος, enhancing the dichotomy between light and darkness (p. 117). Above all, it illuminates the power, precision, and pertinence of Nonnus' epithets, which might too easily be dismissed as ornamental: rare μελισσοβότῳ and οὐρεσίφοιτος (13–14) to describe John ('There was a man sent from God whose name was John') supply biography from the synoptic Gospels, while ἀρχεγόνου (15) may derive from Gregory of Nazianzus but ties in to Neoplatonic mysticism, as ὑψίζυγος (92) links Christ simultaneously with Homer's Zeus and the Neoplatonic Demiurge (p. 167). These are but a sampling. DeS.'s excellent indices make his work eminently accessible.

This is no dilettante versification, but a profound, free-standing interpretation of the most mystical of the Gospels, locating it within traditions of poetry and religious writing from the earliest to contemporary times. Did Nonnus compose the *Dionysiaca* to limber up for this more challenging task?

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PARASITES

E. I. TYLAWSKY: *Saturio's Inheritance. The Greek Ancestry of the Roman Comic Parasite*. (Artists and Issues in the Theatre 9.) Pp. x + 192. New York, etc.: Peter Lang, 2002. Cased, €56.80. ISBN: 0-8204-4128-7.

Students of Roman Comedy will welcome a book on the ancestry of the parasite character. The parasite, as we meet him in Plautus and Terence, is a curiously variable figure, at times flatterer, wit, schemer, teller of tales, runner of errands, and, of course, scrounger of meals, but never all of these at once. Moreover, though parasites talk of being beaten or refer to their joke books, they rarely get beaten or tell set jokes in the plays. All this points to a complex and varied ancestry, which Tylawsky's historical survey promises to unravel.

In fact, T. is not concerned to establish the diversity of the character as he appears on the Roman stage: very few of the individual parasites are mentioned by name. She takes as her typical figure Saturio, the parasite of Plautus' *Persa*, largely (it seems) because he claims an ancestry going back many generations (*Persa* 53–60), and invests him and his kin with a set of stock characteristics.

The book has eight relatively short chapters, which proceed chronologically. T. traces Saturio's ancestry back to Homer, where the disguised Odysseus on Ithaca 'cast himself in the rôle of the ragged interloper and eloquent opportunist who stood at the very edge of society' (p. 3). After alluding to the shadowy *knisokolax* of Asius of Samos (seventh/sixth century), and the prototypical parasite of Epicharmus, T.

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devotes three chapters to Old Comedy, aiming to show how 'comic playwrights, having adopted the traditional beggar opportunist to give a shape to the mechanism of flattery in politics, wrapped that construct around real individuals, and how the resulting caricature of those same historical individuals grew into the fully-fledged stage character' (pp. 43–4).

Aristophanes' part in this, according to T., was that, though he did not bring actual parasite figures on stage, he did highlight the activity of *kolakeia* in his treatment of politicians and intellectuals. This is easier to show in the treatment of Cleon, since Aristophanes uses the verb *kolakeuein* of Cleon and the noun *kolakes* of his supporters, than in the case of Socrates, who, as T. says, did not use flattery, but was guilty rather of *alazoneia*. A greater part was played by Eupolis, who actually portrayed the parasite figure on stage. Here T. has to rely on reconstructing Eupolis' *Kolakes,* in which the wealthy Callias evidently plays host to a number of intellectuals. The eponymous Chorus utter a standard parasite monologue, in which they talk of finding a wealthy man in the agora, praising anything he says, and then offering charming conversation at dinner. The relation of this to the portrayal of the historical individuals in the play, whoever they were (T. argues for Protagoras, Alcibiades, Chaerephon, Melanthius, and even Socrates), is uncertain. T. suggests that the Chorus reflect the characterization of Protagoras, who 'may have stood out from, but still have been defined among, the flatterers of the title' (p. 45; cf. p. 51): she seems here to be toying with the possibility that, while Protagoras was a character in the play, the other named individuals were members of the chorus (p. 141 nn. 5–6).

The two chapters on Middle Comedy inevitably depend very largely on Athenaeus and contain little that is new or controversial. This was the period in which the attributes of the stock character were enlarged and defined in a succession of professional parasite speeches; it was also the period in which the designation *kolax* was replaced by *parasitos.* It was a transitional period in which caricatures of real-life historical people, such as Chaerephon and Philoxenus (examined by T. in some detail), were transformed into the comic stereotype. T. argues that the venue in which the parasite principally operated was the parties of fashionable young men 'lounging in philosophical discussions' (p. 89; cf. p. 85); it is one of the features of the book that she emphasizes the links between the parasite character and philosophers.

In New Comedy, according to T., the parasite becomes, in general terms, 'milder, quieter, and less popular' (p. 94) as part of the increasing realism of the genre. The variety of Menander's parasites is brought out, as is the (new?) distinction between the soldier's flatterer and the hanger-on of the civilian. It is also emphasized that the professional parasite with his self-introductory speeches does not die out, as is evidenced by the speeches from Diphilus and Diodorus preserved in Athenaeus.

The final chapter reverts to Saturio and Roman comedy, concentrating on two specific areas, the parasite's properties (as outlined by Saturio at *Persa* 124-6) and his set-piece monologues. The listed properties are *ampulla*, *strigil*, *scaphium*, *socci*, *pallium*, and *marsuppium*, which in the context (parasites should not have money of their own or they will spend it) presumably represent basic necessities (shoes, cloak, wallet) and the means to enjoy the minor luxuries to which a parasite may aspire (oil-flask, strigil, wine-cup): T. sees the list as evoking Greekness, luxury, beggars, barefoot philosophers, fashionable young men, and Spartan austerity. An examination of the monologues leads to a brief discussion of being funny and being hit by pots.

The novel feature of the book is the emphasis on beggars and philosophers as a major part of the parasite's inheritance. There are also some interesting detailed discussions of tangential points (e.g. the meaning of *autolekythos*: pp. 113–16). The

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book is enthusiastically written with some idiosyncracies of style: the common convention that authors are referred to in the present tense is ignored ('Athenaeus added . . .', etc.). Twelve lines on p. 54 are repeated on p. 55, n. 13 on p. 146 has lost its opening line or lines, nn. 4–6 on p. 156 are missing, while nn. 13–15 are repeated on p. 157. The page references in the Index of Passages Discussed are regularly out by two or three pages (for p. 149 read p. 151, etc.). There is a full bibliography but no general index.

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DE PETITIONE CONSULATUS

G. Laser (ed.): *Quintus Tullius Cicero:* Commentariolum petitionis. *Herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert.* (Texte zur Forschung 75.) Pp. vi + 200. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001. Cased, DM 64/SFr 58. ISBN: 3-534-14485-6.

This edition, translation and commentary of the *Commentariolum petitionis* attributed to Quintus Cicero poses a problem for a reviewer in an English-language journal. To judge from its conscious sacrifice of philological minutiae (p. 1), its minimal indulgence in prosopographical or institutional detail (for which the reader is often referred to *Der neue* or even *Der kleine Pauly*), and the space devoted to exposition of essential, but mostly elementary background information rather than to the exploration of problems of interpretation, this book is evidently directed chiefly not at the scholar but at intermediate students. Consequently, however well this book meets its primary pedagogical purpose, its value is necessarily somewhat limited for scholars—who alone in the anglophone countries will have the inclination and the linguistic competence to read it.

This is not to depreciate the quality and interest of the ideas that appear herein. Major themes include the claims that clients were free agents who could not simply be commanded to further an electoral campaign; that the Republic was a fictive (or not-entirely-fictive) 'face-to-face society', demanding continual communication and interaction between political leaders and a politically active urban citizenry; and that a well-integrated plebs normally acquiesced in the leadership of the Senate provided that at least symbolic gestures of solicitude for its *commoda* were forthcoming. These views represent important strands of the current lively debate on the nature of the Republican political system. However, there is little if anything of significance here that did not appear in L.'s notable dissertation ('*Populo et scaenae serviendum est:* Die Bedeutung der städtischen Masse in der späten Römischen Republik', Bochum 1997) and a subsequent article on clientage in the *Comm. pet.* (*GFA* 2 [1999], 179–92). In general, L.'s views tend to be simply asserted here (with a wave toward this earlier work) rather than substantiated, even when controversial (e.g. pp. 182–3); at the same time, L. evinces a kind of airy disregard for the rest of the current debate, even where it bears directly on his subject. Fergus Millar's 'democratic' thesis of Republican politics goes unmentioned; Alexander Yakobson's challenge to traditional views of plebeian impotence in the *comitia centuriata*, first published in 1992, is passed over much too lightly (p. 18 n. 30—below a page on which we are told that the equestrian centuries

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