tomorrow', etc.) evokes pathos rather than pity since we recognize in it 'an intimation or apprehension of the existential' which goes beyond the merely personal. Similarly, the many old men who feature in Aristophanes' plays lamenting their lost youth and vigour elicit pathos rather than sympathy, not least because the discontinuities of comic action discourage us from identifying with the characters. It is typical of S.'s approach that whereas others interpret the plays' preoccupation with the past, and particularly the pattern of old men looking back, in terms of politics, S. sees it as a vehicle of pathos—an aesthetic and literary quality.

Discontinuity introduces distance, but it also defamiliarizes, making the medium an intrinsic part of the message: Aristophanes' comedies enact their own meaning, presenting us with a comic vision which celebrates coincidence and an open-ended world in which all things are possible, and yet admits pathos. This vision is most fully realized in *Wasps*, for S. the 'purest comedy', which ends with its aged hero Philocleon, a grotesque and wierdly rejuvenated figure, free from all confines, energized by animal spirit, and dancing the dance of life in triumph over the 'limitations of age and its apprehension of mortality'.

This is a book of enormous richness and subtlety, which combines detailed and precise analysis of language and style with discursive meditation on the nature of comedy and the comic. It is unashamedly ahistorical ('for all its freedom and diversity, comedy is still identifiable as such without reference to any particular period'), and seeks to evaluate Aristophanes not only with reference to Bakhtin and Brecht, as others have done before, but also in relation to a vast panorama of writers and theorists from Aristotle to Nietzsche, from Shakespeare to Hardy and Eliot, from the blues through the Hollywood musical to Woody Allen. Reading it requires concentration and effort, but its effect is to destabilize familiar responses and make us think again about the critical assumptions we bring to the interpretation of Aristophanes' plays. More than that, S.'s learned and sophisticated engagement with wider theoretical issues opens up a new perspective on the claim that comedy too can be serious.

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A NEW COMMENTARY ON *PEACE*

S. D. Olson (ed.): *Aristophanes:* Peace. Pp. lxxiv + 330. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Cased, £55. ISBN: 0-19-814081-9.

Platnauer's 1964 commentary on *Peace* never really met the needs of most readers of Aristophanes of its time, and certainly did not offer students the help they needed. The appearance of Olson's new and substantial Oxford commentary is therefore a welcome event.

The introduction discusses Aristophanes' involvement in the production of his plays, the historical background, literary and mythical intertexts, theology and politics (the latter more important), staging (two doors; *Peace's* cave the central door), *Peace II* (a mild revision), and the textual tradition. The major contribution here is the full demonstration that, apart from RVG, the other seven MSS of the play and the Aldine edition all descend from 'a series of three independent copies of a single lost manuscript', β (p. liii). The individual sub-families and their interrelations are described, the foliation of β is reconstructed, and a stemma produced. There is also a very useful digest of O.'s article in *ICS* 21 (1996), 5–34, on the MSS' marking of

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changes of speaker and what can be learned from them about MSS affiliation and early editorial practice. The text is subsequently accompanied by a very full apparatus.

The study of the historical background is also admirably detailed and perceptive, which makes it all the more disappointing that it concludes somewhat jejunely that 'Aristophanes was clearly disgusted not only by the war but by the entire radical democratic agenda . . . and was accordingly eager for a rapid end to the fighting, albeit only on terms that would allow Athens to continue to dominate a sizeable percentage of the rest of the Greek world' (p. xxxi). Surely Aristophanes could have see the contradictions inherent in such an attitude? *Birds* certainly suggests he could. Unfortunately, O. does not show how *Peace* supports such a reconstruction of Aristophanes' views. Indeed, it is a problem with the introduction generally, that the sections rather stand alone and their precise relationship to the text of the play is not demonstrated. The intertexts that are discussed, Euripides' *Bellerophon* and Aesop's fable about the eagle and beetle, have obvious similarities to the play, but it is not clear what their relevance is, and O.'s own discussions suggest that the differences are at least as striking. The same can be said of the discussions of vases depicting female figures rising from the ground and of folk-tales which share motifs with *Peace*: the basic similarities are clear, but what is one to make of them beyond that?

The commentary is remarkable for its comprehensiveness. Hardly a word or phrase is denied comment, but it is all carried out with remarkable economy: a great deal of information is conveyed in a series of admirably crisp notes. Textual matters are fully treated: an individual feature of O.'s discussions is the explication of how the errors arose progressively in the MSS; his defences of generally accepted readings are also useful and compelling. The metrical scholia are given more exposure than is usual and their contribution to the establishment of the text assessed (1331–67 n. is especially notable). Greek idiom is explored and exemplified. The wealth of detail provides constant fascination, whether it be the uses for different dungs (4 n.), methods of cheese-making (368 n.) or the price of vine-stakes (1262–3 n.). At times we learn rather more than perhaps is necessary for the understanding of the passage in question, but the many references to ancient literature are very useful. Suggestions for staging are also consistently provided.

If one had to criticize the commentary, one would say that, while it is remarkable for its detail, it is less good on the big picture. O. makes little or no attempt to interpret the play. As one reads, therefore, the notes take on a life of their own: they are fascinating in themselves, but their relationship to the play beyond their immediate context can be tenuous. The play is effaced by the intent concentration on its details. One might argue that it is not the function of the traditional commentary to interpret a text in this way, but commentaries need to evolve with the rest of classical studies, and today it is curiously unsatisfying to read a commentary that, whilst offering a rich amount of material, eschews any attempt itself to use that material to interpret or explain its text in a broader manner. One longs for O. to comment on the unusual features of the play, such as the considerable scope given to the Chorus and to Hermes, and the reduced rôle of the protagonist. What is its relationship to the peace-treaty, and why is it made up of these particular major structural elements? Why does it concentrate on hoplite experience not naval (p. xlii, 1172 n.) and so on? One would have liked to see more use made of the ideas of Albio Cassio's excellent *Commedia e partecipazione* (Naples, 1985).

Some notable points of text and interpretation. 87 *μὴ πνεῖν μοι κακόν* 'don't have your mind fixed on trouble, please'. 100 retain *ἀνοικοδομεῖν* (codd.), coll. Lycurgus 128. 186–7 transposed, to give more natural order of name, father's name, deme. 194

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not a question. 215 *Ἀττικωνικοί* vocative; but this spoils the parallelism with 212–3 and requires a change in the unanimous reading of the MSS. 223a add *τί φῄς;* (Zacher from metr. Σ^{V}); but do we need two surprised questions here? The similar addition of extra-metrical *ἰή ἰή* in 261 is more convincing however. 257–8 unemended to Kudoimos. 329 *ὀρχήσησθέ τι* (Boissonade + Bekker), to avoid unusual *μή* + fut, indic. as imperative. 365 keep the line; the custom is mentioned by Eur. fr. 39, Hsch. *ε* 5961, etc. 435–57 the Chorus is Trygaeus' interlocutor not Hermes, because the latter is not concerned with human affairs. But not only does Hermes hold the phiale so that we expect him to speak (Sommerstein), but the Chorus have just asked Hermes to tell them what to do (428–9), so a period of silence at this point would be odd, especially as he has a major rôle later in this scene. 458–519 a new order of speakers. 479 *ἔχοντ' <ὑπὸ> τοῦ ξύλου* (Olson). 742–4 keep the paradosis; not all of Sommerstein's objections are met, however. 758 *πρωκτὸν δὲ καμήλου* a reference to homosexual sex; but *ὄρχεις ἀπλύτους* suggests distinct lack of hygiene is more the point? 1135 *ἐκπεπρεμνισμένα* 'having been reduced to rough lumber' rather than 'rooted out'.

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THE LOEB ARISTOPHANES COMPLETED

J. J. HENDERSON (ed.): *Aristophanes. Vol. IV:* Frogs, Assembly-women, Wealth. (Loeb Classical Library, 180.) Pp. 601. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002. Cased, £14.50. ISBN: 0-674-99596-1.

This volume completes the new Loeb Aristophanes begun in 1998. H. remains true to the policy followed in earlier volumes: brief introductions, bibliographies of annotated editions only, text with minimal (but Latin) apparatus, accurate and sometimes imaginative translation with few stage directions and little annotation, index of personal names only (for this purpose, incidentally, heroes count as persons but gods, even if they appear on stage, do not). The rationale for this policy was stated in the preface to the first volume ('a Loeb edition is not the place for a commentary'), and no one is more entitled to lay down such a principle than the editor of the Loeb Library. Others may continue to feel that the policy has deprived them of numerous valuable insights that H.'s flair and scholarship could have supplied—and to hope that he may see fit to present them subsequently between other covers.

Within H.'s self-imposed limits, there is still much worthy of attention. He points out (p. 8) that *Frogs* could hardly have ignored the existence of Sophocles had he been alive (as Ar. must surely have anticipated that he would be) when the play was produced, and makes an interesting and plausible suggestion as to what might then have been said about him. On *Frogs* 1500 he casually notes that 'Aeschylus . . . will depart carrying a torch': this is new, so far as I can discover, and entirely appropriate to this Eleusinian poet who is returning to earth to bring *σωτηρία* to Athens. Another 'stage-directional' adjustment is made at the end of *Wealth*, where Wealth, sent for at 1196, is not allowed to come out of the house until 1207/8. Presumably, though as usual we are not told, this is to avoid his having to wait in the background while Chremylos deals with the Old Woman; it also produces a neat little surprise, as the

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