

Review

Author(s): Timothy J. Moore

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ship). Thus, the parabasis provides *Clouds*' final lesson on how to understand its comedy, which from the beginning has made the comic and our reaction to it decisive terms in its "argument." "We can understand what we see *only* by watching our second, revised comedy and ourselves, its second audience, from the complex, intertextual perspective inescapable in the knowledge of first audience and first play" (68, emphasis mine).

It is a seductive reading. Behind it we might glimpse the sophistic Clouds of deconstructionism and reader–response theory, teasing us, as Strepsiades and Aristophanes' audience once were teased, into new self–awareness and contagious wit. My problem is, first, with that extreme revisionist position—and the burden of proof has certainly shifted against those who would extend the revisions alleged in Hypothesis VII to virtually the entire play (see my review of Hubbard, above); and second, with the implications of that word *only*. It is one thing to find, in Aristophanes' revised parabasis, new self–ironical implications and connections of the playwright's own mistaken assumptions and "failure" with Strepsiades' experience and Socrates' later in the play. It is quite another thing to extrapolate from that parabasis an exclusively ironic, revisionist reading of the entire play. Need we be quite so modern, and so sophisticated?

Any stick, they say, will serve to beat a dog. Whitman used the *Bearbeitungsfrage* to confirm his prejudice against *Clouds*. O'Regan largely enjoys the play but, thanks to the revision, encloses *Clouds B* firmly within the World of Reading, as a text to be read in relation to other texts. Whereas, for me at least, our *Clouds* essentially preserves the script for the (yes!) excellent performance of 423, with some (limited) revisions towards a second, wished–for or imagined reperformance that never came off. In reinterpreting *Clouds* we must ourselves still look to the constraints and, still more, to the opportunities of theatrical performance, both old and new. What Aristophanes thought, finally, of his hypothetical and real audiences, and of the hypothetical and real Athenian democracy, remains an unsolved riddle. As O'Regan says (132), "the pleasures of our *Clouds* tax and extend our democratic capabilities as speakers, as listeners, and as citizens. . . . We are left to enact our own parts, but with a little more reflection than before."

KENNETH RECKFORD

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

DAVID WILES. *The Masks of Menander: Sign and Meaning in Greek and Roman Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. xvi + 271 pp. Cloth, \$54.50.

Wiles's work rests on three pillars: structuralism, semiotics, and Aristotle. Using the perspectives of the two modern theoretical systems, he argues

that all aspects of the performance of New Comedy reflect the same ideological assumptions evident in the Aristotelian corpus. The result is an important and exciting book which may well change the way students of New Comedy do business.

At the center of Wiles's study lie the masks of New Comedy. Making good use of both written and archaeological evidence, he argues that the masks should be seen as a system of signs, as important as the text in providing the meaning of Menander's plays. Pollux preserves not a complete list of the masks used, but an attempt by his Peripatetic source to codify this system. The plays are a visualization of Aristotle's notion that moral choice is a product of disposition (represented by the mask) and thought (represented in language), and all of the masks are created with an eye towards the Aristotelian mean. Wiles supplements his analysis with useful analogies drawn from Japanese Noh drama, *commedia dell'arte*, and the codification of facial expressions in eighteenth-century theater.

He uses a similar line of thought to analyze other aspects of New Comedy. Menander's plots are Aristotelian in such aspects as their focus on choice and their emphasis on *mimesis*, and basic tensions of fourth-century Athens cause their obsession with the incorporation of a woman into the *polis*. The physical makeup of the late fourth-century stage reflects similar tensions and concern with the mean: the unused central door mediates between the doors to its left and right, and there is a polarity between what is shown onstage and the world hidden offstage. The shallow, raised stage encouraged actors to manipulate their masks for the greatest revelation of character. Costumes and gestures, like masks, make up a sign system. Menander's language is "poor" rather than "rich," leaving much meaning to be supplied by actors trained in voice technique like that found in the Aristotelian *Problems*.

Wiles's classification of the masks and his interpretation of the physical evidence of fourth-century performance are very persuasive, and his approach as a whole is provocative and illuminating. When he applies his theories to specific plays, however, he is not always as convincing. His most pervasive problem is that in spite of his insistence that the plays are more complex than other scholars have admitted, his own approach to individual plays sometimes reduces complexity to formulae. This is particularly evident when he applies the narratological principles of Greimas to the plots of New Comedy. True, with a sufficient amount of special pleading, all of the extant plots could be reduced to a repeated narrative involving a subject (a young citizen), an object (a woman), and other such "functions." But what does this really tell us? Rather than laying bare "the sociological roots of Menander's comedy," the reduction of all New Comedy to such a simplified sequence seems merely to draw attention away from the variations which make it interesting.

While Wiles is perhaps justified in his confidence that "the fact that we have a large and more-or-less random corpus of fragments allows us to reconstruct a dramatic technique" (xii), his ideas can best be tested against extant

works. It is therefore somewhat distressing to see that too narrow application of those ideas leads him to misleading interpretations of *Dyskolos*. When he defends (correctly, I think) the thesis of MacCary that the names of New Comedy induce specific expectations in the audience, he argues that Daos is both trickster and victim. This combination works reasonably well for Daos in *Aspis* and some other plays, but it scarcely fits Daos in *Dyskolos*. When Wiles proposes that in *Dyskolos* Menander deliberately contradicted his audience's expectations for Daos, he falls into dangerous circularity. He argues that all of Menander's characters, including those of *Dyskolos*, should be interpreted using Aristotelian rather than modern conceptions of psychology and individuality. Perhaps; but do we need Freud to appreciate that Gorgias is much more sympathetic and interesting than the boor Wiles makes him, or that Kallippides, who enters grumpy and is only barely persuaded to give his daughter away, is far more than a "complaisant" opposite to Knemon? Wiles's determination to apply Aristotelian morality also leads him to judge Sostratos far too harshly, and to misread the end of the play, where the joyful and just revenge on Knemon scarcely shows that Kallippides' household is decadent. This assumption of decadence is closely related to Wiles's insistence on a rigid correspondence between the masks and the Aristotelian mean; for Wiles associates the name of Sostratos' sister, Plangon, with Pollux' "pseudo-virgin" mask and concludes that the audience would associate her with sexual experience. Surely it is inaccurate to group courtesans and raped maidens together as some kind of "golden mean" between *hetairai* and virgins. Courtesans and maidens, like slaves and free persons, were viewed not as ends of a continuum with a "mean" lying between them, but as irreconcilable dichotomies.

Wiles does not restrict himself to Greek comedy. He contrasts Roman practice with his findings on Menander throughout, and he includes a separate chapter on masks in Roman comedy. Here he provides many useful insights, but his method is in general less effective. Some of his assumptions about Roman society are questionable. His schema of Athenian democracy versus Roman autocracy is *passé* at best, and his rather tenuous connection between theatrical masks and the *imagines* of the dead leads nowhere. Wiles explains much of Terence in terms of Stoicism. Some Stoic influence on Terence is certainly likely; but Terence's double plots are far more complex than Wiles's Stoic contrasts between a good young man who marries and his unrestrained comrade who ends up with a *meretrix*.

Wiles has considerably more to say about Plautus. He offers a good, succinct defense of the view that Plautus' actors wore masks, and he has an excellent sense of Plautus' exultation in theatrical signs and of the close relationship between actors and audiences in Plautine theater. Also particularly insightful is his comparison of the escapist Italian milieu of the French *commedia dell'arte* with the Greek setting of Plautus. Again, however, Wiles runs into problems when he applies his theories to specific plays. He exaggerates the stock nature of the characters of *Curculio*, and his proposal that the identity of

the audience changes during the course of *Stichus* is more imaginative than convincing. When he concludes that in the original of *Captivi* Tyndarus must have behaved differently and could not have been revealed to be a Greek, he has allowed his theoretical preconceptions to cloud any reasonable consideration of Plautus' methods of adaptation. Nor is it clear how *Persa* "deals with the plight of those who are poor in Roman society" (140). Wiles's generalizations about Plautus' corpus as a whole are sometimes similarly unjustified. His connection between "lack of a clear narrative subject" in Plautus' plays and the ambiguous political position of much of his audience is strained. Wiles argues that in Plautus "the sense of a festive transgression against morality is enhanced by the fact that a Roman writer is transgressing the rules of Greek comedy" (7). How many in Plautus' audience would have known the rules of Greek comedy?

Some smaller quibbles. I do not see how the introduction of the *ekkyklēma* in *Dyskolos* would allow actors to "come on and off stage without worries about leaving through an appropriate door" (49). Why should we assume that the small theater in Pompeii was "frequented by an educated elite" (55)? Wiles's arguments that the *angiporta* of Plautus and Terence were visible to the audience are not as persuasive as those of Richard C. Beacham (*The Roman Theatre and Its Audience*) which he seeks to refute (56). There were certainly plays of New Comedy (the original of *Captivi*, for example) which did not include all four major genera of masks (77). Wiles refers to the "*mulier in Casina*" as if he has discussed her; he has not (142). Does he mean *Curculio* or *Persa*? Demea is not richer than Micio in Terence's (or presumably Menander's) *Adelphoe* (205). Finally, Wiles's plates are excellent, but they are too few, and several important arguments drawn from visual remains are left without pictorial corroboration. Given the high price of the book, Cambridge University Press could certainly have included more illustrations.

These problems notwithstanding, this is a delightful and valuable book, a "must read" for anyone interested in New and Roman Comedy.

TIMOTHY J. MOORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

SIMON HORNBLOWER. *A Commentary on Thucydides, vol. I: Books I–III*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991 xi + 548 pp.

This new commentary on the whole of Thucydides is extremely welcome. The first volume of A. W. Gomme's *Historical Commentary on Thucydides* was "practically, a 1939 book," though published in 1945 (*HCT* I vi); the last volume was completed by K. J. Dover and A. Andrewes in 1981. Hornblower's commentary does not replace *HCT* so much as update it, using recent studies and approaches. The audience has changed: every Greek lemma is given also in the Jowett translation recently revised by Hornblower; Greek grammar is not usu-