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PETER NICHOLS: *Aristophanes' Novel Forms: The Political Role of Drama*. Minerva Press, London 1998. ISBN-86106-288-5. 258 pp. GBP 7.99.

According to the text on the back cover, this book's aim is to "examine the political influence on drama" by using Aristophanic comedies. This somewhat ambiguous expression becomes clearer only when the author reveals the premise of his study rather late in the introduction: Aristophanes should be treated like a serious thinker who wished to present a coherent view of poetry and philosophy and of their influence on the political life of the Athenian city-state. Nichols says that Aristophanes makes this evident by bringing poets and philosophers as citizens on stage. Aristophanes also wants to show how drama could improve and help the polis in a difficult period.

In the introduction, N. also deals on general level with questions such as "what is art?", "why is art?" and if it can be politics (he should, I think, also ask "what is politics?"). He analyses briefly, e.g., Rousseau's and Nietzsche's views about the meaning and function of art and touches upon questions of the status of drama in the contemporary USA. After the general introduction, N. moves on to discuss in detail three plays of *Aristophanes*, the *Acharnians*, the *Thesmophoriazousai* and the *Frogs*. The choice of the comedies is said to have been made mainly on the basis of the characters: in these plays Aristophanes puts his colleagues in tragedy, Euripides, Agathon and Aeschylus on stage, and is, on some level, represented himself, too. In these plays, consequently, one can detect Aristophanes' ideas about the role of drama as an edifying instrument in the society.

N. goes through the plays (he handles the comedies faithfully, following the plots), highlighting points which he thinks emphasise Aristophanes' theory of the poetic influence on political questions. The *Acharnians* is, of course, about peace, which is achieved only after introducing an Euripidean beggar-character to mollify the veterans of Salamis. After trying to influence in traditional ways in vain, the main character must take over the duties of a just city, as his name Dicaeopolis suggests.

In the *Thesmophoriazousai*, N. concentrates on the characters of the tragedian Agathon as well as that of the protagonist Euripides, who is facing the sentence pronounced on him by the angry women of Athens. The conclusions drawn concerning this play (which, according to the author, is usually not considered a political one) seem to be that Euripides has shaken the grounds of Athenian society by making men more concerned with domestic matters and therefore perhaps leading them away from the "grand ambition". He has also made the Athenian man more "womanish" by questioning the traditional religion. Thus he, unlike Aristophanes, who also makes fun of the gods, makes people fear, which has, of course, social consequences.

In analysing the *Acharnians* and the *Thesmophoriazousai*, N. repeatedly asks whether Aristophanes himself is questioning the usefulness of comedy and Euripides'

kind of drama to assist the polis through rough times:"...what it would mean under circumstances in which the city's survival depended upon warlike heroism, upon manliness in the traditional sense." (pp. 120–21). In the *Frogs*, it becomes clear that this is not the case, but instead the society needs quite traditional values, as presented by Aeschylus. Euripides, who was an indispensable help for Dicaeopolis in the *Acharnians*, and who manages to save himself in the *Thesmophoriazousai* loses out to Aeschylus, who upholds martial heroism. And this is the case, although Aristophanes himself is shown closer to Euripides than Aeschylus, as N. states in the conclusion of his study.

In the concluding chapters, N. compares the Platonic Socrates and criticism of poetry with Aristophanes (rather strangely, since the *Clouds* is excluded from the previous discussion), and he decides that Aristophanes anticipates the Platonic criticisms. The role of drama is not to teach actual means of ruling but to point out the correct guidelines to a just and righteous goal.

The ideas and views in this book are sometimes refreshing and interesting – I especially liked the treatment of the *Acharnians* with the discussion of the justice and justification of democracy and the pondering of the meaning of the frogs in the *Frogs*. On the other hand I found the book very difficult to read and some of the conclusions remain rather obscure and, frankly, unoriginal (but then, everybody knows, how difficult it is to say something genuinely "novel" about ancient literature).

Another problem is that, after reading the book twice, it remained unclear to me, what really was the focus of the study. I think it is self-evident that Aristophanes also depended on tragedy and that he had a political agenda, so it is not difficult to become convinced of the results of the study. But then again, it must be stated that the author is a scholar of political science, which makes his approach somewhat divergent from that of a philologist.

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M. TULLIUS CICERO: *Scripta quae manserunt omnia*. Fasc. 17. *Orationes in L. Catilinam quattuor*. Recensuit T. MASLOWSKI. Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana. In aedibus K.G. Saur, Monachi et Lipsiae 2003. ISBN 3-598-71187-5. lxvi, 108 pp. EUR 68.

Those interested in the speeches of Cicero will be pleased to note the appearance, in 2003, of this new *BT* volume of Cicero's *Catilinarians*, edited by T. Maslowski, a distinguished Ciceronian scholar. Those who have had to absorb this specimen of Cicero's rhetoric at school and thought they would never care to return to these particular speeches might well use this occasion to renew their acquaintance with them. To be truthful, I do not think Cicero is quite at his best in these speeches (and there are perhaps a bit too many instances of expressions of the type of *furor* and *pestis*), but certainly the *Catilinarians* offer much of interest (note, e.g., the fact that we have here speeches delivered both in the senate and to the people).

At the beginning, there is a thorough and informative *Praefatio* (p. v–liv). Of his more recent predecessors, Maslowski mentions only Nohl, Clark and Reis. Clark's *OCT*