

688). Occasionally, this causes metrical irregularities (e.g., in *Frogs* 1335a) which — as they remain unexplained — may irritate some of us.

*Erkki Sironen*

*The Comedies of Aristophanes*. Vol. 9: *Frogs*, Vol. 11: *Wealth*. Edited with translation and notes by A. H. SOMMERSTEIN. Aris and Phillips Classical Texts, Warminster 1996, 2001. ISBN 0-85668-648-4. 312 pp. GBP 17.50 (Vol. 9, pb), ISBN 0-85668-739-1. 336 pp. GBP 17.50 (Vol. 11, pb).

Congratulations are due to Prof. Alan H. Sommerstein for having completed his 23 years long and conscientious labor of composing a full series of Aristophanes' comedies with introductions, texts and translations furnished with readable modern commentaries.

Both volumes under review here include a very handy list of references and abbreviations followed by a sensible introduction that elucidates the historical and cultural context. In the *Wealth* volume, the introduction has been further clarified by its eight subchapters; this would certainly have benefited the *Frogs* volume, also. A note on the text and a select bibliography are followed by the Greek text and English translation plus commentary. I find the note on the text with its sigla and other symbols explained, as well as the (reasonably selective) bibliography, very useful for both the beginning and the more advanced student.

In Sommerstein's hands, the textual form of the plays has progressed considerably: there are dozens of changes for the better. Instead of manuscript readings, Sommerstein quite often prefers the readings of earlier scholars: there are 77 examples of this in the *Frogs* and 40 in the *Wealth* (in *Wealth*, verses 98, 119–120, 171, 196, 216, 227, 271, 287, 293, 300, 368, 374, 391, 476, 499, 505, 514, 524, 537, 546, 547, 596, 598, 641, 677, 701, 792, 805a, 859, 870, 917, 946, 979, 1027, 1030, 1078, 1095, 1120, 1170, and 1173); because the critical apparatus is selective, a fuller account of manuscript readings must be retrieved from Coulon's old, but still acclaimed, edition in series *Collection Budé*. There are some mistakes in Sommerstein's Greek text, not only in the breathings and accents (e.g., in the *Frogs*, verses 215, 272, 366, 483, 492, 501 (twice), 518, 519, 581, 684, 699, 736, 749, 1187, 1198, 1469, and 1523; in the *Wealth*, verses 17, 367, 434, 447, 535, 543 (twice), 564, 637, 641, 678, 687, 706, 781, 881, and 1096).

Certainly numerous approaches to translating Aristophanes have been used during the past centuries, but this one is basically accurate, although also occasionally free (in such cases the literal translation is given in the commentary). The cues for the fast changing dialogue situations and staging, added in brackets, do help a lot. The spacious commentary, weighing various views argued by different scholars, testifies to Sommerstein's learning and humility — he confesses several times that he was wrong in his earlier publications. While giving a course on Aristophanes' *Wealth* this past autumn, I found the commentary excellent in many respects, but occasionally more comments on the language would have been useful: e.g., πλὴν with the nominative κολοσυρτόν in verses 535–536 raised questions from my students.

An extra bonus in the *Wealth* volume is the *Addenda* to all the previous 10

volumes, altogether more than 100 pages. The absence of an index is now amended by the fresh *Index* volume, published in 2002.

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PLAUTUS: *Amphitruo*. Edited by DAVID M. CHRISTENSON. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000. ISBN 0-521-45401-8 (hb); 0-521-45997-4 (pb). 339 pp. GBP 50 (hb), GBP 18.99 (pb).

It is pretty generally agreed that the *Amphitruo* is one of the funniest of Plautus' plays. Accordingly, one is pleased to observe the *Amphitruo* being added to the volumes of the useful Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics Series. This book, a revised version of the author's dissertation (p. ix), has been fairly well received, and I have found it both useful and instructive, especially as far as the commentary goes. However, it must be admitted that there are parts which seem less impressive. This also seems to be the bottom line of other reviews of this book; and speaking of reviews, this book may well be remembered for having provoked one of the weirdest reviews in the history of scholarly reviewing, that of C. Questa (the well-known authority on Plautine metre) in *RFIC* 129 (2001) 91-99. This review must be read to be believed; note, e.g., the reference (perhaps not really needed) to Jesse James, an American outlaw of the 19th century, on p. 94, the description of a well-known modern scholar as *merobibus multibibus multiloquus* on the same page and that of two well-known female scholars as "garrule" (and of their work as "titoli amatoriali") on p. 93. One also wonders about the way the author of the book reviewed here is spoken of on p. 96, only the first name being used. – In any case, the *genre* of a scholarly commentary is an extremely difficult one, and as there is normally enormous variation in the range of potential users, of whom it is practically impossible to please everyone, one should not wonder too much if reviewers find a passage or two with which they are unhappy.

The book begins pretty much as one would expect it to begin. There are chapters on Plautus himself, on Roman comedy in general, on the *Amphitruo* ("The play's the thing", p. 13-45, with sections on "Theme, structure, and movement", "Performance", and on "Reception and reaction"), on its background and sources (no firm views being taken, understandably), on metre, on the "Rezeption" of the play, and on the transmission of the text. I rather liked the chapter on the play itself, with an emphasis on the importance of interpreting the *Amphitruo* as a play (and not as a literary product in general), and thought that the other chapters, too, were more or less useful and informative, especially if used by the uninitiated as introductions to their respective topics. However, in the (first) chapter on Plautus himself, I wondered about some things, for instance about what is said in n. 5, but especially about the passage on Plautus' name (p. 1). It may well be that, in Plautine studies, the nomenclature 'T. Maccius Plautus' is regarded as "implausible", but this is misguided. In Rome in Plautus' period, one gets one's gentile name either by being born to a father with the same name or by being manumitted by someone, again a person with the same name. Thus Plautus can have become 'Maccius' either as the son or as the freedman of another Maccius, and it is in no