Μελίνα Ταμιωλακη (επιμ.), *Κωμικός Στέφανος. Νέες τάσεις στην έρευνα της αρχαίας ελληνικής κωμωδίας*. Ρέθυμνο: Εκδόσεις της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης, 2014, σσ. 179

(Melina Tamiolaki (ed.), *Κωμικός Στέφανος. Νέες τάσεις στην έρευνα της αρχαίας ελληνικής κωμωδίας*. Rethymno 2014, pp. 179)

Agis Marinis

Κωμικος στέφανος is a handy volume including eight essays on Greek Comedy, written by distinguished scholars. Their topics relate to various issues during the long period of development of the genre, from Old to New Comedy, while the last two contributions deal with the reception of Greek Comedy during the Imperial era and Late Antiquity. All eight chapters are in Modern Greek, either originally written in this language or subsequently translated into it. A clarification is in order here: this volume is neither meant to be a comprehensive survey of Greek Comedy nor to supply a sort of introduction to the genre. The papers, the great majority of which stem from a day conference held in February 2011 at the University of Crete, in Rethymnon, represent – as the subtitle makes clear – recent developments in the study of Greek Comedy. The broadness of their thematic ambit surely varies, yet all are well-focused in-depth studies, offering inroads in an up-to-date approach to the comic genre.

The volume opens with an introduction by the editor, Melina Tamiolaki; it is followed by the first essay, written by Emmanuela Bakola, which deals with Cratinus and, particularly, his comedy *Ploutoi* (*Wealths*). Bakola focuses on the theme of human acquisition of wealth and the concept of δίκη in the play, perceiving distinct allusions to Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. She detects similar allusions with regard to the issue of man's relation with the wealth offered by the Earth, as well as the kindred theme of the connection between wealth and the chthonian powers.[1]

[1] I would like to express here my reservations as regards a specific point. The author, referring to the 'red carpet' on which Agammenon treads in the homonymous play, appears to be effectively identifying it with the robe in which he is entrapped by Clytemestra in order to be murdered. Characteristically: "Το πορφυρό ύφασμα,

Nikoletta Kanavou studies the use of 'political myth' in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* and *Birds*. By 'political myth' she refers to a new interpretation of or elaboration on traditional mythological material, which is thus invested with political meaning by the comic poet. First, she deals with *Acharnians*, connecting the comic passage about the kidnapping of the *hetaerae* with the legendary abduction of Helen and the relevant stories recorded by Herodotus at the beginning of the *Histories*. She further discusses *Birds*, focusing on the use of genealogy, while also discerning in Peisetairos' gathering of the disparate fowl into a single city an allusion to Theseus and the synoecism of Attica.[2]

The third contribution, by Michael Paschalis, focuses on the passage of Aristophanes' *Frogs* (1039-1056) in which Aeschylus accuses Euripides of having presented onstage (women like) Phaedra and Stheneboia. Paschalis concentrates on the expression οὐκ ὄντα λόγον and considers it in parallel with the passage 1453b22-26 from Aristotle's *Poetics* (14), which refers to the potential amendment of existing mythical stories (τοὺς παρειλημμένους μύθους) by the tragic poet. Aristotle may indeed have had in mind the two versions of Euripides' *Hippolytus*

σύμβολο του πλούτου και του χυμένου ανθρώπινου αίματος, και, σύμφωνα με την παραπάνω ανάλυση, του 'άδικου πλούτου', απεικονίζεται ταυτόχρονα και ως το συμβολικό όργανο της τιμωρίας των Ερινύων." It is worth noting that this identification is only allusively expressed in the previously published English version of the paper (in *Greek Comedy and the Discourse of Genres*, edited by E. Bakola, L. Prauscello and M. Telò, Cambridge 2013, 226-255: 243-244). In any case, it is important to keep in mind that a *scenic* identification of the two items is merely a possibility, with no concrete evidence to support it (see O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, Oxford 1977, 314-315). This is not to deny, of course, the verbal parallels, as well as the indefiniteness in the description of both items, which makes the cloth trap recall the red cloth: see Taplin, ibid.; also A.F. Garvie, *Aeschylus Choephori*, Oxford 1986, 332-333 (with further references); P. Judet de la Combe, *L'*Agamemnon *d'Eschyle: Commentaire des dialogues*, Paris 2001, 326-327; also B. Goward, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon*, London 2005, 33-35.

[2] Concerning the suggested parallelism with Theseus, which is considered as υποβλητικός ('evocative'; p. 57), I feel that the discussion is incomplete. Namely, exactly because an allusion to Theseus would entail distinctly positive connotations for an Athenian audience, one would expect a consideration of the issue whether *Birds* may actually be read as a *positive* utopia and, additionally, whether the construal of Peisetairos as a 'comic Theseus' is indeed dependent on an optimistic interpretation of the play. In this regard, reference to key relevant bibliography would be expected; in particular, to the chapters on *Birds* in the volume *The City as Comedy. Society and Representation in Athenian Drama* (edited by G. Dobrov, Chapel Hill 1997), as well as to A.H. Sommerstein's study, "Nephelokokkygia and Gynaikopolis: Aristophanes' Dream Cities" (*The Imaginary Polis*, edited by M.H. Hansen, Copenhagen 2005, 73-99).

when he wrote that passage, whereas Aristophanes does not even allude to the existence of the second *Hippolytus*: a possible reason could be that he does not want to extenuate Euripides' 'lapse'.

In the next chapter, Ioannis Konstantakos offers a stimulating and wide-ranging account of mythological burlesque as a hallmark of fourth century comedy, also involving a succinct reference to much earlier parallels from Near Eastern narrative traditions. The chapter, while centring on a number of representative examples, simultaneously offers a wealth of information on the topic in general, combined with a rich bibliography. What Konstantakos particularly emphasizes is how the mythical and supernatural element is brought down to everyday, indeed lowly conditions and surroundings; furthermore, how it may be comically subjected to unanticipated distortions or, most characteristically, to literalizing interpretations.

Kostas Apostolakis concentrates on a different, rather unexpected moment in fourth century comedy: he specifically deals with the comic poet Timocles, who, despite the general trend of the era, emerges as Aristophanic to the extent that he engages in large-scale political satire. Targets of his humour are rhetors/politicians, notably of the anti-Macedonian faction. What indeed seems ironic, as the author underlines, is the fact that political satire on the comic stage, which largely targets the proponents of Athenian sovereignty, will come to an end with the establishment of Macedonian power and, hence, the eclipse of democracy. Timocles' own play *Philodikastai* (*Those who love being judges*) attests to that shift.

The next contribution, by Antonis Petrides, focuses on ὄψις and intertextuality in Menander. He deals specifically with the use of the mask, which – in a genre broadly characterized by representational realism – acquires not merely iconic or indexical, but effectively symbolic quality, alluding, via its recurring, standardized characteristics, to passions, situations and models of life. Yet, what Petrides shows is that physiognomies, as evoked by the masks, may or may not be reflected in behaviour 'expected' by the audience; iconic clues may or may not align with the verbal signs of the play. Potential incongruities of this kind, which may be coupled with intertextual references to tragedy, create a theatrical momentum peculiar to New Comedy.

Richard Hunter, in the next chapter, deals with the place of Attic Comedy in the rhetorical and moralising tradition of later centuries. Menander, who is considered to be following in the footsteps of Eu-

ripides, is regarded as a master of characterisation and is praised for the incorporation of rhetoric in his plays. Also, most importantly, for his inclusion of gnomic wisdom and his avoidance of coarse humour – a point stressed by Plutarch. On the other hand, Aristophanes is acclaimed for the "purity" of his Attic idiom, for instance by Quintilian and the Atticist lexicographer Phrynichus: a preference which may actually be regarded as a key reason for the survival of his work, as opposed to that of Menander.

It is exactly on Aristophanes' reception in Roman and Byzantine times that Nikos Litinas' contribution focuses: through a study of Egyptian papyri of that period, Litinas reveals the particular interest with which Aristophanes' plays were read, especially at the second century BC and the early Byzantine period. The chapter is based on meticulous study, accompanied by chronologically-arranged tables with the finds. The author does not merely delineate broad trends, but also engages in a 'micro-historical' and 'narrative' approach, which bears fruitful results as regards the decipherment of reading trends: for instance, one may conclude, through the study of papyri and *ostraka*, that specific comedies enjoyed particular popularity in specific social or educational contexts.

In sum, *Κωμικός στέφανος* is a volume featuring an array of important scholarly contributions, which offer valuable insights into the comic genre. Most importantly, they shed light on lesser known aspects of Greek comedy, providing thus the impetus for further exploration of less-trodden paths of research. Finally, the fact that the volume is in Modern Greek renders it particularly useful to students in Greek universities, who thus gain ready access to more recent trends of research on ancient comedy.[3]

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[3] Especially as regards the topic of the Hellenistic and Late Antique reception of ancient comedy *Κωμικός στέφανος* offers an important addition to bibliography in Greek.