of sympotic practices. But perhaps the real strength of the book is that it lays a foundation for more adventurous work in theory and interpretation.

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THE STAGECRAFT OF ARISTOPHANES

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The author acknowledges that this book belongs to the ‘school of Taplin’, the tradition of classical scholars discussing aspects of the performance of Greek tragedy and comedy inaugurated by Oliver Taplin’s pioneering The Stagecraft of Aeschylus (Oxford, 1977). There is a generous acknowledgment of Taplin’s guidance in the Preface, and a figure who looks suspiciously like Oliver himself presides as Socrates on high over the proceedings on the rather quirky jacket illustration.

This is a far more substantial volume than most of the monographs that have appeared in the ‘school of Taplin’. The author is very widely read, his conclusions are built on impressive documentation, and the choice of illustrations and the analysis of the iconography are both exemplary. But this work suffers from the same fundamental limitation as Taplin’s own two books on stagecraft. R. thanks several classical scholars for their wise advice in the Preface, and classicists’ publications fill the Bibliography, but there are no references to the work of the scholar-practitioners who have brought to Greek drama both a classical background and actual experience in the discipline of drama, using practice-as-research in the workshop and the rehearsal room to discover how Athenian drama might have worked, and might be made to work, in performance; among them Graham Ley, Gregory McCart, Rush Rehm, J. Michael Walton, and the author of this review. Admittedly most of this work has been on tragedy; but our methodologies are very relevant to R.’s topic.

As a result this book is at its best when it is not dealing with Aristophanes in performance: in Chapter 3, which deals with the questions ‘How authentic is the transmitted performance script in view of re-performances?’ and ‘How typical of the genre is Aristophanic comedy?’ (cf. Appendix 1 on Aristophanes’ rivals). Also very valuable are the discussion of shifting audience perspectives in Peace (pp. 172–5), and that at pp. 236ff. of Lysistrata’s name, which rightly concludes that she is not to be identified with the priestess of Athena Polias, Lysimach.

Where the book discusses dramatic technique, the absence of practical experience limits the effectiveness of its argument. To take two examples, R. claims on p. 42 that eyewitness accounts (e.g. messenger speeches) ‘replace visible action’. There is no recognition here that a messenger speech (like, for example, the narrative of Haemon’s death in Antigone) is itself a performance, in which the actor must use his voice and body to make real for the audience both the location of the narrated action and the action itself, also impersonating as required the voices of the principal characters whose sufferings or good fortune he narrates. On p. 151 Euripides is supposed to have doubled the part of Echo in Thesmophoriazusae; despite a desperate and implausible

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defence by Austin and Olson in their Oxford edition, there is no way this could have happened, as there is insufficient time for a single actor to leave as Echo on the ground, change back and enter on the méchanê as Euripides/Perseus one line after Echo has left. In general, however, R. is at his best (like Taplin) when dealing with exits and entrances (pp. 132ff.; cf. the very fine suggestion about Poverty’s entrance in Wealth at pp. 283–4).

In the specific chapters on the staging issues of three selected plays (Clouds, Lysistrata, Wealth) the suggestions are not always as impressive. I shall draw my examples from Lysistrata, which I have directed twice. Take first p. 241, n. 14: few practitioners would feel that lines 1108-11 (which are normally, and in my view rightly, allocated to a solo female chorus member) could ‘perhaps more attractively’ be spoken by one old man and one old woman in unison. On p. 244 R. wrongly assumes that an altar at the centre point was a fixed prop. There are certainly some plays and parts of plays (e.g. Thesmophoriazusae and the second half of Frogs) where a central altar is required; but elsewhere the centre point is an essential place of maximum focus for actors to deliver their most important speeches; the altar must have been removable, and preset only when needed for a particular scene or scenes. Pp. 246ff. wrongly assume that the place where Lysistrata first meets Calonice is not in front of the Acropolis but a domestic setting. This is impossible, as at the end of Scene 1 the scene turns out to be very clearly set in front of the Propylaea, and there is no scene change before then. Similarly, Myrrhine’s cock-teasing of Cinesias takes place before the Acropolis doors, not ‘in the grotto of Pan’ (p. 251); that it should is just a passing suggestion by Cinesias at line 911, which Myrrhine does not take up. And finally, performance experience strongly suggests that Reconciliation should exit in haste after line 1174, rather than wait to leave with Lysistrata and the Ambassadors after 1188.

As a performance scholar of tragedy as well as comedy, I would take issue with the assumption (pp. 3 and 108) that tragedy was in general ‘sedate’ and comedy ‘busy’, tragedy a theatre of reflection and comedy one of fluid action. This idea goes back to McLeish’s The Theatre of Aristophanes (1980, p. 48); in my view it is based on a failure to realise just how much movement and action tragedy demands for its effective realisation in an orchêstra. Comedy employs many more props than tragedy, and demands types of comic acting style which are wholly alien to tragedy; but it is no less prone than tragedy to ‘static’ episodes, for example the agônes between Paphlagon and Agoracritus in Knights.

I do not want this review to sound too negative. R. is very well aware (pp. 46–7), as Taplin was not in 1977, that significant action cannot all be reconstructed from the text. His book is intelligently argued and very well written. There are many good things in it, even though the author’s failure to test his conclusions experimentally means that those of us who have been able to do this will disagree with several of his detailed points about stagecraft and its relationship to meaning; issues which no scholar, however gifted, can answer simply by sitting in his or her study. It is well worth reading, and is the only offshoot of the ‘school of Taplin’ that deserves to be placed by serious students of Greek drama on the same valued reference shelf as Taplin’s own two books on stagecraft.

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