



Ghosts, too, are weeds that whisper tales of the many pasts and yet-to-comes that surround us. Considered through ghosts and weeds, worlds have ended many times before. Endings come with the death of a leaf, the death of a city, the death of a friendship, the death of small promises and small stories. The landscapes grown from such endings are our disaster as well as our weedy hope. (p. 6)

I feel deeply grateful to the editors of *Queer Euripides* and to its contributors for this volume that in its reckoning with the failures of Classics is no less full to the brim with ‘weedy hope’. I am trying to imagine the landscapes that will grow from such endings.

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THE DEPICTION OF THE COMIC BODY

PIQUEUX (A.) *The Comic Body in Ancient Greek Theatre and Art, 440–320 BCE*. Pp. xviii + 365, b/w & colour ill. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £90, US\$115. ISBN: 978-0-19-284554-2. doi:10.1017/S0009840X23000562

P.’s examination of the staging and perception of the comic body is a welcome contribution that ties together the growing conversation on fragmentary comedy, especially that from the mid-fourth century BCE, and the established scholarship on the relationship between vase painting and dramatic performance, as exemplified by J.R. Green (*Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* [1994] and a series of articles throughout the 1990s and 2000s), E. Csapo (*Actors and Icons of the Ancient Theater* [2010]) and O. Taplin (*Comic Angels* [1992] and *Pots and Plays* [2007]). Building on Green’s work in particular (although she identifies Taplin’s *Comic Angels* as her starting point, p. 2), P. aims for a thorough account of the many ways in which the body appears on the comic stage or is imagined in comic scripts from Old Comedy to 320 BCE (Menander’s plays are addressed several times as points of comparison, but are not a focal point in the study due to significant changes in costuming and staging post-320). P.’s stated goals are to explore how a character’s identity was constructed through visual cues and how this changed over time with the emergence of clearly marked character types such as the parasite, how the ugliness of the comic body was exploited on stage and, finally, how visual aspects of costume related to speech in performance (p. 6).

The book opens with an account of how vase painting from Attica, South Italy and Sicily depicts comedy, with an eye to audience perception of dramatic performance and the ways in which vase painting adopted comic imagery for its own purposes (what P. calls a ‘fiction’ to distinguish this from those vases that document real performances, p. 72). This section establishes the cautious delineation of geography and chronology that characterises the book, beginning with Attic vases and separating Lucanian and Apulian vases from their Paestan and Siceliot counterparts while tracing connections between images from those areas to Attic comedy. The following chapter looks at the development of comic costuming across all those geographical areas, noting changes in masks, padding, stage nudity and the inclusion of the phallus in comic costume, arguing for a generic link to ‘visible artificiality’ that lends an air of ‘innocuousness’ to spectacle

on the comic stage (p. 130). The discussion of grotesquery and exoticism is an important inclusion that would have benefited from a more cautious approach to its description of characters identified as African.

The same criticism about careful use of language applies to P.'s third chapter on the ways in which generic expectations and gender identity are expressed through costume. P. prefers the term 'sexual identity' and 'sexuality' in the discussion of femininity and virility onstage, which muddles the discussion when she moves on to characters that cross-dress (e.g. the kinsman in *Thesmo.*) or are perceived as effeminate. The extended treatment of Dionysus as Heracles in *Frogs* in this chapter provides a convenient case study for exploring how costume and staging interact to encode gender and how such codes could be exploited for metatheatrical laughs.

The strongest chapter is P.'s investigation of how costume is used to depict social and moral characterisation. Here she traces details such as colour in costumes and the use of cloaks and walking sticks to assert that clothing and the comic body (i.e. the mask and padded body suit as worn by an actor) worked together to identify characters, either through their harmonious combination (Demos' appearance at the end of *Knights*) or their intentional contrast (Philocleon as dressed by Bdelycleon in *Wasps*, p. 199). P.'s examination of the visual evidence for masks from Old and Middle Comedy in this chapter is a welcome revisiting of T.B.L. Webster's list (with the influence of Pollux on that work noted, p. 201), which chronicles the many details that were incorporated in comic masks over the fourth century BCE while acknowledging the role of the script in guiding the audience's response to the comic face.

P.'s final chapter takes on the comic body in motion, which is the most challenging aspect of P.'s argument, given the difficulty in establishing the hierarchy of visual and verbal signs on stage and the way in which this dynamic can change from scene to scene. The sections on posture and gait fit well into P.'s over-arching argument about shifts in physical and visual characterisation around the 360s BCE that increasingly identify characters like parasites and elderly *hetairai* as ridiculous. Gesture is a more difficult needle to thread, and the examples that P. employs to explore the relationship of gesture to word do not shed much new light on the issue, relying heavily on already well-explored scenes from Aristophanes. Intriguing ideas like the inscription of words onto images like that on the New York Goose Play Vase mirroring or enhancing the gestures they depict (p. 267) merit more exploration than they receive here. Connecting visual aspects of performance to speech is in fact the onerous task set out for anyone writing about ancient drama, going all the way back to Wilamowitz (cf. P. at p. 263): how much stage business can be extracted from the text and what can be inferred from iconographic evidence?

With its comprehensive examination of text and visual evidence, P.'s book may find some of its best use as a reference work, especially with regard to the many vases collected here, documented in detail with cross-references to helpful bibliography in an appendix to the volume. The reproductions are of high quality; having all these images in a single volume is a boon to those with interest in the visual legacy of comedy, and especially comedy in South Italy and Sicily. At times the internal arrangement of the chapters can be quizzical (e.g. a discussion of gods on stage in the chapter on depiction of gender, p. 175), but this can be attributed to the wide variety of sources required for a project such as this one and the breadth of P.'s approach. P.'s choice not to include accompanying Greek text for roughly one third of the quotations used is confusing; I was unable to find a note that addressed this choice (these are typically excerpts from Aristophanes although this choice is not consistent; accompanying Greek does appear with the other two thirds of passages and key Greek words are included in parentheses where the full passage does not appear in Greek).

Nevertheless, P.'s investigation into the comic body in both image and word, in offering such detailed work on the chronology of developments in its depiction, provides the material for many further investigations, especially on comedy in South Italy and Sicily, as P. concludes (p. 297). P.'s exhaustive approach to iconographic evidence and attention to fragments means that she makes many smaller arguments on character-types, the use of the phallus etc. that may not all be individually convincing, but her overall thesis of significant changes in characterisation via the body that took place around 360 BCE is well proven, if not terribly surprising. This book is a desirable continuation of the conversation from the work of Green and Taplin on the visual record and dramatic performance, and similarly one can imagine further refinements being drawn from P.'s work.

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HISTORICAL CAUSATION IN THUCYDIDES

JOHO (T.) *Style and Necessity in Thucydides*. Pp. xiv + 354. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £90, US\$115. ISBN: 978-0-19-881204-3.

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The question of historical causation, and how ancient historians envisioned it, is complex. Observers of modern wars often search for a single precipitating cause, but have been at a loss to explain fully, for example, the outbreak of World War I or the US invasion of Iraq. Ancient Greek thinking was generally more comfortable with the idea of multiple causation. In mythological and literary tales, fate, the gods and human action comfortably cooperate and coincide to bring about events such as the fall of Troy. Even Herodotus' position that fate and human *hybris* could simultaneously trigger disaster has not troubled most readers. But Thucydides, regarded by many as the forefather of political science, is sometimes seen as depicting historical processes in a more 'rational' light, often partially or wholly mechanistic, for example in the guise of the 'Thucydides Trap'.

J.'s volume is an admirable correction of this tendency, offering a sensitive reading of causation, control and historical processes in the *History*. The book brings together various Thucydidean disciplines that are often relegated to separate siloes: because it works closely with Thucydides' language to establish a reading of the text providing insight into how the historian explained complex political and historical processes, it will be of interest to political scientists and historians as well as scholars with more literary interests.

Chapters 1 and 2 take their starting point from Dionysius of Halicarnassus' critique of Thucydides' language. Narrative portions of the text – what J. deems 'plain style' – normally use typical Greek constructions. Sections in 'abstract style', on the other hand, depart considerably from what a reader such as Dionysius expects – or, on occasion, wishes. Especially in his most significant analytical and editorialising passages, such as the passage on *stasis* following the Corcyraean civil war (3.82–3), the historian often represents the idea of action with a noun when it would normally be expressed by combining a human actor in the nominative with a finite verb. He accordingly uses many articular infinitives and nominal phrases rather than verbs, especially to indicate emotional states, qualities