

This commentary offers us an attractive attempt at reading the text of Plautus’ famous (Middle comedy?) mythological burlesque as one written for the stage, and indeed «for a particular theatre and audience» (ix). Students of classical drama will find it worthwhile to have the essential information regarding Roman thea-
rical experience at the time of Plautus assembled and applied to a specific dramatic context, and C.’s sound, detailed literary account of Amphitruo’s plot and characters should arouse their interest in numerous questions of dramatic technique, especially those concerning meta-theatrical modes of expression, dramatic irony, character typology and generic composition in general.

On the social, legal, mythological and religious aspects of the play C. makes many sensible remarks, showing them to be a powerful source of comedy and farce as well as to provide an important key to our understanding of Plautus’ originality vis-à-vis his Greek predecessors. The same applies to C.’s general treatment of tropes, idiomatic usages and style. His occasional demonstration at places of the ways in which Plautus’ Amphitruo can be claimed to reflect the stereotyped plots and characters of New Comedy should prove valuable for students of classical drama and comparative literature in general. C. is also well aware of the need to familiarize the reader with the literary background of the Amphitruo plot in its entire complexity; hence reference is made to pertinent material derived from Epic poetry, Myth and Tragedy, which, combined with C.’s useful account of later treatments of the play’s theme, is likely to provide a convenient starting point for comparison and contrast. Above all, C.’s essentially light, humoristic approach to the plot and its characters (note in particular his excellent account of the much debated ambiguous figure of the pregnant Alcmena – a loyal wife and unconscious adulterer at one and the same time) has put into their proper perspective previous scholarly attempts at presenting the mythological burlesque unfolding before us in an unnecessarily serious, distinctly moralistic, light.

From the point of view of textual criticism, however, C.’s contribution is significantly modest and generally remains on too superficial a level to allow any appreciation of his critical criteria and methodology.

Consider, for instance, the following introductory comment: «This edition follows the general consensus of the MSS, even when this presents seemingly irrational readings, such as assimilated and unassimilated forms in close proximity. Orthography was in a highly fluid state in Plautus’ day, and it is not unlikely that he is responsible for some of these contradictions himself» (76). Again, «This editor takes a middle course regarding the systematic substitution of archaic or modernized spellings: always servos and not servus; -e- is universally adopted for -e- in vester and verto (and its compounds and derivatives); and superlatives in -imus are written -umus» (77). No clear pattern can be shown to emerge from C.’s own chosen editorial ‘middle course’. Rather, his newly modified text of Amphitruo is evidently marked by inconsistency, let alone carelessness. Suffice it to say that where the ‘modernization’ of the archaic forms is concerned, we are often confronted with a ‘mixed’, hard-to-explain mode of operation: in some cases, the particular archaic form is replaced by a modernized one; in others, it is left untouched for no apparent reason. As an illustration see, Am. 197: cum illo advenero; 249: cum pugnatum est pater; 447: sed quom cogito; 627: quem illum noxes servom Sosiam; 983: mibi cum sacrificium; 1071: quem perepsit; 346: cuius est aut quid veneris?; 371: quius nunc esti; 378: cuius esti; 589: quius ego bodie in tergum faxo ista expetant mendacia.

The following reservations in relation to specific points in C.’s commentary are not meant to detract from the general literary value of this book:

**Introduction:** On p. 3, C.’s claim that «Cas. and Am. are strikingly similar sex farces» is surely an exaggeration; on p. 5, in listing New Comedy stock-characters C. has regrettably omitted mentioning of the mercenary soldier (braggart or otherwise); on pp. 8–12: C.’s
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bibliography on the much-debated question of the relation between Roman comedy and Italian pre-literary drama needs to be updated. Numerous recent attempts have been made to deal with this question, notably at Freiburg, through the combined efforts of Eckard Lefèvre and his pupils and colleagues (e.g. ScriptOralia 11, 25, 47, 74, 75, 83); on p. 16, exploitation of linguistic doublets of various types (i.e. repetition, polyptoton, juxtaposition of semantically analogous words, etymological word-play reiterated in close proximity etc.) forms an integral part of Plautine aberius sermonis. Therefore C.’s presentation of Mercury’s frequent employment of this device in the prologue ‘As part of the process of inducting the audience into the world of the doubles-comedy’ has no real basis in the text; on p. 31, in Plaut. Capt. III.4; Men. 510ff, 731ff and esp. V. 2–5, V 7, V 9 (pasim), accusations of madness and desperate claims to sanity are likewise elaborated to the extreme. Faked madness is an important dramatic device in Plaut. Casina and Mercator; on p. 31, the possibility that in this play Plautus ‘may have recast a tragedy directly, whether Euripides’ Bacchae or some other tragic script (or performance) to which he had access’ is a matter of pure speculation; on p. 131–2, (on the issue of captatio benevolentiae) I miss reference to the prologue speech of Plautus’ Poenulus; on p. 59–61: in his presentation of ‘(c) Podic schemes of common meters’ C. tends to ignore, quite unjustifiably, the significant role played by resolution in Plautine prosody; on p. 70, line 10 from top: originally instead of originally; on p. 77–80: the exclusion of Ernout’s edition from the tabulated ‘Differences in the Text’ calls for criticism in the light of C.’s introductory statement to the effect that ‘This editor has most closely consulted the editions of Leo, Lindsay and Ernout’ (76).

Commentary: On 83n: I see no reason to regard sibi as monosyllabic here; on 97–8n: cf. Men. Dysk. 1–7, 23–5; on 104–6n: Danae instead of Danaë; on 107–9n: C.’s attempt at reading the lines as indicative of ‘at least one earlier visitation’ on Jupiter’s part is evidently misguided. Indeed, nothing in this passage compels us to believe that Plautus may be broadening the sexual farce; on 134n: (juxtaposition of lovers) cf. Plaut. Capt. 93; Most. 204–5; on 148–50n: one of the most striking examples in New Comedy (notably omitted from C.’s own selective list of references) of a divine prologue ending with an intimation of the play’s outcome is Men. Perik. 163–70 (Tyche’s concluding words); on 153–74n: for criticism of Fraenkel’s theory concerning hyperbolic mythological comparisons in Plautus, see: N. Zagagi ‘Tradition and Originality in Plautus: Studies of the Amatory Motifs in Plautine Comedy’ (Hypomnemata 62; Gottingen); on 197–202n: for meta-theatre in Menander, involving an elaboration of a scheme under the guidance of a servus callidus in his role as a ‘stage director’, see Asp. 320–390, 399ff; see also Dysk. 361ff; Ter. Eun. 361ff; on 203, 226n: an interesting parallel to Sosia’s battle-narrative is found in Daos’ interrupted speech in Men. Asp. 23–92; on 232n: (frangunt) ‘The apparently intransitive usage is unparalleled’. C. is obviously wrong in assuming an intransitive usage of frangere here; the transitive usage in plural is best interpreted as constructio ad sensum simply exploited for the sake of variatio; on 321n: for the figurative use of olet and obola, cf. Plaut. Men. 170–171, 384; on 376n: (pro fidem, Thebani cives) ‘Sosia bombastically pleads for protection that normally would be afforded only to free citizens’. But see Gomme-Sandbach, ‘Menander: A Commentary’ (Oxford 1973) n. ad Men. Sam. 577: ‘The law against hybris, roughly speaking assault, gave equal protection to men and women, to free and slave (Dem. XXI. 47)’. It is regrettable that no attempt has been made by C. to enlighten the reader on the probable Greek legal background to Sosia’s standard behaviour in this scene. For bibliography on the Greek popular practice of summoning bystanders to witness wrongful treatment – ‘Not- und Hilsrufe’ – to use Schulze’s terminology, see Zagagi, ‘The Comedy of Menander: Convention, Variation & Originality’ (1994) 192, 128n; on 366n: one could have wished for a more updated bibliography on the Greek institution of the συστίατης (συστίατης (Plautus). See most recently, N. Dunbar, ‘Aristophanes: Birds’ (Oxford 1995; paperback 1997) 673–688; on 346–50n: C.’s limited illustration of the comic lover’s traditional address to the Night (Plaut. Merc. 38f) may be significantly expanded by the following comic parallels derived directly from Greek New Comedy: [Men] Pap. Antinoop. 15. 4; Men. Mts. A1–A14. See Sisti’s edition of Misoumenos (Genova, 1986); on
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735n: C.’s attempt at reading erotic connotations into Plautus’ repeated use of the syllable
ca here and in 132–39 is highly subjective and on the whole unconvincing; on 819n: nos-instead
of non; on 931n: ‘In P.’s topsy-turvy world ... father and son may even become rivals
for the same woman (e.g. Mer.).’ It is important to remember that the plot of Plautus’
Mercator has its origins in Philemon’s Emporos; on 1099–14n: Ter. Enn., 292ff is yet another
example worth quoting from New Comedy in illustration of the familiar entrance
pattern involving description of a ‘wild-goose chase’ throughout the city; on 1022n: it
would have been appropriate to point out the striking frequency of such knocking-scenes
in Attic comedy as well as in its Latin adaptations. A useful discussion of the relevant ma-
terial from Menander, Plautus and Terence is found in P. G. McC. Brown, PLLS 8, 1999,
71–89. For Old Comedy, see Aristoph. Ra. 31ff, 460ff; Achar. 493ff, 1071–2; Eq. 723ff; Nub.
132ff; Av. 533ff, 92–4; Eccl. 960ff; Plut. 1097ff. Door-knocking presumably takes place also
in Achar. 174ff; Nub. 866ff; Lys. 1216ff; Pax 179ff. In Vesp. 132ff and possibly also in
Thesm. 65ff, the traditional pattern of the knocking-scene has been reversed. Such
scenes are not unheard-of in tragedy: see esp. Aesch. Cho. 653–69; Eur. IT 1284–328;
Hipp. Fr. I. 1. 4–5; on 1037, 1038n: In discussing these lines C. seemingly ignores Plautus’
exploitation of legal terminology (advocatus, adsum) for comic purposes. On Plautus’ origi-
nality in this field, esp. in the context of amatory relationships, see Zagagi, ‘Tradition and

Bibliography: in addition to the publications mentioned above, the omission
of V. Masciadri’s comparative literary-structuralistic study of Plautus’ plays Amphitruo
and Menacephi (‘Die antike Verwechslungskomödie. ‘Menaechi’,
‘Amphitruo’ und ihre Verwandtschaft. Stuttgart 1996 [Zagagi, diese Zeitschr. 72,
2000, 301–305]) deserves criticism.

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Fredrik Oldsjö: Tense and Aspect in Caesar’s Narrative. Uppsala: Uppsala university li-

In 344 pages, Oldsjö’s ‘Tense and Aspect in Caesar’s Narrative’ discusses the
linguistic theory of tense, aspect and ‘Aktionsart’ as it applies to Latin grammar and the
text of Caesar’s commentaries. Its main purpose is to bridge the widening
gap between Latin linguistics and general linguistics as regards the treatment of these
important categories. (16). O.’s complementary interests in linguistic the-
ory and Caesar’s narrative are carried out in four major parts: Part 1: the theory
of tense, aspect and ‘Aktionsart’; Part 2: on aspectual conflicts in Latin, by which
that author refers to the use of the imperfective aspect in reference to telic situa-
tions or the perfective aspect in reference to atelic situations; Part 3: the analysis
of excerpts from Caesar’s text; Part 4: the structure of Caesar’s narrative. A final
section summarizes all too briefly (4. 3 pages) the author’s conclusions.

It is both a strength and a weakness of the book that it attempts to cover
linguistic theory for the non-linguist and to offer practical stylistic description and
criticism that tests and complicates the theories that it examines and espouses.
The strength lies in the fact that anyone who is not an expert in linguistics can
with enough tenacity and commitment come away from O.’s text with a much
sounder understanding of the current debates about what tense and aspect are
and the problems of accounting for them in any consistent theoretical frame-
work. The weakness is that the wealth and detail of argument together with the