Ancient scholarship on Aristophanes

1. Introduction

Scholarship on Greek comedy as a whole started when the genre was still flourishing, in the fourth century BC. Beside some cursory remarks **Aristotle** has to offer on the subject in his (extant) *Poetics*, and possibly a more in-depth treatment by the same author and/or subsequent Peripatetic studies feeding into later sources such as the so-called *Tractatus Coislinianus* and the late antique *Prolegomena de comoedia* (cf. Section 5), mention must here be made in particular of Aristotle's compilation of the Athenian dramatic *Didaskaliai*.[1] By making available in book-form the official records that listed for each year and for each dramatic festival the names of the competing tragic, dithyrambic, and comic poets, together with the titles of their respective plays, this was to become a crucial reference work for subsequent literary historians. Referring to it, the Alexandrian scholar **Callimachus** was able to draw up a *Catalogue and List of Dramatists in Chronological Order from the Beginnings*, supplementing his general catalogue (*pinax*) of the holdings in the newly established library at Alexandria (cf. Callim. frr. 454–456 Pfeiffer); and later on in the third century BC the great Aristophanes of Byzantium equally used the didascalies when prefacing each of the comic plays he edited with a brief *hypothesis* including key data such as the date of production and the ranking achieved in the comic agon alongside a plot summary.[2] Given their aims, it stands to reason if none of these works payed more attention to Aristophanes than to other comic poets of the classical period. It is important to keep this in mind when looking at 'ancient scholarship on Aristophanes'. Much of the latter simply forms part of a much wider field of ancient scholarship on comedy. If we are better informed about scholarship on Aristophanes than on, say, Cratinus or Eupolis, this is mainly a consequence of selection and canonization processes that were at best indirectly related to scholarly endeavours in the field – nor can we really tell what it was that led to Aristophanes still being read in late antiquity when the texts of other comic authors had more or less disappeared from the scene.[3] The availability of accessible commentaries (cf. below) may well have played a role in this, but if the interest in e.g. Cratinus and Eupolis had not begun to ebb, equally useful commentaries would have continued to be produced on these authors as well. That Aristophanes' status was a special one even within the triad of the great three representatives of Old Comedy, who are often named together (e.g. Hor. *sat*. 1.4.1, Pers. 1.123, Quint. *inst*. 10.1.65-66, [Dion. Hal.] *art. rhet*. 8.11), is however confirmed by him not only being singled out already in Aristotle (*Poet*. 1448a25-27), or later Cicero (Cic. *leg*. 2.37; cf. Gell. 13.25.7) and some writers on style and rhetoric (Demetr. *eloc*. 128, [Longin.] *subl*. 40.2; cf. the assessment in *Proleg. de com*. III.36-37 Koster), but also by Aristophanes being chosen as the negatively judged counterpart to elegant Menander in Plutarch's half-stylistic, half-ethical *Comparison* of the two poets (Plut. *Comp. Ar. Men.* = *Mor*. 56, 853a-854d).
On the whole, though, ancient rhetoric and literary criticism tend to turn a blind eye on comedy and it is not here that we find strong evidence for scholarly engagement with

[1] For the inscriptional remains of the *Didaskaliai*, see Millis and Olson (2012). The fragments of ancient treatises on drama are collected in Bagordo (1998); cf. also the survey in Rusten (2011: 737-741). On the *Tractatus Coislinianus* and its possible relationship to Aristotle's *Poetics* and/or the Peripatetic tradition, see Janko (1984), Nesselrath (1990: 102-149).

[2] But the metrical *hypotheseis*, which are the explicitly ascribed to Aristophanes of Byzantium in the manuscripts, are generally considered spurious; cf. Achelis (1913-16), Radermacher (1954: 79-83), Pfeiffer (1968: 192-196), Montanari (1970-2).

[3] Cf. Trojahn (2002: 144-149), with statistics.

Aristophanes. Nor should we make too much of the interest shown for Aristophanes' work among the lexicographers in the Roman imperial period. Especially during the second and third centuries AD an ideological war was raging between the so-called **'Atticists'**, who advocated various degrees of linguistic purism and a general revival of 'classical' Greek as used in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, and their opponents who denounced this as a silly exercise in anachronism, which was moreover often based on questionable evidence.[4] In this debate, Aristophanic comedy served as a treasure trove for the Atticists, who could discover in it many everyday lexemes that had long been forgotten, but potentially also as an ammunition depot for the other side whenever they happened to find in one of the plays a word or expression the Atticists were frowning on without noticing that *even* Aristophanes had already used it. None of this deserves the label of *Aristophanic* scholarship as the objectives of either camp were not to elucidate, explain, or critically assess Aristophanes' oeuvre in its own right.

3. The sources

By and large, therefore, we have just two main sources of evidence to concentrate on when enquiring into Aristophanic scholarship as such. The first, and less substantial one, is fragments of ancient papyrus scrolls and papyrus or parchment codices containing either editions of Aristophanic plays with accompanying marginal annotations of variable extent or self-standing commentaries (***hypomnêmata***) that were meant to be consulted alongside a separate text of a given play. In none of these cases are we able to assign a specific scholar's name to such a partially preserved commentary or set of annotations. The relevant papyri that are currently known range from the first century AD to the sixth century AD, with one quarter of the two dozen items collected in the Aristophanes volume of *Commentaria et lexica Graeca in papyris reperta* (*CLGP*) belonging to the *hypomnêma* type and the rest to an annotated edition (Esposito/Montana 2012). Apart from the plays that are also known through the medieval manuscript tradition we occasionally come across other comedies as well here: one of the earliest pieces containing marginal comments belongs to the lost *Heroes* (*CLGP* 11), and one of the earliest *hypomnêmata* deals with a play possibly to be identified with the *Anagyrus* (*CLGP* Ar. 27). However, from the fourth century onward such evidence supplementing the medieval canon disappears. We may therefore infer that plays other than the eleven comedies still known to us in their entirety stopped being read and studied at around that time.[5]

The second, and more informative source, consists of marginal (or more rarely interlinear) annotations in some of the medieval manuscripts of Aristophanes, the so-called ***scholia*** (Koster *et al*. 1960-2007).[6] What differentiates these from the ancient annotations just mentioned is not so much their content as the fact that they are less fragmented and that their initial compilation (cf. below) ostensibly aimed for comprehensiveness. Although not all the extant plays are equally well served by scholia, for those with extensive coverage – including not only the three plays most commonly read in Byzantine times, *Plutus*, *Clouds*,

[4] On these debates see e.g. Swain (1996), Schmitz (1997), and Kim (2010), on the individual scholars involved Dickey (2007: 94-99). Galen compiled a five-volume treatise on *Ordinary Words in Aristophanes* (alongside similar works on Cratinus and Eupolis): cf. Galen. *De libris propriis* p. 19.48 Kühn.

[5] See Esposito/Montana (2012: 3-12); Trojahn (2002: 153-199) proposes a broad categorization into (1) scientific *hypomnêmata*, (2) extensive/succinct commentaries, (3) reading aids.

[6] For an overview over the main manuscripts of Aristophanes, see Sommerstein (2010: 412-420). For the older scholia, R[avennas 429], V[enetus Marcianus 474], E[stensis gr. 127], and Γ (Laurentianus XXXI 15 + Vossianus gr. F 52) are particularly important.

and *Frogs*, but also other highlights such as *Birds*, *Wasps*, *Knights*, and *Peace* – the material is abundant. Its exploration, however, is rendered difficult by the process that led to the final product we now have, namely different selections of notes, which sometimes but not always overlap across witnesses, in manuscripts each of whose copyists may have had their own ideas on what was or was not worth including, and which amalgamate the results of the activity of commentators over a period of more than a millennium. One may therefore compare the scholiastic corpus to a stretch of sedimentary rock grown over a very long time, but with the added complication that someone has broken up the rock into countless pieces, mixed them up more or less randomly, and glued them together again. Now to reassign each of the fragments to its original layer is impossible, and even where there are lucky hints in the structure of a given item – or even a rare 'label' (the name of a commentator) assigning it to a specific stratum –, we always have to reckon with the possibility that it nevertheless contains extraneous elements as well or that the layering we think we can infer is in fact erroneous.

That readers of Aristophanes never stopped commenting on what they read is in any case illustrated by the comparatively straightforward separation of 'old' and 'recent' scholia. The former of these are by and large the scholia preserved in manuscripts that predate the work of Byzantine scholars such as John Tzetzes (in the 12th century) or Thomas Magister and Demetrius Triclinius (in the 14th century);[7] or else, where this is not the case, scholia in later copies that show significant similarities in content and wording with those in the earlier manuscripts. Yet, the fact that there is a clearly discernible corpus of 'recent' scholia at all – alongside a full-scale commentary on several of the comedies by Tzetzes himself – brings home the fundamental continuity that connects the ancient *hypomnêmata* with the modern Aristophanic commentaries of our times.

In view of the overlaps between the scholia in different manuscripts, coupled with the surprisingly common phenomenon that even a single manuscript may contain several annotations with similar content on a single word or line, it seems clear that the bulk of the scholiastic corpus derives from some large-scale master version that brought together the exegetical efforts of previous scholarship. This could have taken the form of a luxury edition of Aristophanic comedy with very ample margins into which the information presented in various earlier annotated texts and/or separate *hypomnêmata* were copied. There has been much debate over the date at which such a scholiastic archetype could have been written.[8] The latest plausible point in time would be the ninth century, not just because this is when the introduction of the Byzantine minuscule script might have acted as an incentive to produce a new full edition, but also because the step must in any case have been taken before the Byzantine lexicon ***Suda*** was compiled, a great many of whose entries are in fact explanatory notes on Aristophanic words and passages (i.e., to be treated like a further manuscript alongside the 'normal' transmission of the scholia) (Adler 1928-38, 1931). On the other side, though, it has also been pointed out that we have some limited evidence for text editions with marginal comments on a large scale already in the sixth century.

For our purposes, however, this is less important than the fact that the scholiastic archetype itself gathered together information from more than one scholarly source. It is the date and character of these sources that are of real relevance for a proper understanding of the evolution of ancient Aristophanic scholarship. Luckily, at the end of the scholia on some of the plays, an end note (*subscriptio*) gives a pertinent reference. For *Clouds* and *Peace* we

[7] On these scholars, see Wilson (1996: 190-196, 247-256).

[8] Cf. Montana (2011), who assesses the opposite views of e.g. Zuntz (1975) and Maehler (1994) on the one hand (late) and Wilson (1967) and McNamee (1995, 1998) on the other (early).

thus learn that "[*hypomnêmata*] by Phaeinus and Symmachus" were mainly used, alongside a metrical analysis by the first-century metrician **Heliodorus**,[9] for *Birds* the work of Symmachus "and other scholia". In the scholia on the other plays no such end notes are found, but we may confidently assume that **Symmachus** in particular must have been of crucial significance there too. Unlike **Phaeinus**, who is otherwise cited by name only in a small handful of banal or questionable notes on *Knights* and of whose work or date we know nothing else, Symmachus – a scholar whose activity is datable to the second century AD – is referred to quite frequently also in individual annotations on nearly all the comedies (with the exception of *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*, but the scholia on all three 'women's plays' are meagre anyway, no doubt because they were the least read of all the extant works of Aristophanes).[10] Although we have to allow for a limited amount of further accretion of (largely insignificant) material after the second century, we can thus conclude that Symmachus' commentary represented the last important stage of real scholarship on Aristophanes in antiquity – the last substantial sedimentary layer, so to speak –, and that, in all likelihood, it was through Symmachus' work that most of what the scholia still tell us about earlier scholars' opinions was mediated and handed down (cf. already Schneider 1838). If this is correct, Phaeinus might perhaps have produced a shorter, digested version of what Symmachus had offered, with personal additions here or there, but without many insights from independent research. In any case, it is noteworthy that the grammarians Herodian and Phrynichus and the rhetorician Athenaeus, all of whom were active during the reign of Marcus Aurelius in the second half of the second century AD, are among the latest writers referred to by name in the scholia; and since Symmachus may have been a contemporary of theirs – rather than living slightly earlier, as is often assumed because Herodian once cites him –, it is even conceivable that virtually *no* such scholarly reference is post-Symmachean (with one likely exception being sch. Ar. Plut. 725h, where the late-antique (4th/5th cent.?) grammarian Salustius is quoted). Moreover, it has been observed that there are noticeable coincidences in wording and substance between the fragmentary remnants of a few fourth- and fifth-century *hypomnêmata* (*CLGP* Ar. 1, 15, 17) with the medieval scholia, whereas there are no such coincidences between the scholia and marginal annotations or *hypomnêmata* fragments before the fourth century. For what it is worth, this too suggests that by around 300 AD at the latest, there should have been one generally acknowledged scholarly reference point for readers of Aristophanes – and it then stands to reason to identify this with Symmachus' commentary.

4. A historical sketch

The preceding remarks have already hinted at the many unknowns we are facing when trying to untangle the evolution of ancient Aristophanic scholarship. Much of the information in the following historical sketch has to be read against this background of fundamental uncertainty.[11] Even apart from the many question marks regarding the identities and biographies of several figures in this history, the general impression we gain from our sources about their individual interests, achievements, and shortcomings could

[9] Heliodorus and his metrical scholia are discussed in detail by White (1912: 384-421); cf. also Boudreaux (1919: 138-143).

[10] On Symmachus see further Section 4, Schauenburg (1881), Boudreaux (1919: 144-160), Gudeman (1931), Montana (2003); on Phaeinus Boudreaux (1919: 161-164), Strout/French (1938), Montana (2015).

[11] For a fuller treatment see Boudreaux (1919); cf. also Schneider (1838: esp. 86-96), Rutherford (1905: 417-434) (assembling the pertinent scholia), Trojahn (2002: 117-142).

well be flawed because of the selective and haphazard character of the primary data. On the positive side, though, the very fact that our sources are so piecemeal also has one advantage. *If* certain patterns do emerge across a body of evidence that is as fragmentary as ours, the danger that these patterns reflect nothing but a selectivity bias is reduced. If, for example, a scholar X is repeatedly associated with a simple type of lexical explanation but hardly ever cited for some piece of factual information, it seems legitimate to assume that this is due to the nature and focus of his scholarship, no matter how little else we know about it. Were this not so, little more than a mere list of ancient scholars' names could be given.

In order for research on Aristophanic comedy to become possible, the plays first had to be collected into one corpus. A Byzantine source, which is certainly drawing on ancient information, tells us that it was **Lycophron of Chalcis** who was encharged with assembling the texts of Greek comedy soon after the establishment of the Alexandrian library in the early third century BC (*Proleg. de com.* [Tzetzes] XIa.I.1-8, XIa.II.1-3/22-24).[12] In addition, the same Lycophron wrote a treatise *On Comedy* whose title resembles that of similar writings by members of the Peripatos and Academy schools in Athens. However, whereas the latter may have been mainly interested in social-historical and/or dramaturgical aspects of comedy, the references to Lycophron in the Aristophanic scholia suggest that his focus was primarily lexical. Since we usually learn only that 'Lycophron explained word X as meaning Y' (e.g. sch. Ar. Pax 702a, "Lycophron [said] that *hôrakiân* [= 'faint'] is used for *ôkhriân* [= 'become pale']), the method by which he arrived at his conclusions is hard to establish. Most likely at this early stage of lexicographical research the meanings of unfamiliar words were inferred from the immediate context, perhaps with some recourse to etymological considerations, but without reference to other occurrences of the word outside comedy.

It did not take long to realise that the results thus achieved could be questionable. In several cases where the scholia cite Lycophron, his opinion on the meaning of a word is juxtaposed with a correction by **Eratosthenes of Cyrene** (*c.* 275-195 BC), one of the greatest scholars of the Hellenistic period who is most famous for his work on astronomy, geography, and chronology but who also wrote a large-scale treatise *On Ancient Comedy* in at least twelve books.[13] That Eratosthenes' corrections to Lycophron (e.g. sch. Ar. Pax 702a [cont.], "but Eratosthenes said [*hôrakiân*] refers to suffering from vertigo as a result of fainting, a consequence of which may perhaps be to become pale"), were to be found in this work is at least plausible, and the same goes for one or two notes that cite him for an opinion on a detail of text constitution. More importantly, however, the treatise also discussed matters of wider literary-historical significance. Thus, in opposition to Callimachus who, in writing his *Catalogue*, had diagnosed an error in Aristotle's *Didaskaliai* as they dated Aristophanes' *Clouds* to 424/3 BC although the parabasis mentions Eupolis' *Marikas* dated to 422/1 BC, Eratosthenes inferred that the text of *Clouds* we read (and he read) must be a partially revised version (cf. sch. Ar. Nub. 553); and by means of a similar reasoning he also tentatively inferred that there may have been two versions of *Peace*, only one of which was preserved in the library at Alexandria (argum. A2 in Ar. Pac.).

Messy transmission situations like the one of *Clouds*, where the originally staged version got lost, underline the importance of being able to read and critically assess a properly edited

[12] On Lycophron, who was also a poet but whose authorship of the extant iambic poem *Alexandra* remains disputed, see Strecker (1884), Ziegler (1927), Pfeiffer (1968: 106, 119-120), Bagordo (1998: 35-36, 150), Meliadò (2019), Pellettieri (2020).

[13] On Eratosthenes see Strecker (1884), Knaack (1907), Pfeiffer (1968: 152-170), Bagordo (1998: 37-40, 127-136), Geus (2002), Montana (2020: 185-190).

text. It is uncertain whether Lycophron had already tried not just to collect manuscripts of the Aristophanic comedies for the library, but also to collate them and establish on this basis a true *diorthôsis* or vulgate version. Even if he did, the result must have been only preliminary since the task of coming up with a truly reliable edition of the plays was left to **Aristophanes of Byzantium** (*c.* 257-180 BC).[14] Best known for his editorial work on Homer, in which he pioneered the use of critical and exegetical signs, he appears to have made use of these in his Aristophanes edition too. According to a scholion on *Frogs*, he put a *sigma* and *antisigma* against Ran. 152 and 153, to signal either that these two lines were mutually exclusive alternatives or that the originality of Ran. 152 was doubtful (sch. Ar. Ran. 152). Furthermore, since he is credited with the invention of lyric colometry, it is also likely that he was the first to set apart cola in lyric passages of comedy as well, rather than writing them out as continuous text; and his idea of prefacing each play with a *hypothesis* (cf. Section 2) was again to find many followers in later centuries.

It is unprovable, but not implausible, that such a careful establishment of the Aristophanic text not only preceded, but inspired the compilation of a running commentary. For all we know, this novel format may have been tried out here for very the first time – even before *hypomnêmata* on Homer began to be written by Aristarchus and others – by a regrettably shadowy scholar called **Euphronius**.[15] One source explicitly speaks of a *hypomnêma* of his on Aristophanes' *Plutus* (Orus in *Lexicon Messanense*, ed. Rabe 1892: 411), and Euphronius' name also appears with reasonable frequency in the scholia on other plays (*Clouds*, *Wasps*, *Birds*, *Frogs*). His date, however, is most uncertain. On the one hand we are told by the Byzantine scholar Choeroboscus that one Euphronius was counted by 'some' as a member of the Alexandrian Pleiad, a group of poets associated with Ptolemy II Philadelphus (r. 283-246 BC); this would make him a rough contemporary of Eratosthenes. On the other hand, the same Choeroboscus speaks of Euphronius as a teacher of Aristarchus, thereby placing him in the same generation as Aristophanes of Byzantium (Choerob. *Heph.* 9.3 and 16.2 Consbruch). Obviously, only the latter chronology would allow us to assume that his activity as a commentator postdates the editorial activity of Aristophanes. One consideration that speaks in favour of this view is that according to one notice he commented on the accentuation of the word for 'owl', *glaux* (sch. Ar. Vesp. 1086a). This presupposes a text with written accents, and that is yet another innovation with which Aristophanes of Byzantium is generally credited. On the whole, Euphronius' notes seem to have been fairly cursory and superficial, as one may expect of such a pioneer work. However, they already went beyond the mere explanation of lexical details and also discussed, at least, the identity of individuals mocked in the plays (*kômôidoumenoi*) – though sometimes basing hasty conclusions on a one-dimensional reading of the comic text. Thus, Euphronius' inference from Av. 997 that the geometer Meton came from the Attic deme of Kolonos is unwarranted and was subsequently corrected by another, better-informed, scholar (sch. Ar. Av. 997a).

When Euphronius is referred to in the scholia, his name is often paired with that of **Callistratus**, a commentator who is known to have worked also on epic, lyric, and tragic poetry and who must have belonged to the circle of Aristophanes of Byzantium's students.[16] Many of Callistratus' notes were, again, concerned with points of detail, regarding the comic

[14] On Aristophanes of Byzantium see Cohn (1895b), Boudreaux (1919: 25-47), Pfeiffer (1986: 171-209), Slater (1986), Montana (2020: 191-200).

[15] On Euphronius see Strecker (1884), Cohn (1907), Boudreaux (1919: 50-51), Pfeiffer (1968: 160-161), Montana (2020: 200-201), Novembri (2020).

[16] On Callistratus see R. Schmidt (1848), Boudreaux (1919: 48-51), Gudeman (1919), Montana (2008a), (2020: 201-203).

lexicon including phraseology (cf. *CLGP* Ar. 28, frr. C+D+E, col. I.12-16), but also prosody, grammar, and textual criticism. It is clear that he was at times responding to Euphronius, as when he sought to clarify the association of Meton with the Kolonos according to the scholion just cited. In his discussion of other *kômôidoumenoi* too, Callistratus may have drawn more strongly than his predecessor on sources external to comedy itself. For instance, his identification of the Dracontides mentioned at Vesp. 157 with Dracontides of Aphidna, one of the Thirty Tyrants of 404/3 BC, was certainly not based on anything in the text (sch. Ar. Vesp. 157a; cf. Montana 1996: 191-198); whether it was correct is a different matter. In this context, it is worth remembering that specialist treatises on *kômôidoumenoi* were not yet available to commentators at the time. Such repertories were subsequently written, still in the second century BC, by Aristarchus' pupil and successor Ammonius (cf. sch. Ar. Vesp. 1238a) as well as Herodicus of Babylon, who belonged to the Pergamene school of Crates of Mallus (cf. Athen. 13.586a).[17]

That Callistratus' relationship with **Aristarchus of Samothrace** (*c.* 215–144 BC), the most illustrious student of Aristophanes of Byzantium, was fraught is sometimes assumed, mainly because he is said to have criticised Aristarchus for not dressing well enough (Athen. 1.21c; cf. Montana 2008b).[18] Be that as it may, for all the evident sensibility of Aristarchus' famous philological principle of 'explaining Homer out of Homer', i.e. treating epic poetry as a closed (literary) universe (cf. Nünlist 2015, Schironi 2018: 735-742), the confidence with which he dissected the epic text was not appreciated by everyone; and, more crucially for our purposes, a similar isolatory approach was far less appropriate when dealing with the rather different genre of comedy. In commenting on (at least some) of the comedies of Aristophanes, Aristarchus was no doubt aware of this, but it remains striking that the one scholion which refers to a view of his not on a literary or philological point, but on a historical matter, shows him go wrong. Unlike Callistratus, who rightly saw that Ran. 1422 must be read against the background of Alcibiades' voluntary absence from Athens in 407 BC, Aristarchus thought that Alcibiades' exile of 415 BC was at issue (sch. Ar. Ran. 1422c/d). Moreover, Aristarchus' literary judgment on comedy does not always seem impeccable either. That, for example, the verses Ran. 1437-1441, where Euripides proposed to turn Cleocritus and Cinesais into an airship and to squirt vinegar into the eyes of the enemy, are "coarse and cheap" may be true, but *that* is hardly a reason to athetize them with Aristarchus (sch. Ar. Ran. 1437-1441a); Aristarchus' idea that the chorus of initiates in *Frogs* must have been divided into two half-choruses at Ran. 354 is not really compelling (cf. sch. Ar. Ran. 440a, taking issue with Aristarchus' view as recorded in sch. Ar. Ran. 354a, 372c); and his (mis)understanding of the joke at Ran. 308-309, where Xanthias comments on Dionysus who has shat himself, is hardly redeemed by the willingness instead to attribute to Aristophanes a rather complex piece of word play involving an exchange of the words for 'red' and 'yellow' (sch. Ar. Ran. 308a). However, too negative an assessment of Aristarchus' work on Aristophanes would be equally unfair since elsewhere we also see him engage in careful textual scholarship (e.g. sch. Ar. Ran. 191c, where Aristarchus defended the reading "the battle about the flesh" instead of "…about the corpses" based on some proper lexicographical research) or check and assess intertextual connections proposed by previous

[17] On Ammonius and Herodicus see Blau (1883: 5-13), Cohn (1894), Steinhausen (1910: 6-49), Gudeman (1912), Düring (1941), Bagordo (1998: 50-51, 74-77, 142-143), Montana (2006a), Pagani (2009b), Montana (2020: 231-232).

[18] The bibliography on Aristarchus is vast, but mainly focused on his Homeric studies: see e.g. Cohn (1895a), Pfeiffer (1968: 210-233), Schironi (2018), Montana (2020: 204-217). On Aristarchus in the Aristophanes scholia see especially Gerhard (1850), Boudreaux (1919: 52-74), Muzzolon (2005).

scholars (sch. Ar. Ran. 1206a/b/c, on an alleged borrowing from Euripides' *Archelaus*). To what extent the concentration of Aristarchean references in the scholia on *Frogs* is a coincidence, i.e. merely due to the fact that the transmission and selection history was different for the scholia of each play, is difficult to tell; but given the intrinsic interest *Frogs* held for any literary scholar, it is not impossible that Aristarchus' notes on other plays, though securely attested by occasional citations here or there, were less rich.

Like all inspirational scholarship, Aristarchus' work also provoked dissent. With regard to Aristophanic comedy, we witness this most clearly with **Demetrius of Adramyttium**, who was nicknamed Ixion – after a mythical king who killed his father-in-law – precisely because he criticized his former teacher Aristarchus in the most vitriolic terms.[19] Although Demetrius' polemical attitude was no doubt most prominent in Homeric matters, the Aristophanic scholia also reflect some of it in one or two cases, as when he attacked Aristarchus' take on a controversial word play at Ran. 970. Puzzled by the politician Theramenes being called there "not a Chian, but a Keian", Aristarchus apparently preferred to read "…Koan" since the worst and best throws of a dice were called the "Chian" and the "Koan" throws respectively; but Demetrius found this "completely ignorant" since it overlooked the *para prosdokian* joke Aristophanes created precisely by substituting "Keian" for the expected "Koan" (sch. Ar. Ran. 970b). However, Demetrius' counter-claim that Theramenes was a native of Keos itself looks like a misinference from the passage, and similarly his defense of the "battle about the corpses" reading at Ran. 191 (cf. above) is so strained that it seems to result primarily from a desire to oppose Aristarchus (sch. Ar. Ran. 191e, attributable to Demetrius thanks to Phot. κ 1069).

A very different attitude towards Aristarchus is inferrable for a critic who is generally cited as **Apollonius** in the scholia. Since Apollonius is about as distinctive a name as English *John* would be, a secure identification of this person is impossible. However, a scholion on *Wasps* once mentions more specifically an Apollonius son of Chaeris (sch. Ar. Vesp. 1238b), and it is reasonable to think this is the same man as the Apollonius of the other scholia. If so, this would make Apollonius slightly later than Demetrius, towards the end of the second century BC, because his father Chaeris is himself considered a pupil of Aristarchus'.[20] Even so, Apollonius would still be among the 'heirs' of Aristarchus, and it therefore makes sense if the two are mentioned in one breath (sch. Ar. Ran. 1124) or if we learn, for example, that Apollonius concurred with Aristarchus' athetesis of Ran. 1437-1441 (cf. above); significantly, though, he managed to improve the strength of the case by observing, not without reason, that the lines "have no bearing on the overall argument of the passage" (sch. Ar. Ran. 1437-1441b). The clearest testimony to the conscientiousness and quality of Apollonius' scholarship, meanwhile, comes from another scholion on *Frogs*, commenting on a line where Dionysus says to Xanthias that the latter will "look like the flogging-slave from Melite" once he has put on Heracles' attire (Ran. 501). Here, Apollonius adopted an earlier line of interpretation which suspected a prosopographical allusion, perhaps to Callias the son of Hipponicus, behind the "flogging-slave from Melite"; but what makes his contribution really interesting is the circumspect way in which he both addressed potential criticism (e.g. relating to the fact that no actual name occurs in the passage) and dissected the alternative view according to which the line contains a *para prosdokian* joke for "*Heracles* from Melite", i.e. a reference to a particular shrine and cult image of the hero (sch. Ar. Ran. 501c). Even if

[19] On Demetrius Ixion see Staesche (1883), Blau (1883: 19-20), Cohn (1901), Boudreaux (1919: 84-85), Ascheri (2009), Montana (2020: 230-231).

[20] On Apollonius son of Chaeris and Apollonius the Aristophanic commentator see Schrader (1866), Blau (1883: 50-56), Cohn (1895c) and (1895d), Berndt (1902: 50-52), Boudreaux (1919: 77-78), Montana (2002).

Apollonius' chronological and linguistic objections are not completely watertight, they here show an argumentative stringency that is closer to modern scholarship than what we usually see attested in the scholia.

All the Aristophanic scholars who have been discussed so far were either active at, or at least closely associated with, Ptolemaic Alexandria as *the* hub of learning in the early Hellenistic period. From the middle of the second century onward, however, Pergamum in Asia Minor began to compete with the Egyptian capital as the Attalid kings fostered their own cultural ambitions – it is hardly a coincidence if the quarrelsome Demetrius Ixion eventually came to work here. The question thus arises to what extent Aristophanic comedy was also studied by others in Pergamum. The leading Pergamene scholar, **Crates of Mallus**, is mentioned very rarely in the scholia, although it is noteworthy that he seems to have had access to a second Aristophanic play called, or version of, *Peace*, as is shown by a remark to this effect in a hypothesis of the transmitted comedy (argum. A2 in Ar. Pac.). Beyond that, the scholiastic references to Crates are of a lexicographical nature and could be based, not on *hypomnêmata* or specialist treatises on comedy, but on a work *On the Attic dialect* (cf. Broggiato 2001: xlvi).[21]

More in-depth engagement with Aristophanes at Pergamum might be indicated if the **Asclepiades** whom the scholia mention repeatedly were to be identified as Asclepiades of Myrlea, a scholar commonly associated with the Pergamene tradition. However, one scholion in the early modern Aldine edition of *Clouds* speaks of an Asclepiades of Alexandria (sch.$^{Ald.}$ Ar. Nub. 37), and while this man is generally believed to have been a different person, who also wrote an exegetical treatise on the archaic laws of Solon (cf. e.g. Plut. Sol. 1), it is impossible to tell whether that entails that the Asclepiades mentioned in other Aristophanic scholia is equally to be kept apart from Asclepiades of Myrlea, or even yet another figure.[22] In any case, there is nothing in those scholia to point to a fundamentally different attitude from what we find among all the Alexandrian scholars, and certainly nothing that is reminiscent of the allegorical exegesis that characterised Asclepiades of Myrlea's treatise *On Nestor's Cup*. One common concern of the earlier commentators had long been to pin down the intertextual models of parodistic lines and quotations in Aristophanes (cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Nub. 1264 for Euphronius). Once the most uncontroversial cases had been set out, less obvious connections could then also be suggested (just as they are in modern commentaries); and Asclepiades may have been a little bolder in this respect than his predecessors. If, for example, Aristarchus and Apollonius had been unable to find an intertextual source for Ran. 1269/70, a line with which the stage Euripides of *Frogs* clearly intends to parody Aeschylus in one way or another, and if Asclepiades then 'assigned' that line to Aeschylus' *Iphigeneia* (sch. Ar. Ran. 1269b), it is unlikely that an incontrovertible model verse had simply been overlooked until then. Probably Asclepiades merely found in Aeschylus' play a less immediate similarity, just as he ostensibly did in the case of Ran. 1331-1333: these latter verses he presented as an imitative allusion to Eur. *Hec.* 68-69 although the resemblance is a very general one, not one involving any specific verbal echo (sch. Ar. Ran. 1331b). Inevitably, there is a danger of going too far in establishing such connections,

[21] On Crates of Mallus see Boudreaux (1919: 79-83), Kroll (1922), Pfeiffer (1968: 234-243), Broggiato (2001), Pagani (2009a), Montana (2020: 222-227). The attribution is further complicated by the slight possibility that the author of the dialect treatise was not Crates of Mallus, but his namesake Crates of Athens, a third-century academic scholar who also wrote about comedy (*FGrH* 362; cf. Bagordo 1998: 61, 216-218).

[22] On Asclepiades of Myrlea, Asclepiades of Alexandria, and Asclepiades the Aristophanic commentator see Wentzel (1896a), (1896b), (1896c), Boudreaux (1919: 86-88), Pfeiffer (1968: 273), Pagani (2007) and (2009c) (on Asclepiades of Myrlea), (2009d) (on Asclepiades of Alexandria), (2009e) (on the Aristophanic scholar), Montana (2020: 236-237).

and at least twice Asclepiades even fell into the trap of suspecting a reminiscence that must be excluded on chronological grounds (by arguing that Av. 348 and Av. 422-424 hark back to Euripides' *Andromeda* and *Phoenician Women* respectively, although *Birds* was staged earlier than either of these plays) (cf. sch. Ar. Av. 348a/b). However, we should also positively acknowledge that, by going beyond the obvious, suggestions like those of Asclepiades fostered less mechanical ways of reading Aristophanes.

Beside Alexandria and Pergamum, the island of Rhodes developed into a further centre of learning during the second and first centuries BC. When Ptolemy VIII expelled many intellectuals from Alexandria in 145 BC, it was in Rhodes, for example, that the great grammarian Dionysius Thrax found refuge. As far as Aristophanic scholarship is concerned, we find it represented on the island by a certain **Timachidas**, who wrote a commentary on *Frogs* (in addition to working on Euripides and Menander), and who may have been the same man as the Timachidas who was in charge of drafting the Lindian temple chronicle in 99 BC.[23] Unfortunately, the occasional references to Timachidas in the scholia on *Frogs* are not very informative, nor do his contributions seem to have been particularly valuable. For instance, the suggestion that the vinegar-flask joke in Ran. 1440 (and Ran. 1453) was inspired by Euripides' mother allegedly being a greengrocer is far-fetched, though still of some interest because it shows that Timachidas cannot have accepted Aristarchus' (and Apollonius') athetesis of Ran. 1437-1441 (cf. above; sch. Ar. Ran. 1453).

Having reached the first century BC, we return to Alexandria where the activity of **Didymus of Alexandria** (*c.* 80-10 BC?) constitutes a caesura in the history of Aristophanic scholarship. Nicknamed 'Bronze-Guts' (*Khalkenteros*) because of his incredible learning and scholarly output, which encompassed works on grammar, lexicography, and mythology alongside literary exegesis (also of epic, lyric, and tragic poetry as well as oratory), Didymus made more than one major contribution to the study of comedy.[24] On the one hand he compiled a large-scale *Comic Lexicon*, which was based on his own and other people's research on the vocabulary of comedy and which (indirectly) constitutes a major source for the comic lemmata in the late-antique dictionary of Hesychius (cf. Hsch. *epist. in Eulog*. 3-8 L.-C.); this will have quickly eclipsed the only slightly earlier, but no doubt less ambitious, collection of comic words by Artemidorus of Tarsus (for which cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Vesp. 1169b, 1238).[25] On the other hand Didymus wrote a series of *hypomnêmata*, among other things on (probably all) comedies of Aristophanes. In preparation for these *hypomnêmata*, he extensively excerpted the commentaries and treatises of previous researchers, and it is assumed that whenever the scholia tell us that a pre-Didymean scholar X or Y said this or that about an Aristophanic passage, we owe the preservation of this information to Didymus' reports. However, Didymus' research was not merely derivative. Not only did he often disagree with what others had said, and typically sought to support his own views with substantial and sometimes out-of-the-way references to parallel passages (cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Av. 1283a, with a quotation from some Doric comedy (?)); he also extended the scope of the commentaries by bringing in sources that had not been consulted by previous commentators at all, notably with regard to factual and historical information (cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Lys. 313a, which suggests that Didymus used the Hellenistic historian Craterus' *Collection of [Athenian] Decrees*). It is in

[23] On Timachidas see Boudreaux (1919: 88-89), Ziegler (1936), Montana (2006b), (2020: 238-239), Matijašić (2014), (2021).

[24] On Didymus see M. Schmidt (1854), Cohn (1903), Roemer (1908: 366-410), Boudreaux (1919: 91-137), Pfeiffer (1968: 274-279), Braswell (2013: 27-103), Montana (2020: 246-253), Benuzzi (2020) and (2023).

[25] On Artemidorus and his work see Wentzel (1895), Bagordo (1998: 63, 98-100). *P.Oxy*. 1801 (with *CLGP* Ar. 3, 7, 12, 24, 26, 30, 31) might contain, or be based on, Artemidorus' collection, but the *Lexicon* of Artemidorus' son Theon or indeed that of Didymus are other possibilities: see Esposito/Montana (2012: 41 n. 1).

this respect, rather than the philological establishment and discussion of the text (as a basis of which he probably still used the edition of Aristophanes of Byzantium) that Didymus' legacy was greatest. In particular, his familiary with the widest possible range of comic *and* non-comic literature had the potential to act as a corrective to the old habit of drawing problematic conclusions (e.g. in prosopographical matters) from oblique or allusive statements in the plays themselves (though see sch. Ar. Thesm. 31 for an instance of Didymus making the same mistake), or also to enrich a reader's understanding where matters of daily life were concerned (such as the Athenian festival calendar or the ingredients of an Athenian dried-fish wrap: see sch. Ar. Ach. 1076a and sch. Ar. Ach. 1101a, respectively). The downside, meanwhile, is that Didymus sometimes worked too hastily, or was carried away by excessive learning. The latter we see in a case like sch. Ar. Av. 13a, according to which Didymus saw in Peisetaerus' straightforward remark "The guy from the bird-market (*houk tôn orneôn*) really gave us a terrible deal" a complicated allusion to the Peloponnesian town of Orneai (cf. Av. 399) and through this to the battle of Mantineia that had taken place a few years before the production of *Birds*. As for the former, one may think of Didymus' rejection of Aristophanes of Byzantium's sensible reading of the poet Alcaeus' name in Thesm. 162, preferring a reference to the more recent tragedian Achaeus (sch. Ar. Thesm. 162a); when, following a rethink, Didymus did realise that "Alcaeus" was in fact the better option, he still did not have the grace to retract entirely, but insisted that another Alcaeus, a citharode from Sicily, must be meant. However, the most serious error that has been imputed on Didymus – on the basis of circumstantial and doubtful evidence, it has to be said[26] – is that he was the commentator who believed, when dealing with the *Plutus*, that the play he had in front of him was not the late composition of 388 BC, but rather a homonymous comedy that had been staged some 20 years earlier (cf. esp. sch. Ar. Plut. 972i). This did create serious chronological problems, but they were brushed aside by means of somewhat specious assumptions (cf. sch. Ar. Plut. 173b, 179a, 1146d).

Once Didymus' comprehensive commentaries were available, readers of Aristophanes who wanted to get up-to-date information on specific points of interest would naturally turn to them, rather than go back to older works; and similarly, anyone wanting to put together a shorter, more eclectic, *hypomnêma* would also take them as the starting point (cf. e.g. *CLGP* Ar. 27, 28). There is in any case little evidence for substantial further developments in the main areas of Aristophanic scholarship for roughly two hundred years. As already mentioned (Section 3), it is only in the second century AD that **Symmachus** felt the need to overhaul Didymus' work.[27] What prompted him to do so we do not know. It can hardly have been a conviction that scholarship had made so much progress in the intervening time that a 'new Didymus' had to be produced; for not only was the one major contribution of the first century AD, the metrical analysis by Heliodorus (Section 3), not integrated into Symmachus' *hypomnêmata* (as it is still cited separately in the *subscriptio* of *Peace*), but it is also not the case that the scholia preserve many other references to scholars belonging to the period between Didymus and Symmachus. Heliodorus' student Irenaeus (Pacatus) is mentioned a few times, for grammatical minutiae (e.g. sch. Ar. Vesp. 900b), and so are Seleucus, a grammarian of the Tiberian age (e.g. sch. Ar. Thesm. 840) and the slightly later lexicographer Epaphroditus (sch. Ar. Eq. 1150a), but none of them should be supposed to have worked specifically on Aristophanes. It is therefore likely that Symmachus simply disapproved of

[26] His name is not given in the relevant scholia, but the 'Didymean' appearance of some of their information induced Boudreaux (1919: 133-137) to attribute the mistake to him. In his discussion of the complex issue Sommerstein (2001: 28-33) wisely just speaks of "one of the ancient commentators".

[27] For literature on Symmachus see above, fn. 10.

Didymus' ideas often enough to make him wish for a modernized alternative. This is not to say that we never see the two scholars agree when both of their names are mentioned on a single matter, with Symmachus at best refining Didymus' points (cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Av. 1273a/b, sch. Ar. Av. 1705a); and we also have to take into account that where only Symmachus is cited, this might be due to incomplete referencing in the scholia as much as to Symmachus really having been the first to come up with a given explanation. However, there are in fact also a number of instances where Symmachus diverges from his most important predecessor. Looking at Av. 1121, for example, Symmachus thought that the description of the panting messenger as "breathing Alpheius-style" (*Alpheion pneôn*) must imply that the messenger "is running as hard as a runner in the Olympic foot-race [sc. by the Alpheius river]", whereas Didymus had more boldly suggested an intertextual reference to a Pindaric line that spoke of the "venerable resting-place of the Alpheius" (sch. Ar. Av. 1121a); and on Av. 439-442, where we obscurely hear of a "knife-maker monkey who made a pact with his wife not to pull his testicles", Symmachus preferred to assume that this is no more than a hint at some popular fable, rather than a prosopographical jibe at a certain monkey-like cook's son called Panaetius, as Didymus had suspected (sch. Ar. Av. 440). From this and other examples, including one where Symmachus openly confesses his inability to make sense of a line as transmitted (sch. Ar. Av. 1681b), we can infer a healthily sober attitude, which no doubt helped his work to supersede that of Didymus. Even so, his was not always the last word either, for any later reader could of course still come to different conclusions and reject what he had offered (cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Thesm. 393a, 710b). In that sense, and as noted before (Section 3), ancient Aristophanic scholarship must not be thought to have come to a complete halt with him. All we can state with some confidence is that Symmachus' *hypomnêmata* – the precise extent of which we ignore: they almost certainly included a commentary also on at least one play now lost, the *Merchantmen* (cf. sch. Ar. Av. 1283a), but did he still cover *all* the Aristophanic plays? – represent the last *major* stop on the road that eventually led to the medieval scholiastic corpus (cf. Section 3).

5. Scope and themes

If we look at the scholia in their entirety, and together with the much more limited papyrus evidence, we see that many of the things that modern commentaries deal with are already present. The most numerous notes are quite elementary as they offer lexical and grammatical – including at times 'rhetorical' – elucidation, often by glossing or paraphrasing words and expressions but sometimes also by highlighting differences between classical Attic and later (i.e., for the commentators/readers: contemporary) usage (cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Thesm. 572 on *homoû genesthai ~ eggus genesthai* 'get together', sch. Ar. Nub. 439b on a morphological difference, which is misclassified in the scholion). Recording textual variants (including conjectures) belongs to this basic layer as well, although the scale of this is much more limited than in a modern critical apparatus and real text-critical discussions are rare (e.g. sch. Ar. Av. 66a; often a variant is just added with abbreviated *gr. = graphetai* 'one [sc. alternatively] writes'). That the attribution of lines, or parts of lines, to speakers is not always clear triggers many pertinent annotations, and the commentators may also express views on other matters of performance (entries/exits, movements on stage, vocal expression), not least because stage directions were only exceptionally written within the text itself (*parepigraphai*: cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Thesm. ante 277 on the text between Thesm. 276 and 277). As mentioned before, metre was originally dealt with separately, but commentators were of course aware of the metrical exigencies of comic verse: they do on occasion, and again not

always correctly, comment on scansion (cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Nub. 818 and sch. Ar. Av. 1283a, with two doubtful scansional claims by Symmachus). Beyond that, there is much information about historical people and realia, the quality of which is variable. Unfortunately, we are ourselves often dependent on what the scholia tell us and hence unable to decide how much trust we should place in them in such matters. To give just one example, there has been considerable debate in modern scholarship about the historicity (and/or scope) of a decree proposed by a certain Syracosius forbidding the act of "lampooning by name" (*onomasti kômôidein*); the only positive evidence we have for this is a scholion on a passage of *Birds* where Syracosius is compared to a garrulous jay (sch. Ar. Av. 1297a; cf. e.g. Halliwell 1991: 58-63, Sommerstein 2004: 208-211). It is telling that the scholion introduces the relevant claim by a hedge ("he *seems* [*dokei*] to have brought in a decree"), which may imply that this was merely an inference from a comic passage cited in support (Phrynichus fr. 27 K.-A.); but since we know that at least one of Aristophanes' commentators was conscientious enough to consult, where appropriate, a published *Collection of Decrees* (cf. Section 4 on Didymus), how sure can we be that there was not really some form of speech injunction in decree form with which Syracosius was associated? Similar questions arise with regard to many of the intertextual sources of Aristophanic parody identified in the scholia. When we no longer possess the original texts as such, we frequently cannot decide whether the dependency relationship between a given expression/verse and a proposed model was obvious and indisputable or more or less plausible speculation (as with some of the examples from Asclepiades cited in Section 4).

Compared to all this, what one might call the really *literary* exploration of the text is marginal in the scholia, more so than in modern commentaries. Partly this may be ascribed to the format because line-by-line or word-by-word annotation does not lend itself so easily to the exploration of wider interpretive matters (though cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Pax 619, 1204 containing a critical assessment of the build-up of entire passages of *Peace*). But even where the format need not have acted as a deterrent, we notice a certain lack of engagement. Although the ancient commentators were not blind to the mechanisms of Aristophanic humour and regularly highlighted speaking names (e.g. sch. Ar. Pax 190 on Trygaeus, sch. Ar. Lys. 838a on Cinesias), puns (e.g. sch. Ar. Nub. 710a, 730b; also, without reticence, obscene ones: e.g. sch. Ar. Ach. 801 on *erebinthos* = 'chick pea'/'penis'), or the many *para prosdokian* jokes (for which the term *par' hyponoian* is normally used: e.g. sch. Ar. Plut. 27a/c with rudimentary analysis), they were much less attuned to other aspects of comic verbal art. For example, comic compounds may be dissected into their component parts (e.g. sch. Ar. Vesp. 220b/c), but nothing is said about their stylistic impact; the user of the commentary is rarely told with sufficient clarity whether an unusual lexeme is a comic coinage or simply a word of the classical language that has lost currency; and where parody is purely stylistic, without echoing a specific model, the chances of it being picked up are much reduced (though tragic and dithyrambic style fare slightly better than the rest: cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Ach. 1190b *paratragôidei*, Ar. Vesp. 1484 *paratragikeuetai*; para-dithyrambic: sch. Ar. Av. 930b, 1379b (Symmachus)).

Finally, there is the question of macroscopic interpretation. In modern commentaries this is typically presented in introductory sections. These do not exist as such in the scholia. There are the *hypotheses*, which became increasingly substantial and, while still containing the basic facts as at the time of Aristophanes of Byzantium (cf. Section 2), sometimes outline the plot in considerable detail. However, even in such longer hypotheses, the readers are seldom told much about how to read a given play. At best, a general judgment is formulated and the presumed central message extracted. Thus, *Acharnians* is "one of those plays that

are particularly well-made, and it advocates peace in every way" (argum. 1 in Ar. Ach.); *Knights* "is composed against Cleon, the Athenian demagogue" (argum. A1 in Ar. Eq.); *Clouds* "is written against Socrates the philosopher, arguing that he intentionally teaches the young people in Athens bad things, because the comedians are in opposition to the philosophers; not, however, as some say, prompted by Archelaus the king of the Macedonians because he thought better of him [Socrates] than of Aristophanes" (argum. A1 in Ar. Nub.); *Wasps* "criticizes the Athenians as fond of lawsuits and encourages the people to be reasonable and abandon them" (argum. II in Ar. Vesp.), and so on. As these illustrations show, the proposed readings tend to assume a straightforward social-corrective and moral function of the plays, often in response to some specified historical situation. The roots of this approach must be sought in Peripatetic scholarship on comedy, and it perfectly matches what Platonius, a perhaps late-antique (?) critic, wrote in his treatise *On the difference between [types of] comedies*, an abbreviated version of which has come down to us among the *Prolegomena de comoedia*, general essays on comedy that were collected by Byzantine scholars and prefaced to a number of Aristophanes manuscripts (cf. Perusino 1989). According to Platonius, in the period of Old Comedy "the poets were free to ridicule generals, judges who passed bad judgment, and some of the citizens who were greedy for money or lived licentious lives" since "we know how naturally opposed ordinary people (*dêmos*) are to the rich, so as to enjoy when they fare badly" (*Proleg. de com.* I.6-11 Koster). This does not exclude that "the Athenians" as a community may on occasion be thought of as being censured too (cf. e.g. sch. Ar. Eq.219a, sch. Ar. Plut. 98, 338), but it leaves little room for additional (e.g. kathartic or ritualistic) dimensions to be made out in the genre.

6. Conclusion

When we look at the extant remains of ancient scholarship on Aristophanes, there is a constant danger of paying more attention to its shortcomings than to its achievements. It is therefore important to remember how much easier scholarly research has become since antiquity and not to expect from the academic work of our remote predecessors that it comply with our own standards of quality. Moreover, it is precisely these standards that should prevent us from neglecting the scholia and other evidence discussed in this chapter when we ourselves read Aristophanes. Firstly, as already hinted at (Section 5), by consulting them we quickly realise how dependent our own learning is on the wealth of information that has been assembled in antiquity: to brush the latter aside without further ado would often mean to saw off the branch on which we are sitting. Secondly, all this material may also serve as a reminder that our own ways of understanding Aristophanes are, in many ways, no less subjective, selective, or biased: perhaps we should even ask ourselves from time to time what an Aristarchus or a Didymus would have thought if they had been able to read a modern monograph on Aristophanes' art. And thirdly, however one-sided we may find the evidence that has come down to us, and however much we may therefore be tempted to contrast it with the sophisticated *literary* response to Aristophanes someone like Lucian manages to create (cf. Rosen 2016), we must also acknowledge that there is enough in it to disprove the notion of Aristophanes having been read throughout antiquity *only* because of the plays' historical or linguistic appeal. That scholars are good at taking the fun out of funny texts is as true today as it was back then, but that is simply the price their students have to pay for being enabled to appreciate to the full what it is that makes those texts worth reading.

Further reading

The Aristophanic scholia, both old and recent and including the commentaries of Tzetzes as well as the hypotheses, are now accessibly edited in Koster *et al*. (1960-2007); the first volume of this series contains the *Prolegomena de comoedia*. None of the material assembled there is translated; a translation of many of the scholia on *Frogs* and *Plutus* into French can be found in Chantry (2009), and for all the plays some assistance with understanding the often difficult scholiastic comments is given in the annotated edition of the scholia in the important Ravenna manuscript (R) by Rutherford (1896). The third volume of Rutherford's work (Rutherford 1905) offers a meticulous, if rather dismissive, overview over much of the content of the scholia arranged by ancient instructional categories.
The papyrus evidence is collected in fasc. I.1.4 of *Commentaria et Lexica Graeca in papyris reperta* (*CLGP*), which contains Italian translations (Esposito and Montana 2012; cf. also Trojahn 2002). Montana (2011) surveys the many controversial issues regarding the formation of medieval scholiastic corpora from such ancient annotations and *hypomnêmata*.
For a very readable history of scholarship in antiquity see still Pfeiffer (1968); but there are now also the detailed and up-to-date chapters by A. Novokhatko (Pre-Hellenistic period), F. Montana (Hellenistic period), S. Matthaios (Roman period), and F. Pontani (Byzantine period) in Montanari (2020). Specifically for Aristophanes, Dunbar (1995: 31-49) is an ideal starting point, while White (1914: ix-lxxxv) and Boudreaux (1919) remain essential. Dickey (2007) is an incredibly useful bibliographical and practical guide to all kinds of ancient scholarly texts, including sample passages and a pertinent glossary. Though focused on Homer, the discussion by Nünlist (2009) of the literary-critical concepts present in ancient scholia is also important for an exploration of the Aristophanic material.

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