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## Aristophanes' Bestiary

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**C. Corbel-Morana *Le Bestiaire d'Aristophane.***  
**(Études Anciennes, Série Grecque 144.) Pp. 350,**  
**ills. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012. Paper, €45.**  
**ISBN: 978-2-251-32680-1.**

Jeremy B. Lefkowitz

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and otherwise) as the primary cultural media of the ancient world. R.'s engagement with the notion of popular culture is not always fully elaborated but he is certainly leading his readers on a new scholarly path.

The book offers a novel and systematic approach to humour in Old Comedy. Although R. focusses on the second half of fifth-century Athens and its political and cultural activity, his methodological tools and choice of thematic interpretation(s) are applicable beyond Aristophanes; they could be used as an interpretational template applicable to any kind of anti-realistic performative or literary humour. Most importantly, like those with 'first-hand experience' R. demonstrates 'a real understanding of comedy and cognition' (p. 6) yet he is sympathetic to its effects, justifying that comedy is the art of the impossible because it manages to 'change our perception of the world and with that comes our potential for change' (p. 429).

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## ARISTOPHANES' BESTIARY

CORBEL-MORANA (C.) *Le Bestiaire d'Aristophane*. (Études Anciennes, Série Grecque 144.) Pp. 350, ills. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012. Paper, €45. ISBN: 978-2-251-32680-1.

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J. Taillardat's influential *Les Images d'Aristophane: Études de langue et de style* (1965) contains the memorable line: 'ce qui intéresse Aristophane, c'est essentiellement l'homme' (§14). And yet, as C.-M. points out in the opening pages of this revised version of her 2002 thèse de Doctorat, perhaps the most famous line from Aristophanic comedy is spoken by a frog: βρεκεκεκεξ κοῦξ κοῦξ ('sans doute le vers le plus célèbre d'Aristophane', p. 9). Indeed, animals are ubiquitous in Greek comedy, and our best studies of the subject have tended to focus on the ritual and cultural origins of animal figures and motifs, in particular the costumed animal choruses of plays such as *Wasps*, *Birds* and *Frogs* (cf. G.M. Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses* [1971]; K. Rothwell, *Nature, Culture, and the Origins of Greek Comedy: a Study of Animal Choruses* [2007]). But C.-M. is essentially uninterested in questions of origins, offering instead a traditional philological approach to the role of animal imagery in Aristophanes' plays. The focus on *images* of animals in Aristophanic comedy also reveals that C.-M.'s use of the term 'bestiaire' is not casual. C.-M.'s title is deliberately resonant with the medieval literary form, a popular genre concerned not with zoological accuracy but with allegorical interpretations of the natural world – a world imagined to be populated by both real and fantastic creatures. Aristophanes created a Bestiary to the extent that animals in his plays are 'avant tout un emblème' (p. 10), and because Aristophanic comedy makes reference both to the kinds of animals that real Athenians would have observed (e.g. dogs, frogs) as well as to legendary beasts, fantastic hybrids and metamorphosed humans.

The book is divided into two parts, one focussed on politics and the other on poetics. Chapter 1, 'L'animal dans l'utopie pacifiste: vivre en paix, manger et faire l'amour', explores the 'double présence symbolique' (p. 17) of animals in the so-called peace plays (*Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Lysistrata*), where the consumption of animals expresses a longing for peace and animal comparisons are used to characterise the sordid appetites (both culinary and sexual) of Athenians during wartime. C.-M. describes the ways in which

edible animals become invested with distinct symbolic functions within each of the anti-war utopias: ‘rêve d’opulence’ in *Acharnians*; ‘tableau d’une campagne idéale’ in *Peace*; and the ‘rétablissement du dialogue entre Grecs’ in *Lysistrata*. Words associated with the famous Boeotian eel (ἔγγελος / ἐγγέλεια: e.g. *Ach.* 880–94, 962–3, 1043; *Peace* 1005–15; *Lys.* 36, 700–3) are prominent in the symbolic system C.-M. delineates; its import to Athens accompanies the return of peace in Aristophanes, who makes the eel ‘un emblème concret du panhellénisme’ (p. 36). The focus remains on consumption in Chapter 2, ‘La cuisine politique’, with a shift to the animal as a marker of the perversion of the ‘régime alimentaire’ in *Knights* and *Ecclesiazusae*. Although Aristophanic comedy repeatedly blames demagoguery for transforming Athenian democracy into a system governed only by the material comfort of the masses, C.-M. shows that Aristophanes deploys animal images in ways that condemn demagogues but also blame the Athenian people and their insatiable ‘citoyen-ventre’ (p. 82).

Chapter 3, ‘L’animal politique’, offers a broad consideration of Aristophanes’ use of animal comparisons as a source of invective. Insults and name-calling are the bread and butter of the Aristophanic bestiary, and the longest, most detailed sub-section of the book, ‘Invective et satire politique’, is primarily devoted to the numerous and various animal-insults aimed at Cleon. Aristophanes’ *bête noire* is commonly associated with animals known for rapacity and voracity, such as the gull (λάρος) and hawk (ἰεραξ), and animals believed to be coarse and disgusting, such as the pig (cf. Cleon’s supposed ὕμουσία, *Knights* 986) and dung-beetle (κάνθαρος). But C.-M. notes that even animals with traditionally positive connotations (the eagle or bee) can become ‘dévalorisée’ when linked to Cleon. C.-M. also notes a high concentration of insults involving the term κύων (frequently in compounds) in *Knights*, *Wasps* and *Peace*, connecting this to Cleon’s risky self-presentation as a ‘guard dog of the people’ during the years 424–421 B.C. In her discussions of animals in *Wasps* and *Birds* (the focus of Chapter 4, ‘Le sauvage et la Cité dans les Oiseaux’), C.-M. develops the notion of ‘métaphores réalisées’, which involves the concretisation onstage of some aspect of an animal image: the dog trial in *Wasps* recasts demagoguery’s dogginess as an actual dog; the chorus of old-men wasps materialises the proverbial irritability of old Athenian men in sting-equipped wasp costumes; and in *Birds* humans metamorphose into birds. In reflecting on the sources of Aristophanes’ bestiary, C.-M. describes a pattern according to which imagery inherited from the traditional symbolic bestiary of archaic poetry tends to be devalued or subverted in Aristophanic comedy (e.g. wasps are imagined as warriors in Homer, not as parasitic drones), whereas material inspired by popular imagery tends to be exaggerated or concretised in one way or another (e.g. the proverbial comparison of cantankerous individuals to wasps).

Part 2, ‘Bestiaire et poétique’, turns from politics to poetry, with chapters on *Frogs* and *Birds*. C.-M. is principally interested in the role played by animals in Aristophanes’ engagement with other literary genres and in comic reflections on the figure of the poet and literary composition in general. In the ‘bestiaire de la critique littéraire’ (p. 302), animal imagery plays a central role in staging the dialectic between ancient and new, high and low, serious and comic, criticism and imitation. In particular, the use of humble animals in the context of noble literary traditions (epic, lyric, tragic) creates ‘discordance de tons’ that is a ‘principe même de la paratragédie chez Aristophane’ (p. 211 n. 3). *Birds*, even more than *Frogs*, is identified as the most important site for Aristophanic use of literary-critical animals; this is because (in part) birds lend themselves so readily to comparisons with the genres of epic, lyric and tragedy. C.-M. presents close readings of the song of the Hoopoe and the parodos of *Birds* (pp. 255–79), which lead to what C.-M. calls Aristophanes’ third voice (neither pure fun nor earnest satire), a ‘lyrisme comique’ that effectively rejects the very notion of a hierarchy of literary genres: ‘Aristophanes remet en question la hiérarchie

des genres pour démontrer que la Comédie est un art majeur et lui donner ses lettres de noblesse' (p. 303).

Like zoo keeping, writing about animals may look like fun, but in practice it can be a messy business. So much has been written on the metaphorical function of animals in cultural and literary traditions, and much theoretical work besides has highlighted the slipperiness of the symbolic animal as an object of study. Thus it is in the end surprising to note how neatly the 'bestiaire d'Aristophane' can be folded into our standard readings of Aristophanic comedy. C.-M. frames her monograph with the claim that the bestiary is a 'clef d'interprétation' (p. 11 and p. 303), but because she generally ignores anthropological and literary theory – despite a momentary interest in Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, p. 211 – the traditional philological method she employs tends in most cases to confirm rather than challenge the *communis opinio*. But if the volume is light on revelation, it is unquestionably successful in demonstrating just how thoroughly animal imagery is woven into the fabric of Aristophanic comedy.

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## EMOTION, GENRE AND GENDER

MUNTEANU (D.L.) (ed.) *Emotion, Genre and Gender in Classical Antiquity*. Pp. viii + 269, ills. London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011. Cased, £50. ISBN: 978-0-7156-3895-8.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X12002260

This volume, which stems from a conference panel, undeniably contains some excellent scholarship. Nevertheless, it struggles to transcend the sum of its parts. This is partly due to a misleading title: few chapters deal in depth with emotion *and* genre *and* gender. Second, while several pairs of chapters work well together, only one page of the introduction discusses interconnections, and this reader spotted no cross-references in the chapters themselves. Another limitation (not clear from the title) is that the volume focusses mostly on poetic genres, with relatively little on prose.

In 'Veiling Grief on the Tragic Stage', D.L. Cairns examines veiling as a gesture of (relatively self-controlled) grief. He discusses several characters in Aeschylus and particularly Euripides, before arguing that veiling serves dramatically to separate the griever from others. However, a veil is also a metaphor, symbolising the grief hanging over the bereft. Finally, veiling can be a voluntary act within ritual mourning. The gesture is typical of women (for whom head covering need not signify emotion), and so particularly noteworthy when performed by a man (signifying temporary strong emotion); this leads to some more subtle points of gender difference. C. includes some instructive parallels to epic and imagery on pots, which lead him to conclude that there is 'no hard and fast disjunction between tragic and non-tragic veiling' (p. 26).

J. Wissman's 'Cowardice and Gender in the *Iliad* and Greek Tragedy' opens with Aristotle's comments relating cowardice to inappropriate fear. This is implicitly assumed to apply throughout the chapter, emotion not being mentioned again. W. argues – re Homer, Classical Athens and the modern US army – that room is always left to interpret whether actions are cowardly, affording space for rhetoric and imputation of motive. Iliadic male characters are anxious to avoid such accusations, cowardice being associated with femininity. In tragedy, this link continues: for men, cowardice (*anandria*) is unmanly;