Frontispiece. Four terracottas of comic actors
Courtesy British Museum.

1 Mon. Attic Terracotta 9b (p. 46); BM 1865.7–20.37. Old nurse in a himation (mantle), holding a baby on her arm. The child is swaddled, and wears a pointed cap. Early 4th cent.; from Athens (?); height 7.5 cm.

2 Mon. AT 26b (p. 69); BM 1842.7–28.752. Herakles, cross-legged, with club, lionskin, bow and quiver. He wears a dotted chiton (tunic) and looped phallos; same mask as A. Early 4th cent.; from Melos; height 9 cm. From a mythological burlesque? (see Bowie in this volume, pp. 319–24).

3 Mon. AT 10c (p. 47); BM 1907.5–18.7. Woman hiding her face with her himation. Early 4th cent.; provenance unknown; height 9.5 cm.

4 Mon. AT 6b (p. 43); BM 1880.11–13.3. Traveller wearing cloak and pilos (pointed felt cap), carrying flask and basket. Looped phallos; same mask as B. He has ‘slightly aggressive attitude’ (Green & Handley 60). Early 4th cent. from Tanagra (?); height 9 cm.
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*The terracotta figurines of comic actors*

Numerous terracotta figurines representing comic actors have survived from antiquity, and some have been used to illustrate this volume. One group serves as our frontispiece, and line-drawings of others will be found elsewhere. The figurines were made in Athens, and later in other places too, from moulds that could produce numerous identical copies. The clay was covered with a white slip before firing, and afterwards painted in bright colours, traces of which sometimes survive (details in Green 36). It would be interesting to create and paint some replicas, so as to recapture the original effect. Those that we illustrate are between 7.5 to 12 cm (roughly 3 to 5 inches) high; one (E) is larger (17 cm = nearly 7 inches).

Both sexes are depicted. Their bellies and bottoms are padded, a long-standing tradition going back to the seventh century. This was (presumably) considered funny in itself, but it would also protect the actor in more boisterous scenes, such as those which involved beatings and pratfalls. The men generally wear a *chitôn* (short tunic), which exposes the leather phallos that was characteristic of Old Comic costume, worn ‘to make the little boys laugh’, according to Aristophanes (*Clouds* 539), though in fact of ritual origin (*DFA* 220–2). It was normally rolled up in a loop (2, 4, A, B, D, F), but sometimes left to dangle. The women have longer dresses and cloaks, and preserve the decencies.

The terracottas make use of a limited range of forty-odd masks (*Monuments* 13–26; *DFA* 218–20): thus Herakles has the same mask in 2 and A, and so do figurines 4 and B. This does not imply that the dramatists of Old and early Middle Comedy restricted themselves to a similarly limited range of standard characters.

One of the most important finds is a group of fourteen found in a single tomb in
Athens, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Mon. pp. 45–60; illustrated in Bieber 1961 pp. 46–7). It is no longer believed that these (or any others) formed a set illustrating a single play.

These figurines were enormously popular, and not only in Attica: they are found all over mainland Greece, the islands of the Aegean, Asia Minor, South Russia (the Taman region), Cyrenaica, south Italy, Sicily (including the Lipari islands), even Spain (details in Mon. and Green 64–5). We are rarely well informed about the contexts in which they were discovered. People will have kept them at home as souvenirs of performances, as we know from those found at Olynthos, but they were also placed in graves to commemorate the interests of the deceased.

The surviving figurines are carefully catalogued in Mon., and there is an excellent discussion in Green 1994, 36–8. Bieber 1961 offers a generous selection of illustrations of some seventy pieces from our period, but her interpretations are fanciful. (She writes of F: ‘He is jumping in undisguised terror over some obstacle. He is obviously [our italics] a coward running away from an imaginary danger, after a lot of high-flown talk’ [p. 42]). By contrast, the descriptions in Mon. are admirably cautious.

However, chronology presents difficulties, and remains controversial. Some scholars have dated the earliest examples to the end of the fifth century (Mon. pp. 1–3, 29, 45–6; Green 1994; Green & Handley 58, 115), but this view is based on the archaeological associations of a single example, which may be fortuitous (Nicholls 473–4 n. 320). If so, the genre will have been born a couple of decades later, at about the time that the rivals of Aristophanes were dying. A mould could be used again and again over a lengthy period, and it was easy to create new moulds from the figurines. Figurines of this and other types continued to be produced throughout the fourth century and beyond. Mon. divides its material by quarter-centuries, but such precision is at present unattainable, and as far as the terracottas are concerned its dates may be too early. We have preferred to use the deliberately vague phrase ‘early fourth century’. 

Bieber M., Die Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen im Altertum, Berlin and Leipzig 1920
DFA = Pickard-Cambridge A.W., The Dramatic Festivals of Athens², revised by J. Gould
& D.M. Lewis, Oxford 1968, 214–5 and figs. 89–102
Mon. = T.B.L. Webster & J.R. Green, Monuments illustrating Old and Middle Comedy³ =
BICS Supplement 39 London 1978
Trendall A.D. & Webster T.B.L., Illustrations of Greek Drama, London 1971, 126–7

Line-drawings by Myfanwy Tristram, after the excellent photographs in Bieber 1920 and elsewhere. We are most grateful to Lucilla Burn for advice on chronological problems.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most of the chapters in this volume are based on papers given at the conference of the same name held in September 1996 under the joint auspices of UWICAH (the University of Wales Institute of Classics and Ancient History) and the London Classical Society. The conference took place in the hospitable surroundings of the Institute of Classical Studies, then at 31–34 Gordon Square, London, and was sponsored by the British Academy, the A.G. Leventis Foundation, the London Foundation for Hellenic Culture and the University of Wales.

This book could not have been published without the exceptionally generous financial support that we have received again from the A.G. Leventis Foundation, to whom we offer our warmest thanks. We are also most grateful to the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies (and their officers Prof. Brian Sparkes and Russell Shone) for a further generous grant, chiefly towards the cost of illustrations. We have been sustained in all the difficulties of our task by the unfailing good will and good humour of our colleagues in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Exeter.

Throughout the laborious task of checking details the resources of the following libraries have proved invaluable: the Ashmolean and Bodleian, the Joint Library of the Hellenic and Roman Societies in London, and, to a lesser extent, those of the Warburg Institute and the University of Exeter. We also thank colleagues in the Common Room at the Institute of Classical Studies for answering assorted questions and for conversational relief from bibliographical chores.

But above all we are grateful to our twenty-six contributors for their patience, friendship, encouragement and co-operation over an exceptionally lengthy period of gestation. The entire book was prepared on disc by David Harvey, who is also responsible for stylistically tweaking the prose of non-anglograph scholars. We also applaud the courage of our publisher Anton Powell for undertaking the risk of publishing such an exceptionally large volume.

In the final stages we have benefited from the careful typographical work of Ernest Buckley. For proof-reading we are indebted to the care and accuracy of Francis Harvey and Hazel Harvey, that ‘hawk-eyed dove of peace’, who was also treasurer of the conference and the publication. A complete account of all the ways in which she has helped with this book would require another volume.

We are most grateful to the following for supplying photographs and for permission to reproduce them: Sir John Boardman, Oxford; Dr Lucilla Burn, London; Mrs Jan Jordan, Athens; Dr Suzy Marcon, Venice; Prof. Peter Parsons, Oxford; Dr Oliver Rackham, Cambridge; Mrs Bodil Bundgaard Rasmussen, Copenhagen; M. Romito, Salerno; Eileen Sullivan, New York; and
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K. Zisopoulos, Athens; to Anna Zawadzki of the Oxford University Press for negotiating permission to reprint entries from the third edition of the Oxford Classical Dictionary; and to Sir John Boardman, Lucilla Burn, Eric Handley, Olga Palagia and Oliver Taplin for advice and information on the illustrations. The notes on these illustrations are by David Harvey.

We also thank Paul Cartledge for his help and encouragement, Gregory Dobrov and Juan Miguel Labiano Ilundain for giving us books, Thomas Braun for providing the Epigraph, and Mike Dobson for help with the electronic transmission of Fig. 4. There are certainly others from whose kindness we have benefited during the four-year gestation of this book: we apologize to anyone we may have overlooked, and thank them too.
A LETTER
TO THE
Reverend Dr. SH---N.
Written in the Year 1718.

by JONATHAN SWIFT

WHATE'ER your Predecessors taught us
I have a great esteem for Plautus;
And think your Boys may gather there-hence
More Wit and Humour than from Terence.
But as to Comic Aristophanes,
The Rogue's too Bawdy and too Prophane is.
I went in vain to look for Eupolis,
Down in the Strand just where the new Pole is,
For I can tell you one thing, that I can,
You will not find it in the Vatican.
He and Cratinus used, as Horace says,
To take his greatest Grandees for Asses.
Poets, in those Days, us'd to venture high
But these are lost full many a Century.

THUS you may see, dear Friend, ex pede hence
My Judgment of the old Comedians.

... And now I find my Muse but ill able
To hold out longer in Trisyllable.

* N.B. The Strand in LONDON. The fact may be false, but the Rhyme cost me some Trouble.

Dr Thomas Sheridan (1687–1738) was a Dublin schoolmaster and friend of Swift who published translations of Persius, Juvenal and Sophocles’ Philoctetes.
Line 6: ‘Prophane’ must be stressed on the first syllable. The Oxford English Dictionary gives no authority for this pronunciation, which is presumably a comic distortion by Swift to create a rhyme for ‘Aristophanes’.
Line 8: Harold Williams, in his edition of Swift’s Poems, vol. 3 (2nd edn, Oxford 1958, 988), compares line 8 to The Dunciad 2.28: ‘Where the tall May-pole once o’erlooked the Strand’, and adds: ‘In the year 1718, when Swift wrote these lines, the Maypole erected opposite Somerset House was taken down, and was not replaced. Its predecessor, removed in 1713, was originally 134 feet high.’
Terracotta A. Mon. AT 11 (p. 48). Herakles with finger in mouth, wearing lion-skin and carrying club. Looped phallos; same mask as Frontispiece 2. Early 4th cent.; examples found in Athens and Paestum; height 12 cm. From a mythological burlesque? (see Bowie in this volume, pp. 319–24). Bieber 1961, 47 suggests that the gesture denotes hunger.
INTRODUCTION

John Wilkins

The audiences who watched the original performances of Aristophanes in the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens knew a great deal about his rivals. They witnessed, for example, the triumph of Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* over Cratinus’ *Chheimazomenoi* (*Tempest-Tossed*) in 425 BC and, conversely, of Cratinus’ *Pytinē* (*Wine Flask*) over Aristophanes’ *Clouds* in 423. We are not so fortunate. No complete play of any other poet of Old Comedy survives. Yet these poets are indispensable for anyone interested in Old Comedy. Aristophanes should surely not be read in a cultural vacuum, as if he were writing plays for their own sake and not in competition at major civic festivals. Furthermore, his attacks on his rivals are an important part of his comic rhetoric: take, for example, his comments on Cratinus, Eupolis and others at *Knights* 507–50 and *Clouds* 518–62.

Much, however, is known about these rival comic poets. There are the comments of Aristophanes himself, ancient anecdotes and summaries of plays, and above all the fragments of the comic poets (including lost plays of Aristophanes). The fragments are currently being edited by R. Kassel and C. Austin in *Poetae Comici Graeci* (Berlin and New York, 1983–), which is now nearing completion. These splendid volumes have inspired us to produce the present volume, *The Rivals of Aristophanes*. Kassel and Austin present all the surviving texts and fragments, with commentary and bibliography. It would have been difficult to assemble a book like *The Rivals of Aristophanes* before their publication. There are too many rival poets to include in a single work, but we have covered a large number of them and all are noted in our Biographical Appendix.

The present work is divided into five sections: editing comic fragments (chapter 1), the poets of Old Comedy (chapters 2–13), the transition to Middle Comedy (chapters 14–15), literary themes (chapters 16–19) and social themes (chapters 20–28). The aim of this book is two-fold: to present an assessment of many of the rival poets and to compare them with the plays of Aristophanes, in order to understand better his comic achievement. Some chapters assess all of a rival poet’s work, while others discuss a particular play or topics in Aristophanes and in the lost plays. Large issues such as the definition of ‘Old’ and ‘Middle’ comedy are also addressed. We address general problems arising from the editing of fragments (chapter 1) and discuss the possible authorship of a recently-found fragment of papyrus (chapter 11). We also pay attention to the evidence of artefacts and vase-paintings, some of which
Introduction

are included as illustrations in the volume. A possible portrait of Eupolis is considered in chapter 10.

Contributors to the volume include a number of editors of Aristophanes, whose books are widely used: Kenneth Dover’s *Clouds* (Oxford, 1968) and *Frogs* (Oxford, 1993), Jeffrey Henderson’s *Lysistrata* (Oxford, 1987), Douglas Olson’s *Peace* (Oxford, 1998) (Olson’s *Knights* is forthcoming from Oxford) and Alan Sommerstein’s edition with excellent translations of all the plays of Aristophanes (Warminster, 1980–): all these form the foundation for any study of Aristophanes. We are delighted to present these authors’ views on the rivals of Aristophanes alongside contributions from an international array of other textual scholars, literary scholars and ancient historians.

Naturally this is not the only recent collection of essays on the rivals of Aristophanes (Gregory Dobrov has recently edited *Beyond Aristophanes: transition and diversity in Greek comedy*, Atlanta 1995), but we have tried to include as many of the rival poets as possible and as many academic approaches as possible.¹ We have also tried to make the fragmentary plays as accessible as we can by translating virtually all the Greek texts that are discussed by our contributors. (A translation of many of the fragments edited by Kassel and Austin is currently in progress in the United States, under the general editorship of Jeffrey Rusten.) Many of the chapters in this volume began life as papers presented to the conference entitled *The Rivals of Aristophanes*, which was held at the Institute of Classical Studies in London in 1996. We have enriched the volume by commissioning a number of additional chapters. The conference allowed contributors to exchange and develop their views and we believe that the current volume has greatly benefited from that interaction.

Aristophanes should have the last word: ὁ σοφῶτατος θεσαυρὸν τὸν νοῦν προσέχετε (*Clouds* 575).

Note

¹ Readers may be interested in a work related to the present volume, D. Braund and J. Wilkins (eds.) *Athenaeus and his World*, Exeter 2000.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations are generally those used in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Liddell and Scott’s *Greek Lexicon* and *L’Année philologique*, but we have occasionally printed fuller forms to avoid obscurity.