

MARSHALL (C.W.) **Aristophanes: *Frogs***. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Pp. xiii + 162, illus. £18.99. 9781350080911.  
doi:[10.1017/S0075426923000228](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426923000228)

This publication belongs to the series Bloomsbury Ancient Comedy Companions, a growing collection that already contains volumes on plays by Aristophanes, Menander, Plautus and Terence. Contributors to the series, of which Christopher W. Marshall is an editor, are clearly given freedom regarding the presentation of their respective companions. Matthew Wright, for example, organized his book on Menander's *Samia* (London and New York 2021) by the play's five acts, whereas George Frederic Franko approached Plautus' *Mostellaria* (London and New York 2022) via the comedy's social context, staging and reception.

Marshall's own companion to *Frogs* is divided into 29 bite-sized chapters. The result is an easily navigable book that lets readers browse by passage or by theme, as Marshall suggests in the introduction ('Hopping: some ways to read this book'). Eighteen of the chapters are devoted to episodes of the comedy, covering the entire play in line order, with additional chapters looking at Dionysus, the Lenaia, costuming, translation, the seriousness of comedy, Aristophanes' career and more. Most chapters are only three or four pages long. Despite this brevity, Marshall manages to include enlightening comments on almost every imaginable subject. Indeed, although the main chapters each correspond to a specific section of the play, they do not merely recount and summarize the action. Rather, Marshall interweaves discussions on many topics that include, although are not limited to, the Battle of Arginusae, the 'wheeled stage platform' (*ekkuklēma*), New Music, wordplay, Athenian politics, the relationship of *Frogs* to earlier comedies, actor and role division, the use of incense in performances, parody and paratragedy. This makes for a fast-paced and rich discussion, thankfully accompanied by a decent index.

As the series title indicates, this book is a companion, not an introduction. It would be best read alongside a text or translation. I feel it would work particularly well in a classroom setting. The chapters are short enough to be added to reading assignments without overburdening students, even if some might find the content occasionally challenging (for example, the dense metrical terminology at the beginning of Chapter 15 or the inclusion of transliterated Greek words throughout). Analogies and references to modern phenomena, such as the Academy Awards, videogames or pop music, help bridge the cultural gap to the classical Greek world. Most chapters contain material that could be used to spark class debates. Sometimes readers are nudged in that direction, as in the chapter on translations, where Marshall poses unanswered questions ('should poetry always be translated into verse?' (108), '[for] references to contemporary Athenians: do you leave them as is or find a local equivalent?' (107)). Other chapters, such as 'Mysteries', on lines 323–459 of *Frogs*, summarize the conflicting views of modern scholars and thus make good candidates for critical discussion. Marshall is not afraid to let his own voice shine through, of course on questions regarding staging, but also on politics in modern anglophone countries, the canonization of tragedy, the 'flask' (*lēkuthion*) joke or whether it is Euripides or Aeschylus who is 'wise' (*sophos*) in line 1413 of the play (on that last question, Marshall could also have pointed readers to David Rosenbloom, 'The Comedians' Aeschylus', in Rebecca Futo Kennedy (ed.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aeschylus* (Leiden 2017), 54–87). Finally, Marshall's opening and closing chapters are intellectually rigorous and would work well as classroom introductions to the context and the afterlife of *Frogs*, as well as to different interpretative approaches.

Not only students but also experienced scholars will find much of value in this companion, not least a couple of rare photos of modern stage productions of *Frogs* (one Greek, one Cypriot), as well as the bonus cover image, in colour, taken from the 2013

Cambridge Greek Play directed by Helen Eastman. Advanced students and critics will appreciate the list of ancient Greek and Roman sources that either mention or suggest familiarity with *Frogs* (Chapter 26), Marshall's reflections on re-performances of Aeschylean tragedy and their possible impact on Euripides' career (Chapter 24; here Marshall might have added a reference to Anna Lamari (ed.), 'Reperformances of Drama in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC: Authors and Contexts', *Trends in Classics* 7.2 (2015), 259–76), as well as the illuminating chapter on 20th-century productions that discusses George Bernard Shaw, Stephen Sondheim and Tom Stoppard, showing how these 'creative minds have engaged with the play' (112).

All in all, this companion is a joyful read, packed with information and insight. One looks forward to further companions on Aristophanes appearing in this accessible series, hopefully all as engaging and informative as Marshall's.

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MASTELLARI (V.) (ed.) **Fragments in Context – Frammenti e dintorni** (Studia Comica 11). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2021. Pp. 236. €80. 9783946317265. doi:[10.1017/S0075426923000307](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426923000307)

This engaging and challenging volume brings together several speeches held at the Academy of German studies in Merano, Italy, in 2019 and puts forward different approaches, though in a rather homogeneous fashion, on common pitfalls and methodologies facing fragmentary texts. In this respect, the English title *Fragments in Context* seems to be perfectly fitting, whereas the Italian subtitle *Frammenti e dintorni* gives a confusing rendering of 'context', a technical term of literary theory, as 'thereabouts', a colloquial and generic term.

What appears to be the main thrust of Patrick Finglass' initial contribution (13–22) is his methodological interest in establishing a 'code of conduct' for future curators of fragment editions, so as to identify a set of principles on how to determine the parts of context relevant to a full understanding of the fragment, and why the primary author chose the particular citation. In contrast to some editors, notably of Stesichorus, who tend to minimize the context or limit its visibility on the one hand and to hypothesize a theoretically limitless scope thereof on the other, Finglass touches upon a point that will become a useful signpost throughout this volume: namely to underline the aporetic aspect of any hypothesis in regard to a given fragment, emphasizing at the same time the utmost restraint regarding its reconstruction, which may be often just described as *exempli gratia*. The risk being, as the author jokingly admits, to become 'no longer an editor but an artist in [one's] own right' (22).

Franco Montanari's paper (23–38) has far-reaching implications in regard to the necessity, methodologically speaking, of deepening the historical-cultural meaning of the praxis of citation in literary erudition. Studying citations in their own context, which to us are fragments, becomes a way to shed some light on key procedures that turn citations into exegetical tools or informative and erudite support, by the same token illustrating the path of classical philology. Drawing a general frame of great complexity and enormous importance, Montanari points the way to further research by presenting some fragments of Old Comedy from the *Iliad's* scholia.