

Peisetairos vis-à-vis the Olympians may serve as an indication of his attempt to counterbalance the impiety underlying the basic assumptions of his present plot (pp. 11-14). Dunbar's failure to include in her discussion a long list of recently published literary studies of *Birds* (see e.g. Storey's surveys in *EMC* 1987, 1-30; *Antichthon* 1992, 1-29) is puzzling, especially in a book which is so markedly consistent elsewhere in providing the reader with as much information as possible on any other given issue emerging from the text.

These reservations by no means detract from the overall significance of this most valuable edition of *Birds*. There is no doubt that it will remain the standard commentary on this play for many years to come.

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Christopher Carey, *Trials from Classical Athens*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997. viii + 247 pp. ISBN 0-415-107-601 (hbk); 0-415-10761-X (pbk).

This volume is a collection of seventeen freshly translated Athenian law-court speeches. Christopher Carey (hereafter C.) justifies its publication on the grounds that there is a growing general interest in four subjects about which these speeches are indeed a mine of information. These are Athenian law, the art of persuasion, the interaction between Athenian drama and the social and political values of the city, and the social and economic history of the ancient world. The volume's declared aim being 'to bring together a number of the most interesting and informative texts in a single volume' (vii), C. presents the reader with a selection of cases ranging from 'homicide' and 'assault and wounding' through 'property', 'commerce' and 'citizenship' to 'slander'. He appends to each speech brief but reliable comments on legal issues and rhetorical strategy. His translations, intended to remain close to the original Greek, are accurate if uninspired. A discussion of the technicalities of forensic rhetoric and Athenian legal process, brief bibliographical references to the authors represented and an introduction to the Athenian calendar and currency help the uninitiated reader to find his or her way round the intricacies of Athenian life in the late fifth and fourth centuries BC.

This is a welcome addition to the constantly growing list of Athenian oratory in translation. C.'s collection is a considerable improvement upon Kathleen Freeman's *The Murder of Herodes and other Trials*, 1963. (The two works overlap to some extent: eight of the 16 speeches included in C.'s collection were also dealt with by Freeman). Unlike Freeman, C. does not strive to impress upon the reader how 'unlike us' the Athenians were. Nor does he resort to those outdated equations (three talents = 3600 pounds sterling) that have long marred modern conceptions of ancient society. He would have done even better had he provided a glossary explaining certain terms that are hard to translate. That, however, is not the reason why I think his book could mislead a non-professional public.

My concern is that when confronted with the workings of the ancient economy C. adopts the modernist position without warning the reader that he has done so. In

subtle ways, he reinforces the misapprehension that the only difference between the Athenian and modern economy is quantitative, that the Athenian economy was not, to use Polanyi's famous phrase, 'embedded' in non-economic functions. One example will suffice to illustrate this point.

Item XII in C.'s collection is the third oration in the corpus attributed to Hypereides, a speech entitled *Against Athenogenes*. The speaker here, an Athenian landowner, is suing Athenogenes, a metic perfumer, for selling him three slaves and a perfumery while concealing the fact that the perfumery is encumbered with debt. He resorts to both legal and moral arguments to drive home the point that he has been cheated. The legal ones were shaky in the extreme: he has to argue the case for the cancellation of the contract by analogy with a law dealing with the sale of slaves. This is why he resorts to moral arguments to add weight to his case. What sort of appeal does *he* expect these arguments to have? How are *we* to interpret them?

C.'s translation would seem to suggest that the speaker's moral arguments drew their force from the internal logic of rational economic action. He presents an attempt by the speaker to counter Athenogenes' plea of ignorance as follows: '[It is incredible that I, who have no experience] *in market business* (τά ἐν ἀγορᾷ) discovered all the debts and friendly loans in three months without any effort, while this man, a third generation perfume seller, sitting in the agora every day, the owner of three perfume shops from which he received accounts every month, did not know the debts' (Hyper 3.19, my italics). The speaker's assumption is, in other words, that the dikasts will be spellbound by the following line of reasoning: the speaker is inexperienced in market business but has still managed to discover the debts, Athenogenes is experienced in market business but denies any knowledge of the debts, ergo Athenogenes must be lying.

In my view, however, even though the logic of rational economic action is certainly there, it is adumbrated by another motif that is almost totally lost in C.'s translation. This is how I suggest the speaker's words would have been understood by the dikasts: 'It is incredible that I, a free, land-owning citizen, who have understandably no experience in the mean, dirty mercantile business that is conducted in the agora, should have found out about all the debts and friendly loans in three months without the slightest effort, while this lowly metic-merchant, a third generation perfume seller, who sits in the agora every day, the owner of three perfume shops from which he was receiving monthly accounts, knew nothing about these debts'. The speaker, to put it another way, gave his words added weight by invoking the idea of status. It is a pity that C., in this important collection, has not helped his readers to perceive that in ancient Athens considerations of status were fused with those whose rationale was economic — that, to paraphrase an observation made by an ideologue now out of fashion, status-consciousness masked economic consciousness.