troubled by individual passages of this work: it may occasionally be Skemp’s translation, but Rowe has the Greek alongside, and it will certainly be Rowe’s introduction and notes. I shall also have *Reading the Statesman* not too far away.

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A good cheap commentary on a rich primary source, aided and abetted by skilful reference to a good bibliography, is sometimes worth more than a score of monographs on its themes. Sommerstein is already well known for his racy Penguin translations of several of Aristophanes’ plays, and these must be now supplemented by his series of texts, translations and commentaries for Aris and Phillips. Vol. 8 in the series *The Comedies of Aristophanes* is a suitable text to set for students who have the good fortune to be required to have a little Greek as well. The Penguin translations are fun enough on their own, and informative enough too, but even beginning students of Greek will enjoy the challenge of spotting the gender changes in the vocabulary of this play and deciphering the barbaric language of the Scythian archer in their original form.
There is as usual in this series an introduction, select bibliography, text, translation and commentary, as well as scholarly apparatus. The introduction is suitably brief and gives basic information about the play and its context as well as themes such as gender inversion that influence the language and action of this 'drama about drama and gender'. The play itself is of course one of the best and Sommerstein is very good at capturing its various spirits in his translation; thus of the effect on In-law of Agathon's strange poetry: 'how feminacious, how fully tongued, how frenchkissy!' (1.130); thus the fast pace of the description of the pretended birth of the new baby for the expectant father: 'He ran out of the room, delighted; she pulled the thing out of the baby's mouth; it bawled' (1.510-511). The choral hymns with their holy 'thou's stand out perfectly against this, while the shading of the official language of the women's business into common gossip is extremely well managed, as is the similar shading of the tragic solemnity of Euripides' rescue scenes into comic desperation. I think that these various tones could actually be gauged from the translation alone, so well-done it is, but finding them in the original is more rewarding. Sommerstein is also very good on the effects of the different metres and rhythms in the language. He hopes to convey some of his own delight in the play to his readers and fully succeeds. His explanations of the puns and other kinds of linguistic humour are very clear, even where an ordinary reader might at first be bemused by what lurks in the translation alone, so well-done it is, but finding them in the original is more rewarding. Sommerstein is also very good on the effects of the different metres and rhythms in the language. He hopes to convey some of his own delight in the play to his readers and fully succeeds. His explanations of the puns and other kinds of linguistic humour are very clear, even where an ordinary reader might at first be bemused by what lurks in the translated line: thus the play on δεῖ and σιγάν in the opening scene, or the gender confusions. Literal meanings are supplied to bridge the distance between modern English and ancient Greek where the apt English equivalent cannot be found. The sexual and lavatory humour is translated and explained without strain, and often with humour. These vocabularies are so culturally determined that international agreement on the appropriate English may not be possible, but let it be recorded that
it mostly worked for me as a woman speaker of New Zealand English. 'Willy' is not quite my word, but going to the 'bog' (1.485) in the conditions of ancient Athens perfectly hit the spot and met all requirements.

The plot of course has the tragic poet Euripides trying to prevent the women of Athens ganging up on him for his scandalous tragic portrayals of mythic women. He disguises his reluctant in-law as a woman to speak on his behalf in the all-female festival of the Thesmophoria where the women intend to 'do him in', but In-law is detected, and the comic business then centres on Euripides rescuing him in scenes which come from his own plays and play out the rescues of various women from myth. The play thus offers a rich comic blend of views on the Festival of the Thesmophoria and the activities of the women who participate, literary theory and the tragic poet, be he Agathon or Euripides, contemporary politics and politicians and a very full dramatization of the barbarian in the form of the Scythian archer. These are all matters of contemporary interest in classical scholarship. The commentary is rich in information and insight, referring to up to date secondary literature for the larger themes that cannot be developed in the space available, while discussing the significant detail at appropriate length; these latter include the most beautiful penis shape (like an acorn) and the confusion between male and female pissoirs (narrow and small apertures). The parodies of Euripides' rescue scenes are helpfully accompanied by tables to show where the adaptions have been made. It is fair to say that such a play and such an edition deserve better than camera ready copy, but that's the price you pay for such a cheap and useful production. Scholars will find illumination in it. I read it right through and could not put it down. It is perfect for teaching at university level. Every schoolteacher of Aristophanes should have a copy and inspire their students to learn Greek with all speed, so that they can reap the full benefit of it.

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