

ΜΕΓΑΣ IS NOT MUTUNIATUS

Professor W. M. Calder III, in his note, "Aristophanes *Vespae* 68–69: An Unnoticed Obscenity," *CP*, LXV (1970), 257, suggested that ὁ μέγας, said of Bdelycleon at *Vespae* 69, has the obscene sense of *mutuniat*, *mentulatus*, *magno membro virili praeditus*, instead of simply "that tall man there."

I do not think his interpretation is likely.

(1) A tall man is always tall, whether he is standing or reclining (as Bdelycleon is here). (2) More important, in none of the four instances cited by Calder does μέγας mean *mutuniat*.

(a) *Nubes* 549: ὃς μέγιστον ὄντα Κλέων' ἔπαισ' means simply, "I struck Cleon when he was at the height of his power," i.e., 424 B.C. in *Equites*.

(b) *Aves* 1733: ἄρχοντα . . . μέγαν, said of Zeus, means "mighty," without any obscene sense. The same is true of *Nubes* 564 f., Ζῆνα τύραννον . . . μέγαν. Cf. *Nubes* 1239, τὸν Δία τὸν μέγαν, and *Aves* 570, ὁ μέγας Ζεὺς. This is Zeus's standing epithet from Homer (*Iliad* 18. 292, etc.) onwards (cf. K. Bruchmann, *Epi-*

theta deorum [Leipzig, 1893], pp. 133–34).

(c) Sappho Frag. 111. 6 L.-P.: a bridegroom is said to be "far taller than a tall man" because he is "like Ares." As we happen to know the size of Ares (seven plethra, *Iliad* 21. 407), we need not interpret the bridegroom as a "fantastically ithyphallic" man, as G. S. Kirk has done, *CQ*, N.S. XIII (1963), 51–52.

(d) Finally, Elegeis' oracle to Neleus (*apud* Tzetzes on Lycophron 1368 and *Etym. magn.*, s.v. ἀσελγάνειν): the words "θαλερόν πόσιν and μέγαν ἄνδρα clearly mean the same thing," as H. Lloyd-Jones puts it, *CQ*, N.S. XVII (1967), 168. If so, then μέγας ἄνθρωπος need not imply more than does the Homeric cliché θαλερός πόσις (*Iliad* 8. 190), i.e., "a vigorous husband," without any obscene sense.

Thus, μέγας (ἄνθρωπος) meaning *mutuniat* cannot be established. *Pax* 1349 (τοῦ μὲν μέγα καὶ παχύ [sc., τὸ πέος]) and *Lysistrata* 23 (τί τὸ πρᾶγμα; πηλίκον τι;—Μέγα.—Μῶν καὶ παχύ;) are something different.

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PROFESSOR CALDER REPLIES

I applaud Professor Marcovich's timely and prompt *cri de coeur*. *Vespae* may again be read in safety by sixth-form boys. If he detects nothing obscene in the passages he lists, I am reluctant to disillusion him. He is too formidable an adversary. His strength is as the strength of ten because his heart is pure. But three points ought perhaps to be made. A tall man is always tall only if tall means tall. If I am right, Bdelycleon may be short and *mutoniat*. As to parallels, a thousand of them cannot prove the 1001st example not to be obscene. "To pull out" is innocuous American, but "Pull out, Nixon, like your father should have" in *Hair* (an Old Comedy) draws smiles from native American speakers. Then too there are

theatergoers and theatergoers. At *Greek Scenic Conventions* (Oxford, 1962), page 29, Professor Arnott innocently writes of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, "In the orchestra was some erection which had to be mounted." This Professor Marcovich could perhaps read to an Urbana audience without a blush. In my Columbia lectures, it brings down the house. The *context* of *Vespae* 68–69 makes the obscenity for theatergoers who, like myself and Aristophanes, have obscene minds; and all of Professor Marcovich's parallels will never make the couplet clean again.

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