



NOTICES

HALLIWELL (S.) (trans.) *Aristophanes: Acharnians, Knights, Wasps, Peace. A Verse Translation, with Introductions and Notes*. Pp. civ + 359. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £90, US\$115. ISBN: 978-0-19-814995-8.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X23001415

This is the third and final volume of the series edited by H. of ‘Verse Translations, with Introductions and Notes’ of the eleven surviving plays by Aristophanes. It is a valuable work, not because the previous volumes published in 1998 and 2016 were less interesting or successful: on the contrary, there is a strong unity in the quality and usefulness of the translations. H. is a sensitive translator of this ‘author for the stage’, to quote a famous book by C.F. Russo (1962), and each play is preceded by an introductory passage that will be of great help for less expert readers, making the volume accessible to a wide readership. However, what makes this work particularly appealing is the decision to conclude the journey starting from the beginning of Aristophanes’ career, from the period in which he was more involved in satire against Cleon and, more generally, in Athenian politics of the so-called Archidamic phase of the Peloponnesian War, covering the years from *Acharnians* of 425 to *Peace* of 421 BCE. *Acharnians* and *Peace, Knights* and *Wasps* are the comedies translated and interpreted by H. in this volume. We therefore enter straight into the heart of a debate that still remains greatly discussed and largely unresolved today: that regarding the ‘politicality’ of Aristophanic comedy and, indeed, a large part of the production of the *archaia*, renowned for being characterised by tones similar to those found in these plays (see e.g. authors such as Cratinus, Eupolis, Plato Comicus).

After a general introduction and a select bibliography, which present, with appropriate updates, the same sections already included in the two previous volumes, the introductions to the individual plays now include a reflection on the issues that H. has dealt with, since starting out as a scholar specialising in Aristophanic comedy and in the history, forms and rituals of satire. In the often hotly contested debate between opposing critical positions, the richness and sensitivity of H.’s reflections are most refreshing, acting as a counterpoint to those who continue to revive with stubborn complacency *tranchant* readings of Aristophanes, depicting him as an exponent of a certain political ‘party’ and his works as ‘documents’ of history. These interpretations are impossible to verify and pay scant regard to the eminently literary status of the comedies, which belong to a genre and ‘satirical’ tradition with deep roots, the cultural and anthropological significance of which should not be so recklessly dismissed. How else are we to explain how Cleon, although violently attacked in *Knights* through his stunt double Paphlagon and then expelled from the city as an abject ‘scapegoat’, was successfully re-elected as a *strategos* just a few weeks later by the same citizens who had previously laughed at his portrayal in the theatre? Some light on this complex matter may be shed by the ‘satirical’ interpretation defended by H., who claims that ‘*Knights*’ picture of Paphlagon is, therefore, an exercise in the crude distortion of social and economic facts for the purposes of satirical stereotyping’ (p. 78). Similarly, we may agree with H. that both *Acharnians* and its protagonist ‘are, as it were, matching phenomena of Dionysiac festivity’ (pp. 15–16).

University of Bari Aldo Moro

PIERO TOTARO
pietro.totaro@uniba.it