

A. M. BOWIE: *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993. xvi, 328 p. GBP 40.00.

Nowadays there is an increasing body of opinion that Athenian drama cannot be viewed simply as literary products of individual authors. The collective and religious setting of the original performances and the intimate connection with the ideological structures of the Athenian *polis* have been most recently stressed e.g. by the present reviewer in *Arctos* 26 (1992) 19-37 and by S. Des Bouvrie in *Kernos* 6 (1993) 79-112.

The book under review departs from similar assumptions. But whereas the above mentioned contributions focus on drama as a *polis* ritual without analyzing in detail scripts of particular plays, the present volume concentrates on the extant works of Aristophanes to exemplify how they functioned in their contemporary context of Athenian culture. Bowie views the plays essentially from the perspective of the employer and the audience (the *polis* in both cases) instead of the alleged individual concerns of the playwright and ends up with the sound judgement that "Aristophanes may now be freed from debates about his personal views, political, social and sexual orientation, attitude to intellectual matters, changing attitudes to Athenian life with the passage of time, and so on, and be allowed to see his name become synonymous with his texts. I am not, of course denying that he had personal views, but I am not convinced that Lenaea and Dionysia were the vehicles for their dissemination" (p. 293).

What Bowie examines, then, are the texts, not the author. The method used is largely influenced by the French school of structural anthropology which sees various cultural phenomena as reflecting the ideology of the society and, consequently, tries to view a single cultural creation within the whole system. The overall standard of the discussion seems high although in details there may be some forcing and, of course, room for disagreement. However, it becomes clear that Greek rituals and myths – also in a distorted form as is typical of the irrational world of comedy – in manifold and significant ways lie behind the structures of the plays. This is the main result of the book and a good basis for further discussion.

*Jaakko Aronen*

SVEN-TAGE TEODORSSON: *A commentary on Plutarch's Table Talks. Vol.I (Books 1-3)*. Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia, LI. Göteborg 1989. 393 p. ISBN 91-7346-219-5. – *Vol.II (Books 4-6)*. Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia, LIII. Göteborg 1990. 302 p. ISBN 91-7346-227-6.