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FREDERICK E. BRENK: *With Unperfumed Voice. Studies in Plutarch, in Greek Literature, Religion and Philosophy, and in the New Testament Background*. Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 21. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2007. ISBN 978-3-515-08929-6. 544 pp. EUR 85.

Questo volume è il terzo della serie che raccoglie il considerevole contributo di Padre Brenk agli studi letterario-filosofico-religiosi antichi. Come nel caso dei due precedenti editi dalla stessa casa editrice (*Relighting the Souls*, 1998; *Clothed in Purple Light*, 1999), il titolo del presente volume richiama uno scrittore antico che questa volta è Plutarco (la voce della Sibilla è definita "senza profumi" negli *Oracoli della Pizia* 397a). Complessivamente i vari temi e discipline sono rappresentati come segue: Plutarco (12 articoli e 2 recensioni), filosofia (4 e 1: biblioteche; autosufficienza; escatologia), religione (5: Artemis; culti isiaci), magia (1), Nuovo Testamento e primo cristianesimo (5; il n. 30, sul procuratore della Giudea Felix e le sue mogli, è scritto insieme con Filippo Canali de Rossi), biografia (1: del compianto Padre Des Places). Alcuni dei testi sono nuovi, come il primo della sezione dedicata a Plutarco ("Speaking with Unperfumed Words, Reaches to a Thousand Years. Plutarch and His Age", pp. 17–51), dove Brenk considera Plutarco come un appassionato visionario dalle idee molteplici e originali (va notato, del resto, che Padre Brenk è cofondatore dell'*International Plutarch Society*).

Si tratta di un volume tematicamente alquanto eterogeneo e di ineguale qualità, nel quale comunque ogni lettore indubbiamente troverà molto di utile e numerose fonti di ispirazione. I refusi potevano essere evitati con una revisione editoriale più accurata.

*Mika Kajava*

ZACHARY P. BILES: *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2011. ISBN 978-0-521-76407-0. XI, 290 pp. GBP 60, USD 99.

As in many other areas of ancient Greek culture, the quest for superiority was an undeniable element of the comic theatre in the age of Aristophanes. The comedies were written for, and performed at, the festivities dedicated to Dionysos. The theatrical competitions in these occasions were competitions indeed. Zachary P. Biles has previously written numerous articles on Aristotle and Greek comedy. In his first book, *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition*, Biles seeks to examine this essential and in the scholarly tradition relatively downplayed element of competition in the old Greek comedy.

The book is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, B. analyses the agonistic nature of the comical parabasis. At the core of Biles's discussion is the argument that in considering competition, the predecessors and models for Aristophanes should not be seen as limited to comedy. Thus, Biles presents Aristophanes not as a comic poet, but rather as a competitive poet

working in comedy. Situating Aristophanes firmly in the wide context of competitive discourse in Greek poetry is critical for Biles's study.

In the second chapter Biles focuses on the relationship between Aristophanes as a competitive poet and Dikaiopolis, the protagonist of *Acharnians*. The overlapping experiences of the poet and his hero are scrutinised acutely. The merging of the motives of the author and the main character is a complex and problematic question, and historically views on the subject have varied remarkably. The merging of Aristophanes and Dikaiopolis has been discussed before (see p. 57, n. 6), but Biles manages to provide a fresh angle on the discussion with his examination of metatheatricality.

In the third and fourth chapters, Biles discusses the rivalry between Aristophanes and the famous old comic poet Cratinus. Firstly, the rivalry is examined through *Knights* – "the most agonistic of the surviving Aristophanic comedies" (p. 98). The custom of keeping victory lists and setting up commemorations for successful dramatists is examined in connection with the agonistic themes and forms of *Knights*. "Intertextual Biography in the Rivalry of Cratinus and Aristophanes", the fourth chapter, was originally published in *AJPh* 123 (2002), pp. 169–204, and is assuredly familiar to those interested in the subject. However, the decision to include the article in the book is a sensible one, as the article deals with matters of substantial importance to Biles's approach. The intertextual responses by both playwrights are scrutinised superbly, with the focus on *Knights* and *Wasps* by Aristophanes, and *Pytine* by Cratinus.

In the fifth chapter, Biles studies the surviving version of *Clouds*. The original version was performed in the City Dionysia of 423 BC, where it competed against Cratinus (unsuccessfully placed third). The exact date of the performance of the surviving version is unknown, but the play was nonetheless revised to suit the new competitive context of a few years later than the original performance. The obvious challenge to Biles's analysis on the revision of the play in relation to the competitive element of comedy is that we do not know much about the original performance, and thus our knowledge of what was actually revised is limited. Biles manages to avoid over-imaginative hypotheses on revision, and examines competing against new contestants with partially old material.

The topic of the final chapter is the theatre god Dionysos and the festival of Dionysia in *Frogs*. In discussing the poetics of competition in Aristophanes, it is not surprising that this particular play attracts attention with its poetical agon between Aeschylus and Euripides. However, Biles sets out to argue that the theme of agon is not limited only to the latter part of the play. In Biles's presentation, the agon between the tragic poets is "a natural, if surprising, elaboration of ideas established in the first half of the play" (p. 212). Biles engrossingly discusses especially the role of Dionysos in connection with poetical agon. The relationship between agon in *Frogs* and the Athenian theatre audience, and Aristophanes' personal investment in the dispute between Aeschylus and Euripides are also studied.

As the book includes numerous new suggestions for interpreting Aristophanes, it is inevitable that not all of them are going to find unanimous acceptance. The competition between Aristophanes and Cratinus is studied comprehensively, but Aristophanes' rivalry with Eupolis, the third of "the Big Three", is discussed to a markedly lesser extent. More attention to Eupolis could have added depth to the analysis of the competitive culture of Aristophanic comedy. Likewise, one could state that while Biles draws continuously from fragmentary material, an even bigger role could have been appointed to the fragments in order to further support the argumentation concerning Aristophanes, and old Greek comedy in general.

In short, *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition* is a valuable addition to the scholarly discussion on Aristophanes. Biles's argumentation is well researched and thought-provoking, and in general the book is highly recommended for any reader interested in Aristophanes and ancient comedy.

*Kalle Knaapi*

BABETTE PÜTZ: *The Symposium and Komos in Aristophanes*. Second edition. Aris & Phillips / Oxbow Books, Oxford 2007. ISBN 978-0-85668-772-3. XII, 243 pp. GBP 24.

Nella versione aggiornata della prima edizione del 2003 (pubblicata da Metzler, Stoccarda, nella serie "Drama. Beiträge zum antiken Drama und seiner Rezeption", vol. 22), Pütz studia le scene di simposio e il *komos* non solo nei drammi di Aristofane, ma anche in molti frammenti comici, per illustrare il processo di formazione della trama e la caratterizzazione delle figure introdotte nelle commedie (a beneficio del lettore, sono adesso o tradotti o parafrasati tutti i passi greci). Parallelamente, vengono discussi numerosi dati e dettagli concreti tratti dalle commedie per meglio capire alcuni aspetti pratici del simposio greco, dal quale erano di regola escluse le donne libere (cfr., da ultimo, S. Corner, "Did 'Respectable' Women Attend Symposia?", *G&R* 59 [2012] 34 sgg.). L'autrice fa osservare (cap. 1) che i momenti in cui si svolgono le scene di banchetto aristofanee sono di solito relativi ad almeno una delle seguenti circostanze: la pace (*Acarnesi*, *Lisistrata*, *Pace*), il successo (personale o di un gruppo; *Ecclesiastuzze*, *Pluto*, *Rane*, *Uccelli*), l'invecchiamento e il maturare dell'uomo (*Nuvole*, *Vespe*). Nel secondo capitolo vengono analizzati i *komoi* in Aristofane, che spesso erano celebrativi e quindi tipicamente posti alla fine del dramma (in seguito ad una vittoria, un matrimonio, o sim.), ma potevano anche essere di carattere religioso (fallici) o del tutto violenti (come quelli in *Vespe* 1299 sgg. o in *Lisistrata* 370 sgg., 1216 sgg.).

Le varie manifestazioni della cultura simpotica con gli annessi *komoi* erano generalmente associate a concetti positivi quali la fortuna, la pace, la ricchezza, la vittoria e il senso di comunità (cap. 3). Tutti questi aspetti si riflettono, in un modo o un altro, in quelli che costituivano gli elementi concreti e indispensabili di un simposio tradizionale, cioè, il vino, il gioco di *kottabos*, gli enigmi e l'uso di profumi. Queste categorie sono presentate in quattro appendici (pp. 156–224) ricche di informazioni di grande interesse dal punto di vista della storia sociale e culturale. In confronto a tale abbondanza di lettura affascinante, a stento si capisce il motivo per cui gli indici alla fine del bel volume siano stati ridotti a poche pagine, in cui vengono ricordati solo i frammenti comici.

*Mika Kajava*

GERALD A. PRESS: *Plato: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Continuum, London 2007. ISBN 978-0-8264-9176-3. VIII, 240 pp. GBP 12.99.

*Plato: A Guide for the Perplexed* by Gerald Press belongs to the series of *Guides for the Perplexed* on western philosophers published by Continuum. The book contains four parts, the