

HALLIWELL, (S.) **Aristophanes, *Clouds*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, *Frogs*: A Verse Translation with Introduction and Notes, by Stephen Halliwell.** Oxford: OUP, 2015. Pp. xcv + 298. £55. 9780198149941.

This volume comprises translations of *Clouds*, *Women at the Thesmophoria* and *Frogs*. It forms the second of Halliwell's OUP translations of the works of Aristophanes. The first, containing *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, *Assembly-Women* and *Wealth*, was published in 1997 before appearing in the Oxford World's Classics paperback series in 1998. The present volume maintains the same structure and format as the first volume, including an extensive general introduction to Aristophanic comedy and condensed but thought-provoking introductions alongside each play. Brief explanatory notes are placed after the translations, and this volume has the notable addition of an appendix outlining the lost plays of Aristophanes. Finally there is an index of the names of people, places and institutions mentioned in the volume.

The general introduction is an expanded and updated version of the 1997 volume, which maintains the same eight-section structure: Aristophanes' career and context; Old Comedy and Dionysiac festivity; the dynamics of fantasy; formality and performance; satire and seriousness; translating Aristophanes; stage directions; Aristophanes and posterity. These provide an excellent introduction for students to Aristophanic comedy, and the section on fantasy is particularly welcome for how it emphasises the imaginative power of Aristophanic comedy, something to which the appendix on the lost Aristophanic comedies readily contributes. In the section on satire and seriousness Halliwell reflects that: 'It is, at root, the interplay (and tension) between fantasy and reality which has given rise to sharply contrasting judgements of Aristophanes' dramatic aims and values' (xlv). Halliwell maintains his opposition to scholars who seek serious intent in Aristophanes' work, and this section would have benefitted from some references to indicate the level of ongoing debate. At the start of the introduction Halliwell defines Old Comedy through its divergences from New Comedy, which allows Halliwell to play up the 'unrestrained exuberance, irreverence, and indecency' (x) of Aristophanic style, something which Halliwell neatly captures in the translations. However, this comes at the cost of a rather simplified view of New Comedy as containing: 'semi-realistic if somewhat stylized characterization, integrated and neatly resolved plots, benign sentimentality, and an underlying tolerance' (ix), which underplays the power of Menander's comedies and the diversity of his contemporaries.

In the preface Halliwell summarises his approach to translating Aristophanes as attempting: 'to combine historical accuracy with a sufficiently fluent style to engage the imagination of modern readers', and the translations live up to this billing, by marrying great energy and liveliness in verse translations (which avoid rhyme) with an eye to preserving and explaining historical details of Aristophanes' plays. In the introduction Halliwell goes on to identify three key problems in translating Aristophanes: how to

capture Aristophanic verse, humour and the profusion of historical references. This enables Halliwell to emphasise the opposing tensions which his translations confront: ‘the expectation of comic fluency and the desirability of historical accuracy make competing and often irreconcilable demands’ (liv). For all these difficulties, the translations succeed in capturing moments of Aristophanic comedy, both its humour and precision, for example *Women at the Thesmophoria* 845, which attacks Hyperbolus’ mother: ‘You deserve no fruit from your loans: how could you, given the fruit of your loins!’. Halliwell’s translations keep in step with the Greek text, making them a reliable guide and excellent introduction for students studying Aristophanes without knowledge of Greek. Equally they will serve as a suitable pedagogic aid for those coming to grips with Aristophanic Greek for the first time.

In *Clouds* the translation of φροντιστήριον as: ‘The Thinking Institute’ offers a satisfying contemporary idiom to bring this significant word to life with 21st c. connotations. At *Clouds* 213 there is a slight discrepancy between the translation: ‘we flattened them’ and the explanatory note for the line which contains the phrase: ‘laid them out’, but this does not disrupt the point of the note. In the introduction to *Women at the Thesmophoria* Halliwell provides a stimulating discussion of the purposeful prominence given to Echo in the parody of Euripides’ *Andromeda* and its significance for Aristophanes’ relationship with tragedy (99). The introduction to *Frogs* plays down the importance of the play’s resolution and refutes the idea that *Frogs* was trying to solve real-world problems for Athens in 405 BCE (157). By comparison Halliwell presents the agon between Aeschylus and Euripides as being ‘about the problem of poetic criticism itself’ (167), which suggests a note of soberness, if not seriousness, at the heart of this wide-ranging comedy. Halliwell aptly summarises the distinctiveness of *Frogs* when he notes that the agon: ‘turns into one of the most concentrated and ambitiously “architected” stretches of action anywhere in the surviving plays of Aristophanes’ (163-4). I would put in a claim for the dog-trial in *Wasps* to share this accolade, and we will have to see what Halliwell makes of that, but hopefully there will not be such a long wait for the final volume: *Knights, Achamians, Wasps, Peace*.

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