

BOOK REVIEW

Aristophanes: Peace. By IAN C. STOREY. Bloomsbury Ancient Comedy Companions. London, UK and New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. x + 177. Paperback, \$24.95. ISBN 978-1-350-02021-4.

Ian Storey's engaging and accessible companion to Aristophanes' *Peace* is the first volume on Aristophanes in Bloomsbury Ancient Comedy Companions. This new series, edited by C. W. Marshall and Niall Slater, aims to offer introductions to the comedies of ancient Greece and Rome, with an emphasis on historical and literary contexts and performance. Storey's volume sets a high standard for future contributors to the series.

The book's greatest strength lies in its balanced introduction to *Peace* and to Aristophanic comedy in general. Those enjoying Attic comedy for the first time, in particular, will come away from the book with a greater appreciation of the play, Aristophanes and his comic rivals, predecessors and successors, and Storey engages his readers in long-standing and current critical debates. At three pages, the brisk introduction teases the major questions and themes that will occupy the following pages: the preservation of *Peace* and of the Aristophanic corpus; the popularity, or lack thereof, of this play among critics and producers; staging; the seriousness of comedy and its generic stature; the comic hero; ancient sources that enrich our understanding of the historical context, especially Thucydides.

Chapter 1, "Old Comedy, Aristophanes, and a Play about Peace," introduces Attic comedy, Aristophanes and his *Peace*. Storey gives a brief history of ancient Greek comedy, including productions in Sicily and in Athens before Aristophanes. He then turns our focus to Old Comedy and its significant generic features, among which Storey includes the idea of farce, the chorus, parodies of philosophical ideas and of poetry, coarse and aggressive language, physical humor, overt sexual behavior and politics.

Building upon this first chapter, Chapter 2, "*Peace* as an Old Comedy," explores the features of Old Comedy in *Peace*. The opening section on the so-called comic hero and this term's problematic usage exemplifies the book's utility for non-expert audiences and for the classroom. Those who teach Aristophanic comedy will appreciate Storey's careful explanation of the limits of English translations and

the nuances of (transliterated) Greek vocabulary. For example, his discussion of the word *trygōidia* (23) subtly enriches the play for readers without Greek. Storey goes on to discuss the structure of the *Peace*, introducing technical vocabulary, such as *agōn*, *epirrhematic syzygy*, *parodos* and *parabasis*. These terms are clearly defined, though a more thorough discussion of meter and metrical terms is wanting. An analysis of the chorus in *Peace* follows.

Turning to the notion that the *polis* is at the heart of Aristophanic comedy, Chapter 3, “*Peace* and its Historical Background,” situates the play in the events of the Peloponnesian War. Storey clearly sets out how historical events can inform readings of the play, though he is careful to note the problems of using Aristophanic comedy as a historical source. While engaging the perennial debate about the seriousness of comedy’s political criticism, Storey observes, “Comedy may not have made much of a political impact on its own time, but it certainly affected the view of later critics” (50). His discussion of Aristophanes’ seemingly novel association of Pheidias, Pericles and the War (53-56) is characteristic of the book’s use of this play as a foray into the challenges confronting students of any Aristophanic comedy.

Chapter 4, “Themes and Motifs in *Peace*,” is, naturally, the least cohesive of the chapters. Storey discusses monsters, divine beings, quests, aromas, food, sex, obscenity and metatheatricity. All of these discussions could form the basis of further discussion in the classroom. I especially enjoyed the robust discussion of the presentation of the goddess *Peace* in the play’s literary and ritual contexts.

Given the emphasis on performance throughout this series, it should be no surprise that Chapter 5, “Staging *Peace*,” is one of the most thoughtful. Storey’s interest lies primarily in recovering the details of the original production, and he uses the particular issues of *Peace* to engage debates about the performance of Greek comedy, and even tragedy, as a whole. Drawing on the range of written and visual evidence for productions, Storey introduces the problems inherent to reconstructing the 5th-century theater and its stage devices, the division of roles and the use of props.

Chapter 6, “*Peace*: Poets, Plays and Posterity,” situates the play in literary history. Storey begins with comedy’s intertextuality with earlier poetry, especially epic and lyric, as well as with contemporary drama. Moving on to later periods, he surveys relevant material from South Italy and Sicily, late Roman republican and imperial literature, Hellenistic scholarship, the manuscript tradition and the 20th century. A string of evocative questions about peace concludes the chapter.

Indeed, this chapter opens up discussions not only about peace and the play's staging but also about translation and "authenticity," topicality, the chorus and music.

Written in clear prose, this is an excellent book for newcomers to *Peace* and Aristophanic comedy. Readers will gain a greater appreciation of ancient comedy, and because Storey draws on his expertise of the genre's fragments, readers will encounter references to, among other rivals, Cratinus and Eupolis. Thus, although written for non-specialists, this study is framed within current critical discourse. The book's balanced survey of approaches to the play make it an attractive option for the classroom. It could certainly find a home in any undergraduate course reading *Peace* and would be useful to graduate students, non-specialists and enthusiasts of the classics studying Aristophanes' production of 421 BCE.

DUSTIN W. DIXON

Grinnell College, dixondu@grinnell.edu