



Venom in Verse (Princeton Modern Greek Studies)

Gonda A.H. Van Steen

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Aristophanes has enjoyed a conspicuous revival in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Greece. Here, Gonda Van Steen provides the first critical analysis of the role of the classical Athenian playwright in modern Greek culture, explaining how the sociopolitical "venom" of Aristophanes' verses remains relevant and appealing to modern Greek audiences. Deriding or challenging well-known figures and conservative values, Aristophanes' comedies transgress authority and continue to speak to many social groups in Greece who have found in him a witty, pointed, and accessible champion from their "native" tradition.

The book addresses the broader issues reflected in the poet's revival: political and linguistic nationalism, literary and cultural authenticity versus creativity, censorship, and social strife. Van Steen's discussion ranges from attitudes toward Aristophanes before and during Greece's War of Independence in the 1820s to those during the Cold War, from feminist debates to the significance of the popular music integrated into comic revival productions, from the havoc transvestite adaptations wreaked on gender roles to the political protest symbolized by Karolos Koun's directorial choices.

Crossing boundaries of classical philology, critical theory, and performance studies, the book encourages us to reassess Aristophanes' comedies as both play-acts and modern methods of communication. Van Steen uses material never before accessible in English as she proves that Aristophanes remains Greece's immortal comic genius and political voice.

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