



Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition

Zachary P. Biles

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Athenian comic drama was written for performance at festivals honouring the god Dionysos. Through dramatic action and open discourse, poets sought to engage their rivals and impress the audience, all in an effort to obtain victory in the competitions. This book uses that competitive performance context as an interpretive framework within which to understand the thematic interests shaping the plots and poetic quality of Aristophanes' plays in particular, and of Old Comedy in general. Studying five individual plays from the Aristophanic corpus as well as fragments of other comic poets, it reveals the competitive poetics distinctive to each. It also traces thematic connections with other poetic traditions, especially epic, lyric, and tragedy, and thereby seeks to place competitive poetics within broader trends in Greek literature.

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