

## BOOK REVIEWS

Simon GOLDHILL and Edith HALL, eds., *Sophocles and the Greek Tragic Tradition*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. xvi + 336. Cloth, \$99.00. ISBN 978-0-521-88785-4.

This Festschrift is a tribute to Pat Easterling's contributions to the study of Greek tragedy and the history of its performance. It assembles essays written by leading scholars, many of whom testify to the profound influence of Pat Easterling both as a scholar and as a Mensch. Many Festschriften are characterized by sloppy editing and essays that are hastily thrown together. Not this one. Typographical errors are few and minor, and the essays are generally well conceived and cogently written—nothing less would pass muster as homage to Pat Easterling.

The essays are divided into three parts. The first explores the relationship of actor and audience, and the ways in which this relationship reflects the political preoccupations (broadly conceived) of the Athenian *polis*. The second offers four essays centered on the figure of Oedipus, while the last examines the development of the tragic genre in both ancient and modern contexts. The editors optimistically suggest a coherence to the offerings, especially in the dust jacket blurb, but any such attempt to tie these essays together is bound to be a stretch. Indeed, the variety of topics should be seen as a strength of this volume, not least because it is a fitting tribute to the range of Pat Easterling's interests. Aeschylus and Euripides, Astydamas and Plutarch, Shakespeare and Yeats all enjoy their moment in the sun, and "the Greek Tragic Tradition" in the title is meant as a catch-all phrase to encompass the many pages that have little or nothing to do with Sophocles.

In the first chapter ("Sophocles: the state of play," pp. 1–24), Simon Goldhill and Edith Hall introduce the volume as a whole by assessing how scholarly interests have developed over the last century or so. They choose Jebb and his 1900 edition of *Antigone* as a watershed for contrasting what went before (Victorian idealism and obsession with the beauty of tragedy) with what followed (already in 1903 we have Hofmannsthal's dark and violent interpretation of *Electra*). What makes this overview particularly valuable is the attempt to place individual oeuvres into their wider cultural and intellectual context—by tracing for exam-

ple, the influences of anthropology, psychology, and new theories about dance and ritual on Hofmannsthal, and noting the challenge these new interpretations presented to the privileged position of Greek culture as the intellectual ancestor of Western civilization. The chapter offers a provocative discussion of the intellectual pedigree and contributions of scholars such as Reinhardt, Kitto, Bowra, Knox, Winnington-Ingram, Vernant, Vidal-Naquet, Segal, Zeitlin, Foley, and Loraux, and acknowledges the recent explosion in performance of Greek tragedy (more expansive treatment of this important area would have been welcome). It also makes broader observations about how continuity and change occur in scholarly trends—the degree, for example, to which lag plays a part, with critics writing against the backdrop of the previous generation’s work (a lag, of course, that is also evident in the approaches taken in this volume). The chapter then lays out four areas in which Sophoclean scholarship is currently engaged: (i) the political sphere (how political/how Athenian is tragedy?); (ii) performance studies, which have now moved from purely practical/dramaturgical considerations to cultural dimensions of performance, including other sites of “performance” in the city; (iii) the language of tragedy (especially its ambiguity); and (iv) the performance history of plays, both in ancient and modern times. These four areas, not coincidentally, are the primary focus of the present volume.

#### Part One: Between Audience and Actor

Simon Goldhill (Chapter 2, “The audience on stage: rhetoric, emotion, and judgement in Sophoclean theatre,” pp. 27–47) makes an ambitious attempt to develop a theory of the audience that can account for democracy’s belief in the collective deliberative ability of citizens. He examines how Sophocles dramatizes the process of being (in) an audience through the dramatic device of creating an on-stage audience (beyond the chorus, which serves continuously in this capacity, offering a helpful alternative model to the “chorus as sounding-board for the audience” fallacy). For Goldhill, characters function as an on-stage audience when they serve as critical observers and respondents to what is occurring on stage, offering a model for the actual audience in the theatre, who are concurrently developing their own responses. The metadrama that other commentators see as an end in itself carries for Goldhill a political function: it encourages the audience to be self-reflexive, to engage the critical faculties vital to deliberation. This political line of inquiry is certainly intriguing and warrants fuller exposition. It is not always clear from Goldhill’s analysis what sets a particular character apart as an on-stage audience beyond his or her silence or function as focalizer, and his

approach could be extended virtually *ad infinitum* given Greek tragedy's tendency to eschew sustained three-way conversation. Goldhill chooses seemingly particularly significant instances that build suspense about how the character is responding to the situation, and that highlight the multiplicity of possible responses to a particular scene. He provides a salutary reminder that the multiplicity of responses by the internal audience argues an equally wide range of response on the part of the external audience. The most fully developed case-study is his discussion of *Electra*; he offers a nuanced analysis of the various on-stage audiences in this the most overtly theatrical of Sophocles' extant plays, though he strangely omits the most prominent instance of an on-stage audience, Electra's role as witness and mediator of the killing of Clytemnestra.

Ismene Lada-Richard's essay (Chapter 3: "The players will tell all: the dramatist, the actors and the art of acting in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*," pp. 48–68) also examines metadrama. She argues that Sophocles' innovation in creating the role of Neoptolemus allows the playwright to explore the relationship between Neoptolemus' part in the plot to dupe Philoctetes and his identity as player. It would perhaps be worth noting that a similar interest in the theatrical implications of disguise and role-playing may have formed part of Euripides' *Philoctetes*, in which Odysseus approaches Philoctetes with appearance and voice changed by Athene and playing the part of one of Odysseus' victims (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 59). But in Sophocles' play, it is the son of Achilles who is co-opted to play the part of Odyssean deceiver, and the disjuncture between player ("self") and part ("character") is explored to powerful effect, and complicates considerably the issue of whether Neoptolemus' responses to Philoctetes are genuine or simulated. Lada-Richards makes a convincing case for reading an interest in acting into the play, and offers a useful study of ancient responses to coherence and incoherence between an actor and his assigned part. She argues that a high degree of expertise is required of the actor in order to pull off the part of the faltering apprentice-player in the internal plot, just as Philoctetes' unremitting *pathos* requires a considerable self-mastery on the part of the actor. Authenticity in performance, Lada-Richards argues, is judged by a different measure from that of everyday life, namely, the degree to which the performance is compelling. She situates Neoptolemus the actor's derailment of the plot of Odysseus the stage-director/playwright within the context of contemporary performance culture in which the playwright's control over performance was diminishing and actors were enjoying increasing prominence and independent success. Some dimensions of the analysis (e.g., the political influence and diplomatic roles of star actors) run the risk of anachron-

ism, as Lada-Richards seems to appreciate (“Sophocles’ play was only a hair’s breadth away from that new chapter ...,” p. 65), though in the absence of sufficient contemporary evidence this remains an argument *ex silentio*.

Edith Hall (Chapter 4: “Deianeira deliberates: precipitate decision-making and *Trachiniae*,” pp. 69–96) considers the function of deliberation in *Trachiniae*, noting that the play conveys the importance of proper deliberation by offering its citizen-audience a series of examples of how *not* to deliberate. This essay ranges widely, drawing on a broad selection of sources to identify what were perceived as the key elements of good council (*euboulia*); this in turn lays the groundwork for appreciating the degree to which deliberation in tragedies is usually presented as flawed or entirely absent, and, in the case of *Trachiniae*, compromised in virtually every conceivable way. Hall discusses the extent to which female tragic characters are capable of initiating and engaging in deliberation, concluding that in the case of Deianeira the evidence is complex and may say less about the deliberative capacities of women as a separate category than about the democratic *polis*; the precipitous decision-making and sudden mind-changing that we see in the play are also characteristic of Athens’ deliberative bodies, the Council and especially the Assembly. While Hall’s suggestion that the hastiness of most deliberation in tragedy, the failure to ponder important decisions overnight, may explain why tragedy adopted the convention limiting its plot to the span of a single day must remain a conjecture, it is certainly evident that tragedy exploits this convention to highlight the dangers of hasty decision-making. And yet, Hall argues, tragedy reflects the essential optimism and self-sufficiency of the Athenian psyche, since it raises the possibility that with better decision-making things could have turned out differently.

#### Part Two: Oedipus and the Play of Meaning

Peter Burian (Chapter 5: “Inconclusive conclusion: the ending(s) of *Oedipus Tyrannus*,” pp. 99–118) takes on the vexed question of the ending of *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Rejecting the arguments against authenticity, he seeks to make sense of what have been seen as its supposed inconsistencies, especially the fact that the expectation of Oedipus’ exile is suddenly overturned when Creon sends Oedipus into the palace in anticipation of further direction from the god. Indeed, the symmetry of ruler transformed into scapegoat is so compelling, Burian argues, that some scholars reject or even overlook the lack of exile at the play’s end. Oedipus’ departure into the palace brings the action full circle and forces him to return to the scene of his undoing. It thus bears a symmetry of its own, but this

brings with it neither release nor the redemptive role of the *pharmakos* that we find in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Burian's argument that the rejection of the *pharmakos*-ending is a rejection of *polis*-centered closure is particularly compelling, and both fits and accounts for several of the more peculiar aspects of the play. The play's shift in focus from the *polis* to the fate and *oikos* of Oedipus, for example, is part and parcel of Oedipus' fall from power: just as Oedipus the tyrant identified himself totally with the state he ruled, so now in his fall from power he can no longer serve any function within it. Burian provides a compelling characterization of the end of the play as providing *formal* closure rather than *conceptual* closure (his terms), and his analysis of the exchange between Oedipus and Creon points out its studied ambiguity. Thus for Burian the play's refusal of exile is a refusal of closure in which Sophocles masterfully exploits the openness of the mythical tradition at this point in the story.

Chris Carey (Chapter 6: "The third stasimon of *Oedipus at Colonus*," pp. 119–133) offers a study of the third stasimon of *Oedipus at Colonus*. His opening remarks proposing that *OC* functions as a type of cornerstone for the "Theban cycle," which he characterizes as the nearest thing to a Sophoclean trilogy, set off alarm bells given the many years and plays separating *Antigone* from *OC* in the Sophoclean corpus. But Carey's analysis does not, for the most part, insist on direct verbal echoes; rather, it offers a thoughtful exploration of this ode and its reflections on old age and mortality, teasing out the possible resonances of its words and motifs, especially the points of particular intersection with the lives of Oedipus and his family: time is described in a way that focalizes it through the long-standing sufferer Oedipus; death described as *anumenaioi* suggests Oedipus' own unclean marriage (the correspondences with Antigone's descriptions of her final journey at *Ant.* 876 and 917, and Electra's description of aging without the prospect of marriage at *El.* 962 are perhaps even more notable); the description of old age as *akrates* intersects provocatively with the situation of Oedipus, who is at once powerless and strangely powerful. The greatest insight of the piece may come at the end, where Carey links the chorus' comparison of Oedipus to a headland with the particular interest in topography that permeates the play. Oedipus' connection to the landscape goes far beyond the apostrophizing that is seen in other plays, Carey argues: Oedipus not only resembles but actually becomes the rugged landscape into which he will be absorbed.

Michael Silk's contribution (Chapter 7: "The logic of the unexpected: semantic diversion in Sophocles, Yeats (and Virgil)," pp. 134–57) examines a very specific feature of Sophoclean use of language—the occurrence of what Silk re-

fers to as a “semantic diversion,” usually found at the tail end of a syntactic unit, which substitutes what the listener expects with a word that is unexpected. Silk claims that this practice is unique to Sophocles among Greek tragedians (I am not so sure), and draws on instances from Virgil and especially Yeats to elucidate it. He compares the Sophoclean diversion to the *para prosdokian* of comedy, though the former does not share the tendency towards climax of the latter. Indeed, Silk is insistent on avoiding thinking of semantic diversions as devices at all (and rejects characterization of them as tropes), perhaps because this suggests a degree of standardization; the claim that these diversions have nothing to do with defamiliarization needs further argumentation. Silk exposes the facile tendency of commentators to explain these surprising word uses as metonym or to posit alternate meanings for words (e.g. reading *nēlea* at *OT* 180 as “unpitied” rather than “pitiless”) and points out the challenge that they represent to textual critics used to operating according to probability. The effect of Sophocles’ “magisterial elusiveness” is to cause a wide range of associations to spill out, including the residual presence of the expected but supplanted reference, and may reflect the playwright’s *Weltanschauung* in constituting completeness and open-endedness at once.

Fiona Macintosh (Chapter 8: “The French Oedipus of the inter-war period,” pp. 158–76) considers reworkings of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* in France during the 1920s and 1930s. Her analysis sets the approaches taken by Mounet-Sully, Bouhélier, Stravinsky, Cocteau and others in the context of cultural and intellectual history. Rejection of the classical heritage as presented by Parnassiens such as Leconte de Lisle resulted in Modernist’s predilection for dissonance and incongruity. When Modernism became associated in France with German cultural imperialism, a classicism emerged that sought the wellsprings of French culture in a democratic classicism, and reworkings of the Oedipus myth presented new popularist tendencies, showed a certain irreverence, and preferred a sequential, diachronic plot order. The study draws on a wide range of pertinent sources and factors (considering, among other things, educational policy, aesthetic currents, staging choices, and biographical information) to explain the peculiar dynamics of the resurgent classical performance tradition in France two decades after the country seemed to have turned its back on classicism as a vestige of the *ancien régime*.

## Part Three: Constructing Tragic Traditions

In a dense and often elusive piece (Chapter 9: "Theoretical views of Athenian tragedy in the fifth century BC," pp. 179–207), Kostas Valakas attempts to recreate fifth century theories of tragedy on the basis of evidence from the tragedies themselves. He draws attention to affinities with the ideas of Presocratic philosophy and rhetorical theory. For example, he notes a growing interest in a theatrical "reality" that is seen as distinct both from what it represents and from the world of the audience, and observes that this parallels a shift in the conception of the relation between artefact and reality as seen in statuary inscriptions: whereas early inscriptions assume that statue and model are one and the same, Athenian inscriptions of the fifth century acknowledge that the statue is a representation rather than the thing itself. Valakas's suggestion that the terminology of representation found in Plato and Aristotle (*eikōn*, *mimēsis*, etc.) was likely already used by fifth-century intellectuals to discuss the dynamics and interests of tragedy, especially tragedy's interest in the capacity and limits of human knowledge and its frequent treatment of themes of appearance and reality, deception and discovery, seems most reasonable. Whether this interest amounts to an espousal of Protagorean relativism, as Valakas suggests, and whether it is possible to separate out tragedy's "moral education" from its "political role," as Valakas attempts to do, is less certain.

Angus Bowie (Chapter 10: "Athens and Delphi in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," pp. 208–31) explores the function of prophecy in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, arguing that it represents an important early indicator of a shift towards a greater sense of human agency in understanding causation and interpreting events. Much of the piece is devoted to close textual analysis of passages in the *Oresteia*, elucidating the degree to which prophecy, and Delphic prophecy in particular, looms as an interest in the plays. Bowie argues that other forms of sign-interpretation in the plays (e.g. the beacon) are described in oracular terms, and that Cassandra is described in language reminiscent of the Delphic Pythia. Bowie even suggests that the description of Agamemnon's robe as a net alludes to the Delphic *omphalos* and its knotted covering. Be that as it may, Bowie successfully demonstrates that in the *Oresteia* prophecies are repeatedly problematized as ambiguous, open-ended, and associated with violent revenge, and that the plot privileges Athens over Delphi as the effective locus for resolving legal and political problems. In an intriguing side-note, Bowie suggests that psephomancy (divination through the use of pebbles) may have been the usual form of divination at Delphi, and argues that this might therefore offer an additional dimension to the contrast between

divination's failure at Delphi and the successful use of (voting) pebbles in the Areopagus court at Athens.

Richard Buxton (Chapter 11: "Feminized males in *Bacchae*: the importance of discrimination," pp. 232–50) offers a welcome cautionary rejoinder to the (perhaps inevitable) tendency to see gender crossing everywhere in the *Bacchae*. Analyzing characterizations *singulatim*, he argues that the play creates as much meaning by setting up distinctions as by collapsing categories. Tiresias and Cadmus, for example, take up the paraphernalia of bacchants, but do not participate in transvestism, in contrast to Pentheus. In their case, it is whether their behavior is age-appropriate rather than gender-appropriate that is at issue. Buxton also cautions that Dionysus' femininity is not as ubiquitous a motif as most suppose, belonging to the early stages of the play; later on, it is his wildness that is at issue. So too in the case of Pentheus, his feminization is a concern early on in the play, whereas later it is his identification by Agaue as a wild beast that dominates. Zeus is presented as parent, and specifically as mother in this play; he is feminized in function, but not appearance.

Oliver Taplin (Chapter 12: "Hector's helmet glinting in a fourth-century tragedy," pp. 251–63) offers a salutary attempt to shine the spotlight on fourth-century tragedy. His identification of the Apulian vase in the Antikenmuseum in Berlin as representing scenes from Astydamos' *Hector* is convincing, though he probably overstates his case in reading the inclusion of an attendant to receive Hector's helmet as an example of the playwright's bold *aemulatio* of Homer, given the ubiquity of supernumerary characters in both tragedy and vase-painting. (That said, this and other correspondences between dramatic fragments and vase-painting certainly support his case for regarding the latter as quoting the former.) Taplin closes with a thought-provoking analysis of a fragmentary passage (Adespota F 649) in which Cassandra is allotted (by Astydamos, Taplin would like to believe) a highly unusual and clever televisionary "messenger speech" in which she describes Hector's death from afar.

Christopher Pelling (Chapter 13: "Seeing a Roman tragedy through Greek eyes: Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*," pp. 26–88) closes the book with a sensitive and delightful look at Shakespeare's use of ancient source material. After a brief discussion of evidence for the direct influence of Greek tragedy, he settles into an extended treatment of the ways in which the playwright engaged with Plutarch. Although his access to Plutarch's *Lives* was at two removes (drawing on North's 1579 translation of Amyot's 1559 French translation), close examination reveals that Shakespeare was often truer in spirit and in sense to Plutarch than both

Amyot and North. Plot devices such as mirror scenes and other dramatic correspondences, motifs such as the language of sacrifice used to describe Caesar's murder, reintroduction of "pagan" elements such as the *daimon* linking Brutus and Caesar (played down in the translations of Amyot and North), and the skill shown in weaving together strands from several Plutarchan *Lives*, all show a close affinity to the sensibilities of Plutarch, and especially his vision of the tragic.

This volume was written by scholars for scholars. Many Greek phrases are left untranslated, and footnotes do not, for the most part, attempt to provide the overview of the scholarly terrain that an undergraduate would need. It contains, however, a number of important contributions to the scholarly study of Greek tragedy and of its tradition, and will no doubt generate further discussion and frequent citation. It also does valuable service by pausing to take stock of the trajectory of scholarship. Although there is little here that is radically pioneering, the reader comes away from these essays with an appreciation for the wide variety of approaches to the study of Greek tragedy that exists in the early years of the twenty-first century.

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Antony AUGOUSTAKIS, ed., *Brill's Companion to Silius Italicus*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010. Pp. xxiii + 512. ISBN 978-90-04-16570-0. €152.00/\$225.00.

Scholars inured to the monotonous deluge of negative superlatives heaped on Silius Italicus in twentieth-century surveys of Latin literature will welcome the new critical insights contained in this most recent *Brill Companion*, which offers a timely affirmation of flourishing interest in his *Punica*. The opening essay, by the *Companion's* editor, Antony Augoustakis, sets the poem in its Flavian context with a survey of the poet's life and literary career and *Punica's* much debated *Makrostruktur*, before outlining 18 contributed articles with reference to their