

BOOK REVIEW

Race and Citizen Identity in the Classical Athenian Democracy. By Susan LAPE. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xii + 341. Hardcover, £55.00/\$90.00. ISBN 978-0-521-19104-3.

In this engaging and original study, Lape explores how Athenians conceptualized their shared identity through myths of common descent and racial purity and how this view of citizen identity shaped Athenian interactions with non-Athenians within and outside their city in the classical period. Although scholars have addressed aspects of this topic in discussing the regulation of citizenship within Athens and the presentation of Athenian civic identity in the Attic funeral orations and elsewhere, this is, to the best of my knowledge, the first comprehensive treatment of the subject. The picture of Athenians that emerges through this survey of the uses and abuses of the idea of common kinship is provocative, unsettling, and largely persuasive.

Chapter 1, "Theorizing Citizen Identity," lays the theoretical foundations for assessing race and citizen identity in Athens, and productively discusses the terminology to be used in probing this subject. While scholars have tended to view Athenian invocations of birth and ancestry in connection with citizen identity as manifestations of ethnic-nationalism (7), Lape proposes that there is a strong racial component to Athenian social identity from the mid-fifth century on following the passage of the Periclean citizenship law: "the law encouraged hereditarian narratives that ... articulate a racial conception of citizen identity" (8) and "had the effect of banning mixed (inter-polis) marriage" (23). Lape suggests that it is appropriate in this context to apply the term "racialism," which is "a value-neutral concept employed to characterize the beliefs of a group linked on the basis of putative hereditary features" (32). Although racialism "does not entail or imply racism," Lape posits that "in the Athenian case racialism and racism do go hand in hand. In general, racialism can be correlated to racism when a group's supposedly distinctive inherited traits are given political or moral salience" (32). Athenians engaged not only in "intrinsic racism," that is, "favoritism toward members of the same group based on family feeling or perceived common kinship," but also less overtly in "extrinsic racism" towards persons of foreign ancestry, who were viewed as outsiders lacking the proper birth and ancestry "to share

in democratic citizenship and its privileges" (32–3). This requires a flexible understanding of "race" since Athenian racism was directed toward non-citizens as a group, not toward specific racial groups in a modern sense; it also demands that we appreciate that race is not necessarily "color-coded" or a matter of physical appearance. This view of race in an Athenian context will likely be contested, but Lape's approach has the merit of forcing us to confront some of the darker implications of Athenian pride in citizen purity and their efforts to maintain it. Lape observes, moreover, "I stress that nothing in this study's argument hinges on the use of these terms per se. This is an investigation of citizenship as a social identity, and racial citizenship is the label I am applying to one component of that identity narrative" (3).

Chapter 2, "The Rhetoric of Racial Citizenship," examines how Old Comedy "inadvertently furthered the ideology of racial citizenship" (63) by casting new politicians as foreigners whose servile associations and occupations betray their alien origins, and then considers how litigants in the Athenian courts seek to expose their opponents as counterfeit Athenians on the basis of their un-Athenian behavior. Lape's treatment of this rich evidence is rather brief, but suggestive. Chapter 3, "Euripides' *Ion* and the Family Romance of Athenian Racialism," offers a detailed and nuanced reading of the *Ion* that explores how "the play of ideologies orchestrated in the family plot mirrors the ideological negotiations and conflicts spawned by the advent of Athenian racialism"; Lape argues that Euripides rather remarkably "was able to flatter Athenian birth and racialist pretensions with a tale involving rape, lies, and bastardy" (97). Chapter 4, "Athenian Identity in History and as History," advances the interesting case that Herodotus and Thucydides diverge strongly from Athenian sources, which emphasize racial citizenship and autochthony: "rather than either endorsing or refuting Athenian racial myths, the historians elide them altogether. In so doing, they are not only denying Athenian chauvinism, but are also refusing the Athenian use of their identity fictions as shorthand explanations for crucial past events" (137). Although it is not always clear to what extent these historians are consciously engaging with and rejecting the Athenian patriotic tradition, Lape successfully throws into relief its peculiarities and idiosyncrasies by juxtaposing it with Herodotus' and Thucydides' treatment of Athens and its peoples.

Chapter 5, "Trials of Citizen Identity: Policing and Producing the Racial Frontier," argues that Athenians were "keenly interested in ensuring that legitimate citizens be recognizable and, conversely, in ensuring that counterfeits be caught," and focuses on "how citizen identity was monitored and regulated in

practice" (187). Lape may go a little far in positing on the basis of the required *dokimasia* for citizenship and the ensuing *dokimasiai* for those seeking to hold office that citizen identity was "an ongoing process rather than ... a fixed legal status" (188); in most such cases citizen identity was probably not controversial, and the process simply confirmed a citizen's legal status. Lape rightly calls attention, however, to the exceptional statewide scrutinies of the entire citizen body in 445/4 and 346/5 and analyzes the circumstances that gave rise to them. A high point of the chapter is Lape's close reading of Apollodorus' speech *Against Neaira* ([Dem.] 59), which provides good evidence not only of how one might bring an indictment against an alien but of how a "naturalized" citizen from servile origins shows his status anxiety in the way he presents his prosecution.

Chapter 6, "Myths and Realities of Racial Citizenship," considers "how the practice and discourse of naturalization" interface with "the myth and practice of racial citizenship" (244). Of particular interest to Lape is the mass naturalizations brought on by the exigencies of the Peloponnesian War, which entailed a lapse of the Periclean citizenship law, and the tightening of restrictions on citizenship in the early fourth century that ensued; Lape may be right to see this retrenchment of "racial citizenship" as a "means to reconsolidate national unity" after the civil strife of 404/3.

Although Lape's analysis of "racial citizenship" in Athens will no doubt be controversial, her study significantly enriches our understanding of Athenian exclusivity in ideology and in practice. It should be noted that Lape's index of names and subjects would benefit from revision and expansion; many entries are the names of modern scholars, and the page and note references cited in connection with these appear to be incomplete.