

BOOK REVIEW

Greek Tragedy on the Move: The Birth of a Panhellenic Art Form c. 500–300 BC. By EDMUND STEWART. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xviii + 261. Hardcover, \$95.00. ISBN 9780198747260.

The expert on Greek tragedy will not find this book revolutionary or groundbreaking. Several recent publications (Bosher 2012; Csapo et al. 2014; Vahtikari 2014; Lamari 2015 and 2017, Hunter & Uhlig 2017; the last two probably too late for the author to consult)¹ anticipate Stewart's main theses, namely, (a) that the dissemination of drama to the wider Greek world began almost concurrently with its development in Athens (Chapters 4 and 5), and (b) that on this matter there is change but also continuity between the 5th and 4th centuries BC, to the extent that the differences observed are quantitative rather than qualitative (Chapter 6). Stewart, however, goes further than his peers in arguing, although not very strongly, that even in the 5th century Athens was in fact never a "core" from which drama was unidirectionally "exported to the periphery," but one of several nodes in a complex nexus of exchanges already in place since the Archaic period. This network, the author opines, catered to the same "song culture" from which tragedy emanated and was associated with the same centers of political and religious prestige as those that patronized the poetry of Pindar, Simonides or Bacchylides (Chapter 2).

Unsurprising for the expert, but useful for the general classicist and the lay reader, is also Stewart's eloquent reminder that in many a meaningful way (sub-

¹ Bosher, K. ed. (2012), *Theater Outside Athens: Drama in Greek Sicily and South Italy*, Cambridge; Csapo, E. et al. eds. (2014), *Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century BC*, Berlin; Vahtikari, V. (2014), *Tragedy Performances outside Athens in the Late Fifth and the Fourth Centuries BC*, Helsinki; Lamari, A. ed. (2015), *Reperformances of Drama in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC (Trends in Classics 7, special issue)*, Berlin; Lamari, A. (2017), *Reperforming Greek Tragedy: Theater, Politics and Cultural Mobility in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC*, Berlin; Hunter, R. and Uhlig, A. eds. (2017), *Imagining Reperformance in Ancient Culture: Studies in the Traditions of Drama and Lyric*, Cambridge. See also: Liapis, V. and Petrides, A. K. eds. (2018), *Greek Tragedy after the Fifth Century*, Cambridge.

ject matter, audience, but also in terms of poets, actors, aulos-players, etc.) tragedy did not *become* but was *already* Panhellenic from the start (Chapter 3). A fine, indeed original, addition in this respect is that tragic myths tend to focus on narratives of travel (either voluntary or involuntary). These narratives trace genealogical connections between distant parts of the Greek world, fostering a sense of shared Greekness, all the more important in cases where this was antagonized, for example as regards the dynasties of Epirus and Macedonia (Chapter 1).

Stewart tends to overstretch the evidence pertaining to the earliest periods of expansion. The ancient sources are rich in information about wandering poets at large, but *pace* Stewart, we cannot automatically assume that this includes a widespread network of travelling playwrights as well. Stewart makes too much of the occasional travels of Aeschylus (plus Phrynichus? discussed in Appendix 3) and Euripides (plus Agathon?). They travelled once or twice in their respective careers (apart from Euripides' well-established journey to Macedonia, Stewart makes a speculative argument in favor of his staging *Captive Melanippe* and *Aeolus* in the Greek West, and repeats the tentative case for *Andromache* being produced in Epirus). These travels, however, were in fact exceptional: Aeschylus and Euripides were not "wandering poets" in search of fame or money. Moreover, Stewart fails to acknowledge that in the roughly half century that separates the travels of the great duo, a period in which tragedy crystallized its character as a genre and as an institution of the Athenian empire, the outward traffic from Attica seems to have been very limited, if there was any such traffic at all.

Stewart criticizes "Athenocentrism" scholars who argue that tragedy had a political and social function within its original Attic context. This, again, is going a step too far. Although re-emphasizing the tragic plays' inherently Panhellenic, not narrowly Athenian, mythological and moral apparatus is certainly correct, we are not dealing with an either/or dichotomy; nor is it necessary for a play to dramatize Attic myth to make salient points about the Athenian democratic *polis* and *politēs*, as Stewart seems to imply. *Antigone* performed at the Theatre of Dionysus in the late 440s is just as strongly Athenian as it is a universal story of conflict between characters, conditions and ideas.

In this reviewer's opinion, despite Stewart's decent efforts to challenge it, the orthodox opinion on the matter of the expansion of tragedy outside Attica still holds. It certainly did not happen in a sudden burst of activity (the continuities between the 5th and the 4th century are indeed more important than the breaks) or without occasional antecedents in the 5th century. Nonetheless, the centrality of Athens per se seems fully to be challenged only in the late 4th century and then

more decisively in the Hellenistic period. This is when a truly Panhellenic, indeed “universal,” performance infrastructure (theatre buildings, festivals, guilds of artists, powerful and power-hungry patrons, as well as the growing trade of books and the establishment of libraries, which create the conditions for the dissemination of the scripts on top of the performances) comes into bloom.

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