

BOOK REVIEW

Αρχαίοι μύθοι στη νεοελληνική δραματουργία. Τρωικός κύκλος – Θηβαϊκός κύκλος. By ATHANASIOS BLESSIOS. Athens, GR: Grigoris, 2020. Pp. 504. Hardback, €28.00. ISBN: 978-960-612-311-5.

For literature and theatre scholars, the book entitled *Αρχαίοι μύθοι στη νεοελληνική δραματουργία. Τρωικός κύκλος – Θηβαϊκός κύκλος. Ο μύθος των Λαμβακιδών* is a valuable guide to making full use of the myth as a decisive tool in modern Greek dramaturgy. The scientific activity of Athanasios Blessios, Professor of Theatre Studies, is well-known from his personal bibliography. He has published a great volume of articles on modern Greek dramaturgy, as well as various monographs in this specific field of research. In his latest scientific work, Athanasios Blessios uses strong narrative dynamics to map the perception of ancient Greek myths of epic and tragedy in modern Greek dramaturgy from the 19th to the 21st century.

The book is well-structured and comprises meaningful and in-depth analysis. It is divided into two parts: the first part explores the Trojan cycle, namely the myth of Helen, of Achilles, of Philoctetes and of Odysseus, whereas the fifth chapter assesses the presence and use of the myth of other – primarily Trojan – heroes in Greek dramaturgy.

The second part provides a comprehensive overview of the use of the Theban cycle, widely known through the myth of the Labdacids. More specifically, the first chapter comprises three categories of plays, where the predominant figure is that of Oedipus in relation to his father, Laius, and to other heroes, while the case of Chrysippus constitutes a distinct category, as this specific myth has been used by Dimitris Dimitriadis in his play *Χρύσιππος* (2008). The second chapter presents plays where the leading characters are Oedipus and Jocasta, while the third chapter focuses on Antigone, the most admired heroine in modern and contemporary dramaturgy compared to the other heroes and heroines of the Theban cycle, as implied by her predominance in the titles of relevant plays, but it is also reflected into other characters, namely Ismene, Creon and Haemon. The fourth chapter looks into the plays *Αντιγόνη και Πολυνείκης* (1977), by Costas

Socratous, *Πάρδος Θηβών* (1994), by Iakovos Kambanelis, and *Τειρεσίας* (1964–1971), by Yannis Ritsos, that differ from the plays discussed in the other chapters due to their distinct theme, which is, however, essentially associated with the other thematic sections of the book.

In this critical review, I would like to highlight the valuable and interesting inventory of plays (1870–2019) related to Odysseus' return to Ithaca, a section that – as Blessios points out – is the most popular among the sections of the Odysseus myth in modern Greek dramaturgy. As two of the above-mentioned works are plays by Cypriot writers, Blessios' study incorporates texts from the Cypriot theater that keeps pace with the Greek theater (9). The first play is a metrical comedy entitled *Η Πηνελόπη και οι Μνηστήρες* (1978), by Costas Socratous, and the second one is a play in five acts entitled *Ο θρόνος της Ιθάκης* (1979), by Loulla Georgiadou. Drawing upon the myth, the latter brings to the fore the national tragedy of 1974; as regards the play by Socratous, Blessios elaborates on an interesting perspective of the influences that seem to dominate the play.

In conclusion, the book entitled *Αρχαίοι μύθοι στη νεοελληνική δραματουργία. Τρωικός κύκλος – Θηβαϊκός κύκλος. Ο μύθος των Λαμβακιδών* encompasses all the information needed for the reader to discover how the four mythical cycles (the Trojan cycle, the Theban cycle, the cycle of the Atreidae and the Argonautic cycle) are used in modern Greek dramaturgy. Lastly, among the virtues of the book, it is worth mentioning the extensive, consolidated reference list, and the useful index of plays and names that complements the volume.

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