

## LATER GREEK TRAGEDY

LIAPIS (V.), PETRIDES (A.K.) (edd.) *Greek Tragedy After the Fifth Century. A Survey from ca. 400 BC to ca. AD 400*. Pp. xiv + 415, ill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Cased, £94.99, US\$131 (Paper, £29.99, US\$38.99). ISBN: 978-1-107-03855-4 (978-1-009-06983-0 pbk).

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This is a much-awaited contribution to the field, which, since its inception over 2,000 years ago, has been focused strongly, if not solely, on classical Athens. The introduction to this volume briefly delineates the issues with the partial attention of scholarship that constructed the discourse on postclassical theatre as various theories of decline. The editors and individual authors of the essays in this volume must be commended for tackling this long tradition of prejudice.

Since the book has been designed as a survey, there is a lot of material to digest, collected from all kinds of evidence (manuscripts, papyri and inscriptions; iconographical material is mentioned in passing, and there is only one illustration). In Part 1, 'Texts', three surviving postclassical tragedies (*Rhesus*, *Alexandra* and *Exagōgē*) are given excellent overviews by their editors, A. Fries, S. Hornblower and P. Lanfranchi respectively. They accurately depict the fascinating nature of these plays and encourage readers to delve further into their texts. Part 1 also has a chapter by Liapis and T. Stephanopoulos devoted to an encyclopaedic overview of dramatic fragments of the fourth century BCE.

Part 2, 'Contexts and Developments', broadens the analysis out to a wider perspective and addresses various aspects of dramatic and theatrical practice. Here, we find an essay devoted to the expansion of theatre outside Athens, with special attention paid to the Artists of Dionysos, by B. Le Guen, the foremost expert on the matter. The conclusions to her chapter include the important statement that the Hellenistic period did not end the close relationship between tragedy and city, but rather that the civic aspect of dramatic festivals persisted throughout the period (p. 179).

Other papers in Part 2 focus on theatrical performance (A. Duncan and Liapis), the musical side of postclassical theatre (M. Griffith), (dis)continuities between fifth- and fourth-century BCE tragedy (F. Dunn), and society and politics (D.M. Carter). Most importantly, Le Guen, Griffith, and Duncan and Liapis all emphasise the centrality of music, dance and chorus in postclassical tragic performances – something that is extraordinarily hard to extract from the small body of evidence at our disposal.

Part 3, 'Reception and Transmission', is the shortest part, comprising only two, but excellent, essays: one by R. Webb on the reception of tragedy in the second sophistic and in late antiquity, the other by J. Hanink on ancient scholarship on tragedy. Webb not only touches upon the topic of pantomime but also elegantly discusses the Church Fathers' opposition to tragic genres. Her evidence extends (quite impressively) to 536/7 CE, when *tragōidoi* with choruses took part in entertainments in Constantinople.

In all three parts the authors, clearly stars in their respective subfields, display an admirable range of readings and interpretations, and their essays are in conversation with one another. The main criticism of the volume as a whole is that it overrepresents the fourth century BCE. This is, perhaps, a reflection of recent publications on the topic and the general interest they created (E. Csapo et al. [2014], V. Vahtikari [2014], Hanink [2014] and now also L. Jackson [2019], which came out in the same year as the reviewed publication). As a result, there is a lot of informational overlap; Chapter 6, for

example, was supposed to focus on theatrical performance, but instead effectively recaps most of the information that readers have already absorbed in the previous chapters before discussing briefly its own subject. On the other hand, the Roman period is limited to only two essays. Because of their focus on the reception of tragedy in prose the book makes it seem like there were no original theatrical productions at the time. Consequently, the field is still awaiting a proper monograph on Greek theatre in Roman times.

There is some important bibliographical information missing such as W. Puchner's *Greek Theatre between Antiquity and Independence* (2017). The section on the raised stage in Hellenistic times does not cite G.M. Sifakis, 'High Stage and Chorus in the Hellenistic Theatre', *BICS* 10 (1963). More understandable is the omission of K. Pietruczuk's monograph on ancient scholarship on classical tragedy *Dzieje tekstu Ajschylosa, Sofoklesa i Eurypidesa między Atenami i Aleksandrią* (2014). Its English translation, *Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides between Athens and Alexandria: a Textual History* (2019), must have come out simultaneously with the reviewed volume.

There are quite a few typographical errors, inconsistencies in spelling (on pp. 36–7 Herakles is spelled 'Hercules', 'Heracles' and 'Herakles'; the name of the famous actor is spelled both 'Polus' and 'Polos', e.g. on pp. 155 n. 31 and 177 respectively) and other mistakes. More worrying is a factual error, which suggests that more might have gone undetected: on p. 213, while discussing the practice of writing 'XOPOY' in the texts of postclassical dramas as a placeholder for choral lyrics, Griffith writes that '[i]n *Wealth* (385 BC), that bare statement "of the Chorus" is all that is found by way of choral presence in our manuscripts'. This is patently not true: in this Aristophanic play the Chorus sings a long musical agon together with the actor playing Carion (verses 290–321), which survives in the extant text.

There are some omissions that could (and, in the opinion of this reviewer, should) change the conclusions of an essay. A part of Dunn's paper is devoted to metatheatre in fifth- and fourth-century BCE tragedy, with the latter being dismissed in one sentence that there are no indications of metatheatre in the remaining textual fragments (p. 260 and, again, on p. 269). We could, however, look at tragic performance, which would suggest that the interest in metatheatre was alive and well in the postclassical period. At the end of the fourth century BCE, the celebrity actor Polus of Aegina acted in Sophocles' *Electra* (which Dunn mentions on p. 259), using an urn of his own son's ashes as a prop. Since Polus was so well known, it is likely that the audience knew that the prop was real (see A. Duncan, *Helios* 32 [2005]). Thus, his performance created attractive metatheatrical layers: Electra of the play thought it was real, the audience knew it was not real within the reality of the play, but it was, in fact, real within the actor's and audience's reality. Those are the interpretative opportunities that the rise of professional actors in the postclassical period provides for scholars. And even though comedy was always more metatheatrical than tragedy, a similar gesture is detectable in Menander's *Dyskolos* 432–4, where the *aulos*-player is metatheatrically integrated into the narrative, when one of the comic characters encourages the musician to play a song to Pan. This implies that perhaps some of the features of postclassical tragedy were dismissed too hastily and, at the same time, that we should not disregard the artistic ingenuity of star actors who are still somewhat looked down upon in classics scholarship.

Nevertheless, this book represents undisputed progress in the history of Greek theatre. It should be incorporated into undergraduate and graduate curricula, even if, as Hanink gracefully writes in the conclusion to her chapter and the book itself, 'new chapters in the study of classical tragedy . . . still remain to be written' (p. 349).

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