

Despite these few shortcomings the book has much to offer, especially for a general audience. Published in Methuen Drama's 'Forms of Drama' series, this slim volume is intended for non-specialists. In effect, the book is extremely accessible. The Greek, always quoted in transliteration, is minimal; when cited, it is employed to great effect, for example to illustrate the onomatopoeic effects of *hoplokup'ōti* in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* 83 (p. 23). F. likewise keeps notes to a minimum. Complicated matters such as the authenticity of certain scenes are summarised concisely and clearly and used to draw attention to the challenges of interpreting and understanding Greek tragedy today. Notwithstanding this simplicity, F. provides an updated and informed account of tragedy, one that includes the latest research on Greek tragedy, from S. Nooter's work on the soundscape of tragedy to L. Jackson's examination of fourth-century chorus. In short, this is a clear and engaging book that successfully outlines the essentials of Greek tragedy and its performance in fifth-century BCE Athens.

King's College London

ROSA ANDÚJAR
rosa.andujar@kcl.ac.uk

GENDER AND POLITICS IN SOPHOCLES

SEFERIADI (G.) *Gendered Politics in Sophocles' Trachiniae*. Pp. xii + 196. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Cased, £85, US\$115. ISBN: 978-1-350-26031-3.

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Sophocles' *Trachiniae* revolves around several gender-related themes, such as male/female reversal and domesticity versus wildness. Scholarly interpretations have remarkably often dismissed the play's female protagonist, Deianeira, as helpless, foolish and naive. Third-wave feminism interpreted this tragedy as a patriarchal product *par excellence*, in which Deianeira's turn to action (her application of a love potion to a robe for Heracles) is an unforgivable transgression (on this trend see e.g. B. Heiden, 'Trachiniae', in: *Brill's Companion to Sophocles* [2012], p. 130). What S.'s book offers is a feminist counter-interpretation, in which she tries to show that the play does not conform to, but rather subverts, patriarchal structures.

In the introduction S. lays the groundwork for one of the central arguments of her book: Deianeira is a political figure, and the οἶκος in which she operates is not a private but a civic entity crucial to the stability of the *polis*. In S.'s eyes Deianeira offers a 'female locus' from which patriarchy is criticised. The concept of the 'female locus' is left undefined, as are other (theoretical) terms. At some points the introduction's dense prose is difficult to understand (see e.g. the unexplained reference to 'cracks' within Deianeira's speech on p. 8, repeated on pp. 16, 93).

The first chapter offers a lucid discussion of the pre-texts of *Trachiniae* and shows how vase paintings can provide us with an insight into other versions of the play's myths. In this chapter S. aims to support her view of Deianeira as a political figure by arguing that she is an Amazon living within the Greek *polis*. According to S. her position contrasts with that of the monsters of the play, who occupy a 'liminal' and 'extra-political' status. In her endeavour to prove that an ancient audience primarily considered Deianeira as Amazonian, S. supplements the scant evidence that is usually brought up (such as

Deianeira's war-like brother and the etymology of her name) with her own, less persuasive, arguments. One wonders, for example, whether Deianeira's descent from a violent family is a recurrent *tragic* pattern, or indeed distinctively *Amazonian*.

The second chapter revolves around the nuptial and sexual imagery that is amply present in the play. S. builds upon the work of Segal (C. Segal, *Sophocles' Tragic World* [1995], pp. 69–94) when interpreting these issues in political terms. In arguing that monstrous sexual desires cause chaos in the play and disrupt its (in S.'s view 'political') order, S. adds her own touch to familiar arguments by more elaborately highlighting the importance of monstrosity and sexual violence. In the second part of this chapter S. offers a discussion of Heracles' νόσος that is less innovative in relation to the existing scholarship (e.g. P. Biggs, *CPh* 61 [1966]; W. Allan, *Hermes* 142 [2014]).

The central theme of Chapter 3 is the 'crisis of reciprocity' that permeates the play (and, according to S., forms a threat to its 'order'). The idea of marriage as a transaction, the recurrence of gifts (Nessus gives Deianeira the love potion, Heracles gives Iole to Deianeira, and Deianeira gives Heracles the robe) and the repeated use of words with the stem δωρ- have been noticed before. S.'s addition is her collection of χάρις-related words and her comparative analysis that shows different ways for gifts to be unreliable and reciprocity to be undermined. Her discussion of Deianeira's gift (the robe) might have benefited from more extensive engagement with Lee's work on πέπλοι (M. Lee, *CJ* 99 [2004]).

In Chapter 4 S. argues that *Trachiniae* can be seen as commenting on justice. She offers a fine outline of existing literature on Deianeira's guilt, showing the bias inherent in these studies – Deianeira is presented in scholarship as either naive or cruel *because* she is a woman. The outline of existing studies points out the relevance of making the distinction between guilt, knowledge and intentions. S.'s treatment of the issue adds nuance to the ongoing debate because of her emphasis on Deianeira's logical deliberations, her concern with her own reputation, and the changes in her state of mind and thoughts on the love potion.

The first part of the fifth and last chapter revolves around the 'authority' of traditional endings over the audience's perception of the plot. S. uses the alternating forces of mythological foreknowledge and dramatic plot on the one hand, and Heracles' role as a 'speaker of aetiology' on the other as explanations for the Sophoclean open-endedness that governs the last part of the play. The second part of the chapter revolves around a different type of authority: that of Heracles over Hyllus. S. argues that *Trachiniae* reflects Hyllus' rite of passage, and she interprets Heracles' wish for Hyllus to marry Iole as a way for him to ensure the continuation of his οἶκος. This aligns well with S.'s interest in the οἶκος as a political unit, but S. seems to go too far when she uses this to drive home her point that the play subverts patriarchal authority. Others have read Hyllus' reluctance less as political resistance and more as a result of his personal discomfort with marrying his father's lover.

One of the crucial characteristics of S.'s approach is her aim to connect the play's literary elements with contemporary socio-political reality. She here follows the widespread (though not uncontested) assumption that even in a play that centres around a mythical world, contemporary issues of public debate can be reflected. But S. sometimes seems to get entangled in theoretical deliberations that obfuscate the connection with historical political reality and yield conclusions that are ultimately incompatible with ancient thought. S.'s main point, that *Trachiniae* is driven by an inclination to subvert patriarchy, is therefore less persuasive. Think, for example, of Deianeira's famous silent exit, commonly seen as an acceptance of guilt. In S.'s reading, the absence of speech is 'a communicative device of contesting authorized linguistic forms and refuting the normative

discourse of phallogocentrism' (p. 114). On p. 41 she points out the paradox inherent in such interpretations: '*Trachiniae* ... [paradoxically becomes] an early manifesto of the feminist movement'.

S. offers an original view on this tragedy that includes valuable discussions of its literary sources and existing scholarship. Even if her feminist reading will not convince all, her close readings shed useful light on thematic issues such as sexual violence and guilt.

University of Amsterdam

LOLA BOS
l.a.s.bos@uva.nl

SOPHOCLES IN TRANSLATION

KOVACS (D.) *Sophocles: Oedipus the King. A New Verse Translation*. Pp. xii + 109. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Paper, £12.99, US\$15 (Cased, £30, US\$40). ISBN: 978-0-19-885484-5 (978-0-19-885483-8 hbk).

MARCH (J.) (ed., trans.) *Sophocles: Oedipus Tyrannus*. Pp. viii + 314. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020. Paper, £29.99 (Cased, £95). ISBN: 978-1-78962-792-3 (978-1-78962-254-6 hbk).

TAPLIN (O.) (trans.) *Sophocles: Antigone and other Tragedies*. Antigone, Deianeira, Electra. Pp. xlii + 223, map. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Cased, £20, US\$25. ISBN: 978-0-19-928624-9. doi:10.1017/S0009840X22002451

These contrasting volumes challenge readers to consider what they want from an edition or translation. All three translators are established academics with impressive publication records. All three volumes are clear examples of the impact their previous work on tragedy has on their translation approaches. These are impressive and useful books. In this synoptic review, I do not discuss them in detail, but consider the experience of reading each in the light of the others, and how the translations and notes reflect the translator's pre-existing interests. Although Taplin's *Oedipus the King* is in a different volume, I discuss March and Kovacs on *Oedipus*, and all three in the general context of what it means to translate Sophoclean tragedy today.

Kovacs gives a short introduction to *Oedipus the King* and its themes. He draws on H. Lloyd-Jones's Loeb text (1994), with a few changes listed in the introduction. March has an introduction, Greek text with facing English translation and commentary. Taplin includes an introduction to the three plays, and English translations of each, prefaced by short introductions.

Each translator also focuses on different key topics. Kovacs emphasises the role of the gods in *Oedipus the King*, building specifically on his article 'On Not Misunderstanding *Oedipus Tyrannus*' (*CQ* 69 [2019], 107–18; March continues this discussion with reference to Kovacs, p. 35). Section 3 of his introduction works through a range of aspects concerning Apollo, arguing that this is not a tragedy of destiny, puppets and marionettes, but that divine interference is important. He makes the dramaturgical point that Sophocles wanted to write an effective play to win the competition, so that some elements of how the