

*Greek Verb* (Boston 1890) and A.C. Moorhouse, *The Syntax of Sophocles* (Leiden 1982). J.D. Denniston's *The Greek Particles* (2nd edn, Oxford 1954) is also frequently cited. This is all very good, and the student who absorbs the information in this commentary will know a lot of Greek by the end. The pedagogical structure has been carefully considered. The implied reader seems to be intelligent and committed, but lacking much grounding in Greek. Sophocles is difficult, and one might ideally assume a certain level of Greek in students who attempt him, but that may not always be feasible.

The commentary is almost entirely linguistic, and literary interpretation is mostly confined to the introduction. The discussion of the performance context includes some statements which need more qualification and justification, for example, 'Being state sponsored, the plays had a strong didactic element' (2). Hanna Roisman states confidently, 'The plays were produced before huge audiences of between 15,000 and 20,000 spectators' (3), although it has been argued that audiences in the Theatre of Dionysus were little more than a third of that. There is a brief discussion of the complex mythological background and of the dramatic treatments of the story by Aeschylus and Euripides, suggesting that Sophocles' play preceded Euripides' and rightly stressing that both were reacting to Aeschylus. Roisman's interpretation of the play itself focusses on its political dimension, which has been the subject of much recent discussion: 'Sophocles suggests that to attain their idealistic goals, the avengers must act as political beings, with all the moral shortcomings of politicians' (11). This is a version of the 'just but ugly' view of the revenge, which is plausible enough in itself although students might have benefited from a clearer guide to rival interpretations. The introduction concludes with some useful remarks on the significance of the royal palace before which the play is set, rightly stressing the thematic contrast between inside and outside. There is a brief account of metre and prosody in the introduction, although criticism of Roisman's treatment of metre in an earlier book is also relevant to this one: 'The introduction to iambic trimeters ... fails to mention *caesura* and confuses line-end *brevis in longo* with *syllaba anceps*' (Martin Cropp, *BMCR* 2011.08.28). All the lyric passages are scanned in an appendix, but merely adding a name to each line (for example, 'choriambic hendecasyllable OR asclepiadean' for 472 ~ 489) does not really amount to a 'metrical analysis'. An idiosyncratic feature of the book is an appendix giving a lexical analysis, with statistics for each section of words occurring only once in the play and of words occurring only once in the extant Sophoclean corpus (rather curiously excluding fragments).

There are a few misprints, including some in the glossary and in the table of irregular verbs, which might confuse readers. The book is very sturdy, and made to sustain heavy use.

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STEIN (P.) *Sophokles. Ödipus auf Kolonos*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2018. Pp. 176, illus. €19.95. 9783406725678.  
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It is not too bold to argue that Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* is one of those tragic plays that can keep a scholar mentally occupied for a lifetime, and despite the constant hermeneutic efforts, there is no escaping the haunting feeling that whatever the critical method meticulously and ardently deployed, each and every reading holds the grave risk of disproportionate schematization, abstraction and inflexibility. The diversity of verbal, political,

religious and social codes threaded together in multiple complex messages notwithstanding, *Oedipus at Colonus* has of late given rise to an array of highly synthetic and contextualized studies. Sadly, a full-scale edition with commentary is still lacking from this collection of wide-ranging interpretive surveys which this reviewer has had his fair share in augmenting by producing two closely related volumes (*Tragic Narrative: A Narratological Study of Oedipus at Colonus* (Berlin and New York 2002); *Oedipus at Colonus: Sophocles, Athens, and the World* (Berlin and New York 2007)). These scholarly soundings seek to afford specialist and non-specialist readers alike vivid and clear insight into the play's complexities and intricacies, all the while striving to provide an essential starting point for those who want to pursue particular topics and themes in more depth (cf., for instance, A. Kelly, *Sophocles: Oedipus at Colonus* (London 2009)).

The beautifully produced and assiduously edited translation of *Oedipus at Colonus* by the internationally acclaimed director Peter Stein is both a welcome addition to and a much-needed elaboration on this slowly but steadily expanding range of comprehensive overviews and detailed monographs, which aim not only at facilitating a fresh and enlightening take on Sophocles' final work, but also at challenging readers to rethink their expectations and assumptions, and therefore to sharpen their response to those undecided and contested questions that lie at the heart of their inquiry. The reason for this is that Stein's original and distinctive German rendition exposes audiences to the captivating liveliness and remarkable thoroughness of the play as a fascinating and powerful performed showpiece. More than that, the book closes off with two penetrating and succinctly argued essays by Bernd Seidensticker and Hellmut Flashar, which are designed to bring further meaning and historical force to Stein's excellent translation by introducing and reviewing current thinking in the field of Sophoclean studies.

In particular, Seidensticker's longer chapter (141–80), besides providing a state-of-the-art research picture of Sophocles' life and times, seeks to offer a deeper awareness of *Oedipus at Colonus* by addressing issues and problems about the play's principal thoughts and dramaturgy that continue to puzzle and provoke today, such as the scandalous developments of the Oedipus myth sending shockwaves for all and sundry and the moral complications stemming from a series of appalling actions and horrible events at Thebes and Athens. There is also a rewarding section on Stein's impeccable translation skills and directorial sophistication, amply demonstrated in his magisterial production of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in 1980, together with helpful comments on diction and structure. Despite its briefness, Flashar's essay (181–88) on the *Nachleben* of the play furthers our understanding of the various ways in which *Oedipus at Colonus* has been discussed, adapted, translated and integrated into other works over the course of the last 2,500 years with a special emphasis on modern reception.

Unsurprisingly, Stein's rich and lucid rendition of the ancient text takes pride of place in this handy and well-illustrated volume (11–140). In the summer of 2010, the distinguished German director mounted a theatrical production of *Oedipus at Colonus* at the prominent Salzburg festival of music and drama with much-admired actor Klaus Maria Brandauer as Oedipus and talented younger actress Katharina Susewind as Antigone. The translation grows from this successful performance of the play, and by avoiding stylistic conventions and the embroidered effects of unnecessarily colloquial attempts, it neatly captures the essential thoughts and arguments of the Sophoclean work. Accessible, poetic and specific, it renders the Greek with a straightforwardness and dignity reminiscent of the original. With swift, translucent language that rings both ancient and modern, the German text immediately engrosses the reader, while the tight and well-adjusted pace allows the audience to hear and appreciate the incantatory replications in the Greek. In this respect, it should be pointed out that by building on his experimental production of the *Oresteia*, Stein not only brings to bear multiple critical editions and scholarly readings on his interpretation of *Oedipus at Colonus* but also seeks to convey the significance of actions and events through linguistic repetition and augmentation. This is a

distinctive translation technique which, quite appropriately, has been called ‘expressive dilation’, in that it frequently deploys numerous synonyms to state as precisely as possible the meaning of a crucial word or term (cf. G. Ugolini “Una parabola meravigliosa”: Peter Stein traduttore e regista dell’ *Edipo a Colono*’, *Visioni del tragico* 1.1 (2020), 51–64).

All in all, Peter Stein, the critically applauded director of the *Oresteia*, here succeeds in taking on an equally demanding and in some ways more rigorous challenge: translating the final dramatic work of Sophocles into eloquent and powerful diction, while at the same time situating the play within the tumultuous political and social context of late fifth-century Athens.

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MARTIN (C.) (tr.) **Euripides: *Medea***. Oakland: University of California Press, 2019. Pp. ix + 101. £19.99. 9780520307391.  
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I like this translation of Euripides’ masterwork. It reads smoothly, easily and unpretentiously, and strikes a fine balance between literal and free-wheeling translation. It will serve well as a vehicle for reaching a Greek-less audience and introducing them to the timeless appeal of Classical tragedies; at the same time, it is a pleasing addition to the libraries of long-time devotees of the play, for when they want to sit down with it, as with an old friend.

The book has a brief, two-part introduction aimed at a general audience. The first part, ‘Euripides and his life and times’, by poet A.E. Stallings, genially but somewhat oddly focuses on reported biographical details of Euripides’ life. It starts with a general disclaimer of the reliability of the relevant second- to tenth-century CE sources, but then goes on to mine them ‘for the bright sharp needles in the stacks of hay’ (1).

The second introductory section, co-authored by Stallings and Angela Taraskiewicz, briefly (and without engaging with secondary sources) addresses some key elements of the play, including its contextualization within the myth of the Golden Fleece, Medea’s problematic position both as spurned wife and as a self-exile from Colchis faced now with involuntary exile from Corinth, the much-discussed and often maligned Aegeus episode, the Greek Chorus’ stance of ‘sisterhood’ with Medea and the possibility that the [original?] audience was to be surprised by the mother’s climactic filicide.

The most interesting part of the introductory material is the author’s brief note on the choices he has made in his effort to convey to a modern reader the play’s force as a ‘poetic drama’ (17). Those choices include blank verse for most speakers and a tendency to trochees for chanted verses. I would like to have heard more from him about his metrical patterns, but as a general phenomenon I commend his successes in unobtrusively making his lines feel like poetry. I can readily imagine an undergraduate reading through the entire translation without any consciousness of reading anything different from prose, yet sensing it as somehow more structured and poetic.

A second set of poetic choices made by the translator regard rhyme, a poetic tool missing from the Greek tragedians’ quivers but available to modern translators who wish to heighten a reader’s (or hearer’s) consciousness of the play as a poetic creation. Martin reports having employed rhyme for Jason’s dialogues with Medea, for the messenger’s speech, for epigrammatic utterances, stichomythic dialogue and choruses (the last on