

## INTRODUCTIONS TO GREEK DRAMA

SWIFT (L.) *Greek Tragedy. Themes and Contexts*. Pp. xii + 125, ills. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Paper, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-4742-3683-6.

GARVIE (A.F.) *The Plays of Aeschylus*. Second edition. Pp. x + 99. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016 (first edition 2010). Paper, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-4742-3327-9.

GARVIE (A.F.) *The Plays of Sophocles*. Second edition. Pp. x + 96. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016 (first edition 2005). Paper, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-4742-3335-4.

†MORWOOD (J.) *The Plays of Euripides*. Second edition. Pp. x + 144, ills. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016 (first edition 2002). Paper, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-4742-3359-0.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X17002384

S.'s slender volume is the latest addition to the well-established *Classical World* series. It is joined by new and updated editions of G.'s and M.'s earlier introductions to the works of the three great tragedians. Together they provide a concise yet comprehensive overview of the genre, aimed at school or undergraduate students whose knowledge of the subject (and the Greek language) may be limited. The set enters an increasingly crowded field. For those contemplating an initial exploration of the texts and themes of tragedy, a number of guides are already available – such as E. Hall, *Greek Tragedy, Suffering Under the Sun* (2010) or R. Scodel, *An Introduction to Greek Tragedy* (2010) – besides the ever-expanding host of Companions to individual authors and plays. The value of this series, however, is that it is ideally suited for the school or university classroom. Each chapter, focused as it is either on an individual play or (in the case of S.'s volume) an individual theme, forms an ideal starting place or revision aid for students new to tragedy. The four volumes offer, in comparatively few pages, a clear and accessible summary of both the plots, problems and main approaches to all the extant plays. As is to be expected, interpretations are firmly grounded in recent scholarship, but references to secondary literature are kept to a minimum. The four books are also similar in layout, each containing chronological tables, glossaries and helpful, though brief, suggestions for further reading on each topic. Overall, the set promises to be an excellent addition to the reading list for any introductory course on Greek tragedy.

S. sets out to elucidate the broad ideas and contexts that underpin the plays. In the first chapter, 'Tragedy as a Genre', she sets the genre within its Athenian context and briefly outlines some of its main features: that it is a mimetic, serious art form, generally involving a plot in which previous good fortune turns to bad. In 'Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides', the three tragedians and their works are briefly compared. Students are urged in particular to show due caution when reading ancient biographies or evidence for the lives of the poets. The chapter 'Myth' seeks to undermine any notion that there is such a thing as the standard or official form of a myth through a discussion of the three extant treatments of the Electra narrative. 'Heroes' covers Knox's theory of the 'heroic temper' and Aristotelian *peripeteia*. In 'Gods', 'Contemporary Thought' and 'Gender and Family', S. situates tragedy within contemporary debates on religion, *nomos* and *physis*, rhetoric, attitudes to non-Greeks, marriage and masculinity. The final

chapter is devoted solely to the Chorus and attempts to introduce readers to an aspect of tragedy that may at first strike many as unnecessary or confusing. S. explains the relevance and importance of the chorus both for ancient tragic performance and our understanding of the texts. Here, and indeed throughout, S. aims to correct errors commonly made by those reading tragedy for the first time. These chapters together cover the main topics of discussion in recent scholarship. In a short introduction it is inevitable that not everyone will be satisfied. Unlike many introductions to tragedy, this volume is not excessively historicist in its interpretations of the plays, something which this reviewer at least found pleasantly refreshing. One might take issue with certain statements – such as the claim that ancient drama was ‘a much starker form of theatre’ (p. 6) than its modern equivalent (do we really know this?) – but in general S. has produced a balanced and comprehensive introduction.

G. has revised his earlier introductions to Aeschylus and Sophocles (published respectively in 2010 and 2005 for the same series). As in the previous editions, each of the extant plays is discussed in a single self-contained chapter, followed by a brief general ‘epilogue’. G. has updated the bibliography for each book and has also made some substantive additions. In particular, he expounds in both volumes on the importance of the pattern of ‘homecoming’. Here he incorporates some of the ideas outlined in his 2009 commentary on Aeschylus’ *Persians*. The significance of travel and heroic returns has been relatively neglected in studies of tragedy, and here G. outlines a fresh perspective on an otherwise well-studied set of plays. The staging is also discussed in greater detail, and his chapter on Sophocles’ *Ajax* has altered in light of the recent publication of G.W. Most and L. Ozbek (edd.), *Staging Ajax’s Suicide* (2015). G. covers many of the most discussed interpretative problems with a lightness of touch that characterises the series in general: the question of a *skene* in the early plays of Aeschylus, the order of Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* trilogy, the deception speech of Ajax and the so-called ‘light and dark’ approaches to Sophocles’ *Electra*, for example, are all examined in passing. Again, although G. provides a generally balanced introduction, students should still be encouraged to engage critically with his conclusions. Not everyone will agree, for instance, that ‘there is indeed much to dislike in Antigone’ (pp. 33–4), but such statements should nonetheless form a good starting point for discussion.

It was with great sadness that I learned of the death of James Morwood while in the course of writing this review. Through his many publications, both on Euripides and on Greek and Latin language, he has had a profound impact on the teaching of Classics and will be greatly missed by his former pupils. This volume and its predecessor are broadly typical of his output and incorporate many of his ideas elucidated elsewhere, especially on *Electra*, *Suppliants* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. One of the characteristics of his work was his enthusiasm for the subject matter: there can be few scholars as willing to declare without qualification that ‘each and every one of [Euripides’ plays] is a masterpiece’ (p. 1). Again, the tragedies are discussed individually, a decision which is in part reflective of his view that the term ‘Euripidean’ is overly reductive.

The new edition has updated the suggestions for further reading and takes account, where relevant, of developments in scholarship since 2002. Many of these are summarised in the closing ‘epilogue’. As an example of where M.’s views have changed in the second edition, on pp. 134–5 he expresses reservations regarding his earlier interpretation of *Hecuba* 218–21. In the text of both editions, he comments on the ‘brutality’ of Odysseus’ speech, but in the epilogue he acknowledges that alternative interpretations are possible. ‘My point’, he concludes, ‘is to exhort readers not to take any judgement about the *dramatis personae* as final’. It is perhaps a pity that this view was not stated more explicitly earlier in the main body of the text. Throughout M. focuses greatly on

characterisation, and his appraisals of many of Euripides' characters are far from charitable. Pheres in *Alcestis* is 'contemptible' (p. 9), Hippolytus 'unappealingly self-righteous' (p. 30), the old man in *Ion* 'repellent' (p. 79), and the protagonists of *Orestes* are a 'terrorist trio' marked by 'nastiness' (p. 97). None of these positions is inherently unreasonable, but it would be as well to note that the *communis opinio* can and has been challenged, for example in the case of the character of Electra in *Electra* or Orestes in *Orestes*. We might indeed expect an audience to respond in more than one way to any given character in a single performance. I would be both surprised and disappointed if I ever encountered a class of students who all held the same opinion regarding the character of Medea. Readers should perhaps be encouraged to consider not merely whether Orestes is a nasty individual from the perspective of the Greeks, but what any potential 'nastiness' might contribute to the play. Why, in other words, did Euripides produce characters in the way that he did? Overall, however, this new edition improves what was already a stimulating and accessible guide to Euripides' extant plays and an excellent companion to the volumes by G. and S.

University of Nottingham

EDMUND STEWART  
[edmund.stewart@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:edmund.stewart@nottingham.ac.uk)

## THE RECEPTION OF AESCHYLUS

CONSTANTINIDIS (S.E.) (ed.) *The Reception of Aeschylus' Plays through Shifting Models and Frontiers*. (Metaforms 7.) Pp. xvi + 409, colour ill. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016. Cased, €152, US\$168. ISBN: 978-90-04-33115-0.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X17001445

This stimulating volume comprises an introduction plus thirteen essays by a stellar line-up of experienced scholars with significant publication records who specialise in Greek tragedy or a related field. This is the first study to address the reception of Aeschylus holistically, and although the plays of the *Oresteia* trilogy are understandably explored in most detail, it is good to see all the extant plays discussed as well as a number of fragments. The thematic focus is on the processes of 'editing, analyzing, translating, adapting, and remaking the plays of Aeschylus' both 'for the page and the stage' (p. ix, italics original), emphasising a 'systemic model' (p. 3) that sees the connections between these processes. Helpful theoretical guidance is given regarding the terminology of 'translation', 'adaptation' and 'remake' (pp. 6–7), and the volume's 'dual perspective' (p. 22) on audience and readership is stressed as C. guides us deftly through the interconnections between the chapters in his exemplary introduction.

In Chapter 1, 'Editing Aeschylus for a Modern Readership: Textual Criticism and Other Concerns', A. Garvie provides an overview of the challenges facing a modern textual critic in producing an edition of Aeschylus. He gives valuable advice on how to strike a balance between analysis of text and contexts by, for example, giving measured consideration both to possible authorial intention and to potential audience responses, ancient and modern. The discussion draws on his own experience in producing authoritative and indispensable editions of Aeschylus, most recently *Persae* (2009), and is informed by an impressive range of scholarship.

Chapter 2, by J. Hannink and A. Uhlig, 'Aeschylus and His Afterlife in the Classical Period: "My Poetry Did Not Die With Me"', focuses our attention on the ancient contexts