2015, directed by Venkataramana Aital, invoked Indian myths and practices in representing and communicating the Aeschylean text.

The final chapter, 'Two Centuries, Two *Oresteia*s, Two Remakes', by H. Moritz, highlights the effects of contemporary theatrical conventions on two major adaptations of the *Oresteia* – Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) and Katharine Noon's *Home Siege Home* (2009). Realist theatrical concerns and Freudian psychology permeate O'Neill's work in his representation of family dynamics. Noon's play, on the other hand, is characterised by postmodernism and metatheatricality in its evocation of contemporary politics. Beginning, as it does, with a brief review of the reception of the *Oresteia* in antiquity, and spanning the main period of Aeschylean reception history in its central discussion, Moritz's chapter makes a singularly appropriate closing piece for the volume.

Overall, this is an exceptionally coherent and well-conceived collection, edited by an expert hand. The chapters speak both to the central concerns of the volume and to each other, with authors clearly engaged with and cross-referencing each other's work. This book will be indispensable for anyone interested in the reception history of Aeschylus, and has much of value to say, more generally, about the politics of translation and adaptation in the remaking of Greek tragedy.

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POLITICAL ASPECTS OF EURIPIDEAN TRAGEDY

WOHL (V.) *Euripides and the Politics of Form.* Pp. xviii + 200. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015. Cased, £27.95, US$39.95. ISBN: 978-0-691-16650-6.

At least since Aristophanes' *Frogs*, the political character of Greek tragedy has been a subject of debate: while, according to what Euripides says in this comedy (vv. 1009–10), tragedy has an important ethical and political role, scholars disagree about how the tragic theatre can achieve this purpose. Some focus on the political content of dramas (e.g. C. Meier, *The Political Art of Greek Tragedy* [trans., 1993], J. Gregory, *Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians* [1991]), others prefer to think that the very structure of Greek tragedy somehow reproduces the functioning and the concerns of the democratic *polis* of Athens (e.g. J.-P. Vernant, P. Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* [trans., 1988], S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* [1986]). Coming from a series of lectures (and particularly from four Martin Classical Lectures delivered in 2011), W.'s study is situated in this context and aims to provide an original insight into the relationship between politics and aesthetic form.

In the introduction, 'The Politics of Form', W. puts forward her thesis: 'in Euripidean tragedy, dramatic form is a kind of political content' (p. 1). She takes her starting point from two general remarks about Euripidean drama, the formal 'oddity' of Euripides' tragedies and the relation between the plays and their contemporary world. Combining both the aesthetic and the political concerns, the study aspires to offer a single answer to these two different questions. After a short review of ancient theories of *mousikê*, W. provides an illustration of her method by an analysis of *Alcestis* and of the opposition between the 'democratic equality of

death' (p. 13) and the elite privilege. Instead of offering a specific message, the emotional trajectory of the play offers 'a framework, a form, for belief' (p. 18).

Chapter 1, 'Dramatic Means and Ideological Ends', provides a study of *Ion*. It focuses on the relation between the ideological concerns about Athens' glory and the foundation of its empire, and on the dramatic structure of the play: with its 'open structure' it reflects contemporary democracy, and with its twists it manages the emotional responses of the audience. Since the *anagnorisis* scene comes very late in order to increase the aesthetical pleasure of the audience, dramatic satisfaction and ideological satisfaction occur together in the final scene. This means not only that the ideology 'emerges out of the formal structure of the play' (p. 38), but also that the emotional trajectory of the play transforms the chorus and the audience from 'ideological tourists into participants' (p. 32).

Chapter 2, 'Beautiful Tears', investigates tragedy as the 'staging of beautiful suffering' (p. 39) and examines the relation between ethical and aesthetic dimensions with examples drawn from *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*. How should we look at the suffering enacted in these plays? The audience feels pity for the Trojan Women but, even if it knows from the prologue that the Greeks will be punished, this pity is not enough to make it just. Similarly, in *Hecuba* the pity has no political effect. Despite the apparent symmetry of the two parts of the plot (Polyxena's sacrifice and Polymestor's punishment), Hecuba's revenge is excessive: the structure of the play alerts the audience to the lack of proportion and to the justice yet to come.

In Chapter 3, 'Recognition and Realism', W. provides a study of *Electra*, focused on another typical dichotomy of Greek tragedy. Since in tragedy everyone is given the chance to speak, tragedy has a form of 'egalitarian realism'. At the same time, however, all the mythological characters and stories display a contrasting 'structural elitism'. In *Electra* the realistic presentation of the peasant and the realistic scepticism of Electra in the *anagnorisis* scene seem to offer a democratic vision of 'reality'. However, the second half of the play moves in exactly the opposite direction. Exterior signs that Electra withdrew in the recognition scene because of the unrealistic elements turn out to demonstrate the very identity of Orestes. The 'realism' of the peasant presentation shows that only elite men can act. This process of de-realisation by which we 'get our play, at the cost of "reality" and its egalitarian possibilities' (p. 76) reaches its peak in the *deus ex machina* final prophecies. Thus the radical egalitarianism remains a possibility not yet realised in the present, but still to come.

The question of direct political allusions is discussed in Chapter 4, 'The Politics of Political Allegory', by an analysis of *Suppliant Women*. W. argues that the presence of anachronisms and allusions to fifth-century Athens makes the play seem a 'political allegory' (p. 91). The opposition between the praise of democratic Athens and the presence of a king shows the limits of this allegorical projection. It is impossible to reconcile tragedy and politics: the praise of democracy is followed by the anti-political lament of the Argive women, and the funeral eulogy is followed by Evadne's suicide. However, the final *kommos* makes it possible to associate the tragic ritual of lamentation and the civic practice (by the parade of young orphans). Thus politics and tragedy can finally combine in an 'affective synthesis' (p. 106) created by the emotional reactions of the audience.

Chapter 5, 'Broken Plays for a Broken World', starts from the difficulty of distinguishing history and fiction in *Helen* and from the relation between the mythological plot enacted in *Trojan Women* and the Melian episode in Thucydides, and it argues that tragedy not only reflects historical context but produces it. A survey of *Orestes* offers a more detailed example. In this play, performed in 408 between the two civil wars in 411 and 404 BCE, the 'manipulation of sympathy' (p. 120) not only reflects past tensions and the

current situation of the city but provides a framework for the experience of civil war and the final reconciliation to come in 403.

In the conclusion, 'The Content of Form', W. sums up the results of her analyses. If Euripides' tragedy prefigures aesthetic and political transformations to come in the following century, it is because it has created their psychic and cognitive conditions. The conclusion is followed by notes, a rich bibliography, appropriately including some important non-English studies, and a very useful index of subjects, names and places.

The book is well written and easy to read, and provides an original and interesting interpretation of the 'oddities' and the structural construction of selected plays of Euripides. Nevertheless, it would have benefited from a greater conceptual precision. What W. means by 'politics' and 'form' (both defined in the preface, p. ix) seems to be so vague and omni-comprehensive that we lose sight of the originality and the coherence of the approach. Occasionally, there is an unwelcome confusion between intra- and extrascenic communication or between the intra- or extra-fictional world. For example, when W. states that the pity for Hecuba has no political effect, is this consideration equally valid for characters and for the audience? Or, when W. focuses on the relation between reality and fiction in *Helen*, does she not confuse intra- and extra-fictional reference? The most interesting readings are delivered, in my opinion, in Chapters 3 and 4, and, beyond any other critical point, we have to appreciate the progress in knowledge that comes from some studies included in this book concerning the emotional and pragmatic effects of the tragedies in question.

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THE ROLE OF COSTUME IN ARISTOPHANES' COMEDIES

COMPTON-ENGLE (G.) *Costume in the Comedies of Aristophanes*. Pp. xiv + 198, ills. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Cased, £67, US$102. ISBN: 978-1-107-08379-0.

Although the scholarship on the performance of Greek drama has increased vastly in recent decades, studies on the role of material props and objects in the stage action of individual plays and scenes are still rare. This book fills a gap with regards to the comic use of costume, showing how the items of clothing worn by characters as part of the theatrical physical arsenal of the playwright contribute to the dramatic fabric of comedies and inform our understanding of the genre.

Chapter 1, 'Introduction: Comic Costume in Action', provides a brief but helpful and informative overview of the existing achievements in the field and approaches to the subject. C.-E. rightly observes that much emphasis has been put almost exclusively on disguise as the default comic manipulation with clothes; she sets a goal to rethink comic disguise as part of a larger system of the use of costume in comic plays. She identifies four types of activities related to costume which are significant for the thematic structure of the plays: voluntary stripping; involuntary stripping; the addition of clothes and accessories; and costume changes and exchanges. The evidence for these manipulations with costume is the text of the plays, in particular, verbal references which mark significant stage actions.