

eight chapters, each covering one or more plays by a single playwright, drawing attention to the manner in which the oath is utilized. Often it is as a plot device, whereby the trajectory of the action is changed when the swearer becomes bound to do (or not to do) something in the future, something which he or she might not have otherwise undertaken to do. In addition to showing how an oath directs the plot, Fletcher also draws attention to the way in which several significant speech acts, especially oaths, oracles and curses, share in a particular religious register that gains performative authority through association with the gods as a communicative act between mortals and the divine: as such, these speech acts are themselves permeated with an authority that transcends everyday human speech. Most revealing in this regard is the way in which a curse often functions as the fulfilment of a previously sworn oath in several tragedies. However, it is in her analysis of the gendered nature of drama's oaths that her findings are particularly enlightening.

Sensitive to the fundamental opposition in Greek gender ideology between the active, creative and authoritative male and the passive, destructive and weak female, Fletcher identifies a correspondence between oath-swearing, the embodied masculine ideal of political agency and authoritative speech in drama. Amongst men, both in real life as in drama, oaths are used in a number of situations: in the creation of friendships (as between Theseus and Oedipus); in the formation of treaties and alliances (as between Athens and Orestes on behalf of the Argives); in the incorporation of a young man into a community of men (as the oaths sworn by Neoptolemus and Hyllus do in Sophocles); and in the creation and administration of laws (as in *Oedipus Tyrannus*). Each of these oaths, appropriately sworn between men, serves to support masculine hegemony over authoritative, political speech.

However, as Fletcher demonstrates, because all oaths exert a supra-human authority in the mortal world, oaths sworn by women or at the behest of women pose a threat to that hegemony: through oaths, women's speech (or their control of it) gains performative authority. Thus, in drama, women are frequently represented as more likely to extract from men (or to swear themselves) ill-formed or inappropriate oaths, as well as oaths in support of personal, vengeance-seeking retribution, rather than in support of civic

wellbeing. Additionally, because of the identified correlation between the ideal masculine body and its performative authority in speech, men who are shown to swear falsely in drama are also those whose bodies are presented as imperfect and/or penetrable. Fletcher's discussion of Papasilenus' perfidy and his subsequent silent exit at the end of the play make a particularly strong case in support of this finding. The association that obtains between the defective male body and improper oath-swearing is thus further reflected in the problematic body of female oath-swearers in drama.

In the majority of cases, Fletcher's analyses of the significance of oaths sworn on-stage in the 18 plays she considers is informative and persuasive. Although there are points of interpretation with which one may wish to differ, these do not detract from the overall contribution that this study makes to our understanding of the oath's significance in the plays performed in front of their audiences in fifth-century Athens.

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MUNTEANU-LaCOURSE (D.) **Tragic Pathos: Pity and Fear in Greek Philosophy and Tragedy.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xiii +278, illus. £60/\$99. 9780521765107.

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A work of art may evoke various responses, for example pleasure, admiration, a specific kind of aesthetic appreciation or even disgust; it may also arouse any number of emotions, some more typical of certain genres than of others. Aristotle famously affirmed that the emotions suitable to tragedy are pity and fear, and his influence in this regard has been massive. At the same time, his account of how these emotions are produced, and just why they are most appropriate to tragedy, is concise to the point of being cryptic, and has invited considerable commentary. Munteanu LaCourse's welcome contribution to the question brings to bear some novelties in approach and some new insights.

The book falls into two parts. In the first, after a general review of modern theories of emotion and aesthetics (and a look at ancient Indian categories, as part of the Indo-European context), Munteanu LaCourse examines in detail the views

of Gorgias, Plato and Aristotle (taking into consideration, not only the *Poetics*, but also other treatises, mainly the *Rhetoric* and *de Anima*) in regard to tragic emotions. In the second part, Munteanu LaCourse examines the expression of emotion on the part of audiences internal to the plays (the chorus and the characters), selecting four exemplary tragedies – Aeschylus’ *Persians* and *Prometheus Bound*, Sophocles’ *Ajax* and Euripides’ ‘unorthodox’ play, as the author calls it (143), *Orestes* – with a view to inferring the likely reaction or reactions of the original audiences in the theatre.

Munteanu LaCourse proceeds methodically, subjecting each segment of text to close critical examination. After a survey of Plato’s views of emotions in the *Republic*, Munteanu LaCourse notes how in the *Phaedo* Socrates meets his own death with equanimity, forestalling the pity and even the sorrow of his friends; Munteanu LaCourse suggests that Socrates is something like the protagonist in an ideal Platonic drama, in which the audience would be free of such disturbing emotions (57–58, 67–68). With regard to Aristotle, Munteanu LaCourse argues rightly, in my view, that ‘the emphasis is not on how characters may display or withhold pity ... in tragedy but rather on how the plot overall triggers the spectator’s emotions. A spectator’s sympathy may be pulled back and forth during the arguments exchanged by Antigone and Creon, or be directed toward one character or another, but in the end – and this is what interests Aristotle – the viewer should feel pity for the entire tragic action and for the whole suffering in the play’ (149). This is why Aristotle can affirm that one can experience the full impact of a tragedy by reading it or even from a summary of the story: the shock of the immediate events may produce horror or sympathy but not genuine fear and pity. But if this is so, how do the reactions of the internal audiences, who cannot always see the entire trajectory of the plot, relate to those of the spectator? It might have been interesting to examine whether the responses of characters in the play change as a clearer picture of the final narrative emerges; this would be especially the case with reactions to messenger speeches, which are more like a narrative outline than a dramatic enactment.

Munteanu LaCourse is especially good on showing how the tragedies invite complex and often opposite emotional responses. Thus, in

Persians, Munteanu LaCourse notes (160) that ‘two types of fear-related imagery dominate the first part of the play, and these may have produced conflicting emotional responses in the contemporary audiences’, who might have sympathized with the queen’s despair even as they felt fear of the enemy. This emotional tension may well be part of the tragic effect, even if it is not theorized by Aristotle or any other Greek thinker, so far as I know. Inevitably, the question whether the actual audience would have reacted as the internal characters do is a matter of speculation; Munteanu LaCourse suggests that, although the Athenians might have pitied the losses experienced by the Persians, many ‘may have been too angry or too preoccupied with their own loss to feel the kind of affinity with the enemy represented in this tragedy that could lead to pity’ (163).

The reactions of internal audiences to events in a tragedy may differ or indeed be contradictory, as Munteanu LaCourse notes. For example, Agamemnon and Menelaus feel no sympathy for Ajax, whereas pity inspires Odysseus to ‘grant proper burial to his deceased enemy’ (219). It is not clear to me that pity is the dominant motive at this point, though I agree that Odysseus’ response is represented as the more humane one. Munteanu LaCourse concludes that the play ‘constantly reinforces the idea that viewers ought to respond to tragic suffering with a type of pity that transcends friendship and enmity’ (202).

Euripides’ *Orestes* is a tough case; as Munteanu LaCourse observes, ‘[t]he same characters may shift their positions on the same issue, and this makes it much more difficult for the external spectator to adopt one internal view as opposed to another’ (219–20). Menelaus himself ‘contrasts two conflicting emotions that people might feel toward Orestes: “there is pity and also angry resentment”’ (v. 702, cited on 221). Anger toward opponents and pity for one’s side are the emotions that orators sought principally to arouse; just how much anger was an emotion internal to tragedy, which was given to forensic debate, would again be worth a fuller study.

All in all, Munteanu LaCourse makes her case successfully, making excellent use of the rich material from the philosophers and the tragedians that she analyses in this book.

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