

particular need for actors, theatre, stage, costumes, masks, musicians, stage-machinery, in addition to choruses, made it no easy add-on to existing festivals. There is a reason why wealthy tyrants and imperial cities like Athens dominate the evidence for the first half-century and more of theatre history. Even in the Hellenistic period many cities with important festivals could not afford drama. Scholars used to believe in a downmarket version of tragedy in the Attic demes, but the evidence suggests that even there high production standards were maintained. (Drama is attested for only two demes before 450.)

Perhaps the biggest problem is that, despite his stated aim of offering a history of the dissemination of tragedy (p. 1), S. downplays historical process altogether. Everything important appears present from the beginning, and tragedy and theatre just grew in volume without really changing. One can agree with S. (and I do) that there were no ‘seismic’ moments in the history of tragedy, but it is very difficult to believe that even purely quantitative change implies no qualitative change (especially in so capital-intensive an industry). Even S.’s discussion of quantitative change seems understated. In Chapter 3, with its coverage of 200 years of foreigners at the Athenian Dionysia, S. maintains that ‘the numbers of non-citizen performers as a whole also seem to have remained fairly constant’ between the fifth and fourth centuries (p. 85). But a close scrutiny of the statistics he supplies here and in Appendix 2 could easily lead one to the opposite conclusion, especially if one uses, not raw numbers, but percentages of known origins, as does S. Nervegna, *Menander in Antiquity* (2013), p. 33, in relation to comic poets: 6% foreign in the fifth century (really 0%, since the singleton Hegemon is an author of *parodoi*), 32% in the fourth, and 50% bridging fourth and third.

Despite any such qualms, this is an excellent and important book. S. offers us a new paradigm for theatre history, truer to the evidence than that it replaces.

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REINTRODUCING *LIBATION BEARERS*

MARSHALL (C.W.) *Aeschylus: Libation Bearers*. Pp. xii + 181. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. Paper, £16.99, US\$22.95 (Cased, £50, US\$68). ISBN: 978-1-4742-5506-6 (978-1-4742-5507-3 hbk).

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As the middle play of the *Oresteia*, the underappreciated status of Aeschylus’ *Libation Bearers* (*LB*) provides a particular challenge for the commentator. Yet M. has taken up this challenge with masterful skill, presenting *LB* as an innovative performance at the thematic and theatrical core of the entire tetralogy. Throughout this companion, M. also reintroduces *LB* as a play with considerable independent influence upon the imagination of spectators, vase painters and playwrights from the fifth century BC and into modernity. Through his deep yet accessible interpretation, M. invites his readers to a closer study of *LB* as an important drama in its own right.

Examining *LB* from the perspective of a stage director, M. organises the chapters of this companion around key issues of staging and its effect upon the audience. His commentary

follows the basic songs, words and movements being enacted on the stage. While the first chapter introduces *LB* to the reader more generally, the other chapters carefully analyse the three major sections of the play: the recognition scene between Orestes and Electra, the great *kommos* and events leading to Orestes' entry into the house and, finally, the quick succession of actions, song and stichomythia through which Orestes carries out the murder. M.'s blend of literary analysis and insight from performance studies makes this a nuanced reference text and a fresh starting point for further discussions.

Chapter 1, 'Theatre and Theodicy', introduces *LB* as a play functioning as the 'heart of the *Oresteia*' (p. 5) and a performance worthy of more study than it has received. M. begins with a basic overview of Aeschylus' life and influence. Next, he outlines how an Athenian audience of the fifth century would grapple with the problematic issue of *dikê* in the *Oresteia*, a problem that reaches its climax with Orestes' matricide. The genius and profundity of Aeschylus' work, M. maintains, lies in how he dramatises unsolvable problems of justice while refusing to 'sacrifice theatrical effectiveness to make a specific political point' (p. 12). M. likewise highlights Aeschylus' remarkable innovation with role assignments and actors' interactions with the *skênê* throughout *LB*. Finally, after a brief survey of earlier myths, M. concludes this chapter by suggesting that Aeschylus' *LB* improves upon the original story by giving Orestes' act a 'moral depth and theological dimension' (p. 24) unprecedented in the mythological tradition.

In Chapter 2, 'Reperformance and Recognition', M. focuses on chorus and character; to do this, he not only analyses the opening scenes of *LB*, but he also surveys its reception and reperformance throughout history. In the first section, M. discusses elements of Aeschylus' stagecraft that link the performance of *LB* 1–305 to the *Agamemnon*: for instance, the continuity of the playing space, the *thymele* as the tomb of Agamemnon, Orestes' dedication and appeal to Hermes and, most significantly, the magnificent choreography of the chorus carrying *choe* and pouring libations to honour the dead. M. then lays out the visual progression of the recognition scene between Orestes and Electra, its foreboding of evil and Orestes' 'overdetermined' (p. 44) decision to avenge his father, a choice that provokes the central moral dilemma of the *Oresteia*. The last two sections of this chapter discuss the reperformance and reception of the *LB* in Athenian vase paintings and performances during the 420s BC as well as in subsequent revenge tragedies throughout the centuries. The discussion of modern reception and ancient reperformances this early in the companion serves to further highlight the continuous, albeit unacknowledged, influence of *LB* as an independent play.

M. devotes Chapter 3, 'Chorus and Character', to a thorough examination of the *kommos* and the actions that immediately ensue. He not only enumerates seven key purposes for the *kommos*, but he draws out an intriguing diagram of its structure, which illuminates Aeschylus' artistry in shifting the dramatic action from mourning to hopeful revenge. M. next explores Orestes' and Electra's (attempted) necromancy, the interpretation of Clytemnestra's dream and the articulation of Orestes' plans, which evoke approval from both Agamemnon and the gods Hermes and Apollo. During the following choral stasimon on evil women, Aeschylus' staging brings the character of Orestes into even sharper relief. According to M., it is likely that Orestes foregoes any costume change but remains near the altar during the song; afterwards, he proceeds (with Pylades) directly to the *skênê*, an action mirroring the earlier, fatal entrance of his father Agamemnon. M. concludes his character analyses by discussing the verbal implications of *xenoi* in Orestes' and Clytemnestra's exchange and by suggesting a possible re-entrance of Electra at *LB* 691–9. Such an entrance, M. argues, would further contrast Electra with her mother, lend greater character depth and emphasise the reversals being staged at this liminal moment of the performance.

Chapter 4, 'Matricide and Madness', proceeds through the last scenes of *LB* with a swiftness that parallels the disorienting pace of the dramatic action and, in content, exposes the terrifying tragedy of Orestes' matricide. In commenting on the nurse Cilissa, M. underscores how her unexpected appearance refocuses and yet destabilises the spectators' perceptions of Clytemnestra as the soon-to-be murdered mother. Aeschylus also sparks surprise and horror, M. argues, through the ring composition with which he structures the actions leading to the accomplishment of Orestes' revenge; M. points out that, although vexed, the central stasimon (*LB* 783–837) 'highlights the theological frame within which the *Libation Bearers* operates' (p. 111). Within this structural framework, M. completes his theatrical examination of the ensuing events: the exceptionally short Aegisthus scene, the tension and violence between mother and son, and the startling interjection of the silent Pylades at the crucial moment of the murder. Finally, to re-emphasise the horror of these moments, M. concludes by noting the dramatic effects created by Orestes' hesitation, by twelve chillingly comedic components of the play and by the (potentially visual) appearance of the Furies for a terrifying finish. By exposing these aspects of the tragic climax and conclusion, M. again validates the genius of Aeschylus' *LB*.

M. effectively reintroduces *LB* as a remarkably innovative theatrical performance deserving greater attention by the scholarly community. M. gives a thorough overview of the play, illustrated with brilliant structural diagrams and tables useful for study. At the same time, like Aeschylus, M. leaves several unresolved questions and provocative suggestions for further consideration. These issues include: connections between *LB* and the Athesteria festival that featured libations with *choe* pitchers (pp. 25–6); the potential reperformance of *LB* and *Eumenides* together as an Oresteian 'dilogy' at the Lenaia festival (p. 51); the theatrical effects of Orestes' and Electra's attempted (and failed?) conjuring of their father's ghost (p. 77); further implications of the ring composition structure (p. 109) and comedic elements (pp. 127–9) in the play as a whole; and the question of the Furies' visual appearance at the end (pp. 137–8). These and other insightful propositions contribute to the overall excellence of M.'s companion, a must-read for anyone interested in Aeschylean tragedy.

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STUDIES ON THE RECEPTION OF AESCHYLUS

KENNEDY (R.F.) (ed.) *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aeschylus*. (Brill's Companions to Classical Reception 11.) Pp. xx + 634, b/w & colour ills. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018. Cased, €193, US\$222. ISBN: 978-90-04-24932-5.

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It has become commonplace for reviewers to begin reviews on companions by stating that we live in the age of the companion and that companions on any imaginable topics have been mushrooming for the past decade. I do not wish to comment on the pros and cons of the inundation of this genre here. However, with regard to the recent publication of *Brill's Companions* on the reception of the two other Attic tragedians (R. Lauriola and K.N.