

irony and tests it on the triad. Part 8 on reception contains well-informed essays by Wright on ancient reception (from Aristophanes to Dio of Prusa); Anderson on the influence of Sophocles on a range of twentieth-century authors, such as Stravinsky, Cocteau, Anouilh, T.S. Eliot, Scorsese, etc.; Walton on translations; and McDonald on modern re-performances.

Minor inconsistencies in structure and focus, and occasional disagreement cannot detract from substantial appreciation of this volume, which will quickly become – alongside Ormand’s – a useful starting-point for the study of Sophocles.

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SOPHOCLES’ *OC* AND ATHENIAN TRAGEDY

MARX (W.) *Le tombeau d’Édipe. Pour une tragédie sans tragique*. Pp. 206. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2012. Paper, €16. ISBN: 978-2-7073-2201-2.

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This is an immensely enjoyable book on Athenian tragedy, written in lyrical prose and elegiac mode. Throughout M. uses Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* as a guiding principle: literally, as the book is structured according to the parts of the play (*parodos*, episodes, *exodus*), but figuratively, too. For M. the *OC* captures and embodies all that is irrecoverable about Greek tragedy, and he returns to the play time and again as a symbol and repository of tragedy’s secrets. Because this is a meditation on how inaccessible Athenian tragedy has become, a deep sense of loss permeates what is nevertheless a joyful celebration of mystery. The surviving scripts may seem to be complete works of ‘literature’ (the very notion of literature will be contested), but stripped of their contexts (geographical, performative, affective, theological) they are but artefacts and fragments. *Oedipus at Colonus* is thus a far cry from the perfectly balanced Ionic column that we make it out to be; rather it is ‘a ruin, a true ruin, just as ruined as the Parthenon is today’ (p. 42). M. conjures many such images, and even the most jaded philologist should find buoyancy in this impassioned tour through tragedy’s secrets. Readers will doubtless find many points to disagree with, but as a whole this is an elegantly written review of important problems in the history of ‘tragic’ scholarship and an energising reminder that an entire, irretrievable world lies behind the words on the tragic page.

Each of the chapters begins with an *in memoriam* to a scholar with whose ideas M. is sympathetic: the first, ‘The Place’, is dedicated to Jebb. Here M. argues that Athenian tragedy was deeply rooted in topography and the numinous spirits of place (the kind with which visitors to modern-day Colonus find it difficult to commune). The places of Greek tragedy are palimpsests of the heroes and rituals that haunt them, and for the Panhellenic audiences gathered in the Theatre of Dionysus tragedy was in this respect a mirror of the world. But tragedies, in the form that they have survived, have become denuded of the particularities of place and context, which today we view only as nice exegetical supplements to the poetry. Regarded all too often as a purely ‘literary’ form, Attic tragedy is deracinated, just as ‘fragmentary’ (and just as alluring in its fragmentation) as the Nike of Samothrace. For a more accessible dramatic tradition similarly rooted in place, here defined in terms of both space and enunciative context, M. brings us to a piece of Japanese Noh which has many uncanny points of contact with the *OC*. The comparison is

illuminating, and forces us to question the nature of the aesthetic responses that we feel in the face of our ‘orphaned’ scripts.

The book’s subtitle (*Pour une tragédie sans tragique*) encapsulates the argument of the second chapter, ‘L’idée’ – the idea, that is, of the tragic. Stripped of its roots in real places, tragedy was freed for theoretical scaffolding: for abstractions and notions of universals. The ‘tragic’ is a more recent invention, an interesting but distorting prism through which our view of the ancient plays has long been skewed. Beginning with Aristotle, M. undertakes a dizzying review of philosophical conceptions of the ‘tragic’, winding his way through German Romanticism, where the idea of ‘theoretical’ tragedy came to eclipse any empirical experience of drama (thus effecting its *déréalisation*), to Nietzsche, Wilamowitz and their conflicting attempts to restore an emphasis upon Attic tragedy’s historical conditions. The pace is breakneck, but the point is clear: modern notions of the ‘tragic’ have little to do with Greek tragedy. Unsurprisingly, M. here invokes the problem of the many Attic tragedies that end untragically: as real as their presence in the corpus may be, these plays are treated as uncomfortable exceptions to philosophical theories, which are the definitional equivalents of Procrustean beds. That the masterpieces best known today (*Antigone*, the *OT*, *Medea*, etc.) more neatly fit our modern idea of the tragic is a matter of circular reasoning, and the propensity of Euripides’ ‘alphabetic’ plays to unnerve definitions only reflects the bias inherent in the ‘hand-selected’ plays.

In the third chapter, ‘Le Corps’, M. makes some of his most focused philological and ideological arguments. He heroically takes on the problem of the definition of catharsis in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, and the attendant question of why spectacles that provoke pity and fear should also produce pleasure. On the basis of other Aristotelian passages (from the *Rhetoric*, the *Politics* and the *Problems*), M. concludes that Aristotelian catharsis occurs through the rebalancing of humours that a spectator experiences when watching a tragic play. Spectators are provoked to pity as they observe another’s suffering, and to fear as they imagine themselves in the sufferers’ shoes (a combination of reactions that can occur only in the presence of mimetic representation). Catharsis is, strictly speaking, psychosomatic, but this is difficult for us to grasp: today we regard literature as an abstract intellectual process that speaks to the mind but silences the body (only psychoanalysis recognises the relation between *logos*, body and mind). M. here performs an elegant balancing act between philological detail and philosophical abstraction: discussions of textual problems in the *Poetics* proceed hand in hand with reflections on what we have lost by denying our bodies a place in the experience of literature.

‘Le Dieu’ is the last chapter, and its organising principle is the lost theology of Greek tragedy (the *OC* in particular) and the winding course of interpretations that its mysterious divine and Dionysiac elements have taken. M. at first rejects readings of the *OC* as prefiguring Christ’s suffering and the notion of Christian salvation, homing in on the play’s obscure line 1583 and the question of whether Oedipus has ‘left’ or ‘obtained’ eternal life. But to give up entirely on the ‘religious’ element is to throw the baby out with the bath water, and M. goes on to dwell on the history of more Dionysiac interpretations of (the) tragedy, paying his required respects to, among others, the ‘Cambridge ritualists’. Given the title of the book, M. is naturally seduced by Ridgeway’s theory of tragedy’s origins in the lamentation and cult of heroes, located (and here we return to the importance of place) at the tomb. The *OC* presents an interesting problem: though a ritual evocation of the hero’s last moments, its mystery and mysticism lie in the very absence of the tomb. In these last pages M. is at his most adventurous, venturing that, with the *OC*, Sophocles was urging his colleagues – who had ‘deritualised’ their medium and its chorus – to return to the cult of heroes and to re-reconcile ritual and drama. At this point he also cannot resist bending to some of the ideas that he has painstakingly deconstructed. His reading now

verges towards prefiguration of the Christian mass, just as the totalising view that he outlines retraces our steps to a view of tragedy centred on death and – dare we say it? – the ‘tragic’.

There is an honesty to M.’s *aporia*, and in it another reaffirmation of loss. The framing device of the *OC* is effective; it provides a landscape for mapping the ineffable enigmas of tragedy, and in M.’s hands the (missing) tomb of Oedipus becomes an unusually productive metaphor. Sophocles’ posthumously-produced masterpiece is, for M., Attic tragedy’s own tomb, and though impossible to locate precisely we can be reassured by its very presence. The book ends in promise rather than despair: the Parthenon, the Nike of Samothrace, the Venus de Milo are all beautiful and provocative in their fragmentation; to regard even the ‘surviving’ tragedies as ruins changes only the nature of their power. M.’s work is a *tour de force* explication of the inexplicable, and a poetic declaration that what cannot be grasped still can and should be *felt*.

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EURIPIDES *IT*

HALL (E.) *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris. A Cultural History of Euripides’ Black Sea Tragedy*. Pp. xxxii + 378, ill., maps. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Cased, £40, US\$65. ISBN: 978-0-19-539289-0.

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H. argues that Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris* (*IT*) is ‘one of the most culturally influential of all ancient Greek texts’ (p. 297). She devotes almost half the book to the play’s reception in antiquity, showing how ‘studies that focus primarily on the post-Renaissance reception of an individual Greek tragedy too often ignore the variant readings and intertexts that emanated from antiquity’ (p. 3). She gives an imaginative account of why the story was popular in fourth-century vase painting, looks at its impact on popular escape narratives and offers a wide-ranging discussion of Greek mime in second-century A.D. Egypt. She follows Fritz Graf in discussing how ‘the myth which Euripides had popularized’ (p. 136) accounted for cults of Artemis in various places, including the sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis near Aricia.

H. stresses the importance of Pacuvius’ version for Roman ideas of *amicitia*, and its possible influence on a scene of Orestes and Pylades competing before Thoas for the right to be sacrificed which was popular in Roman wall paintings. She comments on the ‘the upstaging of Iphigenia by Pylades and Orestes and their passionate friendship’ (p. 92) in Roman versions, but may underestimate Greek admiration of Pylades (e.g. in Euripides’ *Orestes*, another play which supplies fresh adventures for the faithful friends). She suggests (pp. 105–6) that the tradition of the ‘admiring barbarian’, which appears in Ovid’s version of the story (*Ex Ponto* 3.2.39–102), might also have been derived from Pacuvius, although her discussion of Lucian’s *Toxaris* does not entirely do justice to the way in which the Scythian’s praise of Orestes and Pylades highlights the superior appreciation of friendship by his own people.

H. believes that Iphigenia ‘has a great deal to offer a feminist theatre’ (p. 257), but playwrights and directors have regrettably failed to rise to the challenge since the intriguing ‘dramatic scene’ by the early twentieth-century Ukrainian poet Lesya Ukrainka. H.’s