The argument seems more problematic in *Electra*: the spectators' 'identification process towards' the *politides* of Mycenae/Argos (p. 174) is accompanied by the 'blurring of the distinction between chorus and principals' (p. 176), both eventually conspiring to kill the oppressive rulers (p. 231). However, Sophoclean ironies cannot be ruled out. The collective viewpoint defined by the attitudes of a tragic chorus – usually as subjective and changing as those of other non-conventional human characters – could affect, but not necessarily represent any parts of the audience or their responses throughout a performance (as early nineteenth-century German philosophers thought).

Chapter 3, 'Other Non-elite Characters', following the dating of the plays, describes mythical or anonymous free or slave women and men, such as messengers, from various social groups; it traces their important or auxiliary roles, their directly or indirectly defined, or unspecified, social status, and their typical or unconventional characteristics. Among the assumptions about the specific response that each personage could elicit from spectators of analogous status, I found it hardly plausible that the revengeful Paedagogue (allegedly not a slave) could appeal to middling and lower-status spectators of *Electra* as a model of authoritative stance (pp. 225–32); the Guard in *Antigone* as a source of encouragement for non-elite citizens (pp. 215–20) is an attractive suggestion. P. attempts to offer throughout a concrete picture of what we call spectator's identification (pp. 203–4 on A. Ubersfeld; in contrast, Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453a1–12). Yet comparable social status is only one out of various reasons that could make a spectator identify with a fictional figure during a scene. Moreover, Sophocles' tragedies – and their ironies – do not often seem to invite any spectator or group of spectators to identify with specific figures, but rather with attitudes and emotions – often of contrasting characters.

The book (with very few misprints, but repetitions in concluding sections) contains a brief general index and bibliography. Despite the historically and dramaturgically problematic focus on members of a middling group, it offers an original contribution to research on the 'imaginary' of non-elite Athenians as reflected in Sophocles' tragedies ('General Conclusion', pp. 247–51), by approaching from a socio-political perspective the attitudes of non-elite personages and choruses and their relations with others (though not relations between sexes, generations, humans and gods) in the dialogues and the plot. The volume is part of the discussion on varying forms and limits of 'realism' in the surviving Sophoclean texts, with respect to the socio-historical context, the characterisation of personages and related formal elements of the performance.

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RITUALS IN SOPHOCLES

BROOK (A.) *Tragic Rites. Narrative and Ritual in Sophoclean Drama*. Pp. xii + 237. Madison, WI and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2018. Cased, US$99.95. ISBN: 978-0-299-31380-7.
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'Rituals tell stories' (p. 3). Such a simple beginning belies the complexity of B.'s topic, but its confidence stands firmly on her systematic reading of ritual in Sophocles' seven extant

tragedies. Those who favour the theorists she uses will most appreciate the insights B. has to offer, but anyone interested in the role of ritual and ritualised actions in tragedy will want to reference her book. A. van Gennep's tripartite vision of rituals as rites of passage along with V. Turner's more generic and binary view of individuals moving between *communitas* (or liminality) and structure provide B. with the theoretical terminology to understand ritual activity; the narrative assumptions of the dramatic genre, particularly the idea of progressive and purposeful plot structures, are explicitly Aristotelian. Using a methodology of 'ritual poetics' that combines the rules of ritual and literary theory, B. approaches rituals as a poetic device that, being analogous to narrative in their structure, can communicate meaning. Rituals that deviate from the norm thus can point to deviations in character and plot, which would have generated predictable responses and expectations from a fifth-century Athenian audience familiar with ritual practice.

Chapter 1 reconstructs the ritual knowledge of such an audience beginning with a summary of the normative version of religious rituals, the terms that Sophocles uses to reference them and the categorisation of ritual 'mistakes' with examples from *Antigone*, *Trachiniae* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Indeed, one of the most valuable innovations of her work is this categorisation into three general problems: ritual conflation, ritual repetition and ritual status. Ritual conflation occurs when distinct rituals seem to permeate one another, influencing how the two are perceived and interpreted. This can reflect rituals 'entangled' within a scene, or it can refer to the performance of a ritual later in a play that recalls versions in earlier scenes. Ritual repetition, on the other hand, assumes a causal relationship between rites, describing the reappearance of the same ritual because the previous iteration was corrupt, mistaken or incomplete. Ritual status refers to the problem of an inappropriate status of the individual(s) involved in a certain ritual. All of these problems prevent members of the rituals from returning or entering into a community unambiguously and portend future narrative issues as the subsequent four chapters illustrate.

Chapter 2 looks particularly at ritual conflation in the *Ajax*, a play B. divides into three parts based on the conflated rituals in each, both real and metaphorical – the killing of the herd, Ajax' suicide and his burial. In the first part, the slaughter of the herd features sacrificial language, compelling an audience to think of sacrifice rituals, yet the aftermath resembles elements of funeral rites, portraying Ajax as both officiant and victim in a conflated ritual. Ajax' suicide again conflates sacrificial and burial imagery during a supposed purification rite, highlighting his ambiguous, even paradoxical, role in the referenced rituals, evident symbolically in the changing use of the sword. The third part, though possessing dramatic closure, is complicated by Teucer's desperate ritual activities and his demands for Ajax' burial, a ritual that has previously failed in the play. This throws into question whether Ajax' burial can be successful at all. Important to this chapter is B.'s claim that the van Gennep phases of ritual correspond to each part but progress in reverse order to that of the narrative, weakening the resolution at the end of the play. While she demonstrates the liminal and pre-liminal connections in the second and third parts well, it is harder to accept that the first part of the play represents a post-liminal phase, given that the conflated, pre-liminal funeral rites dominate her reading of this part.

In Chapter 3 B. argues that the repetition of corrupt (and conflated) funeral rites in *Electra* not only provides the structure of the plot but is the plot: 'while ritual drives the characters of this play to the completion of a sequence of obligatory funeral rites, the corruption of ritual prevents them from ever reaching the end of that sequence' (p. 76). Turner's vision of ritual informs her argument here. B. considers how each member of the Atreus family is responsible for this unending cycle of corrupt rituals and argues that the family is in a constant state of *communitas* due to Electra's persistent and contagious lamentations. As a result, the end of the play cannot be deemed optimistic when

Orestes and Electra are implicated in the cycle of corrupt rituals that will continue perpetually without some type of intervention. Most interestingly, she concludes that the ambiguity at the end of the play is reflected in the absence of Apollo, who has been usurped by a pattern of ritual repetition that the audience would consider the closest thing to a divine prophecy in the *exodos*.

In Chapter 4 ritual status is regarded as an issue in the *Philoctetes* for Neoptolemus and Philoctetes, who perform oaths and supplications, but do not have the authority to do so according to the societal norms of the last quarter of fifth-century Athens. The isolation of Lemnos, however, would suggest to an audience the possibility of a 'ritually permissive environment' (p. 128), B. asserts, particularly when the integrity of the mythical narrative is at stake. While the chapter seems unevenly focused on Neoptolemus' status, her reading is insightful. B. argues that Neoptolemus could be analogous to a pre-ephebic Athenian youth delegitimising his ritual authority while Philoctetes, though not technically an exile, resonates as one because of his connection with the bestial and divine spheres. Thus, for example, Neoptolemus would not be expected to have experience of how oaths must work, explaining his willingness to abide by his oath with Philoctetes on different terms. Philoctetes meanwhile releases the same wild, inauspicious cries during the oath that left him marooned. While the audience might expect something to come of the oath, they would anticipate a narrative issue as well due to the problematic status of each character (as occurs, forcing the entrance of Heracles). However, B. reads another scene in an opposite way: we might think Neoptolemus will abandon Philoctetes when he leaves to fit out the ships but 'no audience is likely to interpret the speech in this way. The audience has witnessed Neoptolemus and Philoctetes withdraw into ritual *communitas* and emerge into structure having established a new relationship of obligation between them. Even though Neoptolemus lacks adult ritual status, his apparently genuine commitment to Philoctetes as a *supplicandus* has dramatic if not ritual legitimacy' (p. 129). Yet would not Odysseus, of legitimate status and a representative of Greek society, possibly influence Neoptolemus in Philoctetes' absence, feeding doubts about a successful resolution and heightening the dramatic tension?

In Chapter 5 B. argues that all three ritual problems exist within the *Oedipus at Colonus*, 'united by the overarching motif of supplication' (p. 141). The repeated rituals of supplication, the conflation of sacrificial and burial rituals at Oedipus' death and the ambiguity of Oedipus' ritual status throughout the play anticipate the end-goal: the acceptance of Oedipus by Athens and the Eumenides. Of particular note is her reading of Oedipus' death: while there is ritual closure for Oedipus, who began the play with a supplication of the Eumenides, 'he does not achieve closure through ritual whose purpose is to facilitate community; rather, he achieves it by breaking free of human community and a human role in ritual' (p. 168). Indeed, B. most succeeds in demonstrating that our understanding of Sophocles' tragic endings must take his engagement with ritual throughout the play into consideration: 'ritual cues, by evoking the play's earlier rituals, encourage the audience to see these endings as disquieting, ambiguous, and with the possible exception of the Philoctetes, tragic in an affective way . . . ritual offers not an end but a way to anticipate, understand and negotiate what the future inevitably holds' (pp. 177–8).

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