

## FRAGMENTS OF SOPHOCLES

SOMMERSTEIN (A.H.), FITZPATRICK (D.), TALBOY (T.) (edd., trans.) *Sophocles: Selected Fragmentary Plays. Volume I.* (Aris & Phillips Classical Texts.) Pp. xl + 317. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006. Paper, £18, US\$36 (Cased, £40, US\$70). ISBN: 978-0-85668-766-2 (978-0-85668-765-5 hbk).  
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A conference on Sophoclean fragments at Nottingham in 2000 first led to a volume of essays edited by Professor Sommerstein, *Shards from Kolonos: Studies in Sophoclean Fragments* (Bari, 2003), and now to this volume. It follows the format of two volumes of Euripidean fragments which appeared earlier in the Aris & Phillips Classical Texts series: an extensive bibliography, a discussion of the myth and an attempt to reconstruct the play, the text and translation, and then a commentary.

These plays were chosen because four of them, *Hermione*, *Polyxene*, *The Diners* and *Troilus*, concern Achilles or Neoptolemus and raise questions about the Sophoclean hero, and four of them, *Hermione*, *Polyxene*, *Tereus* and *Phaedra*, are somehow related to Euripidean plays. Although there is considerable discussion of the text and dramatic technique, the main thrust is reconstruction of the entire play and thematic discussion.

S. claims that the plays which concern Achilles and Neoptolemus 'tell strongly against the view that for Sophocles an exceptional endowment of one or another virtue (courage, wisdom, endurance, familial devotion) could serve as a free pass to commit any indignity or atrocity' (p. xxv). This is an oversimplification – even those who consider the Sophoclean hero admirable do not think he or she receives a 'free pass'. On the other hand, this discussion gives added resonance to Heracles' advice to Neoptolemus at the end of *Philoctetes* (1040) that he should be reverent in all things.

Even in its fragmentary state, *Syndeipnoi* has some vivid scenes. Some ships are late and Achilles is on one of them. Someone in the course of an argument called someone else 'the son of the belly'. Someone comes on stage and reports that he has been struck by a smelly chamber pot. Finally, Thetis arrives and no doubt sorts things out. S. declares that this play has a serious theme: Achilles almost brings the expedition to a halt, which he will do again in *Iliad* 1 with disastrous results. One difficulty of taking this play as serious in intent is that a number of the surviving fragments have the verbal qualities of a satyr play, which is obvious to the casual reader and further illustrated in essays by Lopez Eire (p. 399) and Redondo (p. 431) in *Shards*. S. claimed *Syndeipnoi* was a tragedy in *Shards*, but in this volume he treats it as 'prosatyric', like *Alcestitis*. The fact remains that there is no evidence that Achilles' behaviour is being treated as something like a tragic flaw.

The version of the plot of *Hermione* given here, which relies on Eustathius, resembles that of the *Andromache* with two major changes: Andromache is not mentioned and Neoptolemus accuses Apollo of injustice at Delphi and is killed by 'Machaereus'. S. additionally assumes that Neoptolemus sacked and burned the temple, basing his view on a passage in Apollodorus. Pearson and Lloyd-Jones (*Sophocles III: Fragments*, Cambridge, MA, 1996) have good reason for staying close to the account in Eustathius. None the less, even without sacking Delphi, Neoptolemus is guilty of *asebeia* and *hybris*, which supports S.'s point. Much more intriguing is S.'s effort to tease out the dramatic possibilities in another statement by Eustathius: Hermione was betrothed by Tyndareus to Orestes before she was

betrothed to Neoptolemus by Menelaus. The fact that the play is named *Hermione* almost guarantees that she is a central character and that the play is set in Phthia.

Major sections of the plot of *Polyxene* can be inferred from the fragments. Achilles' ghost appears in the prologue. Agamemnon and Menelaus quarrel about the timing of the departure from Troy. A messenger tells of the ghost appearing and prohibiting the army from leaving Troy. Far more conjectural are the following scenes. Neoptolemus and Polyxene argue their case before Calchas, to whom Agamemnon has deferred. Calchas declares that Polyxene must be sacrificed. Polyxene prophesies; then is led off. A messenger reports the sacrifice. Agamemnon and the chorus exit, to prepare to embark. The Polyxene–Neoptolemus debate is almost pure conjecture, but without it there is no evidence of the role Polyxene played.

*Troilus* is of interest because it refers to the mutilation of a body (fragment 623). Achilles is thus associated with an atrocity that no one other than Clytemnestra is said to have committed in classical Greek literature. Aside from a eunuch who says the queen castrated him, little is known about this play.

*Polyxene*, *Hermione*, *Tereus* and *Phaedra* are related to plays of Euripides in some way, and their reconstructions often involve a triangulation of Euripides, Sophocles and Seneca. Fitzpatrick and S. reject Ovid's account as a model for *Tereus*, especially concerning the remote hut and the Bacchic theme. *Tereus* contains the best-known fragment from Sophocles, Procne's lament. Despite the obvious parallels between Procne and Medea, their discussion of whether an audience would have approved of her is inconclusive.

Talbot and S. discuss Euripides' two *Hippolytus* plays and Seneca's *Phaedra* extensively before moving to Sophocles' *Phaedra*. There is no plot reconstruction in this case. Early in the play, Phaedra explains that Theseus is in the underworld, and consequently the authors suggest her approach to Hippolytus is less questionable. If this is so, then one can see how Phaedra might be made to resemble Sophocles' Deianeira in *Trachiniae*. The Nurse then approached Hippolytus for Phaedra, and Hippolytus 'spat out' (678) the Nurse's suggestion. Mills, *Shards* 231, suggests plausibly that Phaedra spoke directly to Hippolytus.

The authors have succeeded in demonstrating Sophocles' range, and his relationship to Euripides and Seneca. Although there is a need to create a protocol for depicting original and hypothetical elements, the value of reconstructions is obvious. S. and his colleagues have successfully made the fragmentary Sophocles accessible to a wider audience, while subjecting these fragments to an intense and creative investigation.

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### OEDIPVS REX

DAWE (R. D.) (ed.) *Sophocles: Oedipus Rex*. Revised edition. Pp. x + 214. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 (first edition 1982). Paper, £17.99, US\$31.99 (Cased, £45, US\$80). ISBN: 978-0-521-61735-2 (978-0-521-85177-0 hbk).

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The appearance of Dawe's *Oedipus Rex* and Easterling's *Trachiniae* in 1982 and Griffith's *Prometheus Bound* in 1983 marked an important stage in the rise to