

Thyestes' children and Iphigenia welcoming her father to Hades, which raise the prospect of revenge, and even more forcefully in the scene of the spectre.

A full exploitation of the poetics of indeterminacy is detected in Cassandra's scene. In Shilo's opinion, the couplet of *Agamemnon* 1160–61 'now by the Cocytus and the banks of the Acheron/it seems I will soon be singing prophecies', can be understood both as a simple allusion to death and as a divinely inspired prophecy, entailing the idea of a continuation of Cassandra's prophetic singing in Hades. This would open up a new perspective for her future, markedly different from the annihilation of which she speaks at lines 1227–30.

Central to Shilo's thesis is the analysis of the *kommos* of the *Choephoroi*, where he unravels the different ideas about Agamemnon's condition in Hades proposed by his sons, who express the unattainable wish that he had died on the battlefield (Orestes) or even had not died (Electra), and by the chorus, which simply points to the restitution of his honour as a dead man. For the difficult passage of lines 354–63, Shilo leaves open the possibility of understanding the words of the chorus as picking up Orestes' expression of a possibility in the past (Agamemnon could have had prestige in Hades if he had died gloriously) or implying a copula, so as to attribute to him a prestigious condition independent from the mode of his death.

The poetics of the afterlife plays a leading role in the *Eumenides*. Orestes, acquitted in the trial, appropriates the role of a future hero-protector capable of guaranteeing peace between Argos and Athens; this perspective strongly contrasts with the idea held by the Erinyes that his punishment should continue in Hades. The latter's vision of a perpetual individual punishment clashes with the political dimension of the new state justice founded by Athena. This conflict between two forms of justice has the consequence that the claim for revenge of Clytemnestra's spectre, though cancelled by the Areopagus' verdict, can continue to insinuate doubts about the rightness of Orestes' action and, in the extra-dramatic dimension, about the drive for external war given by Athena to the city.

Shilo's often illuminating analyses are conducted with full command of linguistic and textual issues. Some passages are discussed in more than one chapter, thus creating inter-connections which allow one to better follow the development of his ideas. Sometimes the tendency to admit ambiguities goes a bit too far. I am not convinced, for instance, that *Agamemnon* 1160–61 could be understood as a real prophecy: the couplet resembles similar tragic expressions simply referring to imminent death (Sophocles *Ajax* 865 'henceforth I shall speak in Hades with the dead', Euripides *Trojan Women* 445 'Lead on at once, so I can get married to my husband in Hades'). Individual points of disagreement do not however detract from the quality of the work, which will repay study by all scholars interested in Aeschylus and Greek tragedy.

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SPAWFORTH (T.) **What the Greeks Did for Us**. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2023. Pp. x + 335, illus. 9780300258028.
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It is something of an oddity that when classicists write books for that mythical beast, 'the general public', they are usually sent for review to the least suitable reader, another

professional classicist. Such a reader is unlikely to fulfil the aim of the book, which, in the case of the book under review, as for so many similar projects, is to be stimulated to discover antiquity. Indeed, it is hard for even a generous professional scholar not to feel slightly patronized by the laborious attempts at being chatty and friendly, and vexed by the unwillingness to use names or other ‘difficult’ words, let alone the inevitable shortcuts of argument. The best one can hope for is that the reviewer admires the footwork. Tony Spawforth, whose last major work of scholarship I happily and admiringly co-edited, is not only an emeritus professor of distinction, but also has many years of experience both as a tour guide in Greece, and as a talking head for archaeological films. So, there is at least a fair chance his work will find some of its intended, more suitable audience.

It is, however, a particularly difficult time to write a book like *What the Greeks Did for Us*. When J.C. Stobart published *The Glory That Was Greece* (London 1911), he could be comfortable with a Greece that ended with Alexander’s conquests, with a set of values that lauded the Greek miracle and with the celebration of the origins of Western culture in this privileged past. There was no Greece under the Roman Empire, no Christian Greeks and no Byzantine life, let alone modernity and the reception of antiquity in music, film, novels and advertising. Nowadays, not only are the chronological and geographical boundaries of ‘Greece’ differently drawn, but also what counts as cultural analysis has become a highly contested battleground. Spawforth is well aware of this, and writes with a disconcerting ease that he imagines that some people will not appreciate what he includes or excludes, how he writes with personal reminiscences interwoven into his history or what he has to say about the inevitably provocative topics of sexuality, race, class, politics. Such demurals will not win over the ideologues or the cancellers, but he does at least honestly note where the points of contention are and navigates them with a certain openness. From the start, he allows that every word of the title needs immediate qualification: who ‘we’ are, who ‘the Greeks’ are and how the influence of antiquity, for good and bad, can be evaluated. There is not much glory and quite a lot of careful positioning.

Nonetheless, the 14 chapters set their sights on some familiar topics for such a modern treatment: politics, sex, architecture, theatre and film, beauty, literature, philosophy and a rather small amount of Christianity. There is no chapter that will frighten the horses. I liked it best when Spawforth did mix his personal narrative into the history, though these were also carefully discreet, limited anecdotes, and showed none of the brilliance of Daniel Mendelsohn’s voyage around the *Odyssey* with his father (*An Odyssey: A Father, a Son, and an Epic* (London 2017)), or the searing confessional mode of an Edmund Gosse’s liberating encounter with literature, or even Mary Beard’s or Natalie Haynes’ amused self-positioning against the institutions of learning. As might be expected, the most poise is evident when the book talks about Alexander or the archaeological record or the historicism that underlies the account. These are Spawforth’s areas of expertise and his deep knowledge shines through in the ability of the prose to be instructive and informative without becoming overloaded. It is less successful (in my professional view) when it dips into philosophy or religion or literature. The treatment of tragedy and the role of theatre in the Western tradition is particularly thin and unreflective. Nor am I sure that ‘three-some’ is quite the *mot juste* for God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is telling that after the one chapter on the Nicene Council as a turning point in Greek Christianity (a good thing in itself to include, for sure), the next chapter moves on to the ideals of Greek beauty, without any connecting argument about flesh, the body or even how the Renaissance’s rediscovery of Hellenic ideals redrafted the notion of how the human form should be represented, something the Greeks very much did for us. Indeed, too many chapters drift through exposition and piquant detail, in tour guide mode, without pinpointing

the impact of antiquity on modernity in a sophisticated enough or rich enough fashion. In the end, to this professional and unsuitable reader, it rather short sells what the Greeks actually did do for us.

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THALMANN (W.G.) **Theocritus: Space, Absence, and Desire**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xxii + 232. £54. 9780197636558.

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William Thalmann has already enriched classical scholarship with a study of space in Apollonius (see T. Kenny, *JHS* 133 (2013), 192–93); the idle would be tempted to think of this book as the sequel. They would be wrong: this is a book informed by Thalmann's work on space, but has a good deal more to offer. Were I teaching a course on Theocritus, I would set this as a 'short introduction' to the poet's work; it will be required reading for scholars of Hellenistic poetry. It charts a course through the subgenres of the Theocritean corpus (mime, encomium, bucolic proper, 'epyllion' (but see below), etc.) in courteous conversations with Thalmann's colleagues and (usually immediate) predecessors; Thalmann characteristically refers to his work as 'adding' to existing scholarship. The result is a compact, rich book which models a number of different ways to read Theocritus; this review aims to follow Thalmann's lead by continuing the process of addition.

Thalmann's view of space, divided into two chapters, strikes a good balance between empiricism and theoretical information: various spatial theories are canvassed and used where relevant, but we get masses of textual detail as well (sometimes conveniently tabulated). The notion of a 'separate world' constructed by bucolic, but which bears some relationship to reality, is teased out, poem by poem, with a good deal of finesse. Endless references to *Eclogues* might have been out of place, but some contrasts with Virgil could have been brought out. I was struck by Thalmann's discussion of mountains (13–16), for example, which, while present (if distant, cf. *Ecl.* 1.83) in Virgil, are replaced by *silvae* as the main stage of bucolic performance (cf. M. Lipka, *Language in Vergil's Eclogues* (Berlin 2001), 30ff.). Thalmann does not shy away from technical details: 36 n.95 gives us a full account of the poetic stakes of textual intervention (very valuable for students; it would be churlish to mind that a conclusion is not reached). But Theocritus' dialect is rather neglected (38 n.103 argues with Hinge, 'Language and Race: Theocritus and the Koine Identity of Ptolemaic Egypt', in G. Hinge and J. Krasilnikoff (eds), *Alexandria: A Cultural and Religious Melting Pot* (Aarhus 2009), 66–79; the literature on the question is extensive). One wonders if dialect, too, bears some sort of relationship to spaces in the poetry, given the corpus' varied dialectal affiliations; Thalmann might also have integrated the 'dialect problem' into his reflections on identity in the conclusions (194).

The second chapter deals with 'mythological space' (covering what is usually termed 'epyllion', a term which Thalmann, perhaps wisely, avoids) and encomium. The analysis of *Idyll* 16 (73–85) is perhaps unsurprisingly the most 'intertextual' section of the book. Thalmann considers, in addition to the well-documented Hesiodic intertext (*Op.* 225–37), *Od.* 19.87–114 as a model for 16.88–97. Oddly, he remarks that poetry, unlike in Theocritus, is missing from the *Odyssey's* view of the 'ideal city'; but κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἰκάνει ('your reputation reaches the broad heaven', *Od.* 19.108) surely refers to