

with the ambiguity between modern and old-fashioned rather than clearly taking one side. Had A. made more of this complexity, his analysis would be even more enlightening.

This book strictly looks at the plays at such, avoiding theories. However, considerations at least regarding e.g. stagecraft might have been illuminating. Each chapter gives a great wealth of detail. More of a summary at the end of the chapters on *Ajax*, *Electra*, *Philoctetes*, and *O.C.* would be helpful. Proper summaries for these plays only appear in the concluding chapter. The summaries of the remaining chapters tend to be extremely close to those in the conclusion, frequently even employing the same formulations. A. tends to summarize rather than quote, but sometimes giving Greek passages, not just individual expressions, would help.

All in all, this book is clear, lively and full of interesting interpretations and details. It will be very useful to anyone who studies Sophocles, whether using the book as a whole or only single chapters on individual plays.

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## SOPHOCLEAN NARRATOLOGY

A. MARKANTONATOS: *Tragic Narrative. A Narratological Study of Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus.* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 63.) Pp. xiv + 296. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002. Cased, €88. ISBN: 3-11-017401-4.

There have been several recent studies of narrative elements in ancient drama, but this is the first to mount a narratological analysis of a single play. The book offers a number of stimulating insights into the *Oedipus at Colonus*, but I was not always convinced that they were produced by the narratological approach.

The first introductory chapter tackles the problems generated by applying to drama methods designed to elucidate narrative. M. indicates the points of contact between the two apparently disparate genres, and suggests that the differences may be mediated by the study of film, which has a dramatic dimension but which may be productively studied from a narratological point of view. The main tactic for getting out of any difficulty, however, is to propose that 'an external narrator is another narrative device among many others, the employment of which is completely in the power of the author or the playwright' (p. 4). If this device is absent, 'a particular issue arises with regard to the precise delineation of the commanding intelligence which brings the narrative to life' (p. 5). This 'governing consciousness' (p. 5), it turns out, 'we choose to identify with the playwright or the director' (p. 5). I found this problematic, for several reasons. Narratology, after all, often investigates texts that have no identifiable 'playwright or director', like folktales; it studies narrative and narrative voice rather than historically situated narrators. Even film theory, which certainly can privilege the 'auteur', also knows that a film is the end product of various processes that do not always add up to a 'commanding intelligence'. Finally, in the case of tragedy, many recent advances have been made by jettisoning the playwright's determining presence and investigating instead the other interacting forces that contribute to the genre—often, it may be, without the playwright's conscious knowledge. I shall return to this subsequently.

The introduction then offers an overview of narrative structure in drama in terms of

analepsis and prolepsis, interaction of primary and secondary narrations, and narrative threads shared or disputed by various characters. While there is much of interest, there is inflation of certain terms. Narratives are 'conditioned by the personal beliefs and presuppositions of the characters. This means that in narratological terms they are focalized' (p. 14). 'Focalization' is a useful concept when distinguishing narrative voices in texts like those of Hardy or James, but on a stage, presumably we can more or less discern which narrator is speaking, and therefore our apprehension of their beliefs, presuppositions, and general fallibilities is delivered in quite another way.

The next sections are far more persuasive. The book mounts a close, careful reading of the struggles over control of the narrative between Oedipus and his adversaries. It brings out the 'story-telling disposition' of the characters, and shows how the various competing narratives, about past and future, work together to undermine the audience's ability to reach an overarching comprehension. Oedipus wins; he is the 'master story teller' with unparalleled access to past and future, and since he is blind, everything must be narrated to him. An analysis that purports to be largely formal, however, has interpretive ramifications. In particular, the agon between Oedipus and Polyneices is decided entirely in Oedipus' favour; *because* he controls the narrative of the past as well as the prophecies and curses of the future, he makes us see that his 'shocking imprecations' (p. 75) against his son are wholly justified.

Subsequent chapters consider events in the narrative of the play which turn out to be non-events. The battle between Athenians and Thebans, and the death of Oedipus, are narrated in numerous prolepses but never in an authoritative analepsis which would afford undisputed access to them. 'The chorus offer a unique prophetic account' of the battle but 'the precise circumstances of the fighting are never recounted' (p. 77). The impenetrability of the death is more marked since 'this is the only instance in extant tragedy where a powerful ritual barrier is erected to information flow' (p. 125). M. is extremely skilful in drawing out the difficulties of both these 'events'.

Why the emphasis, in a play which is public spectacle and takes as one of its main concerns the telling and retelling of stories, on secrecy and the impossibility of knowing? An answer begins to emerge towards the end of the drama. M. shows persuasively how the end of *OC* replays and reverses *Antigone*. Despite the conflict among the daughters, the chorus and Theseus, which alerts the spectators to 'the difficulty in reaching a narrative consensus' (p. 131), the Athenian dimension of the play ensures that 'the passionate spirit of Antigone can be accommodated in a city where justice wins the day' (p. 165). This Athenian dimension is foregrounded by the characters' representation of Colonus as a transformation both of Athens, and more ambitiously, of Eleusis. This discussion is quite compelling, particularly in the way that it draws on the drama's otherwise largely unmotivated desire for mystery. However, I do not see how the representation of Colonus is part of the drama's *narrative* activity. The discussion at pp. 167–70 of the overlap between 'description' and 'narrative' risks reducing everything to narrative in a fashion that is ultimately unenlightening.

That said, M. proceeds in a way that seems *not* narratological, to speculate that the mysticism of the play and its ending would have been particularly consoling to initiates in the audience (e.g. p. 198). M. might have added that the consolation would work for all those who, late in the war, could still identify Athens with her great 'gift' to Greece of Eleusis (cf. Isokrates *Panegyrikos* 28). M. does not, however, pursue the political dimension of the drama, despite recent studies of the resonances between 'Colonus' and the coup of 411 (e.g. especially L. Edmunds, *Theatrical Space and Historical Place in Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus* [Lanham, 1996], and J. Wilson, *The Hero and the City*

[Ann Arbor, 1997]). Instead, M. footnotes (p. 195) how *OC* might have been taken, in 401, as an account of ‘civic unity’ produced by a ‘curb on civic memory’. This reading, M. claims, would not have been available to Sophocles in 405. But we could choose to dispense with the ‘commanding intelligence’ of a particular playwright, and understand *OC* instead as a complex, over-determined response to the particular needs of Athens after 411. Its anxiety about telling, retelling, and, especially, not telling, which M.’s fine analyses bring out very clearly, would then emerge as overwhelmingly political.

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## MEDEA

D. J. MASTRONARDE (ed.): *Euripides: Medea* (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics.) Pp. x + 431. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Paper, £17.95/US\$26. ISBN: 0-521-64386-4 (0-521-64365-1 hbk).

This ‘Green and Yellow’ edition of what is probably Euripides’ most-read play makes a worthy sequel to the author’s well-received *Euripides: Phoinissai*, which appeared in the same series in 1994. Donald Mastronarde, who fittingly holds the Melpomene Chair of Greek at Berkeley, bases his text on Diggle’s 1984 OCT edition. Exceptions to Diggle’s readings (listed on p. 73) tend to be conservative: M. retains a number of lines athetized in the OCT, including 43, 355–6, and 1056–80 (except for 1062–3). The latter passage, the most notorious crux in the play, receives extended treatment in a ten-page Appendix. Given his tendency to accept the text as transmitted, it is surprising to see that M. athetizes the formulaic final anapests (1415–19); in this he follows Diggle, but differs from Page, who retains them though ‘they seem a little inapposite’ (D. L. Page [ed.], *Euripides Medea* [Oxford, 1938], p. 181), and especially from David Kovacs, editor of the Loeb Euripides, who soundly defends their retention (*TAPA* 117 [1987], 168–9). Textual polemics are avoided; M. explains his judgements matter-of-factly with varying degrees of certitude, and disagrees courteously with other editors. The apparatus criticus is quite limited, in keeping with the aim of the series: individual manuscripts are not differentiated from one another, nor are papyrus fragments. Readers seeking more information are directed to Diggle or to H. van Looy’s 1992 Teubner edition.

The teacher in M. shows forth in the eclectic wealth of data he stops to provide on every page. Only rarely does this tendency verge on pedantry, as with the prosopographical tidbit (p. 388 n. 3), with reference to T. Bergk’s *Griechische Literaturgeschichte*, Volume III (Berlin, 1884): ‘Bergk died in 1881 and this volume was a posthumous edition.’ Far more often M. reaches his intended audience with a fine combination of clarity, relevance, and respect.

In particular, M.’s introductory material, generous (108 pages: praise to the series editors for permitting so much!) and yet compact, will be a great boon to readers making their first acquaintance with *Medea*, with Euripides, or with Athenian tragedy; to those already familiar with the play/author/genre, there will still be great profit in these pages. Lucid discussion is lightly supplemented with reference to (mostly recent) scholarship. Topics include *inter alia* Euripides’ life and works; the play’s structure, themes, and problems (including a concise discussion of ‘*Medea* and Greek