

Generally speaking, it is methodologically unsafe to borrow an element from the *Iliad* for reconstruction of a Cycle poem and then claim that this poem did not fall short in structural complexity from the *Iliad*. In addition, we should not forget that Aristotle, who, as distinct from ourselves, did have access to the Cycle poems, specifically refers to the *Cypria* as a paradigmatic example of linear narrative succession, sharply contrasting it with the sophisticated narrative strategies of Homer (*Poet.* 1459a30–b5).

Sammons draws no definite conclusion as to the place of the Cycle poems in Greek epic tradition, and his attitude to the possibilities raised by neoanalysis is rather sceptical (19–20). Does his meticulous reconstruction of narrative techniques applied in the Cycle poems overturn the harsh verdict of Aristotle and ‘rehabilitate’ them? The answer to this question is twofold. On the one hand, as Sammons amply demonstrates, the Cycle poets effectively structured their narratives by deploying a wide array of compositional devices. On the other hand, as he admits in the conclusions, the distinction between Homer and the Cycle that Aristotle makes in the *Poetics* still stands: ‘The evidence for the cyclic epics bears out Aristotle’s basic criticism’ (219). This is why the conclusion one draws from his book is that the distinction in question, although still relevant, is not so much of an aesthetic as, rather, a typological character. If correct, this conclusion would revitalize the thesis of the pioneer of neoanalysis, J.T. Kakridis, who claimed that rather than seeing in the Cycle poems a deteriorated form of Homer we should distinguish between two different kinds of epic poetry, one predating the other (*Homeric Researches*, Lund 1949, 92). Sammons’ book does much to substantiate this insight.

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SCAFOGLIO (G.) **Ajax: un héros qui vient de Ioin** (Classical and Byzantine Monographs 90). Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 2017. Pp. 140. €32. 9789025613259.

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Scafoglio draws on years of research on the Greek Epic Cycle for this slender but nuanced study of Telamonian Ajax. In the light of his stature in Trojan myth and relative under-representation in scholarship on Homeric characters, Scafoglio’s

choice of Ajax requires no special pleading. Ajax’s particular appeal for Scafoglio lies in the opportunity he affords to study a single mythic subject across the diverse body of orally derived works and over time: ‘une approche transversale’ (3). His is a philological approach to the Homeric and cyclic fragments, employing the combined perspectives of neoanalysis and oral theory as articulated by Franco Montanari (‘Introduction: the Homeric question today’, in F. Montanari, A. Rengakos and C. Tsagalis (eds), *Homeric Contexts: Neoanalysis and the Interpretation of Oral Poetry*, Berlin and Boston 2012, 1–10, quoted at 7 n. 4). Pertinent use is made of Archaic vases and the *Tabula Iliaca*, though Scafoglio is ill-served by the poor quality of the illustrations in the printed volume.

In the first chapter, Scafoglio discusses seemingly Mycenaean details in the Iliadic portrayal of Ajax, including his name, armour and a particular association with Hector that does not depend solely on Ajax’s elevation to the role of pre-eminent Achaean warrior in the absence of Achilles (especially *Il.* 2.768–69). In Scafoglio’s view, the special pairing of Ajax and Hector in the *Iliad* reflects an older association between the two warriors and implies an earlier role in the oral tradition as protagonist.

Scafoglio uses a fine-grained analysis of Ajax in the *Odyssey* to tease out how particular strands of cyclic epic are woven into the Homeric poem. This is familiar territory, but Scafoglio’s choice of Ajax as a focus for such research is a felicitous one. Ajax’s death at Troy is foregrounded in the account of Nestor (*Od.* 3.109–12); Scafoglio, like others, reads Nestor’s mention of his burial in the company of Achilles, Patroclus and Antilochus as a double allusion to the substrate stories featured in the *Aethiopis* and the *Iliad*. Ajax’s appearance in the two Underworld narratives of books 11 and 24 reflects Homer’s self-consciously definitive ‘version’ of the defence of Achilles and Judgment of Arms.

The study culminates in Scafoglio’s interpretation of Ajax in the cyclic epic poems known as the *Aethiopis* and the *Little Iliad*. Returning to material considered indirectly in the previous two chapters, along with evidence provided by Archaic vase painting and the *Tabula Capitolina*, Scafoglio tackles specific points of difficulty in a head-on manner: the defence of Achilles and removal of his corpse, the favouring of Odysseus in the Judgment ‘by the children of the Trojans and Pallas Athena’ (*Od.* 11.547) and Ajax’s madness and suicide.

Ajax's burial at Troy in a coffin in the *Little Iliad* (*Il. parv.* 3 Bernabé; mis-cited as *fr.* 4 at 99 n. 267) brings Scafoglio's study full circle. The negative valence Scafoglio reads in this un-Homeric funerary method is in keeping with the tenor of the *Little Iliad* as best we can reconstruct it. Ajax's corpse is not entirely without honour, but the denial of a cremation and funerary urn is a final sign of 'the unhappy destiny of the hero in the archaic epic' (100). Scafoglio draws a connection, moreover, between the burial method and the Mycenaean attributes ascribed to Ajax in the *Iliad*. Like the tower shield, Ajax's coffin is a Bronze-Age relic preserved in the oral tradition, harking back to the earlier practice of inhumation and distinguishing him from other Homeric heroes. Scafoglio's Ajax is, in sum, a warrior whose antique origin renders him forever 'out of context' in Archaic epic, doomed to remain a 'héros "inachevé"' (26): left behind at Troy without *aristeia*, pyre or urn.

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BROWN (A.) (ed. and tr.) **Aeschylus: *Libation Bearers*** (Aris and Phillips Classical Texts). Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018. Pp. 486. £24.95. 9781786940995.
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Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* is a captivating and interesting play which has recently drawn the attention of serious scholarship in the field (for example C.W. Marshall, *Aeschylus: Libation Bearers* (Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy), London and Oxford 2017; see following review). In the same vein, Brown's commentary in the renowned Aris and Phillips series brings to the fore the very complex and engaging character of this ancient dramatic piece, notably the second play of the only wholly surviving ancient trilogy of Greek drama, the Aeschylean *Oresteia*.

A learned and informative introduction on the main issues dealt with by the vast bibliography on the play starts with a short exposition of the plot. Brown, rather unexpectedly and surprisingly, outlines for the intended reader (mainly students) a similar account to that found in A. Sommerstein's *Aeschylean Tragedy* (2nd edition, Bristol 2010). It would have been more helpful and profitable, however, if in this section the author had examined in more detail the various

interesting trends and aspects of the *Libation Bearers'* plot that draw his attention in subsequent parts of the introduction and in the commentary. There follows a subsection on the play's mythical background, with particular emphasis on Stesichorus' handling of the theme in his *Oresteia*, which Brown, in terms of a *Quellenforschung* analysis of the mythical data, considers to have been Aeschylus' most important source. A section on the play's main themes as represented in the visual arts follows, and evidences the way Aeschylean drama may have interacted with and been stirred by visual depictions of tragic subject matter. Nonetheless, one should be cautious in accepting direct interaction in all instances, as many handlings of the myth (both in drama and elsewhere in ancient literature) are missing, and thus the influence of specific examples of the visual arts (for example *Oresteia* kraters) on Aeschylus seems mostly rather undetermined.

Staging and performance are also examined, with Brown offering a temperate account of the various views expressed on vexed staging problems, such as, for example, the number of actors involved in the actual performance. The introduction continues with an examination of the way the *Libation Bearers* functions as the middle drama of the *Oresteian* trilogy whilst also functioning as a self-contained dramatic piece in its own right. Issues of imagery and the reception of the play in ancient times follow, with some interesting insights; unfortunately, analysis of the play's reception in later and contemporary literature and art is very limited.

The text and brief yet informative *apparatus criticus* follow. The text presented by Brown is chiefly constructed on the basis of M.L. West's 1998 Teubner edition; differences are defended by Brown in the notes with admirable learning. This is a rather welcome addition to the scholarly character of the Aris and Phillips commentaries, which are not usually concerned with problems of textual transmission and criticism. The English translation facing the Greek text, in accordance with the Aris and Phillips house style, is flowing and renders the Greek text into idiomatic English that is absolutely suited to its (primarily) student audience. The commentary itself, in addition to discussions of a textual nature, contains helpful notes on matters of language and offers various thematic interpretations (myth and dramatic technique, performance issues, the mythological, literary and artistic backgrounds, neo-historicizing