

Gender And Politics In Greek Tragedy

NOTICES OF BOOKS

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Arist. *Pol.* 1284a 3-37; Plut. *Arist.* 7, *Them.* 22) present it as a measure against tyranny or immorality, never as a punishment for treason *per se*. As for stagecraft, M. puts to good use the representations of the Presbeia scene on vase paintings in order to show that the seated and silent posture adopted by Achilles is 'a codified expression of distress and anger' (36): it has a strong impact on the community's decisions and, far from being a sign of weakness, becomes a manifestation of power. The Aristophanic parody of Aeschylus in *Frogs* is used to shed further light on Achilles' silence. Here M. offers a sharp and convincing reading: he claims that after Euripides mentions the haughty silences of Niobe and Achilles at ll. 911-13 and presents them as a sign of Aeschylus' *alazoneia* (l. 919), Dionysus' rough exhortation to Aeschylus at l. 926 to 'be silent' 'reinstat[es] the normative association of silence with powerlessness and inferiority' (38). The account of the circumstances in which Achilles breaks his silence is less convincing: even supposing that ll. 923-6 of *Frogs* refer to them, the *rhemata boeia* mentioned at l. 924 can hardly be compared to the interjections of Cassandra at *Ag.* 1072-3 or Ajax at *Soph. At.* 333ff. Aristophanes' expression is best understood as a reference to Aeschylus' bombastic style, as commentators have in fact repeatedly noted. Achilles' verbal explosion might have been similar to that of Prometheus who, at the beginning of his speech in *Prometheus Bound*, employs an elevated style full of complex nominal-compounds and neoformations. In *Myrmidons* the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is presented explicitly as a homoerotic bond. On the basis of *fr.* 135 R., M. convincingly argues that Achilles' attitude towards the dead Patroclus is best described as *sebas* – the kind of devotion normally displayed towards a powerful person, such as an army leader. The conclusion is that homoeroticism represents a dangerous departure from loyalty to the common cause, although, ultimately, it is precisely for Patroclus' sake that Achilles returns to the battlefield.

At the end of ch.3 M. concludes reasonably that in Euripides' *Hecuba* (83) 'Achilles is portrayed as something between a deceased warrior, a heroised warrior, an epic hero, a vengeful cult hero and a deity.' The discussion that leads to this conclusion contains, however, some questionable points. I shall dwell on just one. M. asserts (61) that 'we do not know whether the sacrifice was Achilles' blackmail in return for favourable

winds' and argues (67) that 'the plot consists of successive and conflicting attempts to define the meaning' of Achilles' address to the army quoted by the chorus at ll. 113-15. Kovacs (*Euripidea altera* (1996) 63-4) rightly argues that, in Euripides' *Hecuba*, it is a violation of the textual evidence to suppose that the killing of Polyxena is necessitated by adverse winds: in fact, when Achilles appears, the Greeks are represented as already sailing away, and it is only Achilles' accusation of ingratitude that stops them. During the debate, everyone seems to assume that Achilles' demand for honour implies a human sacrifice: the question is whether they should grant his wish, and whether Polyxena should be the victim. Neither the chorus' report of Achilles' words nor the army's debate deviate from Polydorus' authoritative version.

The reading of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* which M. proposes in ch.4 seems to me the most original and convincing contribution of his book. M. argues that in this tragedy Euripides dramatizes Achilles' inability to live up to his Homeric persona. All the main characters solicit from him responses consistent with his anger, noble origins and education: nevertheless, Achilles is unable to meet the expectations generated by his epic identity.

Ch.5 explores the different paradigmatic meanings that are assigned to Achilles in plays where he does not figure as a character: he can evoke 'an irrevocably lost past of competitive values' (150) or stand for warlike excellence. Alternatively, he represents an implicit model against which the education of young men should be measured.

Overall, this book offers several stimulating and thought-provoking – although not always convincing – observations about some very interesting Greek plays. It will certainly be useful to any student of Attic tragedy.

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ZELENAK (M.X.) *Gender and Politics in Greek Tragedy*. New York: P. Lang, 1998. Pp. 156. £14. 0820440604.

In his introduction, Michael Zelenak addresses this book to the general reader ('not to Greek specialists or classicists', 2) with the express purpose of recovering 'some of the immediacy' (1) of the original experience of tragedy and 'in the spirit of

Gender and Politics in Greek Tragedy explores themes and issues of gender identity and political ideology in plays by Aeschylus (Suppliant Maidens, Oresteia). 'Gender and Politics in Greek Tragedy' contributes in vital new ways to the ongoing debates over the status of women in Greek culture and its theatre. Western Gender and Politics in Greek Tragedy. Front Cover. Michael X. Zelenak. P. Lang, - Greek drama (Tragedy) - pages. Comparative Drama. Michael X. Zelenak. Gender and Politics in Greek Tragedy. Artists and Issues in the Theatre Series 7. New York: Peter. Lang, This study explores themes and issues of gender identity and political ideology in plays by Aeschylus (Suppliant maidens, Oresteia) Sophocles (Antigone). keep [Greek plays] distant from most readers and enthusiasts of drama and theatre" (1). view of tragedy as an Athenian institution, including its connection with democracy and the restrictions on women's political and social power. Michael X. Zelenak; NOT of Woman Born: Gender Politics in Greek Tragedy. Theater 1 May ; 20 (2): 12 doi. Greek tragedy was written and performed by men and aimed perhaps not exclusively on a male audience that grew out of their psychological, political, and social lives. . 22 Tragic play with gender categories can often blur any clear definition or. Political plays, Greek > History and criticism. Greek drama (Tragedy) > History and criticism. Physical Description: p. ; 23 cm. ISBN: (alk. paper). Despite its democratic ideals, the Greek polis excluded women. Helene Foley shows how Greek tragedy uses gender relations to explore specific issues in the development of the social, political, and intellectual life in the. Gender and Politics in Greek Tragedy [Michael X. Zelenak] Rahva Raamatust. Shipping from 24h. selection of both comic and tragic plays, examine the ways in which this . in Greek society, rather than contending with differing political and. Keuls, E.C. The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens. New York, Zelenak, M.X. Gender and Politics in Greek Tragedy. The Male Actor of Greek Tragedy: Evidence of Misogyny or Gender-Bending? city; tragedy is revealed to be an ideological apparatus of masculine political.

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