

strengthen his case; it is to be hoped that in the future J. will produce a full-length study that takes many more examples into account.

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J. BEER: *Sophocles and the Tragedy of Athenian Democracy*. (Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies 105.) Pp. xviii + 191. Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2004. Cased, £48.99. ISBN: 0-313-28946-8.

This volume is the latest in Praeger's Lives of the Theatre series, a collection 'designed to provide scholarly introductions to important periods and movements in the history of world theatre' (p. i). Unfortunately, unlike Walton and Arnott's *Menander and the Making of Comedy*, which is part of the same series, this edition offers little of genuine worth.

As is highlighted early on, this book is aimed at students of theatre, seeking to present 'many of the salient details of the great age of Greek tragedy' even as it provides a general introduction to the work of Sophocles (p. xii). However, as Beer's treatment of the former is, at times, unsteady, the noteworthy sections are those that focus directly on drama. The book opens with three chapters, which offer notes on the political and cultural contexts for Greek theatre; two of these preparatory chapters are poor attempts at historical review, but the third does offer a solid and useful appraisal of the basic conventions of Athenian drama. This discussion then proves a useful prelude to the analysis of the tragedies of Sophocles that follows in the second section of the book, where each play is afforded a separate chapter that offers an initial summary of relevant myths, a consideration of on-stage arrangements, and a sequential review of each work. These reviews, though laced with portions of narrative, are fair and succinct, and B.'s translations (of Lloyd-Jones's Loeb Greek text) are first-rate. This being a prefatory work, it is perhaps inevitable that much of what it presents is somewhat apodeictic to those familiar with ancient drama. Nonetheless, B. does provide a sound introduction to the plays themselves.

However, serious difficulties tend to arise when the discussion extends beyond plot summaries. A curious feature of this work is that both of its broad sections are fundamentally flawed, but for almost diametrically opposed reasons. Early on, B. sets a wide brief that he cannot cover adequately, while problems result later from the limited scope of his approach. The opening chapter of the book—'Tragedy, Athens and the Greek Cultural Mosaic'—provides an example of the first failing. It attempts to assess the rise of the *polis*, the importance of the *oikos*, Hellenic 'racial kinship', early Athenian history, and Greek religion in fewer than sixteen pages. Considering the audience this work is aimed at, it is crucial that such a survey is included, and that it outline properly the essentials on these subjects. But without clear purpose or method, this chapter fails to do justice to any of the issues individually, let alone present a coherent starting point for the book as a whole. The little that the reader does garner from this preamble must then suffice, for there are few directions given to additional readings and no references to discussion on any of the matters raised. (In general, the apparatus of notes and references in this book is very basic, while the bibliography is limited exclusively to works in English.)

Problems also arise in the main body of the book when B. attempts to extract political material from plays that are not always overtly so. Indeed, it is a test for any work on 'the politics of Sophocles' tragedy' to review plays such as *Trachiniae* and *Philoctetes*, where there seems to be little on offer that applies directly, or exclusively, to Athens. Almost predictably, the chapters on these plays are weak; readers are offered not much more than a modest consideration of the theme of marriage in the *Trachiniae* ('a source of deep anxiety' for Athenians, p. 81), and the general observation that *Philoctetes* 'questions the morality of political expediency' (pp. 140). But as neither play can be reconciled fully with the overall programme, the author struggles to go beyond the provision of basic outlines.

That programme is a curious mix of old and new. In his preface, B. endorses the 'increasing consensus' (p. x) among scholars that tragic theatre played a crucial part in the political life of fifth-century Athens. But while much recent work on ancient theatre explores its political nature in a broad sense, B. augments this approach by reviving the tired practice of reading contemporary allusions into Sophocles' work. And his methods cause particular problems in a work such as this, where one would hope for a certain rigour in the selection of material. Instead,

anything that pertains to politics (in both a narrow and general sense) is included here. Consequently, the reader is often left with a jumble of information, none of which is assessed properly.

In the chapter on *Ajax*—to take one example—one finds extended notes on the career of Cimon (p. 49), the political situation in 460s Athens (p. 50), and an attempt to link the play to debates on Pericles' citizenship law (p. 62). Even if one can set aside the problem with dates here, and accept that a reading of *Ajax* is significantly 'informed' by these details, the act of listing such points in succession is hardly sufficient explanation. Yet we are offered little more than a register of such items and summary statements like, '*Ajax* is an intensely political tragedy . . . the factioning within the Greek army is used as a dramatic vehicle to explore the kinds of tensions that can arise within a Greek polis' (p. 63). Statements that are not invalid, but, again, are of little use when undeveloped.

In sum, although this work has some use, those new to the subject should read it with caution (particularly, B.'s thoughts on *Philoctetes* and Plato [p. 150] and his anti-Athena/democratic reading of *Oedipus at Colonus* [p. 168]). Overall, this book has too many limitations to be recommended.

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D. D. PHILLIPS (trans.): *Athenian Political Oratory. 16 Key Speeches.* Pp. x + 264. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. Paper, £17.99. ISBN: 0-415-96610-8 (0-415-96609-4 hbk).

Sixteen speeches (or, more exactly, fifteen speeches and [Demosthenes] 12, the *Letter of Philip*) are here translated for the use of students of Greek political history. The selection concentrates on three themes and three authors. First we have the regime of the Thirty Tyrants, with Lysias 12 *Against Eratosthenes*, 13 *Against Agoratus*, and 16 *For Mantiheus*. Next comes the theme of Philip and Athens, with the first nine speeches of the Demosthenic corpus—the *Olynthiacs*, the first three *Philippics*, the *Peace*, the *Chersonese*, and Hegesippus' *On Halomnesus*—along with Philip's letter. Finally there is Athens under Alexander, with Hypereides 1 *For Lycophon*, 4 *For Euxenippus*, and 5 *Against Demosthenes*. There are a general introduction to the history of the period in thirteen pages, short introductions to the three themes and to the individual speeches, and at the end some brief notes, a bibliography, and an index.

The book is evidently intended for students at a low academic level, probably taking an introductory course on Greek history. The introductions and notes consist of basic facts, not critical comment. But they are quite sound, as far as they go, and the translations are very accurate. The volume does not make a contribution to research, but it fulfils its purpose as a good elementary textbook.

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P. DRÄGER (ed., trans.): *Apollonios von Rhodos: Die Fahrt der Argonauten.* Pp. 592, map. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002. Paper, €14.10, SFr 24.50. ISBN: 3-15-018231-X.

Paul Dräger has published widely on Apollonius Rhodius and on the myth of the Argonauts in general (*Argo Pasimelousa. Der Argonautenmythos in der griechischen und römischen Literatur* [1993], *Die Argonautika des Apollonios Rhodos: Das zweite Zorn-Epos der griechischen Literatur* [2001], and a translation of the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus in 2003), and he has now produced a translation of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, with facing Greek text, notes, a brief but up-to-date bibliography (Ray Clare's important *The Path of the Argo* [Cambridge, 2002] appeared too late to be included), and a short *Nachwort* dealing with the life of Apollonius, earlier versions of the myth and various aspects of Apollonian technique. In recent years, anglophone readers of Apollonius have had the excellent versions of Green, Fowler, and Hunter. German readers now have both D.'s version and that of Gleis and