

*The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*: Ed. by P.E. Easterling. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997. 392 p. ISBN 0-521-41245-5, GBP 40.00 (hardback). ISBN 0-521-42351-1, GBP 14.95 (paperback).

The study of Greek tragedy has in the last few years benefited from several good handbooks and collections of essays centred on special themes. The new Cambridge companion answers a different kind of need: in the form of twelve essays by seven distinguished scholars (Peter Burian, Paul Cartledge, Pat Easterling, Simon Goldhill, Edith Hall, Fiona MacIntosh, Oliver Taplin) it presents the main aspects of Greek tragedy in the light of the recent trends in scholarly criticism. In spite of multiple authorship, the presentation maintains a uniform level of style, being at the same time accessible for the Greekless reader and non-specialist in the traditions of Attic theatre, and interesting, even challenging, for a classicist. Theoretical insight, documentary evidence and examples taken from the dramas themselves combine to give a many-faceted view of the themes discussed.

The essays are divided into three groups. In the first group, the main emphasis is on tragedy as a civic institution in Athens – a theme which has been very much in the forefront lately, and justly so – concentrating on tragedy as a phenomenon of fifth century Athens instead of the views of Aristotle or later literary criticism. The last group discusses the reception of tragedy in later Antiquity, the Renaissance and modern times, especially in regard to performance – a theme which as yet has not received enough attention, but is clearly a growing interest of scholarship. In the middle section, some central aspects of Greek tragedy are discussed in a series of very good treatments, giving rich insights into the polyphony inherent in the sociology of the scene and the audience, in the language, in the form and performance, and in the use of myth as tragic plot.

One of the very good points emerging from these essays is the continuous attention given to the interaction between the audience and the plays. One of the embarrassing uncertainties we face – very well brought out by Goldhill in ch. 3 – is the fact that the evidence for the composition of this audience is so inconclusive that we still cannot be sure whether it included women or not.

These essays give a rich and variegated picture of tragedy, but the overpowering faith in the civic function of theatre strikes me as a bit too monolithic. It is good that this aspect has been emphasized by recent research, but surely it is time to explore the emotional, artistic and intellectual challenges to the audience as individuals and not merely as members of the state. I do not believe that the prevalent model of myth and tragedy functioning as a confirmation of the values and norms of the Athenian state in any way exhausts the meaning of tragedy for the fifth-century Athenian audience. And – as Pat Easterling's excellent essay about the reception of tragedy in Hellenistic and later Antiquity shows (ch. 9 "From repertoire to canon") – tragedy very soon began to be presented and appreciated in non-Athenian contexts, too, where the civic function was at least different. Even in Athens, the situation hardly was so simple as some expressions used by some writers seem to imply. For instance, although Cartledge (p. 4) and Easterling (p. 213) call attention to the presence of several non-Attic playwrights even in the fifth century, we find such sentences as "the relationship between the Athenian tragic poet and his audience was, formally, that of political equals" (Hall, p. 95; of course true of the three major figures, but all tragic poets writing for Athens were not Athenians) and "the fact that

tragedy is written by citizens – adult, enfranchised males...” (Goldhill, p. 344; this fact is not a fact).

The use of this rich and stimulating volume is facilitated by a glossary of transcribed Greek terms, a chronology of theatrical (and some historic) events, a useful list of texts, English translations and commentaries, an extensive bibliography and an index of subjects.

*Maarit Kaimio*

NEIL HOPKINSON: *Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period. An Anthology*. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics, Cambridge University Press 1994. 224 p. ISBN 0–521–41155–6, GBP 37.50 (hardback). ISBN 0–521–42313–9, GBP 15.95 (paperback).

As the editor says in the preface, the Greek poetry of the Roman period, and especially the later Roman, is an area of Greek literature which in the course of classical studies remains unfamiliar to a student of classics. This anthology is a welcome attempt to correct the situation. The book begins with a brief review of the historical and cultural background of the period in question, i.e. from the first centuries AD until the 6th century. The geographical area as well as the time span is vast, and it is impossible to give a detailed picture of various phenomena in only a couple of pages. The editor has succeeded in giving an idea about what kind of a world we encounter by taking up some major areas: 1. Historical developments, 2. Education and culture, 3. Christianity and 4. Pagan poetry in the Imperial period. This provides a sufficient background for the actual theme – the poets and their production.

The anthology itself introduces a total of 11 poets of collections of poems: *Anacreontea*, Mesomedes, Epigrams, Quintus Smyrnaeus, Nonnus, Musaeus, Oppian, [Oppian], [Manetho], [Orpheus] and Babrius. For each part a bibliography for further reading is provided. The texts are given in Greek with a good and thorough commentary. In addition, some basic facts (if known) are given about each poet, and the contents of the poems are explained in a few words. Since there are no translations, these overviews of the contents are very helpful especially for those students/readers who do not read Greek fluently. The commentaries also help in other ways: the individual texts are handled in great detail, and morphological as well as syntactical explanations are given. The editor often comments on the choices of words and phrases which helps to understand the influences of Greek literary tradition and linguistic phenomena (e.g. Atticism). The reader is also guided through cultural history and mythology.

In the course of reading the anthology I could not help wondering why the editor had chosen these particular poets and/or poems and why were they put in this order. A few lines on the criteria for these arrangements would have cleared up the point, especially in the case of Epigrams. To sum up, the anthology fulfills its purposes. It is a thorough enough introduction to the less-known Greek poetry for students as well as for those who are mainly focused on the ”more classical periods”.

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