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Cover: see Fischer in this volume, p. 323, *Fig. 22b*.

S. Goldhill, *Sophocles and the language of tragedy* (Onassis Series in Hellenic Culture), Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012. 296 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-979627-4.

Simon Goldhill—distinguished author of many stimulating works on Greek literature—has once again returned to what for many of us is the core of literary life in Athens during the 5th century BC: Sophocles and the art of tragedy. The title of Goldhill's book indicates the double focus of his approach: both an analysis of the language in the tragedies and a thorough discussion of the characteristic art of Sophocles. As stated in the introduction, the aim is to combine an analysis of language and concepts with the reception of the dramas, based on theories of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, in order to elucidate the significance of Sophocles' tragedies, from ancient times up until now. Nevertheless, the author has chosen to divide his book into two sections (with some overlapping); in the first part he discusses the language, in the second the reception. However, in the closure of the book, called 'Coda', he tries to bring the two parts together.

In the first part, Goldhill gives us many examples of how rewarding close reading of the texts can be in the hands of a specialist of his rank. Among them, his discussion of the Aristotelian concept *lusis* ("untying"), and how *lusis* is related to *katharsis* in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, but also in tragedies as *Trachiniae* and *Electra*, could serve as an example. Roughly speaking: each attempt of the characters to achieve *lusis* leads inevitably to even harder entwining. True release is achieved only when *lusis* and *katharsis* converge, i.e. in death. And, as Goldhill also reminds us, in Sophoclean texts *lusis* is linked to *telos*, which means "death" but also "fulfilment"; i.e.—as shown in the late dramas of August Strindberg (who eagerly studied Greek tragedies at the time when he wrote the *Chamber Plays*)—an initiation into a new and better existence.

Another stimulating feature is the discussion of how Sophoclean irony is to be understood. Here Goldhill, despite all earlier comments upon the topic, opens our eyes to the etymological complexity in Sophocles' text, especially when Goldhill points out what he calls "the limits of our reading of Sophoclean irony" (p. 27); limits, which are settled by the Greek language itself and therefore must be, but not always are, observed. For example: *oida* ("I know"), the most vital term in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, etymologically means "I have seen". This remark helps us understand the complexity of the famous scene, when Teiresias and Oedipus confront each other: the blind man *sees*, while Oedipus thinks that he is capable of *knowing*, but in order to know he must pay with the loss of his eyes.

Another example of the necessity of etymological skill, when contemplating Sophoclean irony, is Goldhill's elucidation of words and concepts as *didaskein*, (*ekdidaskein*, etc.)—

"teach" ("teach fully")/ "learn" / "know"—in *Trachiniae*: What Hyllus asks to be *taught*, is in fact what he doesn't want to *learn*—knowledge leads to destruction. Another example yet would be *to koinon* ("the common") in *Antigone*; a wording which incorporates "what two share, should share or cannot share" (p. 31)—i.e. the dilemma, which torments Antigone's mind (and actually the mind of Creon as well, which is another twist of Sophoclean irony).

In the first part of the book, we can also read about the importance of the audience—whose members were to judge what was shown on the stage, the dynamic interplay between chorus and actors, the rhetorical use of *stichomythia* and other elements which formed the structure of the fully developed tragedy.

In the second part Goldhill deals with critical readings of Greek tragedy, starting with Plato, Aristotle and Seneca, but emphasis is laid upon German critics and authors from the 18th and 19th centuries: Lessing, Schiller, Schlegel and Schelling, later followed by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner. And after the discussion of critical readings of Greek tragedy, the author leads us to tragedy in performance—e.g. Reinhardt's staging of *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*, etc.

The starting point in Goldhill's survey of the later reception of Greek tragedy is the concept of the tragic, and after scrutinizing texts from Antiquity he urges that the tragic is a modern conceit, formed by the German Idealists. This remark has a general application: if we want to grasp Greek tragedy in Athens, we are often obliged to go beyond the aesthetical reflections of the German critics around 1800 and sometimes neglect the academic tradition known as *Altertumswissenschaft*. Nevertheless, of course, Goldhill pays due attention to the writings of Friedrich Schlegel—"the most cited of nineteenth-century theorists of tragedy" (p. 147)—and others, and Goldhill gives a fascinating survey of the aesthetical and philosophical reflection on Greek tragedy during the 19th century and its connection to, for instance, Romantic Philhellenism and even Christianity (as we may notice in Schelling's ideas about *Sittlichkeit*).

Of special interest in this second half of the book—at least to drama scholars, like myself—are the parts about Richard Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* and Max Reinhardt and his performances; i.e. stagings, inspired by the emotional power in Greek tragedy, which paved way for modern drama. Both Wagner and Reinhardt were possessed with the idea of the performance as a "people's festival". In Wagner's case—at least in *Parsifal*—the impression given was sublime, almost religious. In Reinhardt's production of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, with its use of huge choruses, which dominated the action and even invaded the audience space, the impression was quite the opposite. The chaotic power of Reinhardt's adaption of Sopho-

cles seemed to mock the calm dignity that was expected by audiences marked by the Winckelmann conception of Greece and—once again, what Goldhill identifies as—the German idealist tradition. Even more scandalous was Reinhardt's production of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* (1903), especially the ending with Elektra's wild ritual dance, leading to her death. As Goldhill summarizes: "The blood of violence and the new perspective on the blood of the German Hellenic inheritance were both threatening challenges to the comfort of German Philhellenism." (p. 196). During the rest of the 20th century, and up until now, scholars and directors even more eagerly confronted the German aesthetic tradition and instead stressed the political and ethical discourse to be found in the Athenian tragedies, as we can see in the writings of Jean-Pierre Vernant and the stagings by Peter Stein.

As stated above, in the 'Coda' Goldhill tries to bring the two parts together, mainly with the purpose to describe the distinctiveness of Sophocles, compared to Aeschylus and Euripides. But in the 'Coda' one can also see an attempt to cope with theoretical issues in general; for instance, with references to Hegel, the need of historicity of reading and, as Goldhill puts it, the risk of naïvety when classical scholarship is marked by an idealistic view of ancient Greek culture and society. Further, Goldhill suggests that we should generally renounce the term *text* in favour of the term *script*, at least when we cope with artefacts which only come "into voice in and through performance" (p. 262). Here, before taking leave of his readers, the author also pleads for a personal engagement with the object of the study; if not, scholarship will be reduced to what Goldhill prefers to spell in German: *Wissenschaft*.

The structure of the book, with its two heterogeneous parts, might seem odd: rather two books in one, than one coherent study. (However, as mentioned above, in the 'Coda' the author endeavours to join the two parts, to unite philology with historical criticism.) Sometimes, one is apt to think, Goldhill is rather harsh when he discusses other scholars and perhaps a bit too content with his own interpretations, but—as indicated in the beginning of this review—a new book by Simon Goldhill is of utmost interest and joy for all who devote themselves to the study of ancient Greek literature.

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M.S. Cyrino, *Aphrodite (Gods and heroes of the ancient world)*, London & New York 2010, 155 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-77523-6.

The goddess Aphrodite has received a lot of attention lately. In the wake of V. Pirenne-Delforge's fundamental study *L'Aphrodite Grecque* (1994), several monographs have appeared, e.g., S. Budin, *The origin of Aphrodite* (2003), R. Rosenzweig, *Worshipping Aphrodite. Art and cult in Classical Athens* (2004) and G. Pironti, *Entre ciel et guerre: Figures d'Aphrodite en Grèce ancienne* (2007). A 2008 conference at the University of Reading was devoted to the goddess, *Aphrodite revealed: A goddess disclosed* (later turned into the *Brill companion to Aphrodite*, eds. A. Smith & S. Pickup, 2010), and in 2011–2012, a major art exhibition, *Aphrodite and the gods of love* travelled the United States and graced the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Getty Villa and the San Antonio Museum of Arts. Monica Cyrino's contribution to the flourishing Aphrodite literature appears as a part of the Routledge series *Gods and heroes of the ancient world* and aims at introducing the goddess's cults, character and origins to the general and academic audience alike.

Cyrino's book consists of three parts: the introduction 'Why Aphrodite?', the central section 'Key themes' and finally the lately obligatory reception chapter 'Aphrodite afterwards'.

'Why Aphrodite?', begins with the short introductory section 'Who is Aphrodite?' which presents Aphrodite as the traditional "goddess of erotic love and beauty". Then follow, under the heading 'Aphrodite emerges', three ideas Cyrino finds fundamental for understanding how the ancient Greeks conceived Aphrodite: her *anodos* ("going up"), i.e., the powerful epiphany of the goddess emerging from the sea and rising into the sky, the *kosmesis* ("adornment"); bodily adornment as underlining Aphrodite's power to attract and thereby more or less intrinsic to her nature, and, finally, *mixis* ("mingling"). The latter concept, as forcefully argued by Gabriella Pironti,⁴ designates the goddess's ability to unite: (primarily) bodies in sexual as well as martial encounters. A following short section then presents the 'Evidence for Aphrodite': Cyrino bases her study on iconography and literary sources.

The 'Key themes' part is opened by a chapter with the self-explanatory title 'Birth, origins, names'. The initial discussion of the goddess's birth presents the different pedigrees given by Hesiod and Homer, and underlines that although her parents vary in the two accounts (Ouranos in Hesiod and Zeus and Dione in Homer), Aphrodite's connections to the sky and the sea are expressed through both. The account of the Homeric Aphrodite also introduces the goddess's affinity with the bat-

⁴ G. Pironti, *Entre ciel et guerre: Figures d'Aphrodite en Grèce ancienne* (Kernos suppl., 18), Liège 2007.