

the narrated worlds of tragedy have a *certain structure*. The wisdom of the *polis* is embodied and transmitted in these legends. The play as narrative depends on a core of *praxis* (a series of narrated events), which must satisfy the requirements of *continuity* and *closure*. The narration of the *praxis* is done in formal acts in which the verbal text is predominately spoken. Both act and intercalary matter must be understood as words written to be delivered in particular ways within special visual contexts. Because the primary pleasure of tragedy depends so much on emotional engagement with the persons involved in the *praxis*, a scene will generally be designed to evoke from the audience a system of sympathetic attention on one or more focal figures, in relation to whom the role of the other characters in emotive economy of the scene is defined. The focus is mobile and should be used as a criterion for unity.

Much of this is derived from the author's intensive study of the *Ajax* developed to support his foundational theory for all of Greek tragedy.

The Poetics of Greek Tragedy is a meaty book for the specialist with many insights for the student of Greek tragedy. It is strongly recommended that the reader study the author's summaries first before trying to read the main text. Once that is done, the reader should be prepared to spend a great deal of time in pondering (not just reading) the author's abstruse analysis and intricate supporting textual details.

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Cynthia R. Gardiner, *The Sophoclean Chorus: A Study of Character and Function*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987. First Edition. Pp. x+205. Hardcover, \$ 22.50.

The Sophoclean Chorus is not a book for the general reader; it is a detailed study of the character and function of the Sophoclean Chorus for those who know the Sophoclean Greek text intimately because it is Cynthia Gardiner's aim «to reconstruct, as much as possible, the original performance as Sophocles produced it, to examine his dramatic techniques and attempt to determine in each instance the dramatic effect at which he was aiming, the particular response that he sought to elicit from his contemporary audience» (p. 10). Gardiner, who received her Ph. D. from Princeton and taught at the University of Iowa, is currently president of B.A.R. Associates in New York City and believes her book to be a corrective to so many other studies that stress the lyric role of the chorus: «This investigation attempts to redress the existing imbalance between the study of poetry and the study of character by analyzing the role of the chorus in each of Sophocles' extant tragedies and determining the extent to which he meant the audience to perceive the chorus as a character in the play» (p. 5). The seven extant plays are dealt with under three general headings: (1) «Men at War» (*Philoctetes* and *Ajax*); (2) «Men at Home» (*Antigone*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Oedipus Coloneus*); and (3) «Women» (*Trachiniae*, *Electra*). The book also contains an Introduction, a Conclusion («The Choral Character»), a Selected Bibliography, and Index. It is not easy reading.

In the *Philoctetes* Gardiner sees political implications. The chorus of soldiers, closely related to Odysseus and yet personally sympathetic to Philoctetes, follow the demagogue and accept the principle of expediency offered to them, concerned as

they are, not with higher concepts of honor and justice but only the immediate gains of their group's interest – decent men but basically shortsighted, while in the *Ajax* Sophocles has made the chorus a group of direct, uncomplicated soldiers, men of deeds rather than words, men who act in accordance with certain military and moral principles. This chorus stresses that a man should be judged by the sum total of his life and not by a particular moment in it.

We learn that the chorus sets ethical standards and bring to the plays a broad political significance. This is the case in the *Antigone*, and in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* the chorus function as if they were allies of the gods, leaders of the host, marshalling themselves against the plague. In the *Oedipus Coloneus* they are deeply involved in the action; in fact, they perform most of it and theirs is the true authority. Gardiner says pointedly: «Theseus and Oedipus act and converse as heroic individuals, but the chorus embody the land that defends the suppliant Oedipus and that will ultimately benefit from him» (p. 116).

In the *Trachiniae* the chorus are independent women with a natural affinity for Deianeira, whose choral odes combine a theological content with a style that is suited to and reminiscent of songs of religious festivals and worship and they maintain a strongly and consistently religious mood throughout the play, giving the audience the impression that they believe that Heracles somehow belongs to the gods. In the *Electra* an apparently local group of women, elucidate important aspects of Electra's conduct and as representatives of the people of the land exhibit the emotional response of those people, namely, the conviction that Electra's actions are right and just and approved by society and the gods.

Gardiner's overall views of Sophocles are strikingly similar to H.D.F. Kitto's. Sophocles was impressed by the nature of human greatness and the role of the hero in society; he was convinced of the operation of *Dike*. The natural force of divine justice and cosmic order, and this is how Gardiner sees him.

In terms of the chorus, Gardiner finds that, as in the case of the presentation of a new character to the audience, it is Sophocles' intention to establish the character's identity, to provide a reasonable motive for the initial appearance, and to secure a natural place for the new character in the rest of the plot. There is a basic consistency in utterance and Sophocles' choral odes also carry out the same mechanical tasks in communication and temporal progression that the actor's speeches do. The chorus has an identity as a group, «a plurality that speaks with complete unity of thought and feeling, that gives them their most important functions in Sophocles' dramas» (p. 191), and «The specific human character with which the poet has endowed each group has a vital part in conveying the themes of the play» (*ibid.*).

Cynthia Gardiner's *The Sophoclean Chorus* is an important contribution to Sophoclean studies. Its intricate details and general statements reinforce her insistence that we need to focus our attention on the chorus because «their presence, their statements, their actions are necessary to display the full public and political consequences of the principals' behavior. The dramatic character of the Sophoclean chorus has an integral and insuppressible role in Sophoclean tragedy» (p. 192). Sensibly and excellently put.

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