

Review

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remark that Aristarchus reads ἀριστέας instead of γέροντας there. I make a narrow point, but these are examples of the casual use of the texts; that Zenodotus and Aristarchus read something else seriously undermines Ulf's point and reminds us all of the limitations of the significance for Homer and his audience(s) of any of the terms that Ulf would have us learn about. Social institutions cannot be discerned by vocabulary only.

These mostly trivial defects of production and shortcomings of presentation are easily overcome. Ulf's German is not particularly idiosyncratic; his technical terminology is set out early and causes no great difficulties after a few doses of each term; the beginning will be slow going for those accustomed to certain disciplinary jargon, such as Tönnies's useful distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, because Ulf blurs the distinction and sometimes instead uses terms like *Gesamtgemeinschaft* and *Gesamtgesellschaft* with unclear intent (my colleagues in the German department could not help me out on this particular one).

Few private citizens will be able to meet the astronomical price of this book. My advice to most readers of this review is to urge your libraries to purchase it, for the first four chapters may be culled with profit; the last two chapters are of less value, since much of the same territory has been covered by Donlan in his many articles and by Morris (especially his "Use and Abuse of Homer," *CA* 5 [1986] 81–138). Although several of the formidable undertakings (mostly in *Klio*, between 1975 and 1988) of the Soviet historian Jurij Andreev address a number of the same questions about power relations, the ephemerality of leadership in the epics, the historicity of the Homeric society itself, etc., and do so in German, they are not all in one place. It seems to me that Ulf's efforts will be well received by all who work closely with the epics; his recognition of the tensions generated by the existence of individual obligations within larger social institutions is an important one and should be appreciated on both banks of the Rhine.

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SYNNØVE DES BOUVRIE. *Women in Greek Tragedy: An Anthropological Approach*. Oslo, Norwegian University Press, 1990. Pp. 394. Cloth, \$45.00. (Symbolae Osloenses Fasc. Suppl. 27)

This is an ambitious and provocative work, but one that does not completely fulfill the expectations that it raises. Des Bouvrie makes many intelligent points about women, tragedy, and their respective places within fifth-century Athenian culture, but the methods she chooses to manage the questions she asks do not permit her ultimately to come up with exciting answers.

Des Bouvrie's question is the traditional and still largely unanswered one,

“How can we explain the fact that Greek tragedy presents dominant and enterprising female characters, while contemporary historical females in many respects were ‘muted’ and made invisible from public life?” (11). The answer, she argues, involves another issue; to account for women within tragedy, it is necessary first to account for tragedy within Athenian culture. This means that her project is more rigorously demanding than other comparable studies, but also that the bulk of her work is taken up with a discussion of tragedy, so that the women come to seem somewhat of an appendage.

The book begins with a chapter on women at Athens, follows with four chapters on aspects of tragedy and its interpretation, and concludes with discussions of individual plays. This last section occupies more than half the book. The first chapter contains much that those interested in the field will already have mastered, but it is useful to have the material collected. Des Bouvrie concludes that women occupied a paradoxical position produced by their importance to the process of guaranteeing the continuity of the *oikos* and hence of the *polis*, so that they were on the one hand valued and on the other hand segregated and controlled (59).

The long, central discussion on tragedy advertises itself as indebted to anthropological methods. Des Bouvrie is here concerned to combat various prevalent notions of tragedy, such as that it is a site for intellectual debate about morality or social governance, or that it is an exploration of suffering individual consciousness. Her allegiance to anthropological thought leads her to argue that Athenian theater was preeminently the site of the public creation and recreation of cultural values, values which constituted the shared, unspoken assumptions of all members of the culture and which therefore were not transmitted as information from author to audience, nor presented either as topics for debate or as attractive mimesis. In this analysis, tragedy partakes predominantly of the quality of ritual, producing a sense of *communitas* in its audience members that serves to unify them almost without their conscious participation around the fundamental inviolable tenets of their culture. Specifically, tragedy excites in them emotions of horror at the transgression of cultural boundaries, and emotions of peace and satisfaction when those boundaries are reasserted. Des Bouvrie stresses, then, the concept of a shared culture, the ritual quality of tragedy, and the diachronic emotional orchestration of the tragic plot.

This central section is detailed, forcefully written, and liberating in that it promotes an awareness of historical distances and posits the entire culture as cause and effect of the tragic process, rather than relying on the construct of “the author.” But I find des Bouvrie’s assumptions flawed and the resulting analyses of individual plays unsatisfactory. These analyses proceed as follows. First there is a statement of how the woman or women in the tragedy qualifies it for analysis, then an account of how other critics have dealt with it, distinguishing main lines of approach, and finally des Bouvrie’s new account of the play. She believes that the tragedy itself provides the guidelines to correct interpretation by its “points of excitement,” i.e., the basic cultural values around which

the tragedy generates strong emotions. Thus the women of Aeschylus' *Hiketides* are prominent because of the "fundamental value of the marriage institution" (166), which is what is at stake in the play. Generally speaking, women are prominent because the tragedies deal with the issues of preservation of the *oikos*, and also because women provide the resources of emotionalism with which the tragedy generates strong reactions in the audience.

We are thus left in the curious—for feminists—position of arguing that the given text means exactly what it claims to mean. Des Bouvrie's concluding analyses struck me as reductive in the same way as many of the alternatives which she rejects. The problem at the heart of the method is, I think, its privileging of an anthropological model of culture and thus of drama over any other model that might offer itself. For instance, des Bouvrie twice explicitly dismisses an alternative, ideological analysis: "the notion of 'ideology' should be avoided since it conveys overtones of optional, conscious exertion of power, whereas the phenomena I will discuss . . . belong to the inevitable patter[n]ing of social life, and they were partly withdrawn from conscious reflections about alternative solutions" (51); "dramatic presentation is more effective than overt ideology precisely by presenting implicit meaning" (75). The most influential theories of ideology do not draw this false distinction between the exercise of power and the "patterning of social life" and are able to account for the representation of "alternatives" within a given culture's forms. A working notion of ideology would also release des Bouvrie from the dichotomy that she has to posit, when accounting for the affective elements of tragedy, between reason and emotion.

Des Bouvrie's emphasis on the communal experience and re-creation of basic cultural values in the theater (55) also prevents her from asking the crucial question, *cui bono?* Values that value whom and what? Her emphasis on Turnerian *communitas* prevents her from considering that one value may contradict another and that this may be a manifestation of social conflict. No doubt culture always consists in convincing people that what is artificial is in fact natural, but the selection of artificial arrangements always benefits certain segments of the society at the expense of certain others. Des Bouvrie knows this, for she knows that all the "basic cultural values" celebrated in the theater are generated by men (89), and she knows that despite theatrical *communitas*, the seating arrangements in the theater reproduce the social hierarchy (87). But by allowing conflict no place in her model of social reproduction she is forced to claim a curious and ultimately unconvincing univocality for the tragic production.

Des Bouvrie frequently insists (e.g., 132–33) that tragedy is not a forum for debate, as many modern critics contend, because according to her reconstruction tragedy wants to assert cultural values and not their alternatives, and because it works by means of orchestrating emotions and not by encouraging reflection. Yet she does not tackle the question of why Athens should evolve a form founded on the *ἀγών*, the debate and the conflict, if what was needed was an arena in which to rehearse basic cultural values. Again, why evolve a form

that can be seen in many of its aspects to model the law court and the assembly? Why, indeed, not rely on epic and lyric? The precise historical dimension is missing from the discussion, except insofar as des Bouvrie allows that Athens, extraordinarily rich and powerful (79), was especially interested in a discourse of inclusion and exclusion, and thus its dramatic productions privileged the unit of citizenship, the *oikos*.

I do not want to detract from the strengths of this book, which seem to me to lie in its resolute combating of postromantic notions of cultural production. Des Bouvrie opposes all critical constructions which make the "author" entirely responsible for the tragedy, or which stress the transcendent universality of the tragedy without giving weight to its specific context. But in her urge to write about tragedy in terms of culture, she seems to have left out conflict: anthropology has defeated history. There are other points in her work where history would have been helpful. Des Bouvrie is very good at amassing accounts of critical tendencies, especially on the "women" debate, in chapter 6 and at the beginning of individual analyses. But there is rarely an indication that an external history is one of the determinants producing the critical texts. Thus in chapter 6 she divides approaches to tragedy on national lines (it was a very salutary experience for an Anglo-American critic suddenly to find herself the Other!) but omits any historical taxonomy. On the other hand, her work is well guarded against ahistorical conflation of ancient society with contemporary culture (e.g., 104–7).

I have not done justice to the extensive learning of the book (sometimes documented in onerous footnotes) or to its many individual insights. It is marred by a theoretical blind spot, but is valuable nonetheless. Its ambitious project is, however, undermined by inadequate editing; a systematic inattention to syntax, grammar, spelling, and punctuation proved distracting.

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M. L. MORGAN. *Platonic Piety: Philosophy and Ritual in Fourth-Century Athens*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990. Pp. x + 273. Cloth, \$28.50.

Morgan has written a brief and unpersuasive account of the religious role played by Platonic philosophy. He claims that there was a traditional "Delphic Theology" which assumed an unbridgeable chasm between the mortal and the divine (18). At the heart of this "gap" stood the immortality of the gods. Yet during the years 415–399, when Athens found itself in the midst of a "religious crisis" (16–21, 42f.), there occurred a great influx of foreign, ecstatic cults (17–21, 221, n. 4). These cults (Orphic, Dionysian, Pythagorean) were all inter-related forms of a "non-Delphic theology of divine-human union" (29), which sought to provide for personal salvation and immortality through ecstatic rites.