

A. H. SOMMERSTEIN - D. FITZPATRICK - T. TALBOY (ed. and trans.), *Sophocles: Selected Fragmentary Plays*. Volume I: *Hermione, Polyxene, The Diners, Tereus, Troilus, Phaedra*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006, pp. xxxix + 317, ISBN 978-0-85668-765-5.

The surviving works of Sophocles are fewer in number and in some ways less varied than those of Euripides. How unlucky, then, that information about lost plays is also so much less plentiful for Sophocles than for Euripides. True, Sophoclean “fragments” number over a thousand, but very many of these are lexicographical, grammatical, or gnomic, and thus comparatively uninformative about their original context. Plot summaries (“hypotheses”) and papyrus texts are scarce (again as compared with Euripides, and with the important exception of the Oxyrhynchus papyrus containing several hundred lines of the satyr play *Ichneutai*), as are other categories of evidence, such as explicit ancient statements about possibly related versions by other visual and literary artists.

It is not for nothing, then, that Alan Sommerstein asks, in the introduction to the volume under review, Why study (Sophoclean) fragments? Some of his answers are general, for example, “the simple desire to know—to know, in particular, so far as we can, how a skilful and sensitive poet and dramatist interpreted, adapted and presented these famous, much-told and often gruesome tales in a manner, always novel, that would win the approval of a panel of élite judges strongly influenced by the feelings of a large popular audience” (xxvii). (An efficient summary of knowledge gleaned is offered on pp. xxvi—xxvii.) Another reason he gives and interestingly elaborates is that, in an important sense and especially in the case of drama, “*all* study of the past is a study of surviving fragments” (xxiii). Two further reasons have to do with assigning Sophocles his proper

place in the development of tragic art. First, Sommerstein argues that portrayals of Achilles and Neoptolemus in four of the fragmentary plays included here “tell strongly against the view that for Sophocles an exceptional endowment of one or another virtue (courage, wisdom, endurance, familial devotion) could serve as a free pass to commit any indignity or atrocity” (xxv). In other words, they shed important light on how Athenian audiences may be thought to have responded to characters of the “heroic temper” type. (The argument has force even though, uncharacteristically, Sommerstein formulates the view he believes the fragmentary plays render untenable rather unfairly.) Second, there is “the light that many [fragmentary Sophoclean plays] throw upon, or have thrown upon them by, dramas by other authors based on the same stories,” the other author of greatest relevance and interest here being Euripides. Study of the fragments helps to demonstrate that, as Martin Cropp has put it, “Sophocles clearly played a pivotal role in developing the scope and design of tragedy, anticipating at least to some degree what may at first sight look like Euripides’ innovations” (“Lost Tragedies: A Survey,” in J. Gregory (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*, Blackwell 2005, 271-92, at 277).

The selection, then, has something of an argumentative purpose, besides presenting all that is known and as much as can be reasonably inferred or imaginatively reconstructed of six lost plays. The six are *Hermione* (here taken to be the same as *Phthiotides*), *Polyxene*, *Diners* (*Syndeipnoi*, here taken to be the same as *Achaion Syllogos*), and *Troilus* (all edited by Sommerstein); along with *Tereus* (edited by David Fitzpatrick and Sommerstein) and *Phaedra* (edited by Thomas Talboy and Sommerstein). Thus, two Attic and four Trojan plays (roughly speaking: *Diners* and *Troilus* belong properly to the *Cypria*, *Polyxena* to the *Iliou Persis*, and *Hermione* to the *Nostoi*). A projected second volume will contain the two *Tyro* plays, *Niobe*, *Ajax the Locrian*, *Epigonoï*, the two *Nauplius* plays, *Oenomaus*, *Poimenes*, and *Triptolemus*.

The work began, under Sommerstein’s direction, at the Centre for Ancient Drama and its Reception at the University of Nottingham. CADRE has already produced a related volume of conference proceedings: Alan H. Sommerstein (ed.), *Shards*

from *Kolonos: Studies in Sophoclean Fragments*, Bari 2003. Sommerstein writes that the present volume was inspired by and largely modeled on *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays I*, ed. C. Collard - M. J. Cropp - K. H. Lee (Warminster 1995; a second volume, to which the present reviewer contributed, appeared in 2004). For each play, an introduction supplies bibliography, followed by a detailed treatment of the myth and its dramatic treatment. All available testimonia are studied carefully, as are other versions in ancient art and literature. Greek and Latin sources are translated into English, and sections are added as needed on matters such as tragic or satyric status, alternate titles, related plays by Euripides, and Latin versions.

The editors allow themselves plenty of room to present their arguments and reconstructions, and the commentary is also quite full. Indeed, the amount of Greek text studied here is significantly less than in the comparably sized volumes of Euripidean fragments. While each of those volumes deals with nearly a thousand lines, the total for the six plays edited here is around 125. Sommerstein alone contributes 192 pages on his four plays, of which only about 50 lines survive in all. (Incidentally, papyri, with the exception of hypotheses to *Tereus* and Euripides' lost *Hippolytus*, are nearly absent from the present volume, but they will feature prominently in the next (*Tyro*, *Ajax the Locrian*, *Niobe*, and the recently published P. Oxy. 4807, with a bit of *Epigonoï*.) The editors have made good use of these generous proportions. Their writing is clear and engaging, and their results consistently rewarding. In what remains of this review, I will briefly characterize the individual contributions and comment on a few points of detail.

To begin with, Sommerstein is a notably bold and imaginative reconstructor. After intricate argument to establish the main outlines of the plot and the *dramatis personae*, his introductions offer scene-by-scene schemes. This is not as preposterous as may at first appear: in effect, he is subjecting his avowedly speculative reconstructions to the discipline of distribution over a plausible number of episodes of a more or less familiar type. This is quite helpful, even if the feeling often lingers that we do not really know nearly as much as Sommerstein believes we do. Interestingly, no such schemes are offered for *Tereus*

and *Phaedra*, the two plays for which the other contributors produced the initial draft and for which slightly more text, along with slightly more supplementary information, survives. For *Tereus*, the omission is justified at 151 n. 38 with the comment that outlining the plot in detail “has been attempted several times without much success.”

Hermione (*Phthiotides*) may serve as an example of how much Sommerstein gets from how little. From the scholia and Eustathius on *Od.* 4.3–4 we learn that the story has much in common with that of Euripides’ *Andromache*, though with four main differences, from which reconstruction must begin. One of these is that in Sophocles’ play, Neoptolemus was killed while “trying to avenge the slaying of his father by punishing Apollo.” (In Euripides’ *Andromache*, Neoptolemus has had this intention but abandoned it; for this reason among others Sommerstein convincingly judges it the later play.) This motive suggests a “darker side” to Neoptolemus’ character here than in *Philoctetes* and (probably) the lost *Scyrians* and *Eurypylos*. The sole surviving trimeter attributed to *Hermione* allows the inference that the play was set in Phthia. This strengthens the case for identification with *Phthiotides* and yields three additional fragments (the equivalent of four trimeters), and with them two additional *dramatis personae*. By acute (if necessarily speculative) reasoning from these data, Sommerstein designs an action distributed over a prologue, four episodes, and an *exodos* complete with *deus ex machina*.

The sacrifice of Polyxene is attested in cyclic epic and archaic lyric, in vase painting, and in the fifth century in painting (Polygnotus) and Euripidean tragedy (*Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*: Sommerstein again argues for Sophoclean priority). An interesting question here is whether Sophocles’ Achilles was in love with Polyxene; Sommerstein, who believes that he was, shows that good grounds now exist for thinking the motif as old as the archaic period. In general, the task for anyone who would reconstruct this particular play is to interweave the presumed overall shape of the plot and the few known details, which mainly concern Agamemnon, Menelaus, and the ghost of Achilles. As for *Syndeipnoi*, what emerges most clearly is that it was the setting for quarrels—between Achilles and Agamemnon (as attested by

Proclus for the *Cypria*) and then between Achilles and Odysseus (as alluded to at *Od.* 8.74–80). Also, it seems, Nestor quarreled with Ajax early on: perhaps the point was that this dispute, unlike the other, was relatively easy to dispel. At 100–3, Sommerstein judiciously summarizes the long-running debate as to whether the play was tragic or satyric; he now accepts the conclusion of Wilamowitz and Pearson that it was most likely something in between, “pro-satyric” like Euripides’ *Alcestis*. A key step in his argument is interpretation of F 144a (his H), where he insists that φάλανθον means “bald”, not “grey(-haired)”.

Rounding out the selection of Trojan plays is *Troilus*, about which Sommerstein offers the following as the most firmly established points. First, Sophocles presented Troilus as ambushed while exercising his horses and murdered (Schol. T Hom. *Il.* 24.257), not killed in battle as implied in the *Iliad*. Second, a eunuch slave of Troilus had a prominent part. The related third point is that the play apparently had a fairly strong orientalizing tendency. And fourth, Achilles’ dire mutilation (*maschalismos*) of Troilus’ corpse suggests that “ethically ... [Achilles] was by far the most barbarous character concerned in the action of the play” (205). From trag. adesp. 561 (= Strattis, *Troilus* F 42.1 K–A), which he follows Meineke in attributing to Sophocles’ play, Sommerstein deduces a role for Polyxene and another plot element: a child of Zeus seeks Polyxene’s hand in marriage but is dissuaded by someone else. According to Sommerstein, the suitor must be Sarpedon, while the speaker who steers him away from Polyxene is Troilus. If this is already going out on a limb, Sommerstein’s next inference is one of his boldest. Since Sarpedon would in fact have made an eminently suitable husband for Polyxene, a reason must be found for Troilus to have opposed the match: he was in love with his sister himself (207)! Sommerstein envisions that as a result of his determination to keep Polyxene for himself, Troilus insults his sister again in an effort to deflect Achilles’ interest from her; the Greek hero’s outrage then motivates his murder of the Trojan prince and maltreatment of his corpse. All of this is imaginative and colorful but obviously quite speculative.

Tereus and *Phaedra* present somewhat different challenges. As noted, we are partly guided in the case of *Tereus* by a papyrus

hypothesis; we must also consider whether Ovid's version of the story at *Metamorphoses* 6.424-674 yields useful information. Compared with what has been discussed so far, the editors' reconstruction of *Tereus* is rather cautious. This is generally salutary for, as they note (149), the consensus that has developed concerning the placement of many fragments has no very secure basis. The tone and mode of argument are different, but the coverage is still full, and the reader is helped to apply the highest standards of judgment to all the relevant issues. One of these is the chronological relationship of *Tereus* to Euripides' *Medea*. While admitting uncertainty, the editors incline to the view that *Tereus* is the earlier play (158-9). Another concerns Procne's motive for revenge. It has often been assumed that in Sophocles, as in Ovid, she acted primarily out of anger. If it is indeed the hypothesis to Sophocles' play, P. Oxy. 3013 (p. 435-6 Radt, here printed on pp. 160-1) reveals that her motives also included (sexual) jealousy. The editors reasonably call this "perhaps the most important new information about the plot of *Tereus* with which the Hypothesis [first published in 1974] supplies us" (174), but its implications are not entirely clear. Was Procne jealous in the sense that Tereus' betrayal stung her, or was she jealous of and angry at her sister (before learning the truth)? When pondering these possibilities, the editors commit a minor error in writing (154 n. 44), "But for a gap of seven lines or so in the Hypothesis papyrus, we might have known." There is a gap, but of only about seven *letters* (ll. in Radt's abbreviation). The Greek text and *apparatus criticus* on p. 160 correctly reckon with the smaller gap, but since the corresponding English text is not as clear as it could be, some readers could be misled.

In the case of *Phaedra*, one would like to be able to date Sophocles' play in relation to two other plays, namely Euripides' two *Hippolytus* plays. The editors agree confidently for the priority of *Hippolytus (Kata)kalyptomenos (HippK)*, the lost Euripidean play, to *Hippolytus Stephanephoros* or *Stephanias (HippS)*, the surviving one; a little less confidently for the priority of *HippK* to Sophocles' *Phaedra*; and still less confidently for the priority of *Phaedra* to *HippS*. In other words, they reach the same conclusion (the sequence was *HippK—Phaedra—HippS*) as Barrett in his edition of *HippS* (p. 29-30), but for somewhat

different reasons and with due acknowledgment of uncertainty¹. In any case, the reconstruction of *HippK* (255-72), an intricate matter depending on two overlapping and much-discussed new papyrus hypotheses, is skillfully executed and makes a substantial contribution, as does the discussion of Sophocles' *Phaedra* itself (275-89).

The Greek text differs from that of other recent editions in only a few places. Sommerstein offers strong arguments in favor of original conjectures at *Polyxene* F 523.2 (πέτρας for χοάς) and *Diners* 562 (where a part of the scholion to Dionysius Thrax not quoted by Radt makes μετὰ σὲ for μὲν appear irresistible). Following Gleditsch, the editors introduce Doric alpha at *Tereus* 593.1, despite Radt's reference to Björck's argument that it is not necessary. On the other hand, Talboy's restoration of a Doricizing form at *Phaedra* F 693 is attractive, since the meter cannot be iambic. At *Tereus* F 593.3, Friedländer's τυφλὸς for ms. τυφλὸν strikes me as a banalization; E. *Alc.* 783-6 illustrates the general idea but does not aid a decision about the wording, for which some other argument should perhaps have been advanced. The editors might also have mentioned the grounds for suspecting ἔβλεψα at *Tereus* F 583.2, and conjectures in addition to those they print at 583.10 and 581.9. Where they follow Lloyd-Jones in attributing *El.* 1050-4 to *Phaedra*, I suspect that Finglass *ad loc.* is right to object that this gives too much weight to Stobaeus' attribution of 1050-1 (only) to this play. To accommodate all five lines, the editors must argue (276-8) that *Phaedra*'s Nurse first refuses to help her, only to change her mind when *Phaedra* threatens suicide—a sequence of two actions for which there is no other evidence.

¹ In "Euripides' *Hippolytus* Plays: Which Came First?" (*CQ* 47, 1997, 85-97), I drew attention to weaknesses in the case for the priority of *HippK* to *HippS*. The authors of the volume under review are right (269 n. 75) that I overlooked a word in Arist. *Rhet.* 1416a28-35, but for reasons not worth going into here, they have not convinced me that that passage is good evidence that *HippS* won first prize.

These, however, are minor points. In general, the commentary is as full as one could wish, and of high quality. Sommerstein and his team deserve thanks for this work, whose completion is eagerly awaited.

JOHN GIBERT
University of Colorado, Boulder
john.gibert@colorado.edu