

LEXIS

Poetica, retorica e comunicazione nella tradizione classica

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Anna A. Lamari, *Reperforming Greek Tragedy: Theater, Politics, and Cultural Mobility in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC* (Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes 52), Berlin-Boston, Walter de Gruyter, 2017, pp. ix+198; ISBN: 978-3-11-055986-6; € 99,95.

Anna Lamari's book is a welcome addition in the growing scholarly interest in performances and reperformances of drama in the classical period, in and out of Athens. Following K. Bosher's *Theatre outside Athens* (2012), an important number of studies have been published on this subject, including more or less detailed discussions of the topic of reperformances of Greek drama in the classical period, such as V. Vahtikari's *Tragedy Performances Outside Athens in the Late Fifth and the Fourth Centuries BC* (2014), E. Csapo and P. Wilson's (eds.) *Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century* (2014), Lamari's edited volume on *Reperformances of Drama in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC* (2015), R. Hunter and A. Uhlig's (eds.) *Imagining Reperformance in Ancient Culture* (2017), as well as E. Stewart's *Greek Tragedy on the Move* (2017), which focuses on a topic very similar to Lamari's and was published almost simultaneously.

Reperforming Greek Tragedy offers a balanced discussion of reperformances of Greek tragedy during the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Tragic reperformances are examined in the context of the broader cultural, social, historical, and political developments, as well as the phenomenon of 'cultural mobility' that according to Lamari features as a main characteristic of the period. Tragic reperformances are thus discussed as an inseparable part of the organised travelling of plays, poets, actors, as well as visual representations of tragedies. The author demonstrates that reperformances of tragedies and theatrical mobility share a 'symbiotic' relationship: the reperformative boom of the fifth and fourth centuries BC urges poets and actors to travel to specific festivals and theaters, whilst this very mobility makes reperformative practices grow even stronger.

In the first chapter, Lamari examines tragic reperformances in the context of professionally organized theatrical mobility, towards specific festivals and theaters in the Attic demes and in Magna Graecia. The author studies various cases of cultural traveling of both Athenian tragedians who made a career outside Athens (like Carcinus from Thorikos who was considered an Acragantine and the tragedian Empedocles who moved to Syracuse) and of non-Athenian poets who thrived in Athens (like Pratinas, originally coming from Argolid, or Ion of Chios, who came to Athens at an early age and therein enjoyed what appears to have been a successful career). Lamari then goes on to examine the travels, theatrical mobility, and performances of Aeschylus in Sicily, of Sophocles in the Athenian demes, and of Euripides in Macedon. Aeschylus traveled to Sicily at the beginning of his career in order to produce the *Aetnaeae* and possibly a reperformance of the *Persians*. According to Lamari, the *Persians* must be the first known instance of a tragic reperformance after its premiere in Athens in 472 BC. The available testimonia about Sophocles are rather limited, but as Lamari maintains, even a notoriously Athenocentric poet appears to have directed performances or reperformances of his plays in the demes of

Eleusis and Halai Aixonides. The author then reviews ancient evidence regarding the travels of Euripides to Sicily, but also his possible directing of performances or reperformances in the demes of Peiraeus and Anagyrous, as well as in Macedon. Lamari employs the theory of a strong reperformative culture as a possible explanation for the two possible prologues of *Archelaus*, in the sense that two different versions of the play's beginning might have well been in circulation almost simultaneously, within the context of reperformances and cultural mobility. This section is concluded by a fascinating 'reperformative' explanation of the theatrical practice of the *embolima*: these choral 'throw-ins' that were first used by the late fifth-century poet Agathon showcase how «intimately linked reperforming and traveling are to fifth- and fourth- century theatrical culture» (p. 58).

The second chapter focuses on the political dynamics of ancient reperformances in different cultural contexts. The author examines two milestones in the history of dramatic reperformances, the death of Aeschylus in 456 BC, and the institutionalisation of reperformances of 'old' tragedies at the Dionysia of 386 BC. By treating evidence regarding the beginning of reperformances in the fifth century, Lamari investigates the political repercussions that a consistent reperformative theatrical practice would have in the highly politicized era of mid-fifth century BC. In this context, the author discusses the political gravity of the choregiae, using it, *mutatis mutandis*, as an argument towards the political dimensions that reperformances would have acquired. Indeed, Lamari makes a strong case for a possible connection between the formalisation of reperformances after the death of Aeschylus and the cultural politics put forth by Pericles. At the last part of this chapter, the author embarks on a presentation of evidence regarding the political dynamics involved in reperformances of tragedy in Macedon and Sicily. By examining evidence regarding the theatrical festivals organized by Philip, as well as Philip's political use of actors such as Neoptolemus, Lamari sheds light on the relation of dramatic reperformances with political motivation and cultural mobility, also acknowledging the political significance that a performance or reperformance could acquire. Drawing on testimonia pertaining to the cultural politics of Hieron I of Syracuse, the author reaches similar conclusions and highlights the various ways dramatic reperformances acquired political characteristics in Macedonian or Sicilian courts.

Chapter 3 builds on the discussion regarding the culture of travel and reperformance that was initiated in the first chapter, expanding its focus on the relationship between the reperformances of tragedy and the mobility of traveling actors. The author first addresses the professional characteristics of the actors' mobility: demes organized festivals with prizes and benefits to attract actors and actors travelled in these venues, augmenting their popularity, but also enhancing the spread of Greek theater. Lamari convincingly argues that acting becomes a prestigious profession as drama grows, while the professional mobility of actors provides generous boosts to drama's dissemination. Furthermore, by examining a number of vases, including the well-known Pronomos vase, the author explores how the rise of the acting profession is reflected in vase-painting. Although acknowledging its enigmatic use, Lamari maintains that the Pronomos vase marks a transformation of Athenian theatrical contexts, a development that is to be connected with the practice of reperformances. The chapter comes to an end by an examination of yet another important aspect of the growth of the acting profession, i.e. its impact on the authenticity of texts. Lamari persuasively argues that reperformances and the growth of the acting profession might have indeed reinforced the 'rivalry' between poets and actors, but it also 'empowered' the texts. By discussing the long procedure of the possible textual status of a play from the moment it was written to the moment it was used for a performance, as well as by surveying a long list of ancient evidence, the author concludes that although reperformances often put the authenticity of a

text to the text, ancient scholars are often more responsible for textual alterations than the actors themselves.

In the last chapter, Lamari further explores the relationship between vase-painting and tragic performance, by discussing how cultural mobility and the reperformative tradition encourage visual exchange between different media, enhancing the interest in tragedy-related scenes. After a theoretical part offering a thorough presentation of the 'philodramatic' and 'iconocentric' approaches on the relationship between myth and its visual representations, the author closely examines more than a dozen vases, connecting them to performance through the concept of 'visual allusion', which, so the author maintains, could link vases with images stored in the visual repertoire of the audience. The examples used are grouped according to whether they reflect the export of tragic images from Athens to the West, or vice-versa. According to Lamari's theory, reperformances and cultural mobility increased the popularity and spread of tragic images that could be reproduced in different media, either on stage (by means of a performance), or in a vase-painting. By focusing on the vase-painters' identity as viewers, Lamari makes a convincing case for the fact that painters reproduced on vases their own visual experience, which was either shaped by circulating vases or by reperformances in Athens or in Magna Graecia. She concludes by pointing out that cultural mobility also facilitated the visual literacy of those who bought 'tragic' vases, «attributing popularity to sophisticated artifacts, as well as visual sophistication to fifth- and fourth-century vase-viewers» (p. 158).

All in all, the book is to my knowledge the first to be completely dedicated to a thorough presentation of the reperformance of Greek drama in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Building on the growing scholarly interest in dramatic reperformance, Lamari successfully undertakes the demanding endeavour of collecting all available evidence and developing a theory on the reciprocal relationship of reperformances with other fifth- and fourth-century advancements, such as the spread of drama, the rise of the actors, and the cultural export of images of performances as tragic snapshots. This book has the merits of providing a global account of the growth of tragic reperformances and is doing so through a balanced application of criteria and a sound methodology. Tragic reperformances in the fifth and fourth centuries are thus studied as a fundamental element of classical theatrical practice in a context of cultural mobility and exchange. It marks a step forward to seeing the spread of tragedy as directly connected to reperformances from as early as the fifth century BC. This is a well-argued, thoroughly researched, and admirably balanced book. The editorial production is generally good, although a few typographical errors and bibliographical inconsistencies are sometimes distracting. Lamari reveals a good command of the relevant bibliography, with the exception of E. Stewart's *Greek Tragedy on the Move*, which (it seems) she could not have consulted since it was published the same year.

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