



gay or bisexual as opposed to heterosexual’, then hear that roles in penetration mattered more to Greeks than the gender of participants in a sexual encounter, and then things are rounded off with the statement that ‘[i]n any case, the relationship was not necessarily sexual’ (p. 13). I think the logic of this passage would be hard to follow without knowing some of relevant scholarly debates.

That being said, it should be noted that the book provides a good introduction to a number of historical, stylistic and philosophical matters, including the history of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries, and Plato’s place in it; Plato’s trip to Syracuse; stylometry; and major doctrines across the dialogues. W. makes a number of fascinating connections in this context: as a quick and tantalising example, he suggests we might see a link between the *chorēgia* Plato was required to perform and the philosopher’s views in the *Laws* on the ‘educational importance of dance and the correct way to go about it’ (p. 27). And, naturally, Plato’s trips to Syracuse provide material for reflection on the relationship between the man’s philosophy and practical politics. Because of its broad coverage, the book would be extremely useful as a companion to an undergraduate class.

Importantly, the book also captures the spirit of Plato’s philosophy: it does not become, to paraphrase the philosopher, mired in the mud of everyday banalities, but brings out how Plato’s lived experience infused his philosophical work, and vice versa. For new and old readers of Plato alike, it offers a rich picture of the man, and the promise of casting new light on our experience of his philosophical masterpieces.

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ARISTOTLE AND THEATRE

NAVAUD (G.) *Voir le théâtre. Théories aristotéliennes et pratiques du spectacle*. (L’Esprit des Signes 12.) Pp. 336. Milan: Éditions Mimésis, 2022. Paper, €22. ISBN: 978-88-6976-323-6.
 doi:10.1017/S0009840X2300238X

In this volume N. seeks to do for *opsis* what T. Cave did for *anagnorisis* (*Recognitions* [1988]), M. Lurje for *hamartia* (‘Das höllische Weben: Die “alten” und “neuen” Deutungen der Hamartia und die Handlungstheorie des Aristoteles’, in: *Die Suche nach der Schuld* [2004]) and T. Chevolet for *catharsis* (‘“Che cosa è questo purgare?”: La catharsis tragique d’Aristote chez les poéticiens italiens de la Renaissance’, *Études Epistémè* 13 [2008]). This monograph matches these scholars’ work in erudition and articulates the history of the concept of *opsis* in philology, philosophy and literature studies with its reception on stage. The rich study is also very timely. It contributes to the recent focus on senses in Classics by adding to the research that has been conducted on emotions (D. Cairns and D. Nelis [edd.], *Emotions in the Classical World* [2017]), on sight and blindness (M. Ward, *Blindness and Spectatorship in Ancient and Modern Theatres* [2023]) and on sound (S.A. Gurd, *Dissonance* [2016]). N.’s research highlights the complex and paradoxical relationship of *opsis* to Western theatre and thus is related to contemporary debates about the nature of theatre and the boundaries of drama as a discipline.

The volume positions itself in reception studies by choosing a starting point in the recent past, which also indicates the relevance of this study to contemporary performance practices. It begins with a new *querelle des anciens et des modernes* that occurred at the Avignon Festival in 2005, and which is also the starting point of F. Dupont's book: *Aristote ou le vampire du théâtre occidental* (2007). The debate arose from spectators, theatre-makers and theatre-scholars' reactions to the Festival programming, which included many performances that were not text-based or text-centred. Theatre director O. Py, who argued in defence of speech in performance, was then made into the representative of the 'ancients' against a new generation of artists developing performances aligned with the idea of the postdramatic (H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* [2006]) and defended by G. Banu and B. Tackels (*Le cas Avignon* [2005]) in the 2005 debate. N. demonstrates that this opposition between a 'theatre of text' and a 'theatre of images' at a major Festival in Europe not only mirrors debates about theatre as an academic discipline (drama as well as theatre and performance departments now belonging more often to creative arts than to literature schools), but is also rooted in a long intellectual and scholarly history.

The first part of the book demonstrates that Aristotle did not expurgate *opsis* from theatre, but rather that the concept has been constructed by both neo-Aristotelians and anti-Aristotelians who 'ne divergent que sur leur appréciation d'une telle expurgation, puisque les uns l'estiment pertinente, tandis que les autres la jugent (à bon droit sans doute) délirante' (p. 147). In fact, both anti-Aristotelians, who believe that Aristotle rejects *opsis* and who focus on the performative aspects of theatre – such as F. Dupont (*Aristote ou le vampire du théâtre occidental* [2007]) and O. Taplin (*The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* [1977]) in Classics and H.-T. Lehman (*Postdramatic Theatre* [2006]) in theatre studies –, as well as neo-Aristotelians, who privilege the word in theatre-making are led by a misreading of Chapter 6 of the *Poetics*, as N. demonstrates.

The volume engages with a detailed analysis of the concept of *opsis* in the *Poetics* and its commentaries and persuasively argues that, even if *opsis* is not the centre of the poet's art, Aristotle does not privilege the reading of tragedy over its performance. 'Aristote ne saurait ici procéder à une évacuation de l'*opsis*: bien au contraire, il reconnaît sa fonction primordiale dans l'appréhension de ce qu'est le drame, en tant à la fois qu'objet phénoménal et qu'objet d'une définition philosophique' (p. 48).

N. then justifies the opposition between his interpretation of Chapter 6 and the anti-Aristotelian one by exploring the history of the manuscripts and their reception that he describes as a series of misunderstandings. We learn that V. Maggi (*In Aristotelis librum de Poetica communes Explanationes* [1550]) is the inventor of the Aristotle that would then be rejected by Nietzsche and Dupont and remain authoritative until the 1970s. In the context of the reformation Maggi was led to dematerialise tragedy, which fed intellectualist approaches willing to expurgate sensuous experience from art. Christian and Neoplatonist readings of the *Poetics* reduced tragedy to a poem and were then turned into aesthetical principles by French Classicism and German Idealism. These principles would later be questioned by new dramaturgical approaches (A. Artaud, *Le théâtre et son double* [1938]). Maggi's misreading of Chapter 6 therefore feeds the debate for both anti-Aristotelians and neo-Aristotelians into the twentieth century. It not only fuels discussions about the nature and boundaries of theatre-making, but also turns the *Poetics* into a proto-narratologist treatise – particularly in G. Genette's work ('Quarante ans de Poétique', *LhT* 10 [2012]).

The originality of N.'s approach sits in his constant consideration of theatre practices now and then. He situates the reception of Aristotle's *Poetics* within the history of drama and of the performance of ancient theatre, particularly within Italian, German, French and English traditions. Because it uses the history of *opsis* to reflect on the history

of performance – see, for example, N.’s analysis of the argument opposing E.G. Craig (*On the Art of the Theatre* [1911]) and F.L. Lucas (*Tragedy* [1927]) –, the volume can be illuminating for theatre and performance scholars as well as for contemporary theatre-makers.

After acknowledging the fact that the most convincing way to look at the *Poetics* is to consider it as a philosophical text (with F. Robortello, *In librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationes* [1548], V. Goldschmidt, *Temps physique et temps tragique chez Aristote* [1982] and D. Guastini, *Aristotele: Poetica* [2010]), in the second part of the monograph, N. challenges Aristotle’s theory by taking *Oedipus Tyrannus*, whose *exodos* relies on *opsis*, as a case study. Relying on a close dramaturgical analysis of this *exodos*, N. argues that ‘teratophany’, as an effect embedded in the *muthos* itself, is part of the structure of tragedy: ‘l’interprétation aristotélicienne d’*Œdipe Roi* comme mécanique rationnelle ne rend donc pas compte de l’ensemble des effets produits par la pièce de Sophocle à la représentation – et même à la simple lecture’ (p. 239). N. then demonstrates how *Oedipus Tyrannus* has nonetheless become the epitome of the Aristotelian theory and of the tragedy of fate (with Seneca’s version as a very important intertext), offering close readings of early modern versions of Sophocles’ play – notably by G. Dell’Anguillara (*Edippo* [1565]) and A. Dacier (*L’Œdipe et l’Électre de Sophocle* [1692]) and of the adaptations by P. Corneille (1659) and Voltaire (1719). However, the play by J. Dryden and N. Lee (1678) and a couple of performances in Colleges in France in the seventeenth century, as counterexamples, were particularly spectacular and relied on *opsis*. As N. indicates, *Oedipus Tyrannus* was also used as an argument to loosen the limitations of French classicism, but the monstrosity of the *exodos* only fully made its way back to national stages in the twentieth century. The argument of the second part of the volume is driven by adaptation and performance histories, and N. manages brilliantly to show how practice and theory are interconnected.

Voir le théâtre is a deeply scholarly monograph, using classical reception to investigate the history of the misreadings of Aristotle’s concept of *opsis* and their consequences for theatre practices. This study is relevant to Classics as well as theatre and performance studies. The book is, however, focused on a Western approach to theatre, and there could have been room for further comment on non-European traditions that have been and still are used as references by Western scholars and theatre-makers (E.G. Craig, *On the Art of the Theatre* [1911]; A. Artaud, *Le théâtre et son double* [1938]; R. Schechner, *Performance Theory* [1988]) to resolve or do away with the debate opposing *muthos* and *opsis*. However, N. ends the monograph dismissing this opposition and stating that drama is precisely the art of articulating images and speech and that is why the *exodos* of *Oedipus Tyrannus* is, according to him, more relevant than the *Poetics* for thinking about the theory and practice of theatre and performance.

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