

K. Bosher, ed., *Theater Outside Athens. Drama in Greek Sicily and South Italy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xvii + 473; ISBN: 978-0521761789.

*It was with deep sadness that I learned of Kathryn Bosher's recent death. I submit this review as a tribute to a gifted scholar and offer my condolences to her family and friends.

Theater Outside Athens attempts to understand how theater was produced in Sicily and South Italy and what its relationship with Athenian theater was. It outlines a complex relationship between Sicilian and Athenian theater but also touches on issues such as colonization and the dynamics between the Sicilian tyrannies and Athenian democracy. The result of such breadth is a deeply engaging volume that will certainly inspire a continuing dialogue on the important contributions of the Sicilian poets and practitioners. The volume itself is well-organized, and for the most part the chapters complement each other nicely. One might always lament the lack of dialogue between chapters in such a volume, but the broad scope and overall quality of the chapters make it seem like a trivial point in this case.

Bosher's introduction presents many of the difficulties inherent in this topic, including vastly divergent views and a lack of clear evidence in many fields, and leaves the reader feeling primed for the following chapters. Even one not already immersed in Sicilian history and culture is left with a sense of the problems and a curiosity about how the chapters might address them. The volume is then divided into three parts. Part I ("Tyrants, texts, and theater in early Sicily") begins with Jonathan M. Hall's chapter on the limits of colonization. In a challenge to a common and easy way of thinking about the early settlements of Sicily, Hall questions whether it is appropriate to assume what he calls the 'colonialist paradigm' (21), and whether such colonialist assumptions are more of a reflection of fifth-century practices.

Several authors argue that there was a thriving performance tradition in Sicily that developed independently from Athens, rather than one that imitated or reproduced Athenian practice, thereby challenging the assumption of an exclusively Athenian origin for theater and performance. Kathryn A. Morgan suggests that the archaic period saw a great deal of travelling poets, even in Sicily, who competed locally and abroad. She posits that this (as well as the local theatrical tradition) fostered a strong performance culture in Sicily in the early fifth century that was both independent of Athens and engaged with Athens' performance culture. Andreas Willi presents a persuasive new interpretation of Epicharmus' *Odysseus automolos* and suggests that Odysseus' desertion to Troy is real and not pretend, as is commonly believed. This is significant and alluring because it suggests that Epicharmus was taking a traditional tale and making it his own. Similarly, Lucía Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén argues that Epicharmus was working within the epic, Dorian, and Sicilian traditions. This chapter, however, nicely encapsulates some of the problems inherent with investigations into Epicharmus and other very fragmentary Sicilian poets. The reader is told that Epicharmus bears some similarity to Pindar (and other poets) but that it is uncertain whether he was imitating or

parodying Pindar, and that tragedy *may* have had some influence on Epicharmus' use of metre. Chris Dearden's later chapter, in which he tentatively suggests (due to a lack of solid evidence) that comedy in Sicily was a mix of Athenian and local traditions, is another fine example of this. The scarcity of evidence that makes secure conclusions almost impossible makes for many interesting hypotheses but, on the literary side at least, tells us very little.

Kathryn Boshier presents evidence for the possibility of Aeschylus' *Persians* having been performed originally in Syracuse. Boshier departs from the *Life of Aeschylus*' claim that Aeschylus was asked to reproduce *Persians* in Syracuse and examines the play and the architecture of the theater at Syracuse for evidence that may point to an original performance in Syracuse. Most tantalizing is her discussion of the possible 'Charonian steps' under the orchestra of the theater in Syracuse. This would explain the staging of the notoriously difficult Darius ghost scene, and makes Syracuse an appealing, though speculative, location for the first staging.

David Smith's proposition that Euripides' *Ion*, and the character of Xuthus in particular, is a response to the traditions established in Sicily by Stesichorus and Aeschylus suggests a keener awareness in Athens of what was happening in Sicily and a deliberate engagement with it. For a play that seems so strikingly Athenian, I am not convinced that Euripides was looking as far as Sicily, but appreciate Smith's point that we should be aware of the possibilities of a Sicilian influence.

Anne Duncan presents a fascinating portrait of Dionysius I of Syracuse and how the 'terrible tragedian' (137) and paranoid monarch innovated tragedy by borrowing plots and language from comedy. That he was soundly mocked for this in antiquity does not diminish the impact he may have had on the genre and once again establishes Sicily as a significant presence in the development of tragedy. Nicely connected to this, S. Sara Monoson argues that the Syracusan setting of Plato's *Republic* and the association of the tyrant with Dionysius I is important for Plato's placement of the theater in his discussion of the connections between tyranny and democracy. It seemed unnecessary, however, to have a summary of Dionysius' involvement in the theater immediately following Duncan's thorough discussion.

Part II ("Stone theaters, wooden stages, and Western performance traditions") begins with Clemente Marconi's discussion of the uses and dates of stone theaters in Sicily along with an excellent and extensive appendix of ancient sources and modern literature on those theaters, organized by site. This is followed by Stefano Vassallo's presentation of a detailed, though preliminary, case-study of one theater, at Montagna dei Cavalli-Hippiana, and the work involved in uncovering it. This, combined with Marconi's work, suggests the ongoing presence of theatrical space in Sicily from the fifth century through to the Hellenistic period and beyond, as well as the importance they held within the community as assembly places, and not just performance space.

Oliver Taplin highlights the many practical aspects of travelling with a play, and considers the likelihood of travelling players including a chorus (low), as well as the

equipment necessary for such players. This tells us little about Sicily in particular, but is a reminder of the organization required in putting on plays anywhere outside of Athens.

Luigi Todisco, through Thomas Simpson's translation, questions the probability of Italians fully understanding the imagery of the vases they were purchasing, and J.R. Green discusses the tantalizing and more directly relevant question of whether the South Italian vases depict performances or not. To me, this latter approach is a more fruitful investigation when trying to determine the place of theater in Southern Italy because it considers whether the theatrical scenes would have been interesting enough and recognizable enough to appeal to a purchaser. Overall, however, Green's discussion is more focused on the different features of different painters and could have done more to address the question of what the images tell us about performance culture in Sicily.

Bonnie MacLachlan examines the notion that chthonic rituals were naturally parodic, and that parodic performances created a venue for comic theater. This chapter shows the potentially wide reach of theatrical performance in Sicily, extending even into the world of ritual. That is, theater was not just an import from the mainland, but was an integral part of Sicilian Greeks' lives.

The volume concludes with two chapters in Part III ("Hellenistic reflections") that discuss how performance continued to influence Sicilian-born poets working in dramatic and non-dramatic genres. David Kutzko takes us back to Sophron and tries to reconstruct Sophron's influence through the *Mimiambi* of Herodas. As with the earlier discussion of Sophron and Epicharmus, due to the extreme lack of evidence we are left with very enticing speculation rather than conclusions. Benjamin Acosta-Hughes examines the language of performance in Theocritus and argues strongly and convincingly for an element of performance in the poet's work, demonstrating that as far as the Hellenistic period, performance remained a part of Sicilian culture.

It is somewhat frustrating that, aside from the excavation of theaters, there is so little that can be said with any certainty. But this is not to suggest a flaw in the volume or in any one of the chapters. Rather, the volume presents an opening foray into an area that is in need of a great deal more consideration and discussion. This volume opens the door to such discussion and can be the starting point for many projects.

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