existence or otherwise of a stage building, the height of the stage above the orchestra, the presence of a raised area in the orchestra indicated in a number of passages of the play, and the position of any permanent altar in the theatre.

Following the translation, which reads well apart from a few oddities of vocabulary and phrasing, comes the commentary. As S. says, this is heavily philological, but there is much that is of use, even if most is a recycling of earlier (at times very much earlier) material—in total about thirty new conjectures are advanced and discussed. My own feeling is that in assembling his material the author might have shown a greater discrimination for what is of significance. At times, for instance, he seems simply to be advancing the accepted position; at others the point discussed is so minor as to be hardly worth the mention. So, for instance, at 88 do we read παντᾷ (Murray, Page et al.) or πάνται (Wilamowitz, Friis Johansen-Whittle, West)? Do we prefer πεντηκοντόπαις or πεντηκοντάπαις at 321? Would the original audience have noticed or cared? Do we? Similarly, is there much to be gained from a discussion of whether repeated refrains such as 117–22 = 128–33 should be termed ephymnia or not? Yet for all this there are valuable specific and general observations to be found here, not least a reiteration of the point made variously in the past: that distinguishing what at times seems Aeschylus' penchant for obscurity of wording from textual corruption demands fine judgement and not a little intuition. Similarly S.'s cautionary excursus on the transposition of lines, something of an obsession with some editors, is wholly to be welcomed (cf. the discussion of 290–323).

Space prevents a detailed discussion of much in S.'s work. As he says, it is a beginning, but for anyone working on the text of the play it makes a worthy contribution to further discussion, and for that reason alone is to be welcomed.

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doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni012

AJAX

J. Hesk: *Sophocles:* Ajax. (Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy.) Pp. 208. London: Duckworth, 2003. Paper, £10.99. ISBN: 0-7156-3047-4.

The series to which this volume belongs aims to provide 'accessible introductions to ancient tragedies'. Readers of H.'s introduction to the *Ajax* therefore have a right to expect a reliable and comprehensive summary and discussion of significant recent scholarship on the play, and a responsible and clearly expressed original reading of the play itself to enable them to see the debate being furthered. In this, they will not be disappointed.

H.'s organization of his material is exemplary. He starts with an excellent contextualization of the play in terms of Athenian history and its own staging, drawing particular attention to the pre-play ceremony of the orphans of the state's fallen parading in the hoplite armour the city had awarded them in thanks for their fathers' sacrifice. Equally well contextualized is the tradition surrounding Ajax from hero-cult to Homer to Pindar, in which the idea of intertextual listening and reading is

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https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni013 Published online by Cambridge University Press

introduced to a readership which might not be familiar with the way the ancients creatively cited and recast their forebears.

H. then proceeds to a scene-by-scene discussion of the play. In his discussion of the scene with Odysseus and Athene down to the end of the *parodos*, he highlights the themes of pity and *sôphrosunê*, which Odysseus displays in his intellectual ability to distance himself, and the theme of the Salaminian marines' dependence on their great master. In the scenes with Ajax, Tecmessa, and Eurysaces he examines the conflicting meanings of *eugeneia* and *charis* towards one's *philoi*, giving a clear demonstration of how we can place the tone of Tecmessa's words only if we take account of their intertextual dependence on the Andromache–Hector scene in *Iliad* 6. He then tests Ajax's deception speech and suicide against recent theories like Richard Seaford's view (in *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* [Oxford, 1994]) that the ambiguities of the speech can be explained in terms of the dual nature of the Athenian Ajax-cult, in which Ajax appears as both a protector and a force to be appeased, but ultimately sees the ambiguity as informed by Ajax's ability to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of friendship and enmity conceived in absolute terms. The scenes with Teucer and Menelaus and Agamemnon and with Odysseus and Agamemnon are studied in the light of the play's continuing exploration of what true *eugeneia* is, Teucer's status as a bastard with barbarian strains being pitted against Menelaus' high birth and (Spartan?) authoritarianism, Odysseus' flexibility highlighting Ajax's shortcomings as a hero.

Having surveyed the whole play *in praxi*, H. can finally grasp the nettle of theoretical questions, especially whether Ajax can be classified as a 'Sophoclean hero'; he finds that the ambiguity of Ajax's mental state and autonomy makes it hard to fit Ajax into Knox's familiar template. And he can use the evidence of his prior discussion to argue persuasively (against much current modern thinking) that Ajax is indeed a *hubristês* in his self-assertion against Athena. A succinct history of the Ajax theme in Western literature and art provides a thoughtful chaser to the volume's rich fare.

I have done scant justice here to H.'s argumentation. I can perhaps make amends by commenting on his style as a critic introducing an intelligent laiety to Sophocles' fascinating play. His exposition is throughout commendably jargon-free, clear, and lively. He does not avoid the linguistic evidence just because his intended audience will not know Greek; in fact, he is very successful in conveying the issues behind the language of, for instance, Tecmessa's speech at 504–13, with its significant use of words (all transliterated) like *aidesai* and *klêruchos*, or the language underlying the reminiscences of Homer. Moreover, as I have already remarked, his engagement with modern recent criticism of the play is admirably comprehensive. He treats all variant positions fairly and with respect, and is receptive to what positive good can be found in each approach. The scholarly dissent over the deception speech, for example, in fact feeds into his view of Ajax there as displaying a striking intellectual ability to weigh up the pros and cons of friendship and hostility, and of his planned course of action. This handsome inclusiveness is therefore not merely of educational merit, but allows H. to be all the more richly creative in his own readings. In short, this introduction to the *Ajax* is a very fine example of its kind indeed.

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doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni013

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni013 Published online by Cambridge University Press