individual tragedies. He allows himself nine thought-provoking pages to present Aeschylus' *Septem*.

Sometimes a non-specialist would welcome some information about ancient geography: not every student would be able to locate e.g. Trachis, Psophis, Tenedos, or Eleutherai (see respectively pp. 113, 141, 149, 163). The *Medea* of Euripides is given an extraordinarily brief treatment: only three pages (pp. 147–9), as much as the fragmentary *Antiope* (pp. 162–4). This is, however, an isolated example. On p. 228 A. follows Diano and von Arnim in attributing a fragment reported by John Lydus to the *Hypsipyle* of Euripides. This must come from the *Second Phrixos*: see V. Di Benedetto, *Maia* 17 (1965), 388–90.

The extensive final bibliography is divided by topic, and offers intelligent guidance in a difficult field.

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TO DO WITH DIONYSUS

C. SOURVINOU-INWOOD: *Tragedy and Athenian Religion*. Pp. xviii + 547. Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003. Paper, £20.95. ISBN: 0-7391-0400-4 (0-7391-0399-7 hbk).

Much recent discussion of Greek tragedy has focused on its relationship with the *polis*. In a very substantial new book based on her Jackson Lectures at Harvard in 1994, Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood seeks to redress the balance: in her view tragedy was, both in its early development and in its fifth-century heyday, principally a *religious* phenomenon. Her argument is complex and demanding. It has two parts. One part considers how proto-tragedy might have evolved into the form in which we know it. The other part sets out how, according to S.-I., we should interpret the religious dimension of the surviving plays.

The reconstruction of proto-tragedy is extended, painstaking and necessarily speculative. For S.-I., the Great Dionysia began in the later sixth century

> as a festival focussing on a ritual *xenismos* of Dionysos . . . In the earliest form of the festival the *xenismos* of Dionysos took place at the prytaneion; it involved the sacrifice of a *tragos* accompanied by the singing of hymns, of a processional dithyramb as a *prosodion* and other dithyrambs at the altar. After the *xenismos* the procession escorted the statue from the prytaneion to the sanctuary of Dionysos Eleuthereus. (p. 197)

In their choral re-enactment of the original *xenismos* the singers had, S.-I. suggests, a double temporal identity: they were Athenian citizens of the present, looking back upon the mythological past, but they were also invested with the persona of those original Athenians who had first rejected Dionysos and then welcomed him as a divinity. For S.-I., tragedy at its origin was emphatically something to do with Dionysos.

From the dithyrambs sung at the *tragos*-sacrifice there emerged, according to S.-I.'s reconstruction, a form of proto-tragedy involving a *hypokrites* and an unmasked chorus; this in turn developed into mimetic, masked drama, and eventually into the tragedy we know. Coupled with this process was a modification in the stance of the chorus: from being 'a segment of the Athenian community representing the whole

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polis' (p. 266) it became a group representing a *past* community. (The disagreement with those scholars who stress the chorus's intrinsic social marginality is explicit.) These were clearly major developments, which brought with them a movement away from a concentration on Athens' own past and on the god Dionysos towards a greater geographical and religious scope—not to mention changes of physical location, first to a site in the Agora near the Altar of the Twelve Gods and ultimately to the theatre in the sanctuary of Dionysos Eleuthereus. And yet throughout this evolution what was retained was a central concern with religious exploration, something which S.-I. sees as already implicit in those original dithyrambic evocations of Dionysiac resistance-myths which her reconstruction takes as its point of departure. This central concern can be summarized as, in S.-I.'s phrase, a 'ritual matrix', consisting of the setting out and exploration of religious problems in a medium marked by density of religious language and religious forms.

S.-I.'s speculations about proto-tragedy are underpinned by a deeply impressive knowledge of the *Realien* of Greek religion and the texts of Greek tragedy. Nevertheless—and in spite of the vehemence of her rhetoric—what she is offering can be regarded as no more than an εἰκὼς λόγος about proto-tragedy. (I venture to say this notwithstanding the shrewd attack which she makes at p. 125 n. 26, on 'the cast of mind that implicitly assumes that to doubt the validity of evidence on flimsy and/or a priori grounds is more rigorous than to accept it'.) The real value of S.-I.'s λόγος lies in its rôle as a pointer. By placing humankind's examination of its relationship with the gods so firmly at the centre of tragedy's development, she drives home the truth that, for a proper understanding of the extant plays, we need to comprehend just what kind of religious exploration is going on in those plays.

In this regard, S.-I. enters, as she was bound to, the fundamental debate about whether tragic questioning is 'subversive'. A minor reason for rejecting the claim that tragedy *challenges polis* discourse is (p. 2) that *polis* discourse is much more complex than is often assumed. But there is a major reason also, a reason which goes to the heart of Greek religion. That religion, in S.-I.'s view, is inseparable from a perception of 'the ultimate unknowability of the divine world' (p. 153; cf. also pp. 47, 49). In exploring such a perception, tragedy is not 'subverting', but simply *facing up to and acknowledging* the bleakness and unfathomability of the cosmos (p. 177). Thus, the portrayal of Aphrodite in *Hippolytos* does not amount to a criticism of *polis* religion, but simply to a recognition that gods have a capacity to harm as well as help, which makes the world a cruel place (p. 331). S.-I. is throughout sceptical of the influential modern view which stresses the importance of ironical undercutting in tragedy. For her, such a view is 'culturally determined' (e.g. p. 448 n. 387 and *passim*)—as opposed to her own attempt to reconstruct the 'perceptual filters' (again *passim*) through which ancient audiences gained access to tragedy.

The second part of the book examines the portrayal of religion in particular Greek tragedies, with (on the whole) the exception of Sophocles, about whom S.-I. has already written extensively. A key theme is the way in which tragic dramatists 'zoom' the world of the play to that of the audience (e.g. p. 379); by stressing this, S.-I. seeks to enforce the view, against e.g. Mikalson, that fifth-century audiences perceived tragic divinities as representations of the 'real' divinities of cult. For S.-I. this distinguishes tragic gods from comic gods: in comedy, she argues, the gods *are* mocked, but these comic gods are 'constructs', unlike the gods depicted in tragedy, which bear a much closer relationship to lived religion. In a brief review it is impossible to do justice to the detail of S.-I.'s discussion of specific tragedies. Notably, she examines the varying 'distance from the audience' at which the tragic action of different plays is located—far

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enough so that the explorations were not felt to be symbolically threatening to the audience, yet close enough to allow them to be felt to be relevant (p. 46; I attempted to examine a similar point in 'Time, Space and Ideology: Tragic Myths and the Athenian Polis', in J. A. López Férez [ed.], *Mitos en la literatura griega arcaica y clásica* [Madrid, 2002], pp. 175–89).

Numerous insightful observations are made by S.-I., both about Greek religion and about specific plays. But one defect mars the overall impact of this intelligent book. This defect is stylistic. In countless passages of this work of 547 pages, the writing is either awkward or redundant or both. This example from p. 92 is taken more or less at random:

> The Altar of the Twelve Gods is in the immediate proximity of the area in which the performances would have taken place. More significantly, in front of the Altar of the Twelve Gods, in the immediate proximity of the area in which the performances would have taken place, between the Altar of the Twelve Gods and the performance area, at the time when the dramatic performances would have been taking place in the Agora . . .

Editors need authors, but authors need editors just as much. S.-I.'s typescript desperately cried out for the services of an editor prepared to be cruel in order to be kind. Judiciously shortened and appropriately rephrased, the work would have had far more punch and bite. As it is, it will test the patience of all but the most dedicated of students; even one or two of their teachers may skip a page or two here and there. This would be a real pity, because S.-I.'s analysis is rich in insights important for the understanding of Greek religion as well as Greek tragedy.

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THE IMAGE OF ATHENS

J. GRETHLEIN: *Asyl und Athen. Die Konstruktion kollektiver Identität in der griechischen Tragödie.* (Drama: Beiträge zum antiken Drama und seiner Rezeption 21.) Pp. iv + 492. Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2003. Paper, €39.90. ISBN: 3-476-45309-9.

Grethlein's book, which is based on his dissertation, is a remarkable achievement. The author's command of scholarship, particularly in English and German, is both broad and deep, and includes comprehensive explorations of contemporary literary and cultural theory. G. is concerned to show how the idealized image of Athens that appears at its purest in the Funeral Orations is put to subtle and varied use in tragic suppliant dramas. Extending work by N. Loraux, F. Zeitlin, C. Sourvinou-Inwood, and C. Pelling, he argues that these plays, in which outsiders come to Athens for help, raised interesting questions about what it meant to be Athenian. The book amply justifies G.'s contention that literary works, and in particular tragedy, were basic to the construction of a complex and dynamic sense of public identity in the Athenian democracy. G. threads his way carefully through the difficult question of reception, making it clear that different members of the audience might interpret a play differently, and showing how the 'pluriform' nature of tragedy permitted a particularly searching examination of the contrasts between Athenian and non-Athenian, past and present, ideal and real.

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