***Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages*. Tanya Pollard. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 331 pp. $77. ISBN 978-0-19-879311-3.**

William Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights had more Greek than we thought, as Tanya Pollard convincingly shows in her important contribution to early modern, classical, and feminist studies. In six chapters based on her original research in book and performance history and her close reading of nine early modern English plays, Pollard argues for the visibility of Greek tragedies with strong female leads, and especially of Euripides's *Hecuba*, *Iphigenia*, and *Alcestis* (all from the fifth century BCE), in England's theater culture. The ghostly presence of these and other Greek works in academic, aristocratic, and commercial settings, which Pollard substantiates with known and new data collated in the book's seven appendices, challenged Shakespeare, Thomas Kyd, George Peele, Ben Jonson, and others to innovate in theatrical genres in ways that suggest a more substantial collaborative engagement with ancient drama than scholars have acknowledged. Pollard productively converses with field-defining studies on the reception of Greek and Roman literature in Renaissance England, but she also persuasively refutes their mostly dismissive claims concerning the accessibility of Greek plays compared to the Roman. By re-examining the common assumption that Plautus (ca. 254–184 BCE) and Seneca (4–65 CE) occupied a privileged position in the libraries and imaginations of English dramatists, and by reading some of the period's most popular plays with attention to the legacy of Euripides (ca. 484–406 BCE), Pollard's study advances our knowledge about the "confluence" ("an alternative to 'influence' that suggests a reciprocal conversation between literary authors and periods" [21]) of England's dramatic output and Greek literary tradition featuring affectively powerful women. The book's focus on mythologized bereaved mothers, sacrificial virgins, and the mother-daughter dyad — all central to the Greek drama she examines — enables not only new readings of some of the most thoroughly studied early modern texts, such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (ca. 1600), but also a better understanding of the playwrights' ideas concerning gender and female power, intertextuality, dramatic collaboration, and the development of theater and its genres.

Pollard reminds us that ancient Greek plays, which first appeared in print near the turn of the sixteenth century, reached early modern readers and audiences across Europe "not only in Greek, and in Latin and vernacular translations, but also in mediated forms including adaptations and imitations" (2). Her detailed

examination of their reach in contemporary theater and theoretical discussions about drama leads her to conclude that writers "reimagine[d] the affective possibilities of tragedy, comedy, and the emerging hybrid genre of tragicomedy" (2), capitalizing on the "tragicomic possibilities" inherent in Euripidean stories of loss and partial restoration, whose cathartic power stems from their passionate female protagonists. Contending that "iconic figures such as Hecuba and Iphigenia acquired a privileged status as synecdoches for the tragic theater, and especially for the sympathetic transmission of emotion between bodies with which it was linked" (2), Pollard traces how the explicit and implicit appearances of these and other suffering Greek mothers and daughters on English stages "destabilize their plays' affective trajectories, and generate unexpectedly potent consequences" (3). One of those consequences is the shift of tragic power — that is, of destructive and restorative affective energy — from women to men.

Arguing throughout the book against a "longstanding tradition of English exceptionalism [that] has presented the British Isles as isolated from the Greek learning of continental Europe" (15), Pollard in chapter 1 examines the contexts through which the English were exposed to Greek plays, including the earliest vernacular translations such as Jane Lumley's *Iphigenia* (ca. 1557) and George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta* (1566); Greek scholarship and school curricula that shaped Peele, Kyd, John Lyly, Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, and many others; and frequent performances, in Latin or English translation, that were equally open to the public and to academic communities. These developments, enabled to a great extent by the rise of Desiderius Erasmus as "England's primary promoter of Greek" in the early sixteenth century, not only meant that "the ability to read Greek plays. . .would certainly not have been limited to those with university education, nor to a small handful of elite schools" (58), but also helped to "reframe[e] England's intellectual underpinnings" (46). The theater's Greek pedigree was invoked to defend the institution against its attackers, and in terms of the battle for cultural prestige, "onstage, the Greeks [more than the Romans] were the ones to beat" (60). Thus, as Pollard points out, "through his uses of Greek tragic icons," Shakespeare "presents himself as heir to the Greek dramatic tradition," and his fellow playwrights responded to him as such (4). His so-called Roman plays bear more traces of both Rome's and England's Greek heritage than previously noted.

Given the Greek plays' intense investment in familial and political matters, they must have shaped the construction of English identity and "nation" on

sixteenth-century theatrical and political stages, though Pollard does not address these issues. For Queen Elizabeth I, familiar with at least one, unidentified, play by Euripides that she translated in the 1540s (45), the regal mother Hecuba, as well as her various Mediterranean "daughters," offered lessons on extracting durable affective power and, through affect, political power from her position as a young royal virgin in search of authority and triumph. Scholars have widely discussed *translatio imperii* from Rome to Britain, but Pollard's study helps us to recognize that Britain, like Rome, also constructed itself as a proud heir to Greece's illustrious past and cultural output in a process that was perhaps obscured for us by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century British politics, the mythology of exceptionalism that Pollard mentions, and Britain's complex attitudes to Greece.

Pollard dedicates chapter 2 to Euripidean themes and female characters in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (ca. 1578) and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (ca. 1592), both of which harken back to Hecuba by featuring male acts of revenge in response to passionate mothers and daughters, while chapter 3 examines the consequences of Hecuba's formidable presence in *Hamlet*. All three works have in common the "connection they establish between female grief and tragedy's power to engage sympathies" (21), partly through imagery related to motherhood, liquidity, and melting that signals the uncontainability of emotion and the transmission of agency between bodies. In *Titus Andronicus*, Tamora, Lavinia, Aaron, and Titus all learn their grief and sympathy from the Trojan queen: "When the play confronts question [*sic*] about tragedy and its effects on audiences, characters turn to the figure of Hecuba to reflect on the potent grief, madness, and violence that the genre depicts and unleashes" (107). Similarly, Pollard submits, "Hamlet implicitly competes with Hecuba" (22). To elicit in his audience both sympathy and a sense of vindication in the aftermath of unbearable loss, and thus to leave an indelible dramatic legacy, Hamlet as well as *Hamlet* must appropriate Hecuba's maternal power to transfer affect onto others. That ambition is highlighted in the play by Gertrude and Ophelia as "versions of the Euripidean mother-daughter dyads linked with tragic origins" (128).

Chapter 4 explores the surprising spectral presence of Greek tragic women in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* (ca. 1594) and *Twelfth Night* (ca. 1601), claiming that Shakespeare complements his Latin and Italian comic plots with Greek settings and tragic undertones transmitted via Greek prose fiction but ultimately traceable to Euripidean plots. *Apollonius of Tyre* (ca. third century CE), widely acknowledged as a source behind *The Comedy of Errors*, cannot fully

account for the potency of grief (associated with the language of maternity and liquification), burden, loss, and restoration in the play, all signaled in part by its Ephesian and, more broadly, Ionian and Adriatic setting. In her analysis of *Twelfth Night*, Pollard foregrounds the links between that play's Adriatic setting, Illyria, and the myth of Cadmus and Harmonia, as well as other stories associated with the origins of tragedy. She uses this framework to discuss Viola's alignment with Iphigenia and to conclude that "the ending of *Twelfth Night* reflects not only the *Aethiopica* [fourth century CE], but also the increasingly visible Greek tragic material that it imitated" (159). Her focus on the resonances of England's Greek heritage inevitably leads her to overlook the non-Greek aspects of the play's Illyrian setting, including Roman and contemporary (with its mixed Venetian, Turkish, and Slavic elements), both of which are more evident. Regardless, by stressing its Mediterranean roots, Pollard helps to complicate the misleading yet enduring idea of *Twelfth Night* as quintessentially English.

Shakespeare also reworks Greek tragic tropes in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1599), *Pericles* (1608), and *The Winter's Tale* (1611), discussed in chapter 4. These plays push past their romance sources by drawing on the recurring motif of "a grieving husband's acceptance of a veiled woman who turns out to be his apparently dead wife" (22), which Pollard traces to Euripides' *Alcestis* (438 BCE), whose eponymous hero "represents the hybrid possibility of tragicomic redemption" (173). Thus, Alcestis is another ghostly model of tragic affect that Shakespeare uses to reanimate the theatre. His novel use of ancient models was not lost on his competitors: Ben Jonson's whimsical homage to Shakespeare's "less Greek" is especially evident in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), as Pollard shows in chapter 6. In this play, Jonson "not only acknowledges the pleasures of Shakespeare's Greek-inflected plots, but also discovers ways he can profit from them himself" (23).

The six chapters are followed by seven tabulated appendices, four of which identify pre-1600 Greek, Latin, and vernacular editions of Greek plays and their performances on English stages. The next two trace the texts and performances of Senecan plays, and the last usefully reminds us of extant Greek plays in our own time. Pollard's important contributions to existing data, such as those collected in Oxford University's Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama, pave the way for even more precise mappings of Greek literary influence in early modern English culture.

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