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**book review: L'indovino Poliido : Eschilo, Le Cretesi, Sofocle, Manteis, Euripide, Poliido / by
 Laura Carrara**

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Carrara, L.

L'indovino Poliido. Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2014. xxiv, 497 pp.
Pr. €48.00. ISBN 9788863726688.

In this book Laura Carrara (C.) offers an edition with introduction and commentary (including two appendices, an extensive bibliography and indexes) of three fragmentary plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, which focus on the story of a mythical descendant of Melampus, the prophet and sorcerer Polyidus of Corinth, and his dealings with the son of Minos, Glaucus, whose life he saved. These plays are the *Cressae*, *Manteis* and *Polyidus* respectively.

In the introduction C. gives an extensive survey of the sources on Polyidus in earlier periods and in literary genres other than tragedy. He plays a secondary part in several stories (as in Pi. O. 13.74-84, where he is helping Bellerophon to control Pegasus) and only in the Cretan story about Glaucus he is the main character. C. observes that in archaic literature we find no traces of this story, but even so regards it as likely that the tragic poets did not invent it (perhaps finding it in an archaic *Melampodia*). Starting from Il. 13.636-672, where Polyidus predicts the death of his son Euchenor, C. first discusses the various archaic sources in detail and then goes on to various later kinds of prose and poetry, offering a full diachronic picture of the evidence on Polyidus. In the next chapter C. discusses a 5th century kylix, which is the only evidence in visual art of the Cretan story and more or less contemporary with the tragic plays.

The introduction is very useful for embedding the tragic versions in the larger literary tradition. It is well-documented and carefully written and C. shows herself well aware of the dangers of speculation. For the benefit of the reader it would, however, have been useful to include translations of the Greek and Latin passages and to add a brief summary of the story of Polyidus and Glaucus at the beginning and of the results of the investigation at the end. Another, understandable but still somewhat regrettable, omission in the introduction concerns the overall evaluation of the three plays in relation to each

other, which in my view should have been given more prominence. There are some hints of this kind of approach at various points in the book. Thus on p. 48 C. observes that it is not clear what Aeschylus' contribution on the subject of Polyidus was and how exactly he may have influenced Sophocles and Euripides, but that at least it is clear that he was innovative in introducing themes outside the current Trojan and Theban myths. On p. 260-261 C. discusses the notion of Euripides' desire for originality (perhaps manifesting itself through including the character of Pasiphae in his play) and tentatively suggests some characteristics of each of the three plays. Although I fully agree that with so little evidence one has to be very cautious and avoid undue speculation, a more systematic presentation of C.'s views on these issues and a discussion in the general introduction at the beginning of the book would have been welcome. It would also have been interesting to explore whether there are any results that could be meaningfully related to the outcome of other comparisons of plays on similar subjects by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, such as the three plays on Philoctetes or on the revenge of Electra and Orestes on Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus.

The chapters on the three plays consist of an introduction (devoted largely to aspects of reconstruction, including issues such as dating, exact title, chorus and *dramatis personae* and in the case of Sophocles' *Manteis* an extensive discussion of the question whether it was a tragedy or a satyr play), text of the fragments and testimonia with apparatus and translations, and commentary. The text is obviously much indebted to the editions of the tragic fragments by Stefan Radt (for Aeschylus and Sophocles)¹ and Richard Kannicht (for Euripides),² but C. has clearly gone through the evidence very carefully and here and there we find small corrections (e.g. of a typing error in the apparatus of sources of A. fr. 116), additions or suggestions for supplements (e.g. in S. fr. 389a.5 π[αῖδα]). On the other hand C. has left out descriptions of the traces in the papyrus in S. fr. 389a and E. *Polyidus* test. 2 (although she did consult photographs of them; see p. xviii). Among the fragments of Euripides' *Polyidus* there are a few fragments which are not in Kannicht's edition: test. 2 and fr. 633a from a Michigan papyrus with (scanty) remains of the hypothesis, including a bit of the play's first line, published well after Kannicht's edition in 2011, and fr. 646b, included on the basis of the arguments adduced by Remco Regtuit in

1 Radt, S.L. 1985. *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta 3. Aeschylus* (Göttingen);—1977, 1999. *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta 4. Sophocles* (Göttingen).

2 Kannicht, R. 2004. *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta 5. Euripides* (Göttingen).

his 2007 edition of the Aristophanes-scholia,³ which quote the fragment (see p. 385-390).

In the commentary the emphasis is very much on philological comments, sometimes with brief remarks about context or speakers. On the whole this is sensible and understandable as many of the fragments are small and come with only a little bit of context, so that there is little scope for addressing larger issues of literary technique or interpretation. Even so, there are instances where more background information could have been given and would have helped the interpretation. Thus in e.g. S. fr.389a,4-5 ὥς ἄσμενός σ' ἐσεῖδον ... | οὐ γὰρ [ρ π]ατήρ ἐσεῖδε π[], it seems preferable take ὥς not as introducing a simile (as suggested by C. on p. 146), but rather as exclamatory, followed by an explanation in the γὰρ[ρ]-clause ('how gladly I saw you, for no father saw < his son more gladly ... *vel sim.* >'), and one could refer to the way in which a simile can take the shape of a comparison, as in e.g. Call. *h.* 6.50-52 (more examples in Hopkinson, N. 1984. *Callimachus. Hymn to Demeter* (Cambridge), ad loc.); in S. fr. 395.1 one would like some comment on ὄψηι and the possible addressee of the speaker's words, but this is only added later on p. 177; in a similar way it would have been better to combine the useful comments on ἔα ἔα on pp. 315-316 with those earlier given in the commentary on E. fr. 636.1; and in the introduction to E. fr. 636 some general information about bird omens and the way in which this fragment relates to them would have been welcome and could perhaps have helped to contextualize the fragment further.

Summarizing, there is much to admire in this book. The introduction is useful and clearly written, the text is carefully presented and offers some small improvements in relation to earlier editions, the commentary is very useful, precise and professional. The argumentation is generally cautious and well-balanced and shows independent judgment. So, in spite of the criticisms formulated above, I think the book offers a very useful and welcome contribution to the fragmentary plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

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3 Regtuit, R.F. 2007. *Scholia in Aristophanem III* 2/3 (Groningen).