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Book Review of Lee, K.H., Euripides' Ion.

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ION

K. H. LEE: *Euripides: Ion* (Classical Texts). Pp. vi + 330. Warminster: Aris & Phillips. Cased, £35/\$49.95 (Paper, £16.95/\$28). ISBN: 0-85668-244-6 (0-85668-245-4 pbk).

Lee's *Ion* is a scholarly and very reliable addition to the already extensive list of Aris & Phillips commentaries on individual plays of Euripides. The *Ion* has recently been the object of intense thematic analysis, and our understanding of such issues as Athenian autochthony and the literary handling of the rôle of the female in human reproduction has been greatly advanced by the work of N. Loraux and others. This has rendered A. S. Owen's 1939 edition very antiquated at the broader interpretative levels. L.'s edition is therefore particularly welcome.

The drawbacks of L.'s book are the price of its virtues. He integrates discussion of metre and textual problems into the body of the commentary. This makes textual criticism more accessible, but there is perhaps too much of it. My experience of using L.'s edition with students shows that for teaching purposes L. is a vast improvement on Owen; but it also makes me suspect that, for such readers, his commentary may be over-hospitable to textual discussion as compared with more general thematic comment (the imbalance is somewhat reduced by the fuller introduction). For instance, the treatment of the language with which Ion addresses Kreousa and Xouthos (note his use of the adjective 'stranger') is uncomfortably distributed over a number of separate notes (e.g. nn. on pp. 238, 339, 520), and does not quite do justice to all the nuances (the use of the same adjective in ll. 415 and 429 is not commented upon), while p. 25 of the introduction is too terse; here L. maintains that 'the movements towards and away from each other are marked by the extensive use of stichomythia', but he never discusses how these movements are signified by changes in the manner of address. Again the discussion of Athena's closing speech, with its prediction about the four pre-Kleisthenic tribes, is very succinctly treated in the commentary and introduction (p. 34). The foregrounding by Euripides of the old Ionian tribes has a particular imperial point in c. 413/2, the probable date of the play, when the loyalty of the East Aegean allies was in serious doubt. In some of these cities, such as Miletos, Erythrai, and Samos, the old Ionian tribe names survived (though not necessarily at tribal level), so that the emphasis on the old four tribes can be seen as conciliatory in intention.

But generally L. is a safe and helpful guide, always clear and even-handed, though occasionally hyper-cautious. On the interesting question of what many have seen as the comic elements in the *Ion*, L.'s conclusion (p. 37) is 'whether all this adds up to a "full-fledged comedy" as Knox thinks . . . is uncertain' (see also the end of the note on 112-83). I have argued elsewhere (in Jäkel & Timonen [edd.], *Laughter down the*

Centuries [Turku, 1995] that despite everything, justice can be done to *Ion* only if it is accorded its proper status as tragedy. But my objection is that L. is non-committal where readers have a right to be given a lead. The crucial issue, perhaps, is the handling of Loraux. No commentary on the *Ion*, thematic or lemmatic, can sidestep *The Invention of Athens*. L. can certainly not be accused of neglecting Loraux. But he evidently feels no enthusiasm on the one hand ('far-fetched', l. 453 n.), nor on the other hand does he refute her properly. The result is that he steers an uncharacteristically hesitant and rudderless course through waters he admits to finding 'difficult' (his word about Loraux's arguments, p. 36).

The scholarly quality of L.'s commentary produces special problems within the user-friendly Aris & Phillips format, according to which lemmata have to be in English. Often the notes cry out for the inclusion of the relevant Greek word or phrase. L.'s commentary in fact has much in common with the traditional Oxford commentaries or with the Cambridge 'green-and-yellow' series, both of which tackle the Greek directly. The real issue, then, is the lack of clarity about the audience both L.'s book and the Aris & Phillips series in general seeks to address.

The discussions of the Delphic evocations, and of the staging and scenery are in my view the least convincing parts of the commentary. L. usually relies on accepted scholarly views to explain matters pertaining to the practice of oracular consultation in Delphi. Thus, he inherits such misconceptions as the argument that women were not allowed into the temple (see n. 221b), though there is no such indication in the text: the issue at ll. 226–9 is that visitors, irrespective of gender, can gain access to the inner part of the temple, but only if they have performed the necessary sacrifices. On Euripidean stagecraft L. tends to follow Hourmouziades and Halleran. He accepts Halleran's unlikely suggestion that Hermes exits 'behind a panel . . . painted to represent greenery' (note on l. 76): the better view is that there was no scene-painting in the fifth century. He also uncritically accepts Hourmouziades' problematic view that *Ion*'s first entrance is from the temple door, and does not discuss the existence of *Ion*'s attendants. Cf. also his assumption, unjustified by anything in the text, that Xouthos has an 'entourage' (p. 40).

L. says (p. 41) that his translation has 'no pretensions to elegance or performability', and that its chief purpose is 'to make clear the meaning and structure of the Greek'. In this aim it succeeds almost everywhere: the only somewhat misleading rendering is the description of Kreousa's rape at l. 11, where βίαν surely calls for something a good deal stronger than 'against her will'. On the other hand the disclaimer about elegance is too modest: at ll. 1157–8 (ἦ τε φωσφόρος 'Εως διώκουσ' ἄστρα), Lee's 'light-bearing Dawn put the stars to flight' is a felicitous borrowing from the opening of Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: 'Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night/ Has Flung the Stone which Puts the Stars to Flight'.