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agosto **2024**

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**Brucia il classico
alla prova del tempo**

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a cura di

Anna Beltrametti e Monica Centanni

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Damiano Acciarino

Fragmentary Greek Drama

A new series by “L’Erma di Bretschneider”

Monica Centanni, Paolo B. Cipolla

The new series “Fragmentary Greek Drama”, published by “L’Erma di Bretschneider” and edited by Monica Centanni and Paolo B. Cipolla, provides a useful and up-to-date tool for scholars interested in the history of Attic drama, with specific reference to the lost dramas. While in the field of comedy the “KomFrag” series – the editorial project coordinated by Bernhard Zimmermann and dedicated to the systematic commentary of fragments of Greek comedy – has become an indispensable point of reference, tragedy and satyr drama have so far been the subject of monographs or isolated studies. There is therefore a need for a systematic project focusing on those dramas, especially (but not only) those by the three great tragedians, which were not fortunate enough to survive in the Medieval tradition, but of which a sufficient number of fragments have been handed down to us to allow a reconstruction, even hypothetical, of their plots.

Each volume will be conceived as a short monograph or a long essay and will contain:

- a mythographical introduction analysing the sources of the myth and the different versions;
- a section on the drama, focusing on what can be gleaned from the ancient testimonies;
- the Greek text of the fragments, accompanied by a translation and a commentary;
- if possible, a section on the iconographic evidence for the drama, in particular vase paintings that can be used to reconstruct the plot or individual scenes;
- finally, a summary integrating the data examined into a possible reconstructive hypothesis of the plot and other elements, such as the setting of the action, the characters, and the identity of the Chorus.

As far as the Greek text is concerned, given the format of the volumes, the apparatus will rather be selective and limited to the most relevant data; the commentary will highlight textual problems and linguistic, metrical and, above all, dramaturgical aspects. For each fragment, a translation will be proposed, including the witness(es) who handed it down, a metrical note (especially for the lyrical passages), some notes to illustrate textual and exegetical problems, and a view both on the context of the source and on the original dramaturgical context, if any.

The first volume of the series, edited by Monica Centanni and Paolo B. Cipolla, is dedicated to Sophocles’ *Laocoön*, a tragedy of which only five fragments, an isolated gloss, and an indirect reference have survived. Not so much, it seems, but enough to try to reconstruct the main points of the plot. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (who quotes the longest fragment, 373 Radt), in the play a Messenger announces Aeneas’ imminent departure from Troy. In this

MONICA CENTANNI • PAOLO BIAGIO CIPOLLA

Sophocles' Laocoön



«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER

M. Centanni, P.B. Cipolla, *Sophocles' Laocoön*, "L'Erma di Bretschneider", Roma-Bristol (USA) 2024.
Fragmentary Greek Drama | Series directed by Monica Centanni and Paolo B. Cipolla. Scientific Committee: Anna Beltrametti, Antonietta Gostoli, Olimpia Imperio, Bernhard Zimmermann. Editorial Board: Annalisa Lavoro.

version, Aeneas does not run away at the end of a strenuous struggle for the extreme defence of the city, as in the famous Virgilian narrative of the second book of the *Aeneid*, but before the fall of Troy. Aeneas escapes on the advice of his father, Anchises, who had foretold the imminent end of Troy after witnessing the terrible end of the “Laocoontids” – a problematic expression that, as the editors clarify, should probably be understood as “the offspring of Laocoön”, referring to the Trojan priest’s son.

The prodigy of the two deadly sea serpents, to which Sophocles also seems to have given proper names, must have been the *katastrophé* around which the plot revolved: the aggression of the terrible sea monsters would have taken place in the temple of Apollo Thymbraeus and would certainly not have been represented on the stage, but would have been entrusted to a witness, in accordance with the established practice of Greek tragedy. This is the scene of the drama in which the contribution of two iconographic testimonies from Magna Graecia becomes relevant. Two vases, one preserved in Basel and the other in Ruvo di Puglia, depict the slaughter of a child by two snakes inside the sanctuary of Apollo: the snakes cling to the statue of the god with their coils, while at his feet lie the poor remains of Laocoön’s torn son. A woman, probably Antiopa, the child’s mother, furiously bursts into the sanctuary, wielding an axe and hurling herself at the statue in a futile fit of rage. Behind her, Laocoön, desperate but calm, raises a hand to his head. The painters captured the echo of what must have been the most impressive moment of the drama, providing us with valuable evidence for the reconstruction.

The Sophoclean drama thus offers a very different version from that of Virgil: Laocoön is not the innocent victim of sacrifice, but is punished with the loss of his son – whom he survives – for an act of *hybris*, probably that of having procreated despite Apollo’s explicit prohibition, according to some sources by consummating the sexual act just within the sanctuary.

The next volume in the series will be Aeschylus’ satyric *Prometheus*, by Paolo B. Cipolla: some important papyrus fragments survive of the play performed with the Persians in 472, while an echo seems to be discernible in a series of vases from the second half of the 5th century, depicting Prometheus bringing fire to mankind, surrounded by satyrs.

Other volumes scheduled for publication between now and 2025 include: Aeschylus’ *Myrmidons*; Sophocles’ *Colchides* and *Tereus*; Euripides’ *Alexander*, *Antigone*, *Palamedes*, and *Peliades*; Critias’ *Peirithous*.

Abstract

The new series “Fragmentary Greek Drama”, published by “L’Erma di Bretschneider and edited by Monica Centanni and Paolo B. Cipolla, offers short monographs focusing on dramas – tragedies or satyr plays – of which we have a number of fragments and/or the υπόθεσις, sufficient to allow a plausible reconstruction of the plot of the lost drama. The first volume is devoted to Sophocles’ *Laocoön* of which five textual fragments (plus an indirect reference and one single word) have been preserved from indirect tradition.

After reconstructing the mythographic variants of the story of the Trojan priest, the volume presents all the fragments in the original text and in translation, with a critical apparatus and philological commentary. The volume aims to reconstruct the dramaturgy of the Sophoclean drama by arranging the surviving fragments into a sequence that follows the possible succession of the scenes in the tragedy. In addition to the textual fragments, two vase painting fragments, one preserved in the Jatta Museum at Ruvo di Puglia and the other in Basel, allow for the reconstruction of another possible scene of the drama not attested by the literary tradition.

keywords | Fragmentary Greek Drama; Sophocles' *Laocoön*.



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