

must have served as his primal scene. Astonishingly, Devereux pronounces these paintings repulsive and concludes that they must have repelled Hippolytus too, causing him to want to kill his father and commit incest with his step-mother.

Phaedra, like Hippolytus, acquires a complete life history and diagnosis. She longs for incest because she prefers degrading sex. A prime piece of evidence for this is Ovid's Phaedra, who, for Devereux, tells us what the Phaedra of Euripides' first *Hippolytus* was like. Presumably the playwright failed in his attempt to make the second play different from the first. Devereux believes that in her preference for sexual degradation, Phaedra resembled many Athenian women: a truly Freudian view.

Most odd, Devereux makes the play Hippolytus'. Knox has shown that Euripides divides the play's lines pretty evenly among the characters. Zeitlin, in "The Power of Aphrodite: Eros and the Boundaries of the Self in the Hippolytus" (in *Directions in Euripidean Criticism*), points out that Phaedra and Hippolytus are compared to each other by the words, gestures and images of the play. But, for Devereux, the play is about Hippolytus and Hippolytus alone, not about the disruption he makes in society. Of the excellent analyses by Anne Rankin, "Euripides' Hippolytus: A Psychopathological Hero" *Arethusa* 7 (1974) and Jean Smoot, "Hippolytus as Narcissus: An Amplification" *Arethusa* 9 (1976) Devereux makes no mention.

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CW 80.4 (1987)

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Averil Cameron. *Procopius and the Sixth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. Pp. xiii, 297, incl. 4 b/w maps. \$34.00.

This first comprehensive modern treatment of Procopius centers on the basic questions affecting a proper reading and use of his writings: How do his three works relate to one another? and What is Procopius' relationship to his own time?

The first of three unequal parts introduces Procopius the man, writer, and problem, in his sixth-century social and literary context, as a member of the last generation of the provincial urban elite; and, contrary to many modern opinions, a Christian. Justinian's reign emerges, despite Cameron's equivocal judgement on it, as one of major transitions, with deep social and political tensions. The centralist fiscal pressure of reconquest wrecked the systems inherited from the late empire. Procopius himself has many classical traits: choice of subjects, type of history, and language. But Cameron shows that this classicism is partly superficial: Procopius' overall character is of his own time, not classical.

Part II treats in detail the *Secret History*, then the *Buildings*, and finally the *Wars*, stressing that these works not only are not incompatible productions for one man but fit together into a single person's view of his times and the major actors in it. Each is true to its genre (the *Wars* to classical secular history; the *Secret History* largely to invective; *Buildings* to panegyric), and each is more complex in attitudes than is usually recognized. Cameron richly depicts a man whose initial enthusiasm for reconquest was soured by a growing realization that it could not work as simply as he had hoped, and that its consequences for the reconquered were even worse than for his own class.

The third part compares Procopius with other writers of his period in attitudes toward the imperial regime. Not unusual in seeing personal failings of the emperor and his servants as causes for things going wrong, Procopius was even narrower in his interests: no theological battles, no imperial ceremony, no legislation, no administration. As a literary artist and above all as a vivid reporter Procopius gets good marks; his evidence is to be taken in context and with care, neither dismissed wholesale because of some inaccuracies nor accepted entire because he had some good information.

This learned and acute book restores Procopius to a place in a Justinianic context, and, despite some careless editing, shows a great deal about the times as well as the man and his writings.

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CW 80.4 (1987)

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From I. Zeitlin. *Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes*. *Filologia e Critica*, 44. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1982. Pp. 227. No price listed (pb.).

This "experiment in the decoding of an ancient text in the light of the findings and methods of modern semiotic theories" is not an introduction to those theories (which include structural anthropology and psychoanalysis as well as semiotics). Readers unfamiliar with them will not find much definition of terms or spelling out of principles. But Zeitlin's discussion illustrates her methods through example, and her terminology can easily be decoded by a willing reader, especially one who knows Greek. The book is not easy to read, but more because the argument is presented somewhat diffusely and repetitively than because it is fundamentally obscure.

Zeitlin maintains that language and human social and familial relationships are closely related symbolic systems which depend on distinctions basically artificial, and therefore always unstable. The *Seven* testifies to this link by making the collapse of a seeming distinction between enemy brothers its central action and by presenting this action in a wholly linguistic form: the central shield scene, an extended dialogue explicitly concerned with the power of visual and verbal symbols. Thus Zeitlin argues persuasively that Aeschylus' play itself highlights the issues addressed by contemporary theory and demonstrates that the *Seven's* displacement of its action onto a prospective dialogue in the shield scene is not simply a formal consequence of Aeschylus' early position in the development of drama, but has central thematic significance.

The heart of the book is a close reading of that scene situating its progression of matched warriors within several interlocking symbolic orders: Eteocles' progress towards his individual destiny also evokes the progress of human culture, the development of the individual self, and an increasingly complex use of signs and symbols; his discovery that his victory as a leader entails his personal destruction is paralleled by his ensnarement in the contradictions inherent in human social organization, in the definition of the self, and in language. Most readers will find some points strained or overstated, but should also gain a fuller appreciation of the rich significance of the scene from this searching and insightful analysis.