tion of the snakebite’ Mandel suggests the (prehistoric) existence of a full myth of Philoctetes, “unrelated to the Trojan War”.

In his interpretation of Sophocles’ Philoctetes Mandel rightly stresses that Neoptolemus plays the leading part. But he is wrong when identifying ‘leading’ with ‘central’. To him Neoptolemus is “at the philosophical and dramatic center of the action” (p. 104). This only half holds true. Neoptolemus, in his moral and emotional evolution, represents indeed the main part of dramatic action, but the title role, as in Sophocles’ other known tragedies named after a single character, is at its centre. Until the end of the play Philoctetes is in the focus of the other characters’ activities. Until the end the very picture of heroic solitude is at the centre of Neoptolemus’ action.


In the imaginary dialogue that opens the book a certain Q. asks A.: “How did the tragedians make their audiences cry?” The reply is: “That would take a whole book to answer.” Professor Stanford (henceforth St.) has set himself to this task, though he does not present the book as the final answer to Q.’s question, but as an introductory study.

In the first chapter St. discusses a number of interesting and amusing passages from ancient literature that testify to the intense emotions (weeping, terror, indignation) that theatrical performances sometimes aroused. In chapter two the emotions of the audience are, in a very imaginative way, related to the conditions of performance. Subsequently, St. deals with the nature of emotions like ἔλεος, ὁκτος, ὀργή, στύγος etc. (ch. 3). Next comes the aural element in the stirring of emotions: “Song, music, cries and silences” (ch. 4) and “The music of the spoken word” (ch. 5). “The visual element” is discussed in chapter six. Follow “Emotionalism through vocabulary and stylistic figures” and “Emotionalism through subject-matter, imagery, irony and structure” (ch. 7 and 8). Next, the contents of the foregoing chapters are illustrated by “The tragic emotions in the Oresteia” (ch. 9). A short concluding chapter is called “The ultimate effect?”.
On p. 2-3 St. defines the theme of his book as follows: "The subject of the present work, then, is how the Athenian tragedians made their characters and choruses cry with pity, shudder with fear, storm with rage, strain with suspense, dance with joy and spit with hate, and how these representations of emotionalism affected their audiences—an emotionalism that is rarely if ever paralleled in modern performances of tragedy." While Q.'s question only concerned the emotions of the audience, we are now confronted with two categories of emotions: those of the people in the play and, on the other hand, those of the spectators. Of course, St. himself is fully aware of this difference: "In a modern dramatic performance two kinds of people show emotions, the actors with their simulated emotions ... and the audience. In the Greek theatre the presence of a chorus complicated the emotional nexus. And in emotional terms there were two sorts of chorus, the fully involved chorus who shared the pathē of the actors (like the Trojan women in Euripides' two plays about the aftermath of the fall of Troy), and the more detached chorus who are spectators rather than partners in the pathē (like the Argive Elders in the early part of Agamemnon and the women of Troizen in Hippolytos). Sometimes, then, the audience would see the chorus as the object of their emotional reaction, sometimes as sharers with themselves in their reactions to the sufferings of the characters in the play. In the second case the chorus acted almost as an instructor, telling the audience how and when to feel various emotions" (46-47).

In my view things are even more complicated. St. seems to forget his own assertion (18-19) that the audience knew beforehand the core of the central myths and, consequently, the outcome of a number of plays. It follows that, for instance in the early part of Agamemnon, the emotions of the audience do not really coincide with those of the chorus (cf. below). Another inconsistency, again related to the audience's foreknowledge, is the following. On p. 19 St. writes: "Curiosity about the outcome of a plot is intellectually more stimulating than foreknowledge, but less emotive." Perhaps this statement simplifies the matter too much, since both curiosity and foreknowledge may stir the emotions as well as the intellect, though in a different way. But there is a further point. Foreknowledge inescapably entails dramatic irony, and on this subject St. argues: "Its range is restricted and it is mainly rational and analytical." and "There is usually an element of cool Olympian detachment in it, ..." (113). In my opinion this judgement is not