



**DESTRÉE (P.) Aristote Poétique. (GF n°1637 - Philosophie). Paris: Flammarion, 2021. Pp. 272. €20.43. 9782080712295.**

Frédérique Woerther

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DESTRÉE (P.) **Aristote Poétique**. (GF n°1637 - Philosophie). Paris: Flammarion, 2021. Pp. 272. €20.43. 9782080712295.

As a specialist in Aristotle's *Poetics*, Pierre Destrée provides an annotated French translation of the text. The translation is accompanied by an introduction; a bibliography that gathers the most useful editions, translations, commentaries, and studies, as well as articles that deal with specific issues listed by topic (253–64); and an index of authors and titles (265–70). The translation is a revised version of the annotated translation published in P. Pellegrin (ed.), *Œuvres Complètes d'Aristote* (Paris 2014), and is based on the OCT edition by Kassel (1966). A list of the *lectiones* borrowed from other editions is provided (249–51).

The book opens with a long and illuminating introduction (5–83), in which the author gives an overview of the issues raised by the *Poetics* from antiquity up to the present, and questions – in a relevant way – the targeted readership of the treatise. Does Aristotle address future poets? Does he, as a philosopher, set rules to learn how to develop critical thinking skills? By embedding the text in its historical, cultural and philosophical contexts, Destrée sheds light on several controversial issues. For instance, he raises the question of the value of poetry and its relationship to ethics; he defends the idea that, in spite of what is usually said, Aristotle does not rule out or underestimate the role of staging among the parts of tragedy (18–22); he explains the famous idea according to which poetry is more philosophical than historical by offering a convincing interpretation of the adverb *katholou* ('selon une structure générale', according to a general structure) in *Poet.* 9 (44–48). Finally, he offers a global explanation of *katharsis* (67–75). If in the wake of Bernays (in J. Bernays, *Zwei Abhandlungen über die aristotelische Theorie des Drama*, Berlin, 1857) 'medical' exegetes stated that spectators sought to purge their emotions, 'ethical' exegetes read the *Poetics* as a counterpart of the *Ethics* and interpreted *catharsis* in regard to the idea of 'right measure' ('*catharsis* would be the "purgation" of an emotional overflow, which would allow for the "purification" of piety, or its just measure, which transforms it into a virtue', my translation from the French, p. 71). The interpretation of Martha Nussbaum (in M. Nussbaum, "Tragedy and self-sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on fear and pity", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 10, 1992, p. 107-152) relies on a different translation of *catharsis* ('clarification'), which has no relation to the musical *catharsis* of the *Politics*. Destrée suggests a more 'minimalistic' and 'global' interpretation of *catharsis* (as it also applies to comedy, according to Iamblichus and Proclus) that takes into account *Politics* VIII and Aristotle's biological corpus. By inducing fear and pity through the plot (which culminates in recognition), the

*catharsis* of these emotions would be nothing more than their expression, which happens concretely through the tears and shouts of fear and lamentation. Like comedy and music (in the *Politics*), tragedy would therefore bring a kind of emotional relief which, in addition, does not contradict the goal of these activities, which is leisure.

The French translation is never pedantic and always tends towards transparency. In this respect, the book does not address specialists but targets a broader readership without, however, giving up on precision and scholarship. Destrée avoids literal translations that might be misleading or obscure; for example, according to the context λέξις is translated as ‘*langage*’ (language), ‘*mot*’ (word), ‘*expression*’ (expression), or ‘*figure de style*’ (figure of speech). I note some wonderful solutions: for example, translating Δειλιάς as *Poltroniade* (Cowardiad, 1448a13), where Destrée maintains the play on the word in French; ‘*grave et sérieuse*’ (grave and serious) to translate (or gloss) the adjective σπουδαίος (1449a24), qualifying the kind of action represented by tragedy; ‘*intègre*’ (upright) to render χρηστός, defining the first virtue of the characters in tragedy (1454a17); ‘*revirement de situation*’ (turn of events) for περιπέτεια (which indeed does not correspond to the French ‘*péripétie*’, incident); translating τῇ λέξει συναπεργάζεσθαι (1455a22-23) with ‘[when he builds his plots, the poet], *doit s’aider en les récitant* (must help himself by reciting them)’, where συναπεργάζεσθαι (usually understood as ‘completing the effect [of the emotions]’) and λέξις (usually understood as ‘expression’) are translated according to the explanation in footnote 203: for Destrée refers here to the passage in 1455a30, where the *lexis* designates the attitude of the poet reading out loud his own plot. As a result, Aristotle’s advice is the following: while reciting the text he is composing, the poet must visualize its action.

Reading this beautiful translation will be even more pleasant because Destrée adds titles and subtitles to Aristotle’s text, making clear a structure that can be hard to grasp at first sight. The footnotes (171–248) provide historical, cultural, and Aristotelian contexts; they explain and justify, in a more technical but always clear manner, the choices made in the translation.

FREDERIQUE WOERTHER

CNRS (UMR 8230, Centre Jean Pépin/ENS Ulm)

frederique.woerther@cnrs.fr