



Gender and the Social Function of Athenian Tragedy (BAR International)

Spyros D. Syropoulos

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Athenian tragedy offered the world 'dynamic, powerful and moving female characters', but how far did the women portrayed on stage mirror those of real life? After assessing the role of Athenian women in cultural, social and religious terms, Syropoulos considers female characters in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, and Euripides' *Medea*, *Bacchae*, *Antigone* and *Alcestis*, and speculates on how the audience reconciled the women they saw on stage with attitudes and experiences of women in everyday life. What Syropoulos reveals is that tragedy shows a role-reversal in terms of gender roles and is a didactic device, created by men, to warn against straying from established gender order.

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