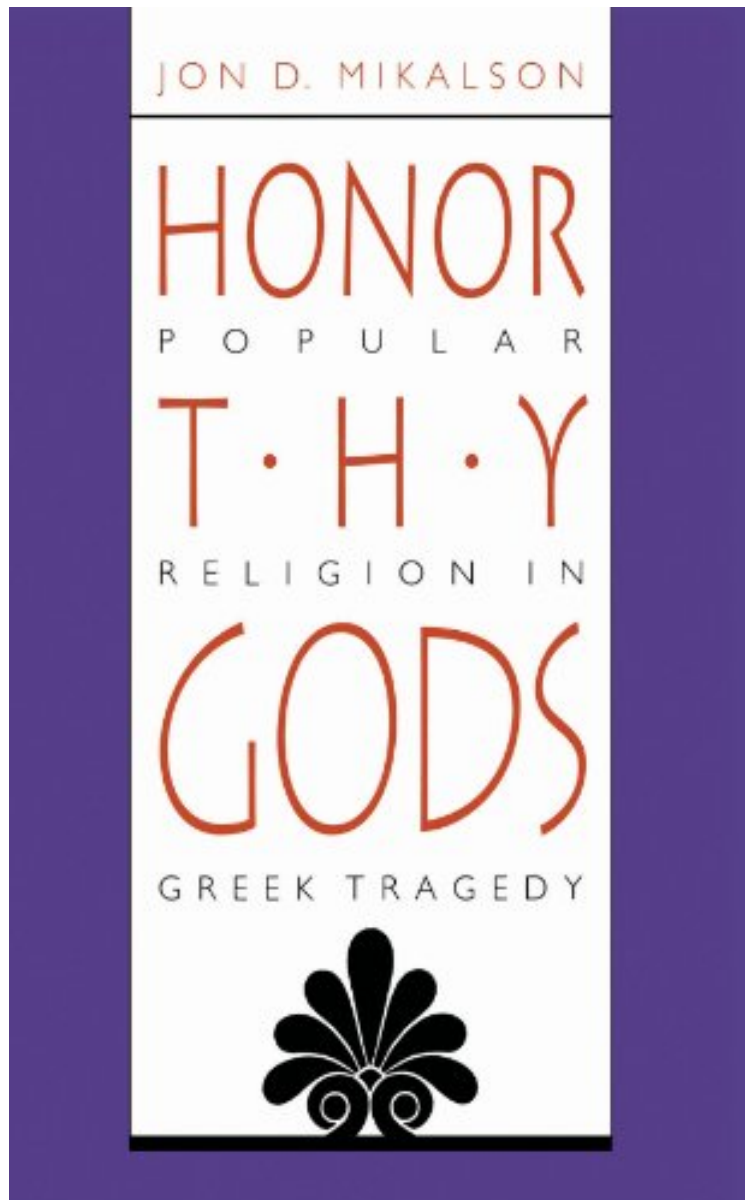


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Honor Thy Gods: Popular Religion in Greek Tragedy

Jon D. Mikalson

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Jon D. Mikalson : Honor Thy Gods: Popular Religion in Greek Tragedy before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Honor Thy Gods: Popular Religion in Greek Tragedy:

In Honor Thy Gods Jon Mikalson uses the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides to explore popular religious beliefs and practices of Athenians in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and examines how these playwrights

portrayed, manipulated, and otherwise represented popular religion in their plays. He discusses the central role of honor in ancient Athenian piety and shows that the values of popular piety are not only reflected but also reaffirmed in tragedies. Mikalson begins by examining what tragic characters and choruses have to say about the nature of the gods and their intervention in human affairs. Then, by tracing the fortunes of diverse characters -- among them Creon and Antigone, Ajax and Odysseus, Hippolytus, Pentheus, and even Athens and Troy -- he shows that in tragedy those who violate or challenge contemporary popular religious beliefs suffer, while those who support these beliefs are rewarded. The beliefs considered in Mikalson's analysis include Athenians' views on matters regarding asylum, the roles of guests and hosts, oaths, the various forms of divination, health and healing, sacrifice, pollution, the religious responsibilities of parents, children, and citizens, homicide, the dead, and the afterlife. After summarizing the various forms of piety and impiety related to these beliefs found in the tragedies, Mikalson isolates "honoring the gods" as the fundamental concept of Greek piety. He concludes by describing the different relationships of the three tragedians to the religion of their time and their audience, arguing that the tragedies of Euripides most consistently support the values of popular religion.

It should quickly establish itself as required reading for students of both Greek religion and Greek tragedy. Robert S. J. Garland, Colgate University Skilled historical investigation and literary interpretation make this a book for scholars and students interested in careful reading of Greek literature, history, and religion. --Choice|A material contribution to the understanding of the function of Greek drama in its historical context. [It is] more substantial than other books on the same subject because Mikalson's findings are based on a careful and comprehensive survey of the available historical information. His book will serve as an essential reference book for the serious study of Greek drama, even to readers who know no (or very little) Greek. --Mary Lefkowitz, Wellesley College|Honor Thy Gods greatly enhances Jon Mikalson's reputation as a leading exponent of Athenian religion. The work is lively and comprehensive and will make a fine companion piece to Athenian Popular Religion. Refreshingly readable and uncluttered by doctrinaire assumptions, it reviews a familiar subject in an entirely new way. It should quickly establish itself as required reading for students of both Greek religion and Greek tragedy. --Robert S. J. Garland, Colgate University|From the Back Cover|In Honor Thy Gods Jon Mikalson uses the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides to explore popular religious beliefs and practices of Athenians in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and examines how these playwrights portrayed, manipulated, and otherwise represented popular religion in their plays. The author discusses the central role of honor in ancient Athenian piety and shows that the values of popular piety are not only reflected but also reaffirmed in tragedies.