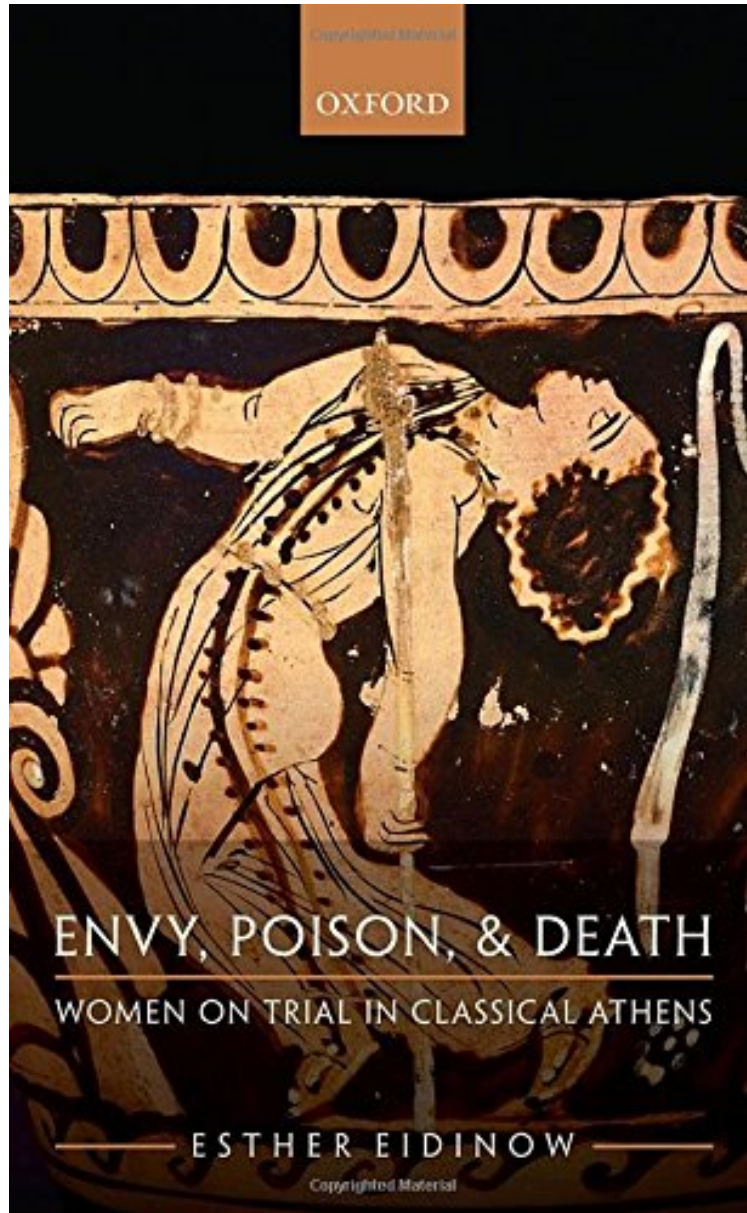


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Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Ancient Athens

Esther Eidinow

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Esther Eidinow : Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Ancient Athens before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Ancient Athens:

At the heart of this volume are three trials held in Athens in the fourth century BCE. The defendants were all women and in each case the charges involved a combination of ritual activities. Two were condemned to death. Because of the brevity of the ancient sources, and their lack of agreement, the precise charges are unclear, and the reasons for these women's trials remain mysterious. *Envy, Poison, and Death* takes the complexity and confusion of the evidence not as a riddle to be solved, but as a revelation of social dynamics. It explores the changing factors--material, ideological, and psychological--that may have provoked these events. It focuses, in particular, on the dual role of envy (*phthonos*) and gossip as processes by which communities identified people and activities that were dangerous, and examines how and why those local, even individual, dynamics may have come to shape official civic decisions during a time of perceived hardship. At first sight so puzzling, these trials reveal a vivid picture of the socio-political environment of Athens during the early-mid fourth century BCE, including responses to changes in women's status and behavior, and attitudes toward ritual activities within the city. The volume reveals some of the characters, events, and even emotions that would help to shape an emergent concept of magic: it suggests that the boundary of acceptable behavior was shifting, not only within the legal arena but also through the active involvement of society beyond the courts.

"*Envy, Poison, and Death* is a book of great learning and intellectual flair. The three women who are its subject have had a destiny that no one could have expected. Folklorists and anthropologists will see a classicist grappling with a question that they often have to ask themselves: how to understand the mind-set of culturally and/or historically remote persons." --Lowell Edmunds, *Folklore* "the author effectively combines philological analysis of a wide range of Greek texts and contemporary social science theory to build her case A significant study for advanced students and scholars interested in the history of women and law in fourth-century BCE Athens."--CHOICE "A significant study...Highly recommended." --Choice About the Author Esther Eidinow is Assistant Professor in Ancient Greek History at the University of Nottingham.