MARTIN CROPP, KEVIN LEE AND DAVID SANSONE (eds.), 
Euripides and Tragic Theatre in the Late Fifth Century (Champaign, 
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This volume, produced as a double volume of the Illinois 
Classical Studies, presents 25 articles derived from the 47 papers of the 
specialist Euripides conference held at Banff, Alberta, in May 1999. 
The organisers and editors are well known in the field of Euripidean 
scholarship, as indeed are many of the contributors, and the scholarly 
value of the volume as a whole is unquestionable as a contribution to the 
advancement of knowledge about Euripides and the theatre of his time. 
The original four themes of the conference have been collapsed into 
three sections, which, while not providing a comprehensive coverage of 
the categories of tragic analysis (how could a single volume hope to do 
so?), include a wide range of recent questions and current issues. The 
first chapter, ‘Twentieth-Century Performance and Adaptation of 
Euripides’ representing Helene Foley’s keynote address, examines a 
selection of modern productions of the Medea, along with Wole 
Soyinka’s and Suzuki Tadashi’s versions of the Bacchae, pointing out 
that inspired and engaged producers have often responded to the ancient 
texts in ways that parallel and indeed even sometimes anticipate a ‘new’ 
focus of scholarly criticism. Foley in passing raises issues of reception, 
of genre, and of the various fashions in relating tragedy to myth and 
religion, and so her contribution constitutes as appropriate an 
introduction to such a diverse volume as could be imagined.

The first and longest section, ‘Tragedy and Other Genres’, 
introduced by Donald Mastronarde, includes among its ten chapters both 
papers on Euripides and other genres (most notably John Davidson’s 
‘Euripides, Homer and Sophocles’), and considerations of key aspects
within the genre of tragedy, especially of Euripidean tragedy. Ruth Scodel’s ‘Verbal Performance and Euripidean Rhetoric’ is a particularly valuable offering, examining the complexities of Euripides’ relation to contemporary rhetoric, and observing that while Euripidean characters consistently use rhetoric for two purposes, as a means of establishing identity and for persuasion, these functions cannot be regarded as entirely congruent, for ‘there is a real distinction between lying and performing’; she concludes that since in Euripides’ plays verbal performance is so often the recourse of sympathetic powerless characters, the audience might have been led to consider the arguments that in real life the powerless would have been unable to express, and might thus have been directed in their judgements of what is good or bad.

In the same section, Justina Gregory challenges the long-established belief that Euripides in some plays erodes the generic boundaries between tragedy and comedy; in a close examination of three so-called ‘comic’ passages from the Andromache, the Troades and the Bacchae, she demonstrates that in each instance there is sufficient indication within the context of a serious intent, and concludes that the ‘comedy’ may rather be located entirely in modern perception.

Christian Wildberg introduces the section on ‘Myth and Religion’, a rather mixed bag of six chapters ranging from discussions with a specific focus, like Charles Segal’s ‘Lament and Recognition: A Reconsideration of the Ending of the Bacchae’, to Wildberg’s own ‘Piety as Service, Epiphany as Reciprocity: Two Observations on the Religious Meaning of the Gods in Euripides’, a highly theoretical and dauntingly complex exploration of Euripides’ use of divine epiphany in the light of an examination of the philosophical-intellectual concept of hypēresia (which he defines as ‘supportive service’) developed in the late 5th century as a means of redefining the relationship between mortals and immortals; here one finds a real engagement with the often expressed notion of Euripides as a member of an intellectual elite.

The ‘Performance and Reception’ section, introduced by Eric Csapo, consists of eight chapters, all thought-provoking, that address quite diverse aspects of theatrical stagecraft and presentation in the late 5th century, including the spatial environment of the fifth century theatre
in Athens (Jean-Charles Moretti, ‘The Theater of the Sanctuary of Dionysus Eleuthereus in Late Fifth Century Athens’) and Euripides’ use of space (Rush Rehm, ‘The Play of Space: Before, Behind and Beyond in Euripides’ *Heracles*’). Music is the subject of two papers: Peter Wilson’s study of the signification of mousikē in ‘Euripides’ Tragic Muse’, with reference to the *Heracles* and the fragmentary remains of the *Antiope*, and Csapo’s own contribution, ‘Later Euripidean Music’, in which he questions the idea that the New Music of the late 5th century was an anti-traditional and purely aesthetic exercise, suggesting instead that it was an attempt to recreate ‘an authentically Dionysian music’ expressive of emotion and sensuality.

Rather more than is common with conference proceedings, this volume comes close, through its well-chosen section-titles and careful selection of papers, to constituting a snapshot of Euripidean and dramaturgical scholarship at the end of the 20th century. Such an intention is at least implied by the ‘General Introduction’ of Martin Cropp and Kevin Lee, the organisers of the conference, and further indicated by the consolidated bibliography at the end. Nevertheless, given the wide range of subjects and issues discussed between its covers, the volume is more likely to be consulted for a specific paper on a given topic than read as a whole, which means that individual bibliographical listings at the end of each chapter may have been of more practical use. The ‘Index of Passages Discussed’ that follows will, however, have the advantage of directing the browsing consulter to other analyses of the relevant play or passage, and the short but useful index will also prove a serviceable navigation tool.

The volume is dedicated to the memory of Desmond Conacher, who was an honoured guest at the Banff conference but died shortly before publication. It also serves as a memorial to the selfless scholarly contribution of Kevin Lee, co-organiser and one of the editors, who died untimely a little after the book appeared.

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