

third year of studying Ancient Greek. When I asked their opinion of M.'s edition, one student remarked, 'Every time I had a question, it was answered in the Commentary.' That is high praise for a 'Green and Yellow', and a judgement with which most readers, most of the time, will surely concur. M.'s well-produced volume will doubtless stand for a generation or more as the best introduction to this tragedy to be found between two covers. Characterized by tact, intelligence, and deep familiarity with Euripides, the volume will be useful to M.'s professional colleagues as well.

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## A COMPANION TO *MEDEA*

W. ALLAN: *Euripides: Medea* (Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy). Pp. 143. London: Duckworth, 2002. Paper, £9.99. ISBN: 0-7156-3187-X.

This volume is one of the first in the new series 'Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy'. The series' mission statement claims to provide 'accessible introductions to ancient tragedies', and accessibility is a key feature of Allan's work. Complex issues are confronted, but the material is presented in a clear, direct manner throughout. The essentials are highlighted, and detailed guidance is provided to enable readers to pursue issues in greater depth, with a bibliography and endnotes indicating the extent of scholarship behind the play. The book functions as an excellent introduction to the play itself, and as a useful gateway for readers wishing to explore Greek literature and culture more widely. The main chapters are supplemented by a glossary and a brief timeline giving major dates for the history of Greek drama between 533 and 405 B.C.E.

The opening chapter, 'Festival, Myth and Play', condenses a remarkable amount of material into a highly readable introduction. The nature of Greek tragedy and Euripides' rôle within it is surveyed in a few pages, followed by a succinct, but detailed, account of the myth of Medea before Euripides' version. The chapter concludes with a scene-by-scene summary of the drama which flags the issues to be discussed in later chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 approach the play thematically: 'Husbands and Wives' combines a detailed reading of the play's gender dynamics with a thoughtful survey of the Athenian socio-political climate; 'Greeks and Others' warns us against reducing the play 'to a document of crude ethnic chauvinism', as A. provides a subtle reading of the play's manipulation of identity concepts, and the problematization of the binary opposition Greek versus Barbarian. Chapter 4, 'Medea's Revenge', examines one of the central problems of the play from a number of angles, giving a balanced account of the current academic debate on the status of Medea's action. A. pays particular attention to the details of language on which much interpretation turns, but manages to present the material in a general context so as not to exclude Greekless readers from the debate. As the series' prime audience must be students working in translation, it is heartening to see a sustained effort to explore linguistic matters in a wider forum. The final chapter, 'Multi-Medea', opens with a disclaimer that a full treatment of the post-Euripidean history falls outside the scope of the volume. Nevertheless, the material A. has chosen to present gives the reader a tantalizing glimpse into the reception history, together with a strong sense of the importance of the play to Western culture. The chapter ends with a strong assertion of the value of the drama to

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modern readers, as a play ‘which combines moral complexity with an overwhelming emotional impact’.

As indicated above, the wide range of material referenced makes this a valuable guide for non-specialist teachers, and suggests new details and avenues for those who have a more specialist interest in tragedy. However, this volume will be of particular interest to students studying the play and the myth of Medea, and will be a welcome addition to reading lists. It works as a comprehensive introduction to the play for those reading it for the first time, yet also suggests the depth and complexity of the issues raised by the play. This will be a powerful antidote to the malaise of students skimming the play, believing they have ‘understood’ it because they studied it once at school or university. A.’s account shows that this great tragic drama is both engaging and disturbing on many levels, and repays detailed attention at any stage of an academic career.

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E. M. GRIFFITHS

## ON GODS AND HUMANS IN EURIPIDES

C. WILDBERG: *Hyperesie und Epiphanie. Ein Versuch über die Bedeutung der Götter in den Dramen des Euripides.* (Zetemata 109.) Pp. viii + 231. Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2002. Paper, €49.90. ISBN: 3-406-48419-0.

Discussions of gods in Euripidean drama have all too often become consumed by the question (both unanswerable and irrelevant) of the poet’s own religiosity. W. adeptly avoids such pitfalls: his concern is to explore the ways in which the devotion of human characters to divinity (‘Hyperesie’), and the direct involvement of the gods in human action (‘Epiphanie’) operate as principles that set the plays’ action in motion. Dramatic technique and, above all, the characters’ *ēthos* and *dianoia* play a central rôle in W.’s interpretative scheme.

Chapters 2–4 take on the challenging task of detecting religious motivation behind the action of plays like *Alcestitis*, *Medea*, *Heraclidae*, and *Helen*, in which the gods are seemingly absent. Thus, the values to which Alcestitis and Admetus subscribe (the former’s wifely loyalty, the latter’s hospitality) are said to qualify as ‘von der Göttern symbolisierten Moralvorstellungen’ (p. 28): marriage is the domain of Hera and Hestia, foreigners are protected by Zeus. As for *Medea*, W. attacks the oft-expressed view that its action is divested of religious motivation: the primary motive of Medea’s murderous actions is not her uncontrolled emotionality but her overwhelming moral indignation at Jason’s violation of the divinely sanctioned principle of *euhorkia*.

A major driving force behind the action of these plays is ‘Hyperesie’, an ethico-religious attitude whose origins W. insightfully traces to Athenian intellectual circles of the late fifth century, especially the Socratic milieu. This novel attitude consists in placing oneself, by one’s own volition, to the service of divinity. A far cry from the mood of passive resignation prevalent in traditional forms of piety, ‘Hyperesie’ consciously promotes itself as a means of actively defending divine order. (The full impetus of the novelty can best be gauged against the background of conventional Greek *eusebeia*; necessary reading here is L. Bruit Zaidman, *Le commerce des dieux* [Paris, 2001], and the semantic studies of *ὄσιος* and *εὐσεβής* by J. C. Bolkestein, *ΟΣΙΟΣ en ΕΥΣΕΒΗΣ* [Amsterdam, 1936], and W. J. Terstegen, *ΕΥΣΕΒΗΣ en ΟΣΙΟΣ* [Utrecht, 1941].)

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