In this book, Professor Mastronarde draws on the seventeen surviving tragedies of Euripides, as well as the fragmentary remains of his lost plays, to explore key topics in the interpretation of the plays. It investigates their relation to the Greek poetic tradition and to the social and political structures of their original setting, aiming both to be attentive to the great variety of the corpus and to identify commonalities across it. In examining such topics as genre, structural strategies, the chorus, the gods, rhetoric, and the portrayal of women and men, this study highlights the ways in which audience responses are manipulated through the use of plot structures and the multiplicity of viewpoints expressed. It argues that the dramas of Euripides, through their dramatic technique, pose a strong challenge to simple formulations of norms, to the reading of a consistent human character, and to the quest for certainty and closure.

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Preface

It is over twenty-five years since I first contemplated writing (eventually) a general book on Euripides (at the time I had in mind the somewhat perverse title *The Unity of Euripides*). It is over ten years since I began trying to write this book, for which I had by then tentatively adopted the title *The Art of Euripides*, in tribute to the example of my senior colleague Tom Rosenmeyer’s *The Art of Aeschylus*. I wanted to write a book that dealt with topics that span most or all of the extant plays rather than one with a chapter on each play; and I hoped to find a middle ground between the formalist studies that I have admired and the social and political approaches that have been so successful and influential in the past thirty years. As things turned out, Tom Rosenmeyer died not many months before I was finally far enough along in my work to seek the reactions of some readers (had he lived, he would have been one), and I began to doubt whether I should keep the allusive title, being all too aware that I could not match the breadth of his reading in the history of drama and dramatic theory or the elegance of his writing. In the end, I kept the title but added a subtitle, “dramatic technique and social context,” to declare the two types of concerns that I have attempted to combine (with what success or utility it is left to each reader to decide). The Greek tragedians, like other Greek poets, were consummate craftsmen, innovating and experimenting with the formal elements of their art and reinterpreting the myths and personalities of the traditional heroes with an inextricable mixture of seriousness and playfulness. At the same time, their activity was clearly embedded in the social and political culture in which they operated, and their works reacted to and commented on issues and conflicts present in a broad archaic and classical Greek tradition and in the specifically Athenian tradition of the imperial democracy.

In the chapters that follow, I have approached the corpus from a number of directions, choosing topics that strike me as important and challenging. I did not aim to write a definitive book, and there are surely interesting
topics that I have omitted. Even in the topics I have chosen, I have been more interested in exploration and in recognition of variety and even contradiction than in reaching conclusions that can be neatly summarized. I believe that much of what is best in Euripides (and in the Greek tragedians generally) is exploratory and aporetic, and I approach the work in the same spirit. But I am not unaware that what I see and emphasize in analyzing Euripides is unavoidably a product of my own personal and scholarly profile: attending high school and college in the US in the 1960s and reading Greats at Oxford; being receptive to German scholarship of the fifties and sixties (Reinhardt, Ludwig, Strohm, Matthiessen) and American scholarship of the sixties and seventies (Knox, Wolff, the early works of Charles Segal); owing my earliest technical interests to Fraenkel’s commentary on Agamemnon and Barrett’s on Hippolytus; and pursuing my career at the University of California, Berkeley.

Because of the pressures of other responsibilities and projects, my work on this book has taken longer than I would have wished. Various chapters were drafted and redrafted over a period of a dozen years. I have worked intensively in the summers of 2007 and 2008 to bring it to completion and I have not always been able to take account of work published in the past few years, since I felt I needed to set a final limit for myself and finish the book before I got any farther past my prime, and the choice was between revising my drafts or almost interminably postponing completion in order to read new publications. I am conscious of the book’s shortcomings and difficulties. It is not an introductory book, nor easy to read, since it draws on so many plays, and I do not take up time and paper summarizing plot details (except for some brief summaries at the end of Chapter 1), and I cite a very large number of passages without including the text, requiring the reader to have at hand an edition or translation (with appropriate line numbers) in order to verify my claims or to flesh out concise statements. Nevertheless, I have tried in various ways to make it as accessible as possible to the serious reader who may come to it with knowledge of only a few plays or even may not read Greek. On the other hand, despite the advanced nature of the book in some regards, I may disappoint more expert readers by not engaging more frequently and specifically with the specialized scholarship on Euripides. Since my early formation as a scholar, I have of course learned greatly from the works of important critics like Zeitlin, Foley, and Goldhill, and my ideas have been sharpened and refined by the significant books on individual plays (here I would single out those of Mossman, Allan, and Mendelsohn for special praise). But I was trying from the beginning to come to terms with the chosen topics from a personal perspective based on a
long period of reading and teaching and not to write in detail about the
trends of scholarship; to do more with the bibliography would have
extended the book (and the date of its completion) even more (as it is, I
am grateful to Michael Sharp and Cambridge University Press for tolerating
the current length).

It is a pleasure to record here my gratitude for the help I have received
from many friends. Mark Griffith has been a wonderful colleague for thirty-
five years, and I have learned much from his bold and original readings. He
read the penultimate draft and, as usual, provided copious brief remarks
that guided me toward many improvements. Martin Cropp (whose friend-
ship goes back even further, to our time at Toronto) not only read that same
draft and gave helpful suggestions of both a particular and a general nature,
but allowed me to see the page proofs of the second volume of the Loeb
edition of the fragments (Collard and Cropp 2008b) and a version of its
index. Marco Fantuzzi spontaneously offered to read my work, gave sug-
gestions on all but one chapter (the one I revised too late to share with him),
and cheered me up when I was suffering self-doubt. Three readers for
Cambridge University Press also helped me in important ways to decide
on the final shape of the book. My ideas on particular topics have also
benefited from interactions with my students, of whom I want to mention
here Luigi Battezzato, Melissa Mueller, and Johanna Hanink. David
Jacobson provided another set of eyes to proofread the revised chapters,
pointed out passages that could be made clearer, and checked a near-final
version of the compiled bibliography. I must emphasize, of course, that
these readers should not be assumed to agree with all my views (or my
decisions about the final form of the book), and that any errors, omissions,
or perversities present in the book are my own responsibility. Versions of
various parts of the book were presented as lectures in Berkeley, Pisa,
Urbino, Rome, Calgary, and Boulder, and at Amherst, Columbia,
Harvard, and a Greek drama conference at Sydney, and students in semi-
nars at Berkeley and Harvard have also heard parts of this study: I thank all
my audiences for their kind reception and helpful questions.

Editors and presses have generously given me permission to reuse here
material that I have published previously. The versions in this book are
sometimes abbreviated, sometimes expanded, sometimes appear in English
for the first time, and most have received some degree of revision in wording.

Chapter 2 is derived from “Euripidean tragedy and genre: the terminology
Chapter 4 appeared in “Il coro euripideo: autorità e integrazione,” Quaderni
Urbinati di Cultura Classica 60 (1998) 55–80 and in “Knowledge and authority
in the choral voice of Euripidean tragedy,” *Syllecta Classica* 10 (1999) 87–104. Parts of Chapter 5 appeared in “The optimistic rationalist in Euripides: Theseus, Jocasta, Teiresias,” in *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy: Essays presented to Desmond Conacher*, eds. M. Cropp, E. Fantham, S. Scully (Calgary 1986) 201–11, in “Euripidean tragedy and theology,” *Seminari Romani di Cultura Greca* 5 (2002) 17–49, and in “The Gods,” in *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*, ed. J. Gregory (Blackwell: Oxford 2005) 321–32. I am grateful to Banca Intesa, Milan, for providing a high-quality digital image of the volute crater with what is plausibly regarded as an illustration of *Andromache* (Milan, Collezione H.A. (Banca Intesa Collection) 239, attributed to the Ilioupersis Painter) and for giving permission for its use on the cover (and thanks to Oliver Taplin for his help with this). I refer to this image in n. 25 of Chapter 3, and I consider it a good choice for this book for several reasons: it is a fine work that has not been frequently illustrated in the past; it is part of the evidence for Euripides’ popularity after his death; it features one of the extant plays that is less often studied; it shows the divine agent in a higher frame above the humans and expresses the close association of Apollo with Orestes in the ambush; and it catches the underhandedness of Orestes’ role and the underlying opposition between him and Neoptolemus.

In my drawn-out work on this book, I have benefited from fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and my progress was also assisted by the fact that my Berkeley department colleagues honored me with appointment to the Melpomene Chair (for which I also want to thank the anonymous donor). Finally, I must acknowledge the patience of my wife Joan, who has had less enjoyment of summer vacations (and weekends) than she should have while I have been completing this book.
Abbreviations and reference system

Names of Greek Plays

The names used in the text are an eclectic mix of Latinized versions of the Greek titles and a few English names. Some alternative names not used in this book are listed here. In the footnotes and in parentheses, abbreviated versions (as shown here) are used.

Aeschylus

Persae (= Persians), Pe.
Septem (= Septem contra Thebas, Seven against Thebes), Se.
Supplices (= Suppliant Women), Su.
Agamemnon, Agam.
Choephori (= Libation Bearers), Choe.
Eumenides, Eum.

[Aeschylus]

Prometheus (= Prometheus Vinctus, Prometheus Bound), Prom.

Sophocles

Ajax
Antigone, Ant.
Trachiniae (= Trachinian Women), Trach.
Oedipus Tyrannus (= Oedipus Rex, Oedipus the King), OT
Electra, El.
Philoctetes, Phil.
Oedipus Coloneus (= Oedipus at Colonus), OC
Abbreviations and reference system

Euripides

Alcestis, Alc.
Medea, Med.
Heracleidae (= Children of Heracles), Hcld.
Hippolytus (= Hippolytos Stephanias, the second Hippolytus), Hipp.
Andromache, Andr.
Hecuba (= Hekabe), Hec.
Supplies (= Suppliant Women), Su.
Electra, El.
Heracles (= Herakles Mainomenos, Hercules Furens), Her.
Troades (= Trojan Women), Tro.
Iphigenia in Tauris (= Iphigenia Taurica, Iphigenia among the Taurians), IT Ion
Helen (= Helena), Hel.
Phoenissae (= Phoenician Women), Phoen.
Orestes, Or.
Bacchae (= Bacchants), Ba.
Iphigenia in Aulis (= Iphigenia in Aulide, Iphigenia Aulidensis), IA
Cyclops, Cyc.
Rhesus, Rhes.

Fragmentary plays are generally referred to by their Latinized names (but English is used in a few names like Melanippe the Wise and Melanippe the Captive). References to fragments of Euripides follow the numbering in TrGF, which has also been adopted in other recent collections of tragic fragments.

Names of gods and characters

Most proper names are in Latinized forms, but there are exceptions (e.g., Helios, Thanatos) when Latinization strikes me as too odd.

Abbreviations


T Kannicht  Testimonia pertaining to Euripides in TrGF vol. V.1, ed. R. Kannicht.


Abbreviations of journal titles generally conform to those used in L’Année philologique.

Translations are my own, except for two short extracts credited in the footnotes.
Modern reception and interpretation of the major authors and literary texts of ancient Greece are heavily conditioned, and often distorted, by the long history of anecdote, criticism, pedagogy, and scholarship that has accreted around them, and there are few authors to whom this applies more forcefully than to Euripides. It is indispensable, therefore, as a preliminary step in approaching the works of Euripides, to take account of the long tradition of reception and judgment to which the plays have been subjected. Such an accounting will reveal several important potentialities inherent in his dramas as well as the agendas and preferences of the various readers and audiences, and it ought to help us move beyond some of the commonplaces that continue to influence the appreciation of his work.

A thorough treatment of the reception of Euripides would require a whole volume to itself. For the purposes of this book, some highlights will have to suffice. We may begin with the earliest stages of that reception, those from antiquity, which have had the longest span of direct and indirect influence: the judgments about Euripides’ themes and styles conveyed in comic form in the plays of Aristophanes; the strictures on his dramatic technique that emerge as obiter dicta in Aristotle’s Poetics; the biographical tradition about the poet himself; and the scholia and prefatory material transmitted with select plays in the medieval tradition of the extant plays.

Aristophanes, a younger contemporary who staged his comedies during the last two decades of the tragedian’s career, made use of Euripides most intensively in Acharnians (425), Women at the Thesmophoria (411), Frogs (405), and in a minor way in Clouds (the extant version is somewhat later than 423) and Peace (421). Exploiting a kind of culture war for humor, the

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1 Aristophanes’ productions date from 427 to 388 and he may have been born around 450–445, whereas Euripides’ productions date from 455 to 405 (posthumous) and he is likely to have been born in the period 485–475.
comic playwright fashions an exaggerated and oversimplified contrast between old and new, assimilating under one grouping Euripides, New Music, the sophists, Socrates, and the amoralism engendered by intense internal political strife, prolonged war, and dedication to retaining imperial power. The Aristophanic portrayal is the earliest source for the idea that in Euripides (as contrasted primarily with Aeschylus) rhetorical cleverness, “realistic” costuming, choice of sensationalized myth, and innovative lyric style diminish the dignity of the tragic genre and fail to produce the proper edification of the audience, as well as for the idea that Euripides is an atheist. From the Poetics derive many of the often repeated charges of the defects of Euripidean dramaturgy: faulty dramatic construction (use of the deus ex machina, Ch. 15; the backhanded compliment about being “most tragic even if he does not manage other matters well,” Ch. 13, which leads many to apply Aristotle’s complaint about lack of probability or necessity in Ch. 9 to Euripides); the perception of unworthy or unrealistic characterization (Menelaus and Iphigenia, Chs. 25, 15); the contrast with Sophocles, implicit when Euripides is cited as an example of the wrong approach, and explicit with respect to characterization (Ch. 25) and the use of the chorus (Ch. 18). Curiously, Aristotle’s admiration for Euripides’ Iphigenia in Tauris (Chs. 14, 16) has been much less influential until recent times. Aristotle’s opinions were especially decisive for reception once interest in tragedy was revived in Western Europe in the sixteenth century. But even though we cannot trace much direct knowledge of the Poetics itself in antiquity, similar judgments were no doubt conveyed in other works of Aristotle and in those of his immediate students (especially Dicaearchus and Aristoxenus) and thus had an impact on the scholarly treatment of Euripides in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, especially the major Alexandrian scholars, whose views have left traces in the surviving scholia.

2 Aeschylus is featured most prominently in Frogs, but the same contrast is assumed in Acharnians 10 and Clouds 1365, and presumably in fr. 161 K–A.
3 For the decisive role of Aristophanes in conditioning subsequent interpretation and criticism of Euripides, see Snell 1953.
4 Aristotle (Poetics 1460b33–4) ascribes the contrast between idealized characterization in Sophocles and realistic in Euripides to a statement of Sophocles himself. If this reflects a reality of written transmission (Sophocles is alleged to have written “About the chorus,” which some think could have been about tragic production in general and not simply about the chorus), it is another contemporary source of reception. But the statement could also have an anecdotal origin, perhaps involving oral transmission, so that it could be apocryphal, but still an early perception.
5 For the importance of the Aristotelian background to rhetorical and literary theories assumed in the scholia (primarily on Homer and the dramatists), see Meijering 1987.
The biographical tradition for most Greek poets is almost completely unreliable, and the case of Euripides is no exception. Mythical elements enter the lives, especially regarding birth, oracles, and death. Elements of rivalry and one-upmanship are highlighted or invented. Similarities between ideas in the poetic text and the works of other famous men generate allegations of plagiarism, collaboration, or teacher–pupil relationships that probably never existed. Illegitimate inferences are made from statements of characters in the dramas to establish the attitudes or experiences of the poet himself. The exaggerated, fantastic, or humorously malicious details provided in comedy are treated as facts. In the biographical tradition on Euripides we find the claim that his mother was a seller of vegetables (and the opinion that this claim is false); that he tried his hand at painting, or at competitive athletics, before becoming a poet; that he was student of Prodicus, Socrates, and Anaxagoras; that he was socially aloof and unpopular with his fellow-citizens; that he composed his plays in a lonely cave on Salamis overlooking the sea; that his dramas about adulterous women were inspired by his personal experience of two adulterous wives; that Athenian women at the Thesmophoria festival discussed condemning him to death; that he was torn to pieces by dogs (or by women). It is easy to see how some of these details come from a comedy, from well-known myths, or from Euripides’ own plays, and scholars have long acknowledged that most of what we read in the Life of Euripides or learn in other anecdotes is not to be taken seriously, but there is always some residual pull of the framework of perception suggested by the biographical tradition, especially where it overlaps the Aristophanic characterization, so that many still approach Euripides’ relationship to his contemporary intellectuals and artists and to his civic community in the light of that unreliable tradition.

Following the lead of Aristophanes and Aristotle, Hellenistic scholars found fault with various Euripidean strategies and techniques, especially on grounds of deviation from proper tragic decorum and lack of “necessity” in construction of scenes or speeches. An implicit contrast with Sophocles often seems to

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6 On the characteristics of the lives of ancient poets see Fairweather 1974, Lefkowitz 1979 and 1981.
7 The major sources are a life prefixed to the plays in the medieval manuscripts, an extended notice in the Byzantine encyclopedia called the *Suda*, and a section of Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae* 15.20). For these and other testimonia see Kannicht, *TrGF* 5:1.39–45; Kovacs 1994: 1–141 (with English translation).
8 The cave on Salamis where Euripides was believed to have worked has been identified and contains various dedications, showing it was a place of pilgrimage in postclassical times: one cup has Euripides’ name inscribed on it in lettering of the Roman period. See Lolos 1997; Blackman 1998: 16–17; Sauzeau 1998.
9 On Euripides as an Athenian citizen, see Stevens 1956.
operate in such evaluations, and it is possible that Didymus, the great compiler of Hellenistic literary commentary in the age of Augustus, was decisive in shaping the content and tone of the surviving scholia to Euripides. Other judgments found their way into the prefatory materials that accompany the select plays: two short extracts of aesthetic evaluation accompany *Phoenissae* (one somewhat appreciative, the other complaining of unnecessary or undramatic parts); the characters in *Orestes* are condemned for their ethical shortcomings (“all are bad except Pylades” – an unjustified exception); the material accompanying *Alcestis* and *Orestes* notes a resolution more suitable to comedy or satyr-play than tragedy (relying on the crude assumption that all tragedies end in disaster or death); the extant *Hippolytus* is praised as correcting what was “unseemly and deserving of condemnation” in the other version Euripides wrote. In the early reception of Greek tragedy in the Renaissance, when command of the Greek language (especially poetic idiom) was rare, the literary judgments of the scholia and prefatory material were taken very seriously and strongly influenced what was said about the plays and the poets.

If we now turn from these earliest sources of literary and philological interpretation to later ones, we find that the reputation of Euripides in the Hellenistic and Roman periods was actually complex and conditioned by the different contexts of reception. For the general educated public, he rapidly became a cultural icon of wisdom and skill. One theme of Euripides’ biography in the Peripatetic tradition reflected in Satyros is the failure of

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10 Elsperger 1908; Meijering 1987.

11 These prefatory supplements to the poetic text fall into three broad categories: (1) a one- or two-sentence summary of the play’s action together with basic information about the production (year, accompanying plays, ranking in the dramatic competition) and the play (scene, composition of chorus, speaker of prologue); (2) an epitome of the play in a long paragraph, often as much about the antecedents of the action as posited in the play or narrated in the prologue as about what happens in the play itself; (3) miscellaneous other comments (some pertaining to rhetorical qualities, some to questions of authenticity or dependence on another version) or mythographic information. On the first type see Achelis 1913, Zuntz 1955: 129–31 (with references to other discussions), Barrett 1964: 153; on the second type, see especially Rusten 1982, Rossum-Steenbeek 1998, with references to earlier discussions; for examples of the third type, see the prefatory matter accompanying Med., Phoen., and *Rhesus*.

12 These ancient judgments are still taken more seriously than they ought to be, especially the ones in the prefatory material that have been attached to the name of Aristophanes of Byzantium (second century BCE). In my opinion, this ascription results from a process of accretion, and the literary judgments do not actually go back to that scholar, who may have been responsible only for the standard factual details about the original production.

13 On a fragmentary papyrus book-roll recovered from Egypt, we have tantalizing scraps of a bizarre “life” of Euripides in dialogue form by Satyros of Callatis (third century BCE). The papyrus is re-edited with an extensive commentary, including good observations on the biographical tradition of Euripides, by Schorn 2004.
his contemporary Athenians to appreciate him adequately as the innovative intellectual and great artist that he was. The tradition may in fact have exaggerated this motif as part of a tendency of later historians and scholars to denigrate the Athenian democracy of the fifth century. The positive counterpart to such denigration of Athens was the claim to cultural authority made for the Macedonian dynasties by writers who passed on and elaborated the anecdotes about Euripides’ residence in Macedonia at the end of his life as well as by scholars performing the bibliographic and editorial work at the Alexandrian Library (which claimed, truly or not, to possess the Athenian state copies of the plays of the three great tragedians). On the other side of this competition for ownership of a cultural icon, the Athenians of the later fourth century made no differentiation between Euripides and Sophocles and Aeschylus when they recognized them as sources of wisdom and national pride in their orations, honored them with statues in the new stone-built theater, and accorded special treatment to their reperformed texts.

Although in his own lifetime Euripides won only four first prizes in (perhaps) twenty-one productions at the Great Dionysia, after his death he quickly eclipsed all other fifth-century dramatists in the performance repertoire. As time went on, performances included not only more or less fully staged complete plays, but virtuoso performance of excerpts with new music and dance. Among early papyri of tragedy, many are not from full texts of the plays, but from selections or anthologies that must reflect the performance tradition. Moreover, for the fourth century there is tantalizing evidence of Euripides’ popularity and influence in the fragments of comedy. Among the subset of known comic titles that match those of known tragedies, a remarkable number are Euripidean titles. We often

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15 See Wilson 1996 (esp. 335–16); on the symbolic significance of Lycurgus’ decree requiring actors to follow the accepted texts of the great three, see Scodel 2007.
16 He won for the fifth time posthumously. The entry in the Suda says that Euripides produced plays in twenty-two years all together. It cannot be determined whether this total is based on a count of didaskalic notices (and if so, whether the count applies only to the Great Dionysia or whether possible productions at the Lenaea are included – but most of the ancient scholarly references to tragic competitions are to the Dionysia) or by someone who considered eighty-eight plays to be genuine and divided that total by four. On the number of plays and productions, see Collard and Cropp 2008a: xi–xii; Kannicht TrGFV 77–80; Kannicht 1996; Pechstein 1998: 19–29 and in Krumeich et al. 1999: 400–1.
17 The nature of the Ptolemaic papyri of Euripides is the subject of a work in progress by Susan Stephens (presented at Berkeley in spring 2009).
18 Euripidean titles that also occur as titles of comedies in the late fifth and in the fourth century: Aigeus (Philyllius), Aeolus (Antiphanes, Eriphus; cf. Aristophanes’ Aeolosicon), Almion (Amphis, Mnesimachus), Andromeda (Antiphanes), Antiope (Eubulus), Auge (Philyllius, Eubulus), Bacchae
cannot be sure that Euripides’ plays inspired all of these instances, since some titles are known to have been used by Sophocles or other tragedians as well. Nor do most fragments permit us to see how the comedy may have exploited a tragic play (did the heroic characters of the original also appear in the comedy? How extensively were the tragic characters, tragic plot-motifs, or parodied passages deployed throughout the complete comedy?). Nevertheless, such reception of Euripides in Middle Comedy will have been one mechanism for reinforcing his stature with the theater audience and may have provided an auxiliary path for the adoption in New Comedy of plot-motifs like rape, exposure, and recognition and of conventions like the prologue monologue. In addition, scholars can discover allusions to or parodies of Euripidean passages or expressions in both Middle and New Comedy. Although it is possible that by the time of Menander many tragic allusions may have been recognized by the audience as typically tragic rather than specifically Euripidean, this general perception in itself attests to the canonical status his works and his style had attained within the century after his death.

The gnomological tradition and the citation of Euripidean lines by cultured authors indicate a high prestige value for some degree of (even indirect) familiarity with the classic writer. Euripides’ authority manifested itself also in the way mythographers followed or reported his versions of myths, even when modern scholars have concluded that Euripides’ versions were innovative, even eccentric, at the time his plays were written. It was a major mark of Greek educated culture to show familiarity with a wide range of myths, so as to be able both to understand allusions in art, literature, and performances and to make appropriate display of one’s knowledge. Such familiarity came in part from direct knowledge of reading texts, at school or in the home, and Euripides is, after Homer, the poet most commonly represented in the scraps of ancient books that have accidentally survived from antiquity, mainly in Egypt. But more often this cultural training derived not from detailed knowledge of an extensive range of classic texts, but from mythographic handbooks and collections of stories, such as the so-called epitomes or “Tales from

(Diocles, Antiphanes), Bellerophon (Eubulus), Cretans (Apollonius, Nicocharis), Danae (Apollonius, Sannyron, Eubulus), Erechtheus (Anaxandrides), Ion (Eubulus), Ixion (Eubulus), Helen (Alexis, Anaxandrides, Philyllus), Medea (Strattis, Antiphanes, Eubulus), Meleager (Antiphanes, Philetaerus), Myt (Eubulus), Oedipus (Eubulus), Oenomaus (Antiphanes, Eubulus), Orestes (Alexis), Peladus (Diphilus), Phoenissae (Aristophanes, Strattis), Polyidus (Aristophanes), Protesilaus (Anaxandrides), Philoctetes (Strattis, Antiphanes), Phoenix (Eubulus), Chrysippus (Strattis). In addition, note that both Axionicus and Philippides wrote plays entitled Phileuripides.

20 See, for example, Arnott 1996: 62–3.
22 Cameron 2004.
Euripides” ascribed (falsely, it appears) to Dicaearchus of Messene (Sicily). Numerous papyrus fragments give evidence of the popularity of this collection, and it was a source both for later mythographers and for the epitome included as “hypothesis” to each play in the medieval tradition of select plays.²³

The educational system, especially training in rhetoric, displays a second strand of this broader reception. Some of the positive comments about Euripides are based on admiration for the tragedies not as dramas or literary representations of emotion-stirring events,²⁴ but as sources for gnomic statements and examples of rhetorical technique. Thus the prefatory material to Andromache comments favorably on the style of the prologue speech, on Hermione’s speeches in the first episode (one evidencing “royal stature” and the other being “not badly framed”), and apparently on Peleus’ speech as well; Phoenissae is “full of many fine gnomic statements.” Quintilian leaves undecided whether Sophocles or Euripides is the better poet overall, but effusively explains why Euripides is far more useful to the person training himself for oratory (Inst. orat. 10.1.66–8 = Eur. T 145 Kannicht). Rhetorical skill and the abundance of gnomic sayings are chief points in Dio Chrysostomus’ recommendation of Euripides to a politically active man seeking greater proficiency in oratory (Orat. 18.6 = T 147 Kannicht: see further T 146, 148, 196, 197). Incidents and speeches from tragedy could serve as inspiration for rhetorical practice, as for instance in the progymnasma (exercise) of Libanius (a prolific author from Antioch in Syria, fourth century CE) that paraphrases and expands the speech of Menoeceus about willingly sacrificing himself to save his city (Phoenissae 991–1018; Libanius progymn. 11.22). Indeed, if one asks why Hecuba, Orestes, and Phoenissae emerged as the Euripidean triad, that is, as the plays most likely to be read and studied in the Byzantine “system” of higher education, one must weigh not only the popularity of these plays in the performance tradition (for which there is evidence in the case of the latter two) and the range of important mythography that is covered by the set (embracing Troy, Thebes, and Argos), but also the speeches and gnomes that would have been prized in the rhetorically oriented education of the late Roman period. Euripidean excerpts also loom very large in the anthology of gnomic wisdom of Stobaeus from the fifth century CE, and such collections must go back many centuries, even perhaps to the fourth century BCE.

²⁴ There are, however, also appreciations of the pathos of Euripides: in the prefatory material to Medea, the opening is praised for being “very pathetic” at the same time that the artful composition (epexergasia) of the nurse’s speech is admired; Phoenissae is also called “very pathetic,” apparently as a positive evaluation.
In contrast to the appreciation that Euripides received as a general cultural authority and as a model for rhetorical skill, a more critical attitude flourished in scholarly and philosophical contexts. Philological commentary aspired to a relative ranking or comparison of the three tragedians; biography and anecdote sought juicy material; scholars paraded their expertise by finding fault with the famous poet on specific points of style; and scholars or teachers promoted a particular ethical and artistic decorum by condemning his deviations from their preferred norm. We can observe how the scholia to Sophocles preserve many comments praising his dramatic construction and characterization while those to Euripides more often contain criticism on these counts. Although this contrast goes back ultimately to the influence of Aristotle and his Peripatetic followers, it is likely that the prominence and preservation of such comments in the scholia reflect the agenda of the Roman period, from Didymus in the Augustan age onward.\textsuperscript{25} In the renewed “Greek classicism” aligned with Roman imperial rule, cultural authorities such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus were eager to distance themselves from the popular tastes and political disorder of the Hellenistic period and to give higher status to purity of language and style and to canonical works from the fifth and fourth centuries. Scholars and schoolteachers could thus enhance their own standing by subverting the popular preference for Euripides and by demonstrating their skill at detecting weaknesses in his works.

Somewhat akin to such philological commentary is the reception of Euripides among Hellenistic philosophers. It was surely with Euripides’ \textit{Medea} in mind that the Stoic Chrysippus began a long tradition of using Medea’s killing of her children as an illustration of the harmful triumph of emotion over reason. Fragments and passages of Teles, Favorinus, Epictetus, and Plutarch show that Polyneices in \textit{Phoenissae} was a standard example used in arguments against the false valuation of exile in conventional morality.\textsuperscript{26} Epictetus also cites the power-hungry Eteocles for his incorrect judgment about what is the greatest of goods. The culturally familiar and

\textsuperscript{25} Meijering \textit{1987} often suggests that such judgments of Euripides are survivals of the commentaries of Aristophanes of Byzantium; but Aristophanes’ authorship of these opinions is no more secure than the ascription to him of literary critical comments in the prefatory material to plays (\textit{n. 12} above). Even if the judgments were taken from Aristophanes, it is significant that they were selected and preserved as the scholiastic comments were compiled and reduced during the Roman and early Byzantine period.

\textsuperscript{26} There is some precedent for this use of Euripides in Aristotle, as in \textit{EN} 1110a28 (“what compelled the Euripidean Alcmeon to commit matricide seems ridiculous”), 1167a32–4 (“but whenever one person wants himself [sc. to rule exclusively], like the characters in \textit{Phoenissae}, people engage in civil strife”), and Aristotle uses Euripidean lines to illustrate points (e.g., \textit{EE} 1244a10, \textit{EN} 1136a1, 1142a2, \textit{Pol.} 1277a19), but not in the combative way typical of later diatribe. For Medea see Gill \textit{1983} and \textit{2005}, Dillon \textit{1997}; for Epictetus’ use of the sons of Oedipus, see Mastronarde \textit{2009}: 65, 462.
authoritative texts are thus selected to provide effective negative examples for those challenging their listeners and students to follow a more philosophical path in life. Gnomic excerpts on moral and theological themes were likewise of interest to Hellenistic philosophers, either for support of their own views or as alternatives to attack, and Greek patristic texts that quote Euripides probably reflect earlier compilations of key passages on divinity, fate, and the like rather than direct reference to complete plays or a new culling of examples. The fashion of valuing very highly the maxims to be culled from the texts remained strong in the Byzantine middle ages and the Renaissance. ²⁷

FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO GERMAN CLASSICISM

The ancient sources, particularly the scholia, the lives, Aristotle, and Quintilian, were extremely influential in the first centuries of modern reception, from 1500 well into the 1700s. For instance, to accompany his influential Latin versions of Hecuba and Iphigenia in Aulis (Paris 1506, Venice 1507, but his work on Hecuba probably began a few years earlier), Erasmus translated the hypothesis of the Palaeologan scholar Thomas Magister for Hecuba, but wrote his own epitome for Iphigenia in Aulis, which had no hypothesis in the manuscript tradition. Some of his choices in his translation of Hecuba may perhaps point to use of the scholia (from manuscript sources). ²⁸ The scholia became widely available in 1534 with the edition by Arsenius of Monembasia, and the first Latin translation of the whole Aldine corpus (lacking Electra, first available in 1545) appeared in 1541, the work of Dorotheus Camillus, a pseudonym for Rudolf Collin. By the 1550s we begin to see some efforts toward assessment of the individual plays in the context of the Latin translations. The Reformation scholar Philipp Melanchthon was noted for his inspiring lectures on classical authors, and Guilielmus Xylander stitched together, edited, and supplemented translations by Melanchthon to produce a new Latin translation of the full

²⁷ In some Byzantine manuscripts gnomic lines have special marking with marginal symbols or the notation ὡραῖον ("beautiful"), and gnomological compilations were still being made: for instance, Gnomologium Vatopedianum (Longman 1959), and the El Escorial and Barberini gnomologia (Matthiessen 1974: 38, 45). The first collections of tragic fragments in the Renaissance were essentially gatherings of maxims: Kassel 2005.

²⁸ For example, Hec. 8 πάλαξ = glebam, 9 φίλιππον = ferocem, 16 ὅρισματα = Pergama might reflect explanations in the scholia, but Erasmus had also seen the partial translation of Hecuba by Filelfo, who used glebam, ferocem, and moenia in these three places. The scholia to Euripides were not printed until 1534, but manuscripts of Hecuba with at least scholia recentiora are numerous and are likely to have been available to Erasmus. For Erasmus’ editions of these two plays, see Waszink 1969.
corpus of Euripides (Basel 1558, with a somewhat revised issue in 1562). Xylander included some sporadic brief comments on particular plays.\footnote{Some relevant remarks are in his dedicatory preface, and others (which might be derived from Melanchthon) precede certain plays, such as \textit{Phoenissae} and \textit{Cyclops}: for the latter, the comment is “this tragedy is the image of some extremely cruel tyrant. I believe the poet may have wanted to describe some Egyptian king or tyrant. By the Satyrs he means fools and imposters (moriones et impostores). The play has the general argument that no one is trustworthy to a tyrant, even someone who obeys.”} Contemporaneously, Gasparus Stiblinus (Caspar Stiblin) worked on an even more ambitious edition (Basel 1562, but with a dedicatory letter dated 1559). Stiblinus is now more famous for a utopian political treatise,\footnote{Firpo 1963.} but his Euripides is significant because it seems to offer the earliest particular assessments of all the plays in the corpus. He produced a new Latin translation of the plays, with the ancient hypotheses also translated before each play. Following each play, he supplies his own preface (\textit{praefatio}) as well as notes (\textit{annotationes}). His approach is in line with the tendency of sixteenth-century writers on poetics (for example, Scaliger, Castelvetro, Sir Philip Sidney) to attempt a reconciliation of Platonic and Aristotelian views of poetry by insisting that poets both delight and instruct, and that representations of morally suspect behavior edify by providing a model of what is to be avoided. Both in his dedicatory epistles (one to the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I and one to his readers) and in his individual prefaces, Stiblinus emphasizes the didactic and moral effects of observing disasters, sufferings, and wrongdoing, and frequently points to the rhetorical skill of particular speeches, in line with Quintilian’s advice about the utility of Euripides. As a commentator, Stiblinus drew inspiration from the Donatan commentaries on the comedies of Terence: he divides each tragedy into five acts, following the model of the Terentian comedies and in accordance with Renaissance theory; the structure and topics of his prefaces imitate those of Donatus; and he employs analytic terms that he found in Donatus’ work on Terence (\textit{epitasis}, \textit{catastrophe}, \textit{paraskeue}, \textit{praestructio}) to make original observations about dramatic structure. Many of his notes are drawn from the scholia, but he also adduces information and comparative passages from ancient authors,\footnote{A telling example is Stiblinus’ note on \textit{Hecuba} 1261, where he gives a rationalized alternative version of the death of Hecuba: she annoyed the Greeks so much with her insults and curses that they threw her from the mast into the sea. This unusual version is taken from half of a \textit{scholion recentius} on 1261 (L.509.3–9 Dindorf, already published in Arsenius’ edition of 1534), where throwing from the mast is confusingly conflated with stoning on land. A similar rationalization, with stoning rather than casting into the sea, is in the Latin Dictys Cretensis 5.16.} especially prose writers like Plutarch and Cicero on ethical issues. Stiblinus’ efforts stand out because philologists editing Euripides in
this period rarely addressed broader issues of dramatic interpretation, but simply cited or paraphrased what they found in the ancient sources.

Writers on poetic or dramatic theory and commentators on Aristotle’s *Poetics* were more likely than editors of the plays to make evaluative comments about tragedies or their authors, although such comments touch on the handling of details more often than on overall impact or meaning or structure. Most repeat the ancient examples without showing any independent judgment, but there are exceptions, like Minturno, Castelvetro, and Daniel Heinsius. By the early eighteenth century, the French, with their own well-developed dramatic tradition, could judge their own best productions more skilful and decorous than the ancient models, as Pierre Brumoy, the author of the first general handbook of Greek drama in a vernacular language, remarked. After 1750, however, German Classicism and Romanticism are the background for major developments in classical philology and also in the literary and cultural interpretation of Greek drama. Along with a better sense of historical contextualization (and clearer differentiation of Greek and Roman traditions), approaches in this period rely on a new idealized sense of “the classical.” They imitate and elaborate the ancient tradition when they posit a quasi-biological growth and decay of the genre, in parallel with political trends in Athens and changes in other artistic modes, such as sculpture. Tragedy is thus an art-form crude and underdeveloped in Aeschylus, perfect in its harmony, control, and organic unity in Sophocles, and declining and decadent in Euripides. Aristotle’s teleological perspective (*Poetics* 4.1449a14–15: “and after undergoing many changes, tragedy stopped [changing], since it had attained its natural form”)

32 Antonio Sebastiano Minturno, *De Poeta* (1559) and *L’arte poetica* (1564); Lodovico Castelvetro, *Poetica d’Aristotele vulgarizzata et sposta* (1576); Daniel Heinsius, *De Tragoediae Constitutione* (1611). For a survey of treatises on poetics in Renaissance, see Weinberg 1961. For reception of Greek tragedies on the stage in this period, see Burian 1997b.

33 Brumoy 1730. This work contained translations of the plays together with analyses and aesthetic criticism. Brumoy died in 1742, but his book was re-edited and expanded into an almost unrecognizable form in later editions over about 150 years. An English translation appeared in London 1759. Note the following extracts from the introduction: “I do not believe I do an injustice to an age as polished and as enlightened as our own when I say that in the very period when the taste for theater performances has been purified to an extreme degree by the great geniuses who have worked in the theater, people have had little knowledge of, and people now know almost nothing any longer of, the Greek theater. To be sure the little which survives for us is still the delight of certain curious persons whom the study of the Greek language has not repulsed; but their number is very limited, and in their sphere one does not always see prevail a taste equal to their erudition, as if these two things were rarely combined …” [Moreover, the French theater has reached such a height that people feel it is unnecessary to look elsewhere.] “The favorable opinion of the present theater, which people enjoy and which depicts our manners, has caused the neglect of knowledge of the theater of the past, which costs too much toil and which holds too little interest.”
is obviously important as a source, but the criticisms provided by Aristophanes also find wholehearted acceptance in this scheme, which is well illustrated in the works of the brothers Schlegel. The belief that there existed at a certain moment of Greek or Athenian culture a “classical” balance and perfection goes hand in hand with the conviction that peoples and races are characterized by distinct psychological and cultural traits carried in their blood and preserved by purity of descent. This was already an ancient attitude, but it received strong development and pseudo-scientific support in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Euripides’ decadence can then be viewed not only as a matter of quasi-biological senescence in the genre, but also as a personal betrayal of the purest cultural norms and values.

THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

The charges against Euripides taken over from Aristophanes and developed by critics like the Schlegels reappear in a striking form later in the nineteenth century when Friedrich Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), elaborates his fantasy of a lost perfect musical culture combining both the Dionysiac and the Apollinian. This essay has many distinctive features, such as indebtedness to the metaphysics of Schopenhauer and a schematic view of stages of alternation between Apollinian and Dionysian moments in the history of Greek religion, culture, and poetic and musical art, and it also reflects Romantic notions, such as the essentialist assumption of inherent ethnic/racial qualities and the belief in the non-intellectual origins of genuine art. What Nietzsche has to say about Euripides himself, however, is mostly a continuation or extension of the previous traditions: for instance, Euripides’ rationalism and devotion to intelligibility and clarity (Sections 10, 12), his realism (Sections 11, 17), his affinity to Socrates (Sections 12–15), his betrayal and dismantling of traditional myth and the previous tragic approach to it (Sections 10–11). Nietzsche echoes the early nineteenth-century idea that Euripides experimented with tragedy in a desperate attempt to win the favor of an audience ill disposed toward him, but then modifies this view, making the striking claim that Euripides wrote to please only two viewers – himself and Socrates (Section 11). This was an important impetus to theories that posited that

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34 See F. Schlegel *1794a, 1794b, 1795–97, 1798, 1815; A. Schlegel 1809; Jacobs 1798: 335–422; and the discussions of Snell 1933, Behler 1986, Michelini 1987: 5–11.
35 For a full discussion see Silk and Stern 1980.
Euripides wrote in such a way as to convey one impression to the masses while signaling a quite different meaning to a small group of intellectuals.\textsuperscript{36} Nietzsche’s description of the Euripidean prologue and divine epilogue as epic elements different in kind from the dramatic-lyric elements in between them (Section 12) likewise addresses a problem that has exercised many later critics and suggests one of the common approaches (insisting on the separability or otherness of these parts of the play). Nietzsche’s view of Euripides is not wholly consistent. At one moment, for rhetorical effect, he speaks of Euripides as killing tragedy, but then partly absolves him as an individual by declaring him to be only the mask of a new divine force, Socratic aestheticism (Section 12). Similarly, when decrying Euripides’ approach to the chorus and to characterization, he is honest enough to concede that Sophocles also already reflected in his use of the chorus a breakdown of the Dionysian basis of tragedy (Section 14) and that Sophocles introduced psychological refinements that began to move tragic characters away from the eternal types that Nietzsche considered proper to genuine tragedy (Section 17).

In defense of Euripides, throughout the nineteenth century, and much of the twentieth, many critics reacted to the widely accepted picture of a decadent Euripides by emphasizing one or another aspect of the oeuvre, particularly any aspect that would have a strong resonance in the critics’ contemporary culture. The modern novel, the theater of Ibsen or Shaw, and the rise of the discipline of psychology influenced those who saw realism or psychological depth as the main goal of Euripidean drama.\textsuperscript{37} The struggles between church and science found their echo in the approaches that made Euripides a would-be educator of the people in the latest science and philosophy, a proponent of a Greek Enlightenment, or an anti-clerical rationalist.\textsuperscript{38} The experience of massively destructive or divisive wars made it attractive to emphasize anti-war themes in Euripides. All such approaches latch on to something that is in the plays, but fail to examine the applicability and ambiguity of their chosen terms, treating (for instance) “realism” or “character” as self-evident concepts that meant the same in antiquity as they do now, and they suffer from the partiality inherent in any narrowly focused lens of interpretation.

\textsuperscript{36} See n. 38 below.
\textsuperscript{37} For fuller discussion of the period from 1800 to the 1980s, see Michelini 1987: 3–51.
\textsuperscript{38} The idea of Euripides as a “philosopher on the stage” (σκηνικὸς φιλόσοφος) has ancient roots (Γ 166a–169 Kannicht). Euripides’ espousal of and intention to promote “modern thinking” were central to the interpretations of, e.g., Hartung (1843) and Nestle (1901). A similar assumption is made in the dual audience approach of so-called Verrallism, in which the rational view is a message to be understood only by a select few of the large audience: Verrall (1893). On Verrall and his influence on several later critics, see Michelini 1987: 11–19, 22–8.
The longstanding views just described continue to be influential, especially among non-specialists. Among professional scholars of Greek tragedy, their limitations are, in general, well recognized. Three general kinds of approach have been particularly prominent and productive in the scholarship of the past fifty years: formalism, structuralism and semiotics, and several flavors of historicism. The first of these embraces the stylistic and formal studies that have heightened our awareness of various conventions of language, dialogue, extended speech, and scenic composition. Formal studies of this kind go back much farther than fifty years, but many earlier specimens presupposed an evolutionary scheme of growth, perfection, and decline, and thus tended to look at Euripides in terms of ossification of formal elements or predominance of pathetic effects over organically integrated expression of emotion. From the 1950s onward, however, there has been a greater tendency to recognize variety and creativity in the use of conventional forms and to resist, to some extent, the temptation of seeing linear development as a key to interpretation (and chronology). The importance of the study of forms and conventions is twofold. First, it reveals the complexity of tragic art as a form that comprises both elements that are conventional to the genre and not to be read as personal to a particular playwright and elements that are unconventional and idiosyncratic. Second, it reinforces the lesson that modern terms of reference cannot be simply carried over to the Greek plays, that we must take account of the intricate interweaving of the conventional with the particular elements unique to a speech, to a character, or to a scene, even if this makes interpretation more difficult or indeterminate.

Structuralism and its offshoots have proven to be well suited to Greek tragedy as well as to other Greek texts. Binary oppositions were embedded in many structures of the Greek language and were often exploited in their social, political, and philosophical thinking. Human and bestial, civilized and uncivilized, Greek and non-Greek, male and female, free and slave—these are only some of the major themes explored in tragedies and fruitfully analyzed in the scholarship of the last several decades. Broader applications of semiotics have illuminated various symbolic meanings of space (inside and outside, up and down, city and countryside) and the body (integrity and permeability, openness and concealment, variations of dress and appearance). The
