The author of this pair of monographs is among the most significant and respected living German experts in the field of Euripidean studies and tragedy in general. His first monograph, published 40 years ago, is one of the most successful products of the German school that promoted intensive study of form and variation in Attic tragedy, and it also contributed to the emergence of more sensitive approaches to Euripides’ so-called tragicomedies and to the ongoing debates on the implications of Euripides’ treatment of the gods and of τὰχθι. His 1974 study of the textual tradition of Hecuba laid the groundwork for a better understanding of the transmission of the Euripidean triad (Hecuba, Orestes, Phoenissae) in the 13th century and later and facilitated subsequent work on the triad plays, including the appearance of Hecuba with a very rich apparatus criticus in the Oxford Classical Text of Euripides by James Diggle. M. has also served the field notably as a reviewer.

M.’s project in the first of the two books under review is in some respects reminiscent of the work of Albin Lesky in his Tragische Dichtung der Hellenen, esp. in its third edition of 1972, in which Lesky added a more detailed sequential discussion of the action of each tragedy to his reporting and evaluation of contemporary trends of scholarly criticism. M. acknowledges this affinity (12) when he summarizes nine developments in Euripidean interpretation since 1972 that justify a new treatment of this kind, including greater willingness to emphasize the continuities between Eur. and the literary tradition from Homer to Sophocles and Herodotus, different approaches to the sophistic elements detected in the plays and to Götterkritik, heightened appreciation of his creativity in varying and innovating within a well-developed system of formal elements, and the application of sociological, political and gender-based viewpoints. M.’s book is aimed at a disparate audience: scholarly experts in the field of Attic tragedy, advanced students, beginning students, and the interested general reader, as well as scholars of theater and theatrical producers. There are no extensive quotations of the dramatic texts, and Greek appears very rarely, always translated for the non-expert. Thus M. engages in a delicate balancing act, between brevity and detail, between large themes and very specific controversies familiar to experts, and he is largely successful, although it is inevitable that occasionally the expert reader may be dissatisfied with the brevity or generality while the beginner or general reader may be mystified by this or that detail or technicality.

The book is structured in small units: an introduction, 23 chapters (with five covering background material, 17 on the surviving tragedies in assumed chronological order (the same order as enshrined in Diggle’s OCT, except with IA before Bacchae), and one on the fragmentary plays about which one can say something useful), and three appendices (on the satyr-play Cyclops; on Rhesus, which he rightly does not consider likely to be Euripidean – pp. 288–90 give an excel-

1 Elektra, Taurische Iphigenie und Helena, Hypomnemata, 4 (Göttingen 1964).
2 Studien zur Textüberlieferung der Hekabe des Euripides, Bbl. der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften, N. F., 2. Reihe, 52 (Heidelberg 1974).

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lent concise statement of the case; and on reception and influence – too brief to be more than a guide to some further bibliography¹). Some sections are therefore as short as 4–5 pages, while the longest chapters on individual plays are those on Alcestis and Hippolytus, the shortest on Heracleidae and Andromache.

In presenting Eur.'s biography (14–17), M. concedes the tainted nature of the tradition but is inclined to think that something useful may still be inferred beyond the titles, number of victories, and dates that have a basis in serious research into public records of the Great Dionysia. Once it is agreed, however, as M. himself states several times in both books, that the opinions spoken by characters in a drama are not to be taken as the personal utterance of the playwright, I see no safe ground for detecting even rarely an echo of Eur.'s «true voice», whether we are dealing with the old men's choral declaration of allegiance to song in Her. 673–679 (best taken in character as a self-consolation for the defects of the arrangement of human life and as an encomiastic motif of enthusiasm for the role of praising Heracles) or in apparent compliments to hardy farmers (who are I think subject to as much irony as others in Eur.: more on this below).

Chapters 2 and 3 give an authoritative brief overview of the textual tradition, editions, scholia, and arguments. M. explains that the collection of arguments that circulated in Roman times «hatte eine ähnliche Funktion wie ein moderner Opernführer, sollte also die Möglichkeit bieten, sich rasch über den Inhalt eines Stückes zu informieren». This is partly true, but one should also consider the fact that a very large part of each argument is devoted to the mythological background of the piece and relatively little guidance is given as to the exact sequence of scenes and actions. The collections thus served as well to bolster a more general cultural literacy in regard to mythology or mythography.² Chapter 4 reviews structural forms (Bauformen) and story-patterns (Handlungstypen), and Chapter 5 summarizes what can be said about dating (with a useful digression explaining the fallacies of the dating system proposed by C. W. Müller, who argued that tragedians generally wrote and rehearsed a tetralogy exactly every two years).

Each of the chapters on the individual plays begins with a few paragraphs introducing the dating and mythological and poetic background and commenting on the structure, plot-type, or similar issues. The discussion is then in the form of «descriptive analysis» (13 Anm. 1) of the sections of the play by the traditional divisions of prologue, parodos, episode, stasimon, and exodos. The choral parts sometimes receive rather perfunctory treatment and are always less analyzed than the dialogue scenes: given the range of audiences for this book, it is not really to be expected that the complex rhetoric, allusiveness, and imagery of the choral odes would be given more space (but one regrets seeing such a prosaic summary of a beautiful and rich stasimon like Hipp. 732–75, p. 85). M. closes each chapter with a few paragraphs on general interpretation. Finally, each chapter has a bibliography of half a page or more appended.

To give an example, for Alcestis M. lists the commentaries by Dale, Conacher, and Weber and Lesky’s famous 1925 Sitzungsbericht; cites the relevant pages of about 30 books from Schmid (1940), Zürcher (1947), and Pohlenz (1954) through Rohdich (1968), Steidle

¹ A few more items might have been mentioned: Edith Hall, Fiona Macintosh, Oliver Taplin. eds., Medea in Performance 1500–2000 (Oxford 2000); Marianne McDonald, Euripides in Cinema: the heart made visible (Philadelphia 1983); ead. Ancient Sun, Modern Light: Greek drama on the modern stage (New York 1992). Mention could also have been made of the ongoing work of Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama in Oxford.

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(1968), and Burnett (1971) to Foley (2001) and Wildberg (2002); includes about 10 articles in German, English, and French; and for additional older and newer items refers to Lesky’s listing in 1972 and those in the monographs of Riemer (1989) and Hartigan (1991). M. is a true master of Euripidean bibliography, although the treatment of items from the late 90s onward is not complete, and there is perhaps too little indication of the burgeoning of Euripidean studies in Italian in recent years.

M.’s approach to Eur. is one to which I am very sympathetic, so I find a great deal to agree with in his chapters on the individual plays. Alcestis may be taken as a good example of the tact and tenor of M.’s interpretation of Eur. He is fully alive to the paradoxes of the situation generated by Apollo’s gift and Alcestis’ sacrifice, acknowledges the weaknesses of Admetus, but also rejects as anachronistic the more extreme moral objections to his character raised by many 20th-century critics, and gives full weight to the authority of the divine pronouncements of Apollo and of the actions and attitudes of Heracles as the agent of divine favor. He rightly notes how important a value ἔμνεια was for the original audience, especially when imagining heroes and aristocrats. The final phrase of the chapter («schon ganz ein echter Euripides, zugleich fromm und betroffen über die große Fremdheit zwischen Göttern und Menschen und über die Dis- harmonie der Weltordnung») sounds a valuable note that is carried through consistently in M.’s interpretations. This chapter may also be used as an example of the ways in which I would prefer to go beyond the interpretation that M. offers, and the limitations I detect can be only partially explained by the format and brevity of his discussion.

First, I would give greater emphasis to the unresolved tensions: for instance, although ἔμνεια is an important value, it is not absolute (and its aristocratic nature perhaps made it less self-evidently primary to some in the Athenian audience), and the contradiction between the chorus-leader’s shock at Admetus’ excess in 551–2 and the omniscient or prescient choral voice that foresees good fortune for Admetus in recompense for his virtue as host (604–51) should not be ignored; nor should the irony of Admetus’ later near-denial of his duties as host when Heracles is trying to reward him for his earlier hospitality (1042–45, 1104). Second, this glorification of ἔμνεια deserves to be brought into relation to the issue of gender: Admetus’ ‘betrayals’ of Alcestis do not so much demonstrate a particular weak personality or a striking egotism as a larger value system in which public male interests trump familial and female interests, and I believe the pain and paradoxes staged in this drama imply a challenge to straightforward acceptance of that large system, even as it acknowledges its dominance. Third, there are occasional details where M. may be too ready to take a ‘commonsense’ approach. Is it really clear that if Admetus had told the truth to Heracles, Heracles would have gone elsewhere (47), or is this rather one of the many mistaken judgments that Euripidean characters tend to make? The statue kept in the marriage-bed as a consolation certainly has a literary or mythological background, but citing the real-life beneficial effect of keeping a picture of a deceased dear relative doesn’t seem a sufficiently complex response to the extremism of Admetus’ suggestion.

For other plays I will briefly note points of disagreement or differences of nuance, and these remarks are to be read in the context of my overall agreement with most of M.’s analyses and my judgment that they provide a very good introduction for many kinds of readers.

1 Justina Gregory’s comm. on Hecuba (Atlanta 1999) is not listed on p. 114, but this is no doubt related to the unlucky distribution history of the APA Textbook Series (the book is now available from Oxford University Press).
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Note, for instance, p. 135 (Electra) on the ‘psychology’ of Electra and on the relation of the gods to Orestes’ ambiguously-presented deed of matricide; p. 144 (Heracles) on the naiveté of theology briefly espoused by Heracles against the background of the realities of the created dramatic world; p. 171 (IT) on misinterpretation of the moral status of Orestes and Iphigenia in stealing Artemis’ statue; p. 181 n. 1 (Ion) against Rohdich’s overemphasis on Ion’s short-lived intention to ask Apollo for the truth; p. 182 on the absurdity of Verriallism; p. 236 on the irony of context that subverts Iphigenia’s noble decision in IA. P. 74 in Hcll., the position of the divinities with respect to the protection of the suppliants is not so simple as Zeus and Athena vs. Hera; there is also the requirement of human sacrifice to Persephone (488–9), which makes the chorus doubtful about the will of the gods (425–6).

P. 86: M.’s compares Medea and Hippolytus in respect to the conventional failure to intervene in response to cries from within (Med. 1274–8, Hipp. 782–3), but when he suggests that the chorus in Hipp. is inactive because the women think Phaedra should not be hindered from suicide, this ignores the difference in situation. In Hipp. the chorus has already been told Phaedra will die and its dissuasion has been rebuffed, and the woman assumes at the first cry that Phaedra is dead (778): an intervention would be aimed not at stopping the violence, but at cutting down the corpse.

P. 107 n. 2: the associations that Polyxena’s self-exposure (Hec. 357–70) may have stirred in the ancient audience must have been multiple and complex (for instance, Amazons, rape of captive women, appropriation of heroic nudity and the warrior-ideal of wounds on the chest); M. rejects the more extreme statements of a feminist approach (Rabinowitz’ oft-quoted «pornographic gesture»), but it doesn’t seem sufficient to conclude that «Die zeitgenössischen Zuschauer mit ihrem unbefangeneren Verhältnis zum Körper dürften keinen Anstoß genommen haben».

Pp. 110–14: in the final evaluation of Hecuba M. laments the lack of a ‘tragic conflict’ in either of the two actions of the play and suggests that Trojan Women was to be a more successful (more unified) attempt to dramatize the fate of the women after the fall of Troy. The former judgment is a reflection of the way M., despite great sensitivity and flexibility in reading Euripides, is still attached to the traditional Germanic category of «the tragic» and is not quite ready to concede that the modern development of this concept may be inapplicable to ancient plays and an obstacle to correct, or sympathetic, interpretation (cf. his remarks on Helen, p. 192: «Theonoe hilft dem Stück, die Tragödie zu bleiben, die es sein soll»). As for the latter view, I think Hecuba is in fact the more tightly-knit of the two plays, not in terms of an Aristotelian singleness of action but in terms of the mirrored structure and rhetorical dialectic of values (the same techniques are used in Trojan Women, but in a looser concatenation).

P. 121 n. 1: M. correctly objects to the view that the goal of the supplication in Supplices is not fulfilled because the mothers of the Seven do not see their sons’ bodies. But I do not understand his claim that «Es geht wohl eher darum, dass der Exzess an Äußerungen der Trauer, der in einer solchen Situation üblich war, im Rahmen des Dionysosfestes nicht angebracht war und deswegen vom Dichter vermieden wurde». Certainly, excesses of lamentation not to be seen in public in reality were regularly staged in Attic tragedy. It is much more likely that in Supplices Euripides is presenting a filtered version (and critique?) of the longstanding and contemporary Athenian efforts to control excessive mourning, especially through restrictions on women.¹

P. 164: M. seems to me overoptimistic in inferring that Artemis does wish to be rescued from the bloodthirsty Taurians (as Iphigenia would like to believe, IT 389–91): Artemis’

² See Helene P. Foley, Female Acts in Greek Tragedy (Princeton 2001), Chapter 1.
attitude is, I believe, left obscure throughout the play. M. himself concedes a few pages later (p. 172) her «double face» and the identity of the goddess of Halai with the goddess of Aulis and the Taurians (cf. an even more forceful statement of this point in Eur. u. s. Jahrh. 61). Similarly, in Helen, M. seems to me to go too far in claiming that the audience would understand that Zeus will ultimately come down on the side of justice and thus Theonoe’s decision is symbolic of that of the chief god, and not as decisive as Theonoe herself alleges when she says the τελειος is in her hands (Hel. 883). That is an after-the-fact rationalization that some members of the audience are entitled to make, but others are equally entitled to conclude that the will of the gods is not ultimately to be understood (as the chorus suggests in 1137–50). And again, M.’s own general summation (pp. 197–8) is not fully in tune with such optimism about Zeus and justice.

P. 209: even for the audience of this book, it would have been worthwhile to mention the possible relevance of the apparent absence of Phoen. 1737ff in the Strasbourg papyrus. pp. 233–4: although I largely in agreement with M.’s approach to the shifting course of sympathy over the arc of the plot of Orestes, from deliberate evocation of sympathy in the early scenes to revulsion from the self-deluded fervor of the hostage-and-murder-scheme, I believe the bitterness and irony of the play persist to the very end, so that the easy betrothal of Orestes to his hostage, albeit sanctioned by Apollo, is still shocking and the auspicious wish of Menelaus in Or. 1676–7 rings hollow, and the god’s tidying up of moral qualms is more than usually strained.

P. 227: M. has many good observations on the characters, plot twists, and rhetoric in IA, but it is also at pains to accept a great deal of the text as genuine where a number of scholars have had strong doubts. I find somewhat desperate his explanation of the low rate of resolution in the suspected iambic prologue (he suggests not that Eur. wrote this much of the play years earlier and then returned to the project later, but that Eur. orally/mentally conceived this passage years earlier and carried it unchanged in memory until he wrote it down near the end of his life and composed the rest of the play). The argument he tries to make against Diggle concerning IA 323–16 strikes me as faulty (p. 228). Diggle accepts this passage as probably Euripidean, but M. claims that Diggle ought to have suspected it because of its low rate of resolution, since that fact is counted against the prologue. This ignores the problem of the different sizes of the two samples, and the greater problem that there has never been an adequate technical study of the variations in resolution rate across the course of each play. Philippides performed some tests for a few plays of Euripides, but the tests would have to be done on all extant Greek tragedies, and would have to be done with multiple parameters (particularly, using sliding frames of different length, rather than the single length that Philippides used, to be able to reveal variations both in plays with fewer resolutions and in plays with a greater number). M. defends the assignment of the address in 592 to the chorus of Chalcidian woman (p. 230), but it seems to me unjustified to assume that this chorus would adopt a subservient voice in order to assist the deception of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia (in the way the chorus of Electra, much more clearly attached to the female protagonist Electra, contributes to the deception of Clytemnestra). Finally, if the play was left unfinished at Eur.’s death, I see no reason to accept that the ending attested by Aelian is any more genuine than what is in our manuscripts of IA (p. 233).

P. 259: M. concedes that we may not have enough information about the structure and content of Erechtheus to understand the full effect of Praxithea’s speech on the sacrifice of a child (fr. 362), but concludes that it appears that Eur. did not develop the dramatic possi-


bilities of the sacrifice-motif as well as in other cases. It is perhaps worth noting, that in
view of the way M. interprets Iphigenia’s position in IA, it is possible to think that the
untroubled patriotism of fr. 160 may have been undermined by or contrasted with the ac-
tual grief Praxitha suffers when she loses all three of her daughters and her husband as
well.

P. 274: I think it is misleading to assert that in Cretans Pasiphaë «im Mittelpunkt des
Stücks stand». Since Minos appeared early in the play, and the chorus consists of male
priests, it is not likely that Pasiphaë had much opportunity to appear before the audience
and reveal her thoughts and feelings. Perhaps she appeared on stage nowhere but in the tri-
ail scene in which she tries to defend herself (like Helen in Trojan Women). The presenta-
tion of female passion here would then be quite different from what we see in Medea and
Hippolytus and other plays, where the presence of a female chorus makes it possible
for women characters to reveal very intimate details of their desires, disappointments, and
feelings, in a way they could not do before males.

As was said above, a reader who is already fairly well informed about Greek
tragedy and Euripides may be frustrated by the brevity of M.’s treatment. Some
of this frustration will be alleviated if the reader turns to the second monograph,
Euripides und sein Jahrhundert, where several general issues are treated, albeit
still rather briefly, except for the topic of the gods. Chapter 1 (12 pages) gives a
rapid review of Athenian history in the fifth century, including political and mi-
itary developments, art and architecture, poetry and music, intellectual life
(visits of philosophers and sophists). Chapter 2 (14 pages) considers Euripides
and Athens. M. rejects the view that Athens is generally not regarded as a proper
location of tragic action (citing the evidence of lost plays like Aegaeus and
Erechtheus) and the view that cities like Thebes and Argos are privileged locales
because each was seen as an anti-Athens (suggesting that Troy, a city abandoned
by its protecting gods, destroyed, and depopulated, is a better candidate for this
role). M. has no patience with the hunt for specific political references and alle-
gories (practiced by Goossens, Delebecque, and others), and sides (as I would)
with the approach championed by Zuntz and de Romilly. There is a brief survey
(26–29) of passages that seem to reflect more directly on the political debates sur-
rounding democracy and other forms of government. The unflattering portrayal
of an assembly debate in the trial of Orestes in Orestes and the description of
Odysseus as a demagogue in Hecuba are rightly set against the praise of demo-
cracy by Theseus in Supplices, but I would insist more explicitly than M. that
we are not entitled to infer that Euripides is committed to one or another posi-
tion, only that he could shrewdly observe and reflect the conflicting values and
arguments that enlivened his society. Likewise, disapproval of the corrupting
influence of the city and praise of the simplicity and honesty of hard-working
country life are shared ideas of the contemporary culture, in reflecting which
Euripides need not be interpreted as revealing a personal stance. M. also takes a
reasonable middle position in the ongoing debate about the degree to which
Attic tragedy reinforces the ideology of the dominant culture in which it was
written or criticizes or questions the assumptions of that ideology. Brief remarks
are made on free and slave and Greek and barbarian here, while the topic of the
portrayal of women is held off for the next chapter.

In this chapter (28) M. uses the argument that some statements in favor of the poor
and simple countryman or the μουσοί are not ‘required by the action’ and thus are to be taken
as more likely to reflect Eur.’s own viewpoint. M. does not accept this traditional form of
argument as it has been applied to Phaedra’s great speech, nor as it has been applied to criticism of the gods (as in interpretations of Heracles 1342–6), and I believe it is no more acceptable for these passages. Each is to be interpreted in the light of the character and situation of the speaker. M. shares with a number of critics the notion that the στίγμη in Orestes 917–30 and the στίγμη in Electra are somehow favorites of Euripides, crediting him with a romantic or Marxist admiration for such a figure. But consider the advice the simple man in Orestes gives. The audience has witnessed the regrets of Orestes and Electra themselves, has heard Menelaos and the chorus criticize the matricide, and has heard Orestes himself describe it as partially unjust. In the assembly itself Diomedes has offered the compromise solution that avoids extremes. The στίγμη is at the opposite extreme from the agents of Tyndareus, giving absolute priority to the demands of military service to the state (thus echoing the decision at Aulis that set the family of Agamemnon on its destructive course): Orestes should be acquitted, praised and crowned. What is the relationship between the messenger’s praise of this speaker’s background and character and the content of his speech? If we accede to the praise, do we also accede to this man’s advice? The incongruity and difficulty of judgment seem to be genuinely Euripidean, not a sentimental endorsement of the middling citizen-farmer. Similarly, in IT 264–75, an audience should surely appreciate the wit and irony of the fact that the instinctively pious herdman is wrong about the young men spotted at the shore while the herdsmen who are «foolish and bold in his irreverence» is more or less correct in recognizing Orestes and Pylades as ordinary humans who are aware of and afraid of the sacrificial custom of the Taurians.

Chapter 3 (18 pages) is entitled ‘Frauen auf der tragischen Bühne’. M. here reacts especially to the contributions of Zeitlin, Rabinowitz, and McClure, accepting much from Zeitlin’s approach, but insisting that the concentration of women characters in Eur. serves more than simply addressing the problems and positions of men. Most of the discussion of particular examples of avenging women and self-sacrificing women is directed at countering some of the conclusions of Rabinowitz that are overtly based on a strict feminism (although the unexamined Freudianism of her approach also comes in for its share of rebuttal).

The longest and most detailed chapter in the book is ‘Die Götter bei Euripides’ (54–96), which draws heavily on M.’s previous fine work in this area, while taking account of much recent scholarship (for instance, he evaluates and tests Wildberg’s interesting, but dubious, notion of Hyperesie,1 79–81). M.’s 1964 monograph certainly had a strong effect when I was forming my own approach to Eur. in graduate school, and I find myself here very largely in agreement with M. both overall and in most details.2 M. gives due weight to the embeddedness of statements about the gods in the immediate circumstances and in the aspirations of the characters who speak them (excellent remarks on pp. 59–61), rejects approaches that bracket off prologue-gods and epilogue-gods from the interpretation of the full experience of a Euripidean play, and recognizes the harshness of the world and the twosidedness of the divinities that form the environment for human action in tragedy. On small points like the principle of non-interference of one god with another (p. 85 n. 2 against Sourvinou-Inwood) or the existence of unanswered prayers (p. 82) M. is also an excellent guide. This chapter should be required reading for all students and critics of Euripides.

2 See the article cited in note 1 p. 9 above.
Nevertheless, I pick out here a few points for respectful disagreement.

P. 63: I do not agree that there is anything cryptic about Athena’s reference to μψις in Ion 1558: in the context of Kreousa’s repeated complaints about the way she believes she and her baby were treated by Apollo, and of Ion’s forestalled intention to ask the god point-blank for clarification, «reproach concerning the previous events» is readily understood to mean reproach directed at the god.

P. 69: As a general rule, I can agree with M. that the «Relativierung oder Ironisierung» of human impulses in a deus ex machina scene should not automatically be extended to the epilogue-gods as well, but I suspect there is at least a little of this in Ion and perhaps more in Orestes.

P. 74: M. declines to draw any theological or metaphysical conclusion from the adverse winds that almost cause the escape of Orestes and Iphigenia to fail; for an opposite argument, see my ‘Eur. Trag. and Theol.’, 28–29. (Likewise, against his view on p. 77, I would not dismiss the human confusion and perversity at the close of Orestes as only a dramatic device to motivate the entry of Apollo.)

Pp. 87–88: M. draws a rather strong distinction between τάχη, which, as a random force, he thinks is operative only in the mistaken interpretations of human characters at particular moments, and μορά or πεπρώμενον or χρεών, which he thinks are consistently revealed as the true cause in the end. I tend to think that the wild fluctuations of fortune in Heracles and statements like Tro. 67 (spoken by one god to another: «why do you jump in this way now to this attitude and now to that?») must leave some residual doubt whether there is much order in the tragic world, if the actions of gods appear so fickle. Conversely, one should recognize that when references are made to μορά at the end of a play, they have a rhetorical function, to bring closure to lamentation, complaint, or criticism, and may be in various instances more or less satisfactory to the audience that has witnessed the full arc of emotions through a play.

The final chapter (barely 12 pages) discusses psychology and characterization, including «the limits of characterization», that is, the orthodox view that the convention – or temptation? – of rhetorical contests sometimes involves a neglect of characterization. This final topic brings me to what is perhaps my greatest regret about these two books, despite my frequent agreement with and respect for the author. This is that I would have liked to see a more explicit examination and questioning of some of the categories that have been taken for granted in the long tradition of Germanic scholarship on tragedy. First, as mentioned earlier in this review, there is the concept of the tragic: despite his appreciation for the diversity of Eur.’s output, M. still occasionally uses terms implying that it is easy to understand what is ‘truly tragic’ and who is a proper ‘tragic character’. Related to this are issues of genre and structure, where the tyranny of Aristotle’s brilliant theory still exerts its influence. Not only is it not clear how well defined tragedy (or any genre) was or can be, but the rules for causation and organic unity espoused by Aristotle are not the only possible principles of literary construction, as a long history of dramatic and non-dramatic forms shows. I am more inclined than M. to recognize artistry and meaning in open forms that feature repetition, mirroring, and variation. Character, too, is a concept that is easily abused: literary constructions involve a complex mixture of the conventional, the arbitrary, and the psychologically plausible. I would argue that even rhetorical set speeches are an essential contribution to the literary construction of a figure and that thus rhetorical need not be seen as outside the limits of characterization, but one part of characterization conceived more broadly than it is by a strict Aristotelian tradition.

1 Note 1 p. 8 above.
To ask for such details and refinements is perhaps to ask for a different book. The books at hand are an excellent concise presentation by a master Euripidean, and they will certainly be of great value to a variety of readers.

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This is the first systematic extensive study of the Derveni papyrus, found in 1962 and dated between 340 and 320 B.C. Therefore, it is the first papyrus found in mainland Greece and it might be the oldest Greek papyrus found so far. This was a very significant find, which threw new light on our knowledge of the classical period, providing long fragments of what seems to be the oldest Orphic poem, a sample of early literary exegesis, a philosophical commentary along the lines of the last Presocratics and the description and interpretation of badly known religious rituals. It is not surprising that a vast bibliography arose about it, although a critical edition based on the original text has not been published yet.

In fact a copy of the original text without critical apparatus was published in 1982. The text was based on an early version with some supplements by Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou, but also with additions from different sources, and mistakes. It was therefore discredited by those who were in charge of its edition. In 1997 Tsantsanoglou published the first seven columns without critical apparatus and Laks and Most presented a careful translation into English based on a text, also corrected by Tsantsanoglou. In 2002 Janko published an ‘interim text’ and later on the papyrus was still published twice.

Betegh (B.) presents in pp. 4–55 the text and translation of the papyrus. Although this text according to him «makes no claim to be a critical edition», it is meticulous and includes a brief but complete critical apparatus. The translation is very accurate.

1 Such is the dating by K. Tsantsanoglou — G. M. Parássoglou, Heraclitus in the Derveni Papyrus, in: Aristoxenica, Menandrea, Fragmenta Philosophica, Firenze 1988, 125–133. It was dated between 325–275 by E. G. Turner, Greek manuscripts of the ancient world, Oxford 1971, Jourdan (see n. 8) XIII–XIV and Betegh himself 61 doubt this dating.


3 ZPE 47, 1982, 81ff (after p. 300).


5 K. Tsantsanoglou in: Laks-Most, quoted in n. 2, 93–128, with a long commentary.

6 Ibid. 9–22.

7 R. Janko, The Derveni papyrus: an Interim Text, ZPE 141, 1–62, which reached B. when he was already about to submit his manuscript for publication. The other two works we will quote here could not be taken into consideration by B.