οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος

L. KÄPPEL: *Die Konstruktion der Handlung der* Orestie *des Aischylos. Die Makrostruktur des 'Plot' als Sinnträger in der Darstellung des Geschlechterfluchs*. Pp. 310. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1998. Paper, DM 128. ISBN: 3-406-44860-7.

This important monograph frustrates all its reader's expectations. Despite its nearly impenetrable title; despite the thick pile of 'schemata' that continually falls out of the inadequate plastic sleeve affixed to the back cover; despite the moments early on when Aeschylus seems to have been left altogether behind in favor of an abstruse discussion of 'Kausalzusammenhang', this volume should find a place on the shelf of every student of Athenian tragedy, for in it Käppel, by means of a methodology both sophisticated and accessible, offers well-reasoned and very often convincing solutions to many of the most difficult aspects of the trilogy. More laudable still, perhaps, is K.'s employment of a mode of criticism—whose name might best be translated, albeit inadequately, as 'causal connection'—that suits the *Oresteia* so well that the reader constantly wonders why no previous critic has thought of applying it; one might also find a corollary triumph in that mode's making no claim whatever to being universally applicable to Athenian tragedy.

The book is a revision of the author's 1997 Tübingen Habilitationsschrift, and consists of an introduction (Chapter I), wherein K. both presents his methodology and demonstrates the need for it, two chapters that trace the 'Handlungen' of the individual dramas of the *Oresteia* (Chapter II on *Ag*., Chapter III on both *Eum*. and *Cho*.), and a brief synthesis (Chapter IV). The aforementioned schemata, along with an appendix that presents much the same information in a more narrative—and to my mind slightly more helpful—format, make up another important part of the work, and may prove a boon to the schematically inclined reader; I must say that I found them at best superfluous and at worst confusing. *Ag*. receives of the three tragedies by far the most detailed treatment—153 pages, as opposed to seventy-nine pages for both succeeding dramas—for reasons that become clear as the discussion proceeds: most importantly, because K. draws up his methodology so thoroughly in Chapter II, in the course of his reading of *Ag*., that the reader need not in fact have paid close attention to the philosophies of real-world causality outlined in Chapter I.

Indeed, my only quarrel with K.'s argument—beyond minor disagreements with individual conclusions here and there—lies in his assimilation without comment of causality in drama to causality in the world outside the theatre. The philosophy of contrafactuality that K. finally adopts (from the work of David Lewis) applies so well to the *Oresteia*, I would argue, only because Aeschylus was interested to explore in this trilogy problems of causal connection. To be sure, K. would agree with me on this point, since the results of his investigation turn, time and time again, on the 'Verknüpfung' to one another of events in the trilogy, and the agency of such a knotting must be the tragedian's. K.'s methodology, however, as he lays it out in Chapter I, seems to depend on an unexamined naturalistic understanding of dramatic action as transparently mimetic of real-world events. An unwavering focus on the action of the trilogy as an integrally constructed whole, however, makes this possible difficulty moot: none of K.'s conclusions depends upon an argument from probability in the extra-theatrical world, since, as he demonstrates convincingly, every event in the *Oresteia* springs of necessity from the events that have preceded it.

The one event of the trilogy that presents a partial exception to this rule—the

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intervention of Apollo in *Eum.*—makes a very good specimen case of K.'s method (pp. 243–5). K. uses his argument to this point, the painstaking process by which he has shown how Aeschylus has imbued each 'Handlung' of the drama with a cause that connects it to the 'Plot' (K. employs the mixed-language terminology of M. Pfister, which may at times be confusing to readers whose first language is English), to demonstrate the fundamentally different quality of the action of *Eum.* from that of the *Ag.* and *Cho.* For K., *Eum.* is an exploration of the divine forces that lie at the back of the human causality that the previous two tragedies have brought to the stage.

That human causality is best characterized as the 'Geschlechterfluch' of K.'s title, and the most important contribution of his book—though far from the only one—must be the demonstration that the family curse of the House of Atreus serves rather as the causal backbone of the *Oresteia* than simply as a source of good dramatic material. Among other critical insights, K.'s reading of the eagle-simile and the eagle-portent in the parodos of *Ag.* should win a great many supporters, integrating as it does the meal of Thyestes with the sacrifice of Iphigenia in a way that I can only describe as stunning. K.'s discussion of the parodos as a whole, indeed, which takes up ninety pages of Chapter I, may well prove a touchstone for interpretations to come. The qualities that make those ninety pages so valuable, and which they share with every other page of this volume, are a clear, forceful writing style and something not usually found in association with such a style—a remarkable depth of erudition in text-critical and interpretative scholarship alike.

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TRAGIC TALES

B. GOWARD: *Telling Tragedy. Narrative Technique in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.* Pp. vi + 214. London: Duckworth, 1999. Cased, £40. ISBN: 0-7156-2795-3.

Scholars often see drama and narrative as utterly distinct, and narrative theory has had relatively little influence on the study of tragedy. To be sure, I. F. de Jong has applied narratological method to the messenger speech, while D. Roberts and F. Dunn have studied closure, but much work on tragedy has emphasized either stagecraft or language and social context, not storytelling.

Tragedy is a form of storytelling, however, and has much in common with narrative in the narrower sense. This book discusses several aspects of the narrative methods of the tragedians, both in the actual narratives of tragedies and in their overall progression. Though well worth reading, it lacks focus: it does not fully discuss the relation between narrative and authorial audience, or the treatment of time, or the manipulation of audience expectations, or the building of narrative progressions, but all of these. The result is dissatisfying, despite the intelligence and literary sensitivity the book generally shows throughout.

One problem is theoretical. The narrative theory most influential on the book is the actantial theory of Greimas; Bremond, Bal, Genette, Prince, and Propp hover in the background. The author, though, is primarily interested in how the tragedians manage audience response and in the meanings of individual narrative sequences. Actantial theory is generally too abstract to explain the detail of particular texts (though Goward's treatment of the recognition-process in *IT* is a partial exception). In general, structuralist narratology has usually concentrated on the novel and has emphasized

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