



# Euripides and the Politics of Form (Martin Classical Lectures)

*Victoria Wohl*

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How can we make sense of the innovative structure of Euripidean drama? And what political role did tragedy play in the democracy of classical Athens? These questions are usually considered to be mutually exclusive, but this book shows that they can only be properly answered together. Providing a new approach to the aesthetics and politics of Greek tragedy, Victoria Wohl argues that the poetic form of Euripides' drama constitutes a mode of political thought. Through readings of select plays, she explores the politics of Euripides' radical aesthetics, showing how formal innovation generates political passions with real-world consequences.

Euripides' plays have long perplexed readers. With their disjointed plots, comic touches, and frequent happy endings, they seem to stretch the boundaries of tragedy. But the plays' formal traits--from their exorbitantly beautiful lyrics to their arousal and resolution of suspense--shape the audience's political sensibilities and ideological attachments. Engendering civic passions, the plays enact as well as express political ideas. Wohl draws out the political implications of Euripidean aesthetics by exploring such topics as narrative and ideological desire, the politics of pathos, realism and its utopian possibilities, the logic of political allegory, and tragedy's relation to its historical moment.

Breaking through the impasse between formalist and historicist interpretations of Greek tragedy, *Euripides and the Politics of Form* demonstrates that aesthetic structure and political meaning are mutually implicated--and that to read the plays poetically is necessarily to read them politically.

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