Matteo Taufer (ed.), *Contributi critici sul testo di Eschilo: ecdotica ed esegesi*. (*Drama*, Neue Serie, Bd. 8.), Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2011, pp. 276, ISBN 978-3-8233-6686-7.

This book presents the papers from a conference on "Eschilo, il creatore della tragedia" held at Trento in May 2011 (full disclosure: I would have attended this conference myself had I not already been committed to spend that weekend elsewhere). Its title and subtitle should really be read together, for it has in truth three foci rather than two: *ecdotica* (editorial technique), exegesis – and textual criticism. It contains seventeen papers (plus an opening speech by Bernhard Zimmermann), most of which are mentioned below.

The tendencies in textual criticism of what may be called the Trento school, inspired especially by Vittorio Citti, are well known and are revealingly expressed, in relation to Aeschylus, by Citti himself at the beginning of his contribution ("Aesch. *Suppl.* 354ss.", 79-95):

> Da qualche tempo alcuni grecisti italiani, fra cui il sottoscritto, stanno proponendo all'attenzione dei filologi classici, per il testo di Eschilo, delle scelte ecdotiche che si differenziano un po' da quelle che sono state avanzate nel corso del XX secolo, per il fatto che conservano dove possibile il testo della tradizione manoscritta. Noi sappiamo bene che esistono casi in cui la tradizione concorda in un testo inaccettabile, e ancora casi in cui tutta la tradizione diretta concorda in errore contro quella indiretta ... come ancora casi in cui la lezione del Laur. 32.9 [M] è dimostrata erronea dal confronto con altri manoscritti di Eschilo, quando questi esistono, e pur con questa riserva cerchiamo di sostenere la lezione del Mediceus per le tragedie in cui questo è unico testimone, contro altri studiosi che propongono di correggerla.

Different editors will always have different views on how confident one needs to be, before printing an emended text, that the paradosis is corrupt or the emendation correct; and they will have different views, too, on the degree of such confidence which is warranted by the evidence in any particular case. But Citti has made his own position clear: he will print the reading offered by "the manuscript tradition" whenever it is *possible* that that reading may be the right one. On this approach the best comment remains that made over a century ago by A.E. Housman (*M. Manilii Astronomicon Liber Primus,* London 1903, xxxii):

Chance and the common course of nature will not bring it to pass that the readings of a MS are right wherever they are possible and impossible wherever they are wrong: that needs divine intervention; and when one considers the history of man and the spectacle of the universe I hope one may say without impiety that divine intervention might have been better employed elsewhere.

It quickly becomes evident, moreover, from Citti's contribution and those of others, that the threshold of possibility is being set very low. In *Supp.* 354-5 M offers

ὁρῶ κλάδοισι νεοδρόποις κατάσκιον
νέονθ' ὅμιλον τῶνδ' ἀγωνίων θεῶν

which Citti, interpreting the first five letters of 355 as νέον θ' (which of course is no real alteration of the text), renders thus[1] (84):

io vedo il gruppo di questi dèi ... adorno di rami colti di recente, e con un aspetto inconsueto.

No evidence whatever is adduced in support of the claim that νέον can mean "con un aspetto inconsueto"; to call the assembled gods, or their images, a νέον ὅμιλον would be more likely to suggest to a listener that their cult was a new one or that the images had only recently been set up. And what is the point of θ'? That the images have an "unaccustomed look" is not an additional fact to set beside the fact that they are adorned with suppliant-boughs; it *consists in* the fact that they are adorned with suppliant-boughs (together with the presence of Danaus and his daughters). Citti can only suggest (84) that νέον should be seen as having "un valore consequenziale" vis-à-vis κατάσκιον: once again he cites no parallel to show that τε can have this kind of force. M's reading here, far from deserving to be retained in the text, can hardly even be classified as what Denys Page used to call a Remotely Conceivable Alternative.

This is all too typical of the kind and quality of arguments used by those contributors to the volume who set out, in conformity with Citti's above-quoted principles, to defend the paradosis. I will analyse one case in particular, which I have chosen for two reasons: firstly, the author (Maria Pia Pattoni, "Due note prometeiche", 185-207, at 185-98) defends the manuscript tradition in a passage where even Citti is sure it is wrong; secondly, her methods and assumptions raise vital questions about the nature of that tradition and the relative value of direct and indirect transmission.

---

1 I omit his rendering of ἀγωνίων, which is designed to bring out what he sees as its double sense.

In quoting Citti's programmatic statement above, I omitted a parenthesis attached to his reference to cases in which the indirect tradition preserves the truth while the direct tradition is unanimous in error: "(è il caso di *PV* 2 ἄβατον vs ἄβροτον)". It is precisely this passage that Pattoni discusses (neither paper refers to the other). Kratos, entering with Bia, Hephaestus and the prisoner Prometheus, announces that they have come

Σκύθην ἐς οἶμον, ἄβατον εἰς ἐρημίαν.

So, at any rate, say the Aeschylean manuscripts. However, a scholium on *Iliad* 14.78, attempting to explain the meaning of νὺξ ἀβρότη, cites from Aeschylus the phrase ἄβροτον εἰς ἐρημίαν; and Hesychius (α 211) has the entry ἄβροτον· ἀπάνθρωπον where both the case-form and the definition make it overwhelmingly probable that the reference is to our passage. The scholia on a passage of Aristophanes (*Frogs* 814), and an entry in the *Suda* (ε 2978) plainly derived therefrom, quote the first six lines of *PV* as an example of Aeschylean style: the *Suda* reads ἄβροτον, one Aristophanic manuscript (V) ἄδροτον, and the rest ἄβατον.

The overwhelming majority of recent editors have preferred ἄβροτον, and Pattoni (186, 198) gives the impression that they have done so purely on the principle of *lectio difficilior potior*. Certainly, as she shows, ἄβροτον does have its difficulties; in particular, neither this adjective nor the more frequent ἄμβροτος is ever elsewhere known to bear the meaning that would be required here. But this is hardly a decisive argument, when Hesychius' evidence shows that at least one ancient commentator did give the word this meaning. More importantly, though, ἄβροτον is the reading with *the stronger evidential support.*

Pattoni to some extent conceals this by baldly claiming that the *Suda*, Eustathius, ⧄Favorinus[2] and Hesychius "dipendono con ogni probabilità dagli *scholia vetera* omerici". For Eustathius this is no doubt true. But it is very unlikely to be true in the case of Hesychius (the word ἀπάνθρωπος does not appear in the Homeric scholium); while as for the *Suda*, its entry, as so often, is a direct citation of the *Aristophanic* scholium, and in fact backdates our evidence for the reading ἄβροτον in the Aristophanic scholia from the twelfth century to the tenth.

So we actually have three independent witnesses to the reading ἄβροτον – the Homeric scholia, the Aristophanic scholia (in part), and Hesychius – at least two of which are certainly ancient. What do we have for ἄβατον? The majority of mss. of the Aristophanic scholia, plus what Pattoni sonorously

---

2 No reference is given for the quotation by Favorinus, and I have not been able to trace it; it is not to be found in A. Barigazzi's edition of Favorinus (Florence 1966).

terms "il consenso dell'intera tradizione manoscritta" of *PV* itself. But what does that impressive "consensus" actually amount to? In the ninth or early tenth century, when poetic texts began to be transcribed into minuscule, "a very limited and unified tradition [of Aeschylus] lay to hand ... whether one postulates the use of a single [late antique] MS as a basis, with variants copied in from elsewhere, or of a small number of closely related MSS"[3]. Thus to say that a reading is supported by "the entire manuscript tradition" may well be only to say that it stood in one copy, or in a tiny number of closely related copies, in late antique Constantinople; and we know that the reading ἄβροτον was quite widely disseminated at, apparently, a considerably earlier date.

Pattoni recognizes (196) that it is incumbent upon her, if ἄβροτον is an error, to explain how this error arose, and suggests that it is due to the fairly frequent collocation of ἐρημία with βροτοί or its synonyms (though she musters only two examples for βροτοί itself). The reverse corruption is far easier to account for, and may even have occurred independently in the tradition of *PV* and in that of the Aristophanic scholia (though it is more likely that a copyist of the latter took over ἄβατον from his text, or his recollection, of the former[4]). For whereas ἄβροτος is a very rare word (it occurs only once again in the tragic corpus, at Soph. fr. 269c.20 – and there it had suffered corruption as early as the time of Augustus!), ἄβατος is fairly frequent in tragedy (x10), very common in the Greek Bible (x30 – seventeen times in Jeremiah alone), and, crucially, had in Christian times a strong affinity for ἔρημος and its derivatives. The two lexemes occur close together in Leviticus 16.21-22 – the famous passage on the scapegoat, which soon became charged with christological significance – eight times more in the Septuagint, and over a hundred times in ecclesiastical Greek literature; unless in *PV* 2, they never occur close together in any Greek text earlier than Diodorus Siculus (3.30.1).

In short, both ἄβροτον and ἄβατον are ancient readings, in the sense that they existed before the dark age of the eighth century, but ἄβροτον has the longer and richer attested pedigree even though it is not to be found in any Aeschylean manuscript; moreover, ἄβροτον would be exceptionally liable to corruption, both because of its rarity and because of the tempting familiarity of ἄβατον ... ἐρημίαν. To set this aside by invoking "il consenso dell'intera tradizione manoscritta" is to succumb to a mystical belief in the superiority of one particular category of evidence over all others.

3 G.O. Hutchinson, *Aeschylus: Septem contra Thebas*, Oxford 1985, l.
4 Indeed in one case we can actually see this happening. As Pattoni notes (197), whereas V (twelfth century) has the meaningless ἄδροτον, its usually faithful fifteenth-century copy G (Ven. Marc. 475) has ἄβατον.

The same general tendencies appear in all the other contributions that focus on textual criticism. That is not to say that all these contributions are devoid of value or utility. It is always salutary to remember, and be reminded, that there should be an initial presumption in favour of the manuscript tradition, connected as it is by a continuous chain of copying to the author's autograph; and sometimes, undoubtedly, this presumption has been overridden too hastily in the past. A few of the defences of the paradosis that are mounted in this volume are at least worthy of serious consideration, notably Citti (89-90) on *Supp.* 389 (τοῖσδ' Mᵖᶜ: note by the way the unwanted δ' which M has after τίς earlier in the line), and Enrico Medda (141-3) on *Ag.* 1128 (where he is right to argue that Bothe's <ἐν> is dispensable *metrically*, and at least has a case for claiming that it is also dispensable *linguistically*).

Editorial technique is the main theme of the contributions by Taufer himself ("Una rilettura dei codici del *Prometeo*", 209-218) and by Renzo Tosi ("Testo ed esegesi di alcuni scolî eschilei", 251-262). Taufer explains how he started on a programme of selective collation and found the tradition was so "open" that he in the end felt it necessary to collate in full all the manuscripts for which digitalized reproductions were available. He admits in effect (215-6) that it will only very rarely be the case that this additional information will alter anyone's view of the text, and it is in fact doubtful whether it will even give a truer picture of the tradition – at any rate to anyone who knows how to read an apparatus like West's, in which manuscripts are chosen for regular citation up to, and not beyond, the point at which all readings likely to be of ancient origin are covered (see his *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique*, Stuttgart 1973, 42-6). That the true reading κατισχνανεῖσθαι at *PV* 269 is to be found not only as a first-hand correction in the thirteenth-century manuscript H (from which alone West cites it) but also in the text of four (much later) manuscripts and as a correction or variant in three more, tells us nothing about the antiquity or merit of the reading; it is of interest to a student of the history of texts, but of none to a textual critic (the two things are not the same), let alone to a reader of *PV* as such. There is a place for the exhaustive information that Taufer aspires to provide, but that place is not the critical apparatus of an edition: once upon a time it might have been a series of journal articles – today it should be a dedicated, publicly accessible database.

Tosi discusses some of the problems facing an editor of scholia, now that it is accepted (1) that the age and authority of a scholium cannot be automatically inferred from the manuscripts in which it is found or the nature of the other scholia therein and (2) that the relationship between scholia and lexica is more complex than had often been thought. On the frequent phenomenon of a scholiast on one text citing another in a corrupt form, Tosi holds (259-60), surely rightly, that an editor of scholia should

present, as the text of the scholium, not what was written by the quoted author but what was written by the quoting commentator, with further information being provided in the (or an) apparatus.

Some of the exegetical contributions contain the best material in the book. Pierre Judet de la Combe ("Sur la poétique de la scène finale des *Sept contre Thèbes*", 61-77) strives hard to show that the author of *Seven* 1005-78, whom he places somewhere between *Phoenissae* and Lycurgus (Taufer in the preface, 6, wrongly presents him as supporting the authenticity of the passage), designed the ending to continue themes from the body of the play and especially to hark back to its opening scenes; I am not sure that he succeeds, but it is certainly well to remember that, as he puts it (61), "le *Nachdichter* est un *Dichter*". He provides an interesting footnote to the history of scholarship by revealing (68 n.20) that Hugh Lloyd-Jones in 1977 completely repudiated his defence of the ending's authenticity in *CQ* 9 (1959) 80-115.

Liana Lomiento ("Considerazioni sulla funzione dell'efimnio ritmico-metrico in Aesch. *Suppl.* 630-709", 97-112) makes a detailed comparison between this song, *Ag.* 355-488 and Eur. *HF* 348-451, both of which have similar glyconic/pherecratean codas at the end of each stanza. Like Wilamowitz, she sees the pattern as having a ritual origin, and she describes both the Aeschylean songs as "prayers" (105): the *Suppliants* song certainly is a prayer, but the *Agamemnon* song, though its opening anapaests ("O Zeus and Night, who ...") suggest that it is *going* to be a prayer (or hymn), in fact develops into something quite different, and throughout its 122 lines of lyrics no god is addressed. It would be fairer to say that Aeschylus takes a format designed for praising and petitioning deities and uses it – or creatively abuses it – for a song that starts by admiring what Zeus and Night have done and ends by stressing the negative aspects of the event and even by doubting whether it has really happened.

Carles Miralles ("Il finale delle *Supplici* di Eschilo", 113-23) has some good material (119-20) on echoes of the parodos in *Supp.* 1034-51, on the implicit contradiction between 1052-3 and 1057-8 (sung by the same voices!), and on the Danaids' admission (1069-70) that the course they have chosen is at best the lesser of two evils (though, one may add, the evil can be expected to befall mostly others, namely the Argives); but there ought to have been a fuller engagement with the rich existing literature on the end of the play. Miralles is right to say (115) that whether or not the maidservants of 977-9 were part of the play's original text, we have a duty "spiegare il finale che abbiamo nell'unico testo che abbiamo"; his view seems to be that the author of the passage (whoever that was) envisaged their appearing for the first time at that point, in which case one would like to be given some suggestion as to where they have come from and who has brought them (I freely admit that Miralles is not the first who has failed to offer one!)

Antonella Candio (""Ἄπτερος φατις: persuasione e reticenza in Aesch. *Ag.* 276", 125-33), discusses the meaning of this enigmatic phrase, favouring the view that ἄπτερος means, as in Homer, "unspoken", and here specifically "not yet revealed by you (Clytaemestra) to us (the chorus)". But Clytaemestra's reply – "You're impugning my intelligence as if I were a little child" – makes it clear that the question clearly, and disparagingly, implied that her declaration that Troy had fallen was based on information *which she ought not to have credited*; and whether or not I am justified in believing information that has reached me has nothing to do with whether or not I have disclosed its source to someone else. Two passages that Candio does not cite – Hesiod fr. 204.84 M-W and Parmenides fr. 1.40 D-K – show that in archaic and classical Greek ἀπτερέως could mean "swiftly", and when the chorus come once again to doubt the truth of the news, they repeatedly emphasize the *speed* with which it has been disseminated and believed (*Ag.* 476-7, 480-1, 484, 485-7) with the strong implication that first reports are often not true reports; and that, I would have thought, is more likely to be the force of ἄπτερος in *Ag.* 276.

Carles Garriga (149-64) attempts to find semantic common ground between the four occurrences of καταστρέφω/καταστροφή in Aeschylus (*Pers.* 787, *Suppl.* 442, *Ag.* 956, *Eum.* 490), and finds it in the notion of drastic change (*rivolgimento*). But if a lexeme can in fact have several meanings (as this one certainly can, in the relevant period), why should a particular author be obliged to use it in only one sense?

Ivan Sodini ("Su ἐλπίς nell'*Orestea*: una proposta di lettura", 165-183) produces the outstanding contribution of the book, a model study of the deployment of this thematic term in the trilogy, giving due weight to the important (and easily overlooked) fact that it does not occur at all in *Eumenides*. There are several related issues which would have repaid further analysis, had more space been available, such as the relationship between this theme and the repeated (and, for long, vain) prayers for all to be well or for an end to trouble (*Ag.* 1, 121, 349 *et saepissime*), the (changing?) balance between hopes that are eventually frustrated and those that are fulfilled, and why the theme disappears in the third play, for which Sodini's explanation is not wholly satisfactory ("il tempo d'attesa è finito ... Le *Eumenidi* sono il regno della certezza", 181; yet Orestes is still in anxious suspense, and contemplating suicide, even as the votes in his trial are being counted, *Eum.* 746, and after his departure at 777 the fate of Athens, facing the wrath of the Erinyes, remains in jeopardy for another 123 lines).

Pattoni in the second part of her contribution (198-204) discusses the meaning of ἀκραγεῖς in *PV* 803, and makes a very good case for the rendering "very noisy" (*fortemente strepitanti*), comparing especially *Iliad* 13.41 (ἄβρομοι αὐΐαχοι, of the Trojans). She perhaps dismisses too readily (202) Groeneboom's suggestion that the word is a syncopated form of *ἀκροκραγεῖς (cf. *Eum.* 52 βδελύκτροποι for *βδελυκτότροποι).

Piero Totaro (219-32) offers a useful commentary on the fragments of the two tragedies produced with *Persians* in 472, *Phineus* and *Glaukos Potnieus* – though it does not pretend to completeness, especially as regards the papyrus fragments of the latter play. He was able to make use of this reviewer's article on the tetralogy (*Dionysus ex Machina* 1 [2010] 4-20; now also in English in D. Rosenbloom and J. Davidson ed. *Greek Drama IV,* Oxford 2012, 95-107) but unfortunately offers no judgement on its arguments or conclusions.

Except for Zimmermann's prologue, all contributions are furnished with brief summaries in English, though these are often not well written and sometimes barely intelligible. The function of such a summary is presumably to enable users who read Italian, but read it slowly, to determine whether or not the article is worth their closer attention; probably an Italian abstract would perform this function at least equally well.

The book is generally well produced, though one or two misprints (such as *datale* for *dotale* two lines from the foot of p.121) leave one wondering whether some of the contributors would have defended them as authentic readings had they occurred in a medieval manuscript. It would have been helpful had running page headers been provided (as has been done in some other volumes in this series) so as to enable readers to see at once, for example, whether the bibliography they were looking at was the one belonging to the contribution they were reading.

Alan H. Sommerstein
University of Nottingham
alan.sommerstein@nottingham.ac.uk